

## GUIDANCE

Wednesday, July 10, 2024

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Do you want to live a more God-focused life? Not a big response. [Congregants laugh] You know, one of the things I love about Unity is: I love that I think Unity makes intellectual sense. I appreciate the fact that you don't have to kind of check your brain at the door. Right? That you can actually look at this teaching and take it apart, and it holds up! Right? That it doesn't expect you to believe in craziness. It invites you to understand that a deeper spiritual understanding can be at work.

And what I also know to be true is that, sometimes, our intellect can actually get in the way of a more profound experience of the Divine. Because we ... You know, when you're smart, you tend to look at life from concepts and understanding and paradigms. And you look at life in an intellectual framework. And you see the world around you from an intellectual framework. And so everything kind of makes sense from that intellectual framework.

But the problem is that it doesn't always feel like you're connected to it. It can feel very sterile and very abstract, and you can feel kind of even disconnected from it. Because it's a concept. And if you've ever tried to go home to a concept, it's not always very rewarding.

And so, tonight I'm going to invite you into more of an experience than a concept. And I think there are maybe three levels of a God-focused life.

And the first one is what I've kind of addressed: is this idea that God is a concept; God is an intellectual understanding. And you can believe in God, but what you believe is kind of an idea. You believe in the possibility of God. You believe in the concept of God, but it's kind of an intellectual paradigm. It's not something that's very close. It's more of a, *"Yeah ... I believe in God. Something."*

The next level is: I believe that it's when we can say that we believe in God, but there's a ... We really haven't ... There's a distance. Like, God stays in God's lane, and I stay in my lane. And I don't really need God to come over into my stuff. I don't really want God into my stuff. I want to do what I want to do and live the life that I want to live. And I want to be in charge, and I want to be in control. And I kind of like that there's a God. And I kind of like that God just stays over where God belongs. Right over there; not over here.

And then there's this third path. And this third path is when we begin to hunger and thirst for a closer walk with God. That we've known God as an idea; we've known God as a concept; we've known God as a thing "out there." And somehow that just doesn't satisfy us any longer and we don't ... It's not really meaningful; it's not really helpful. It's like my soul -- my heart -- hungers and thirsts for intimate relationship with the Divine. I want to know God personally. I want to ... I want to feel God directly involved in the little details of my life.

And I think there's some things that we can really kind of open to that kind of an experience, where we want to move beyond the intellectual understandings. And we want to experience God in a deep and profound way. When we read in Scripture -- when Jesus talks about God as Father -- the word that He often uses is "Abba." And Abba is a very personal, very intimate way of talking about God. It's God as "Daddy." It's very personal. It's very intimate. Right? It's not that big a thing that we like shout, *"God of all creation!"* It's an intimate God that we know personally and deeply in our lives.

So how do we create more of that? And I think the first one is that **WE HAVEN'T TO REALLY BE OPEN TO IT.** Because God is always willing to come wherever we are! Because we have free will, the entire Universe is willing to just stand and watch us until we are ready to open the door to experience more

God. So I believe that we have to be open to a deeper, more meaningful, more personal relationship of God. That we have to open the door; we have to open to that experience. We have to ask for it; we have to invite it in. We have to actually be open to that activity of God that wants to guide us and direct us and bless us and love us and heal us and be our God ... and be that Holy Presence that is with us in every moment of every day to guide us and direct us; provide for us; to be our God.

Two: that **WE HAVE TO BE WILLING TO RENDER OUR WILL – AND OFTEN OUR DESIRES – TO SOMETHING GREATER.** And if you're like me, sometimes we hate that! How many of you just want what you want when you want it? Right? Like, *"I don't I don't want to debate; I want it; I want it right now!"* I love this culture that we live in, right? Where, if you want it, it's available; you can have it! Right? And so, there's this second aspect is: not only do we have to be open to that guidance of God, but we have to be willing to -- over and over again -- be willing to say, "Where are my desires actually getting in the way? Where is my will actually getting in the way of a higher experience of God?"

Like, what if it could just be better than you could even imagine? But for you to experience that level of goodness -- that level of blessing -- we have to be willing to let go of our smallness, our pettiness, our ego desires. To be open to something greater and more profound.

And then third: **WE ACTUALLY HAVE TO ASK TO BE GUIDED.** Like, Spirit doesn't step in until you ask to be guided. And when you ask to be guided, there's a level of infinite Wisdom and Intelligence that is available to you in any situation, in any moment. But you actually have to ask! You have to be willing to be guided. You have to ask to be guided. And then you have to enforce it. I believe that we have to practice surrendering to that guidance; surrendering to that will; surrendering to the voice of God within us; surrendering to the feeling; surrendering to that divine activity.

And actually, until we jump into the flow, we don't really know if the flow works. You can feel that infinite flow moving and wanting to bless your life and take you to higher and greater places. But until you surrender and actually get into the flow, you're just watching the flow go by.

And you can maybe see other people in the flow. And you're watching their life work, because you can tell they're in the flow and you can feel the goodness that is moving through their life. And you can say, *"Wow, they really are living a God-centered life. I love that for them!"* And then Spirit says, *"Well, jump in!"* It's like, *"Ehhhhhh. I'm not sure I'm ready to go quite that far. That's just a little too fanatical for me."*

And then five: I think **WE HAVE TO PRACTICE GIVING THANKS WHEN IT WORKS.** That when we see the guidance of God and work in our life -- when we can see the blessings of God in our life -- that, the more we can give thanks for them, the more it affirms our faith that God is at work in our life for higher and greater levels of good.

In Matthew 7: *"Ask, and it will be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to he who knocks the door will be open."*

I love that! Like, there could not be a greater statement of faith! That wherever you are; whatever you're going through; whatever the need; whatever the challenge, what we hear in the Scripture is that if you ask, it will be given to you! If you seek, you will find! If you knock, the door will be opened! That, no matter what you're walking through, the infinite wisdom and guidance of the Universe will come to work in your life!

And it doesn't make sense! Like, it doesn't make sense how the infinite wisdom of the Universe can be accessible to all of us. But I guess if Google works, it's possible. [Congregants laugh] Right? Like, nobody thinks it's weird that we can all jump on Google and pretty much ask any question. Even if it's not about

anything that makes sense, and Google will give us an answer! You think, *"Well, that's just computers. Of course!"*

But what if there's an infinite wisdom and intelligence that's actually -- don't say it out loud! -- greater than Google? [Congregants laugh] Can't say that in Northern California! [Congregants laugh] Right?

And so what if there's an infinite wisdom and intelligence in the universe that will respond to you?

Now, I want to do a little compare and contrast. How many of you have GPS? One form of GPS in your phone or in your car, one way or another? Alright, I want to compare and contrast the difference between divine guidance and your current GPS system that you have in your phone or your car.

One difference between GPS and divine guidance is that with a GPS, you have to program in your destination. I mean, I tried. *"Siri, take me to someplace fun."* [Congregants laugh] Right? Siri didn't know! Right? I said, *"Siri, take me to someplace that I would love for dinner tonight!"* Wasn't enough information.

Now, maybe AI -- artificial intelligence -- will get to the point where you have made so many restaurant choices that, if you say take me to a restaurant I will like, based on your past experience it will actually be able to program and find you a restaurant in your area based on your past experience that you would actually like.

But what I want you to see is the difference between GPS and divine will is: that divine will -- when you say, *"Thy will be done"* -- God has an answer! When you say, *"I want to go to the highest level of good in my life,"* God knows how to get you there!

GPS is just based on your history, not on your potential. Not on the possibility. When you ask GPS or when you ask your phone for directions to anywhere, it will probably give you accurate directions. Right? We were on vacation last week. It was fantastic to have GPS. It is! It's fantastic when you're in a community that you don't know -- that maybe you've never been to before -- and you say, *"Where is this?"* And GPS will walk you through! At four o'clock in the morning, I was glad I had GPS to get me back to the airport, because it was dark and rainy. Right? It's a fabulous thing!

But you can't ask GPS for more than it's designed to do. It actually doesn't know the highest and the best for you, while divine guidance always does.

The other difference between GPS and divine guidance: if you go off the path with your GPS, it recalculates and gets a little cranky about it. [Congregants laugh] Have you ever experienced your GPS getting a little cranky? *"Recalculating. Don't make me work this hard. I'm telling you how to get there."* Right? It recalculates. Right?

Well, the interesting things about divine guidance is: when you go off the path, Spirit just waits! Spirit just waits until you're ready to get back on the path. Spirit will allow you to have just an unbelievable amount of time to create whatever nonsense you want to do. And then, when you're ready to get back on the path, Spirit will just guide you from wherever you are back onto the highest level of good for you in that moment. But Spirit never gets snarky. [Congregants laugh] I know! I deserved it! Like, there's been so many times when I deserve a snarky divine relationship and God just says, *"Alright; let's go."*

Three: GPS knows a lot; God knows everything. Like, that's a difference! Knowing everything is better than knowing a lot! Knowing a lot is great, but there are limitations. Right? GPS sometimes gets it wrong; God never gets it wrong! GPS is a tool; divine guidance is a relationship. And a relationship is better.

Because what happens when we use divine guidance over and over and over again: we finally get that God loves us. And that, wherever we are; whatever we're walking through; whatever we're going through in our life, God is always there to make sure that all the little ducks get home.

And the thing about God -- what's different than GP -- is: if you put in a bad request with GPS, it will still take you to that restaurant. If you want to go there, GPS will let you go there. God will not. If you're trying to implode your life, God will not guide you in that activity. It will be quiet. It will be silent. And you think, "*God doesn't talk to me!*" Well, maybe what you're asking for isn't the highest and the best! That we actually have to frame what we're doing so that we actually focus on creating a God-focused, God-centered life.

And the number one thing that we have to look at to really live a more God-centered, God-focused life is control and trust. How much control of your life do you still need? And how much are you willing to trust God with the details? Trust that actually God can guide you and direct you in ways that you can't even imagine?

You know, and to the degree that we've been wounded by life, often it creates an inverted relationship where we don't want to trust anything or anyone, including God. And as we heal the wounds of the past, we actually are willing to trust God more.

See, what I want you to see is that the lower levels of life are bumpy. There's things that are bumpy, and they're messy, and they're violent. And sometimes they feel and look like a train wreck. And we tend to -- at the lower levels of life -- we tend to use a hammer about life. And life hammers us and we hammer back. And it tends to be kind of messy.

But as we move up to the higher levels of life, it's more graceful; it's more elegant; it's more beautiful. You know, as we live a more God-centered life, people look to us. And we have more power; we have more responsibility; we are more dialed in. And it tends to be that we move into a level of life that really is about grace and ease.

And most of us can think of about a time in our life where our life was kind of a hot mess. You know, when we weren't really having a relationship with the Divine; we were functioning out of our ego, and we wanted what we wanted when we wanted it. And as we do that over and over again, we get to the point where we just realize that we actually need a Higher Power. That we need a greater level of God.

Many people -- many, many people -- come into this spiritual walk through the 12 steps of AA. And step number two says, "*I now come to believe in a Power greater than ourselves that can restore us to sanity.*" And three: "*I now make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.*"

And for many of us, that movement from out of our own ego; out of our own understanding; out of our own concepts into a Power that is absolutely a Divine Force in the Universe actually moves us to a higher and higher levels of good.

Now, let me tell you a story about my own life. Sometimes in my own life, when I miss guidance, it actually reveals how much guidance I have in my life. Does that make sense? When you're when you're living by guidance all the time, sometimes you don't even notice how much your life is being guided -- because your life is being guided all the time -- until you miss one of the marks. And you realize, "*Oh, it could have been better right there!*"

So, vacation over the last month. So, my wife and I were guided. And she wanted to get away from Arizona for a little bit. So, we rented a little cottage. And I wanted to rent it for three or four months and go back and forth. Right? And go back and forth from work and let her be in the little, like, place of

healing and just a little cottage. As we prayed about it, we were both guided that we were to go for one month. Right? One month.

And we looked at our schedules and we looked at my calendar, and we were going to leave on June 6, right? It was right before my birthday, and we'd be on my birthday in this cute, little cottage. And then we'd be back.

And I looked at my schedule, and it really was best for me to come back July 9 right? Now, what did God say? What was the guidance? One month. So, one month from June 6 is July 6, right? But, you know, it wasn't the three or four months that I really wanted; it was just a few extra days. What's a few extra days going to hurt, right?

So, we had to go with this fabulous time. And we find out during this trip that a very dear friend of Jill has been diagnosed with a form of cancer, and he was given just a couple of months. And so, as I leave to come back here, within a few days she leaves to go help and be a friend and support him.

So, I'm now ... And she's in Kansas City. So I'm, like, *"What am I going to do? Am I going to go to Kansas City? Because now I've got this time off. Am I going to go to Kansas City? Or am I going to go to this little cottage that we've rented?"* And I decide that I'm going to go to this cottage. Even though Jill's not going to be there -- she's going to be with her friend -- I'm going to go by myself. And I've never ... I mean, I can't remember the last time I've done a vacation by myself -- without kids or without anybody else. But what the heck? You know, it's 4th of July; I'm going to go! It'll be fabulous, right?

And so, I go, and it was lovely! Fourth of July; this little cottage ... they do a parade; they do a concert; fireworks on the water. It's fabulous, fabulous, fabulous!

And on Saturday, I wake up and I realize, *"Oh; it's time for me to go."* Like, I just know it's time for me to go. And I think back: *"Oh; God said it'd be a month, and guess what? This is July 6; it's Saturday."* It was time for me to go.

But guess when my flight was booked? It was it was booked until the 9, right? And so, I call the airline and say, *"I'd like a change, and I'd like to see if I can get on an earlier flight home."* And the airline says, *"Well, there's this storm called Beryl, and it is impacting ... So you could change your reservation at no cost, but there's this storm that's going to be between you and home. And on Saturday, Sunday, Monday, there are no flights left."* And I said, *"Well, when's the next time I can fly out?"* *"Well, your 6 a.m. Tuesday flight is the next available flight."*

Interesting. So God said, *"You'll be there one month."* And I wanted to stretch it out three extra days. Because, you know, It was three days. And so, God let me go. Right? And it's like, *"Okay; so now Beryl's coming, and you're there whether you want to be there or not!"* Right?

Has everybody had that experience where you realize you stayed at the party too long? [Congregants laugh] Right? And Spirit said it was time to leave and you think, *"Well, I'll just stay for a little bit longer, and it will be better. And I know it's going to get better."* And it just doesn't!

And what I want you to see is that, the more we put God in the center of our life, the more it requires us to listen over and over again. And I could probably give you a hundred times when I did it, and I listened exactly the way it was given to me. But it's also helpful -- in the times where it's so clear! That God said one month, and I thought, *"Well we're not staying for three months; we're not staying for four months. I'm not going to go back and forth all summer long. I'm just going to stay an extra three days."* And who would have thought there'd be this little hurricane thing? [Congregants laugh] Right?

And there's a million things that I don't know that the infinite wisdom of God does. And when we move our way of living from our human intellect and understanding to divine Wisdom and Guidance, we

actually access a level of life that's available to all of us. But we have to have the sensitivity and the willingness to actually put it into effort.

So here's your homework; you ready? I want you, tonight, to just kind of check in to see: Are you willing to have a more intimate relationship with the Divine? Because that really is where it all starts. Because if you don't want to have a deeper, more intimate relationship with the Divine, you're not really ever going to ask for guidance. Because you're going to want God to stay in God's lane, and you to stay in your lane, and never shall the twain meet. Right? It's a separate situation.

But if your soul is really hungry for a deeper, more profound relationship with God, then we kind of have to ask for It. And we have to kind of invite It in. And not only do we have to ask for a deeper relationship with God, but then we actually have to ask for guidance and direction. And to put it in use over and over, even when it doesn't make sense to do it. Because when we don't, it doesn't always work so well.

But the infinite presence of God loves you; wants to bless you; wants to provide everything and more. And when we can trust that; when we can ask that; when we can open our heart and our mind to a more intimate relationship, that can have your life work at a level that's staggeringly fabulous!

And many of us have areas in our life that we are willing to turn over to God. And many of us have areas of our life where we haven't yet been willing to turn it over to God. But when we turn everything over to God, our life just works better and better and better.

So where are you hungry for more God? Where are you seeking more God in your life? To live a more God-focused life? And are you willing, today, to listen -- to deeply listen -- to that gentle small voice that speaks to your heart and will guide you and direct you in everything? And when you hear that, are you willing to put that guidance to work? Or is it, *"Thanks; I got this one"*? And you do it your way.

Because you do have free will. You can live your whole life based on your understanding. But there's a point where we get so tired of living from our own understanding that we really want to feel God's infinite love for us. And that requires that we listen for guidance.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God tonight. And our simple prayer tonight is: God, guide me. Just guide me. Show me the way! That I am ready for a higher level of good; I'm ready for a higher level of life. I'm ready to learn with grace and ease and beauty and abundance and peace and joy. I am ready for life to be good and greater good. And I'm willing to be teachable and guided. And I'm willing to walk with grace and peace.

So in the name and through the power of the living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.