

COMMIT

Week #2 of a 4-Week Series, "Living Your Best Life"

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Last week, I began a four-week series on "Living Your Best Life." And it's an interesting thing when you know you've got like four more talks to give. Like, what are you going to say? "Good luck; God bless you!" [Congregants laugh] You know, what are you going to say? What is it still in my heart to say? What do I still got juice about? What's the most important thing?

You know when I got here in 1991 -- October 1991 -- I had a vision of building the biggest Unity church in the country. We didn't quite get there ... but we came pretty darn close! [Congregants cheer and applaud]

And little did I know that that outer project was really a spiritual project; that it's never about really doing the outer things, right? But in taking on a big project, it's about the impact that has on our inner life. So we think we're doing this [points outward] and it is really just doing this [points to his heart].

And I can't tell you the amount of transformation that I've had in the last -- can you believe it? -- 33 years. It's a long time; I'm old! [Congregants laugh] Right? I can't tell you how much that has impacted my life, my soul, my family, my world.

So, what I want to talk about for these last several talks is what I believe with all my heart is absolutely true. And that I think that this process that I want to teach is transformative, inside and out. It will change your world, but it also change your inner world.

Last week we began ... If you weren't here last week, you can always watch it online. Last week we began talking about living your best life: what that means. And last week I invited you to take on or entertain the idea of five possibilities. And of those five possibilities, I wanted three of them to seem possible and two of them to seem impossible. Because there is something about taking on the impossible.

Because what happens when you take on the impossible is that your ego doesn't do it the same way. Like, your ego can handle doing the possible, because you know how to do the possible. You've done the possible most of your life. You just do what you do ... and maybe you have to do it a little harder, a little faster, or do it more hours. But you know how to do what's possible.

But the moment you begin to entertain the idea, "*What if I was to take on the impossible?*", at that moment, your ego gets very quiet. Because your ego knows it's impossible! So your ego doesn't have any tricks. There's nothing your ego pulls out and says, "*No worries, I got this.*" Because if you really take on the impossible, it's a statement that you're actually putting yourself in a very vulnerable place. Because your ego hates to fail. Your ego hates to look bad. And when you take on the impossible, the chances are really good that it's going to blow up in your face!

And by taking on the impossible -- even when you don't know how to do it -- it requires that you actually believe in God ... not just as a concept, but as an experience that you hang on to; that you hold on to; and that you actually need every day.

See, if you do the possible, you don't really need God. Because you know how to do the possible. But if you take on the impossible, not only does it make you very vulnerable, but it makes you completely dependent on a Power greater than yourself.

You know, many of the people in our ministry have dealt with addictions. And one of the underlying experiences when dealing with addictions is: you get to the point where you know you can't do it on

your own. Where you've tried, and you actually need a Power greater than yourself to actually move you to a higher ground; to move you to a new place. And that's what tonight's all about: is that, once you begin to entertain those three possibles and those two impossibles, it actually makes you very God-dependent. Because I actually need God.

Will you say that with me? [With congregants:] *"I need God."*

I don't need a concept of God; I need an active Presence that guides me and directs me and shows me the way!

A lot of you, after last week's talk said, *"Well, I love I impossible, because I love the word I-M-POSSIBLE."*

Let's say that together: [with congregants] *"I am possible."*

One more time: [with congregants] *"I am possible."*

Elbert Hubbard said this: *"No one gets very far unless he accomplishes the impossible at least once a day."*

And I just love that whole concept, right? Like, what if once a day you take on the impossible? And it actually requires that you put your ego in check and say, "I don't know how to do this, but I'm willing to do this just because, if I go in this direction -- if I do this; if I take this on; if I commit to this -- I'm actually going to need God."

And I think, as a world, we need to be back in that state where we actually know that we need God. You know, there's a benefit in feeling self-sufficient, right? We live in communities that are very self-sufficient; where individuals don't always need their neighbor to be successful.

There was a time in our country where you couldn't get by without your neighbor. You couldn't feed your family without your neighbor. You couldn't build your barn or take in your crops or do the work that your family was doing without your neighbor's help. And it made us very dependent. And it was better. It was better, because you could only be so much of a jerk [congregants laugh] or your crops were going to sit in that field a long, long time. Right? If you were a jerk to people, you might go hungry for a little bit, 'til you got your attitude adjusted.

Because now we believe that we don't need anybody and that we are entitled to everything.

Marcus Aurelius ... You know, if you're going to quote somebody, you know, go back to ancient times, right? Because it's just like ... you just feel so well-read when you can quote Marcus Aurelius: *"Because a thing seems difficult for you, do not think it's impossible for anyone to accomplish."*

And Anthony Robbins: *"What we can do or can't do, what we consider possible or impossible, is rarely a function of our capacity, but more likely a function of our beliefs about who we are."*

So, I want us to entertain, tonight, this idea that your soul actually needs the impossible to move forward. That you actually need to take on a project that is bigger than your thoughts, bigger than your beliefs. Because something happens when we move from the possible to the impossible.

See, the realm of the possible is at the level of mind. When we stay in the realm of the possible, your mind can figure it out. You know, we don't move beyond the realm of ego, the realm of mind, the realm of, *"I know I can do this; I believe I can do this."* When we stay in that realm of *"I believe."*

Now, how many of you were taught that it's fundamentally important that you believe in something if you're going to do it? We have! We've all been taught that!

Reading from Matthew 9:28: *"When he entered the house, the blind man came to him; and Jesus said to him, 'Do you believe that I'm able to do this?' And he said, 'Yes, Lord!'"*

Or in Matthew 21: 22: *"Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive it if you believe."*

So, what I know to be true is that Jesus taught at both levels. He taught at the level where he taught people that they had to believe; like, at this level of mind where you have to believe. Because when you believe, you actually realize that something's not impossible, but possible! And at the level of belief -- what's possible -- you know you can do it, even if it's difficult. You know you can do it.

But when you take the step up to the impossible, then we actually move to higher ground. And that's why last week we talked about when Jesus invited Peter to get out of the boat. Because what's interesting about that is: Jesus didn't ask Peter, *"Do you believe you can walk on water?"* He just invited him to make a commitment and get out of the boat.

And so, there's a level that we work on our beliefs and we change our beliefs. And we believe more and more and more, and more becomes possible in our life. And yet there's a level that's beyond that where beliefs aren't going to help us; where we actually just have to decide: if we're going to do the impossible, we just have to commit to it.

See, in the level of "if you believe," then you have to actually just do it. When you make this commitment to the impossible, you don't know how to do it. And it makes you completely dependent on God, and it actually moves us to higher ground.

You know, the other thing I used last week was the idea when John F. Kennedy said to the nation that we were going to send a man in the moon and return him safely back to Earth. And I believe that that was an impossibility that John F. Kennedy invited the whole nation to step into and make a commitment to, even though there were so many things that were impossible at that time. That we literally did not know how to do. And he stands in front of the whole world in a joint session of Congress and says, *"In this decade, we are going to send a man on the moon and bring him back safely."*

That was a bold declaration! A bold commitment! And the nations followed. That was a bold declaration; a bold commitment.

And what I want you to see is that, for many of us to actually begin to create the impossible in your life, It isn't about you spending time trying to change your belief system and to believe in more. What I'm inviting you into tonight -- to live your best life; to literally do the impossible in your life -- you have to make a commitment, even when you don't believe.

And that seems wackadoodle. That's a spiritual term. [Congregants laugh] I think Moses said it somewhere in the Old Testament: *"These people are wackadoodle!"* Right? Right?

And there's a moment where your mind has to kind of put it aside and say, *"I don't know how this is possible. I don't know how to do this. I think this is impossible. But everything in my soul says I've got to get out of the boat and walk on water. Everything in me actually has to go do this, because if I don't do this, I will never be truly true to my soul until I'm willing to do that which is literally impossible."*

[Congregant claps loudly] Thank you. Thank you. [Whispers: *"I love you!"* Congregants laugh]

All right, so my favorite scene is in the first act, last scene of *Gone with the Wind*. And you know where I'm going. Scarlett O'Hara is on her knees. She is in a field that has been devastated. There are dark gray storm clouds behind her, and she looks up to the heavens and says, *"As God is my witness, I will not go hungry again!"*

Was that a possible statement or an impossible statement? That was an impossible statement! Did she have any way of providing for herself? Did she have any way of being able to figure out how she was going to feed herself when all that was around her was devastation? And something in her soul

demanded that she make a commitment that was bigger than she understood intellectually. And yet that commitment unleashed the full power of God to move her life forward.

William Hutchinson Murray, one of the first climbers of ... uh, yeah ... something. [Congregants laugh] The Himalayas. Sorry; I knew it was going to come back around:

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there's one elemental truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves in. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise occur. A whole stream of events issued forth from the decision, raising in one's favor all manners of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamt would come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets: 'Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it!'”

I want you to hear that! Like that man discovered -- in taking on an impossible project -- he discovered that the way that you unleash the full power of God in your life is to commit to something you know you can't do, but you go all in anyway! And in the act of going all in anyway, God opens the windows and doors of heaven. Divine assistance comes to you in all directions. The people that you need, the situations begin to line up in your favor, because you have the courage to do that which seemed impossible to you just five minutes before.

So, what is it? Like, what would it look like for you to live your best life? What would it look like for you to be willing to entertain the impossible in your life? To do that which you've never done before? To do that which, literally, you don't know how to do? That doesn't wait for your mind to come up with a plan, but your soul says it's time? And you go all in, trusting that there is a Power greater than yourself. Trusting that there is a power of God at work in your life -- at work in the universe -- that literally wants to move your life forward if you have the courage to take on the impossible, and to make a commitment that is bigger than your ego; that is bigger than your personality; that actually requires you to know God.

Jesus taught us that there are times when we don't just need to believe, but we need to make a commitment even when it doesn't make sense.

And the safe bet -- the safe bet -- is to do what you believe. The safe bet is to do what you know you can do. And do it a hundred million times more, over and over and over, so that you end up living the same life, the same year, the same decade over and over again. And nothing ever really changes, but your ego is safe. And you can point to all the things that you've done a hundred times before, and you feel like you actually accomplished something.

But when you take on one impossible project, it rocks you. It disrupts the status quo. It makes us very uncomfortable, and yet it teaches us about God: that God is a real, active presence in our life. It's not just a concept. It's not just an idea. It's a living, moving Force that will come to your aid when you need it the most because you need it the most.

This week we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King. And he was a man that invited us to do both. He invited us to be people who would believe and he was a man who invited us to make a commitment that was bigger than we understood.

His background and training came and was very much influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, and the nonviolent work of Mahatma Gandhi, where he invited people into a spiritual process. To make a commitment. Even though they didn't understand always how it was going to work, the commitment into that bigger vision -- into that bigger possibility -- allowed us as a nation to move forward.

And do we have a long way to go? Amen. But we have come a long way.

Delivered August 28, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. And I'm just going to read a bit, but it's appropriate to read it. I think it's appropriate for all of us to read it:

"Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.

So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherly love.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama with its vicious racists, and with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, one day right down in Alabama little Black boys and Black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jagged discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherly love. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning: 'My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims' pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring.'

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children -- Black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics -- will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: 'Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.'" [Congregants applaud]

Here's the deal. Each one of us has to kind of take a look at our own self and a look at our own life. And we absolutely have the God-given right to play the same year over and over and over again until we run out of days. We do! We have a God-given right to live the same decade over and over again.

Or we can actually listen to our soul. But the problem with listening to our soul is that many times what our soul asks of us is not the easiest path. Many times what your soul wants most is to do that which looks impossible to your intellect. And everything about us wants to quiet our soul and get our mind busy and our emotions loud so that we don't have to pay attention to what our soul is asking for. That we just spend more and more time entertaining ourselves so we don't have to be uncomfortable with the request that our soul is making to us.

But if we listen to our soul -- if we deeply, truly listen to our soul -- our soul is ready to do that which we've never done before. That which you don't know how to do. That which we believe in, but not because we know how to do it, but we believe in it because we know God.

Your soul came for something special. We can spend all of our time just entertaining it, or we can get busy. I think it's time for us to get busy: to really live our best life. To do that which only our soul knows we can do, and to be curious and fearless in the exploration of listening to our soul and doing the impossible.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul, to the activity of God. And today our only job is to listen. Listen to that deep, still voice within you. And what does your soul want? What does your soul deeply, truly want? What would you truly need God to do? What is so much bigger than your ego or your personality or your intellect that your soul is ready to take on?

And you think, "*Well, Richard, my time has passed.*" Bologna! I believe that every soul is here to do the impossible over and over and over again.

What does your soul want you to do? Listen and then make a commitment that's bigger than your intellect.

I commit to my best life.

Together: [with congregants] "*I commit to my best life.*"

One more time: [with congregants] "*I commit to my best life.*"

One more time: [with congregants] "*I commit to my best life.*"

In the name and through the power of the living God, we say thank you God; thank you God; thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.