

## LIFT YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS

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So how many people ever wanted to change, improve, or transform your life in some way, and it was so much harder than you thought? Anybody? [Congregants laugh] I mean, so hard that you did not achieve what you wanted to achieve, and so hard that you kind of stopped trying, because you just weren't making progress?

And so my question is: So why is it so hard to change? Why is it so hard to improve our lives and transform things? Why is it so hard to overcome our challenges and to move from lack to abundance, from fear to love, from the negative to the positive?

You know, the Apostle Paul had some insight on why that might be, and he said these words: *"My own behavior baffles me. I find myself doing things I know I should not do, and not doing things I know I should."* How many people have ever done something you know that was not good for you? How many people have ever not done something you knew that was good for you?

Why do we find it hard to do things that are good for us? That's the most confusing one. Why do we find it hard to do things we know that are good, that are positive, that are helpful for us? From the basics of eating healthy, of getting regular exercise and sleeping well ... you know, from choosing to hit the snooze button instead of getting up and going to yoga class; or choosing to take a nap or stay on the couch instead of reading; or choosing to eat a Krispy Kreme donut instead of a delicious kale salad. [Congregants laugh]

You know, The Apostle Paul also said these words. He said, *"Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Because he knew that we could all get stuck in places of not having the level of discipline that we need. Of, you know, sometimes procrastinating too much. And that it's important for us to not conform to these patterns that we can fall into; that we need – if we want to transform our lives -- we need to renew our minds.

You know, changing our minds is the most important thing we can do: shifting our perspective -- our mindset -- if we want to improve our lives. You know, the thing is: as brilliant and creative and as powerful as our minds are, they can sometimes be a little bit hard to control. Sometimes renewing our minds absolutely takes mental discipline; it takes spiritual practice; it takes work and time and intention.

Our minds need renewing because they are so easily distracted. How many people have ever meditated for four minutes and your mind wandered for three-and-a-half? The Buddhists call it "monkey mind." We have minds like monkeys; they just jump from branch to branch, from thought to thought to thought.

And what happens is, unfortunately -- with not the best conditioning in our childhood years -- we develop some unhealthy thought patterns about ourselves and our beliefs about the world. Some limiting beliefs; some negative mindsets that are so strong that, even when we're trying to create something new, they pull us back. So strong they have a grip on us, and we end up falling back into those negative states and negative patterns.

Rita Schiano -- who wrote the book, *Live a Flourishing Life* -- said the greatest addiction ... Our greatest addiction is talking about our problems and our troubles. She says we talk about our stuff, think about our stuff over and over and over again. We so condition and reconfirm and reaffirm the negativity we're trying to get out of, that we're trying to liberate from and improve.

You ever hear some bad news, and you just couldn't stop thinking about it? Or someone was critical at work, and said you didn't like a decision you made or some work, and you couldn't get that out of your

head? I mean, sometimes our minds get consumed with anger, with frustration, with upset, with pity. And she said our greatest work is to learn: How do you break free from those mental negative patterns to create a space for more positivity to transform and use our minds?

You know, in the Bible, one of the keys to break out of negativity ...? When times are down or struggling, we aren't happy? To reconnect -- to go from a negative to a higher level? There are two statements that are used in 49 verses to say how to go from the negative to the positive. And the words are: *"Lift up your eyes."* Sometimes, in some versions, they say *"Look up."*

And here are a few of them. In Isaiah 40:26: *"Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens."*

*"Lift up ..."* I'm not going to cite the passage; I'm just going to read them for you:

*"Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created things."*

*"Lift up your eyes and your heads, because your redemption draws near."*

*"Take your eyes off yourself and look to Jesus."*

*"Lift up your eyes, and where does your help come from?"*

*"Lift up your eyes and see that the fields are already ripe and white for harvest."*

You remember when Jesus put the loaves and fishes ...? That they didn't have enough bread and enough fish to feed the 4,000 -- one version is 4,000; one is 5,000. Do you know what the very first two things Jesus did was? He had everybody sit down on the grass. And the second thing: he looked up.

And one of the powerful things about looking up or lifting up your eyes is that it means to **LIFT YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS: to lift your awareness and recognize the presence and power of God that is right there with you in that very moment.** To recognize God's wisdom; to recognize God's power. And it also means to turn away from the negative. Lift up your eyes -- look up -- means turn away from the negativity. To reconnect to the Source; to reconnect to peace. To see things from that higher level of truth and awareness.

Einstein said, *"You cannot solve a problem at the same level that created it."* What he is meaning is that, whatever is going on in your life, lift up your eyes! Look up; go to a higher level of consciousness; a higher perspective and awareness -- a spiritual awareness -- so that it could lift us from that so we can move forward to transform and improve our lives.

So tonight, I want to talk about three ways we can lift up our eyes, or **LOOK UP** to lift our consciousness.

The first one is to lift our eyes to see and **REMEMBER THAT WE ARE LOVED AND SUPPORTED BY GOD.** You know, in my prosperity class, one of the things I teach is that forgiveness is an act of self-love. And to ask the question: *"Do I love myself enough to stop reliving the pain of the past? Do I love myself enough to stop punishing myself by holding hate and bitterness and blame?"*

To me, an unwillingness to forgive and release the past is choosing to deny ourselves love. It's choosing to deny ourselves peace and joy. You know, when we don't do things that are good for us, we are literally withholding our love from ourselves. When we are choosing to not support our own health -- our own well-being -- it is choosing to deny ourselves our own love.

Self-care ... I mean, there are all kinds of varying ways I can tell you. When we don't do these things for our best, we are literally withholding and denying ourselves love. It's like we don't even realize that we're withholding our own love.

And so what we need to do is to remember that we are loved and supported by God. That we're absolutely ... And when we know that we are loved and supported by God, that self-love will grow when we are connected to Divine Love.

You know, one of the greatest ways to know we're loved and supported by God? It is the fact that you're here! [Congregants laugh] And I don't mean that you're in a Phoenix on a Wednesday night, although that is a beautiful thing. It is that you're alive. You were created in the image and likeness of God. God brought you here! You are absolutely loved and supported by God! God created you; God loves you; God provides for you; and God wants the best for you.

The fact that you are here and alive is proof that you are loved and supported by God: that that Divine Love is in you. You're created in the image and likeness of God! And if God is love, that means you are created in the image and likeness of love! That every one of us is an expression of God's love. We are loved and supported by God.

*"I am loved and supported by God."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I am loved and supported by God."*

*"God created me."*

Together: [with congregants] *"God loves me."*

[Congregants:] *"God loves me."*

*"God provides for me."*

[Congregants:] *"God provides for me."*

*"God wants the best for me."*

[Congregants:] *"God wants the best for me."*

*"I am loved and supported by God."*

Together: *"I am loved and supported by God."*

You know, one of the best little meditations and little practices for remembering that God loves us is just to meditate on the words, *"God loves me. God loves me. God loves me."* Sometimes we're so busy in our lives and so in our head, I don't think we really let it sink in. *"I am a child of God and God loves me. God loves me. God loves me."*

In that video with Maya Angelou and Oprah Winfrey, Maya is crying because, for the first time in her life, she really gets that *"God loves me."* You know, we hear that we're a child of God, but do really get, *"God loves me"?*

*"God loves me. God loves me."* We are loved and supported by God.

I've got a friend named Dave, who literally believes he is loved and supported by God. And I remember when we first met ... he worked at Silent Unity, and that's where we met while I was in school. And we're driving around one day and he says, *"Hey, you see that beautiful sky?"*

I said, *"Yeah."*

He said, *"God made that just for me."* [Congregants laugh] *"God made that for me!"*

He said, *"You see the sun shine and see how warm and bright it is?"*

I said, *"Yeah."*

He said, "God made that for me." And he said, "Do you see the flowers and the bushes and how beautiful that landscape is?" He said, "God made that for me." And he said, "See all this air that we could breathe in?" He said, "God made that for me."

At first I thought, "This bad boy has lost his mind!" [Congregants laugh] But, I have to tell you: Have you ever really thought how much God loves and supports us? How much we are provided for? I mean, when you think about it: the stars and the oceans and the trees and the air ... I mean, there is so much good that's already there supporting us. We have, you know, an entire planet and universe supporting, you know, our highest good and our well-being.

You know, to lift up your eyes and see how amazingly loved and blessed we are. We get to be here and we get all these beautiful amenities to enjoy. I go in my backyard, and I look at all the different palm trees. And most of them are not in my backyard ... [congregants laugh] ... but I could see them all. And I think, "Thank you, God, for providing all this, and I don't have to care for any of it!"

I mean, there are mountains are all kinds of things we get to enjoy. And we sometimes think we're not loved. We sometimes think we're not good enough. And that is so just not the truth!

When Jesus said, "It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom," he is saying God does not withhold anything from us, but delights and desire to give as much as we are willing to receive.

You know, Gay Hendricks says every one of us suffers from a ULP: an upper limit problem. We think that we are only worthy of "X" amount of wealth, or only worthy of "X" amount of love, or "X" amount of happiness or responsibility. Every one of us has different levels of ULPs in our lives. Sometimes we have higher with love and a little lower with finance, and all these types of things.

But we need to look at our lives and say, "Where in my life am I blocking my good by now feeling worthy?"

I want you to take a deep breath for a second -- take a deep breath -- and think about how much love is in your life right now. And take another deep breath. And how much are you willing to expand to your upper limit to receive more love? God isn't withholding anything from you. The question is: How much are you willing to receive?

And whether it's how much more love, how much more happiness, how much more success, how much more abundance ... how much more are you willing to receive? Are you willing to believe that you are loved and supported enough to allow yourself to be willing to open yourself to more of God's abundant good?

So, it's about expanding our capacity for good, which means expand your capacity for God.

*"I expand my capacity for God."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I expand my capacity for God."* Take a deep breath.

*"I expand my capacity for good."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I expand my capacity for good."* Deep breath.

*"I expand my capacity for love."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I expand my capacity for love."* Deep breath.

So the first thing to look up -- to lift our consciousness -- is to remember that we are loved and supported by God.

The second one is to **LIFT OUR MINDS UP TO THE TRUTH THAT NO ONE IS AGAINST US**. Anybody ever had even a moment or two in your life where you thought that life was against you? God was against you? the universe was against you? Anybody ever thought that some person was against you?

Okay, nobody needs to raise your hand, but I know all of us -- in some form -- has wondered. You feel like, *"God, everything just seems to be against me."* Sometimes we feel like people or the universe is conspiring against us. That people are opposing us.

And the interesting thing is: all human beings have this tendency naturally. You see, we were born with that "fight or flight" instinct of survival. And back then, when they were like saber-toothed tigers and cavemen and just trying to survive, it was hugely important.

But as those dangers have gone away, that same mechanism is in us isn't as needed as much ... and we start spreading around and start suspecting all kinds of things of being against us. We start making stuff up about! You know, that there isn't enough of this, or that person's out to get me, or *"I could tell; they want me to fail. They want me to fail!"*

And we start doing this. And whether those things are real or not, the truth is: we build it up so much in our minds, we literally begin to believe and live out of a place that we think people are against us.

Here's what it is ... and it's called a negativity bias. He says, *"Our bias gets activated daily and it skews our perception of the world as we give higher importance to irrelevant stimuli, interpreting them as threatening."* We start believing all kinds of things are a threat and believe, at some level, that the world or life or people are against us. Could you imagine not feeling safe enough that, every day, you think that people are against you? Life is against you? It doesn't sound like a way of peaceful, joyful, abundant living -- joyful living -- at all.

Here's a quote from the book, *The I of the Storm*:

*"No one is against you. You have no adversary in your life. There is nothing in the universe that is against you or your purpose. Nothing opposes you. Any experience you may have to the contrary is evidence that your mind is rooted in separation and illusion. If you resist what seems to resist you, you strengthen the hypnotism that keeps you in bondage to your past and makes predictable your future."*

Even when people appear to be opposing you or disagreeing with us, they are not truly against us on a deeper level. Their actions are simply a reflection of our own limited perspective, their own limited perspective and state of consciousness. And so the truth is: life isn't against us, life is actually for us.

You remember, you ever heard people talk about that paranoia: thinking everybody's against you? And then spiritual people say, *"No; I believe in reverse paranoia; I believe everybody's out to help me. Everyone's out to support me!"*

But my question for you is: Could you imagine living a life where you feel no one is against you? Can you feel what that would be like? How freeing it would feel to realize, *"There isn't anybody against me. In fact, this world and this universe and these people -- whether they realize it or not -- are actually there for me ... to support my highest good and the evolution of my own soul"?*

*"All the people and situations in my life are for me, not against me."*

Together: [with congregants] *"All the people and situations in my life are for me, not against me."*

One more time: [with congregants] *"All the people and situations in my life are for me, not against me."*

That is the truth! And, again, can you imagine how liberating it would be if we woke up every day and realized there isn't anyone against us? In fact, life is for me. In fact, every single challenge and situation in your life, everything that is going well and smoothly in your life, are all for your highest good.

Sometimes we like to think the only things that are for our highest good are things that are really going well, and the things that I really want. But it's all for our highest good. And if we were able to look up to that perspective -- and not see it as a negative, but something that's worthwhile and supportive of us -- we would actually be more engaged and enjoyable, and get more of the lessons and the blessings and the teaching that that is meant to bring into our lives.

Okay, the second thing for us to look up to is to the truth of realizing that no one is against us. In fact, life is actually for us.

And then the last one is lift up our consciousness to **CLARIFY AND CALL FORTH OUR GOOD**. One of the things I think that makes change and improvement the hardest in our lives is that many of us don't know what we want.

You ever had somebody ask you, "*Hey, what do you want?*"

*"Well, I don't know." "Not quite sure." "I'm going to need to think about that."* We do that a lot! We could say all the things we don't want; we could lift those off like crazy! But you say, "*Hey, what do you want?*" Do you really know what you want? Are you really clear beyond, "*Not this!*"?

Because it is a huge thing that actually stops us from improving our lives. It makes it difficult to transform our lives when we aren't quite clear what it is we actually want.

In the Book of Genesis, it says, "*Lift up your eyes from where you stand, and as far as you could see to the north and south and east and west, I will give you all that you can see to you and your offspring forever.*"

And I love that! Lift up your eyes from where you are now, but how far can you see into the future? How far can you see in terms of your success: financially, your work, your relationship? You know, your health and well-being? It is a powerful thing to clarify: to know where you're going.

*"I'll give you as much as you can see, but you've got to see. You've got to be clear. You've got to tell me."* But it's all there! The question is: Are you clear and are you willing to call it forth?

There are all kinds of ways to call it forth, but I just want to focus on two tonight.

And the first one is affirmations. How many people do affirmations? Anybody who do affirmations? Affirmations are powerful! And here's how powerful they are.

Number one: they give us a sense of clarity. Number two: they raise our vibration. Three is: they create an attracting force through the power of the word. They declare and state our desire for what it is to be true. They call forth our good. They replace negative with positive. They focus our mind on the good, conditions our consciousness, and elevates our mood. Affirmations are powerful! They condition our consciousness and get us prepared to attract the thing we desire.

Everybody just repeat after me: "*My life is abundantly blessed.*"

Together: [with congregants] "*My life is abundantly blessed.*"

One more time: [with congregants] "*My life is abundantly blessed.*"

*"I am positive, passionate and prosperous."*

Together: [with congregants] "*I am positive, passionate and prosperous.*"

*"I am happy, healthy and whole."*

[With congregants:] *"I am happy, healthy, and whole."*

*"All things are working together for my highest good."*

[With congregants:] *"All things are working together for my highest good."*

*"Success comes to me like mushrooms overnight."* [Congregants laugh]

*"My relationships are honest, caring, joyful, and safe together."*

[With congregants:] *"My relationships are honest, caring, joyful, and safe."*

*"I am poised and centered in the Christ Mind."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I am poised and centered in the Christ Mind."*

*And nothing can disturb the calm peace of my soul."*

Together: [with congregants] *"And nothing can disturb the calm peace of my soul."*

*"Each and every day, in each and every way, my life is getting better and better and better."*

One more time: [with congregants] *"Each and every day, in each and every way, my life is getting better and better and better."*

Amen! So the thing with affirmations: they need to be positive; they need to be clear; and you need energy. You've got to have some emotion; some vibration. You know, like, *"Each and every day in each and ev ..."* works for me. It may not work as well for you!

Find affirmations -- create affirmations -- that get you a little excited; that make your energy go up; that make you smile and feel optimistic and good.

So let's go to another one. How many people have ever heard of affirmation? There's affirmations and affirmations. Okay, so here are what affirmations are: they are affirmations, but with a question.

And so instead of saying, *"I am prosperous,"* it would be, *"Why am I so prosperous?"*

And what it is: is when you pose a question, the brain is triggered to start seeking an answer and solution. It is a powerful way to engage ... and actually even more powerful than affirmations. Because affirmations: we say them, and we feel good. But sometimes we say them and think, *"Well, that's not true."*

But when you ask *"Why?"* to it, it's actually like you're saying, *"Hey, go find this for me. Go help me figure out how to attract and manifest it in my life."*

You could say, *"I am wise, wealthy, and successful,"* and you could say, *"Why am I so wise, wealthy and successful?"*

It is a powerful, powerful mechanism to engage your brain to seek out the paths and the possibilities to bring forth what it is that you desire. Socrates -- the Socratic method of learning -- was based on questions ... but based on the idea that the intelligence is already in the student. The question draws out what's already within.

There's a fabulous Cameroonian proverb and it says, *"He who asks the question cannot avoid the answer."* So make sure you ask some good questions! Don't ask questions like, *"Why am I so stupid?"* Not a good question! [Congregants laugh] *"Why am I so fat?"* You don't want the answer! *"Why can't I do anything right?"* You know, *"Why does nothing ever work out for me?"* These are disempowering questions, sending our minds into a place we don't want it to go because it'll attract more negativity.

So here are some questions we should ask: *“Why am I so successful?” “Why do things always work out for me?” “Why do people love doing nice things for me?” “Why am I so good at creating wonderful opportunities?” “Why am I so confident, positive and happy?” “Why I am so good at learning from my mistakes and gaining new levels of insight, strength and understanding?”*

There is something powerful about affirmations. There's something even more powerful, in a way, with affirmations. You know, they help us clarify the good and call it forth into our lives by changing from negative to positive. It is going from a lower level to looking up to a higher level.

Les Brown said, *“If you're going to fall down in life -- and you will from time to time -- just make sure you land on your back. Because if you can look up, you can get up.”* [Congregants whoop and applaud]

But this stuff takes work, and it takes work all the time, consistently. I saw a quote and it said, *“The only thing I don't like about life is that it's just so daily.”* [Congregants laugh] You can't just have one good meal and you're good for a week or a month. You can't take a shower and be clean for a week. You've got to do these things daily! You can't work out and you're fit for life. You've got to do these things daily, consistently, on a regular basis. It's the only way that it works.

Remember: the mind jumps around like a monkey. You know, it gets distracted. We need to renew it on a regular basis. And we do that by lifting our mind to remember that you are loved and supported by God. Lift your mind to know the truth that no one is against you; In fact, life is for you. And lift your mind to clarify and call forth your good with affirmations and affirmations, knowing that each and every day, and each and every way, your life is getting better and better and better.

If you want to change your life, no matter what, the best thing you could do is to look up and lift your consciousness.

God bless you all.