

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE BIG?

Week #1 of a 2-Week Series, "Living Big"

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Well, it's summertime, I think, isn't it? I think ... Well, it's been actually kind of not that summery the last couple of days. It's been cool and nice! But it's June, so we know what to expect. It's summer.

And I don't know about you all, but I like to have a summer reading list, right? Just a little, you know, something to sit by the pool and read and have a nice time. And I also always, not just in summer, but always have -- so tell me if you're the same -- a list ... possibly it's a physical *stack* of books: spiritual books, inspirational books, personal development books to be read. Does anyone else have that? Do you have a stack? How big? Show me. How big is your stack? That one's ... Okay! Well, okay!

Well, I want to give you about another two or three inches. I don't know how thick this book is, but I want to give you another book to add to your stack. And it is *Big Thinking* by Pam Grout. Now, you might recognize the name Pam Grout. She wrote a very, very popular ... Mmm hmm. It's here. You're going to tell me what is it:  $E^2$ . *E Squared*. That's it. *E Squared*. You remember that? *E Squared*: about manifesting and looking for numbers and finding them. It's just a great, great, great book. And then she wrote, which was going in my head a second ago and got confused:  $E^3$ . Because *E Squared* was so popular, she wrote *E Cubed*.

But I'm not talking about either of those two books, although you might want to add them, too. But I'm talking tonight about *Living Big*. *Living Big* is the name of the book we're going to focus on tonight and next week. I'll be back with you next week. So, this is kind of Part #1 of Living Big and next week will be Part #2 of Living Big.

So, to kick it off, we really need to ask the question: Okay, well, what does it mean to live big? And my definition of living big is doing what you came here to do and being who you came here to be.

Now, *here* -- when I say came *here* -- I don't mean like here in this room; I mean here in this physical human incarnation. You showed up on this planet at this time to be and do something amazing; some things amazing and unique. I think living big is when we be and do that. Or perhaps said another way: living big means expressing the Divine in through and as us in the best possible way we can.

And I love this statement from Dr. Ernest Holmes, who is the founder of Science of Mind. And he said:

*"God is more completely expressed through the one who lives largely ..."*

I'm going to put in parentheses (also known as big). So I'll say it again:

*"God is more completely expressed through the one who lives largely than the one who lives meagerly."*

So we're here to express the Divine.

I actually have a friend who's often here on Wednesday night, she's not here tonight. But her motto in life is: *"I'm here to give God a good time."* That's her view of life: *"I'm here to give God a good time, expressing through me and as me."* But a lot of people don't have that attitude. They're not; they don't realize that they're here, that that's what they're here to do.

And Thoreau -- in his beautiful work, *Walden* -- said words that I think ring true for a lot of people. Maybe not you sitting here, but I bet you know someone for whom this quote would ring true and it's this: *"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."* That hurts my heart. That hurts my heart! And I

want to influence as many people as I can to not live like that, but to be and do who and what they came here to be and do.

I love this statement from Pam Grout at the beginning of her book. It's a quote from Bob Savino, and she said:

*"Every day you are signaled and summoned to embark on a journey beyond the boundaries of all you have ever known."*

So, that's what we're going to do tonight and next week. We're going to embark on a journey. And I want you to consider these talks "your summons and your signal" to embark on this journey beyond perhaps what you've ever known yourself to be, or do things you've known yourself to do up until this point.

So, to get into it -- to dive right in -- tonight we're going to talk about three ways to live big.

The first one is to **think big**, and this is all about an attitude of boldness, okay? So, think big with an attitude of boldness. Number two: **imagine big**. This is an attitude of creativity. And the third one for tonight is **play big**: having an attitude of happiness and joy.

And then next week, we'll explore **bless big, give big**, and we'll save the most important one I think till the end, and that is **love big**.

So that's our framework for tonight and for next week.

We're going to dive right in with **THINKING BIG: Having the attitude of boldness.**

So, you all probably remember the book written by Robert Fulghum. I never could say his name properly. It doesn't roll off my tongue. But the name of the book is *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. That's a very old book, but it's got some good stuff. And they turned it into a play.

And in the play, one of the first scenes in the play, they are ... There's a teacher in front of a kindergarten group, obviously, kindergarten. And the teacher says to these kindergarten students, "*How many of you are dancers?*" And all these little hands raised like, "*I am! I am! I am!*" They shout with this, you know, jubilant enthusiasm.

And then she says, "*How many of you are singers?*" And again, every single child raises his or her hand and says, "*Yes!*" And there's these enthusiastic shouts and little bodies are just vibrating with excitement, with passion, with boldness.

And then she said, "*How about painters?*" "*Yes! Yes!*"

"*How about writers?*" "*Yes!*" All of them enthusiastically proclaiming that they are those things.

And then we flash forward to a fourth grade class. And the teacher asks them the same thing. Way fewer hands went up to those questions.

And then we flash forward to high school. And only a brave few raised their hands to those questions.

What the heck happened? What happens? Where does our boldness and our fire and our passion, where does it go? Well, that perhaps would be left for a therapist. Not my job here tonight to explore where that went for us ... but maybe it was a teacher's critique of us at one point. Maybe it was a parent's disapproval. Maybe it was unspoken rules. Maybe it was something said by your priest or your minister. Who knows, it doesn't matter, but somewhere along the line many of us got this message: Tone down; don't be so much; reel it in; settle. Yeah? Anybody know someone who ever got that message? Do you know someone? Okay; two people know someone. All right; good. Good.

Well, I'm going to suggest: What if, tonight, we reclaim our boldness, our passion, our fire for life and for who we are? What if we decided to have a new thought about who we are? And, in fact, to think new or renewed or again or deeper that we are – every single single one of us -- magnificent, brilliant, bold expressions of the Infinite.

Let me say that again, because I wanted to anchor and land in you because this is the truth. Each and every one of us is a magnificent, brilliant and – yes! -- *bold* expression of the Infinite. Being bold isn't about ego; it's not about bravado. It's a choice to see yourself and your gifts and your voice and your presence as essential and worthy.

So say with me -- hand on heart, if you will, deep breath, maybe even eyes closed so you really bring it in: *"I am essential and worthy."*

[With congregants]: *"I am essential and worthy."*

Now there are enough of you in this room that that should have been a lot louder, so let's try it again. Here we go: [with congregants] *"I am essential and worthy."*

Thank you. There! Thank you! I love these words from Pam Grout in her book, *Living Big*:

*"We live at half-throttle. We suit up for hopscotch when we could be performing miracles. We're completely oblivious to our own majesty; to the fact that the very heartbeat of the Divine thrums through our veins."*

And that idea that we could be performing miracles is not a new idea. Ooh; somebody said that many, many, many years ago. You may recognize this statement from this master teacher. He said:

*"Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing and they will do even greater things than these."*

Now, I have to tell you, I was raised in a Baptist church. And all they talked about was Jesus. We never ... Well, and the devil; we heard a lot about that, too. But we heard a lot about Jesus. I never -- until I walked into a Science of Mind church, similar to Unity -- did I hear that quote from Jesus. It's in John; it's right there in the Bible! I never heard that: *"that these things and more you will do as well."* It's from the big guy right there; he said it. I mean, you can't deny that, right?

And Jesus I don't believe saw himself as a source of miracles. What he knew is that he had the Divine flowing *through* him and *as* him. And it was the divine miracles that came forth. And he also didn't know that he was the only one who had the Divine in him through him and as him. He knew, in that statement, that we all have it.

Now along the way we forgot that, and we've been told that that's not true. And so, we're not walking on water yet. I don't know, maybe I should check. Anybody? Anybody turned water into wine yet? Yes? Oh, good. Rev. Sandy; better be taking her class. She's done that, right?

We've forgotten. But according to the master teacher Jesus, the things he did and more we shall do! So that's the essence of boldness: to know that this divine power is already in us.

I love this little tender story -- true story -- of Walt Disney. And it's said that when he was little – just a little boy in class, in a class -- and he was doodling on the margins of his paper, and he was drawing flowers. And his teacher -- well-meaning, I'm sure; well-meaning, but none the less came up -- and said, *"Oh, Walt, honey, flowers don't have faces."*

And he looked at her boldly and said, *"Well, mine do."* [Congregants laugh]

Look what happened with flowers with faces! It kind of, it caught on. It became a thing! Walt Disney's kind of a big deal! He claimed his boldness.

Tonight, I am inviting us, I am inviting us to reclaim our boldness. To think big about our possibilities; about our place in the world. And in a few moments, not quite yet, but in a few moments, I'm going to invite you to have a new thought about your boldness. And choose to perhaps have a new or renewed belief about who you are. Because it is time for us to stop playing small and to start thinking big.

But before we go to that time to have a new thought about that, I have two more points I want to make. And the second one is about Imagine Big. So, the second idea that Pam Grout puts forth. By the way, I really do want you to ... I really suggest you get this book because, of course, in two short talks, I can't cover the whole book, and it's really good. But we are covering these six points.

So **IMAGINE BIG: the attitude of creativity**. She writes this:

*"In order to fulfill our destiny as spiritual beings, we must become more creative, more open to the magic, to the deep vistas that gush through our souls."*

I love the way she writes: *"That gush through our souls."*

But we can also have our creativity squashed. We can squash our own creativity. I want to give you a personal story.

I don't know how old I was when I picked up my first crayon, but I did at some age, and I loved to draw. I had so much fun drawing. I loved to draw! Let me tell you what my drawings look like. They were always girl -- stick figures with three distinct features: beautiful hair, big eyelashes, and shoes. [Congregants laugh] Of course, right? We don't change all that much now, do we? [Laughs]

But they were stick figures. Let me just point out: they were stick figures.

I have a younger sister. She's three years younger than I am. And whatever age she got old enough to be interested in what I was doing and wanting to do the same as her big sister, she plopped her little chubby, little, adorable body next to me when I was coloring my stick figures with eyelashes and hair and high heels, and started drawing next to me. Now, she's three years younger than I am. This kid is drawing in proportion, fully fleshed out tea parties. Amazing! My sister is an amazing artist. She has made her living from being an artist.

I took in a belief when I saw her draw. Now, the fact is my sister could draw circles around me. There is no doubt about that; that's a fact. But I turned it into ... I'm not even going to say a belief; I turned it into a *knowing*. An absolute *knowing* that, *"My sister is creative; I am not."*

Um hmm. I lived with that for a very long time. I would even say, *"Oh, my sister got all the creative genes in her family."* I was not creative. I knew it at my core.

Is that true? Am I not creative? Hmm. [Laughs] I learned. I grew. I started going to a New Thought church, discovering who I was. And I realized that, oh, my gosh; I'm very creative! Now, I can't draw; I still draw stick figures with eyelashes and hair and heels. But she's got that talent. But I am *very* creative. I can create a beautiful home. I can create curriculum that'll knock your socks off, if I don't mind saying that. Thank you. I, for 22 years ...

So, when I became a minister of a church, my mentor said to me, *"Michele, there are only three things that you ever will talk about. And here they are, three concepts: God is all there is. We are incarnations of God. And we create through our thinking. That's it. But you have to say them in ways -- creative ways -- so that people don't know you're saying the same thing over and over and over."* [Congregants laugh] And for 29, 30, 40 -- whatever, 30 years now! -- I've been doing that. So, I think I'm a little bit creative!

The fact is: not creative in the way my sister is creative, but nonetheless creative.

I love this statement. I don't know who said it. I didn't make it up, but I found it as I was doing some research on this that: *"It is said that the artist is not a different kind of person, but every person is a different kind of artist."*

And so, every single one of us is creative! And maybe we've had that squashed along the way and maybe we did it to ourselves. I did that to myself. Nobody told me that. I did it! But if you've done that to yourself or somewhere along the line, you've been told you're not creative, pshaw! That's not true! You are!

Now, even those of you who -- I like that word, pshaw, right? Even those of you who are out there going, *"Well, I am creative. I know I'm creative."* But then I hear a "but" after that a lot of the times. I've seen it happen so many times! *"I am creative, but what I create isn't good enough yet to bring forth. It's not good enough yet. I have to work on it some more."*

Mmm. Mmm. I invite you, if you fall into that category, to let that go and know that it's probably way more than good enough right now to be brought out to the world. And the world, I believe, needs our creativity.

And so in a few minutes I'm going to invite you to have a new thought about your creativity, but not quite yet. Because I've got one more point that I want to make before we get there. And that is to **PLAY BIG: or have an attitude of happiness and joy.**

In the ancient Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita, we're told that the full nature of God is joy, and that we -- as children of the Divine -- are the enjoyers. I love that! We are the enjoyers. We're designed for delight. We are hardwired for happiness.

Now ... but let's be honest. When things are going our way -- you know, when smooth sailing and the skies are sunny and all that good stuff -- it's easy to be happy. Right? So easy to be happy. [Laughs] The trick is -- the challenge can be, and our spiritual work is -- to remain having that sense of joy, that attitude of happiness, even when circumstances and conditions aren't going the way we would like. Yeah.

Here is a profound spiritual concept. Are you ready? You're ready to hear it? Good. Again, thanks for being my one person who responds. I appreciate it. [Congregants laugh]

The profound spiritual concept is this: The attitude of happiness is not about circumstances; it's about choice. It's about a choice. It's not about circumstances. It's about a choice. So can we have -- I'm going to call it the spiritual maturity -- to find joy everywhere? To see that joy is our divine birthright, no matter what is going on around us? One of the most radical acts is to commit to being happy and joyful.

Now, I don't mean slapping on a happy face if your heart is breaking, because we are human and we do have emotions, or if you're really, really upset about something that's happened, okay; give yourself some space to have your emotions. But don't -- as one of my other spiritual teachers said -- *"Stop and build a condo there."* Because we kind of like to stop and build a condo.

Give yourself the space, but then return to that inherent joy that is the quality of the Divine that lives as you.

Sometimes we think that, you know, *"I will be happy when ..."* Has anyone ever done that? *"I will be happy when that thing happens"* *"I'll be happy when I find this."* *"I'll be happy when that's over."* *"I'll be happy when ..."*

And I did something last time I was here; when I spoke last month. I did a little ChatGPT search and asked it to write a poem for me on the topic. And I decided to do that again! And I have another poem written by ChatGPT. Scary; I know I wish I could say I wrote it, but I did not even begin to write it. I only put in the parameters of the “when ... I'll be happy when ... I'll be happy when.” So, would you like to hear this great poem? [Congregants: “Yes!”] Thank you! Here it is:

*I'll be happy when the bills are paid,  
When the job is mine, when fears all fade.  
I'll be happy when the kids are grown,  
When I have the house I can call my own.*

*I'll be happy when my weight is right,  
When my dreams come true, when love takes flight.  
I'll be happy when the sky is clear,  
When the past is healed, when the path is near.*

*But life is always moving on,  
new goals arise as old ones dawn.  
There's always something else to chase,  
Another dream, another place.*

*Yet here's the secret, pure and true:  
Happiness is here for you.  
Not in some day, not in when --  
But in this breath, this moment, my friend.*

*So let go of waiting, chasing then ...  
Choose to be happy now, not when.*

[Congregants applaud] Pretty good, huh? I really like that. I really like that.

So, I love this passage from Pam Grout on this topic. She said:

*"You're the only one who can decide if your glass is half empty or half full. Enthusiastic childlike joy is not something you need to grow out of. One of the greatest ways to serve humankind is to figure out a way to enjoy yourself and to let people know that enjoying yourself is a good thing. Vow today to approach your life with a sense of aliveness. Intentionally decide that you're only going to look for the good and concentrate on the beautiful. When you decide to practice the attitude of happiness, boredom turns into exploration. Cancelled flights turn into a party. Waiting in line becomes an opportunity to meet a new friend ..."*

I love this line:

*"Vacuuming the floor is a ballet performed to Van Morrison."* [Congregants laugh]

I would change that to say Elvis Presley, myself, but that's just me!

*"And of course, a rainy day calls for an indoor picnic with five kinds of cheese. Make this revolutionary attitude switch now. Your joie de vivre will be contagious. Maybe you'll even be on the six o'clock news."*

So, make the revolutionary attitude switch! Let your *joie de vivre* -- I love that French phrase, meaning your infectious delight of life -- ripple out into the world. Be the person whose smile brightens up a room, whose laughter is a soundtrack of a life well-lived.

I want to give you a story -- an anonymous story -- and I'm going to read it, because it's written in the first person. So, I'm going to read it to you. It's how a joy-filled happy experience changed a woman's life and the lives of the people around her. Here it goes:

*The other day I had just come home ... I was coming home from a particularly exhilarating choir practice, and I was feeling heavenly. I drove by a religious bookstore and thought I would stop in and browse. At the corner, they had a "Honk If You Love Jesus" bumper sticker. I bought it, and I put it on the back of my car. I'm really glad I did! What an uplifting experience followed.*

*I was stopped at a light at a very busy intersection just lost in my heavenly thoughts and my feelings, feeling so joyful that I didn't notice that the light had turned green. Suddenly I found lots of people who loved Jesus! [Congregants laugh]*

*Why, the boy behind me started to honk like crazy! And he must really love Jesus, because pretty soon he leaned his head out of the window and said, "Go Jesus, go!" [Congregants laugh] Everyone else started honking, too, so I leaned out of my window and waved and smiled to all those happy, loving people. There must have been a guy from Florida back there. because I could hear him yelling something about a sunny beach [congregants laugh] and I saw him waving a funny in a funny way with one finger. [Congregants laugh]*

*My teenage son was in the back, and so I asked him, "What does that mean?" He was caught up so much in this moment of joy that he could hardly catch his breath from laughing, but finally told me that it was the Hawaiian good luck sign. [Congregants laugh] So I leaned out the window and gave him the good luck sign right back! [Congregants laugh]*

*A couple of people were so caught up in the joy of this heavenly moment that they got out of their cars and started walking toward me. I just knew they wanted to pray with me, but then I noticed that the light had changed, and so I stepped on the gas. It's a good thing I did, because I was the only car that got through the intersection. And I looked back at all of my new friends standing there, and I leaned out of the window, gave them a big smile, and held up that Hawaiian good luck charm one more sign one more time as I drove away.*

And that, my friends, is the attitude of happiness! [Congregants laugh and applaud] See? We've got a little joy going in here; we've got a little happiness going in here.

So, tonight we've talked about three ways to live big, to be who we came here to be, to do what we came here to do. The first one is to think big with an attitude of boldness. The second one is to imagine big through creativity, knowing that you are a creative being. And the third one is to play big through happiness.

And so, I've said a couple of times that, later on, I'm going to invite you to have some new thoughts about these three ideas. Well, guess what? Now is the "later on." Now is the time. So, I'm going to invite you to close your eyes and take a nice deep breath.

And I ask you this first question: What is a big, bold thought that you could have about yourself right now? A big bold thought about your gifts; about your voice, and what you have to say about your presence, about your inherent worthiness.

Go ahead and have that big bold thought. Let it bubble up. Let it be daring. Let it surprise you. Now take a deep breath to kind of anchor the thought that you just had so that it stays with you.

And now I ask: What is a new thought around something that's been wanting to be created through you? I suspect we all have an idea, a dream, a possibility that's been knocking at your door. Maybe it's been a

quiet whisper. Maybe it's pounded like the thunder we had last night. Whatever it is: tonight, can you dare to have a new thought about bringing that forth from you?

And anchor that idea with a nice deep breath. Because I want you to remember it when you leave here tonight.

And finally: What is a new thought that you could have about your ability to play big? To live with an attitude of happiness? Not "sometime" ... Not when ... But now. Can you see yourself as the kind of person who wakes up ready to dance with life? Can you right now claim joy as your birthright and choose to make living and joy a spiritual practice? What is a new thought you could have about playing big with an attitude of happiness?

Remember this: God is more completely expressed through you when you live big. So right now, in this moment, choose to live big by being bold; by imagining greatly; and by finding delight in the journey. Because the world needs your greatness; it needs your creativity; and it needs your joy. And so do you.

And so it is.