

FINDING SPIRITUAL FREEDOM FROM THE NOISE OF LIFE

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Well, tonight, I am speaking about spiritual freedom from the noise of life. Life a little noisy, everyone? [Congregants laugh] Yeah; it's noisy: noisy from the outside world; noisy from the inside world.

So, first we've got this outer noise. We all have a good idea of what that is, right? Because the news is going 24 hours a day now. There's lots of access to any kind of news information that you want. We also have people screaming into the Facebook world or Instagram world 24 hours, also. So, it's exhausting, right? We get a lot of outside noise.

And then we've got the internal noise: the internal dialogue. And we can be our own worst critic! Right? We say things to ourselves that we wouldn't say to a friend even. [Congregants laugh] Our minds start working overtime, overthinking everything, which puts us into overwhelm and anxiety, depression.

So how do we stay spiritually filled up and centered in our divine nature when we have all of this from the outside and the inside bombarding us with noise? How do we allow ourselves peace and that internal freedom away from the noise of life? How can we stay informed and, yet, still find that inner peace? How can we quiet the inner critic?

So, I've really been sitting with this for the last few days. I'm talking to myself here as much as I'm talking to you tonight! How do we block out all, again, the external/internal noise so that we can stay spiritually centered and be the divine beings that we're here to be?

So, as I sat with this the last few days. I thought, *"Okay; what do I do that's working and what do I want to do more of?"* And I realized there's about four areas that we can all look at together tonight.

One is: Where's your focus? I know Amanda Sue talked about this last week, but we're going to go into it a little bit more today. Where's your focus?

Live life fully; don't just observe it.

Remember your internal GPS: that's your God Protection Service ... System. God Protective System ... [Laughs] I can't say it! GPS: God Protective System.

And the fourth is to remember you're a soul with a body.

So, let's dive into that. So, the first action to help us eliminate the noise in our lives: **WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?** Again, now the newly ordained Rev. Amanda Sue Briggs; she did an amazing talk last week, so go back and watch it on YouTube. [Congregants applaud] Yes! If you didn't see that ... And she really talked about where you're going to put your focus, because wherever you put your focus is what you're going to manifest. And the same is true with blocking out all the external/internal noise in our life.

So, when we're looking at the internal dialogue: What's that internal noise? The self-talk that I'm doing? First, we have to look at: Where's my focus? And start to be mindful of it, aware of it, catch it -- *"Uh oh; I'm not talking too nice to myself!"* -- and stop it.

One of the questions we can ask ourselves is: Is this thought -- is this whatever I'm saying to myself -- is it causing me freedom? Is it causing me peace? Or is it causing me worry and sadness? And also, again, that question: Would I speak to a friend like this? Probably for most -- if not all of us -- we would say probably no. So, showing the same empathy and compassion, grace, loving kindness to yourself as you would a friend.

Whatever you say to yourself, you know, you hear it. Whether it's eternal or our loud – whatever you say to yourself about yourself, it gets magnified out into your life.

Unity co-founder Charles Fillmore said this (up on this first slide):

“Words are also seeds and, when dropped into the invisible spiritual substance, they grow and bring forth after their kind.”

What you say about yourself is powerful, and it can either add to your peace or add to your disturbance. And along those same lines, I wanted to also add in here: you know, we teach people how we want to be treated. So, if you disrespect yourself -- if you're saying unkind things about yourself -- you're teaching others that they can do the same thing. And so, you show up by showing others how you would like them to speak to you; how you would like them to treat you.

And you start with yourself. How can I speak kindly to myself? How can I show compassion to myself? Because when we honor the divine within; when we honor the divine that we are; when we extend grace and compassion to ourselves, it helps drown out that internal noise.

And then, of course, there's the noise outside of ourselves. So, let me just talk to myself for a minute. Limit the TV; limit the scrolling; limit the ... all of it! Right? The newspaper time. And we know this and, yet, there we are stuck to it. Right? But it's available; like I said, it's available 24 hours now, and anyone can just say whatever they want. And it's a lot of loud noise.

And yet, what I've noticed is: when I'm on vacation, I feel so happy and calm. I feel mentally happier; mentally better. And I've come to realize that it's not just about vacation and connection. That's a big part of it, but it's also because I'm not on my phone as much. I'm not sitting there “doom-scrolling.” There's no news; there's no comparison; there's no FOMO (fear of missing out). [Congregants laugh] Right? I'm just present. I'm being present with whoever's in front of me; whatever's in front of me ... which improves on my emotional and spiritual well-being, and it quiets the noise. I can find peace when I'm not listening to the outside world as much.

So, limiting those; we have a choice. And we also have a choice whether we look for the negative or whether we look for the “glimmers.” So, again, where are we going to put our focus? We can keep focusing on the negative or we can look for the glimmers: those are those little positive moments; the sparkles in life. We can put our focus there.

And I asked myself this question: Do you want to add to the noise, or do you want to add to the harmony? You can ask yourself that: Do you want to add to the noise, or add to the harmony?

Here's an interesting fact. It's a new Instagram account I just found. It's up here on the screen. It's from @let'strainthebrain. I love that title, right? Look at this, everyone:

The heart's electromagnetic field is up to 5,000 times stronger magnetically and up to 100 times stronger electrically than the brain.

So, if you're hearing or seeing terrible news, or hearing terrible self-talk, shifting to the heart -- shifting to the heart; the loving kindness; that compassion -- because it's powerful. It is really powerful! So, send powerful heart-centered waves out into the world or back to yourself.

You know, that's what I was seeing; that's really what prayer is. Sometimes people ask me, “Well, does it have to be two or more that pray to make prayer happen? Or what is that all about as far as collective prayer?”

And I say, you know ... If you're standing outside and a bird flies by you, you're going to feel that bird flying by you. You'll probably notice it, right? And, yet, if a flock of birds flies by your head -- wow! That

powerful energy and breeze that they will make; you will really feel that. So, one prayer -- one person's prayer -- absolutely. And, yet, when we as a collective bring our hearts together -- wow! The energy -- that prayerful energy -- that can go forth and make a big difference.

So, again, it comes back to: Where do you want to place your energy? Do you want to place it on the negative noise or on the good news? Ultimately, you're in the driver's seat. You can drive towards the good, and place your attention on what you do want, or you can drive towards and place your attention on what you don't want. But the choice is yours. So, choose where you want to put your focus.

The next area to help keep us keep life's noise at bay and keep more peace in our life is that **WE CAN'T JUST OBSERVE LIFE HAPPENING**. Again, we tend to do this more and more. I think we kind of just watch it all happen. But we've got to live it. **WE'VE GOT TO LIVE LIFE**. We've got to throw ourselves into it versus just being an observer of our life or life itself. Or just studying it, you know; meditating on it.

But we've got to be fully awake and present to every moment; otherwise we get caught up in that noise and the distraction too easily.

There's a great story about a Zen teacher. He had a student who came to him. And he gave the student instructions to sit by a stream until he heard what the water had to teach him. So, he sat there for days. Three days go by; he's trying to make sense of it. He's trying to wrap his mind around: what does the stream have to teach me? And then day four comes. And all of a sudden, this small monkey comes by and bounds into the water, and starts playing in the water and splashing around with joy and having a great time. And then he kind of bounds back away and out of the picture. And the student sits there and just starts crying, because he realizes that all of the reverence and meditation and devotion hadn't brought him the same joy that that monkey found by just jumping into the water.

Jump in the water! How often do we miss the joys that life brings? The gifts that life brings? We get so focused on what's happening around us, or focusing on the negative in our lives, that we forget to actively dive into the joy in our life; the happiness that's before us.

Don't let life become so distant that you're just looking at the river and you never get wet. Be sure to jump in and get wet! Dance in the rain. Share food with a friend. Accomplish a new hobby. Because when we do this, then we focus on what's before us. We're experiencing joy, and all that noise just disappears. It gets less no-e-sy. Noisy. Noisy and nosy. [Congregants laugh] So joy in throwing ourselves fully into life drowns out the negative.

The Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes this; it's on this slide:

"Knowing how to create moments of joy and happiness is crucial to our healing. It's important to be able to see the wonders of life around us and to recognize all the conditions for happiness that already exist."

That already exist! Where is your focus? Right? So, focusing on the wonders, and then jumping into it; that heals us. That brings us peace. That brings us freedom.

You know, I was just reading this book, and it was looking at the different regions where people live the longest. It's those "blue regions." You've probably heard of that, right? It's where the oldest humans live on earth. And one of areas -- the area that has the most centenarians, the most people who are a hundred or older -- is on the island of Okinawa. In Okinawa, Japan.

And they have a word there in Okinawa, it's "ikigai." It's a combination of "iki," which is to live, and "gai," which is reason. In other words, it's a way of saying: your reason for being, your purpose in life, your *joie de vivre*. Because "ikigai" is really an overlap between doing what you love; what you can be paid for (or

even volunteer for); what the world needs; and what you're good at. It's bringing all that together and looking at: What's *joie de vivre*? And it turns out, that's one of the keys to a happy, long life.

And here's the other interesting thing about Okinawa. They don't have a word for "retire." Some of you are like, "*Oh, no!*" [Congregants laugh] But see, that's just it! Because they've got Ikigai; because they continue to do what they love. They start at the beginning by: What is mine to do? What is my purpose? What is my joy? How can I contribute? And then they just keep doing that! They don't stop!

And the other big part that the researchers found: those living on this island, that the connection ... So the connection combined with this clearly defined ikigai, or life purpose, were even more important -- contributed even more so -- to the health and happiness than the Japanese diet itself, which also contributed. But those two factors -- the connection and the Ikigai, having a clear Ikigai.

And they had a beautiful saying, which is, "*Treat everyone like a brother, even if you've never met them before.*" Treat everyone like a brother or a sister, even if you've never met them before. Hmm. So, let go of the noise of that story that you tell yourself about "the other," and let's treat them as a brother or a sister. Let's find the connection. Because, as we connect with others -- as we jump into the stream of life and do what we love to do -- it helps drown out that outer noise and also that inner noise and brings more joy into our life. And it keeps us healthier! We can all live to be a hundred! But a healthy hundred; a joyful hundred! A hundred where we're connected to one another.

The third idea that I have for us to drown out our negative inner and outer worlds is to **REMEMBER OUR GPS**. Let's see if I can say it this time, Jamie. **THE GOD PROTECTION SYSTEM**. [Congregants whoop and applaud] Thank you.

You know, you're an expression of God. You're an expression of life itself. Therefore, you're made up of spiritual attributes; spiritual abilities. And your intuition is your inner wisdom. It's that inner knowing. It's that blending of the heart and the head and the intuition together, which is your spiritual power -- or attribute of wisdom.

And so your GPS -- God Protection System -- is made up of those spiritual attributes of that inner wisdom; of that spiritual ability or capability of will or willingness; and discernment, or understanding. Discernment; discerning ... but in a spiritual sense. Meaning: bringing these three together, you get to tell it ... just like your car. You tell your car's GPS where you want to go.

And so, you tell your inner GPS where you want to go. Where do you want to go with your thoughts? Where do you want to go with your experiences? Where do you want to go with your relationships? Where do you want to go? Give it the information -- just like you put the information into your car -- and then you listen. And so, we get quiet. We get quiet and we remember that we're connected to -- and, in fact, an extension of -- the Divine. That we're part of that one Power and Presence of the universe.

And then from our hearts we can ask: What is mine to do? What is mine to do? How can I show up as goodness today? How can I show up as peace today? How can I show up as love and kindness today? Because when we're giving to others -- and we're focused on being the good in the world, the God in the world -- we're not paying attention to all the noise!

So Rev. Linda Martella Whitsett is one of my favorite Unity ministers. She has this great affirmation. Let me share it with you. It's also here on the slide. It's:

"I valiantly champion the goodness within myself and within each person I encounter."

Let's say that together.

Together: [with congregation] *"I valiantly champion the goodness within myself and within each person I encounter."*

And let's say that in a whisper now: [congregants in half-voice] *"I valiantly champion the goodness within myself and within each person I encounter."*

Because, see, when we put our focus there, you aren't listening to all the stuff; you're listening to the Divine within you.

And remember that electromagnetic field that your heart radiates? So, when you're holding that heart-centered vision of who you really are and what you can be, that's what you manifest! So, trust that GPS. Trust your wisdom; listen to it and let it steer you in the right direction.

And our last reminder to help us be spiritually free is that **YOU'RE A SOUL WITH A BODY**. Sometimes we forget; we think we're a body with a soul ... but we're a soul with a body. And that soul is free.

Unity co-founder Charles Fillmore said, *"The soul is the real man" -- or woman -- "and the body is the manifestation of the soul."* See, he viewed the body as the vehicle for the soul's expression and growth. Our body's here just to get our soul from place to place! His wife -- and Unity co-founder -- Myrtle Fillmore said that the soul is really the true essence of a person, distinct from the physical body.

So, when you start to feel overburdened by life -- when it starts to feel like it's too much -- this is when we stop and we remember who we truly are.

"I am a spiritual being."

Say that with me: [with congregants] *"I am a spiritual being."*

Yeah! And you're here. You're here in the seat. You're here watching. You're alive. So, you've got work to do, my friends. [Congregants laugh]

If you're here, there's a reason for you to be here. How can I express more God in the world? That's what we ask! Whatever is going on in your life; whatever is going on in the world, if you focus on the good that you can put forth, it's going to help bring more peace to you.

You get to direct your life. It doesn't mean that problems aren't going to occur. Problems will occur, because they do; because they will. But how do you react? How do you react? Do you turn to your spiritual abilities of wisdom and discernment and faith and love?

If not, here's your reminder that you have within you the power to direct your life. Within you, you have the power to direct your life! Your nature is one with Divine nature. Your divine identity is your soul's identity.

So let's remember, together, not to get stuck in the noise and what it's saying to us but, instead, remember that we can free ourselves from the many messages that we get bombarded with, either from ourselves or the world at large. We don't have to get stuck.

Eckhart Tolle, the author, said this on this slide:

"When you make the present moment (instead of the past or the future) the focal point of your life, your ability to enjoy what you do -- and, with it, the quality of your life -- increases dramatically."

The news is reporting the past. We usually are focused on either the past or the future. But let's put our focus on the present moment, because that's what can dramatically increase the quality of our lives: putting our focus on the present. You have within you the power to change your life.

So I invite you to consciously choose peace. Choose clarity. Choose an inner sovereignty. And we do that by cutting out the noise. By placing our focus on where we want it to be, what we want to experience more of in our life. Jumping into and living life fully. Being directed by that internal GPS -- God Protective System; tapping into those spiritual attributes of will, discernment, wisdom. And remember that you're a soul with a body; that you manifest your life with your thoughts, your actions, your strong emotions because of the powerful soul that you are. So let your body be the vehicle that carries your soul to its highest good.

And for everyone: let you celebrate your life and the inner freedom that you have on this Independence Day and all the days ahead. Wishing you all a happy and safe 4th of July, everyone. May your own freedom ring!

Blessings!

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