

## YOUR SPIRITUAL RIGHTS

Rev. Richard Maraj

Wednesday, July 9, 2025

*"You have the right to remain silent." [Congregants laugh] "Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed to you. Do you understand your rights?"*

I think we all recognize that from watching crime shows. Those are called the Miranda rights. But I think we recognize it, because there's a heightened awareness of our rights in this country. We're kind of, you know, born on rights.

The Declaration of Independence said that we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them our life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In 1791, the Bill of Rights were passed that guaranteed us a number of rights: the right to free speech and the freedom of expression; the freedom of religion; the right to protest peacefully; the right to bear arms; the right to petition the government. And we've got all kinds of rights: the right to vote; the right to work; the right to privacy; the right to strike. Human rights; civil rights; equal rights; workers' rights; patients' rights; victims' rights; children's rights; animal rights.

We have a lot of rights. And we are always encouraged to exercise our rights. And why? Because rights remind us of our freedom; of the power that we have; and the potential that we have to take our abilities and our opportunities to make a better life and really to create a better community, country, and world. Rights really protect us and support us in bringing out the best.

Now, what's interesting is the Miranda rights actually took place here; a court case here. It was a case Ernesto Miranda vs. Arizona in 1966. It was a Supreme Court case. And it was about informing suspects that they didn't have to say anything and they had the to an attorney. It was to protect them about being pressured and intimidated to confessing, and also to protect them from themselves of self-incrimination.

And I thought to myself: *"Protecting yourself from yourself? From self-incrimination?"* I'm thinking, *"That's kind of crazy!"* But how many people have ever said or done something that was really stupid and you got in trouble? [Congregants laugh] And how many people tried to actually fix or cover up that thing and you made it even worse? And so, sometimes we're a worst enemy. Sometimes we're the ones that hold us back more than any other situation or any other person in our lives.

So, having rights is actually really great and really helpful to have, because they help us become a better version of ourselves. They help us actually create better lives.

But in the course of us doing that in our normal lives, is that we think of all of our rights except our spiritual rights. And so, tonight we're going to look at our three basic spiritual rights to learn how powerful they are and how important it is to exercise those spiritual rights.

So the first one is: **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT.** [Congregant laughs] It wasn't a joke, but I love that you thought it was funny! [Congregants laugh]

And so, silence is a spiritual right. My question is: How well do you use your right to silence? What is your relationship with silence? What do you think about, and how do you feel when you hear silence? How much do you use silence in your spiritual practice?

You know, one of the things in our culture ... silence is not exactly highly revered or valued or sought after. In our culture, the only place I know that silence is revered is at the movies and they put up, "Silence is golden!" But other than that, we do not pursue silence as well as we could.

Sometimes we think, *"Silence? Well, that's nothing!"* We would prefer noise or TV or music over silence. We would prefer activities and business over silence. Because long periods [long pause] of silence [long pause] can feel [long pause] awkward and uncomfortable ... or like you're trying to do an impression of Christopher Walken. [Congregants laugh]

Either way, you know, when it comes to silence, we would rather fill it with conversation; fill it with music; fill it with activity. In our culture, full calendars and busy schedules that are packed to the max represent success and importance and productivity. But silence? That doesn't ring a bell for success or productivity or happiness.

Meister Eckhart, the 13th century Dominican monk said, *"The world would be a much happier place if we all had as great a capacity for silence as we do for talking."*

So again, for all of us: What is your capacity for silence? How much do you value silence? How much do you practice silence?

You know, silence is so powerful, healing and transformational. Silence helps quiet our mind. It helps calm and soothe us. It opens the door to inner peace. Silence creates space for self-reflection; self-awareness. And silence allows us to have a deeper connection and awareness of the divine presence within us and our spiritual nature. Silence reduces the inner and outer distractions of life to give us more clarity; to give us more peace, more insight, and more understanding. Silence is so powerful and filled with possibilities, peace and potential.

In Mark 1, Verse 35, it says, *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed. And then he went out teaching."* Jesus knew that silence was a part of his spiritual right and his spiritual life and his spiritual practice. Jesus chose to remain silent. In fact, that's how he started every single day. And not just started the day, but practiced silence and meditation multiple times a day.

And so, the question is: How much would you be willing to add more silence to your spiritual practice? Would you make it a priority and start it every single day like Jesus did? Would you be willing to commit to do it multiple times every single day?

So, my sister just called me. She and I meditate once a week by FaceTime because she lives in Montreal. And we've been doing a couple of years. So, she went on a silent retreat I recommended that I've been on. It was a 10-day silent retreat: no speaking. Ten days! I know somebody right here who attended it, as well. And so ... We haven't gotten a chance to talk – not until we meditate and talk – but she sent me a note and said, *"It was really hard!"* [Congregants laugh] *"But it was great."*

And I will tell you: doing spiritual work is hard. That's why they call it work. It is spiritual ... While you might say, *"Oh, it's meditation, and it brings us peace; it's meditation and silence,"* it is hard work. It is inner work. It is spiritual work.

And you know what the hardest thing about silence is? It is learning how to quiet your mind. That is the biggest challenge to meditation and silence and having a deeper spiritual connection: quieting the mind.

How many people have ever had your mind just go like the Energizer Bunny and you couldn't shut it off? Anybody? Anybody ever meditate and your mind -- even though you're doing fine -- your mind still wanders about the leak or some bill you've got to pay? It is amazing!

Silence is a powerful spiritual practice. It is a powerful spiritual work ... probably the most powerful that we can do. But the question is: Are we willing to put in the work that's needed to deepen our spiritual life and connection? I mean, are you willing to allow silence to be a priority in your life?

And how many people say that there's enough room for you to add more silence and meditation in your life? I mean, I would say a hundred percent. You know, silence unlocks peace, potential possibilities and power that is within us if we allow ourselves to be still. To just turn everything off and be still.

It is out of that stillness that the world was created. It is out of that stillness -- in that tomb -- that Jesus' resurrection took place. It was in that stillness! Sometimes it's through stillness and quietness -- not busyness! -- that the great potential and possibilities and inspiration come to us or come through us.

So would you be willing to spend five minutes in the morning in silence? Whether you just follow your breath or you just think about God ... And then would you do it in the midday for five minutes? And would you be willing to do it at night for five minutes? Fifteen minutes! Would you make that commitment to yourself and to deepening and unlocking the potential and power and peace and possibilities that reside in you. It is your right! The question is: Are you willing to exercise that right to remain silent?

So, the second spiritual right says: **ANYTHING YOU SAY CAN AND WILL BE USED AGAINST YOU IN A COURT OF LAW.** And what's that saying is that your words count. Your words are powerful; Your words matter and absolutely make a difference.

In John 1, verse 1, it says, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* Everything that came into being was with the Word.

In Genesis we are told that the first thing God did was he said, *"Let there be light. And there was light."* He spoke the world into existence. And our words have that same creative power! Words have energy and vibration. And the words that we express will attract energy and vibration that are equal to that.

Our words are used for or against us in the court of spiritual law: The Law of Attraction; The Law of Sowing and Reaping; The Law of Cause and Effect. And what this is saying -- when it says it can be used against you -- it means that our words absolutely play a huge role by the spiritual law. What we put out is what we get back. So we'd better pay attention to the words that are coming out of our mouth!

Proverbs 18:21 says, *"Life and death are in the power of the tongue."* Our words can tear ourselves and others down and it can build ourselves and others up, as well.

And so, the question is: What kind of words do you find yourself speaking? What kind of words do you find yourself saying on a regular basis? Are they words of kindness? Are they positive words? Are they loving words, uplifting words, energizing words? Or sometimes are your words a bit negative? Or are your words a bit judgy? Or are your words about lack and limitation and everything that's going wrong in your life? Or about fear, hopelessness, or hate or anger?

*"She is such a hot mess." "You know, I hate my family; I just can't stand those people." "You know, life really sucks sometimes." "I have such a horrible memory; I can't remember anybody's name." "Things just go from bad to worse. You know, the rich get richer." "You know, people are so inconsiderate." "You know, men: you can't trust any men." "I always get a cold in the summer." "Things never work out for me." "People always take advantage of me." "I never seem to have enough money; I'm always broke." "I always get turned down for job promotions. I guess I'm just ... it's bad luck."*

In Psalms 19:14 it says this: *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, 'O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."* And what it is saying is: do your words line up and are they in alignment with the kind of person you want to be? The kind of life you want to live? and the kind of things you want to create and attract?

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be aligned with the kind of person I'm here to be; with the kind of life I'm meant to live; the kind of difference that I'm here to make!

In the Book of Joel, Chapter 3, Verse 10, it has a simple line, but it's very powerful. It says, *"Let the weak say, 'I am strong.'"*

Let the weak say, *"I am strong!"* What's that saying is: whatever condition your life might be, speak a higher possibility for yourself. Lift yourself up with the power of your own words! Lift yourself up to call forth something greater that isn't currently here, but you know it's possible for you and for your life.

Let the weak say, *"I am strong."* Your words matter. They count in the court of spiritual law! We create and build our lives by our words.

Everybody repeat after me: *"I am positive, passionate, and prosperous."*

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

*"I am determined, wise and strong."*

[Congregants:] *"I am determined, wise and strong."*

*"I am patient, kind and loving."*

[Congregants:] *"I am patient, kind and loving."*

*"I am generous, grateful and good-looking."*

[Congregants, laughing:] *"I am generous, grateful and good-looking."*

*"I am brilliant, bold and beautiful."*

[Congregants:] *"I am brilliant, bold and beautiful."*

*"I am happy, healthy and excited to be alive."*

[Congregants:] *"I am happy, healthy and excited to be alive."*

*"Things always work out for me."*

[Congregants:] *"Things always work out for me."*

*"I am always learning, growing and improving."*

[Congregants:] *"I am always learning, growing and improving."*

*"All my relationships are healthy, meaningful and enjoyable."*

[Congregants:] *"All my relationships are healthy, meaningful and enjoyable."*

*"The universe is conspiring for my success and happiness."*

[Congregants:] *"The universe is conspiring for my success and happiness."*

*"Each and every day, in each and every way,"* [congregants join in] *"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!"*

You can feel the power of the word! There is a vibration and there are energies. So, we need to be careful of the words we speak about ourselves; about others; and how we think the world works. Saying things like, *"Life is unfair"* is not something we want to condition ourselves to be a part of attracting more of that kind of mindset and energy.

The great thing about this – Let the weak say, *"I am strong,"* – says whatever condition your life is, you can speak it into a higher existence. You can speak it into higher possibilities. You can speak it to attract greater goodness, greater abundance, greater happiness, and greater success.

Anything you say can and will be used against -- or for you! -- in the court of spiritual law. It is your spiritual right to speak the power of the Word.

And then the last one is: **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO AN ATTORNEY.** [Congregants laugh] And, you know, if you cannot afford one, one will be appointed to you.

So, of course, when you've got a legal situation, the smartest and wisest thing to do is to seek counsel of an attorney, because they know the laws; they know the rules; and they know how to guide you and to give you the advice that you need for the outcome to be the best. You know, to not use an attorney and to not seek guidance and counsel from a higher knowledge, you know, is a horrible thing to do; not a wise thing to do. You know, it hurts ourselves.

Somebody once said, *"He who acts as his own lawyer has a fool for our client."* And so, it's an important thing! And so, what this is saying is – "You have the right to an attorney" -- means you have the right to seek counsel from a higher knowledge; from a higher level of intelligence; from a higher level of experience and wisdom.

And I know this is a stretch to be comparing seeking God's guidance to seeking the guidance of an attorney ... but I do think that there is some wisdom in it. And here's where it comes from. In the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 9, Verse 6- 7, it says, *"For unto us a child is born; to us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called wonderful counselor; mighty God; everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end."*

And so, what this is saying is that Spirit -- the Christ Spirit, the God/the Divine in us – is our counselor. It is the greatest wisdom and knowledge. So why not tap into it? A spiritual right is to seek the guidance of God; to seek the answers that we don't know.

Listen to what it says in the Book of James. It says, *"If any of you is lacking any wisdom, ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault."*

Another fabulous one from Proverbs. It says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lead not to your own understanding, but in all ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your path."*

So, this whole idea about seeking guidance -- seeking counsel -- means to ask God for the wisdom that you're seeking. If you've got a situation that isn't working well in your life, ask! Open a space for the wisdom and guidance of Spirit to show you what is the best thing for you to do. Ask for that and then trust and listen. Seek that counsel of the Higher Power – the Higher Intelligence -- and allow it to guide you.

How many people have ever had a situation in your life, and you didn't pray? You didn't even think about it, and you just did it on your own. Anybody? Yeah, and as Dr. Phil would say, *"And how's that working for you?"* [Congregants laugh]

And then another one: How many people have ever gotten guidance from Spirit that was clear, but you chickened out and you chose not to do it?

And so, this whole idea is about: we have access to the Wisdom and the Intelligence of the Universe! And It's saying: tap into It! It's a spiritual right! It's fully available 24/7. It's available! The question is: Are you willing to open your heart and seek? Are you willing to open your heart and ask? Are willing to open your heart and just trust that there's an answer, even though I can't see it? Trust there is wisdom. Trust

there is guidance. Trust that things can be better than I can imagine. But am I willing to ask? Am I willing to trust? And am I willing to listen?

The entire theme of the entire Old Testament is about this: trust and obey God -- even when your path doesn't seem clear -- and ultimately it will work out for you. Everybody -- Abraham, Moses, Noah, David, Joshua, Solomon, Joseph -- every one of them listened to the guidance of God, even when the conditions didn't go well. And sometimes it went into a little funky space, but ultimately, they did great. Ultimately, their blessings, their fulfillment of their lives, and their divine purpose -- all of those things fell into place. It is a powerful and amazing thing.

So, the next time you're watching a crime show [congregants laugh] and someone gets arrested, and you hear, *"You have the right to remain silent,"* I invite you to let it trigger you to remember that you have the right to silence. And that silence can bring you to levels of peace and power and possibilities if you allow yourself to be still. Let it remind you that the words you say have power in the court of The Law of Attraction; spiritual laws. So, watch the way you speak your words. Use them to build yourself up! And finally, to have a right to attorney is to seek God's higher counsel. Seek the divine guidance that is fully available to all of us.

Let's all make a commitment to exercise our spiritual rights. God bless you all!

*Copyright 2025 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Maraj*