

UNITY PRINCIPLE #5: "LIVING THE UNITY PRINCIPLES"

Final Week of the 4-Week Series, "The 5 Unity Principles"

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So, this evening I get the honor of wrapping up our series on "Unity's 5 Principles."

So before we get to the fifth principle, I know some of you might not have made it to every single Wednesday ... so I thought we should do a little review. Would that be helpful? [Congregants: "Yes!"] Okay.

So, I didn't see anybody teach this. I know Stacy knows it, because they teach it in our Youth & Family, but I find it's very useful for adults, as well, to remember what our five principles are. So, it's using your hand. Principle #1: God is. Principle #2: I am. Principle #3: I think. Principle #4: I pray. And then tonight we're going to be talking about Principle #5: I love.

So, Principle #1: God is -- It talks about the nature of God, moving us from the idea of a Santa Claus-type God who's watching us and judging us and meriting out reward or punishment to the idea of God as the One Presence and One Power that permeates all of existence; that's all around us and within us; and that is absolute good.

Principle #2: I am -- talks about what humanity is. That if God is all there is, and God is good, then how can we be anything but good?

Principle #3: I think -- is about the power of our thoughts and our minds to shape our experience of life.

And then Principle #4: I pray -- is about the tools of prayer and meditation that help bring us back into alignment with that spiritual truth.

So, before I get into Principle #5 -- which is I live -- I want to give a little bit of history.

So the Unity movement began with a husband and wife, Charles and Myrtle Fillmore ... but really it began with Myrtle. So, the ideas and the teachings that Unity teaches really aren't new ideas, and they weren't new ideas at the time, either. You see, Myrtle and Charles were alive at the same time as people like Emerson and Thoreau, the transcendentalists, who were already talking about this idea that there is a divine spark that lives within each and every one of us. And that what our job is is to live from the truth of that divine spark, rather than conforming to what the world tells us we should be.

And before Emerson and Thoreau, there was a guy named Quimby, who was a physician who first started talking about this connection between our mind and body: that our mind has power. Now in the 18th century, this was a pretty radical idea: that our minds have power over our body. And yet, today it's accepted as fact. In fact, the proper term is not mind and body; the proper term is Mind/Body: one word. Cannot be separated.

And then, back before that, there was Christian mysticism that was talking about these same ideas since the beginning of Christianity 2,000 years ago. Before that, there were the ancient Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle and Pythagoras who were talking about these same ideas. And then, going back even more thousands of years, Jewish mystics were talking about these same ideas.

So, the ideas were not new. But as Myrtle, Unity's co-founder, began studying and learning about these ideas -- as she began understanding the truth of her identity as a child of God -- things started to change for her. And so, Charles watched as his wife was transformed and changed by putting these ideas into practice.

And so, because he saw the results, he thought, *"Maybe there's something to it; maybe I should try this out myself."* And being a scientifically-minded man, Charles decided, *"I want to try and figure out the formula. How do I make this work in a scientific way?"* And so that's what he set out to do.

And so, I share this with you because I want you to understand that, from the very foundation -- from the very beginning of the Unity movement -- we were, and still are, a movement of positive, practical spirituality. That, from the very foundation, our movement is about living the Truth that we know.

Which brings us **to Principle #5, which states: Knowing and understanding truth is not enough; we must live the truth we know.** Or, as I like to say: living the truth. That's the easiest way to remember it.

So, in the Bible -- in the Christian Scriptures or the New Testament -- there is this ongoing debate about faith or works. Which of these is better? Is it about what you believe or is it about what you do?

Now, in a way, Jesus was actually rebelling against the idea that it's about what you do. You see, the religion that Jesus was born into -- the religion that he grew up in, and the religion of his people -- had a lot of specific rules and laws that you had to follow to be "right with God." And what Jesus was saying was, *"Yeah; you're doing the right things, but you've totally lost the plot. You're forgetting the point."*

So let me give you an example. The commandment says, *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* And so, what happened was: the Jewish authorities put laws in place of what your duties and your obligations were to your neighbor that were demonstrating that you loved your neighbor as yourself. And then Jesus came in and said, *"Yeah; but you're not supposed to do it because you have a duty and an obligation to do it. It's not just about doing the right thing. It's about the feeling of love in your heart for your neighbor. That's the point."*

So, in a way, Jesus rebelled against this idea of what we do being important: that it was more about what we believed and what we felt.

So, this debate continued in the New Testament and in these different letters. And then along comes James, who says, *"Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith"* ... basically saying to the people, *"Show me what you believe without showing me what you do, and I by what I'm doing will prove what I believe."*

I love this, because he goes on to say that you need both. It's not about just doing the right thing; it's about believing and doing. He said that works is what makes faith complete. That, once we believe and know and understand the truth of who we are, we have to act like it to complete that cycle.

In Unity, we call this a demonstration. A demonstration is when we act on our faith and see real tangible changes in our lives.

So, for example, who believes in Principle #3: that our thoughts -- that our mindset -- has power to create our experience? So, if you're not changing your thoughts to change your experience, you're not living into that belief, right? We can believe all day long that our thoughts have power, but if we don't change our thoughts to see changes in our life, then we're not living that belief.

So, said another way: our inspired actions are the natural results of an inner conviction.

I want to share with you a brief part of my own story about when I found Unity.

So, I began struggling with my mental health in my early teen years. But at the time, we didn't say, *"I'm struggling with my mental health."* We said, *"I'm crazy; something's wrong with me; I'm broken; I'm bad; I need fixing."* That's the language that we used. So that was in my early teen years.

And then, in my late teen years, I walked into a Unity church for the first time. Who here remembers your first time at Unity? A lot of you! Yeah! Twenty years later and I still remember it. I remember that

there was a pamphlet on the wall that said, "What is Unity?" And I opened it up and, under the heading "What We Believe" I read the five principles for the first time. And when I read about God being all good, all loving, all powerful -- the One Presence and the One Power in the universe -- it just resonated.

And when I read the second principle -- that we are all created in the image and likeness of God and therefore are inherently good -- it gave me permission to start to believe that I was good.

Now, I can't quite remember all the details of the talk, I'll be honest. But I do remember what I heard, and the message that I received my very first time in Unity. And the message that I received was that I could choose happiness. And for somebody who was a teenager and felt completely out of control -- and like I had no control over anything that I was feeling -- the idea that I could choose that there was a power within me that was greater than the circumstances going on in my life, that it was inherent in me ... it was a game changer. To understand that, no matter what was going on with friends, or boys, or school, or my parents, that I could choose happiness.

All right. Now believing that is one thing. Living that is a whole other story ... and a story for another day. [Congregants laugh] But the point is that it planted the seed. And that is always where it begins -- is that, until we take hold of an idea that things can be different, we can never take action to make things different. It has to start where it always starts ... which is in consciousness.

By the way, I mentioned Charles was looking for that formula. Essentially, through his life's work, what he came up with was: *"As within, so without."*

So, what I love about this fifth principle -- that we live the truth that we know -- is that there's not a hard and fast rule for what that looks like. Living the truth is about, first and foremost, doing the work in your consciousness. Because if we don't take the time to figure out where we're getting stuck and hung up; if we don't take the time to root out where our biases are; then any action that we take isn't going to be inspired action. **Living the truth is about doing the work in mind first and then taking action.**

Unity Minister Rev. Ellen Debenport says, *"When we are living the truth, any action we take will be from the consciousness of spirit and oneness, with ego in service to soul."*

There's a Buddhist saying that I love: *"Before enlightenment, chop wood; carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood; carry water."* So sometimes living the truth means that our outer actions don't change, But the way we do them -- the consciousness that we bring to it -- changes.

Early on in my marriage, my spouse and I decided that we would explicitly divide up the household chores. So, some chores were always his job, and some chores are always my job. So, one of the chores that is assigned to me is doing the dishes. It's not necessarily because I like doing the dishes, but we just came to the conclusion that I care more about how the dishes are done and when they're done ... [Congregants laugh] So, dishes are my job.

All right, now let me tell you something. There have been times in my life where I have avoided doing the dishes. I think, *"Ah, I think that just needs to soak for the night. We'll get to that tomorrow."* There have been times in my life where I have done the dishes angry ... like when someone decides to make a bagel and cream cheese at 6 a.m. and then put that cream cheese-covered knife in the sink without rinsing it so it can sit there all day long until the cream cheese gets hard and I have to scrub it off. [Congregants laugh]

And there have been times that I have had a profound spiritual experience doing the dishes: to be fully present, feeling the water on my skin, the texture of that scrub daddy that I use; to take joy and delight in cleaning something that I own. I got new pans recently. They're so cool! Like, they're non-stick and,

like, non-toxic and they clean so easily! And it's such a joy to wash them. [Congregants laugh] This is what happens when you get into your 30s, guys; just wait! [Congregants laugh]

So, my action is the same,: it's doing the dishes. But my experience of doing the dishes -- how much joy and fulfillment and purpose I feel -- that action can stay the same. But it's what I bring to it -- the consciousness I bring to it -- that changes it.

So sometimes living the truth means we still do the same stuff; we just do it differently. We do it with a different consciousness.

And other times, living the truth means it's time to make some changes. That we have to do something different.

So, Unity, as I said, is a practical spirituality. And so, I want to share with you a very practical tool that you can use to help you live the principles and live the truth in your daily life.

All right, so we have to start with a scenario. So, let's take one that probably everybody can find their place in. There's some situation in your life that involves another person, and whatever is going on, you're not quite happy about how it's turning out. Okay? Does everybody have a situation in their life with another person that you wish were a little bit different than it is right now? Okay? We can all find something. Great.

So, what you do is, you start with Principle #1: God is. And you start asking yourself some questions. In this situation, in my relationship with this person, and how I'm handling and looking at this dilemma, can I see God in it? Can I see goodness in this? Am I believing in this situation that there is One Power and One Presence active in the universe and it is all good? Or am I creating some evil force that's against me, that I'm having to fight against?

Then you move on to Principle #2: I am. Am I living from my Christ essence? Am I living from my highest self when I talk to this person, when I think about this person, when I think about this situation? Am I coming from my divinity; from my soul? Or am I coming from my ego? Can I see the divinity in this other person? Or am I turning them into a bad guy?

And then you move on to Principle #3. What thoughts am I entertaining and holding onto that are making this more difficult than it needs to be? Am I holding onto this idea that there are winners and losers? That, if it's not my way, it's not going to be good enough? Or am I holding thoughts of truth and harmony and love for this person and this situation? Are my words and what I'm saying lining up with what I really believe to be true about them, about me, and about life?

And then you turn to Principle #4: I pray. Have I taken this situation into prayer and into meditation? Have I sat with this conflict and not tried to solve anything? Not replay that conversation and that nasty thing they said and the comeback that I thought of two days later? Have I sat with it in stillness and in silence and wrapped it in that energy of love -- as is my spiritual practice -- and just let it be there? Am I praying and affirming the truth about this person in this situation? Or am I letting my mind get all wrapped up into the "he said/she said" and whatever anger and doubt that I feel?

And then we get to Principle #5, which is: having done the first four principles -- having done that work -- now my action is clear.

So, the fifth principle -- it is not enough to know and understand these truths; we must live the truth that we know -- It is a calling and an invitation to bring us back again and again to what we know to be true and how we can deepen that knowledge and understanding and live it out in our lives.

Living the truth is about progress, not about perfection. It's an ongoing journey of aligning ourselves more and more with that truth and that greater, deeper spiritual understanding of our wholeness, of our divinity, of our innate spiritual strength, and that there is no force of evil working against us.

Intellectual understanding -- studying these spiritual principles and understanding them in an intellectual way -- is absolutely that key first step. But the journey doesn't end there. After we understand it, that is when we move into action.

So, I want to invite you, this week, to think of an area in your life where you want to step boldly into completely living the truth that you know.

So, maybe you're struggling with a financial situation. But the truth that you know is that God is your source and God is unlimited. So how can you live into that truth in your daily life?

So, find one truth that you know -- one spiritual truth that you know is true -- and see how you can live into it and commit to it fully over this next week. Remember that it's not about following some external set of guidelines and rules. Like Jesus taught, it's about tuning in to the truth of your essence -- the truth of who you are -- and living from the inside out. It's about expressing yourself authentically and lovingly and purposefully, and living your unique life and your unique light to the fullest and brightest.

I believe that our highest calling, our highest purpose and our greatest joy in this life, and also the thing that will heal our world, is if each and every one of us lives the principles.

So it is. And so we let it be. Thank you.