

I HAVE A DREAM (Inspired by the ABBA Song)

Final Week of a 5-Week "Songs of Life" Series

Rev. Richard Maraj

Sunday, Nov. 9, 2025

LYRICS TO 'I HAVE A DREAM':

I have a dream, a song to sing
To help me cope with anything
If you see the wonder of a fairy tale
You can take the future even if you fail

I believe in angels
Something good in everything I see
I believe in angels
When I know the time is right for me
I'll cross the stream, I have a dream

I have a dream, a fantasy
To help me through reality
And my destination makes it worth the while
Pushing through the darkness still another mile
I believe in angels

Something good in everything I see
I believe in angels
When I know the time is right for me
I'll cross the stream, I have a dream
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To help me cope with anything
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MESSAGE:

Okay, we're going to start with an "oldie but a goodie." A guy walks into a restaurant with a full-grown ostrich with him. The waitress asks what they'd like, and the guy says, "I want a hamburger, fries, and Coke." The ostrich says, "I want the same thing."

A short time later, she comes, and the bill is \$18.40. He pulls out exactly \$18.40.

Then the next day he comes in again. He orders a hamburger, fries, and a Coke. And the ostrich says, "*I'll have the same.*"

And the same thing happens. He pulls out exactly the amount of money that was needed. This goes on for several days. And one night, they come in and she says, *"Would you like the usual?"*

He said, *"No. This is a Friday; a special occasion. So, I would like a steak, a baked potato, and a salad."* And the ostrich says, *"I'd like that, too."*

And then the waitress comes and says, *"It'll be \$42.62."* And again, he pulls out exactly the perfect amount of change that it needs. And once again, she is so curious; she just can't help herself. And she says, *"So, excuse me, sir, how is it that you always manage to pull out the exact amount of money right to the penny that you need every time?"*

He said, *"Well, once I found in my attic a lamp and I dusted it and I rubbed it and the genie said it'd give me two wishes. My first wish was that I would have enough money to pay for anything I want, the exact change, everything I needed on me at all times. And the right amount would always be there."*

And she said, *"That is so brilliant. Most people would just say, 'I want a million dollars,' but the way you've done it, there'll be money there exactly what you need every single time for the rest of your life."*

He said, *"Yeah, it's great. Whether it's a gallon of milk or a Rolls-Royce, I have all the money I need every single time."*

And she leans in and says, *"But sir, what's up with the ostrich?"*

And the guy sighs. And he says, *"Well, my second wish was for a tall chick with long legs who would agree with everything I say."* [Congregants laugh] Wow. I thought it was more of an oldie than a goodie, but I appreciate your applause.

So, my question for you is: If you had two wishes, what would you wish for? What is it that you would like to come true? What is a desire that you're yearning to have? Do you have a dream for your life? And what is it that you would like to create or enjoy or manifest?

Today we are going to talk about the power and the importance of having a dream as we wrap up with the fifth and final week of our "Songs of Life" series.

You know, I love doing these every year, because we love music. We all have favorite songs that I think make us happy and uplifted: songs that might have been our personal anthem that got us through a really tough time; maybe a sad song when we need our cry to help us cry and have a nice cathartic release. There are incredible songs that we all love. And I like taking those and finding a spiritual message within each of them.

Week #1, we looked at Coldplay's "We Pray." Week #2 it was Bob Marley's "Could You Be Loved?" Then Don Henley's "Heart of the Matter." And last week we looked at George Harrison's song, "While My Guitar Gently Weeps."

Today, we are going to close the series with a 1976 hit, "I Have a Dream" by the pop band from Sweden, ABBA, whose name is the first letter of the singers' names: Anni-Frid Lyngstad, Björn Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson and Agnetha Fältskog. And it is written by the "B's": Benny and Björn. And it was an absolute hit all across the world. I mean, literally from Argentina to Austria, from Canada to South Africa.

Twenty years later, they actually did a musical, "Mamma Mia," to the music of ABBA. In fact, we went on an "Out & About" there, and that's where I got the inspiration to actually do the song, because they played it in it, and I was just so moved by it.

Something interesting to learn was the song was actually inspired by the 1960s civil rights movement, and specifically, Dr. Martin Luther King's speech, "I Have a Dream." So that is where they got the title, "I Have a Dream."

You know, this song clearly is a song of hope; a song of strength and resilience -- particularly through difficult and challenging times -- by having a goal. Something to look forward to; something to move towards to help transform and improve our lives.

"I Have a Dream" is clearly a positive song. It is an uplifting song, and I think -- in some ways -- it's very soothing. I think it's very comforting in a way. It's got the kind of Greek sound with the guitar, but I think it sounds almost like a lullaby. Do you know there are 28 children? There was a choir in the original that sang the chorus a lot at the end.

And there's something so uplifting and innocent and optimistic about this song. And this song really touches on a universal theme -- a truth -- and that is that everyone wants a better life. Everyone wants to move to something greater, something better.

The Dalai Lama says, *"From the time we are born to our death, every human being consciously seeks to be happy and to not suffer."* Every one of us wants to be happy. Every one of us does not want to experience pain.

And that desire for what is a happier life varies. For some of us, it's inner peace. For some of us, it might be employment or a financial situation. You know, maybe it is finding a sense of purpose or meaning in our lives. Maybe it's for friendship. Maybe it's companionship. Maybe it's for true love. Maybe it's for healing for ourselves or healing for someone that we love. Stated clearly or not, every one of us has a dream. Every one of us has a desire for a better life in some form.

So, this morning, we're going to look at the four spiritual lessons inspired by the song, "I Have a Dream."

And the first lesson, I believe, is about **THE POWER OF OUR IMAGINATION**. The song begins:

**I have a dream, a song to sing
To help me cope with anything**

You know, Albert Einstein spoke about the importance and the power of our imagination when he said, *"Imagination is the preview of life's coming attractions."* That it is our imagination -- and seeing something ahead -- that we attract and create in our lives. He also said, *"Imagination is more powerful than knowledge."* And knowledge is a lot -- there is a lot of knowledge! But knowledge is what is. And imagination is what could be. And that there are unlimited possibilities of all the things that could be.

Imagination really is a divine faculty that allows us to see beyond what is to what could be. imagination really is one of the amazing powers in which we get to co-create our lives with God. Several times in the Bible says, *"Lift up your eyes and see."* See the possibility. See the good. See the wonder. See what is greater.

You know, the song continues:

**If you see the wonder of a fairy tale
You can take the future even if you fail**

And what it is saying: the power to envision something greater is almost even at its best and always works, even when life isn't working well. Even if you feel stuck; even if you feel lost; even if you feel like life isn't clicking or you're feeling a bit down, we have the ability to use the power of our imagination to lift up our eyes to some higher possibility than what is currently going on. going on.

The fact is: if we see that the results in our lives aren't going the way we want, we literally can use this powerful tool -- an ability to see and dream -- to imagine something greater. To not only help us deal and cope with what's going on now, but to move our lives forward to something better.

In Unity, we like to say, *"To set it right, you've got to see it right."* You've got to use your imagination. You've got to see the potential in your spiritual eye. In many ways, I think, imagination is an absolute superpower that God has given us.

Think about how important imagination is and how it influences all areas of our lives. Our imaginations really helps enhance our creativity. Our imagination helps us problem solve. It helps us build confidence. It helps us with cognitive development and emotional resilience. It helps us with social skills and memory. And, of course, seeing and developing a vision and moving towards our dream.

You know, there are so many ways that our imaginations are used. You know, athletes use imagination. Basketball players use their imagination to visualize the ball going in. Golfers visualize for the putt to be sunk. Baseball players for the ball to be knocked out of the park. I think we've all heard about Jim Carrey, and how he visualized greatness even before he became successful and such a known name.

But the important thing here to remember is: as great as imagination is, we've got to be careful of it. Because sometimes we can use our imagination in negative ways that bring us down. How many people ever used your imagination, and you imagined the "worst case scenario"? Anybody ever do that? You ever make a problem – like make a mountain out of a molehill? Make the problem so much bigger? You know, like almost getting to a place where we're "awfulizing"? We think the sky is falling, and we're just making it up in our own heads. I think they call it "catastrophizing," or I call it "awfulizing."

And sometimes we end up thinking and dwelling on the negative: the very thing we don't want. We use the creative power of imagination, and we end up attracting and getting more of what we don't want by misusing or not appropriately using the power of our imagination.

So my question for you is: How well are you using your imagination? What are the ways that you are using your imagination in a negative way to attract more of the things you don't want? And how could you use your imagination in a more positive way to create a better life?

So, I want you to think of an area that's maybe not clicking exactly the way you'd want, and ask yourself the question: How can I use my imagination to see something greater? To see a better possibility? To see something that will work in more harmony, to bring me more peace and more love and more joy? You know, what are you willing to vision -- are you willing to hold in your head -- and to allow it to lead you and guide you and call you to something greater and better?

I love the power of the words in the Book of Proverbs, Chapter 29, Verse 18 that says, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."* And what it's saying is: when you don't have an idea of where you want to advance and move your life towards ... When it says the people perish, you know what perishes? Our creativity. Our joy. Our motivation. Our enthusiasm. When we have something to move towards, it's a channel for our creative energies and our spiritual powers to be utilized in a focused way. That when we don't have one— or have one going in the other direction – it perishes our energy and excitement, our motivation and our joy.

I truly believe having a vision -- having a dream -- is a spiritual responsibility and a spiritual directive that we have been given. Let me read you the line again. It says, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."* The individual who has a dream or a vision to move towards engages their imagination, directs their spiritual powers and energy, and moves their lives forward to bring themselves more gifts, but also to bring more light and goodness into our world.

The first lesson in "I Have a Dream" is about the power of our imagination.

The second lesson is about **THE POWER OF BELIEF**.

**I believe in angels
Something good in everything I see
I believe in angels
When I know the time is right for me**

They use that line a lot in the song:

**I believe in angels
Something good in everything I see.**

And it has me reflect upon a line in the Talmud that says, *"Every blade of grass has its angel that bends over it and whispers, 'Grow; grow!'"*

"I believe in angels," to me, is saying there is an energy ... Reminding us that there is an energy and a power of good that is there for us. *"I believe in angels,"* to me, is about an awareness and a connection to that Divine Love; to that spiritual Intelligence and Power that supports every aspect of our lives and of our being. As we believe, we are able to see good in everything. The more we believe in that connection -- that awareness of that Spirit and Presence -- the more we see good in all things and all situations.

Jesus said, *"All things are possible to those who believe."* He also said, *"Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."* So, clearly there is a power in believing.

And so, the question is: How do we improve, how do we build, how do we strengthen our belief? Well, it's simple, and it's important. And that is: to consistently and regularly unify our mind with the mind and the allness and the goodness of God. To align and unify our mind with the substance, with the Presence and the Power and the Energy that makes all things possible. That the more we rest in that peaceful Presence -- that all-providing Presence -- the easier it actually gets to believe. The easier it gets to see good in everything, but to believe and know that even greater things can and will come forth in our lives.

And, you know, the more we believe, we begin to not only believe more deeply, we believe to move to a level of knowing ... From not just believing, but knowing. To not just believing in God, but knowing God. From not just believing that God loves you and wants the best for you, but knowing that God loves you and wants the best for you. And not just believing that our dreams are important and they matter, but knowing that they are important and they matter. From not just believing that we are capable, powerful and valuable, but knowing that we are capable, powerful, and valuable.

"I believe in angels / something good in everything I see" is really saying: I believe good is there for me. I may not see it fully yet, but I trust my good is unfolding in divine timing. I believe.

Let's try this. Everybody repeat after me: *"I believe good is there for me."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I believe good is there for me."*

"I may not see it fully, but I trust my good is unfolding."

[With congregants:] *"I may not see it fully, but I trust my good is unfolding in divine timing."*

"I believe."

[Congregants:] *"I believe."*

"I believe."

[Congregants:] *"I believe."*

"I believe."

[Congregants:] *"I believe."*

The second lesson from the song is about the power of belief.

The third one is about **THE POWER OF PERSEVERANCE**. And I love these lines. It says:

**And my destination makes it worth the while
Pushing through the darkness still another mile**

The song encourages us and also makes us aware that we need to persevere. That sometimes we need to push through the dark times. Sometimes we need to keep going and realize it's still a mile away, but we need to keep going. To reach our goals, it takes our effort; it takes our work, and it's not easy.

Ever had a time where you're working really hard and feeling like you're getting no progress? You're not making any advancements whatsoever? We all have those moments where it feels difficult. And we need to keep going. We need to keep going. Because all success, all achieving, all changing and improving is hard work. And it takes work. It takes effort. It takes time. It takes patience. And it takes perseverance.

My two favorite quotes on perseverance are: first one is Winston Churchill. He says, *"If you're going through hell, keep going."* [Congregants laugh] He's saying you've got to keep pushing through the adversity. Don't stop and pitch a tent; keep moving. Keep moving through it. Don't stop; don't give up; just keep pressing on, pressing on.

And then the second quote: someone said, *"Faith can move mountains, but don't be surprised if God hands you a shovel."* [Congregants laugh]

You know, you can pray and have great faith, but guess what? You've got to do some digging. You've got to do some work to have the breakthroughs that we are seeking.

You know, J.K. Rowling was rejected by 12 publishers before "Harry Potter" became a global phenomenon. And I love her quote. She says, *"Rock bottom became the solid foundation upon which I rebuilt my life."* So, she had to persevere twelve publishers turning her down. I'm sure that level of rejection was not fun and it was not easy. But she knew her desire was worthwhile. She knew she could push through the darkness and still hang in there another mile.

The Book of James, Chapter 1, Verse 2-5, powerful words when it says, *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work in you so that you may be whole, complete, and lacking in nothing."*

And I love it goes on. It says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."*

Two things that it says: you've got to persevere; you've got to persevere; you've got to persevere. Great things start happening in us as we persevere through our goals. It's not just about creating the goals. It's who we are creating and allowing ourselves to become.

But I love when it says, *"Persevere, but ask God for help."* Seek the guidance. You are not in this alone. You've got the support. Tap into that support as you are persevering.

You know, the message in the power of perseverance is to realize that all the challenges we face in life are testing us. They're strengthening us. They're growing us. They're awakening and expanding us into the fullness of who we came here to be, who we are meant to be, and the things that we are meant to do.

Book of Galatians, Chapter 6, Verse 9 says, *"Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not give up."*

If we want success, if we want happiness, we want greatness, we want a better life, we've got to keep working. We must persevere.

And then the last -- the fourth and final -- lesson from the song to me is about the **POWER OF TRANSFORMATION**. Another line that gets used a lot:

I'll cross the stream, I have a dream

Many, many times:

I'll cross the stream, I have a dream

And to me, the stream represents the flow of consciousness ... and the crossing from our old mindset -- our old limiting thoughts and patterns -- into an expanded awareness of greater good and greater truths.

Michael Beckwith said, *"You can have anything you want in life, but first you must become it in spirit."* So, it's not about the outer changing; it's the inter-changing. And it is about expanding our consciousness and our awareness.

How many people have heard of Josh Waitzkin? Okay, let me tell you about him. [Congregants laugh] He was a chess champion -- national and international chess champion. He was the person that was the focal point of "Searching for Bobby Fischer." You remember that movie of many years ago? He would achieve so much in chess. And, at 21, he decided to study martial arts: a new area.

And he studied Tai Chi Chuan, which I don't know what it is. But it took him time and there were injuries. There were all kinds of stuff that he went through. But he ended up winning two world championships. He said, *"The best thing that happened to me was losing my first national championship."* The chess. He said, *"It helped me avoid the pitfalls of thinking I was the smartest, or I was special, or better than anyone. That I didn't have to work as hard."*

See, he realized that losing humbled him, but it awakened him to a greater truth. He realized that it's our mindset that is the most important thing. Not just the hard work we do in the focus and the perseverance, but the mindset behind what we do that actually influences us rising above.

He said, *"The moment we believe that success is determined by an ingrained level of ability, we become brittle in the face of adversity."* And what he is saying is: we all have the potential to grow, to improve, to change, to advance, to progress.

I'm sure some of you -- and I think I've mentioned it in some other talks -- talked about the work of Carol Dweck. She's the one that came up with the concepts of a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. And a fixed mindset believes that, "This is as smart as I am. This is as good as it gets" at whatever level that means.

Where a growth mindset says, *"I can get better. I can improve. I can change. I can expand. I can discover new things."* It's a mindset that says that, *"I can learn and improve"* vs. one that says, *"Well, this is as good as I am."*

And the thing is: they did a study with 700 kids. And they differentiated which ones were the ones with fixed mindset and which ones were the ones with growth. And every one of the growth mindsets, over a two-year period, their grades improved. And all of the ones that were a fixed mindset: all their grades stayed the same. Even the smart ones, however the distribution was, that there wasn't improvement. Everybody stayed the same.

And we're thinking, *"Of course! All this is obvious. I would never do that to myself."*

But how often have you ever said, like, *"You know, I'm really not good at math. This is as good as it'll get."* Or, *"I really don't have a sense of direction."* *"I really don't have a good memory."* *"I'm not really very organized spatially."*

We say all these things, and that's a fixed mindset, thinking that I don't have a good memory -- meaning it'll never get better, because this is just where I am -- is actually not true. But we tell ourselves that truth. And whether it's our memory or our math or whatever it is, that we keep ourselves limited.

And the guy ... I saw a TED talk on this. It was really good. The guy said one thing we should all add to our vocabulary -- instead of saying, *"I'm not good at this"* ... *"I'm not good at this yet."* Or, *"I will get better at this."*

And it doesn't mean that we're all going to be world-class level at these things. But there's so much we are preventing ourselves and limiting ourselves from experiencing because we keep saying, *"That's as good as I am. It's not going to get any better than this."*

Do you know our brains have neuroplasticity? Which means right up until whenever, that our brains have the ability to change and expand and learn new things? We have that built in us. And it's important to not override that program by telling ourselves fixed mindset, limiting beliefs.

Jesus ... In Luke 2, Verse 52, it says: *"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature."* Now, Jesus didn't/wasn't just born with all that in him. It says Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, which means Jesus had a growth mindset. He advanced. He expanded. His awareness and consciousness grew in amazing ways, because he put the work into it.

You know, it's a shift in consciousness from fear to faith, from resentment to forgiveness, from limitation to abundance. You know, from limitation to unlimited possibilities for ourselves, our lives and whatever situations we might be going through.

We all want a better life. But the truth is: we really can attract and create it in great ways.

Kind of reminds me of this guy: this government employee who's sitting in his office. He's so bored. He's got nothing to do. He starts fiddling around in this filing cabinet. Finds this old brass lamp, rubs it, and he gets three wishes. And he says, *"My first wish is: I want an ice cold beer."* Poof! He gets his ice cold beer.

Puts his feet up on the desk, and he starts thinking. He said, *"Okay, my second wish is: I want to be on an island with beautiful women who all desire me."* Poof! He's on this island, gorgeous women fawning all over him.

And in his third wish, he says, *"I wish I never had to work another day in my life."* And poof! He was back in his office. [Congregants laugh] And, uh, all right.

The point of telling that old bad joke was this: is that we do not need a genie for our lives to get better. That we have all the tools that we need. And this song reveals four of those powerful spiritual tools, and that is: the power of our imagination. To see beyond what is, to what could be. To utilize it, to move towards and make our lives better.

Secondly, the power of belief. All things are possible, but do you believe? Do you believe

And then the third is to persevere. Life is tough. It takes work. There will be roadblocks and obstacles and challenges. The question is: Are you willing to hang in there and keep pushing, advancing and moving forward?

And finally, are you willing to use the power of transformation? To have a growth mindset to transform your consciousness?

You know, these are the four lessons. And these four lessons, to me, tell us a powerful message. And that is: a better life awaits us all if we're willing to do the work. And that is the message from the song, "I Have a Dream."

God bless you all!

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