

## UNLOCKING THE MAGIC

Final Week of a 3-Week Series, "The Magic of Surrender: Learning to Let Go"

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Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2025

Before I get too engaged in the message, I want to give you what I call "the Jimmie Scott disclaimer." Magic is not my favorite word, especially when it comes to my spirituality. And the reason is: I remember one of my English teachers a long time ago telling our senior class that magic is one of those words that can either be a noun or a verb or an adjective. And it is also of Greek origin, and that means it has many different applications ... all of which, incidentally, I'm pretty cool with.

But when it comes down to my personal spirituality, I kind of want my terminology to mirror my belief system. It's important to me that I believe in this -- what I call -- supernatural gift that we've been given as individuals. And I think that is the foundation of true greatness, which is another word that's kind of loaded.

If you think about greatness, I think about it in terms of some athletes, some people that I've known throughout the course of my existence on this planet. And they were supernatural in a sense in that they had natural abilities that far exceed most of our capacity. For instance, one of the people that I loved seeing was Michael Jordan, a supernatural athlete; Michael Jackson, a supernatural performer; Babe Ruth was sort of a supernatural baseball player.

Mr. Rogers had almost a supernatural ability to interact with kids of all ages; even infants it seemed like were enchanted by the sound of his voice and the way he was able to interact with it. That's greatness. Billie Jean King, another person that comes to my mind -- an amazing tennis player, maybe one of the greatest ever. Martin Luther King, probably one of the greatest orators of all time.

Wilt Chamberlain, another supernatural athlete. Greatness. Jesus Christ, of course; greatness! Albert Schweitzer: another person that comes to my mind that suggests greatness. Miles Davis, one of the greatest trumpet players of all time. Greatness.

So, if you listen to that list, it covers many different genres; it covers many different skill sets; it covers many different types of activities. And it doesn't matter whether they are professional people or whether there are so-called ordinary people. Each of them has a level of extraordinary-ism that takes us to another level.

And so, the challenge of this concept of greatness is often in our perceptions and what we perceive of as greatness. In the definition, the challenge is sometimes filtered by the culture that we live in, by the society that we live in, by the institutions that we embody, and on and on, and on.

But I also think far too often the challenge is in us. I think far too often the challenge is in us and that we do not fully comprehend the capacity that is within us to do great things.

And then, again, great things don't have to be these chart-shattering things. Great things can also mean making a difference in the lives of one person that you were speaking to five minutes earlier that nobody else had spoken to, or even recognized their existence. To me, that's a great thing.

So, I want to talk about first the five traditional elements of magic. Because I think when we look at the elements, we might begin to see this concept of magic in a different light. The first one is earth. The second one is water. The third one is air. The fourth is fire. And the fifth is spirit.

The earth represents stability. It represents groundedness. It represents the physical world.

The water represents our emotions. It represents our intuitiveness. It represents our healing capacity and our healing nature. And it represents our abilities to transcend our own thought process.

The air represents our intellect and our ability to communicate. And communication is not just about talking and speaking and listening. Communication is also an energetic experience. And the air also represents our capacity for inspiration.

And, finally, fire represents our passion, And it represents our transformative skills. And it represents our capacity for action.

Spirit represents, of course, the Divine in us. And it doesn't just stop with the concept of divinity. That also means that there is a unifying force in us. And that unifying force is also active in all the other four elements. And this is a big "and" – AND it represents the connection between the physical and the spiritual realms.

These are not things that we walk around and think about day in and day out. So, it's important to be able to have these nesting in our consciousness so that we're always reminded -- when we need to be reminded -- of what we are capable of doing.

I was asked to do this talk on Chapter 7 of the book, "Unlocking the Magic." Greatness. And the author, Kute [Blackson], talks about the magic of surrender. How often have we heard that on Sunday mornings? Surrender. When it comes time for prayer and meditation: surrender. It's kind of a practice that we sort of take for granted.

Take a couple of seconds. I invite you to take a deep breath. Just take a deep breath. Just sit back in your seat. I want to invite you to surrender.

What do I mean by surrender? I mean to let go of any preconceptions that you might have about what it means to be great. Let go of any preconceptions or ideas that you already know this stuff, or you may not even believe this stuff. But again, I want to invite you to surrender.

Let go of the belief that you've heard this before. And just, for the first time, try to hear it at a deeper level.

So, here's an interesting quote from the book. He says, *"Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow may never come. This moment is your only guarantee."*

You ever really think about that? This moment is your only guarantee. I've seen people literally transpire in the blink of an eye. People who were talking and active and alive suddenly drift off into another realm. This moment is your only guarantee.

He said, *"Stop looking somewhere else. The magic is right in front of you."*

Stop looking somewhere else. The magic is right in front of you. Stop looking somewhere else. The magic is within you. Stop looking somewhere else. The magic is around you. It is above you. It is below you. There is nowhere to get to. This is it!

He states further, *"There really are no ordinary moments."*

If you ever really thought about that reality? There really are no ordinary moments?

He says, *"If you are truly paying attention, you'll see that it's not about what you accomplish in the major moments of your life that really make a difference. What it's really about is how you live in the seemingly mundane moments that makes all the difference. Because every moment becomes precious. Every moment becomes a privilege. And the magic of each moment can reveal itself to you when you are in that sacred space."* Close quote.

So, I want to preach to you for a few moments. [Laughs] But I want to do it gently. And then I want to challenge you to think about what I'm saying.

Wise living, magical living, comes through divine wisdom. Wisdom does not come cheap.

I want to explore that word, "cheap," primarily because I'm a word guy. But secondarily because words make a difference. And we don't pay a lot of attention to them. So, therefore, we don't get the depth of what they mean.

The word "cheap" originally comes from an old English rendering, "ceap" (C-E-A-P), meaning, literally, "low in price." And it also comes from a Middle English phase meaning "favorable bargain."

Now, that's good information to have. If you're trading stocks or taking care of your bank account or taking care of your business, it's good information to have. But for wisdom, you have to go to an old German proverb to understand it at another level. Cheap requires a different kind of currency.

In this old proverb, it states, "What is cheap is always the most costly" (C-O-S-Y). Translated, it means "the most costly." The reason is because the currency is experience. The experience of living: the experience of loving, the experience of winning or losing, the experience of going forward or failing, the experience of succeeding, sacrificing or refusing to sacrifice, the experience of accommodating, questioning.

These are costly endeavors for our spirit, so it does not come cheap. Every one of those great people that I mentioned earlier -- and any that you may think of -- paid a price. They put in enormous amounts of time and energy and creativity and work ... and more work. They had progress; they regressed. They lost family members; they lost time. They had enormous amounts of competition. They endured amazing amounts of criticism and judgments, all in the course of achieving greatness.

So, it wasn't an easy journey. What is "cheap" is always the most costly, because the currency is experience. And there's an old saying that experience is one of our greatest teachers. The great Roman statesman, Cicero, said, *"Great works are performed not by strength, but by perseverance."*

Great works are formed by perseverance.

So, I don't want to stay here too long tonight. So, I want to leave you with something that I read in "Ink Magazine" many years ago about the time I started in my first ministry. I've held on to it and will hold on to it until I leave this planet.

*It says, "Believing in yourself and in your abilities is essential to make things happen for you and to you and it is essential for greatness and life." It states further, "Being great is not about ego. It's not about selfishness. But the path to greatness consists of having a strong and genuine desire, plus a meaningful purpose, and at the same time also have good company along the way: people who will help you endure as you move through life."*

It has its challenges. It can have accidents. It can have failures. It can have successes. It can have promotions. Many different threads of life. And they all have a place and a role to play when we're being willing to live originally.

I know a lot of original people, and they are the light of my life. I love originality. That's what we are made for.

So, I want to leave you tonight with a quote from Kute's personal anecdote. And there's a lot of information in this book, if you can digest it. It's humbling, it's inspiring, and it's challenging. But that's the nature of truth.

So, I'll close with this anecdote from him. He says:

*When I was 20 years old, I decided to put on my first seminar. I spent a month preparing, anticipating lots of people. I was hoping that I'd be able to feel a pretty large conference room. So, I rented it. And the night of the seminar, I kind of lowered my expectations, and I was hoping for at least 100 people to attend.*

*And from a very young age, I had dreams of doing seminars with thousands of people. But I knew I had to start small. So, the day of the event, I got a haircut, and I put on my best suit and tie. Took some deep breaths. Headed to the hotel room, a little small conference room I had rented. It was 7:45 p.m.; the event was to start at 8 p.m.*

*I walked into the room, and there were two people waiting for me. And one of them was my friend, who had brought her friend. And my heart sank. All the time and energy I'd put into this seminar and spreading the word. I was literally heartbroken.*

*So, I walked into the room. I approached my friend. I said, "Thanks so much for coming" as I sat down trying to ignore all the empty seats. She introduced me to her friend, and I shook her hand and then said, "Look, obviously, we didn't get a good turnout. So, I'll cancel tonight, and you both can come back another night when more people are able to attend."*

*And my friend, Barbara, looked at me confused, and said, "What do you mean, cancel?"*

*"Well," I said with a nervous laugh, "No one is here."*

*She looked at her friend and looked back at me, and she said, "I'm here. My friend is here. We paid for our parking, and we want our seminar."*

*I looked at her like, "You can't be serious." But she was serious and mad, knowing she was right and knowing I was devaluing the two people in front of me, because I was attached to 2000.*

*I nodded. And I went to the restroom and I sat in a corner and I cried. I felt shame. I felt like a failure. I felt I was wrapped up in my own personal ego. And as I stood in that bathroom and I stared at myself in the mirror, I had to get real with myself. And I dried my tears. I walked back into the near-empty conference room, I ran up on stage, and I delivered a two-hour seminar with all the energy, sincerity, authenticity and passion I could muster.*

*And those two women cried; they laughed; and they were transformed, literally.*

*After they left, I sat in the room by myself, looking around at the empty chairs. I made a commitment to myself that no matter how many people show up, I will always give my all.*

Forty-two years ago, I graduated from seminary. I put in applications all around the country. No responses. Four months passed; nothing happening. I finally got a call from a friend I had known from seminary, Baine Palmer. He said, "Jimmie, there's a friend of mine in Nashville, Tennessee, by the name of Frieda Olsen who was looking for an associate."

By this time, I'm thinking anything would be better than sitting here waiting. And so, I gave her a call. She said, "I'll hire you, but I can't afford very much."

I said, "Well, what do you mean by very much?"

And she said, "I can pay you \$12,000 a year."

Twelve thousand dollars a year? Wow! So I said, "Give me a little time to think about it and pray about it."

I took a day. I thought about it. I prayed about it. I'm going to take her up on that. I called her up. I said, "I'm in if you were in." She said, "I'm in."

I went to Nashville. They were just starting in an old Tudor mansion that had been converted into a small sanctuary. As the associate minister, as the janitor, as the greeter. [Congregants laugh]

She said, *"I can give you the nine o'clock service."*

I said, *"Well, what is the nine o'clock service?"*

She said, *"Whatever you can make it."*

That's fine! So, we put it in the bulletin. That Sunday morning, six people showed up. We had service. Six people, Mary and me, and the organist. The organist was a retired funeral director. The organ was a funeral organ, I think. [Congregants laugh] When he played it, it shook the whole building.

Those six people and I for that first service, and Mary; we did that service and vowed to meet again the next week. The next week we had nine. And then following, we had 20. And then all of a sudden 30. And all of a sudden 50. And all of a sudden, not only was the 9 o'clock with 50 or 60 people, but the 11 o'clock had too many people for the old building that were in.

And we sold that building and bought a piece of property out on Franklin Road. And we began to do services at Hillsborough High School. We were able to do services at Hillsborough High School because I volunteered to help the principal with a drug problem that they were having there were some of the kids. So, I and another person that I knew, were able to set up a system where we could help these kids look at their drug behavior. And all of a sudden, parents and people began to congregate and began to separate the process and cleaned out all of that drug activity in that school.

And then we went from selling that building to building a building out on building out on Franklin Road. I don't remember the time span and much of that: a lot of hostility, a lot of anger, a lot of confusion. But there is only one thing I could do: that was just keep the faith. That's never going to leave.

This stuff is not simple, not hard or complicated. It's pretty simple. But that within itself is a challenge: to keep the faith. It's more than a notion. When things are going good, we're all excited and ready and jumping and enthusiastic. But when things get tough, the tough have to get going.

And that, my friends, is what being great is all about. That's not chest pumping that's having faith in a Power that is greater than the individual self. You can take it or leave it.

That's all I've got. God bless!