

A YEAR OF EMBRACING YOUR POWER

Rev. Stacy Macris Ros

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Well, everyone, so our theme at Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center this past year has been to “Embrace Your Power.” And we had some fantastic Sunday talks by Rev. Richard Maraj this past year that were inspired by this theme, “Embrace Your Power.”

So today, what I wanted to do is invite us to reflect upon the spiritual teachings from this past year. I'm going to review them. So, if you're here for the first time or you haven't been here for a while, that's okay, because we're going to go through and review some of them. Because what I'd like to do is to look at the practices and the tools that we explore together so that we can consciously choose how we want to carry them forward.

Because they don't stop; just because the theme was 2025's theme -- Embrace Your Power -- it doesn't mean that we now let that go. But, instead, we allow it to be the foundation from which we enter into 2026. We allow it to really push us forward in that power of that foundation of our own spiritual strength.

So, today is all about devoting ourselves to the integration and embodiment of the spiritual teachings. Moving beyond inspiration. It's great to be inspired, but let's move beyond inspiration to application. So, it's going to be a little “workshopy” at one point here today.

But this is our fifth Unity principle. Unity teaches five basic principles. Our fifth one says, “It's not enough to know or understand spiritual teachings; we must apply them.” We need to walk our talk. So, that's what we're doing today.

So, as we reflect back on these topics that we've heard, I'm going to invite you to ask yourself: Which of these teachings can apply more of so I can feel even more spiritually empowered? Or which of these teachings have I forgotten or missed, but now I can incorporate in my life -- or in this area of my life -- that's really needing that particular spiritual lesson or tool?

So, our theme -- Embracing Your Power -- it really means to remember your divine identity. That you have inherently within you spiritual attributes that can be drawn forth, and that you can apply to and lean into in any situation in your life. And that's why we started -- Rev. Maraj started -- with the 12 spiritual powers as taught by Unity's co-founder, Charles Fillmore.

So, these spiritual powers -- sometimes called spiritual attributes or abilities or spiritual qualities -- are our divine nature. It's our spiritual truth. They're reflective of the 12 disciples, and we have all of them within us. Not some of us have it, but all of us have all of these spiritual qualities or powers within us.

So, here's the 12: they are faith, strength, wisdom, love, power (or mastery), imagination, understanding, will, order, zeal (or enthusiasm), release and life. And what's interesting about these 12 spiritual powers or abilities is that we can overuse them or underuse them.

So, if we look at that spiritual power of order, for example; maybe we haven't really been using a lot of that quality of order, say, like in our bills. Maybe we've got a messy corner in our house, so we need to employ or pull forth more of order -- that spiritual quality of order -- and place it around that area of our life. Or maybe we're so orderly that there's no room for growth. And so, we're overusing that spiritual quality of order.

But the goal really is to tap into these spiritual attributes/qualities within us and embody them in a balanced way so that we can power up our lives from a spiritual depth within us. Again, every single

person has these 12 powers or abilities within them, and we can use it to help with situations, with people, with those around us.

So, I invite you to ask right now: What area in my life right now would it be good to apply more of these qualities? Maybe one or more of these qualities? Maybe you need more discernment. Maybe there's an area in your life where it needs more of your life energy around it. Or maybe there's an area where you need more love – more harmonizing – with a relationship or a situation. Where can I use one or more of these spiritual qualities in my life?

So that -- Unity's 12 spiritual powers -- was the foundation for our year.

And then we also had Sunday talks on -- and I love this title -- “The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry.” And it was that reminder: How can we slow down? Instead of reacting to a situation, how can we express more of our divine nature coming from this place within us? Don't react, but instead: How can I show up and express my divine nature in each and every situation?

We also looked at parables in the Bible. And, of course, in Unity we ask: How do these characters reflect myself? How do these characters reflect what's happening in my own life? And in most, if not all, of these stories, they remind us to trust in a loving, abundant Universe; a loving Presence. That we're creative beings. That we're able to manifest magnificence -- and magnificent experiences in our life -- as a co-creator with God.

Before Easter, I spoke about not taking anything personally. Anyone still taking things personally? [Congregants laugh] Okay, we can all review it together. That reminder not to take anything personally.

And then I also spoke on Father's Day about the importance of patience and humor as part of our spiritual practices. So maybe reflecting now: Where can I put a little bit more patience? What area of my life needs more humor, more lightness?

And then Rev. Maraj had a fantastic four-week series on Mel Robbins' book, “Let Them.” And it was all about reclaiming your power and prioritizing yourself. So, again, we reflect: So where do I need to take back my power? In what area of my life do I need to prioritize myself? Because, friends, “No” is a complete sentence. So just reflecting/noticing: Where can I reclaim my own power?

He spoke about turning trials into triumphs and letting love lead the way; letting go of fear; bringing in love. So where in your life right now is there still some fear where you can allow love to rush in, turning that trial into a triumph?

And then Rev. Richard and myself both brought out the spiritual messages in music and movies, and how we can apply those spiritual messages to our life to embrace even more spiritual power. Because, in Unity, we can take any movie, any song, any story, and we can pull a spiritual teaching from it. And so, you're encouraged to do the same: How can I keep looking for spiritual lessons and truths in my life, even in the fun of watching a movie or listening to a song?

And so, just as an aside, if there was a Sunday you missed or right now you're thinking, “*Ooh, that sounds good; maybe I'll go back and listen to that again,*” we do have all of these on our YouTube channel and on our website. So, again, if there was something there that you heard -- “*Ooh, I might need to listen to that again*” -- you can!

But today what I want to do is to reaffirm that nothing can stand in the way of you claiming your spiritual power and creating the life that is calling you. The only thing that can stand in your way is *you*. We're usually the ones that tell ourselves all the reasons why we can't be spiritually powerful or why we can't achieve our goal. We get in our own way.

Brené Brown, the author and researcher, says *"The most dangerous stories we make up are the stories that we make up about ourselves."* And yet she also reminds us: *"We can choose courage or we can choose comfort, but we can't choose both."*

So, what if right now you choose courage? What if right now, just for this moment, you tell yourself: Just for this moment, I'm going to choose the courage to embrace my divine nature. Just this moment. Because in another moment, it will be just that moment. But this moment, I can remind myself that I am a unique expression of the Divine; of life, itself.

One of my favorite Unity authors and ministers, Rev. Linda Martella-Whitsett, wrote this. It's on the slide here. She writes, *"I believe we free ourselves from our limited human perspective by identifying our nature as divine. I want that we revel in our Divine Identity! I want that we create our world and experience life from this realization. In a consciousness of only One."*

And that's what I would like, as well. I would love for us to revel in our divine identity. I want that we create a world and experience life from the realization that we are One: One Power; One Presence; One Divine Mind; One Consciousness.

And that starts by recommitting ourselves to embracing our spiritual power right now: right now in this moment. The intention is to embrace our spiritual nature and our capacities and, in doing so, shining our inner light so brightly that it doesn't matter what situation we're in – whether that situation is wanted and desired or unwanted.

Sometimes life "lifes." But how can I show up shining my inner light so that our divine identity is our first resource rather than our last resort? We choose our divine identity as our first resource.

So here it is, everyone. Here we are. It's the last Sunday in 2025. How are you going to live it? Better yet, how do you want to live it? What energy do you want to bring into today? How do you want to show up in your interactions today?

Because we can show up insecure or rushing or worried or chaotic. Or right now we can choose loving kindness, courage, faith. And how do you get from how you will live it -- how you are living it -- to how you want to live it? In other words, you came into that door with a certain energy. You have the moment right now to shift. How can I get from how I'm living to how I want to live this moment?

Just take a moment right now. What shift do I need to make within me? Maybe it's one of those 12 spiritual powers. What do I need to draw upon so that I shift right now into how I want to be right now? Maybe I need some more wisdom or discernment. Maybe I need to release and let go. Maybe I need to reaffirm life. Maybe I need to apply more imagination to create and manifest the life I want. Dream bigger. Imagine bigger. Those are just a few to choose from.

But you've got a few days left of the year. 2025 is not over yet! So, what are you going to create in the next few days? You have a choice. You could create beauty, understanding, tranquility. You can uplift yourself and another. But make the choice right now, from your seat. Not in the next few days ... but right now. What energy are you going to bring into this day and the last few days of 2025?

Because it means – to truly embrace your spiritual power – to remember, embrace and express that you are the Divine; that you are God in human form. And we just celebrated Christmas, which reminded us to allow that Christ potential to be alive within us every day and every moment. To let the darkness -- that winter solstice that passed, right? That we came through. It signifies a sacredness – a time of rest and renewal – so that we and then be spiritually renewed. To walk forward from the dark spots in our life with our light glowing brightly. It means shining your light and being God on earth as a divine, loving presence on earth; being peace on earth, as we sing every Sunday.

To embrace our spiritual power means realizing our oneness with God and others. That we're all part of this universal life force. That we're all connected in our godness.

Author Eckhart Tolle writes this: *"You are not separate from the whole. You are one with the sun, the earth, the air. You don't have a life. You are life."*

So, if I'm connected to the All, to the whole – I'm part of the Allness – then how can I best express that divinity to the world? If you are part of the whole —of the Allness – how can you best express that divine nature that you are?

Because now is your opportunity. Now is your opportunity to embrace your power. Even if you missed a Sunday, that wisdom is still within you. Even if you forgot one of the lessons/talks on a Sunday, it's okay. The year's not over yet! Again, don't wait for the New Year's resolution. We can jumpstart right now! We can walk into the New Year on a strong foundation of faith and spiritual teachings that we've integrated right now.

Now is the time! Because, ultimately, now is the only time we really have! So, what is your one-word intention of how you're going to live today? What's your one-word intention of how you want to live today and the last few days of 2025?

You got it? Because I'm going to make it real awkward. I'm going to ask you to tell a neighbor. So ... And here's why. And it can be uncomfortable. But speaking it out loud is powerful, and it solidifies your commitment. So, five seconds, everyone. Turn to someone and just let them know: What's your one-word intention for today and the rest of the year? And if you're just you know tell your cat or dog or plant. [Congregants laugh] But for here, go ahead and turn to a neighbor: one word. Just your one-word intention for today and the rest of 2025. [Congregants share with one another]

Okay; that was more than one word. [Congregants laugh]

Okay. Everyone take a breath. And now I want you to imagine placing that word on your heart; maybe even putting your hand on your heart. Maybe putting both hands on your heart. Placing that one-word intention on your heart as we remember the teachings from this year: that we're powerful. That that power, that wisdom, that faith, that love, that mastery – it's all within you.

So "let them" ... whoever they are. Let them have their opinions, their choices. As you stay strong with your choices for an empowered life with that intention on your heart. Just take a moment to breathe in that intention.

And then sometimes the "let them" is really a message to ourselves. Because, again, most of the time it's us getting in our own way. We think we're not good enough, smart enough, rich enough, brave enough, connected enough. We've got all the reasons why.

So, I want you to reflect right now: What's getting in your way of remembering and embodying your divine nature? What's getting in the way of you embracing your power? Just one word. Because if it's more than one word, it's a story. [Congregants laugh] The story is your ego. The story is your ego trying to talk you out of your wholeness. The story is your ego trying to talk you out of your light and shining your light. Also, your neighbor's not going to want to hear your story. [Congregants laugh]

And if the one word of what's getting in the way of you really embracing your divine nature and embracing your power ... If the one word is "me," then I want you to get even more specific. What about you or yourself? What thought, what belief, what habit, what behavior is getting in the way of you fully embracing your divine nature?

Okay, five seconds, for real. Because it's just one word; no stories, okay? So the one word: What is getting in the way of you embracing your power? Go ahead and share with a neighbor. [Congregants share with one another]

Okay. There's definitely some stories happening. [Congregants laugh]

So, take a breath, everyone.

So, as we apply our spiritual powers/qualities to our life, and remember our divinity and our purpose, we can manifest our goals and our dreams. And we can raise the consciousness of the world: first our world, and then the larger world.

So that's the next question: What is your goal? What is your dream? What is your desire? What's your next step as you step out of this year to the next? What is your goal/dream? What do you want to make manifest? It can be as simple or complex as you want it to be. It could be smile at three people a day. It could be build a business or create a foundation. Just for yourself right now: What is your dream? What is your desire? What's your goal? What is it that you want to make manifest in 2026?

Because now we're going to put it all together. So, you're going to take the two words that you shared with your seat neighbor, and we're going to put it into an affirmation. So, it's here on the slide. Let me kind of read through it first.

So, you're going to say, I will use (whatever that intention on your heart is) to let go of and release (whatever that one word is that's getting in your way) in order to manifest, and then you put in whatever that dream or goal is. So, it could sound something like: I will use patience to let go of my self-criticism in order to manifest more clients.

So, I want you to now put your words in there. Okay, we're going to speak it together, just quietly to yourself. Out loud, but here. Okay, here we go. Together: I will use (____) to let go of/release (____) in order to manifest (____).

Okay, now a little bit louder. Ready? I will use (____) to let go of/release (____) in order to manifest (____). And now again in a whisper. I will use (____) to let go of/release (____) in order to manifest (____).

Yeah. Because no one and nothing can get in the way of you embracing your power and creating the life you want to experience. Outside people, organizations, events are not getting in the way of your life flourishing. All of your power is within you. It's already there!

And so, another spiritual tool that we have in Unity are our affirmations and denials. Now, denials are now usually referred to as release statements or negation, because we're not denying the reality or the experience of a situation, but we're releasing its power over us. And then we claim – we affirm the spiritual truth – often one of those 12 powers or attributes. Affirmations aren't wishful thinking; they're spiritual truth.

So, we know God is love. So, if God is love, you are love. Therefore, you can be loving to that family member that you've had a disagreement with, or your neighbor that you've had an argument with. Or you can be loving to the person who's cut you off off the highway.

So, our denials/affirmations sound like: *"I release all thoughts of anyone being against me. I honor the expression of God that they are, and claim the love that I am."*

There are many spiritual tools. And whatever spiritual tools it takes to remind you to claim your divine identity, embrace your spiritual nature -- it is who you are! It's not up to someone else to do it for you. We live from within, out. So, turn within. Turn to the Christ within: that divine center within you; that

light within you; your spiritual truth in. You are a creative being! You create your life with every thought, word and action and behavior.

Charles Fillmore, Unity's co-founder, wrote this here on the slide: *"The highest and best work of the imagination is the marvelous transformation that it works in character. Imagine that you are one with the principle of good, and you will become truly good."*

And just imagine if we put in the word "brave": that you're one with the principle of being brave, and that you become truly brave. Imagine yourself working at your ideal job, and watch it happen. Imagine yourself in a harmonious relationship with that friend or family member, and watch it happen.

You've been given the tools; you've been given the inspiration; you've been given the wisdom. And now we apply it! Now we be it! The best time to start is now! On the last Sunday of the year; we don't have to wait a few days. We can get a jumpstart! We can take hold of our lives!

Take hold of your life and live what you've learned. Embrace your divine power as you finish this year, and walk boldly into the next year. That's the invitation, my friends. The invitation is for you to commit. To reflect, to recommit, and to step boldly into 2026 grounded, empowered, and aligned with your own divine nature. And to do so starting today, right now. That's your invitation.

So, thank you so much for being with us in 2025. We look forward to more spiritual growth and spiritual community in 2026. We'll be celebrating that with you! Thank you, everyone. Blessings!