

## LIVE THE PRINCIPLES AND TRUST THE PROCESS

Final Week of the 5-Week Series, "The Practice of Groundedness"

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I wanted to start this evening with our affirmation. It's our affirmation: "*From a place of groundedness, I live my life as a prayer.*" It's important that we stay grounded and live our life as a prayer. Because life – there's a lot going on in the world right now, especially in the United States. A lot of people are scared, worried, angry, feeling the loss of hope.

So, I just want to acknowledge that and how important it is that we all live our life as a prayer. And we do that by staying grounded. You know, it's because of our Wednesday nights, our Sunday mornings, that we get to listen to messages and be in spiritual community. And that's wonderful! Because being in spiritual community means that we're with like-minded beings, other people who want to grow: grow spiritually; grow in consciousness. And ultimately it's about applying what we've heard to our lives; to the situations that rock us.

So, I was thinking: So why do we come? Why do we show up? Why are you here? Well, your soul wants you to remember. Our souls want us to remember. You have the answers within you already. It's just a matter of remembering. So, you're here because you want to grow spiritually. You want to expand your consciousness.

And I'm guessing you're not here to be entertained. I can try. [Congregants laugh] I'm not very good at it. I had a college friend who would always say, "*I aim to entertain as well as enlighten.*" So, I could try to entertain as well as enlighten. But I think the reason that you're here is to be enlightened; to be transformed; to remember that you are a spiritual being. That's what your soul is calling to you, to remember. Because ultimately, if you're showing up and you're listening ... Well, ultimately this is about you and your spiritual path, *your* spiritual journey, *your* learning, *your* growing.

So, over this last month, we've been in this series, "The Practice of Groundedness," based on the book of the same name by Brad Stulberg. And he gave us six practices in order to become more grounded.

And again, what does it mean to be grounded? To practice groundedness? It means to have a secure, firm, unwavering foundation. It means to have a deep well of inner peace and tranquility. Groundedness means to have an authentic sense of self. And, ultimately, being grounded means to have a deep inner knowing of your divine nature.

So, when we hear and see the enormous amounts of events that are happening, it's too much for our brains and our nervous system. We were not built as humans to hear all of the hurt and the pain and the aggression and all of it. We weren't built to hear that on the daily or even the weekly basis. And then on top of all that, we're expected to work; and take care of parents or children or grandchildren' or volunteer; go about our daily existence ... getting the groceries. And it can be exhausting physically, emotionally, even spiritually.

I just spoke to a young friend of mine the other day. I hadn't heard from her in a while. So, check on your friends who you haven't heard from in a while. Because I reached out and I said, "*How are you? Are you okay?*" And she said, "*I'm so overwhelmed with everything right now that I'm finding it hard to function.*"

And I reminded her -- and I'll remind all of us tonight -- that we have tools. We're not helpless. So, we acknowledge the feelings, and then we remember: "*I have spiritual tools. I am not helpless.*"

So, in this book that we've been studying, there's been six practices to keep us grounded; to help us with that inner stability, that steadiness of spirit

The first one was to accept where you are to get to where you want to go. Accept where you are. It's just this. I want to get here; right now, I'm right here. This is what's happening right now in this moment. I can have my sights over here, but I'm accepting where I'm at right now.

The next was to be present so you can own your attention and your energy. Being present. Not having your attention out here and focused over here on what's going on ... because then you're giving all your attention and your energy away. But to be present to right here, right now, to your own self.

The third was be patient, and you'll get there faster. In that talk, I remember that new mantra of, "Go slow to go fast," right? Go slow to get there faster. That's been my mantra now the last couple weeks. Be patient, and you'll get there faster.

The fourth was embrace vulnerability to develop strength and confidence. Because when we're vulnerable and authentic -- both with ourselves and others -- that actually is where our strength and confidence comes from: the more real we can be, especially with one another.

And then it was build deep community. And, again, I think that speaks into why we all show up on Wednesday nights, on Sunday mornings with your friends. It's important that we have those connections, especially right now, to help keep us grounded.

And then lastly, move your body to ground your mind. Because when we move our body, we move that energy. So, all those big, heavy feelings, we can move them even. if it's a gentle walk out in nature. *Especially* if it's a gentle walk out in nature.

But see, the key is -- because those all sound lovely -- but the key is to apply them. And that's what the last chapters in this book are all about. I've given this to you; now *apply* it. If we want to grow spiritually, then we need to apply what we've learned to the situations in our life and for all those situations and experiences that come up over life.

So Brad Stulberg points out this really interesting fact. He says that usually we've heard it takes 21 days to form a new habit. But he said that was actually based on a really old study with one scientist who did it on himself. [Congregants laugh] Which I thought, "*Well, that's interesting!*" I mean, I could start something right now! See how long they'll do it for.

So, there was a new study in 2009. And it actually showed that the average amount of days to form a new habit is 66 days. For some people, it will be 18 days. For other people, it could be 200 days. For the average person: 66 days to form a new habit.

So, again, this goes back to that chapter that we covered to go slow to go fast -- to have patience -- because we want change *now* or in 21 days. But the reality is: it may take longer. And consistency is the key.

So, again, a lot of times we try on a new practice, we do it a few times, and then we let it go. But this is about really holding on to these and consistently applying them to our life. And part of that is our spiritual attribute -- or spiritual ability -- of strength. Our spiritual attribute of strength is to persevere, to strive, to continue on. So, when you feel like giving up, you know that within you, you have this spiritual power of strength.

And in Unity, we associate that with the color of spring green. So, you can even imagine -- when you need that extra spiritual strength -- imagine spring green just rising up from you. Maybe all around you, out in front of you, on your path before you.

And Brad Stulberg encourages us to choose simplicity over complexity. Simplicity over complexity. Here's what he says. It's on the screen, I believe.

He says, “*We often make things more complex than they need to be as a way to avoid the reality that what really matters for behavior change is consistently showing up and doing the work. Not dreaming about it. Not thinking about it. Not talking about it. Doing it.*”

And so often it's those complex ideas that are more exciting, right? Those little shiny objects. That's what we want to do. But really, it's the ones that we're most likely to stick with over time that are going to get us where we want to go; that are going to keep us grounded.

So, in order to be successful in any change -- and in this case, making changes to support your well-being, your groundedness -- then we have to first start with: Okay; who are the people and the places and the objects and the behaviors or the thoughts that support me and my desired behaviors? Who does that for me? And then we make those people and those things that support us the prominent part of our life. We make that the priority. What supports me in a positive way both within me and around me?

And then with that in mind: Okay; identifying what obstacles are going to get in your way to establishing these new ways of being. But now you've got your support within you and around you to help you navigate those obstacles.

And Brad Stulberg suggests four ways to help us apply these practices that we've been talking about over the last month here.

And he says the first one is to align your DOing with your BEing. Align your doing with your being. What is your being? Your spiritual nature. So, align your doing -- your actions -- with your divine nature. And he says this means incorporating the practices that we've talked about of acceptance, of presence, of patience, of vulnerability, of deep community, of movement in your everyday life. Aligning your doing with your being.

The second way to help us apply these habits -- these new practices -- he says: to shift your habit energy. He says behavioral scientists have found that it is in the *internal* rewards that create habits that stick. Not the outside rewards, but the internal rewards. And so, we could really ask ourselves -- we can go through those different practices, those six groundedness practices -- and we can ask: “*By incorporating more acceptance in my life, what will the benefit be to me? Or how will that make me feel? How will that improve my life?*” Or you could ask: “*By incorporating more patience in my life, how will that be a benefit to me? Or how will that make me feel or improve my life?*”

And then number three -- the next step-- is formal reflection. He says, on a regular basis, taking stock of how you're doing is aligning with your being. And you can journal that. You can have an accountability -- spiritual accountability -- partner. But to really reflect on a regular basis: How is my doing aligning with my being?

And then lastly, make groundedness a group endeavor. And that's what we're doing here, right? What's going to support your groundedness?

And right now we're about to have our Lenten Circles. That's a great way to get together in a small group of people and come together and get deep in spirituality and support. Or our classes are another way to go deeper, both within you and with those around you here at the church. Volunteering -- another way. But to make groundedness a group endeavor.

And, of course, anytime we try to do any sort of change in our life, there's a resistance. And it can be especially challenging when there's a lot going on in our lives or around us. So, starting with one small step. Sometimes people say, “*I want to start meditating.*” And then they say, “*I'm going to meditate every day for 15 minutes.*” Well, that's not realistic! You can't go from zero to every day. “*No, no, I can do*

*it! I can do it!*" And I'm like, "You know what? How about this? How about if it's five minutes, like three days?" That's doable! And then you can build on that. If it's realistic and manageable, then you celebrate the success and then you build upon it.

So, when we're working with making changes in our life, let me **make one small step at a time**. Again, that consistency. Consistency is the key to change.

So, I called my aunt last week. When the world is burning, I used to call my grandmother, who passed in 2012. So, I called her daughter; my aunt. And she asked me, "Yeah, honey; what are you doing to navigate all this?" She asked her minister niece. And I said, "You know what, Auntie? I'm still figuring it out."

But I give myself permission to be tired. I've stopped asking what's wrong with me. "What's wrong with me? Why can't I get things done anymore?" I've let myself off the hook for all the errands. I can tell you I've got about six baskets of clean laundry in my room. [Congregants laugh] I've given myself permission. It's okay to take a rest day on my day off. I listened to my body. As I was talking to her, I was walking outside; I was getting sunlight; I was getting fresh air. I had on my calendar to do a live, really intense Zoom workout. But my body said, "No; go slow. Go slower. Get sunlight."

I've begun limiting how much I'm on social media or the news sites. Now, this is still a work in progress, everyone! [Congregants laugh] But I'm giving myself grace for slowly cutting down the time spent in the news cycle.

And I start my day with quiet. I get quiet. I read Unity's *Daily Word* magazine, our daily devotional, or some other inspirational reading. I snuggle with my dog. I start my day quiet. And then I remember: you know what, sometimes everything seems that it needs to fall down to get rebuilt. But there's always love there. There's always new life there.

And then as I was putting this all together, I thought, "Well, look at me! I've applied our practices of groundedness, everyone!" [Congregants laugh] Because I said to my aunt: "I'm still figuring it out." Oh! Authenticity, vulnerability. Embracing being vulnerable. Giving myself permission to be tired; to rest on my day off. Being present to my own energy. Listening to my body. Accepting where I am, and moving my body into the sunlight. Limiting how much time on social media. (Well, I can tell you that does not build deep community. What that does is support separation. I want oneness. Plus it affects my peace of mind, body, and spirit, right?) I start my day with quiet. That's being present: being present to the moment. To remember that sometimes everything seems to fall apart and yet love is there; life emerges. Accept where you are to get to where you want to go. We know that love and new life always emerges.

Ultimately, when life's challenges hit and the storms of life lash out -- when you're going through that dark night of the soul -- the key is to focus on you. What can you do? Focus on the actions you can take.

As author Brad Stulberg writes: "Focus on the process. Let the outcomes take care of themselves." Focus on the process; let the outcomes take care of themselves. In other words: let go, let God. Or release and know that all is in divine order.

So, when the world feels shaky, you've been given tools. Over the last four weeks, you've been given six really great tools to stay grounded.

So, we're all done with what Brad calls "heroic individualism," with its burnout and its anxiety and its loneliness and its depression. Because we're built to be in community. Our souls long for connection back to oneness. Here's what Unity minister Eric Butterworth wrote in his book, "In the Flow of Life" -- here on your screen: "There can be no other eachness quite like me, and yet I have no existence outside of the whole. My eachness can never be separated from the allness, which is God."

What the allness needs right now? Your love; your compassion.

Author and Buddhist teacher, psychologist Jack Kornfield writes, *“Compassion arises when the jewel of the mind rests in the lotus of the heart.”* Allow your compassion and your heart to be one.

And then, again, from Matthew; you know this one: *“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it under the bushel basket but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.”*

In the same way, let your light shine before others. You are the light. You are the light. So, stay grounded. Practice. Apply the groundedness to your daily life so that you can be one of the helpers; so that you can be one of the light bearers; so that you can be a beacon of peace in a restless world. The calling is there for each of you.

And that concludes our series on “The Practice of Groundedness.” Blessings, everyone!

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