

## **BE THE LIGHT AND SHINE, SHINE, SHINE!**

**Final Week of a 6-Week Series, "Ignite Your Spirit: An Inner Journey"**

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**Sunday, Feb. 15, 2026**

Centuries ago, the Pope made a decree that anyone in Italy who was not Catholic would either have to convert to Catholicism or leave the country. The Jewish community was outraged by it, and so the Pope offered a compromise, and he would have a religious debate with their leader. And if their leader won, they could stay. And if the Pope won, they would have to convert or leave. The community chose a very wise, elderly rabbi to represent them. However, he couldn't speak Italian and the Pope couldn't speak Hebrew, so they decided to have their debate conducted in complete silence.

So, on the day appointed, they sat across from each other, and the Pope raised three fingers. And then the rabbi looked at him and held up a single finger. And then next, the Pope waved a finger in a circle around his head, and the rabbi pointed firmly to the ground. And then the Pope took out a communion wafer and a chalice of wine, and the rabbi turned and pulled out an apple. And at that, the Pope suddenly got up and declared that the rabbi had won and the Jewish people could stay in Italy.

Later, the bewildered cardinals got together with the rabbi to find out what was going on and explain what had happened. And the Pope said, *"Well, first, I held up three fingers to symbolize the Holy Trinity. And then he held up one finger to show that there is one God common to both of our faiths. And then I gestured around my head to show that God is all around us, and then he pointed to the ground to show that God is right with us here right now. And finally, I presented the wafer and the chalice to show that God absolves us of our sins. But he pulled out an apple reminding me of the original sin. He outwitted me at every turn, and I had nothing I could do but concede."*

Meanwhile, back in the Jewish quarter, the community gathered around with the rabbi and they asked him: *"How did you win?"*

And the rabbi threw his hands in the air and he said, *"Win? I have no idea what happened!"*

*"Well, what did he say?"*

*"Well, first he held up three fingers and I think that meant that we had to leave Italy in three days. So, I gave him the finger. Then he waved his hands in a circle and symbolizing clearly that we -- that the country -- had to be cleared of anybody who wasn't Catholic. So I pointed on the ground and said, 'We are staying right here.'"*

*"And then what else happened?"*

He said, *"Well, the last thing, I just didn't quite understand. I'm not sure what it meant. But he took out his lunch, so I took out mine."* [Congregants laugh]

Hopefully today's message will not be as confused as the Pope and the rabbi. But today, we are in Week #6 of our six-week series for the new year entitled, "Ignite Your Spirit: An Inner Journey." And this is to really help us, because we lit our candles at Christmas Eve to symbolize igniting the light of the Christ in us -- to igniting the light of God in us and to allow it to shine brightly.

And sometimes we get in this routine where we set resolutions, and those resolutions fade, and are forgotten very quickly. So, this year we are holding a spiritual intention -- individually and as a community -- to ignite our spirit. And to be willing to do the work so it doesn't fade and pass away, but we keep it focused on our mind throughout this new year.

In Week #1 the title was, "Awaken the Spark Within." Sometimes we look outside of ourselves a lot for happiness and success and achievement. And the important thing is to look within, and to connect with our divine nature. To understand that we are pure spirit; that we are eternal beings a part of an eternal universe. So, what if that were true: that you are an eternal being? And part of an eternal universe? How would that change how you see yourself, and how you show up in life, and how you move through all of your experiences>

And then the second week was called "Fuel the Flames of Forgiveness." One of the quickest ways to pull down our energy and our joy is to hold a grudge; to hold bitterness or resentment or blame. And including holding and having regrets and guilt towards ourselves. Forgiveness is a powerful choice: it's to choose freedom; it is to choose compassion; it is to choose healing ourselves for the things that get triggered that are deeper than just the word or activity that the other person engaged in. And finally, choosing forgiveness is also about choosing spiritual mastery. Emmett Fox says that we cannot make spiritual progress unless we are able to forgive. That whatever we are given, to choose to release it and still send love to others.

In Week #3, we looked at "Direct Your Power, Purpose and Passion." There's no question: every one of us has power. Every one of us has purpose and passion. The question is: How well are we directing it? Sometimes we direct our power towards worry and fear and negativity rather than directing it to a higher vision; to our goals and our higher dreams and desires.

In Week #4, it was "Put Your Heart into It," because you cannot ignite your spirit without opening your heart. We are created in the image and likeness of love. Love is our nature. And life is always calling us to open ourselves to love more; to love bigger. So where in your life are you being called to love bigger? To be a greater stand for love? You know, there are three areas of love we need to express more of. And that's for the people who are we already love! Sometimes we take them for granted very easily. And two of the things we could for the people we love to love them better is, one: just to appreciate them once in a while and say, *"You know, I don't always say it, but I really appreciate how you show up for me and how you're there for me."*

Another one is to just listen without trying to fix. Sometimes we love someone so much, we just want to fix, but sometimes just being heard is a powerful and healing thing. And unless they ask you for advice, just listening is a great gift of love. And for those we consider our enemies, sometimes love is just having some compassion to realize that they're a child of God who are just struggling like us and who makes mistakes. And still able to send them blessings of peace and joy and love.

Week #5 was entitled, "Activate the Greatness of Giving." Giving turns on the cycle of giving and receiving -- the law of abundance; the law of increase. You know, it is that consciousness and that principle of living that keeps abundance and prosperity flowing in our lives. And the three things we were called to do is to be a cheerful giver: to give and serve others and do it cheerfully; to be a joyful tither, and to have our money in the flow; and then also to be a grateful receiver. Because to give, you've got to receive, as well, to keep that flow moving in your life.

So today, we wrap up "Ignite Your Spirit" with today's message, which is "Be the Light and Shine, Shine, Shine."

So, in the Book of Matthew, Chapter 5, Verse 14, it says/Jesus says, *"You are the light of the world. Let your light shine."* Notice Jesus did not say you might become the light of the world. It is possible for you to develop into the light. That someday under the right circumstances that you could be the light of the world. It clearly says/he says, ***"You are the light of the world."*** Not maybe, not possibly, not one day. You are currently, presently, and have always been the light of the world.

The question is not: Are you the light of the world? It is: How brightly are you shining your light?

On a scale of 1 to 10 -- 10 being the highest that you could shine it -- how brightly are you shining your light? How many people would agree that there's probably a little room for you to shine your light a little bit brighter than you're currently shining it right now?

And so, this morning, we're going to look at four ways for us to be the light and shine, shine, shine. So here we go.

The first one to be the light and shine is to **USE THE POWER OF INTENTION**. I don't think we always use or realize how powerful our intention is in all areas of our lives. You know, intention is the focused, conscious, deliberate mental act of directing our thoughts and our energy towards some specific desired goal or outcome. You know, intention is like an internal compass that clarifies, guides and harnesses our spiritual powers to draw, attract and create the thing that we desire.

How many people read "Seat of the Soul" by Gary Zukoff? One of the things about him that was a really powerful message that he ran home was: everything is created by the energy of intention. Everything in our lives is created by the energy of intention. That all things that are seen are created from things that are not seen. And that invisible power is intention.

There's two workers working at the same place, doing the same job. And one says, "*I just want to survive and just get through this day.*" And the other one says, "*I want to be a presence of peace, positivity and encouragement to everyone today.*" Same job, but very different intention! And I would guess a very different experience they had. I would guess a very different level of productivity, and the positive impact they had on their co-workers and on the company.

Wayne Dyer said, "*Our intention creates our reality.*" How many people believe in the power of intention? That it creates our realities and our experiences? I mean, even as simple as that -- those two workers -- as simple as the intention of just surviving versus the intention of being a presence of peace and positivity has a huge impact in our lives.

How many people set an intention for the kind of day you were going to have today? And how are you going to show up? Alright. About 10 people; we're moving in the right direction. [Congregants laugh] I'm feeling good about that; my intention is working.

Anyway, and so I think it's an important thing for us to realize how powerful it is. How cool and amazing, and what impact do you think would have, if every day we all woke up and set an intention to be the light? In our work, to be the light of peace or the light of joy or the light of understanding, the light of kindness or the light of generosity? Can you imagine setting an intention and harnessing our spiritual power -- harnessing our light and allowing it to shine brightly in that way?

I mean, it is a powerful gift that we have that we don't always use. And it is the power of intention. If we truly want to ignite our spirit -- and be the light and shine, shine, shine -- the first thing we need to do is to use the power of intention. Have the intention to be the light and to shine it.

The second thing to be the light and shine, shine, shine is **ACCEPTANCE**. How many people ever had a situation or a person in your life that you did not like, you did not want? And you prayed and wanted them to be out of your life? Anybody have a situation like that or a person? And how many people ever had something that you wanted -- like a job, or some money, or relationship, or a level of success -- and you did not get it, and you still felt adamant and strong that you should have it, and it would definitely make your life better? Anybody ever have that experience?

And how many people would be willing to believe that whatever it is in your life currently is meant to be in your life? And how many people would believe that what isn't in your life, that you would like to be in

your life, is not meant to be in your life, because it's not a part of your spiritual path? That's one of the challenges to letting our light shine and being the light ... because sometimes we spend a lot of that energy resisting and fighting against what is or what isn't in our lives.

In page 417 in "The Big Book," it says, "*Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today.*" Sometimes we have a hard time accepting certain things: we think it's wrong; it shouldn't be this way; and that shouldn't have happened, and this isn't right.

And one of the reasons we have a difficult time finding acceptance is because we always want what we want. We want people to behave the way we think they should behave. We want everything to go the way we want. And you know what makes ... And then we get upset when it isn't. So that's when we resist and dislike and, you know, reject those things.

But here's what makes it worse. And that is we in Unity teach -- through the Law of Attraction -- you can have anything you want and everything you want. So, we get attached to having anything and everything we want and believe that. And, yes; there is truth in that. But sometimes we get so attached to it that we have a hard time accepting when those things don't work out the way we want them to work out.

To be the light is to face that: what is before you is before you, and it is your work to do. It is your thing to process to bring healing or bring insight or understanding or to overcome or to heal.

I love what it says in the Book of Philippians, Chapter 2, Verse 14. It says, "*Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent so that you can shine as lights in the world.*" How many people have ever done something grumbling or disputing? Or done it with resistance or reluctance? Anybody? You don't have to put your hands up anymore, because I know the answer! [Congregants laugh]

Eckhart Tolle has a very interesting line. I love it. He says, "*Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it.*" Because you know why? Because at some level, you did. Because our souls are drawing these experiences into our lives ... again, to bring healing; to expand us; to deepen our faith and our connection; our insight or wisdom or compassion or understanding.

Imam ash-Shafi'i said, "*My heart is at ease knowing what was meant for me will never miss me and that what was not meant for me will always miss me.*" And that is just the truth. Think of how many times in our lives do we try to force things to happen that aren't happening because we want them to happen ... rather than using that spiritual, creative energy to just face what is before us and learn and gain what we are meant to learn and gain from whatever is before us.

So anywhere in our lives where we're cranky, that we're resisting, that we're grumbling, that we're negative or whining, we need to ask the questions: What do I need to heal here? Where do I need to find acceptance? Where do I need to make peace? And where do I need to welcome and allow myself to actually face what is before me with ease and grace to gain the best and to allow the light within me to shine through this?

The third way to be the light and shine, shine, shine is to **USE DISCIPLINE**. Life requires discipline. It's not one of our favorite subjects, but it's a powerful and important thing.

I saw this thing on Facebook, and it said, "The Secret to Success and the Secret to Failure." The secret to success was: Do three good practice every single day and develop a habit of doing these three practices every day. They could be as simple as making your bed; doing 10 minutes of Tai Chi; journaling for two or three pages; doing 50 push-ups or sit-ups; or calling a loved one and just telling them you love them.

Doing three good practices -- developing three habits, and doing them consistently over time -- will create a mindset of success, and it'll begin to program you to move towards greater things that are for your highest good.

Now, the formula for failure is to find three things that aren't good for you and keep doing them every day. [Congregants laugh] And it could be as simple as if you're smoking or not exercising or drinking alcohol daily. Or not making up your bed or eating poorly or not getting enough sleep -- whatever it is. That when we do, we set a certain pattern in our mindset -- in our consciousness.

And the healthier we do, and do them consistently, the better it builds a more positive consciousness. One of the things I learned about a making up your bed -- why it's so important -- is because your mind sees chaos and confusion and disorder. And then you fix it, and it sees order. And subconsciously you start seeing in your life things that are out of order that you automatically start putting it in order. We can program ourselves, but it does take some discipline. And it is a relentless force to do little things on a regular basis, because then it shows how massive success can begin to be transformed through those situations.

Anybody heard of the 100-hour rule? You've heard of the 10,000-hour rule; it's a similar version of it. And what it says is: If you do something for 15 to 18 minutes every day, in one year you will do that thing and know more about that than like 80% or 85% of the people in the world. And it doesn't matter about the 85% or whatever. It's saying that you will get massively improved. You will make incredible progress if you just do a little something.

And it could be reading for 15 minutes. It could be learning Spanish. It could be improving your yoga or whatever it is. Or it could be 15 minutes of being in the silence. Whatever it is you do with discipline over time, amazing things will happen.

In the Book of James, it says, "*Faith without works is dead.*" And that's saying all the faith in the world is fine, is beautiful; but until you put it into action -- until you bring things in motion; until you develop good habits -- that it will not be as fully realized and bring forth the best in you as much as it could. Because discipline brings out the best in ourselves.

You know, life without action -- life without discipline and good habits -- is actually stagnant. It contracts, it shrinks, it limits our joy and our success. Life with and without discipline is the difference between strength and weakness; the difference between structure and disorganization; the difference between resilience and giving up; the difference between refined skills and just being mediocre; the difference between self-confidence and feeling insecure. Discipline and consistent action will bring out the very best in ourselves to let our lights shine, shine, shine.

And the final one is **to LIVE WITH JOY** and to be joy and let the joy in you shine brightly. One of the things I love: they call children bundles of joy. And I love how Scripture says, "*To enter the kingdom of heaven, you must become as a child.*" Children are giggly and they're smiley and they're playful and they're innocent; they're loving. I love kids, because they don't hold on to stuff for long. You know, they have a good little cry, and then they get over it, and they want to go play. You know, children are always fascinated and interested in life. They're always in awe of all kinds of stuff.

Can you imagine ourselves living back there and getting back to that mindset of just being curious and happy and excited? Our attitude that we live with radiates our inner joy. You know, they have been doing a lot of studies, and they say over and over again, life is getting better by every conceivable standard. Life is getting better. Yet, there are more people who are hopeless, more people who are depressed, and more people who feel alone than ever.

What triggers despair is not a lack of happiness. You know what it is? It's a lack of meaning. That people feel that their lives have no meaning; that they have no power; that they have no value. Happiness -- as they define it in these studies -- happiness is a state of comfort and ease and feeling good in that moment. And we have lots of those. We live in a world of luxury. So, we are having moments of happy.

But in terms of meaning ... goes deeper. Meaning goes to a place of: Do I feel a sense of belonging? Meaning means: Am I serving something greater than myself? And meaning also means: Am I bringing out the best of myself? Realizing there's some good in me, and I am here to develop that and to bring it forth.

Here's what George Bernard Shaw said: *"The true joy in life is being used for a purpose recognized by myself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clot of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making me happy. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die. For the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have to hold for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it over to future generations."*

I love when Jesus said he came that his joy may be in us and that our joy may be complete. Complete joy does not mean life always goes perfectly. Complete joy means I have an attitude and a mindset that I know that my life has meaning and value; that I can overcome; I can handle and face things; and I believe in myself. That I believe in my worth; that I believe that I am here for a reason. Believing in ourselves is a powerful, important thing for us to radiate the joy of life.

A German shepherd, a Doberman, and a cat die and go to heaven. And they're all -- it's a true story. [Congregants laugh] A Doberman, German shepherd and cat die and go to heaven. They're all standing there.

And God says, *"What do you believe in?"*

And the German shepherd says, *"I believe in discipline, training, and loyalty to my master."*

And God says, *"Good; you can sit on my right side."* And then to the Doberman, he said, *"What do you believe?"*

He said, *"I believe in love, care and protecting my master."*

And God said, *"Excellent! You can sit on my left side."* And then God looks at the cat and says, *"What do you believe in?"*

And the cat says, *"I believe you are sitting in my seat."* [Congregants laugh] We can learn a lot from cats -- believing in ourselves and our value!

So, this is a new year. And like every new year, we want a new life. We want a better life. And for us to really have a new year and a new life and a better life, we need a new you and a new me; a new perspective and a new mindset; a new intention to truly believe that we are willing to do the inner spiritual work to ignite our spirit.

And the way to do that is to set our intention to be the light and to let it shine. To use acceptance; to know that whatever is before us, that is what we'll bring out the very best in ourselves -- by facing it and not running from it. By practicing discipline: taking the right actions we need to bring forth the best in us and the situations. And to express our joy with our attitude, knowing that we have meaning and believing in ourselves. Let us all make the commitment to be the light, to ignite our spirit and shine, shine, shine. God bless you all