



Unity Church of Christianity
Celebrate the Curriculum
February 20, 2011

Howard Caesar

I want to begin by telling you a story about a Sunday School teacher. A lot of great stories come from Sunday School teachers. This teacher was trying to teach the Ten Commandments to her young students, and she thought it might be helpful to read some concrete illustrations and then have them guess which commandment she was talking about. She read to the children, “Early one Saturday morning, Johnny’s parents were going shopping. They asked Johnny to wash the dishes while they were gone. Johnny was watching cartoons when they returned, and the dishes were still unwashed.” All of the kids in the class responded by saying, “Honor thy father and thy mother.” Next, the teacher said, “Ann went shopping with her mother. When no one was looking, she slipped a candy bar into her pocket.” The class quickly said, “Thou shall not steal.” Next, the teacher said, “Andy was a cruel little boy and had a bad temper. He got angry with his little sister, grabbed her pet kitten, and threatened to pull its tail off.” This was more difficult, and everyone was quiet. All of a sudden, one little boy shouted, “What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Some of us know the content of the Bible better than others. One little fellow was asked who in the Bible went into a den of lions and survived. The little boy said, “That’s easy. It was Tarzan.”

In one of His teachings, Jesus said not to judge. That was an important principle. He said, “Judge not according to appearances, but judge righteous judgment.” In the Gospel of John—Chapters 7

and 8—He said, “I am the light of the world, and he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” What He seems to be saying is that if you follow His teachings, you will have an ability to look into life beyond appearances. You will always see light. You won’t see the darkness, because it’s not there. Beyond it all, there is the light of God always.

Speaking to the farer seas, He continued, “Though I bear record of myself, my record is true. I know where I came from and where I am going, but you cannot tell where I came from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet, if I do judge, my judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I am with the Father that sent me.” He’s talking about our tendency to judge according to the external flesh and what we see on the surface. He goes on to say, “You are from beneath, and I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.” He’s talking about consciousness. As you grow in consciousness to a higher place, we’re not there yet. Coming from below, you’re going to see the physical form and be quick to judge. But when you begin to come from above, from a higher state of consciousness—not alone, but aligned with the Divine—then you begin to see past appearances. You see with another level of softness and compassion. You feel with a sense of connectedness and oneness with all people and all life. You remember that you’ve been through your own pain. You’ve made your own mistakes, and you’re able to see past them, beholding the beauty and essence inherent beyond form. There is a formless dimension of all life that is the beauty and essence of the Divine.

You are of this world, meaning that you tend to judge like those people of the world. We teach that God is omnipotent good—all-powerful good—and everywhere present. The nature of God is good. That’s not always easy, because we look at the surfaces and appearances of life, and we’re inclined to say, “That’s not good.” It’s a difficult thing to push past and understand. At another dimension, beneath what appears, there still is good. At that moment, the energies of the Divine are present. It’s important to realize that it exists, and we can shift it in a heartbeat. You have the capacity to bring the light of the world in dark places—to bring a whole other energy.

One of the goals in the curriculum of life is to expand our consciousness and to become a clear, unobstructed, and willing channel through which the spirit of God is able to pour its message of peace, love, beauty, oneness, and truth into the world. You are the vessel through which it is to be poured. You are the one who says yes or no. That’s why it’s so important that we recognize this calling in all of us.

We have to ask ourselves, “How do I judge by appearances? How am I doing in this life as I look at the different circumstances? Am I quick to judge something as negative or bad? Am I quick to label it? Do I notice if I have that tendency? Is every problem truly a problem, or do I frame it that way? Is it some part of our curriculum in life that there is something here to gain?”

In his book, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, Deepak Chopra said, “Every problem you have is the seed of opportunity for some greater benefit. Once you have that perception, you open up to a whole range of possibilities, and this keeps the mystery, the wonder, the excitement, the adventure alive.” That is mighty. Every problem has a seed of opportunity for some greater benefit, and once you capture that perception, you open up to a whole range of possibilities which allow for the mystery, wonder, and excitement of the Divine to be alive.

It's the idea that beyond what we see, there are other worldly dimensions. There are invisible things happening right now that you and I don't have eyes to see. Even cell phones have signals coming. There are all kinds of things on the invisible realm. We often judge something as bad, when it may actually have some element of good or benefit. Righteousness might bring us to see beyond appearances and take us to a deeper meaning of what's happening in the curriculum of one's life. It's a great opportunity to learn something as you're going through a difficult challenge. Knowing that there is a range of possibilities beyond those circumstances we know about can keep us in the wonder.

The great Greek philosopher, Plotinus, spoke of God as being the Supreme One and as being transcended. The idea is that as you engage with the Supreme One, you transcend. You move beyond the appearances of things. You capture the ability to see beyond the circumstances. "From this Supreme One," he says, "flows all truth and beauty and goodness. Therefore, the universe is inherently positive." What he's saying is that the universe is inherently your friend and is good. No matter what argument your mind may want to make based on appearances, it is inherently your friend and positive and good.

Plotinus believed in three degrees of knowledge that you progress through. The first—the lowest—is opinion. We formulate opinions based on our own human knowledge. Eventually though, science validates spiritually and the law—the principles of the universe that have always been there. They're uncovering what has always been. Science is progressing.

Next in your evolution of knowledge is illumination or intuition. These three channels represent spiritual capacities that are part of our self-knowingness and our progression. Intuition is something that we're all invited to develop along the path, because it is an understanding that is beyond reason and rationale—just a deep knowing. You have to know from a place that goes beyond what appearances may be telling you. That's an element of faith. From the perception of intuition we get to see another range of possibilities. When we perceive from that range of another level of truth, there may be something to always celebrate. If you're in the mystery and the wonder, there is always something to be celebrated. That's a powerful thing to realize.

When you prepare a field or a garden, you plow and plant the seeds, and you know something's happening beyond your ability. Then all of a sudden, there are sprouts. You celebrate that there's something happening. It becomes a bloom or food.

One of my hobbies is watching Purple Martins, wonderful, energetic, chirping, diving, swooping birds. I love their sound and what they represent for me. I have three bird houses. One is two levels, another three levels, and another four levels. Every level has six compartments, which adds up to 54 compartments. That's a lot of Purple Martins I could have. During the winter I have to take them down and clean out the nests and debris, or they won't come back. If I don't clean house, then I don't have Purple Martins. They'll go somewhere else. It's like our minds—if we don't clean house within our minds and let go of some things, we won't have new life flying into our experiences.

There is excitement and celebration in anticipation of the birds coming. Scouts are sent out in January and February, and they hadn't arrived at my house yet. Yesterday I was sitting in a chair next to the window that looks into the back yard, and I could see all three birdhouses. I was

researching for today's lesson and meditating. All of a sudden, I heard the sound of a Purple Martin. I opened my eyes and there were three diving around and checking out the houses. I celebrated that they were home. My heart leapt. It may seem silly, but I'm learning to lean into a celebratory awareness of everything that comes into my life. Everything that shows up is celebrated, whether it's good or not. I'm not there yet, but it's something to strive for, because there is always something to benefit. A range of possibility is opened once you know that.

I had the good fortune to be able to find time to go golfing with some members of the church. We were teeing off right by some water, and a fish jumped out. It was huge, and it jumped full-length out. We all looked at each other, our eyes got big, and we had big smiles.

There is one cosmic presence and creator in the universe. Because this creative power is eternal, it has no beginning and no end. You have to think about yourself as having no beginning and no end; you are eternal. Eternity has been issued to all of us by the creator. You're already living it, moment by moment. You can think that once you die, eternity begins. You are a creative being carrying the life of the Divine here and now. It's as important as any moment in time.

All of us are called to open up to Divine ideas, dynamic ideas, truthful ideas, life-giving ideas that can cause the limiting perceptions to fall away. These new ideas further one's spiritual growth and bring into awareness what there is to celebrate. It's not easy to establish the intention of celebrating all of life.

In the 1980s there were meetings held in Las Vegas, in which people would come to see Louise Hay. They were weekly gatherings, referred to as the "Hay-ride." It was a spiritual support group organized to meet the needs of those affected by HIV and AIDS. These gatherings brought together the young and old, professionals, and the poor. They sat side-by-side and were raw with emotion, looking to Louise Hay for help, guidance, and tools for dealing with their fears. Those who were diagnosed would sometimes attend alone, sometimes with a partner, sometimes with friends, sometimes with family. They would sing, chant, pray, and share about the vulnerability they were dealing with and fears they were going through and their friends who were dying. They were sharing from the standpoint of trying to be helpful to the others.

One night a mother stood up to share. She began by saying, "We have a ritual in our family." She told how many years ago, her son Timothy suggested that they begin to celebrate everything. He had read about an orphanage in Africa or Cambodia and the resilience of a group of children. Even in the midst of famine, war, and disease, these children formed a conscious bond of coming together. Without any coaching by parents, these children chose to come together with the intention of watching out for one another, to praise one another, to share each other's successes. They knew that they were making a journey through a difficult time in an orphanage, and this helped them feel less alone. It helped them feel together as one, that they could create a better life in the midst of those circumstances. So they shared and celebrated everything.

The mother shared that one day Timothy announced that they would do the same in their family. It started off as a bonding but grew to something more meaningful and deeper over time. They began to experience the dynamic of celebrating everything. She said, "Whether it was a glowing report card or a traffic ticket, we celebrated it. Whether it was a new puppy or my husband being laid off, we celebrated." The goal was to do their very best at not judging the events in their lives

as good or bad, but viewing them as part of life's curriculum. To add to the ritual, they started making cupcakes. Nearly every day, they would stand at their kitchen counter, raise one of the freshly baked cupcakes into the air, and make a celebratory toast for whatever event life brought them.

When she developed cancer, it was challenging for her to stand at the counter with her family and feel that there was anything she could celebrate about the situation. Yet, they had all agreed to do so no matter what. Week after week, with her hair falling out and nauseated with Chemo, she stood there with her kids and husband and celebrated life as best she could. She said, "Something about unending ritual kept pivoting my focus toward the good." She added that this attributed to her ongoing cancer-free state more than five years later.

She hesitated in her story and said, "Today's cupcake has been the hardest of all to swallow. Timothy died last night from his many challenges with AIDS. Pneumonia set in, he needed assistance breathing, and he finally gave up. I brought a new cupcake with me to the hospital every day. I put it in front of him on the tray, and sometimes I placed it on his chest, watching it go up and down with his breath. But he let go. I'm angry that my baby boy is gone. I'm angry that the world will not get to experience his heart and goodness. I know that Timothy would not want me to be like this and stay in this state."

With that, she reached into her coat pocket and brought out something wrapped in tin foil. She peeled it away, and it was a cupcake. She said, "We stood at the counter this morning—my daughter, my husband, and I—and I tried to toast Timothy, but I just couldn't. I was wondering if tonight you would be like those orphan children and help me out." The magic of that moment in that room was unforgettable. She lifted the cupcake into the air, and following her request, everyone in the room lifted a symbolic cupcake as well. The mother said, "To Timothy! In celebration of a life well lived! May I never forget your example. May I always see the vision of something greater. May I continue to celebrate and honor it all."

Moments like that teach us and stay with us. Whether we can see it or not, in all things there is an unending beauty and grace that is to be celebrated. We all have cupcakes that are hard to swallow in life—in our journey through our curriculum. It's certainly a great challenge to always have a perception of something greater in the midst of challenge and difficulty. She was celebrating her son—not his dying, but what he taught the family and the impact it made on her. It was a way of looking at life that trusts the universe is our friend. There is something greater beyond what we're able to see in the here and now. It inspired her, just as her son had been inspired by a group of children in an orphanage.

I like to believe that our goals are about coming together as a spiritual community to create a bond where we inspire one another. We do our best at not judging events as good or bad. We are here to celebrate our successes and view our situations and circumstances as part of life's curriculum. I think we're meant to come together and watch out for one another, to inspire one another, to praise one another, and to share our successes.

Last night I got a call that my second granddaughter was born. That was something that was easy to celebrate in life, but there are difficult things. I know some of you may be going through them,

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but I would like to have you consider something. I have a cupcake here. I raise this cupcake, much as the mother did, and I invite you to lift a symbolic one as well. Will you?

May we always see the vision of something greater. May we celebrate and honor it all. May the unfailing beauty and grace of God be seen everywhere. May God find in me and in you a clear, unobstructed, willing channel through which to pour its potent message of peace, love, beauty, oneness, and truth.

God bless you all.