

MY BEST LIFE NOW!

Scripture used: [Ephesians 1:8 \(NLT\)](#); [Luke 23:39-43 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

We are starting a new sermon series “My Best Life NOW!” Pastor Hurmon wants us to understand the importance of taking God-inspired action today, rather than putting it off to some vague time in the future. It’s important to plan for the future, but not to let those plans rob us of enjoying the present. Do the phrases “When I get that next job...” or “When my kids go off to college...” resonate with you? If so, this message is for you. To help us understand this core message, Pastor Hurmon shared a powerful story from his past. He was sent to Taiwan as a teenager, leaving his great-aunt and uncle for two and a half weeks. During that time he never once called to check in on them. When he returned home, they both told him how disappointed and hurt they were by his behavior. For over 30 years, Pastor Hurmon carried around that guilt and shame. He preached about the incident and used it as an example of his own broken past. But he never forgave himself. It was until recently that he used the FREE framework to process this event. Now it’s our turn to use these steps to forgive ourselves, ask God to come into our lives, and completely free ourselves!

KEY POINTS

- 1. We must forgive ourselves to be free.** That is a painful and difficult process for most of us. We carry the guilt and shame of our past sins. We may view some of those mistakes as unforgivable, even by God. That is a trap! We are worthy of forgiveness. God wants to forgive us, but He knows we can’t earn it on our own. That is why He sent Jesus, a sinless offering, to absorb all our sins. If we don’t accept Jesus into our hearts, then we will continue with the horrible self-talk that destroys our confidence and our relationships. That constant pressure will never go away without forgiveness.
- 2. To become free, we must FREE.** Use the acronym that Pastor Hurmon gave us to remember these steps. They are not a formula that will guarantee instant results, but a map to help each of us navigate our way toward a loving, almighty God.
 - a. F - Frame the story correctly.** We are often tempted to act like a victim. We want to blame others or the world for our problems. We will be cynical and defensive, lashing out at others. But deep down in our souls, we know that in many instances, some part of our suffering is our own fault. We must accept responsibility before any true healing can take place.
 - b. R - Reprogram our thinking.** We are our own harshest critics. When we think about the mistakes in our past, we often ask some form of the question “How could I have *done* that?” We miss out on a core insight from the Bible: God already knows every mistake we’ve ever made, and has forgiven us! Read [Psalm 103:14 \(NIV\)](#) or [Isaiah 53:5 \(NLT\)](#) and you will find a God who expects us to make mistakes and is overflowing with grace.
 - c. E - Enrich our lives.** Once we accept that God truly loves us for who we are, we can start to open ourselves up to His gifts. We must accept God’s gifts even when we don’t understand them, or the bigger picture about how those gifts will improve our lives. The key thing to remember is that we must ask God to do this for us. We can’t do it or earn it on our own.
 - d. E - Experience our new freedom.** In [Luke 23:43 \(NLT\)](#), Jesus told the second criminal on the cross next to Him that they would be together in heaven that same day. Forgiveness is instantaneous. God doesn’t need a lot of time to bring us into a new life of freedom. That doesn’t mean we forget the lessons from our past mistakes, though. We keep the wisdom and let go of the shame. That’s what it means to be free.

DISCUSSION

- 1) HEAR** - If you are honest, are you generally too hard on yourself or too lenient with yourself? Or does it depend on the circumstance? How has God helped you to assess your past more accurately?
- 2) UNDERSTAND** - God has lavished us with kindness and grace. Unfortunately, we struggle to love ourselves the same way. Pastor Hurmon asked us to affirm this sermon by committing to God that we will forgive ourselves by fully accepting God’s forgiveness. This forgiveness must be focused and specific. Ask yourself “What is the event, incident, or experience for which I need to forgive myself?”
- 3) DO** - Identify the mistake in your past for which you feel the most shame. Prayerfully admit the following statements. Yes, it was my fault. I am sorry. Jesus took care of it. I am better for it. I am God’s beloved!