

You Are Not Finished

The Science and Spirituality of Becoming

Rev. Blaine Tinsley · July 26, 2026 · 10 AM · Unity on Maui

THE BIG IDEA

Most of us carry a quiet belief that who we are is essentially settled — that our limits and capacity for change were fixed long ago. Neuroscience has shattered that assumption. The brain rewires itself in response to experience, attention, and practice across an entire lifetime. The mystics called this metanoia. Scientists call it neuroplasticity. They are describing the same astonishing truth.

KEY TERMS

Neuroplasticity: The brain's lifelong ability to rewire itself in response to experience, attention, and practice. Metanoia: Greek: a radical restructuring of the mind at its root. Not guilt — but transformed perception. A new way of seeing. Fixed Mindset: The belief (Carol Dweck) that character is permanent. As a spiritual claim: a misalignment with how Divine intelligence works.	<i>"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." — Romans 12:2</i> The neuroscientists and mystics are not in different conversations. They stand on opposite sides of the same river, describing the same water.
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THE SCIENCE: WHAT NEUROSCIENCE NOW KNOWS

1. Researcher Michael Merzenich showed that the brain reorganizes in response to directed attention and practice at any age — not just in childhood. 2. Every time we practice something, we physically reshape neural architecture. New connections form. Underused pathways quiet.	3. The grooves in our thinking were carved by the river of our attention over years of repetition — like a canyon carved not in one day, but by showing up in the same direction, every day.	4. These grooves can be recarved — genuinely, measurably, biologically. Not overnight, not without effort. But truly. This is not metaphor. This is biology.
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THE WISDOM: WHAT THE MYSTICS ALWAYS KNEW

Metanoia: The Greek word at the heart of Jesus' teaching: think differently, perceive differently, let your mind be restructured at its root. Not guilt — transformed seeing.	Charles Fillmore: Unity's co-founder taught that the mind and body are plastic to Spirit — responsive, moldable, always capable of expressing a higher truth. The Contemplatives: Desert Fathers, Sufi masters, Buddhist teachers — all built practice systems around one shared insight: the mind can be retrained.	<i>"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." — Romans 12:2</i> <i>A fixed mindset is a spiritual problem — the claim that the creative intelligence of God has met its match in us. It hasn't. They are not permanent. They are just well-practiced.</i>
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REV. BLAINE'S STORY: THE PERMISSION TO FALL APART

When Emily died, Rev. Blaine thought he knew how to grieve. He was a minister — he'd held hands in hospital rooms, spoke at gravesides, helped people find words for wordless losses. He had the map.

What he discovered was that knowing the map is not the same as walking the ground. A story surfaced in those early weeks: "I'm not really someone who needs a lot of help. That's just how I am." That story was wrong.

What saved him was the people who refused to let him disappear into his self-sufficiency. Over time, the river found a new channel. Today he is someone who can ask for help, who can be held — his self-sufficiency no longer a fortress, but on good days, a choice.

That is neuroplasticity. That is metanoia. Community as the mechanism of transformation.

THE COMMUNITY THAT HELD HIM

- ▶ John and Mike — his men's group — steady, wordless presence
- ▶ Adam, the prayer chaplain, who held him in prayer when he had no energy to hold himself
- ▶ The Unity on Maui congregation — wrapping around him in ways visible and invisible
- ▶ His Loud and Lousy bandmates — keeping music and laughter in his life
- ▶ Friends who had him over for dinner and lunch, who didn't ask him to be the minister — just to show up

A QUESTION TO SIT WITH

What is one story you carry about yourself that begins with "I'm just not the kind of person who..."?

Hold it lightly. Not as fact. As a first draft.

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

1. NOTICE THE STORY

Listen for the voice that says "that's just how I am." Don't argue. Write it down. Give it a name.

You cannot revise a story you haven't recognized as a story.

2. ASK FOR HELP

Identify one place where you stopped asking for help. Name it. Tell one person — not to fix it, just to say it out loud in the presence of someone who cares.

That act alone begins to recarve the groove.

3. PRACTICE SOMETHING SMALL

Two minutes of stillness before your phone call. One conscious breath before reacting. A written affirmation where you'll see it. Repeat daily.

One small vote, every day, for who you are becoming.

THE SERIES: FOUR WEEKS OF FORMATION

July 26 · You Are Not Finished

Neuroplasticity meets metanoia. The science and spirituality of becoming.

August 2 · Rewiring the Worried Mind

Contemplative practice and the neuroscience of peace.

August 9 · The Stories That Wire Us

Memory reconsolidation and the healing power of sacred storytelling.

August 16 · Practice Is the Prayer

Hebb's Law meets discipline. Transformation is a direction, not a moment.

THE CLOSING IMAGE

A seed doesn't become a tree by deciding to. It becomes one by responding — to water, to light, to the soil it finds itself in. It doesn't force its becoming. It participates in it.

You are always in that process. The creative intelligence of the universe has never stopped working in you — not through your grief, not through your failures, not through the years you spent believing a story that was never entirely true.

You are not finished. You are not broken. You are becoming — and that becoming is holy.

AFFIRMATION

*I am not who I was, and I am not yet who I am becoming.
I am renewing my mind. I am one with the Divine.*