



TOUCHSTONES

a monthly journal of Unitarian Universalism

February 2018

Surrender/Letting Go

Wisdom Story



vulnerability with which most children are also familiar. Valuing control as we do, the idea of surrender seems repugnant.

Yet surrendering is not to give up, it is not to acquiesce or relinquish our power, but it does mean relinquishing what we can't control. Be clear about the goal, work to achieve it, but understand the limits of your ability to control the outcome.

Unitarian Universalist minister Mark Belletini writes, "Surrendering to Reality means that I have to admit the limits of my capacity to control the world around me, admit even the illusions of my control. Surrender to reality means turning from the magical thinking that fools me into thinking life should be fair, or life should be just, or suffering should be passed out more fairly, or that death should only happen in one's sleep at age 103, or that there are cosmic reasons behind every sadness."

Philip Simmons, an English profes-

(Continued on page 6)

Introduction to the Theme

We like to be in control. This desire starts early as illustrated by any two-year old as he or she announces to the world, "I can do it myself." Part of that control is self-mastery, learning how to do and be, which is essential to a meaningful existence. The ability to control is influenced by will power, a critical factor in the survival of our species over the millennia. We can be aggressive, bold, and tenacious, and these characteristics have served us well as they have led toward autonomy and independence. The ascendancy of the desire to control as a species may have been directly proportional to our vulnerability in an exceedingly hostile world, a

The Forever Trap

One morning, Owl saw Hunter tie a glass bottle to a root at the base of the banyan tree. Owl thought that was strange because the glass bottle wasn't going to run away. Hunter took some things out of his pocket, put them into the bottle, and left. Owl lost interest in the bottle and took a nap.



Owl awoke to hear Monkey yelling and jumping up and down with his hand stuck inside the glass bottle.

Owl flew to get a closer look. Monkey's hand was wrapped around three nuts, which was why Monkey could not pull his hand through the small opening at the top of the bottle.

"Your hand's filled with nuts," said Owl to Monkey.

Monkey said, "They're my nuts!"

"But your hand is stuck in the bottle," said Owl to Monkey.

Monkey whined, "This bottle has me trapped. I'll be trapped forever!"

Owl told Monkey, "If you drop the nuts they will be in the glass bottle and you can pull your hand out of the bottle. The nuts will still be safe in the bottle."

Monkey opened his hand, dropped the nuts, and pulled his hand from the bottle. Monkey shouted joyfully, "I'm free! Thank you, Owl."

Monkey then ran up the banyan tree with the bottle of nuts. But the bottle was

(Continued on page 2)

Surrender & Letting Your Life Speak

The contrasts are striking: no versus yes, control versus surrender, willfulness versus willingness, holding on versus letting go. When we hold on, our hand is clenched. When we let go, our hand is open, open to possibility, open to experience, open to wisdom, open to life. The illusion is that we are in control when we are not, and it takes many lessons and much time to learn this hard truth. The Buddhists speak of the value of detachment. Some misunderstand this stance, thinking that it means not caring. In fact, detachment is an act of compassion, one that realizes that we cannot control the outcome: open hands and open heart. As Joshua Kauffman observes, "Surrender is not giving up on life but giving up fighting with life. And, when you're not fighting with it, you're working with life."

Touchstones is committed to exploring liberal theology. This journal is supported by subscriptions from Unitarian Universalist congregations. For daily meditations, photos, and more visit/like Touchstones at <https://www.facebook.com/Touchpossibility/>

Let Your Life Speak

Trapped by Greed

(Continued from page 1) **The Forever Trap** still tied to the rope and the rope was still tied to the tree. The rope snapped tight, pulled Monkey off balance, and he fell back to the ground with a loud thump.

Monkey yelled at Owl, "You tricked me. I can't get my nuts and I want them right now!" Owl waited until Monkey calmed down and said, "Turn the bottle upside down and the nuts will fall out."

Monkey turned the bottle upside down and the nuts spilled out. Monkey was so happy that he started to jump up and down. "My nuts," said Monkey, "Oh Owl, thank you."

"Well," said Owl, "could I have some nuts? They look awfully good."

But Monkey was greedy and said, "They're my nuts, and I want all of them!"

Monkey tried to pick up all of the nuts, but there were more than he could hold, and he kept dropping nuts as he tried to pick up more. Monkey looked at Owl and asked, "Oh Owl, what am I going to do?"

Owl almost laughed, but he stopped himself and said, "Well you could put the nuts back in the bottle."

Monkey quickly put all of the nuts back in the bottle. Owl laughed and said, "Those nuts really do look good enough to eat!"

Monkey said, "Yes, and I want to eat them right now!" Monkey reached his hand into the bottle and wrapped his greedy little fingers around three nuts. When he couldn't pull his hand back out of the bottle he said, "Oh no, this bottle has me trapped and I'll be trapped forever!"

Owl just looked at Monkey, shook his head, and said, "Monkey, that bottle is not what will keep you trapped forever." Then Owl flew off to his home, to get a good day's sleep.

This is a variation of a fable included in Tales of the Dervishes by Idries Shah. In that story there are cherries in a jar. This version is adapted from one in the March 2010 issue of the All Souls Parent Resource Network. Source: <http://www.allsoulschurch.org/Websites/AllSouls/Images/Newsletters/ParentsGuide/2009-2010/Mar2010PRN.pdf>

Asking for Help

Terrible at Surrender

Rev. Daniel Chesney Kanter

Henry Miller wrote, "I know what the cure is: it is to give up, to relinquish, to surrender, so that our little hearts may beat in unison with the great heart of the world."

We are terrible at surrender. We, you and me, like control, feeling we have power over the people and events in our lives. It's the Unitarian Universalists who like to apply reason to all things. It's a world of people who, like us, want everything clearly defined and logical. The fact is ...life just isn't like that! The quote from Henry Miller has many meanings. To me, it says that the first step to "the cure," our healing connection with others, starts with surrender. The next step is to understand that our lives are interdependent with our chaotic world rather than separate from it. The third, and I extrapolate here, may be an urging to those who need it to ask for help. In asking for help, we let go of some measure of our fierce sense of separateness.

When we surrender, we exercise trust: we let someone else into our grief, our struggles, or our loves. Trust is a form of faith, and the first lesson in faith is that at some point, in some circumstances, we must let go and let others in. Part of being faithful is being able to ask for help when we need it.

Being a part of ... [a] church means being part of a community of support. ...[Y]ou must surrender some of your sense of self-reliance [to] ...ask for ... help.

Source: No longer online.



Unburdening

The Secret of Letting Go

Guy Finley

The truth is that letting go is very simple and, above all, natural; as natural for you and me as it is for a tree to shed the heavy, sun-ripened fruit that clings to its branches



...This is ...the secret of letting go.... First must come the understanding that we are still carrying around the accumulated defeats of a lifetime, and that these weary weights have only served to make us someone sorry, not someone special. ...We must let go of this sorry self that is certain it is better to suffer ...than it is to just let go.... Let the following special insights speed you on your way.

- ◆ ...Uncovering what is wrong must always precede ...what is right.
- ◆ You can only be as free as you are willing to be truthful about yourself.
- ◆ Letting go is strictly an inside job.
- ◆ There is nothing hidden in the world from you if you will reveal yourself to yourself.
- ◆ ...Letting go takes no strength, only a willingness to see the need for it.
- ◆ ...Letting go is the natural release that always follows the realization that holding on hurts.
- ◆ Unhappiness does not come at you, it comes from you.
- ◆ ...Defeat comes from clinging to solutions that don't work.
- ◆ ...Real freedom is the absence of the self that feels trapped, not the trappings ...to make it feel free.
- ◆ ...The only thing you lose when you let go of something you are afraid to live without is the fear itself.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/18201>

Readings from the Common Bowl

Day 1: “Don’t despair: despair suggests you are in total control and know what is coming. You don’t—surrender to events with hope.” Alain de Botton



Day 2: “The creative process is a process of surrender, not control.” Julia Cameron

Day 3: “We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.” Joseph Campbell

Day 4: “I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day.” Abraham Lincoln

Day 5: “If you surrender completely to the moments as they pass, you live more richly those moments.” Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Day 6: “The condition of an enlightened mind is a surrendered heart.” Alan Redpath

Day 7: “Surrender to what is. Say ‘yes’ to life—and see how life suddenly starts working for you rather than against you.” Eckhart Tolle

Day 8: “Completion comes not from adding another piece to ourselves, but from surrendering our ideas of perfection.” Mark Epstein

Day 9: “The essential surrender happens within you, it has nothing to do with anybody outside you. The basic surrender is a relaxation, a trust—so don’t be misguided by the word. Linguistically, surrender means to surrender to somebody, but religiously, surrender simply means trust, relaxing. It is an attitude rather than an act: you live through trust.” Osho

Day 10: “Control is never achieved when sought after directly. It is the surprising outcome of letting go.” James Arthur Ray

Day 11: “I’ve discovered there are only two modes of the heart. We can struggle, or we can surrender. Surrender is a frightening word for some people, because it might be interpreted as passivity, or timidity. Surrender means wisely accommodating ourselves to what is beyond our control.” Sylvia Boorstein

Day 12: “Often times, the greatest peace comes of surrender.” Richard Paul Evans

Day 13: “The word ‘surrender’ is often interpreted as giving up, as weakness, as admitting defeat. ...Surrendering means letting go of your resistance to the total openness of who you are. It means giving up the tension of the little vortex you believe yourself to be and realizing the deep power of the ocean you truly are.” David Deida

Day 14: “It’s healthy to say uncle when your bone is about to break.” Jonathan Franzen

Day 15: “I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.” James Baldwin

Day 16: “Forgiving was not about accepting their words and deeds. Forgiving was about letting go and moving on with my life. In doing so, I had finally set myself free.” Isabel Lopez

Day 17: “When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.” Lao Tzu

Day 18: “Our lives: a series of defining moments, strung together by passing time. Surrender fully to this moment, because it is not the moment itself that defines us, but how we choose to live in it.” Jill Hanna

Day 19: “Listening to someone is an act of surrender.” Brian Eno

Day 20: “The life of faith was amorphous, ephemeral, a glimpse, a moment. Trusting it was like my early swimming lessons in learning how to float.” Nora Gallagher

Day 21: “Last night I lost the world, and gained the universe.” C. JoyBell C.

Day 22: “Serving the emerging whole means paying attention to what’s right here within my awareness, what’s completely local, and surrendering to what’s being asked of me now.” Betty Sue Flowers

Day 23: “Go home, and let all your relatives off the potter’s wheel. You are not the potter!” Joyce Meyer

Day 24: “Surrender to life itself and you’ll just be rewarded....” Jason Mraz

Day 25: “All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.” Henry Havelock Ellis

Day 26: “Learning to *let go* should be learned before learning to *get*. Life should be touched, not strangled. You’ve got to relax, let it happen at times, and at others move forward with it.” Ray Bradbury

Day 27: “Sometimes what seems like surrender isn’t surrender at all. It’s about what’s going on in our hearts. About seeing clearly the way life is and accepting it and being true to it, whatever the pain, because the pain of not being true to it is far, far greater.” Nicholas Evans

Day 28: “The willingness to surrender self-centeredness and self-righteousness form part of the character of compassion.” Christina Feldman

Day 29: “I realize there’s something incredibly honest about trees in winter, how they’re experts at letting things go.” Jeffrey McDaniel

Day 30: “You must learn to let go. Release the stress. You were never in control anyway.” Steve Maraboli

Day 31: “We’re all broken. We all have cracks. It’s not about making it through life in one piece it’s about narrowing the gap between the fissures so we don’t shatter.” Riley Murphy





Willfulness & Willingness

Dr. Gerald G. May (1940-2005)

Surrender does not come easily. ... We are taught never to give up, never to allow ourselves to be determined by anyone or anything other than our own self-will. We have been so well taught to say 'no' that, when we do say 'yes,' we are liable to feel spineless and unassertive.... The momentary glimpses of what it means really to say 'yes' are only hints of what the great surrender or real willingness might be like. They never last long, and inevitably we must pull ourselves back to "reality;" back to a world in which we carry our own destinies on our shoulders, where we carve our marks upon the world with our own muscles, where we must forge some semblance of meaning and purpose through the efforts of our personal willpower. ...

Willingness implies a surrendering of one's self-separateness, an entering into, an immersion in the deepest processes of life itself. It is a realization that one is already a part of some ultimate cosmic process.... In contrast, willfulness is the setting of oneself apart from the fundamental essence of life in an attempt to ... manipulate existence.... Willingness and willfulness ...reflect ...the underlying attitude one has toward the wonder of life itself. Willingness notices this wonder and bows in ...reverence to it. Willfulness forgets it, ignores it, or ... actively tries to destroy it.



...More simply, willingness is saying 'yes' to the mystery of being alive in each moment. Willfulness is saying 'no', or perhaps more commonly, 'Yes, but...'

Source: *Will & Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology* by Gerald G. May (1982)

The Wisdom of Letting Go

Rev. Marlin Lavanhar

Monkeys in India are easily trapped and caught for one reason: they are unwilling to let go. For centuries, Indian trappers have simply placed food inside a container with an opening big enough for a monkey's open hand to enter, but too small for its closed fist to withdraw. When a monkey reaches in and grabs the food, it then remains trapped by its failure to let go. We humans often do the same thing when we are unable to let go in times of change and loss, or even in times of celebration.

Every life is filled with innumerable losses and changes that require a person to find ways to let go and adapt to new realities. They range from something as simple as bad weather on a special day to the death of a loved one. Our ability to navigate the smaller losses gives us the capacity to pass through the larger ones.



The Buddha taught that we also need to be careful not to become attached to the joyful moments, because they too will change. Even in the midst of eating an ice cream cone of our favorite flavor, we can suddenly begin to grieve that it is almost gone. Here we are, in the middle of a pleasurable experience, and our mind has already fast-forwarded to another point in time and we become saddened by

the anticipation. The Buddha taught that change is constant and gave his followers techniques to learn how to live in the present moment, so that they would not burden themselves with attachments.

The awareness of impermanence becomes helpful when we are dealing with an unpleasant situation because we can also remember that "this too shall pass." Each emotion and thought is like a cloud in the sky passing over and will eventually be gone. Trying to hold on to pleasant moments forever is futile and leads to disappointment. Conversely, our sorrows, depressions, anger, and fear will also pass away in time. However, it is possible to convince ourselves that our grief or depression or fear will never end, and in doing so, we can create the conditions for a perpetual state of suffering. The antidote is to learn to live in the moment, enjoying the pleasures while they last and experiencing the more painful emotions while they are with us. In a world governed by the law of impermanence, when we grasp and try to hold on to the way things are, or were, we set ourselves up for disappointment. And we end up like an Indian monkey, trapped by our own inability or unwillingness to let go. ...Many Christians ... practice giving something up in the 40 days leading to Easter [and Muslims give up food by fasting from sunrise to sundown during the month of Ramadan]. Such ...ritual[s] can be a meaningful way for a person to learn about and explore his or her own relationship to letting go. If you choose to try it, pay attention to how it feels at different moments. At times you may long for that which you have given up. At other times you will notice the sensation has passed. Such awareness is a building block to finding personal satisfaction in a world of uncertainty and change. How wise are you in the realm of letting go?

Source: http://thembasedministry.org/Files/Journals/March_2010_Letting_Go.pdf



Letting Go: Trust the Process

Gabrielle Ricketts

...Letting go is one of the hardest life lessons. ...A famous Buddhist quote tells us, “You only lose what you cling to.” Holding on too tightly to outcome is a recipe for suffering.

...Letting go is a lifelong curriculum in acceptance. The hardest chapter for me is parenting. I am so heavily invested in my children’s happiness and success (or my definition of it) that I have to remind myself that it is their journey.

The art of parenting is messy — part laughter, part tears, some frustration, always love. Allowing the process of parenting to unfold encourages us to stand back and experience our children’s journey, allowing them to explore and tell us their interests, their strengths and weaknesses, and their needs. I’m not saying children shouldn’t have boundaries, and I believe parents should be strong role models. But ...I remind myself that my children are not mine to create. They are not a piece of clay to be molded into my “second chance....”

...Our path is to facilitate their discovery of new experiences while keeping them safe and healthy, to let them make mistakes with a safety net and to allow them to build their own confidence from working through their mistakes.

The art of parenting is messy: be present, prepare the medium, invite inspiration, follow your authentic inner voice, allow mistakes, create — then, let go of expectation. In 18 to 20 years you’ll have a masterpiece.

Source: http://thembasedministry.org/Files/CRE/PRN_March_2010_LettingGo.pdf

Parenting: A Phoenix Process

Elizabeth Lesser

If you want to pursue a phoenix process of the highest order, I would recommend raising children. Parenthood is a clumsy yet majestic dance in the flames. When you parent, you fall in love with someone who is always changing into someone else, and whom you know will leave you. Yet most parents will say that they have never given themselves to anyone as fully as they have to their children.

Parenthood is a never-ending journey down a wide river of worry and love. You get in that boat with your kids and you never get out. They get out—they build their own boats and row into their own destinies—but you stay in the original boat, always their parent, forever caring and forever *koelling* (a useful Yiddish word that describes how parents express pride in their children).



Sometimes the act of parenting is an awe inspiring adventure. Your heart expands to accommodate a vastness of feelings so tender and unselfish that you step boldly into the nobility of your true character. And sometimes parenthood is a mundane and frustrating hamster-wheel of a job—an exhausting labor of continual surrender. It’s a training; but just when you get the hang of sleeping upright in a rocking chair and changing dirty diapers, the kid sleeps through the night and

poops in the potty, and the job description changes. It’s like George Carlin’s complaint, “Just when I found out the meaning of life, they changed it.”

Source: <http://www.oprah.com/own-super-soul-sunday/Book-Excerpt-from-Elizabeth-Lessers-Broken-Open>

Family Activity: Home Clearing

Invite the family to do a “home clearing” by collecting things that each has decided to give away.



With the things collected that will be “let go,” share what each item meant, why you are ready to let it go, and what you hope it will bring to the person who has it next.

Family Activity: Letting Go of Expectations

Invite each member of family to share a story about an experience that turned out unexpectedly. What were your expectations? Why were they important? How were you able to let go of your expectations? What did you learn about yourself?

Family Activity: Letting Go of Fear

Share stories from when you were “young” about being afraid, remembering that everyone in the family was younger. What was the cause of the fear? What does fear look like? Could you draw a picture about fear, like the one below? What happened? How did you let go of fear?



(Continued from page 1) **Intro to the Theme** sor and Unitarian Universalist, knew that he couldn't control the outcome when he was diagnosed with ALS in 1993 at the age of 35, but he could cultivate intention. He died 10 years later in 2002. He self-published a book, *Learning to Fall: The Blessings of An Imperfect Life*, which was republished in 2001 by Bantam. Simmons reminds us that we all fall from time to time. He wrote, "The fall from youthful ideas, the waning of physical strength, the failure of cherished hope, the loss of our near and dear, the fall into injury or sickness, and late or soon, the fall to our certain ends. We have no choice but to fall, and little say as to the time or the means." Learning to surrender, learning how to fall is essential, for it allows us to confront reality as it finds us, as we find it. Simmons wrote, "It is born out of a paradox: that we deal most fruitfully with loss by accepting the fact that we will one day lose everything. When we learn to fall, we learn that only by letting go our grip on all that we ordinarily find most precious—our achievements, our plans, our loved ones, our very selves—can we find, ultimately, the most profound freedom. In the act of letting go of our lives, we return more fully to them."

We usually understand surrender in relationship to another, one country surrendering to another country, me surrendering to that teenager with who I was fighting, or a devout person surrendering to God. But what if the whole point of surrender is self-surrender, surrendering to yourself? Letting go, as Richard Rohr writes, of being in control, being effective, and being right is a kind of self-surrender.

If we don't need to be in control, we will likely be dramatically enriched by a spirit of collaboration. If we can give up control, then we will invite new possibilities into endeavors in which we are involved. Unitarian Universalist philosopher of religion, Henry Nelson Wieman, developed a philosophy of creative interchange. Rather than seeking to control an interchange, Wieman believed that engaging without an agenda or the need to control the outcome led to creative possibilities that could never have

emerged otherwise. He wrote, "The culmination of man's [sic] quest through the ages, if ever there is a culmination, will not be to build the house of his dreams. It will be to climb above the fog of his dreams and see that the greatest values are shining summits very different from his dreams."

If we don't need to be effective, then we can focus more on "being" rather than "doing." As soon as we focus on "being," then the nature and quality of our "doing" will be transformed.

If we don't need to be right, then we will surely discover profound truths that were previously hidden from us because of our need for righteousness. If we don't need to be right, that we can surrender to what we don't know, rather than clinging to what we do know.

When we seek to be in control, to be effective, to be right, we are in reality seeking to be perfect, and perfection is pernicious. To seek perfection is not to seek to grow, but to control one's growth in a predetermined way. To seek perfection is to cast a narrow net around what constitutes effectiveness. To seek perfection is to define right in ways that are ultimately self-serving. The antidote to perfection is surrender, the willingness to embrace our true humanity no matter how imperfect. Gerald May defines surrender as a "willingness to engage the fullness of life with the fullness of oneself," and the fullness our self can never be captured or contained by the notion of perfection. In this, surrender is an expansive freedom, a powerful transformation. Patricia Carrington wrote, "It is only after you have let go of wanting to change a particular thing that you can perceive its nature." It is only after surrendering the need to control and to be right, that you can perceive your own nature.

Surrender is a radical act of self-acceptance, a radical act of self-blessing. Henry Miller wrote, "I know what the cure is: it is to give up, to relinquish, to surrender, so that our little hearts may beat in unison with the great heart of the world."

Fear of Letting Go

Victoria Hoff

[Letting go] is not an easy ask for human beings, who have been historically conditioned to emphasize logic over feeling. "For centuries, Western culture has been fairly obsessed with rationalism, a philosophy that places a premium on reason over ...emotional experience," says Heather Silvestri.... "The idea that we should exercise our minds over our emotions has a lot of cultural currency...."

... "By elevating reason over emotion, we create a false sense of control by convincing ourselves that we can, with enough strength and composure, gate-keep our emotional landscape," says Silvestri. "But the belief that we can game our emotional experience such that feelings are under our complete control actually sets us up for problematic emotional outbursts."

... "This," says Silvestri, "is the basis for many situations in which we find ourselves struggling to let go—the toxic



friend, the growing up, the trauma. ... "When we have trouble letting go of a perceived wrongdoing, a past event, or a

relationship, we are attempting to force a narrative in which we can be the sole director—not only of our feelings, but also of the course of our life," she says.

... By allowing yourself to feel while also eliminating self-judgment from the equation, you gain the clarity to react more effectively. In other words, you have to lose control in order to gain it again—this time, in a lasting (and far more productive) way.

And even if it's messy and difficult, it's ultimately so worth it.

Source: <https://thethirty.byrdie.com/how-to-let-go/slide2>

Stop Tinkering

The Value of Letting Go

Charlotte Sophia Kasl

Letting go creates a wonderful image. It is the way toward love, contentment, and breaking free. ...

The ego resists with all its might because letting go also means falling into the empty space between thoughts, concepts, images, and teachings. It can feel disorienting and unfamiliar—kind of like going through withdrawal from a substance....

When I think of letting go I have this image of an interior structure built over time—like a Structo set or a Tinkertoy—made up of thoughts, beliefs, and concepts that give me an anchor in life.

Then, I imagine pulling out a crucial

piece and letting the whole contraption collapse. No longer any clear beliefs, con-



cepts, or sureness about anything. It's a groundless feeling. No anchor, no thought. You can see it in the ease with which children can knock over a sand castle they built because they aren't attached to the structure. It's all sand play—delving into sand, building, creating, then knocking it all down. Adults tend to feel uneasy about this because we get attached to our creations.

Dismantling your concepts can feel like taking off your makeup, fancy clothes, titles, degrees, snazzy car, miseries, and wounds so you stand in the world without labels, without anything impressive, extraordinary, or valuable. As the Zen master who says, "I have nothing to lose because I have nothing, we start to feel the freedom of nothing to protect, hold on to, or identify with.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/14573>

Risking the Uncertain

Letting Go Over the Falls

Rev. Richard Gilbert

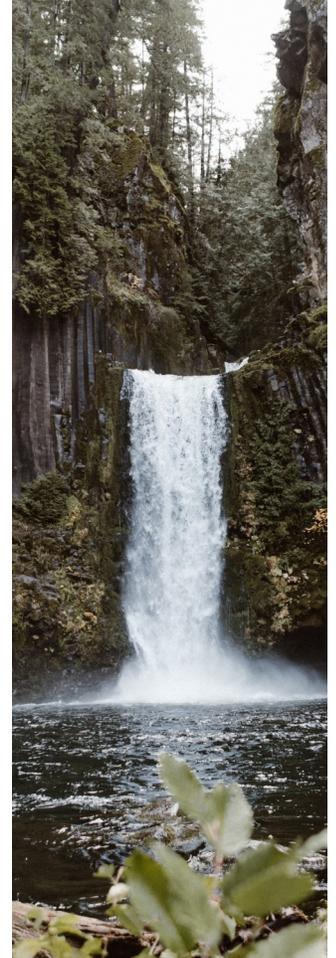
We approached the falls from upstream,
Hearing only a roar designed to intimidate the faint-hearted.
At first glance we saw only white water cascading over the cliff
And plunging into the pool in front of us. ...

Stripping to a bathing suit and an old pair of pants—
So as not to rip my one and only swimsuit
And foreshorten my North Carolina swimming career
I plunged into the lovely pool beneath the falls
To make my way to the point of ascent. ...
Clumsily I pulled myself up the rocky slope to the top,
Hand over trembling hand. ...

I sat in the edge of the stream ...
Gradually, I lost control.
Quickly the current pushed me toward the edge
And even more quickly hurled me over the falls.
I plummeted like a great stone, ...
Down into the deep pool—deeper and deeper.
I could not touch bottom.
Some primordial instinct had me swimming for the air
And I broke the surface water to my own relief ...
To repeat this process with something approaching
confident joy.

There is something to be said for letting go,
For risking the uncertain,
For putting oneself in strong life currents
With a rich mixture of faith and fear.
Unknown pools sustain us, buoy us;
Forgotten instincts stretch our spirits to the surface.
Where the air is clear and the water cold and
refreshing.

Source: *In the Holy Quiet of This Hour: A Meditation Manual* by Rev. Richard Gilbert



Fear Less, Love More

Letting Go

Author Unknown

To "let go" does not mean to stop caring. It means we can't do the inner work for someone else.

To "let go" is not to cut our selves off. It's the realization that we can't control others.

To "let go" is to recognize that our power is limited, which means that the outcome is often not in our hands.

To "let go" is not to try to change or blame another. It's to focus on the work that we need to do for ourselves.

To "let go" is not to be in the middle,

arranging all the outcomes, but to allow others to affect their own destinies.

To "let go" is not to nag, scold, or argue with others, but to be mindful of our own shortcomings as we continue to grow.

To "let go" is not to expect the world to conform to our individual desires, but to take each day as it comes and to cherish all that we can.

To "let go" is not to regret the past, but to live deeply in the present.

To "let go" is to fear less and to love more.

Source: <https://thepathlighter.com/empowering-thoughts/>

Theme for Discussion Surrender/Letting Go

Preparation prior to Gathering: (Read this issue of *Explorations* and *Living the Questions* in the next column.)

Business: Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

Opening Words: "Compassion holds within it resilience and equanimity. Patience, receptivity, awareness, and honesty are all part of its paradigm. Forgiveness and courage and a willingness to be intimate with life give compassion its power. The willingness to surrender self-centeredness and self-righteousness form part of the character of compassion." *Christina Feldman*

Chalice Lighting: (James Vila Blake) (adapted) (In unison) *Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.*

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Read the Wisdom Story: Take turns reading aloud parts of the wisdom story on page 1.

Readings from the Common Bowl: Group Members read selections from Readings from the Common Bowl (page 3). Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

Sitting In Silence: Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

Reading: "Opening to our fear is an act of intimacy, a courageous welcoming of the disfigured and outcast into the living room of our being. Opening thus is also an act of surrender. As such, it is not a dissolution—or collapsing—of personal boundaries, as in submission, but rather an expanding of them.

In submission, we deaden ourselves, sinking into the shallows; in surrender, we enliven ourselves, dying into a deeper Life. In surrender we may lose face, but we do not lose touch. Submission flattens the ego; surrender transcends it. Submission is passive, but surrender is dynamic."

Robert Augustus Masters

Living the Questions: Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving on.

What does surrender mean to you?

Many people regard the process or act of surrender to be negative. Do you? Why?

Can you think of a situation in which the process of surrender was or could be positive?

Was there a time when you took a significant risk, one in which the outcome was not clear and you were not in control? What was the experience like? What did you learn about yourself?

What is the relationship between surrender/letting go and risk? Acceptance? Letting in?

Have there been times when you wanted to control a situation, but were unable to? How did you deal with that lack of control? As you recall times when you seemed to grow in significant ways, did you expect that growth or did it come to you unexpectedly? If unexpected, what did you need to let go of to grow?

The facilitator or group members are invited to propose additional questions that they would like to explore.

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person who claimed time.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice:

(Elizabeth Selle Jones) (In unison)

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Closing Words: Rev. Philip R. Giles (In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*

Letting Go of Things

Brooks Palmer

- ◆ Remember nothing is sacred except you.
- ◆ If it doesn't fit anymore, physically or psychologically, let it go.
- ◆ If you hesitate, trying to decide whether something is worthwhile, it's clutter.
- ◆ If you haven't used it in a year, it's clutter.
- ◆ If you find yourself defending the object because of how much it cost you, it's clutter.
- ◆ Always remove from your home what you know to be clutter. ...
- ◆ Feel good about the process of tossing, and avoid the guilt. Keep the things that feel alive to you.
- ◆ Be ruthless. Clutter will try to trick you. Question everything.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/18879>

Attribution for Images

Page 1: Monkeys roam Qixing Gongyuan photo by Andrew Turner, December 14, 2007, (CC BY 2.0), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ajturner/2212346136/>

Page 2: Cable car let go, photo by Mr. Littlehand, January 29, 2010, (CC BY-SA 2.0), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/73577218@N00/4347538509/>

Page 2: Pear, photo by Bram Naus on Unsplash
Page 3: Round Melon Shape Bowl with Triangular Pattern, by Wicker Paradise, August 25, 2013, (CC BY 2.0), <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wicker-furniture/9592646138>

Page 3: this is as far as i'll go with you, photo by Addie (Bare Dreamer), April 26, 2008, (CC BY 2.0), http://www.flickr.com/photos/addie_oh_addie/2828293070/

Page 4: Buddha, Erica Schoonmaker, September 16, 2012, (CC BY-ND 2.0), https://www.flickr.com/photos/_erica/7993362298

Page 4: Life is Beauty Full, photo by Masaaki Komori on Unsplash

Page 5: Parents & Toddler, photo by Brittany Simuangco on Unsplash

Page 5: Old School Bird, photo by Ms. Phoenix, March 13, 2009, (CC BY 2.0), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/32020964@N08/3352442078/>

Page 5: my lamb-y, photo by S. Mash, August 2, 2010, (CC BY 2.0), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/shelbzyleigh/4854352007/>

Page 5: Fear, photo by Tanmoy Acharjee, September 2, 2011, (CC BY 2.0), <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tanmoycreative/6106167210/>

Page 6: Photo by averie woodard on Unsplash

Page 7: Tinker Toy, Mike Mozart, January 2, 2012, (CC BY 2.0), <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jeepersmedia/12953572425>

Page 7: Waterfall, photo by Ketan Morris on Unsplash