

## **SURRENDER AND TUNE IN**

**Week #3 of a 4-Week Series, “The Power of Letting Go”**

**Jan. 31, 2021**

**Rev. Richard Maraj**

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** Good morning, and welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center’s Sunday virtual worship celebration! I’m Rev. Richard Maraj, and I’m so glad that you are joining us!

You know, we are really cranking it up with classes and opportunities for you to connect and learn virtually. We have got our “Circles of Joy” starting up. And it’s a six-week series of getting together on Zoom that lead into Easter. It’s about “release and renewal.” And if you haven’t been a part of a Zoom or meeting, it really feels “live”; you really feel a nice sense of connection. So I really encourage you – if you haven’t done it, and you’ve thought about it – I’d really encourage it, because it’s easy and you feel that wonderful sense of community and connection.

I’m going to be doing two classes on Feb. the 2nd and the 9th related to the Sunday series I’m doing on “The Power of Letting Go.” Letting go is absolutely liberating and transformational, but it really requires us doing the work. And in the talks, I can’t really give you the time to process. So, if you’re serious about it, and want to move through those exercises and practices of releasing, I encourage you to join me on the 2nd and the 9th of February.

Jeanette St. German’s doing a four-part series on how to connect with angels.

And all the information you need to register is online, and I hope you check that out!

Right now, Rev. Lori is going to lead us in a time of prayer and meditation. And to prepare us for that experience, we will now listen as the choir sings “Surely the Presence.”

### **MEDITATION**

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** I invite you to join me in a time of prayer and meditation as we close our outer eyes, take in a deep, cleansing breath, and release it slowly. And take in another mindful breath and, as we let it go, gently release any busy-ness we’ve had so far today. Just let it all go. Any doubt: let it go. Any sadness: gently release it. Give it up to God. Just let everything go that’s less than love.

As we feel the energy of the Divine coursing through our bodies, vitalizing every cell, bringing us to wholeness. That, in this time of quiet contemplation, we are one with God. And we are one with each other. As we begin to move our awareness within, we gently relax our consciousness. As we move our awareness within, we feel the Divine love that God has for every person on this planet: that unconditional love for each and every one of us. And as we expand our heart space, we feel that love for ourselves: loving us just the way we are, just the way God does. Recognizing our innate goodness. Knowing that we’ve come here for a very important purpose: to be the hands and the feet of the Divine. To share God’s love with each and every person that we meet, no matter who they are, no matter where they’ve come from, no matter what they believe. We are here to be God’s love personified.

As we take in another deep, cleansing breath we move more deeply within: to that quiet, still, place. The very center of our being. The center of our souls. That true, real part of us: our essence. That part of us that was created at the beginning, and that lives on forever. That houses that piece of divinity – that Christ Spirit within. That teaches us to love God and love each other. That allows us to be who we truly are: a unique and unrepeatable expression of the Divine.

And so, in this moment, we feel God’s love wash over us. We are lifted up out of any negativity, of any doubt, of any sadness. We are lifted up into a higher consciousness of peace, of love, of joy, of abundance and prosperity. Because we are one with the Divine!

And so we take just a few moments to move more deeply into the silence as we experience the presence and power of God within.

#### SILENCE

And so, sweet Spirit, we come in gratitude for these amazing lives that we are living. For all the good that is showering down upon us now. For each and every blessing we say thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.

#### MESSAGE

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** Thank you, Rev. Lori! That was wonderful!

You know, this week I was reading an article by Albert Einstein, who developed the theory of relativity. And he is considered one of the most influential – if not the most influential – physicists, and had a huge impact on the philosophy of science. And, in this article, he said that our greatest handicap – our greatest restriction and limitation – in science and in our lives is not believing in the non-physical world. He believed that there are realms beyond human thinking that we can tap into. And he said to not believe in the non-physical dimension – whether you call it the life force or intelligence or creative power of the universe ... whatever you call it that permeates all living things and vibrational structures – to not believe it is to be blind to the most powerful and influential aspect of our lives.

Einstein says this: *“Investigate the spiritual world. Investigate your interior world. For it is through your interior world that you access these realms. This is the solution to many of your problems: to remove yourself from the materialistic beliefs of the scientific method, and open your minds and your hearts to these other realms and dimensions.”*

So what he’s saying is that there are these amazingly powerful spiritual dimensions that are available to us, and we need to open ourselves up to them. And how do we do that? How do we tap into that higher dimension? And the answer is: by letting go.

Michael Beckwith said, *“One hundred percent of spiritual growth is about letting go.”* Which seems kind of counter-intuitive, doesn’t it? If we want our lives to get better, we usually think: What do I need to add? What do I need to get? What do I need to have more of? We usually don’t think of: What do I need to release? What do I need to let go?

And when you think about it, what do we need to let go? A lot of things! Like letting go of fear. Letting go of anxiety. Letting go of worry and doubt. Letting go of resistance. Letting go of the need to control. Letting go of the need to be right. Letting go of the need to know everything. Letting go of guilt and shame and regret. Letting go of anger. Letting go of judgement. Letting go of limiting beliefs and negative thoughts. Letting go of attachments to how we think life should be. Letting go of feelings of unworthiness or that we’re not good enough. Letting go of a belief that we’re victims and we’re powerless. I could go on and on, but I think you are getting the point!

I’ve come to believe 100% that, if we’re stuck in any area of our lives – if any area isn’t working the way we’d like – the most important question to ask is: What do I need to let go? What am I holding on to that is keeping me stuck? What in my past is it time for me to release?

See, letting go frees us and liberates us to help us reconnect with the truth of that spiritual power and that amazing spiritual being that we are. You know, when we were born, we were “bundles of joy”; we are pure light, pure consciousness. But then we start picking up untruths about ourselves that keep us limited, and keep believing that we are so much less than we really are. That’s why letting go – 100% of letting go – returns us back to the truth of who we have always been. It helps unblock all the things that allows the light that is within us to flow with ease the way it is meant to.

You know, we – as a culture – focus on goals and intentions and actions and hard work as the absolute number one way to improve our lives. But the truth is: the most important way to improve our lives is to start with what we need to let go.

It's kind of like getting in a boat and figuring you want to go really far. And you're paddling and you're paddling; you're paddling all night, and you're paddling all night. And then you wake up in the morning, and everything looks the same. And then you look back and realize you forgot to untie your boat. And that's how a lot of life can be! You've got to untie your boat and let go first – to free yourself – so you can move towards the greater things.

So where in your life do you need to untie your boat? I will guarantee you: letting go is the most vital spiritual practice if you want your life to progress and get better and better.

So we are in Week #3 in our four-week series on letting go. And what we're really doing is looking at various practices of release and letting go to help liberate us and free us, and to lighten our load so we can truly live as fully, as freely, and joyously as we want to.

Human beings have a tendency – as we know – to hold on, especially to things that aren't good for us. And that's why a daily practice of letting go is such a vital and important thing. The Apostle Paul said, "*I die daily.*" Those three words tell us so much! "*I die daily*" means I let go daily. I release the hurts of today daily. I lighten my burdens daily. I open myself to allow Spirit to move through me on a daily basis.

So I'm going to repeat and review a lot of these ideas, because they're so important to get them engrained in us, so we make it a regular practice of releasing and letting go.

The first week we talked about mindfulness. Mindfulness – and all meditations – are practices of letting go. And what are we letting go of? We're letting go of our focus on the past and the future to be present! Mindfulness meditation helps us let go to be fully present to the here and now. And the way we do that is just focus on our breath as it comes in and out, and our belly as it expand and contracts. Just returning to your breath every time brings us back to the present so we can release and let go of focusing on the past or the future. The mind will wander a lot, and that's okay; just keep bringing it back with your breath. Keep bringing it back to the present: the here and now. Even if we pause 10, 15, 20 times a day – coming back to the present and letting go of the past and future – is the most powerful place we can be.

The second one is to let go of being a mental slave to our mental patterns. And the way that we do that – because we get caught up in our dramas and the stories we tell. And the way to free ourselves to let go is just by observing them. Take a breath and just pull back, and just notice we're getting jealous. Just notice we're getting angry. Just notice we're telling ourselves a story: how life is unfair. Or we're telling ourselves a story of how horrible that cashier was to us. The more we can just pull back and observe and be present to the thoughts, they don't consume us and they don't hook us in and rob us of being more conscious and in control of our lives, of our minds.

Third thing that's important to let go is to let go of our attachments of who we think we are. We so identify ourselves as our role: as a doctor; as a teacher; as a parent; as a friend; as a Democrat; as a Republican; as a Christian; as a Buddhist; by our names. By all these types of things! We get so focused; that's who we think we are! We think we are our income; we think we're our house and our possessions. And letting go of that to identify with the truth of who we are – which is pure Spirit – by just using the mantra, "*I AM. I AM. I AM.*" It helps us let go of those roles, and to really embrace the truth of who we are: that "*I AM Spirit. I AM love. I AM. I AM. I AM.*"

Last week we talked about letting go of the past. And one of the most powerful ways to let go of the past is: stop talking about it! I'll be every single one has a story we've told many times about "that jerk boss," "our lying ex," you know, what bad parents we had ... And we tell the story over and over for years. And, you know, something will come up; it'll trigger it and we'll go back to that story again.

If we're serious about moving forward with our lives, we've got to stop telling the stories. We've got to stop talking about the past. That, even if someone says something about the past, don't say anything. Just go to your breath; come to the present. And I guarantee you: by not talking about the past, it'll actually create a space there for new possibilities and new ideas.

We also talked about the importance of letting go of negative images we hold about ourselves. We all hold some form of negative belief about who we are. We say things like, *"I am such a loser or a knucklehead."* *"I'm not really good with money at all."* *"I am terrible when it comes to picking men."* *"Things just never seem to work out for me."* *"I always end up being taken advantage of."* So there are all kinds of them!

But what is the negative, limiting image/idea that you have about yourself? Whatever that may be, there are four questions that we need to pose to ourselves – this is a writing exercise. And the first one – for whatever that limiting idea, like *"I'm not good in relationships"* – would be to ask: What are the underlying beliefs that makes me think that? The second question is: What is my payoff for telling that story? Number three is: What is telling that story and repeating it costing me? And then, finally: What are the benefits that would come to my life if I let go of that story?

These practices of letting go take work! They take time! They take self-awareness! And that's why we're doing the class: to give you the time to put these things into practice, because they absolutely make a difference.

Today we're going to do two practices of letting go. And the first one is how to let go of the pain and the toxic energy and the judgements that we hold towards other people.

So do you have someone in your life that really annoys you? Just ticks you off? You know, maybe they're a little rude or mean or inconsiderate? Maybe they make poor life choices over and over again, and it just drives you crazy! Maybe they're not as responsible. Whatever it is, is there someone in your life that really irritates you? That you just project some energy that you just get frustrated with?

And what we need to do with that – another important exercise to process in writing – is to write down all the people's names, and then all the ways that they annoy you. Doing that is a good start. And what you will notice is: the person's name, what they annoy, and how it annoys you. And then the person's name and then how they annoy you. And what you come to realize is: the common denominator in that equation of annoyance is you!

Carl Jung said a beautiful line. He said, *"Everything that irritates you about others can lead us to a greater understanding of ourselves."* See, he had this idea – this philosophy – about the "shadow self." And what he says: the shadow self is that part in us of unresolved hurts that we project unconsciously on to other people. And, because they're aspects of ourselves that we have suppressed and not dealt with, and we need to bring it to the forefront and just acknowledge it.

So what we need to do is go back to that list, and see that person, and see that whatever bothers us – that they lied or they're selfish or they're rude or they keep making poor decisions – and we turn it on ourselves in a healthy way. And say: Where in my life have I lied? Where in my life have I been rude? Where in my life have I made poor choices? Where in my life have I been inconsiderate?

And this isn't to place some sort of blame game, but it's to make us aware of ourselves so that we stop projecting and subconsciously letting these things in us that have been suppressed come out and show up in unhealthy ways. What it does is actually help us embrace our strengths and also embrace those parts of us that aren't as great, and we actually feel more whole. More healthy. More at peace. We actually judge ourselves and others less. We actually have more and more compassion for ourselves and others, and greater understanding. And we actually do feel more peace, more whole and complete. And we actually show up better in relationships, including our relationship with ourselves. And so that is an important aspect of letting go and going deeper.

The next aspect of letting go – and this is the deepest aspect of letting go – and that is surrendering. Surrendering fully and completely. Letting go is hard! And surrendering completely is harder! In fact, it's actually scary for us! Because we associate surrender with being weak, giving up, throwing in the towel. You know, not really caring. And the truth is: it is the exact opposite. I like to refer to it as "spiritual surrender."

Spiritual surrender is a willingness to completely release all fear and anxiety and doubt about anything in our lives, and open a path to allow Spirit to move in and through us. It's not about giving up; it is about giving way to God's Spirit and a higher consciousness to move and through our lives.

See, when we surrender, we are in the present. You know, we are fully there. We're aware of our thoughts. We're connected with our "I AM." But then we fully surrender and release it to allow the guidance of Spirit to move in and through us.

I'm sure you've heard that phrase, "*I surrender my will and my life completely to God!*" It is a beautiful and powerful thing! It's similar to saying, "*Not my will, Father, but Thy will be done.*" Those are two powerful aspects of surrender. But we still get a little scared, because we think, "*Oh; if I surrender completely, my life might fall apart!*" But it's the opposite! By surrendering completely, our lives are actually supported, and we move in alignment and more in the flow of God's Spirit.

Do you know what the ultimate motivation and the ultimate key about surrender is? It's one word. And that word is TRUST. The more that we trust God, the more we are able to let go. And so my question is: Do you trust that God loves you enough that you are willing to surrender to God? Do you trust that God has a great plan and purpose for your life? And do you trust that enough that you're willing to let go? Do you trust that all things are working together for your highest good – enough; do you trust it enough – to let go and surrender completely and fully?

So I was on a radio show; I was interviewed last week on a radio show called, *The Funniest Thing*. It's a Unity online radio show. The two hosts are Ed and Darrell. And Darrell was sharing a story of him being in the ocean in California, and how this riptide was pulling him out. And he was swimming towards the shore, and he's getting sucked out. And he said, as a young man, as he's fighting he hears a voice. And he hears the voice say, "*Let go.*" And so he let go, and it pulled him out all the way, and it didn't take him down, and then he was able to swim around and then come back and be safe.

And they do an affirmation for this show. [*Laughs*] And this was the affirmation. And the affirmation was, "*When you feel are in over your head, let go and trust God instead.*" And I love that, because it's about trust! Do you trust life? Do you trust God? Do you trust that your life is meant to be – that you are meant to be here to do great things – enough that you can let go and allow the wisdom and the intelligence and the intuition of Spirit to lead you and guide you?

We know how to trust! Like, right now, you trust there's enough air and oxygen for you to breathe; you trust that! You trust that the sun is shining, or it'll shine again, even though it might be cloudy and rainy. You trust that! You trust the chair you're sitting on supporting your body. The question is: can we lend that level of trust to God? To open our lives to allow Spirit move in us in an easy and amazing way?

You know, I think that surrender would be easier if we changed the name of it: to say that it's about opening and allowing the wisdom of Spirit to lead and guide us in our lives. Because that's really what it's about! It's not about giving up.

John Purkiss, in his book, *Letting Go*, tells a story about when he was living in Paris. And he had a business, and it was going miserably. It was coming to a grinding halt. He was almost totally out of money. His relationship was falling about. I mean, the harder he worked, the worse things got. He was more stressful, and he felt like he had just hit rock bottom. And he had remembered a book he read called *A Rich Man's Secret*, where the main character in the book kept letting go and releasing. Kept

coming back to his breath: to the present. Any time he worried, he'd come back to the present, and just followed his breath.

And [Purkiss] thought – he was so desperate hitting rock bottom – he thought, *“Let me practice just letting go and coming back to the present.”* And he kept doing it, and he started feeling moments of peace and relaxation. Not worrying as much. He kept doing it, and his mind would worry a lot, and he'd keep coming back, coming back. And the more he would do it – he'd try and just let go at an even deeper level. Like worrying about his job and his work; he'd try and surrender completely. And even though the worry would come back, he'd get back to the present and surrender completely.

And then he got this opportunity to be a headhunter. And he was not good at headhunting; he knew nothing about headhunting! But he got this opportunity ... And so what he'd do: instead of worrying, he went back to his breath, and just came back to the present. Went back to his breath – came back to present – and just started completely surrendering. So just before his interview, he just completely surrendered. And somehow he ended up getting the job! And then, just before every interview he had with potential employment people for his headhunting, he would just surrender completely.

And what he found was: he started feeling tuned in to these people. He started being able to read them better, and make good judgements and good decisions about who might be a right fit for what company. And his progress started happening! He started making more money than he had been hoping to make over the last five years! And he just kept surrendering; he just kept surrendering! He'd hold an intention of wanting to do well, but then he'd keep coming back to the present, and keep surrendering.

And he said, *“Nobody needs to hit rock bottom before they surrender.”* Because this Spirit is always available to us if we are willing to practice letting go!

So I want you to think of a problem that's going on in your life right now. And you can hold an intention for it – that it will resolve and it'll work out – but I want you to base it on a trust and a knowing that everything's going to be okay. A trust and a knowing that God's got you, and all things are working for your highest good.

And can you just take a deep breath and, in that area, just surrender completely to God? Opening your heart that Spirit will come forth and inspire you? And then what you do is just be present in your life. Just pay attention. And I guarantee you, inspiration, guidance and wisdom will come if you continue to come to the present, and completely surrender and let go.

And this will work for work problems. It'll work in relationships. It'll work in finances. It'll work in important decision-making. The question is: Are you willing to trust enough to just let go and surrender, and open yourself to Spirit?

See, we think that thinking and working is the way we move to success! But the truth is: it's about letting go and surrendering yourself to success. Remember what Einstein said: Our greatest hindrance is to not believe in the non-physical dimension! That Intelligence! That Wisdom that created everything is in us! It created us, and it is working through us, and wants to work more through us.

You know, I don't think we realize how much we hold ourselves back from greater peace, love and happiness. I don't think we realize how much overthinking – how much worrying and judging and fear and negativity and consuming our minds with these ideas – separate us from our power, from our peace and from our connection with Spirit.

So I want to encourage you: whether you join this class, or you don't, I want you to practice, practice, practice letting go. The daily practice of releasing and letting go will liberate you. It'll free you. And you will become a greater channel to allow Spirit to do amazing and wonderful and joyful and loving things through! Surrendering completely will tune you in; it'll turn up how you live; and it'll show you the incredible power of letting go!

God bless you all!

**SOLO**

***Rusty Ferracane sings "Centered in the Storm"***

Tossed by the waves  
On a sea of mixed emotions.  
I'm lost in the roar  
Of the clamor and commotion.  
The thunder deafens and lightening blinds.  
I'm drowning in the darkness  
Of the shadows in my mind.

Taught by the world  
To believe in fear's illusions.  
I'm caught in the spin  
Of the chaos and confusion.  
I close my eyes to calm my soul.  
I feel the truth within me,  
Then I let it take control.

I am centered in the storm,  
Where I know I'm not alone.  
Thunder is the voice of God, leading me home.  
I am centered in the storm,  
Where it's always safe and warm.  
I see a beacon in the night, keeping me centered in the storm.

Led by the sun  
To the shores of my salvation.  
I'm fed by the Love  
That exists in all creation.  
I know I'll never drift off course.  
With faith as my anchor,  
Then God is my source.

I am centered in the storm,  
Where I know I'm not alone.  
Thunder is the voice of God, leading me home.  
I am centered in the storm,  
Where it's always safe and warm.  
I see a beacon in the night, keeping me centered in the storm.

Set adrift upon this changing sea.  
I'm right where I'm supposed to be.

I am centered in the storm,  
Where I know I'm not alone.  
Thunder is the voice of God, leading me home.  
I am centered in the storm,  
Where I'm always safe and warm.  
I see a beacon in the night,  
Always shining bright,  
Never out of sight,  
Keeping me centered in the storm.  
Centered in the storm.

## **OFFERING**

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** It's that time in our service to give of our gifts and our tithes and our offerings. We're so grateful to all of you who are sending in your checks, who are contributing online. You're keeping this great work that we call Unity of Phoenix going throughout this time of pandemic!

And so I invite you to affirm our offering blessing: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."* And so we say thank you, Mother/Father God, for these gifts and these tithes and these offerings. We know they are given in love; they are received in love; and that they move through this ministry with the energy of divine love out into the world as good. And that each giver is blessed – heaped up, pressed down and overflowing – for that is the Law. And so it is. Thank you, God! Amen.

## **CLOSING**

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Well, we're so grateful we could spend this time together through cyberspace! We hope you've been uplifted in some really amazing and wonderful ways by our music and our meditation and our message.

And now will you join me in listening as the choir sings the Peace Song?

### ***Choir sings Peace Song:***

Let there be peace on earth  
And let it begin with me!  
Let there be peace on earth  
The peace that was meant to be!

With God as Creator  
Family all are we!  
Let us walk with each other  
In perfect harmony!

Let peace begin with me;  
Let this be the moment now!  
With every breath I take  
Let this be my joyous vow:  
To take each moment and live each moment  
In peace eternally!

Let there be peace on earth  
And let it begin with me!

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** And now will you join me in affirming our Prayer for Protection?

The light of God surrounds us;  
The love of God enfolds us;  
The power of God protects us;  
The presence of God watches over us;  
Wherever we are, God is, and all is well!

Have a fabulous week!

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