

TURN YOUR DESIRES INTO REALITY

Final Week of the 4-Week Series, "The Power of Letting Go"

Feb. 7, 2021

Rev. Richard Maraj

Rev. Richard Maraj: Good morning, and welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center! Welcome to our Sunday virtual worship celebration! I'm Rev. Richard Maraj, and we're so thrilled that you are joining us today.

We have a number of wonderful activities going on. Our "Circles of Joy" begin on Ash Wednesday, February 17. There's just a little more time for sign ups. There are all on Zoom: a great way to connect; a great way to learn more spiritual principles in a nice discussion forum. So you can go on the website and sign up for that.

I'll be teaching two classes this week: on Monday, I'll be teaching "Prayer Basics." While it is a prerequisite for becoming a member, anyone can attend it and enjoy it to learn a little bit more about affirmative prayer. And, on Tuesday, I'll be wrapping up the "Letting Go" practices series that I've been doing. If you didn't attend the first one; we'll be repeating and doing a lot of the practices of releasing and letting go again. And those are both at 7 p.m. Monday and Tuesday.

Jeanette St. Germain will continue her series on connecting and communicating with angels. And all information is online; all the sign ups are online, as well.

So right now, Rev. Lori will lead us in a time of prayer and meditation. And to prepare us for that experience, we will now listen to the choir sing "Surely the Presence."

MEDITATION

Rev. Lori Fleming I invite you to join me in a time of prayer and meditation. A time to move away from the outer world into the inner world. I invite you to close your outer eyes, to take in a deep, cleansing breath, and release it slowly. Take in another mindful breath and, as you let it go, let go of anything that's on your mind. Just gently release it. Give it up to God, knowing that with God all things are possible. Then take in another breath, and as you let it go, move more deeply into the silence: into that quiet, still place within. Into that place where we are present with the Divine: fully, completely at one.

In this quiet, still place, every good thing is possible. In this quiet, still place -- as we celebrate our oneness with the Divine -- we know that it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. Right here, right now, just for the asking.

And so once again, we breathe in deeply, and we begin to open our hearts to God's unconditional love. That unifying force that brings good into our lives. That activity of seeing the good in ourselves. When maybe we can't see it, but we know that God sees the good in us, and calls it forth into greater awareness of the amazing spiritual beings that we are.

In this quiet, still place, we know that anything is possible. That what may seem impossible in the outer world is imminently possible in the inner world. Because God makes all things new. Because God lights up every cell in our body, bringing us into health and wholeness. Because God is the power that moves us forward when we can't see the next step. We know that God is right here, right now, lifting us up out of the old into a brand new consciousness: a brand new way of seeing endless possibilities for solving old problems. Raising divine ideas for new ways to be. And that, the more deeply we go into the silence, the more we are lifted up. The more we feel the presence and the power of the Divine within.

In this quiet, still place, we recognize that each and everything we do -- that every step we take -- God is there, silently encouraging us. Urging us forward in grace. Knowing that we cannot fail, for God is here. Right here, right now: in us, and as us, and through us.

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

SILENCE

Sweet Spirit, we come in gratitude for this time away. For your presence and power that's in every cell of our body. That was planted in our souls from the very beginning. And we know, God, with your unconditional love we can move forward into our greater good: right here, right now. And so, God, we say thank you for all of our blessings -- each and every one of them. They are truly too numerous to count. And so 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 a wonderful meditation!

So we'll start with a couple of jokes to put a smile on your face! And here we go!

Why did the mom shush her kids at the tennis match? Because they were making a "racquet"!

What do you call sushi that's on sale? A raw deal!

Who is the spiciest French singer? Celine "Dijon"!

You know, I tried to write a joke about a Portobello, but there was "mushroom" for improvement. *[Simulates a "rim shot" drum roll]* Probably the thing that's "mushroom" for improvement are my jokes, too! *[Laughs]*

So we are in the final of a four-week series on "The Power of Letting Go." And I'm going to start by asking you the questions that I posed to you in the very first week. And that is: What would you like to change or improve about your life? What would you like to achieve or accomplish? And what is it that you'd like to be different in you in how you show up in life?

You know, the classic response for improving and making our lives better are: you know, goals and dreams; and determination and work; and perseverance. And they're all good! You know, they're all good and wonderful. But just those, alone, can sometimes lead us into a hamster-in-a-wheel process of just working hard and not really progressing or having traction in moving toward the level of success or happiness or fulfillment that we're seeking. You know, these things are good, but they're not as effective unless they are coupled and used with the power of letting go.

And I know that kind of doesn't sound like it makes sense, and these things don't seem compatible. You know, saying things like: Have goals and dreams and let go. Or have a vision and release. Or have intentions and desires and surrender. It's sound like these practices are not related; they sound mutually exclusive and kind of separate and disconnected.

But the truth is that, if you combine letting go with other principles, they will multiply; they will magnify and increase the level of effectiveness of our goals. Of our actions. Of our work. Of our perseverance and determination. Because letting go is a vital spiritual practice. It is the path to peace. It is the component of creation. And it is the key to improving the quality of our lives. Letting go is a powerful spiritual practice!

You know, the secret that we're all looking for? Well, it is one of the aspects of the secret that makes our lives better. But there are two things we need to realize about letting go. Number one: it is a hard spiritual practice; it is not an easy practice at all. And why? Because we have the tendency to be controlling. We have the tendency to overthink and worry and hold on, and thinking that things will fall apart if we let go. So letting go is hard and it takes practice, but the benefits of it are incredible.

The second thing about letting go is that letting go is a practice that we need to do on a regular, daily basis. And why? It's because we have a tendency to be controlling! *[Laughs]* And a tendency to

overthink and worry and hold on, thinking things will fall apart if we let go. That's why the Apostle Paul said, "*I die daily.*" And he meant: I release daily. I let go daily. I surrender daily. I untie and free myself from the past every single day.

See, the truth is that controlling and overthinking mindset is always creeping in, and that's why we have to let go on a regular basis -- a daily basis.

So the first step of letting go is about a mindful meditation. It is using the breath to bring us to the present. Because what happens when our breath brings us to the present, we automatically let go of the past! We automatically let go of worrying about the future. The more we can bring ourselves to the present just by using our breath, we feel a sense of peace. We're more present. We're more grounded. We're more centered. We're more alive. We are more engaged.

And the thing is: the mind's going to wander, but you just keep gently bringing it back, many times a day. And you'll be surprised, over time, what a powerful impact that can have on us feeling more centered and more powerful. And it'll improve our lives in great ways.

You know, the interesting thing -- if you really think about it -- is that meditation is a practice of letting go. That when we meditate, we let go of our concerns and worries. We let go of all the outer appearances. We let them go and center ourselves in Spirit. Center ourselves in God. That it opens us to feel a greater sense of peace and connection and oneness with Spirit.

Remember when Jesus said to his disciples, "*Come apart a while and rest.*" What he was saying is come apart and just let go of the world for a bit. And just center yourself in the presence and peace of God. And did you notice that Jesus prayed and meditated in the morning, in the afternoon, mid-day and evening? He did it frequently! And so he had a regular practice of letting go of the outer world, and centering himself in God's Spirit, and just opening himself to the fullness of God.

You know, using our breath helps us come to the present and the now -- which helps us let go of the past and the future. But it also helps us get our minds unstuck in anger or negative patterns. Coming back to our breath actually disrupts the mental negative patterns that sometimes get triggered several times a day. That when we catch ourselves, getting to the breath actually breaks up and slowly dissolves those negative mindset patterns. Going to the breath also helps us observe our thoughts so we don't get consumed, and they don't sabotage or undermine our peace and happiness. That we have more control over our mind -- than our mind over us -- the more we come back to center and just observe our thoughts.

Sometimes when we're stuck, we need to do some writing of stuff. And there are some -- if you listened to last week's -- you'll find out the process of working through some questions to release us and unearth us from some long-held beliefs. You can join me again for the practices on Tuesday night. But it is powerful and important work to learn how to let go.

Last week, we went into the deepest level of letting go, which is surrendering, which is a full, complete releasing and letting go mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Letting go of our dreams. Letting go of our goals. Just fully surrendering and opening ourselves to Spirit. Because the more we open ourselves, the more we allow the movement of the wisdom and peace and goodness of God to flow in and through us.

Now, today we're going to look at an aspect of surrendering we really don't think about. And that is: surrendering as a tool in helping us achieve our dreams and our desires.

So I want you to think: What is your biggest desire in your life right now? And, before we look at achieving them, we need to look at actually our desires and where they come from, and what they're about.

There are really three types of desires. The first one is our ego desires. These are our desires that are so attached to the physical and the outer world. And we sometimes live in fear -- and we have goals -- based on just wanting to have more. They are goals based in lack and fear. More money. More possessions. More food. More of everything! Because we have an underlying fear that we're not good enough, or there isn't enough. Sometimes we want these goals so that we look good or have a nice image. And they're not really goals that we actually want, but we think are going to make us happier and better.

The second kind of goals are goals from other people. Like, sometimes we have goals because our parents think we should become a dentist or an engineer. Sometimes people's opinions of us drive what we try to get in our lives. Sometimes we see other people with something, and we think, "*Well, I should have that.*" And it's kind of a "keeping-up-with-the-Joneses" mentality, where some of the goals for our lives are really what other people think and want, and not what we want.

And the third type of goals are really our soul goals: things that are inner yearnings that are in alignment with our authentic self. What it is that we really seek. What it is that we really want and desire. Not just wanting stuff for the sake of having it, or wanting stuff because other people think: but is really calling us to have and experience in terms of our career or lifestyle or kind of relationship that we want. We don't just accidentally fall and take whatever happens; we need to be more intentional and clear with what our true and highest desires are.

So how do we use the power of surrender to manifest our desires in our lives?

The first one is to **USE SURRENDER TO GET CLEAR ABOUT OUR DESIRES**. You know, sometimes we really don't know what we want! Sometimes we're unsure; we're unclear. And then we grab an "ego goal" or something someone else thinks just to kind of fill the space, instead of utilizing the power of letting go and surrendering to get clear about our goals.

You know, when it says, "*Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and the door will be opened unto you,*" there's an underlying understanding that you're going to give it some thought. You're going to take some time and prayerfully contemplate what it is that you want to ask for, and what it is that you're seeking and desiring in your life. It's about going a little deeper than your head and what society is saying, and getting down to the soul-level to say: What is mine to do? Is this for my highest and best? Or: What is it that is really calling me?

Sometimes before asking for what we want, sometimes we need to ask: Is this what I really want? Is this what is really for my highest good? And just kind of open ourselves and say, "*Spirit, what is mine to do? What is mine to learn? What is the highest and best decision in this situation?*" We have access to this incredible wisdom, and we can open ourselves and surrender ourselves to it to get more clarity.

Paramahansa Yogananda used to have a little mantra. And his was, "*God, reveal Thyself to me. Reveal Thyself through me.*" And just doing that begins to give us a level of clarity on what it is that we desire.

You know, John Purkiss gave a great example when he said that his business was falling apart -- his life was falling apart -- and he didn't know what to do. And he read a book called *A Rich Man's Secret*, where the [author] always surrendered and let go. Surrendered and let go; came back to his breath. So [Purkiss] started practicing it, and he started surrendering more and more: just his life, his career, his direction. And then an opportunity popped up to be a headhunter. And he never thought of being a headhunter; he didn't think he had any skills about it. But what he did was: every time he went to an interview -- every time he did anything -- he always surrendered. He always surrendered. And, amazingly, he started getting good at tuning into other people. He got really good at matching people up for executive searches. And he became a great success. And he said that he really "surrendered his way to success." I mean, it brought this great opportunity, gave him great success, made more money than

he thought ... and all because he was willing to just surrender. And it guided him and clarified for him what his career was.

Sometimes people use a thing like muscle testing for food. You know, they'll touch a banana or a bagel, and they'll muscle test to see. And, to me, that's just a way of surrendering and tuning in at a deeper level to really get if something is good for us. You know, there are all kinds of choices we have. We can select this or select that. But the question is: Are you tuning in and surrendering to allow the clarity and the wisdom of a deeper level of you to really guide you in all your decisions, from food to relationships to career.

I remember when I was in the process of wondering if to be a minister. I didn't want to be a minister at all! I had a lot of resistance; I thought, *"You know what, I don't want to work on Sundays! That doesn't sound like a fun gig being a minister!"* There were a whole bunch of other fun things I thought of! But, as I let go of my resistance, I really realized what an incredible honor -- and what incredible joy and what incredible fulfillment -- being in ministry was about! And so, it was really good to surrender and let go. It reduced the resistance. Because it's brought me to a career that I find more fulfilling than anything I could ever imagine. *[Laughs]* And I'm so honored and blessed to do this! And had I not let go and surrendered to my resistance, who knows what I'd be right now? *[Laughs]* But I feel so blessed to be a minister.

And the point I'm trying to make here is: Use the power of surrender to get clarity about your desires. Even saying something as simple as, *"Spirit, Thy will be done. And I surrender to whatever is for my highest good. Just show me!"* It will begin to bring a level of clarity.

Second thing to surrender is: **SURRENDER TO THE JOY OF RIGHT NOW.** Judith Orloff wrote a book, and I love the title. It's called *The Ecstasy of Surrender*. And she admits that she's a bit of a work-a-holic, and she has to work hard in surrendering. But she uses surrendering to help her in her teachings and writing her books. And she uses it to get through her daily list for her life, from working out to paying her bills. But here's what she also says: *"Success is not just about achievement. Success is also when I laugh, love and really surrender to feeling happy about the tiniest things. It's reveling in winter thunderstorms, warm fires, night-blooming jasmine and shooting stars. It's having peace of mind and some blessed downtime, rather than knotting myself up in frustration, especially when things seem to fall apart."*

You know, surrendering is also about letting go enough to allow yourself to be happy right here and now. Too often, we're too busy chasing to relax and enjoy -- to relax and be present to all the good in our life -- and really appreciate how good our life is. Being present to the here and now is great, but something that's also good is to appreciate the here and now. It's one thing to be present to a deep breath. *[Breathes in deeply]* And then it's also a wonderful thing to just appreciate that you can have a deep breath. To just appreciate air as it comes in and air as it goes out. To appreciate how comfortable your body is right now. To appreciate how healthy you are. To appreciate that you are alive in this very moment! That we can surrender to not just be in the present, but to appreciate the present.

You know, being happy right now is the best foundation and the greatest springboard to achieve greater things in our lives! And just being present to the tiny, little moments that are blissful and wonderful and magnificent about being alive. And when we create that in the moment -- to appreciate the now -- it begins to easily attract more good in our lives.

So recently, two little cool things happened for me in meditation. I love meditating in my back yard. And, about a week ago, I was meditating in my back yard. I mean, I went outside, and I heard classical music! In 10 years of living there, I have never heard anybody playing music; it's in the middle of the day! And it was so peaceful and beautiful; it was at the perfect volume. And it was so wonderful! I heard some birds chirp, and the music's going. And it was a heavenly little moment and experience.

And then, a couple of days ago, I had opened the back door and the side door, and I was doing some work. And the sun was shining, and it was coming in to the house. And there was a little breeze from the

two doors. I heard the little wind chimes. I mean, I heard some birds chirping. I heard the heavy garbage truck in the distance. And there was something so beautiful about that moment.

You know, life presents so many blissful, beautiful, magnificent moments. But sometimes we're not present to them. And sometimes we don't take the time to pause to appreciate them. But just appreciating them begins to help us appreciate so much of this amazing life that we have.

You know, Covid has given us the opportunity to practice letting go a lot! And we are still in the midst of a lot more uncertainty about when "normal" is going to come back, or what "normal" even is. But it also gives us the gift to practice just appreciating and experiencing the joy in life right now. To appreciate, right now, what's going on: the tender moments, the experiences. Because life is filled with great moments. A great life is about living great moments! So are you willing to utilize the power of surrender to let go and just appreciate the now moments?

The final thing I'm wanting to talk about with surrender is to **SURRENDER TO ALLOW YOUR INNER GUIDANCE TO LEAD YOU AND INSPIRE YOU TO MANIFEST YOUR DREAMS**. You know, as we learn to surrender, it really is about listening and tuning in at a deeper level to that inner wisdom -- to that higher self -- and allow it to lead us and to guide us and to inspire us.

Conrad Hilton has a wonderful experience in one of his books, where he said that he wanted to buy a prestigious hotel in Chicago. And it was sealed bids, and it went to the highest bidder. So, after doing research and thinking about it, he bid 165,000, which would be worth today about 700,000. 165,000. And then that night he went to bed, and he just: something was just stirring in him. He was a little uncomfortable, and he was thinking about it. And then when he woke up the next morning, a number came to him, and that was 180,000. So he went and changed his bid from 165 to 180. And then, when it was revealed, he won the highest bid by \$200. You know, he listened to his intuition, and he let it guide his actions, and he let it inspire him to follow it.

You know, the truth is: There is an intelligence beyond our human thinking. There is an intelligence available to us beyond our reasoning and our analyzing and our studying. Beyond the power of our brains. It is an inner knowing. The question is: Are you willing to surrender to it? Are you willing to tap into it, and open ourselves to let it guide us in all aspects of our lives?

You know, Richard Branson -- of Virgin Records and Virgin Airlines -- says, *"I rely far more on gut instinct than researching huge amounts of statistics."* Steve Jobs said, *"I have the courage to follow my intuition and my heart."* And that's why he thinks he succeeded: because he followed his heart. He followed his inner intuition. Beyond reason, he trusted that inner feeling. Oprah said, *"I have trusted the still, small voice my entire life. And when I make mistakes, it's because [Rev. Maraj laughs] I didn't listen to it."*

The truth is: To not surrender and go deeper and listen is to deny ourselves of access to a higher level of intelligence and guidance. And the question is: Are you willing to trust that inner intelligence? And let go and surrender fully to let Spirit lead your life?

To surrender to God means you don't need to go it alone! You have access to the greatest power [laughs] and guidance and intelligence in the world! And are you willing to surrender yourself and let it -- not only use it -- but let it use you? To move through you to bring more light and goodness into your life and your world? Let it heal you. Let it uplift you. Let it comfort you. Let it inspire you!

You know, when we look at our lives, there is "mushroom" for improvement. [Laughs] Yeah, I can't believe I brought back that bad joke! But there are so many!

I mean, we all are seeking better lives. And the fact is: We have all the tools we need! We have all the principles and practices that we need! And one of the most powerful and underutilized ones is letting go. And I'd love to tell you that it's easy. It's not easy. It takes practice. It takes work. And it takes work on a consistent basis. But it absolutely works, and it will absolutely change and transform your life.

Zig Ziegler wrote a book many years ago called *See You at the Top*. And, in it, one of the lines says, "*The elevator to success is out of order. You've got to take the stairs.*" And I like to tell you; you'd love an easy ride. But the truth is: It takes the stairs. It takes work. And one of the key aspects is learning to let go and practice surrender every single day. It'll bring you peace. It'll bring you to the present. It'll connect you to your power. And it'll open the door to possibilities. Letting go will liberate and empower you.

So, this week, I want you to practice deep letting go of surrender. Surrender deeply to your desires to get clear about what is yours to do. I want you to surrender to those little moments of joy. And then use surrender to allow the guidance to lead you and to inspire you. There is not one area of your life that will not get better -- from relationships to health to finances -- if you are willing to practice these principles. Do the work, and practice daily, the power of letting go.

God bless you all!

SOLO

Cerise Patron sings "Be True" (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on the piano)

Where would Moses be if he'd succumbed to slavery
And put his dreams up high upon a shelf
If he'd turned from the water and just walked home by himself
To never see the promised land, and never save another man

It all started with a thought that turned into a dream
A fire burning in the soul of a single human being
Every dream that is lived is a dream come true
So stand up for your dreams; to thine own self be true

What if Martin Luther King had been afraid that day
And never stood up to the ones who tried to take his rights away
All the pain and tears would have wash away
We'd never walk hand in hand; we'd never learn to take a stand

It all started with a thought that turned into a dream
A fire burning in the soul of a single human being
Every dream that is lived is a dream come true
Stand up for your dreams; to thine own self be true.

Never let another take, the dreams God's given you
Go out and live your dreams; do what you've always wanted to ...
Wanted to

And what about this church, and all the people that you see
Had we been afraid to search, and never learned to be free
Now we see the truth, and anything we want can be
And so we hold our heads up high as we spread our wings and fly

It all started with a thought that turned into a dream
A fire burning in the soul of a single human being
Every dream that is lived is a dream come true
Stand up for your dreams; to thine own self be true ...

Stand up for your dreams; to thine own self be true

OFFERING

Rev. Lori Fleming: It is that time in our service to give of our gifts and our tithes and our offerings. We're

so grateful to those of you who've sent in checks, who continue to contribute online. You're keeping everything going at Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center, and we are really grateful for that.

Our offering blessing is: *"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, God, for these gifts, 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: So we hope you've enjoyed your time with us online here. We're so grateful that you could be with us! And now will you listen as our 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 the Prayer for Protection?

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

Have a blessed day!

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