

LET GO OF CONTROL

Week #1 of a 4-Week Series Inspired by the Book, "The Let Them Theory"

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So, how many people have ever allowed the opinions or comments of people -- including some family members -- to stop you from doing something you really wanted to do? Anybody? And how many people have ever been a people pleaser seeking approval so someone would like us or love us? And how many people have ever had someone speak negatively of you behind your back and it bothered you for months? How many people have ever spoke negatively about someone else -- spoke behind *their* back -- and you did it for months? Anybody? [Congregants laugh] Yeah; a fewer number of people.

I saw this "Family Circus" cartoon years ago. And they had the main character standing out, looking up at the sky with his arms open. And it said, "*I love life. It's just the people I can't stand.*" [Congregants laugh]

And I think that goes to the point and the reality that relationships aren't easy. Getting along with other people, especially difficult people -- people we sometimes don't agree or see eye to eye with -- is not easy. But I would say one of the most important things for us to learn is to how to deal with people. If we want to have a life of happiness and success and fulfillment, we have to learn how to engage in relationship with people of various types.

So, today we begin a four-week series on Mel Robbins' blockbuster book called *The Let Them Theory*. How many people have read the book, have the book, or heard of her? All right. She he is really, really quite amazing. One of the things she says is that, if you are struggling to change your life, to achieve your goals and be happier, the problem isn't *you*. The problem is the power you are unknowingly giving other people.

I think many of us give our power away to other people. I think many of us are too concerned with what other people say and what other people do and what other people think. How many people would agree that sometimes you give your power away -- and the influence of your own happiness -- to people other than yourself?

And the thing is: we want people to like us. And that is the reason we care about what people think, because we want to be liked; we want to be loved. We want to feel connection; we want to feel a sense of belonging; we want that close touch; we want to know that we're valued and important and that people care. And when people don't like us, it really bothers us. When people don't like us, we sometimes will do anything -- and pretend to be anything --so people will like us.

I think we've all heard that old adage, "*You can't please all the people all the time.*" It is the absolute truth! We will never, no matter how close or how much we love people, always see eye-to-eye with folks. We will not always have the same perspective or have the same beliefs in so many areas. And we definitely will not always approve or like one another or our decisions.

You know, in the Book of Galatians, Chapter 1, Verse 10, it says: "*Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.*"

And what it is saying is that seeking people's approval and trying to get people to like us -- everyone to like us -- is not the path to spiritual fulfillment. If we are always focusing on what someone thinks about us or says about us, we will not live our most authentic life. We will rob ourselves of fulfilling the spiritual calling that we are here; we will limit our spiritual power and our creative energy.

Mel Robbins says, *"Stop wasting your life on things you cannot control: other people's opinions, moods, or actions. No matter what they say or think about you, let them."*

It is hard to practice this whole idea of just let them. And one of the main reasons is that we like to be in control. And "letting them" is about letting go and letting go of control. And all human beings: we are all kind of wired for being in control: being in control of our environment; being in control of our lives; being in control of keeping ourselves safe.

And it includes wanting to be in control of the people in our lives. And whether it is family members or friends or community or work, we want to be in control of those people. We want to be in control of people in rush hour traffic; we want to be in control of how people react in all kinds of different ways in our lives. We always want to be in control, and that's just not a fact. That's just not even a possibility. We spin our wheels and cause ourselves so much frustration.

So, instead of blaming or getting mad, you know, we need to accept the fact ... And the truth is: we cannot control other people. You know, trying to control people and situations actually creates more anxiety and more frustration. And it keeps us constantly anxious and constantly overstressed.

When you think about it, this whole idea of "let them" is about regaining our peace and freedom. It's about: stop trying to manage; stop trying to control; stop trying to save people. Stop trying to allow other people's behaviors to affect our decisions and how we live. Stop obsessing about what other people might be thinking or saying.

So, if a family member doesn't like the way you're living your life, let them. If all your girlfriends had a Bunko party and didn't invite you, let them.

Last Sunday I went to eat dim sum. Everybody know dim sum? It's a Chinese brunch. I love it! And my favorite thing is this coconut butter bun. Oh, it's just warm and delicious. It's so good! And so, I went at an early time, because it's rare that I get to go have brunch on a Sunday. And so, I went there and they ran out of my favorite coconut butter buns. [Congregants laugh] And I was just livid! *"How could you run out? It's only 10:30!"* And I was upset.

But then I remembered the book I was reading. [Congregants laugh] And I really decided to let them run out of my favorite coconut butter buns. [Congregants laugh]

And then I go outside and, as I'm leaving -- and I'm not in a rush -- but as I'm leaving, there's a lineup of three or four cars. And there's a huge white pickup truck trying to reverse into this small parking space. And he goes back three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 times. And I'm usually a patient guy in traffic, but I'm thinking, *"If it was me I would have gone somewhere else instead of, you know, and I wouldn't have gone 10 times back."* I said, *"Can you believe this guy?"* And then I had to take a deep breath and let him reverse into his parking space, no matter how many amount of times he wanted to take.

You know, there are all kinds of actions and decisions people take that we get hooked into that are none of our business. You ever do stuff like that? *"How could she wear that outfit in church?"* [Congregants laugh] It's like, that's none of our business! There are all kinds of things people can say and do that we don't agree with and, instead of getting hooked in a stew or worrying about them, we need to just let them. You know, let them live their lives. Because the more we let them the more peace we're going to feel; the more positive energy and power we're going to have, if we just let them.

To me, when we practice letting them, we remind ourselves of four things. Number one is acknowledging that there are things that we cannot control. When we say, *"Let them,"* it means that there are things that we can't control. Like, I had to come to grips that I could not control the person who baked the

coconut butter buns. [Congregants laugh] And there are a lot of things we need to admit, *"I can't control that, so why am I investing so much time and energy into it?"*

The second thing that "let them" does: it helps us release pent-up energy that we hold on to. The "can-you-believe-he's-behaving-that-way" kind of energy we hold to. And it helps us get to a place where we realize, *"Hey, I don't want to take that on. I'm not going to carry the weight of that particular burden. That is not mine to deal with."* Because we sometimes build up a lot of inner frustration that's just not necessary. "Let them" helps us release that.

And then the third thing: to "let them" is to trust: trust God; trust life; trust the Universe that it's going to work out. You don't need to carry this weight or force things to happen. To let means to allow. And when we let go or allow, it means that we're trusting that everything's going to be okay. Trusting that there is an invisible hand that is guiding and supporting and helping us so we don't have to freak out or get upset.

And then the final thing I think that "letting them" does for us is remind us to give others the freedom to live their own lives. It's *their* life. It's *their* decisions. It is *their* choices.

So, I want you to think of someone who may have done something you didn't like -- some behavior or something they said to you this week or recently, or that you're still holding on to -- and can you just take a deep breath [congregant sneezes loudly; other congregants laugh] and just say, *"God bless you."* [Rev. Maraj laughs with congregants]

After you stop laughing, you can take a deep breath and just say, *"Let them."* Whatever that is: *"Let them."* Which reminds you: you can't control it. Which reminds you just to release that energy. Which reminds you to trust it's going to work out. Which reminds you to give them the freedom to live their lives. Let them. Let them. Let them.

So, this morning we're going to look at three practices -- because this is really an ancient wisdom of learning how to "let them."

So, in Buddhism they say that we cause our own suffering; that we are the ones who cause our own suffering. And two of the major things that we do: one of them is that we are ... One of them is **attachment**. That we are attached; we are always craving. And attachment: the definition of that would be that I think that I need to necessarily have this thing and my life look that way for me to be happy. Like I am attached that I *have* to have, you know, X amount of money or this job or that girl or be married ... or whatever it is. I *have* to have that. I'm attached to some belief that I need something outside of myself to be happy.

And then the second one is **resistance**. And that is the belief that the conditions of my life right now are not good enough for me to be happy. I need something other than this

And so, I ask you: In your life, what are you resisting? And in your life: What are you attached to? Because the more attached we are, and the more resistant we are, the harder it is for us to "let them."

And so here are the three things we need to do to practice authentically living in a mindset of "let them." And the first one is **ACCEPTANCE**. It is about making peace with how things are and what has happened.

Sometimes we Ever have something happen and think, *"Oh, this shouldn't have happened! This was wrong that that happened or it was bad that it happened?"* It's just to make peace with the fact that it happened: that it happened; that it is how it is. Acceptance is just allowing what is to be without fighting it; without judging it; without hating it. It's saying, *"This is what has happened. This is what's going on right now in my life, with myself, and with my relationship."*

And the more that we have acceptance, we tend to be more present and more aware, and we're not consumed by the energy. It helps us from not being stuck or lost or overwhelmed by whatever is going on, by just accepting this is what has happened. It's reducing the resistance and the negativity that we might be holding just so we could be right here. *"So this is where I am. This is what is going on."* Acceptance is the thing that brings peace. It brings calmness. It brings clarity. And the more aware we are, the more engaged we are, the more we are connected to our power when we find a sense of acceptance.

You know, when we let others just live their lives, it really helps release the emotional pain and the emotional bondage we hold ourselves in. Here's three things that acceptance does. It helps us connect and accept what is. It helps us realize we don't have control. And it makes us realize that there's always going to be a variety of ways and things to do in life. Like, there are going to be a lot of different ways you can do the very same thing. And they're not wrong; they're just different.

People are all going to be different. We have different beliefs; we have different political affiliations; we have different spiritual practices. There are all kinds of things. There's always going to be variety and differences in life. And we need to accept that that it's just a norm of life. That things are the way we are. We don't have control over everything. And there's always going to be a huge range of perspectives and beliefs and practices and ways to live our lives.

So, the first thing we need to do, if you want to practice this whole idea of just "let them" -- and so that people's behaviors and attitudes and what they say don't affect us -- is to practice acceptance. Just let it be. Make peace with how life is.

And then the second one is to **PROCESS** when we get triggered by other people's behaviors or words. Let me give an example. So, you're in a work meeting and you have this idea you've been working really hard on. You're just so excited about it, you want to present it. So, you present the idea with all your enthusiasm, and you get people going, *"Oh."* And a blank stare. And they're just kind of politely nodding, *"Yeah; that's good."*

And then the next person gives their idea, and they love her idea. They go wild for her idea. They praise her, say how brilliant she is. And then you feel like you're shrinking, you're invisible, and you're kind of embarrassed. You start second-guessing yourself, *"God, they love her idea, not mine. Why did I present? I should have waited for a while."* And all this stuff is going on in you.

So even if you say, *"Let them take her idea instead of mine,"* or, *"Let them praise her and reject mine,"* sometimes you know there's still lingering stuff that's triggered in us."

Here's another one. You go out on a couple of dates with somebody and then they ghost you. [Congregants laugh] They will not respond to your calls; no explanation, no nothing. They're just gone. And you start thinking, *"What did I do wrong?"* You start replaying in your mind the dates and what you said and didn't say. And you're just freaking out. And even if you say, *"Let them ghost me"* or, *"Let them not say a word to explain anything,"* there's still some pain.

And so, just saying "let them," alone, is not enough. And we need to recognize when we get triggered. When some old wound or pain has been touched off, we need to ask ourselves things like, *"Why did that hurt me so much and why did that trigger me so deeply? What in me needs to be healed?"* Or, *"What do I have a closer look at? What in me still needs some healing and processing?"* And we really need to do our inner work -- our spiritual work.

It's lovely just to say a simple line like, *"Let them."* It is a wonderful philosophy and there's great stuff behind it. But if we aren't willing to do the deeper work, we'll keep repeating these patterns. We'll keep

repeating this pain. And we will continue to keep giving our power away to other people and other situations.

We need to use processing tools. I think one of the best is journaling: to write down all your feelings of why it hurt. You know, to even write down, *"Where did this pain start? Where did it come from? You know, what in me needs to be healed? What do I need to change? You know, what do I need to let go?"*

How many people have ever gotten triggered by something like abandonment or rejection, and you said to yourself, *"I thought I finished dealing with all that already!"* Anybody ever have something pop back up into your life? And that is not a bad thing! Sometimes we think, *"Oh, man, I didn't do; it's not healed."* No! Your soul is ready to heal it at an even deeper level now.

So, when things pop back up in our lives, we have to be willing to go and do that inner work. We need to go deeper and to process what's really going on so we can feel more healed and more whole and more connected to our true self.

And so when we can say, *"Let them,"* and we do our processing, then the first person: they could say, *"Even though my idea didn't get accepted this time, I'm still creative and I'm still talented and I'm still going to come up with new ideas and present them again."*

Or the second [ghosted] person goes, *"Hey, I deserve someone to treat me with respect, and who's willing to communicate with me, because I'm worthy of love, and I'm worthy of being cherished."*

And so, to me, you can't just say the line, *"Let them."* We all need to recognize the places where we might be wounded; where we might have some hurt; where something in us needs to be healed, to be processed, to be released so we can engage more fully and more deeply. Otherwise, we'll keep reconnecting with the pain and reliving the same patterns and keep giving our power away. But we deserve to heal, to process, and to feel whole and empowered again.

And then the final thing about "let them" is to give everyone the **FREEDOM** to live their lives. Mel Robbins says, *"The more you let people live their lives, the better your life gets."*

Let me read it again: *"The more you let people live their lives, the better your life gets."* If we want to have healthy relationships -- if we want to be healthy -- we have to give everyone the freedom to live their own lives.

Because sometimes we can get encumbered by being an enabler ... or co-dependent ... or trying to save people ... or being needy ... or trying to control others, thinking that we're kind of saving them or helping their lives. And one of the things we need to do is to empower other people and have faith and confidence that they have it in them to make the decisions and choices that they need. They are spiritual beings; they are powerful creators. And we need to hold that the truth of who they are for them. You know, we just see them in the light of the truth of who they really are and hold a prayer that they will find their path and find their way.

How many people have at least one person in your life that you know you could run their life better than they can? [Congregants laugh] And I'm not talking kids; I'm talking adults here! And so, the question we all need to ask ourselves: *"Is there anyone in my life I am not giving the freedom to live their own life? And who do I need to give freedom to let them live their own life?"* To let them fall and fail or do whatever they're supposed to do? But are you willing to set them free?

Because as we set them free, we set ourselves free, as well. And it's important for us to let people be free and also give ourselves that freedom, as well.

You remember that old thing: *"Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream?"* It's about rowing your own boat. It's not about trying to row somebody else's boat or have somebody row *your* boat. It's very tempting.

And so, the question is: Are you rowing your own boat? Are you living your life on your terms? Are you doing what you are called to do and what you want to do? Or what is stopping you from living the life that you want and doing what it is you desire? What do you need to do differently? What do you need to change? Where in your life do you need to work a little harder? Or where in your life do you need to get a little clearer about who you are and clearer about what it is you actually want?

"I give everyone the freedom to live their lives."

Together: [with congregation] *"I give everyone the freedom to live their lives."*

"I give myself the freedom to live my life."

Together: [with congregants] *"I give myself the freedom to live my life."*

Mel Robbins says, *"You are capable of creating anything that you want if you are willing to put the time and energy into working for it ... and that means you must stop wasting your time on petty, shallow, and insignificant things. It also means that you have to stop trying to control the things you can't: other people."*

A rabbi and a priest get into a huge car accident, and after both of them crawl out of their cars, the rabbi looks at the priest and says, *"Look at that! Both of our cars are completely demolished, and yet here you are alive, and I'm alive, and we are well. This is a sign from God that we should become good friends."*

The priest looks at the wreckage in the car and absolutely agrees.

The rabbi then grabs something from his totally destroyed car and says, *"And look at this, too. Even though everything was destroyed in our cars, this bottle of expensive wine is not broken. This must also be a sign from God that we should open it and drink together to celebrate our new friendship."*

And the priest agrees.

And the rabbi hands the bottle to the priest, and he takes three or four big swigs and hands it back to the rabbi. But the rabbi says, *"No,"* and he hands it back to the priest. And the priest drinks four or five more swigs. He says, *"You sure you don't want some?"*

He says, *"No, have one more drink."*

And he drinks three or four more. And three-quarters of the bottle is gone. He hands it back to the rabbi, and the rabbi puts a cork on it and hands it back to the priest. And the priest says, *"Aren't you going to drink any?"*

And the rabbi says, *"No; I think I'll just wait till after the police arrive."* [Congregants laugh]

You can't control what everybody does. [Congregants laugh]

People are not easy. Relationships are hard; they're challenging, working and engaging with all the different people and the different perspectives that we have. But we must allow others -- and give them permission to live their lives. We must practice acceptance. We must process when we get triggered. And we must give permission to live their lives.

You know, we all have to try and stop controlling things that we cannot control and control what we can, which is *ourselves*. In Stoicism, an ancient philosophy, it says that controlling your thoughts and actions -- focusing on yourself -- is the most important thing. Because that's where true power lies: in controlling

ourselves. If we want to be happy; if we want to have healthy and better and more fulfilling relationships -- no matter what other people do and no matter how they show up -- we need to let go of control and **let them.**

God bless you all!

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