

THE GIFT OF LEARNING

Week #3 of a 4-Week Series Inspired by the Book, "The Let Them Theory"

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So how many people have ever not said something important to someone because you were afraid they would get mad or feel hurt? Anybody? And how many people ever had a guilt trip laid on you to get you to do something, and you gave in to the guilt? And last one: How many people ever had someone who had a lot of volatile mood swings and it felt like what you're walking on egg shells being around them sometimes?

You know, I truly believe that every one of us have allowed -- at some time or another -- other people's emotional reactions to stop us from being honest with them. To stop us from sharing our feelings with them. To stop us from asking for what we want. And sometimes pressuring us into saying "yes" when we wanted to say "no."

Today we are in Week #3 of our four-week series on Mel Robbin's book, *The Let Them Theory*. And she says, *"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 to other people."*

Sometimes we give a lot of power to what other people say or think or do. A lot of power we give other people over our own peace of mind, our own happiness, our own success of what we do, and what we don't do.

In Week #1, the message was entitled, "Let Go of Control." Because the reality is: there are a lot of things in life that we love being in control, but there are a lot of things we can't be in control of. And the number one thing we can't be in control of is other people. And so, we need to let that go. And she said, *"If other people don't like how you live your life, let them. If other people disagree with you or gossip about you, let them."* She said, *"The more we let people live their lives, the better our lives get. Just let go of that control."*

And then, the second week the talk was entitled, "Reclaim Your Power." And the truth is that the only thing we can have power over is ourselves. And it is for us to develop a level of self-mastery in the way we look at things with our perspective, our attitude, our mindset. The way we look at things and how we respond more positively. And the line she uses is "let me." You know, *"Let me take charge of my life."* You know, *"Let me respond positively. Let me see this from a positive perspective. Let me improve who I am and how I show up in my life and in my relationships."*

And today we're going to look at two areas of how we need to learn how to deal better. And the first one is with other people's emotional reactions. And the other one is how we compare ourselves with others.

So, let's start with our **emotional reactions**. And why is it that we allow ourselves to be manipulated by other people's upset and disappointment? Why is it that we choose to take on the weight of other people's emotional immaturity at our own expense? We are not born emotionally mature, and so we really need to learn how to be more mature in how we show up in our relationships and in our lives.

And the thing is: we are already not born with it, and we don't do a great job teaching our children or ourselves how to process our emotions in a healthy way. Therapist Anne Davin says that most adults are stuck at the level of emotional maturity as an eight-year-old. And she asserts that most of us still at our adult ages today do not know how to process our emotions in a healthy manner, much less communicate our needs effectively and directly and respectfully to others.

Let me give you an example. How many people have ever given someone a received the silent treatment? Anybody? Or the cold shoulder? How many people? Now here we are as adults, and we give the silent treatment ... which means refuse to talk or acknowledge the person that we are mad at. And we even get into this little contest of who will speak first, and we don't want to be the first one to break the silence. Now does that sound like the maturity of an adult or an eight-year-old? [Congregants laugh]

I mean it is absolutely amazing! Because when we're giving the silent treatment, you know what we're saying? We're saying, *"I'm hurting; I need your attention. I need your understanding and support."* And yet, we choose to ignore and avoid communicating when that's what we need!

Here's another one. How many people have ever been on the receiving end of someone's passive aggressive behavior? Anybody experienced that? I mean, it is absolutely stunning how poor we are at handling emotional reactions, including our own. And we may hide it better than kids, but it's still not great within each and every one of us.

And it's not easy. Emotions are uncomfortable. They can be intense; they can be overwhelming and painful. And when we are not taught how to regulate and manage our own emotions, it becomes even harder to regulate and manage the emotions of others.

And is it surprising, in some ways, our relationship with emotions? Because we grow up hearing things like, *"Don't cry. Stop crying. Big boys don't cry. There's nothing to cry about here; just get over it. Calm down. Everything is fine. Don't be a crybaby."* I mean, these are just a few of the messages we get. And clearly, in our culture, emotions are seen as bad; as weak; as immature; childish; and something so uncomfortable that we should avoid them.

And so, we learned how to hide and how to pretend and deny and stuff our emotions. And we can never process emotions we don't admit that we have, and emotions that we do not allow ourselves to feel.

Feelings and emotions are normal and they're healthy and they're an important part of life. If someone breaks up with you unexpectedly, it's normal to feel a bit sad; to feel a little bit heartbroken. You know, when we lose a loved one that passes away, feeling grief, feeling loss, feeling confused is normal. We lose our job, feeling a bit devastated and frustrated and uncertain and even angry. When we mess up and get chewed out by the boss, feeling a little embarrassed and ashamed is normal. Feelings are normal! But Instead of moving through them -- experiencing them -- we often avoid them and repress them.

You know, life isn't easy. Life is hard. And life is an emotional experience. It can be frustrating. It can be heartbreaking. It can be devastating. It can be disappointing. And it can be exciting, it can be exhilarating. It can be joy-filled, as well. But it's important that we don't just skip over -- and particularly skipping over the painful feelings-- and go right to, *"It's all good."* Because sometimes we are burying some pain there, and it is actually hurting us.

You know, I truly believe that we are spiritual beings having a human experience. But sometimes by the way we avoid our emotions it seems like we're spiritual beings trying to avoid a human experience. You know, Jesus wept, Jesus got angry. Jesus was disappointed. I truly believe that the healthiest and the happiest people in the world are those who feel and allow themselves to feel the entire range of the human experience and our human emotions.

And so, if someone has an emotional reaction, let them. If someone feels hurt, let them. If someone is angry, let them. If someone is disappointed, let them. If somebody wants to be passive-aggressive, let them. If someone wants to go silent, let them. If they want to erupt, let them. If they want to play the victim, let them. If they want to deny that anything even happened, let them. If they want to make it all about them, let them.

The next time we get triggered, we should all try this: that, if we feel ourselves getting triggered and have an interaction and someone's having an emotional reaction, imagine them as an eight-year-old version of themselves. And instead of looking at them with contempt, maybe -- understanding how we are in our culture and don't teach great ways of feeling our emotions -- maybe we should have more compassion. Compassion for them. Compassion for ourselves. Because we're not exactly great at processing our emotions, let alone expressing them in a healthy way.

And then move to the "let me." Let me be emotionally mature. Let me be compassionate. Let me be loving. Let me be honest with the people in my life and be honest with myself. Let me remind myself that managing other people's emotional reactions is not my responsibility. Let me remove myself from difficult situations, or texts, or the dinner table, or wherever the situation is happening. Let me set better boundaries. Let me take care of what I can take care of, which is myself.

And sometimes we're going to be the ones that are having the emotional reaction. And we need to learn how to deal with our emotions better than we usually do or have been taught.

You know, emotions are chemical reactions in our brain, and it actually lasts about 60 to 90 seconds. There is a rise and fall; your heart races; you sweat a little bit; you get intense. And it rises and then it falls. And so, what's important to do is to let ourselves feel our emotions; there's nothing wrong with them! They're healthy! They're a natural part of life!

And then, we need to let them have their rise and not freak out when the initial part. It's best in the first 60 seconds to not say anything.

Remember: you ever heard somebody say, *"If you get upset count to 10?"* Have you heard that? We should actually count to 60 ... [Congregants laugh] But still, the general premise is understood! That, so, when it rises, the best thing to do is say nothing. Otherwise, if you engage in that at that point, it can get a little out of hand. And you can kind of lose it a little bit and get angrier and say things you might regret.

So, it's important for us to allow ourselves to feel those emotions and just to let it rise and to let it fall. We'll be more aware; we'll handle ourselves more positively, more effectively for ourselves and for others, as well. But the important thing is to make space to feel our emotions and to not judge them or hate them, but allow ourselves to feel them. We have to let them pass through to be processed and not be lingering or stuck inside of us.

How many people ever had to make a decision, and you knew it was the right decision for you, but it disappointed or upset somebody else? Anybody ever have that experience? And so, you know, maybe sometimes things are right for us, but other people don't agree. And so, maybe it was like you moving out of state and you had to move away from your parents, and they were mad and upset that they weren't going to be near you. But you knew it was the right thing for you.

See, sometimes we let our emotions and our attachments and whatever people think affect our decisions. And the way we do that is by avoiding the truth and actually living an inauthentic life, and not doing what our soul is actually calling us to do. So, there's a point at which we need to have the courage and the strength to listen to our inner guidance; to trust our gut; to know what is for our highest and best; and know that -- in doing it -- we ultimately are doing the highest and best for everyone. To know that when you say, *"Let me make the decision that's right for me,"* but also, *"Let me realize that this, too, shall pass."* That our parents' upset will eventually settle down and we'll continue to love each other from a distance.

That it's important for us to keep honoring our truth; keep living our life. Because that's what's going to bring the greatest good to ourselves and others. And anything less is inauthentic.

I'm sure we've all said and done and made decisions to please the people that loved us and to get their approval. And the fact is: that's not real love. That's imitation love. It's not authentic and real love, because you want to be honest with the people you love.

And that's how you create intimacy and closeness: by respecting other people's boundaries; respecting other people's decisions; and especially respecting our own decisions and having our own boundaries and making our own choices. It's not easy, but it is an important thing for us to learn how to work with and to utilize emotional reactions to allow us to live our lives to the best.

The second thing that we need to learn is how to handle the situation when we compare ourselves to others. How many people ever compared yourself to someone that was really rich and successful, and you felt really jealous and inadequate? Anybody ever have that experience? How many people have ever seen like a really good-looking couple, and they have this gorgeous, huge house, and they have these wonderful, perfect kids and this really, really great life, and you wish you had their life? Anybody?

And then, how many people ever looked on Facebook and you see all these people doing all these fun, adventurous things? And they're *traveling* and they're eating great food and they're wearing really the very best clothes, and you think, "*My life sucks!*"? [Congregants laugh] It is amazing how we compare ourselves to others!

And some of it is kind of understandable, you know, for self-evaluation; to seeing -- kind of looking -- at where we fit in the world and where we have achieved our social standing. You know, comparing ourselves to others can be good, but often we do it in a way that actually hurts us. We do it in ways that sometimes make us not feel good about ourselves.

You know, we can use comparing to teach us or torture us; to help us or hurt us; or to bring us down or build us up. And the fact is: most of the time we do comparing, we don't feel good about ourselves.

You know, in the book, Mel Robbins has a chapter called "Life is Unfair." And I would really change that to "Life is Different and Life is Diverse." We are always going to have different experiences, different cultures, different bodies, different abilities, different talents, different lifestyle, different looks. I mean, we are all dealt a different hand in our lives.

And sometimes, yes! It does seem unfair. Some people are born into incredible poverty, or born into a war-torn country. And some are born into incredible wealth and affluence. You know, some people live until their 90s; some people die in their 30s. You know, some people have great incredible health and some people get cancer. And some people with cancer get better, and some people with cancer die. You know, some people have a really great boss and they get promotions, and they're happy and love their jobs. Some people have a crappy boss and they don't get promotions and they hate their job. Some people inherit a lot of money, and other people struggle to pay the bills or just trying to catch up with their debt. I mean, some people have easy and great and wonderful relationships, and other people are still looking for the right one.

You know, there are different types of lives; different types of situations. And we sometimes just want to hit better or worse ... but maybe it's just different. Maybe life is meant to be this diverse. Maybe it is meant. I mean, is the life of a Stephen Hawking less than the life of Michael Jordan? I mean, I could ... Sorry to give famous examples, but you know what I'm saying? I mean, you can see how we compare, and I would say we don't need to.

You know, the Bible talks about different. Here's in 1 Corinthians, it says, "*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same God who gives them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of workings, but all of them are in everyone in and through the same God.*"

In the Book of Romans, it says, *"We have different gifts according to the grace that God has given us. And if your gift is prophecy, then prophesy. If yours is service, then serve. If yours is teaching, then teach. If yours is encouragement, give encouragement. If yours is giving, give generously. If yours is to lead, then do it diligently. And if yours is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."*

We all have different paths. We all have different lessons. We all have different gifts. And it's not better or worse, so it's important not to compare. We are all children of God -- different and diverse -- yet we are all one from the same Presence and Power. We're all one. We're all different in our past, but we are all here for the same reason: to experience the peace and the love and the glory of God. To let the Spirit of God within each and every one of us shine brightly in our own unique way.

Now, we will have different circumstances and situations. And this constantly and physically, comparing ourselves can do nothing but help us feel inadequate; to feel like we are not good enough. And so, we could choose to feel bad that life seems unfair, or we could choose to feel good about our unique and amazing gift that God has given us for life.

To me, we're all dealt different hands, but to play a winning hand is to love your life; to love your situation; love your talents and your abilities; and to let them shine; and to share them with others.

"I embrace my life's journey."

Together: [with congregants] *"I embrace my life's journey."*

"It is uniquely designed just for me."

[With congregants:] *"It is uniquely designed just for me."*

And so, we can torture ourselves when we use comparing others to determine that we don't measure up in some ways. We torture ourselves when we think that, *"Someone else is winning means I'm losing"*; where, *"Someone else's success means my failure."* You know that lack mindset of kind of an "us vs. them" thing is so unhealthy and wrong. To measure our own self-worth based on comparing ourselves to someone else is really not the truth of the incredible children of God and expressions of the Divine that we are. Every time we compare ourselves in that way, we will feel unhappy, dissatisfied, and we will suffer.

But we can use comparing to help us because, to me, when you compare and see somebody that's successful, it should get us excited; that they're showing us that it's possible! Get excited that they figured out a formula; they figured out practices and mindsets to use that has helped bring out the greatness in them. So I can use some of those principles to bring out the greatness in myself!

Everybody learns to become a greater teacher and a greater person, and often because of the other people in our lives! Scripture says, *"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature."* Jesus learned! You know, it was through the Spirit of God in him ... but also the people around him helped him learn and be better.

Michael Jordan wasn't born a perfect basketball player. He grew and he learned. You know, Taylor Swift wasn't born this amazing performer, an entertainer; she grew into it. And whoever we are, we can grow into it if we are willing to learn from others; to utilize them as mentors or teachers; as role models.

You know, sometimes we think that everybody is against us. No! They're actually for us and with us! We can utilize these people to help us bring out the best in ourselves *by seeing the best in them*.

When I joined Toastmasters a million years ago, I wanted to become a really, really great speaker. And I wanted to enter the speaking contest. And then the speaking contest -- they were like for five to seven minutes long, these talks. And there was a guy in our era; he was King of the Hill. His name was John Roberts, this British guy. He was hilarious. He was probably one of the best speakers I ever saw in my life.

And I wanted to beat him, but I also was inspired by this guy. So, I would ask him questions all the time. He became my mentor. And I loved just listening to him. And here are the four things this guy taught me to be a better speaker, because he became my mentor and teacher. And he said: find your true self, and then be yourself. He said that the most important thing is to be your natural, authentic self, even though there are 500 eyes looking at you, which is not natural. But he said be your most natural, authentic self. Discover that and be that.

Then the second thing he said is: work hard. He said: work so hard that it looks easy. He said: when you make it look easy, that's the amount of work that is needed. And that's what he did and truly, truly exemplified. Make it look so natural and easy by working hard.

And then the third thing he says is: always say "yes." Take every opportunity. It will grow you and expand you, and amazing and wonderful things will happen. I used to drive one hour-plus to speak for five to seven minutes and then get back in my car, because somebody asked and I said "yes." I said "yes" so many times! I once sat next to a guy who was the president of Countrywide Automotive in Mississauga, Ontario, and he leaned over and he said, *"Hey, will you come speak to my people and how much do you charge?"* And I thought, *"Charge?"* [Congregants laugh] *"I'm driving for an hour for free and you want to give me money; say, 'Yeah, man!'"* [Congregants laugh] That, when you put things into motion, good things will happen. People will be drawn to you.

And the last thing he taught me was: enjoy all of it. Don't just enjoy when you're delivering the talk; enjoy preparing it just as much. Enjoy when you get the gig and enjoy when you get that check. Enjoy the entire experience! It is the joy of doing it -- whether you're doing it for three people or 3,000 people -- do the thing you love and do it with your joy and your passion.

Here's what Mel Robbins says: *"Whoever and whatever is making you feel jealous, good! Their success and their wins don't shrink your chances of creating the life that you want. They expand it. Let them lead. Flip jealous into inspiration and see what's possible through their example."*

Success is about what you're willing to learn! And are you willing to work for it?

A young boy walks into a barber shop and the barber whispers to his customer, *"This is the dumbest kid in the world. Watch while I prove it."* And he pulls out a dollar and puts the dollar in his hand, and he puts two quarters in his other hand. And he says to the boy, *"Which one do you want, son?"*

And the boy takes the two quarters and leaves.

And then the barber says, *"What did I tell you? The kid chooses the quarters every single time. The kid never learns."*

Later, the customer sees the same kid coming out of the ice cream shop, licking this ice cream, looking as happy as could be. And the customer says, *"Hey, son, may I ask you a question? Why did you choose the quarters instead of the dollar?"*

And the little boy, smiling as he's looking at his ice cream, says, *"Because the day I take the dollar, the game is over."* [Congregants laugh]

See? He was willing to learn! [Laughs]

Tom Brady said, *"You don't have to be special to be great."* He said, *"You must do the thing that most people won't and that is to be consistent, be determined, and be willing to do the work."* I absolutely believe one of the greatest gifts God has given us is the ability and the capacity to learn.

Nobody is born emotionally mature completely. We have to learn and work at it. Nobody is born knowing the absolute key to success of every area of life. We need to learn and work at it.

I always believe that there is enough success for everyone. Be happy for other people when they succeed, because they show us what's possible. They teach us; they inspire us; and help us believe in ourselves. And we are all here to believe in each other.

We are capable of doing amazing and wonderful things. The question is: Are you willing to learn it and are you willing to work for it?

God bless you all.

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