

WHEN WE STOP PUSHING, LIFE STARTS MOVING

Week #1 of a 3-Week Series, "The Magic of Surrender: Learning to Let Go"

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We are talking for the next three weeks about "The Magic of Surrender." I don't know if anybody's read it yet. I've read it a couple times now. It's by Kute Blackson. And what he says is: the magic of surrender explores the transformative powers of letting go while embracing life's uncertainties.

The book challenges the misconception that surrender is passive or a sign of weakness, instead presenting it as an active engagement with life that leads to greater freedom, joy, and fulfillment. Blackson explains that the true surrender involves trusting the universe and aligning with the greater purpose, allowing individuals to express and experience life's magic beyond personal limitations. Through personal anecdotes and lessons from his own life, he illustrates how surrendering to life's flow can result in profound growth, inner peace, and ultimately lead you to a life of impact and legacy.

So, when I read this book ... the first time I read, I didn't, ... I say "read." I listen to books, because I drive at the time and I'm listening to it. I had to redo it and actually listen to it in my room so I could take notes, because there was just so much to be unpacked. And I really like it. There's a lot of books about letting go out there. Lots of them, right? But the author reads this book and he has so much passion for what he's sharing in this book. If you get a chance, you can go on YouTube and look at some of his lectures and stuff. You can just see that he has so much passion for it.

And it comes honestly, because when he was born in Ghana, his father had 300 churches. By 8 years old, he was preaching. By 14, he was ordained. His path was laid out in front of him. I mean, his whole family is like, *"You're the one. You're right behind dad. Here we go!"* Right?

And all along -- as he's doing all these things for his family -- there's this little gnawing inside of him. Anybody who felt that before? *"Is this really what I'm supposed to be doing? Is this really where I fit in?"* But they're like, *"No; here's the path. Oh, yeah. You're going to walk this. You're going to take it all over all the way down the road."*

And fortunately for him, even at a young age, he was able to articulate to his parents that that wasn't his passion, and he wanted something more. So his "more" led him all over the world. And he wanted to learn how to choose for himself; to be able to decide; to be able to listen to that still small voice.

For him, in his book, he explains a lot of these stories, and many times it led him from one place to the next place to the next place. Anybody ever go to one place and said, *"Oh, this is it!"* and then find out a couple of years, *"Oh; not so much."* I mean, that's happened to me probably 40 times in my life! You know, *"Oh, yeah! I got it!" ... "No; that's not it."* [Congregants laugh] Doesn't really work. Doesn't fit.

So, that's kind of what happened with him. He followed his calling and he discovered that we all must one day realize that the miracles we are seeking are not somewhere "out there." They're in here [points to herself].

And even in his father's ministry, he talks about -- he saw miracles every day. He saw the blind see. He saw the lame walk, just like the followers of Jesus. His father's ministry was doing all that! And to him, that was magical, but he wanted more. He wanted to know where his magic fit in and how he could see that.

So in Chapter #1, he talks about **a radical shift in perspective**. Most of the time my radical shifts in perspective wound up with a, you know, really hit-bottom-hard thing or a smack -- Woof! I say people smack me with a two-by-four upside of the head. That's the way I get my message. Hello! Listen!

Sometimes it was something really drastic for me. At least that was for a long time. It's not that way anymore, thank goodness!

But he says, in the first chapter, that *"Surrendering is not being passive, weak, lazy and not working towards your goals."* That's not what he's talking about. Surrender seems to kind of get a bad rap.

Now, I remember this from when I was a kid. I don't know if any of you guys had older siblings. I had two older brothers, and the oldest one was really mean. But I was the oldest daughter, and I wasn't having it. So, you know how you'd be ... Because it was all WW -- you know, the Wrestling World War Federation in our house; you could do anything, right? Right there in front of the parents, you'd be fighting and wrestling, and they'd just go, *"Whatever,"* smoke their cigarettes, and watch TV, you know.

So, I mean, we'd be in all-out, down. And you always, when they got you down, it was always, *"Give up! Surrender! Give up!"* You know what? I never would. [Congregants laugh] And that's when people ask me, *"How are you?"* and I say, *"I'm ornery."* I would never give up. I mean, I would lay there and cry all night if I had to. They always walked away sooner or later, because I wasn't going to give them the satisfaction, because then they'd do it to me again.

Because giving up -- to me at that stage in my life -- meant that I was too weak to take care of myself. And what Blackson is saying is that's not what surrender is about. It has been given a bad rap.

We're conditioned by measuring sticks. Okay? These are either self-imposed or imposed by our community or our world. How do you measure your life? Right? So, one of the ways we measure our life is: we get through school; we go to college; we get married. We have all these milestones that we've got to meet. And when we get to the next one: oh, we've done so good! This is our measure of a life.

But that's not who we are. That's just a step on the stone. It's not the way we really need to measure who we are. And most of the time it leads us to places that trap us in our mind.

So how do we really want to measure ourselves? And how do you want to fit into a life that was built for you? Either you constructed it with your mind ... Like growing up, some people hear messages like, *"Well, you're not good enough."* Or, *"You'll never amount."* Well, the big one from my family was, *"You'll never amount to anything"* or, *"Who do you think you are?"* That always kept me down for so many years. *"Who did I think I was?"*

I can't tell you until I had enough therapy before I finally figured out I know who I am! And what was said then was meant to keep in my place; it was a way of parenting that they did back then, at least in my family. But it left a big enough mark that I can tell you I don't say that thing. I don't say it to anybody I know. I'm not going to repeat it. I didn't ever repeat it to my children, to the stepchildren I raised, and to the grandchildren I'm now raising. Because I know what it did for me. It made me think that I had these limits on me: that I couldn't be what I wanted to be. It didn't matter how I felt.

And I don't know about any of you, but I always felt out of place my whole life. I remember thinking when I was just little -- I mean, I couldn't have been in kindergarten. *"Who are these people and why am I here?"* I just couldn't understand. The way they were behaving and the things that they were coming out of their mouths was like, *"I can't possibly belong to these people."* You know?

My father was like ... Does anybody remember Archie Bunker? I kid you not -- even looks like him! My dad was taller and heavier, but he was the same person. That prejudice, big mouth. You know, everybody was wrong except for him and his race and men. And that's how we grew up.

And this was like: I had this little box. I had to stay in my place. I had limits on me. I couldn't be ... You know, the measuring stick for me was: *"Stay where you're at, because you don't belong anywhere else. You'll go or you'll get what I tell you you can have."*

So, some of these are imposed by external ones, like I talked about. Some of them are imposed by ourselves. Our wee little brain called the ego, right? The ego wants to tell us, not only how we should be/where we “shoulda/woulda/coulda” been ... but it also wants to tell us that we haven’t done it right. Or that we’re not good enough ... or whatever it is that we’re going to limit. *“You can’t possibly make enough money to drive a Jaguar!”* You know, *“You can’t possibly make enough money to have a nice house; right now, you can’t even put food on the table!”* Because it keeps us limited.

And some people's ego is the opposite: you know, their overblown egos and they don't make it there. But, for the most part, either way, it gives us this box that creates this prison around us. Because it limits who we think we are and what we think we can do.

And the ego is not our enemy. A lot of people think, *“Oh, I have to get rid of my ego.”* No. **We have to control our ego.** Just like I tell -- I have an autistic grandson, and he's probably 240 pounds now. About six foot. And he has really sincere, deep anger issues. And when they pop up, he just doesn't know how to control himself. So, I start building the whole thing about, *“You can have anger all you want. Be mad! It's what you do with that mad that worries me, and who's in the way.”*

So, we can have these thoughts. We can have this ego that's trying to control us. But are we going to let it shut us off from our good? Are we going to let it shut us off from our magic? From who we really are supposed to be in the path? So, we're going to keep it in check. And it's a tool, just like any other tool that we have I there.

But we’ve got to make sure we just monitor it and make sure that it’s not leading us; it’s assisting us. It can be in the passenger seat ... well, maybe the back seat, because God and me are in the front seat! But anyway, you know what I mean? It can be on the next seat over, because it’s not going to lead me where I need to be.

And I will take into consideration what it has to say to me. Because it actually is a primitive part of the brain. It actually is there to save it; to help save us. So, it's part of that part of the brain. But in the society we live in now, that's very rare that we need that kind of part of the brain. So just keep it in check.

And when we start letting go of what we can't control -- even the things we can control -- we start releasing that ego and saying, *“It’s okay. This will be okay. We’re going to let God; let God work through me.”*

So, he says here that one of our major questions is: What is it that is seeking to express or manifest and create through you? Is there a dream in there somewhere? Is there something that you thought, *“I might dance or I might sing or I might paint ... Or I might start my own company.”* And all of these other things -- all of these measuring sticks and all these cages and all these limitations have been holding me back from even thinking that it might be a spark.

He wants us to recognize if there's something inside there which he says is our goal in life. I can't give you the end of the story, because I'm only doing the first two chapters. But **it's about letting it go and letting God be God through us. And getting out of our own way.**

I used to tell one of my sponsors years ago -- I've been in recovery for almost 30 years -- and I told her, *“I am my own worst enemy.”* And she said, *“Yeah, you keep affirming that, don’t you?”* Then when I found Unity I thought, *“Ah, maybe I don’t want to use that affirmation! I don’t want to be my own worst enemy; I want to be my own best friend! And I want to give space and open up and let those dreams come in.”*

Because as we're constricting and not allowing ourselves -- or caging ourselves or limiting ourselves -- we don't have room to breathe. Even if you just think about it for a second, anything that's caving in almost takes your breath away. But when it's opening up, it's like it becomes lighter around you.

I work with energy a lot, so I can feel like this light breeze when that happens: when somebody just opens up and expands; becomes who they're supposed to be.

And in those years, I reminded myself about the self-sabotage: never to go into my mind alone. Because I could ... there was too much in there that would -- all these negative things; all these hurts; and all these happenings; and all this self-sabotage. I had ... you know, I went through therapy. I had sponsors. I had friends that I could sit and talk with. Anytime something like that came up, I had to get it out on a journal and then talk to them. Because my limits -- what I was told or what was conditioned in me, or what I just assumed on the behalf of all the conditioning -- that limited me so much for so many years.

And we do this to ourselves. And Kute says, you know, you can't really figure out why we start it, maybe. But when we recognize it, we can move past it. We don't have to hold on to it.

So, at 23 years old, Kute decided -- because he's going from person to person to person to person -- he decides he's going to go see this guru. Yet another guru. And, you know, he really wants to know ... He's 23 years old; just a kid to me. Spiritual seekers are like, *"Twenty-three? You're, like, still a baby!"* I know we have some of them! I see them, but it's just like, *"Wow, you're learning so much!"* One of my granddaughters are one of them. They learn so fast! But me, I, you know, I bumped heads until I was like 36 or 37.

But he was 23. And he goes to see this guru up in this hill. Up on a mountain; you know, some kind of hermit. And he had set his expectations about what this guy looked like and everything. And he was going to be all, you know, in sandals and the flowing gowns and stuff. He gets there, and it's just this guy in some sweats, some flip-flops. And he's like, kind of shocked because he's thinking, *"This guy's supposed to be a guru?"*

And he sits down with him, and he talks to him. And the guy realizes very quickly that Kute is looking to him for the answers. And he's just like, *"Am I going the right way? Am I where I'm supposed to be? You know, did I miss my opportunity?"*

And the guru said this: *"If you think you can screw up God's plan, rest assured; you are not that powerful. You are not."*

Thinking that we can control things is an actual addiction. We think if we keep it in control, that we have control over it, then it will go our way. It just doesn't work that way. I have let go of things so many times they have claw marks in them. You know, *"You can have it ... no, you can't."* *"You can have it, God; no, you can't."* How long did it take me to figure it out -- that I just really needed to let it go and see what happened along the way.

And sometimes this is hard and sometimes it's scary. But I'll offer you this -- was told me many, many years ago. You start with just being willing. Maybe you can't get there. But if you wake up every day and say, *"I'm willing to let go of something today. I'm willing to look for that -- when I see that one thing, I'm willing to let that go just for today. Just for an hour. Just for 10 minutes."*

Be willing. That willingness gets longer and longer and longer until it becomes an actual something that you can do; something you can actually let go of. Because I don't know how willingness became so powerful. I'll have to do some research on that, but I know that it works so well for the people that I've worked with and for myself. If I just start off being willing to step into that just for a little bit and let go and let God.

And he says, secondly, **without a doubt, show your progress**. So basically, think about this for a second. Think about in your mind's eye where you were 15, 20 years ago. Just take a second and think about where you were, and think about where you are now. And I can bet you that every person in here is in better shape now than they were then. They have actually gone ... you know what I mean? Spiritually, you've learned so much; you've grown so much; you've become so aware of who you are.

So, everybody wants to go, *"Oh, if I turn the switch, if I become willing, or if I do it now, then tomorrow I'll wake up and it'll work."* It's not going to happen like that! It's progress. Like they say in the 12 steps: It's progress, not perfection. Progress. **Willingness and progress**.

And to keep that ego in check, because you want to move from ego-force to soul-power, he says.

In Chapter #2, he talks about leveling up. The lies we tell ourselves. The ones that, *"I coulda; woulda; shoulda"* ... *"You can't do that."* *"I'm not good enough for that."* He says it takes courage to be the one to call out the lies. Stand up for yourself. Stand up for others. Speak the truth.

You know, it's so easy for me to stand up for someone else. I mean the school calls and says, *"Hey, blah, blah."* I'm like, Johnny on the spot. I'll get down there and talk about those kids, I'll be like, *"Grandma Bear"* right there.

But then when someone violates a boundary on me, I'm just like, *"Oh, well; they may have not really meant that."* Why would I do it one way and do it another? **Standing up and facing the lies that are going on around you makes perfect sense when you want to evolve**. Our lives can keep us stuck, just like our ego can keep us stuck. And I don't know about you, but I don't always want to be stuck in this dimension. I actually hope I can keep growing and keep transforming and becoming who I'm meant to be in my life. You think that ministers get up and go, *"Oh yeah, we're done."* No, we're not! We do a lot of work as ministers, just being; keeping on top of who we are and transforming ourselves.

So, my perspective is that lying to ourselves is, again, self-sabotage. And it holds us back from being our best selves. We need to learn to let go. And if we can't let go, be willing to let go. Every day when you wake up, just say, *"Just today I'm willing for this: [X]."* Start with one little teeny thing. Because we really do know what we can control. We just want to control more than we actually can.

And his whole premise of the whole book is: **there's magic when you can surrender that, and step back and let the magic happen around you**.

Sometimes people do this by, you know, trying to stay in control. They stay in jobs that they don't want or don't like. I was in IT for a long time; 25 years I was in the IT field. And I thought the ultimatum of ultimatum was: I would get a job at IBM. I thought they were the bomb! That was my head; that's where I was going.

And I actually did get a job with IBM at one point. I worked there about three months, and I go, *"What was I thinking?"* [Congregants laugh] Oh, my goodness! It was so not me! Can you see me being a critical incident manager behind an IT desk? Getting people from all over the world to log in and do their stuff? What was I thinking? I had those little things in my mind going, *"Oh, yeah; this is it!"* No, it wasn't! I wasn't listening to my heart. I was thinking with my mind.

Self-honesty allows us to stop resisting life and start listening to our inner authentic guidance. So be honest with yourself. *"To thine own self be true."* Right? Be honest.

And honesty can be hard sometimes, especially when you're, you know, you've convinced yourself of something -- X, Y, Z -- for your whole life. Sometimes it can be hard to face that and go, *"You know, that's not really true."* It makes all the difference in the world when you can.

One of the things I do with the ladies that I work with – I often work with women who have been traumatized for long periods of time in their lives. And I give them ... The first thing I do when I meet them is I give them two different colors of dry erase markers. And I tell them, “The mirror is your friend.”

So, every night when they go home, I tell them to write a message to themselves; a “love note” to yourself. Because when you go to sleep and you wake up the next morning, you're going to forget that it's there. And when you walk over and you look in that mirror, you will see how much you really love yourself. You'll understand that you really do love yourself in that moment. And it's hard to do, but it works for a lot of people.

I did have one friend, though, that took it kind of extreme. She has those glass doors on her closet all the way down and then back up. And I said, “*Okay, that's a little extreme, but it's okay. Whatever you need for you, that's what works.*”

So, where in your lives are you not standing up for what you desire? Am I the only one? I don't think I am, though. Where is it you're not saying, “*You know what? I either deserve this or I desire this or maybe I can just change this little piece*”?

One of the things that took me a long time to figure out was how I wanted to dress. Isn't that silly? I was just like a tomboy. I was a tomboy growing up; I had two older brothers. What else did I have, right? So I was always the tomboy, thinking, “*Well, this is cheap; it works and I can wear it.*”

And then, someone says – you know, because I start becoming a minister. I'm start doing these presentations. I've been doing talks now for six years. And tomboy clothes doesn't really work too well with professional speakers. [Congregants laugh] So, I was just like, “*You know what? I really have a style I want.*” And my husband goes, “*What's that?*” And I showed it to him and he goes, “*Oh.*”

And I took that judgment like, “*Oh gosh; was it wrong?*” And then I went, “*No; it's not wrong. It's me. This is how I want to look. This is how I want to dress. These are the earrings that I want to wear. And this is the way I want my haircut.*” Doesn't always go over great, but it works when you decide this is what you want for yourself.

I know it seems like such a simple thing, doesn't it? But when you start taking that -- this is really what I want. Just like coming here to Phoenix. It's coming home to where I was before. And we have a house in Southern California. And he's like, “*Whoa, what about our house? What about this ...*” And I said, “*I'm going to Phoenix! I love you; you're welcome to come!*” [Laughs] You know – whatever you want to do!

But it was just – that's what I wanted. I actually took the step to do what I wanted. And when you can do that, it feels so great!

So [Kute] says **we cannot live a happy or fulfilling life if we are not doing what our soul calls us to do.**

I read another author; I'll talk about him real quick before I stop here. Parker J. Palmer. Has anybody heard of him? He's a Quaker and an author and just amazing. He started the Center for Renewal -- Courage and Renewal -- up in, I think it's in Washington. I've been to several of his retreats -- not him starting them, but, you know, his organization's retreats. And I really like the Quaker model of ministry, because they just all come into one room, and only the people that speak. There's, like, not a minister; there's just anybody that speaks that needs to speak.

But anyway, he had ... The first introduction I had to him was in a book called “Living a Divided Life.” And in it he talks about: we walk this way, but we talk that way. Who are we? Because as long as those two aren't the same, we're divided. Our actions have to match our words and have to match who we are inside. Otherwise, we're not being true to ourselves.

And that's kind of what Kute Blackson is saying here: is to understand that your truth is that you have what you need. It's inside of you if you'll listen. Listen in the silence. We talk about that a lot in Unity. Listen in the silence. Hear it. Acknowledge it. And keep those messages and self-sabotage and the ego just at bay long enough to start experimenting with it.

And the next two weeks you're going to get to hear more about the book. I really want to go further, but I can't do that. So, I will share this with you. That, if you -- Parker Palmer says this. This is my last thing: *"A fault line runs down the middle of my life. And whenever it cracks open, divorcing my words and actions from the truth I hold within, things around me get shaky and start to fall apart."*

And that happens to me, too. So **ultimately the only thing Blackson says that really matters in life is love and our soul work.** Thank you.

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