

THE MIRACLE ZONE

Week #2 of a 3-Week Series, "The Magic of Surrender: Learning to Let Go"

Rev. Stacy Macris Ros

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Good evening, again! We are ... It's Week #2 in a three-week series. We're looking at this fantastic book, everyone; it's called "The Magic of Surrender" by Kute Blackson. Have you seen this before? This is a great read! It's an easy read, but -- and I should say -- he gives so many great examples in this book. So, I highly suggest you pick it up because, wow! It's ... I just ... I'm enjoying it a lot.

Now, Rev. Becky kicked off the series last week. She introduced us both to the author and that idea that surrendering can be freeing. So often we think of surrender; we want to hold on. It's scary. We don't like the idea of surrendering. But she talked about last week -- and it was great; I was listening to it as I was driving in California for a quick visit -- and she was talking about how surrender is really about how we're able to step into our blessings and step into our true purpose.

Surrendering is really one of our tools that we have for growth and transformation. So, we don't often look at it that way, but that's what surrendering can be for us: transformation. So tonight, I'm looking at three other areas of surrendering -- letting go so that we can have more magic in our lives. Does everyone want more magic in your life? Yes!

So we're looking tonight at surrendering our need for control. We already had some "ermmm" around that, I know; I heard it. Me, too! We're also going to look at surrendering so we can receive more miracles ... but not only receive more miracles, but become the miracle. And then surrendering and getting out of our own way so that we can be Love in action. That's what we're here to do ultimately.

So how do we surrender our control so that we can be Love in action. So, let's jump right in!

It's Chapter 3, and I love the title: it's called "The Ultimate Improvisation: Control." And from a young age, we start to lean into the need to want to control so that we have power over the situations that we may find ourselves in ... especially if you're from a home that was unstable, that had a lot of chaos. You were probably trying, as a child, to control the environment. And so, holding on -- not surrendering, but holding on, resisting, trying to be in control -- was really your survival technique.

And, as adults, the longer we live, we start to realize that life is full of unexpected surprises, isn't it? It's what one of my friends, Rev. Sherri James, says: "*Life lifes*." Right? So, we tend to lean into control.

How many of you, I'm wondering, have felt like you had a situation totally under control -- whether it was a vacation, your career, something else -- and suddenly it didn't go the way that you had planned. Yeah; almost everyone in the room, right? And then also, how many of you made a plan for something, it didn't go your way, and it turned out even better? We've had that too, haven't we?

I mean, I'm going to admit in front of all of you right now, I'm a recovering control freak. [Congregants laugh] I just saw on Instagram this great post. It was this woman. It says, "*God has a plan for you*." And her response is, "*Okay, but is God open to some feedback?*" [Congregants laugh] And I thought, "*I'm with ya there*." Yeah.

So let me share with you something that has really helped me become less of the control freak. And that's the idea of surrendering to "what is." Surrendering to "what is" -- meaning: whatever is in front of you; whatever you're experiencing; it's just this. Surrendering to "what is."

So often we think of surrendering, again; we think of surrendering as giving up. But that's not what it is at all. Here's what our author, Kute Blackson, says. It's here on your screen. He writes:

"To surrender is to be open to what you don't know. To surrender is to stop trying to force your way. Surrender is the art of allowing. So that there's space for the Universe to show up ... and letting go leads to more."

See, when we open up -- when we let go; when we allow there to be space -- the Universe is going to come rushing in and fill it. And so, the surrendering is about being okay with letting there be space and room so that we can make something more conscious come into and fill into that space.

It's about taking the action -- the conscious action of letting go and surrendering -- so we can allow something better to emerge. It's about knowing there's something good here that wants to emerge ... better than I could have even imagined!

So, if I'm on vacation or I'm at work and I've got my "to do" list, and then all of a sudden I'm not doing anything on my "to do" list; it's this, it's that. And I'm like, *"Wait; this isn't anything of what I planned."* Or you've gone on a vacation: *"Wait; this isn't anything what I've planned."*

Instead of being upset, what I do now is I think, *"You know what? It's just this. This is what's before me. This is where I need to be right now. This is where God has -- God has me right here. This is where I need to be love in this moment. It just is."*

In other words, you stop dictating what you think should happen, and you become water. You become fluid. You flow. You adapt to whatever vessel you're in, to whatever environment you find yourself in. You become water. And, in doing that, you open yourself up to allowing something new to emerge that wants to be there, that wants to grow there; something for you to learn or experience, maybe -- probably! -- even bigger or more beautiful than you could have ever thought or planned yourself.

But when we hold on too tight, there's no room for anything new to come in. When we hold on too tight, we're closed to new ideas. The surrendering: we open up. We allow whatever is there -- "what is" - - to be. Let there be room for the Universe -- for divine order -- to be at work.

Winston Churchill once said, *"Plans are useless, but planning is invaluable."* See, it doesn't mean that we don't make the plans. I've always made plans! So when I'm making a retreat schedule and putting that together, or a camp, or a class or a vacation, I do all the planning. But once it's done, it's done. And I surrender to "what is." I surrender to whatever now is going to emerge from here. Whatever is going to come out of this, that's what's going to be here. That's what's meant to be.

Kute Blackson has a great example of being in India. So, he's in India. He's waiting for a train. The train ends up being nine hours late. Now, I was in June in the airport in Phoenix here, and my plane was five hours late, and you would have found me, Kirsten, crying in the airport. I was crying on the floor like, *"Five hours?"* Right? Wow.

So, Kute was also very upset about his train delay. He was upset; he was frustrated; he was angry. And as he's stomping around trying to figure out, "Where is this train? Why isn't it here?" -- getting more and more upset -- he sees this Indian family who's having a picnic. They take out a picnic basket, they start to eat. They're laughing; they're connecting with one another. At some point they take a little nap; then they get out some more food. They're talking; they're connecting. And he's watching this, and he realizes, *"They're in heaven and I'm in hell."* [Congregants laugh] *"We're in the same train station."*

These folks are in heaven. This one's in hell. So, he's stomping around. He's asking as many people as he can, "Who knows anything about this train? And he comes and meets this one Indian fellow who says, *"The train comes when it comes."*

Here's what else that man said. He says, *"Sometimes 'on time' is not always on time. Your timing is not always divine timing. When things are delayed, don't always think that you're late. Everything has its own timing."*

Everything has its own timing. Not only did that change Kute's perspective but, years later, he's still friends with that man. Because he ended up sitting and connecting and having conversation with him.

I was working on this with California traffic this last week. [Congregants laugh] *"The traffic clears when the traffic clears. You'll arrive when you arrive. I don't know why there's five lanes all stopped 1 p.m. on Saturday. I could be in Phoenix going down that 101. But right now I'm right here. The traffic's going to clear when the traffic's going to clear."*

Because we can put ourselves in heaven or hell. Ultimately, the only thing we have control over is our reaction to what's happening. So do you want to choose resistance and anger and frustration and crying on the airport floor? Or do you want to make connection and joy? Call a friend while you're stuck in traffic, right?

See, when we stop resisting "what is," and instead accept what is -- whatever that goal is, whatever that plan is, whatever that day was supposed to be that's now unfolding -- it's when we accept what is -- that's when we can enjoy the moment. It's in the accepting -- not the resisting -- that life unfolds with peace and with joyfulness. That's where the juiciness comes forth.

And this is why our meditation practice is so helpful! Because meditation is not just about showing up and feeling good on your mat every day or on your pillow or your bed or whatever it is -- wherever you do your meditation. It's not ... It is about feeling good, but also it's about applying it to daily life.

See, meditation is about being in that present moment with each breath. Every breath I'm right here. And now I'm right here. I stay present. So now when life throws me a curveball -- when something's happening and things aren't going my way and now I'm feeling like it's all out of my control -- I can come back to my breath. I embrace the now. I come back to the present moment.

Because it's actually not what's happening outside of you; it's what's happening within you. That's what's important. That's where the freedom lies. What's happening inside of you: that's where we find the freedom.

See, resistance ruins the moment. It doesn't solve the problem. I can tell you that. Personal experience! The frustration, the resistance; it just adds to the problem, the pain.

But the acceptance -- being in the present moment -- that's what offers the beauty of life. That's what offers those moments that are there to be revealed to you. What is here to be revealed to me in this moment?

He has a great story about -- and I've heard this before about the famous singer, Lady Gaga. And I'd heard her tell this, her own story, too. But she was in immense physical pain for many, many years. And she had a doctor who told her: *"You just need to have radical acceptance about your pain."* And she resisted that. She was like, *"No way am I going to accept this pain!"*

She resisted it; she resisted it. And then she decided to, what: why not? She surrendered to the idea. *"Okay, I'll just have pain."* She surrendered to it and guess what? Her pain dissipated.

I have a similar story. After seven plus years or so of this medical mystery that turned out to be shingles - chronic long-term shingles -- where I was in lots of years of searching for answers and treatments and this test and that test. And I finally realized -- because the last two, three years, I was able to hike and walk and be with my kids and do all the fun family activities. And so, I just finally -- going into year eight --

I just surrendered. And I just said, *"You know what? I can do ... My life is beautiful. I can do everything I want to do. I have a great medical team. My life's great. So maybe my shingles number will never be normal."* I just accepted: *"My active shingles number will never be normal, but my life will be beautiful."*

After eight years -- two months later after me just releasing -- I had my first normal shingles number. That was at the beginning of 2023. And I'm sure there were some other factors in there, as well. But I'm telling you, two months later after I said, *"It's just this. It's just this,"* that that number came back normal. So instead of resisting what is, I accepted what is, and life flowed.

Because here's the beautiful part, friends. And I've taught this to our prayer chaplains. If you name the outcome, you limit it. We don't want to name the outcome, because you might limit it. Because the Universe -- Spirit, the Creative Force of the Universe -- is bigger and grander than you could ever imagine.

Surrender to the illusion of control, because life has something bigger for you. As our author says, *"Events don't have to go a certain way for you to be happy. That is an illusion."*

So, when you stop resisting, you open yourself up to the signs. You start to become more aware of that information, signs, things that start to come to you. Because now you're not locked into how it needs to be; how it should be. But now we're opening ourselves up. And then that leads you to all that signs, the opening to a new path, new possibilities; a greater purpose, even.

But if you hold on too tightly, you miss the miracles that are right before you. And that gets us to the next chapter, which he calls "The Miracle Zone."

And he says, *"Stop looking for a miracle and realize that you are one. Stop praying for a miracle and instead be one."* Sometimes we think that miracles are just for the holy or the select few or those folks who have some kind of special power or are very spiritual. But miracles are an actual part of life. We just need to expect them and to look for them.

And he gives some great examples in the book. He says, *"To be able to look into your child's eyes. Is this not a miracle? To be able to see the whole rainbow of colors. Is this not a miracle? To see strangers suddenly come together in a crisis to help one another. Is this not a miracle? Life-saving surgeries and medications. Miracles! Sobriety. A miracle. The gift of forgiveness. A miracle."*

See, he points out that the only thing you need is to be open: openness. Openness is the portal to miracles. Being open to the possibility of miracles. Life is unlimited! Don't put limits on it. Instead, have a miracle mindset. And having a miracle mindset is about being open to all possibilities: *"This or something better."* *"My highest good unfolding now. I can't even see or imagine what that might be. So I'm going to release it and be open to the bigness, the greatness of life."*

But we limit ourselves by what we think can happen based on past experiences; based on our conditioning; based on whatever level of consciousness we have at that moment.

But Albert Einstein said this. He said, *"There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle, and the other is as though everything is a miracle."* See, we get to choose. You get to choose whether everything is a miracle or not.

And here's what I really find is interesting ... Because often we ask for divine guidance. And then ideas come, or someone suggests something, and the next person might even suggest the same thing. But then what do we do? We go, *"Oh, no, no, no."* We shoo it away, right? *"Oh, no, no, that couldn't happen. That's not possible."*

And yet, in Unity, we teach: our prosperity is divine ideas. Divine ideas is our prosperity. So, when we get those ideas, don't limit your good. Go after it! See, miracles, again, are about being open to life's

guidance -- meaning your intuition; meaning your inner God voice: that spiritual attribute or power of wisdom. It's about allowing your inner guidance -- your inner wisdom -- to bring yourself into the flow of the Universe; into your own divine order.

So, trust your guidance. It is your soul -- your Higher Power -- guiding you. And when you get yourself out of the way -- when we get our ego, our thoughts, our mind, our limited thinking out of the way -- then you get yourself into the flow of life, and you align yourself with the power of the universe. The power of God.

And so here's the affirmation that Kute Blackson used. It's here on the screen. I'll say it first:

"Each moment I will listen, surrender, be open, and let life show me what to do next."

Let's say that together. Together: [with congregation] *"Each moment I will listen, surrender, be open, and let life show me what to do next."*

Let's say it one more time: [with congregants] *"Each moment, I will listen, surrender, be open, and let life show me what to do next."*

Yeah, it's about turning within. It's about listening. It's about trusting your inner wisdom.

And this chapter really inspired me: this chapter on miracles. And I thought, *"I'm going to start a miracle journal. I'm going to start keeping track of all the miracles I see and experience throughout my day."* The last few days I've been doing it at the end of the day: a bedtime routine. At the end of the day, as I'm getting into my bed, I'm thinking: *"What miracles did I see today? What miracles did I experience today?"*

We just ended our class yesterday; last night. Man, there were miracles! Transformation. Today, speaking with somebody, a healing was happening. Wow; a miracle! The miracles are all around. So, I encourage you, start a miracle journal. Because you want to know what happens? As you go through your day, what happens: you start looking for them. You start expecting them. You start looking for the good. So, I invite you to join me in miracle journaling.

And then we get to the next chapter -- #6 -- which is: "The Ultimate Letting Go is Love." Here's what Kute Blackson says; it's here on your screen:

"It is time to surrender to the love that you are. And love fully, with nothing held back. This is our calling. This is our destiny. This is the ultimate surrender. We are love. And to share love with the world is the most powerful thing you can do."

See, that's the miracle that you are. The miracle that you are is that you are love. This is your destiny.

So, tap into the divine essence that you are without any expectations. Just giving from a soul level; not expecting the other person to say, *"Oh, thank you; thank you; thank you."* Not expecting the other person to say, *"I love you, too."* Not expecting any favors or any compliments or any anything, but just giving from a heart space: the deep soul loving part of yourself.

It's a moment-by-moment choice. It's a moment-by-moment choice to offer loving kindness to others. And it's a moment-by-moment choice to offer loving kindness to our own selves. Don't forget yourself in that equation! But it's the labels we put on ourselves -- the conditioning we place on ourselves, and the conditions and limits we put on others -- that will limit us from really stepping fully into that. To be love fully.

And so, what we can do is: in times of meditation, here's what I do. Whether it's sitting quietly and listening or meditative journaling, which is what I tend to do, I just write on that page or I just place the question out there: *"Divine Love, what will you have me do?"* Or, *"Divine Love, what is mine to do*

today?" Or, *"Divine Love, what message do you have for me? How can I show up more loving and more present today?"* And just listen. And you'll hear what is yours to do in that day.

And Kute Blackson, you know, he says when he gets into real challenging situations -- where there's a challenge before him or a challenging person before him, and he's not sure how to handle it -- usually what he'll say is, *"In this moment, what would Jesus do? In this moment, what would Gandhi do? In this moment, what would the great ones do?"* And he listens. It's about returning to our hearts: returning to the purpose of life, which is to return to the love that we are.

So, we find magic in surrendering. There's innate Intelligence guiding your life: the same wisdom that moves through your body making your heartbeat, your lungs breathe without you even thinking about it. There's an innate Intelligence working through nature, working through the Universe. Just trust it! Let go of who you think you need to be and, instead, ask, *"Does this light up my soul? Is this who I really am? And how can I be more loving in my day to day?"*

To be open to miracles all around you: to notice them, to write them down and, better yet, to be one. Be the walking miracle! Listen for guidance. Step aside from the control and follow the quiet whisper of your soul.

And remember that you're here to be loving awareness, loving presence. Surrender to what is. Allow what wants to bloom in your life to unfold. Surrender to the miracles -- to your true self. Be the miracle; be love. Because miracles and magic are always happening. All we need to do, my friends, is surrender to them.

And that concludes our night two of three of "The Magic of Surrender." Thank you, everyone!