

Spiritual Practice: Letting Go

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As Bartimeus responds to Jesus' invitation to step out of the crowd in Jericho and get up to come to him, Mark's gospel tells us:

And, throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

In Bartimeus's action of throwing off his cloak as part of his movement toward Jesus and healing, we can see a metaphor for our own need to let go of anything we are carrying that might hinder us in our journey to become part of Christ's healing, redeeming work in the world.

Many spiritual traditions include disciplines around "letting go". Very early in Christian history, we find the desert fathers and mothers dwelling in the wilderness as a way to leave behind the distractions that blocked their path toward union with Christ. Centuries later, Ignatius Loyola described letting go as a process of moving toward what he called, "indifference." In his thinking, indifference was not being unfeeling or uncaring, it was,

*being detached enough from things, people, or experiences to be able either to take them up or to leave them aside, depending on whether they help us to "to praise, reverence, and serve God" (Spiritual Exercises 23). In other words, it's the capacity to **let go** of what doesn't help me to love God or love others—**while staying engaged with what does.***

—Marina Berzins McCoy

This process is alive with possibilities for our individual spiritual practices. It is also a valuable communal discipline for congregations as we discern what traditions, programs, buildings, partnerships, and habits make us more able to praise, reverence, and serve God now and which may be getting in the way of our capacity to love God and love others in the time and contexts in which we now find ourselves.

One practice to open ourselves individually and communally to the freedom of indifference to all but God's love at work in us and through us is the Prayer of Open Hands. Here is one description of it: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/prayer-with-open-hands/>

Here is another "Open Hands" prayer:

A Prayer for Indifference

In a time of silence and solitude, pray through this prayer as you feel led. Pray it as it resonates and reflects where you currently are now in your discernment process, or in preparation for a season of discernment around a particular issue or decision. Pray slowly and pause to listen to what God might be revealing and speaking in between stanzas.

God, I come humbly before You now searching my heart. I open my heart and hands to You. Lord, search my heart and know me. Give me knowledge of the places that I am attached to anything other than Your will.

Right now, it seems apparent to me that I am not indifferent when it comes to _____. I know that part of me clings to my own agenda. Lord, if I am to become indifferent, You will have to do it in me. God, I wait on you.

Jesus, I notice that I am not indifferent and find resistance. Without judgment and in self-compassion I ask You to show me how to surrender to Your will. In the spirit of Mary I say, 'let it be unto me as You say' and in union with You, "not my will, but Yours, oh God."

Holy Spirit, what needs to die in me for Your will to come forth in my life? What do I need to set aside so that I can be open to what You want?

Lord, I am willing to let _____ die to give You room to start something new. I lay aside and leave behind _____ so that I can be open to Your new gifts of grace and new expressions of ministry.

God, I entrust myself to you. Bring me to holy indifference so that I might hear from You and follow You, to the places and ways in which You are at work. I commit my spirit, heart, and mind to You. I surrender to Your will, not my own.

Amen.

(from Trinity Reformed Church, connectwithtrinity.com)

Every time we catch ourselves getting reactive, every time we catch ourselves acting as if the outcome of the situation has the authority to name who we are, we are to take a deep breath and remind ourself that it's not true.

—James Finley

To sum up, dear friend of Mine, unclench your fists, and let everything fly out of your hands. Clean yourself up nicely and stay faithful to your Creator."

—Thomas a 'Kempis

"God is not found in the soul by any kind of addition, but by a process of subtraction."

—Meister Eckhar

