

EA: What's in your bucket

As I said last week, this fall faith series is based on the book, *Everybody Always*. I tried to pick a different book but God led me into Barnes & Noble on a day when this book was **everywhere!** I was forced to notice the sub-title: *Becoming Love in a world full of setbacks and difficult people*. Is there a better description of our world?

And, as we also explored last week, “becoming love” and “loving everybody always” sums up our directive from our brother and way-shower, Jesus. There are 228 references to love just in the New Testament. 39 in John. Jesus tells us over and over to love one another. Love God, love your neighbor, love yourself. BECOME LOVE. My favorite advice giving chapter in the New Testament, James, says, “You do well if you **really** fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” I added the emphasis. There is no bold print or ALL CAPS in the Bible. You have to figure out for yourself what is speaking to you in the moment. But it’s interesting it says “if you really fulfill the law”. I suspect James was aiming the message at “half-steppers” or people who talk about the law more than they really live it.

Jesus talks about forgiveness and love so much, you’d think we might have caught on. Nowhere does Jesus exclude anyone from the directive OR from being the subject of love. Love the criminals and the politicians and the lawyers and tax collectors. Love your enemies, those who persecute you, those who take you to court. I mean, if you read the New Testament, Jesus does not set out the easy, softer way. The Dalai Lama says, “My religion is simple. My religion is kindness.” We would do well to at least begin by *trying to be kind*. Jesus just amps it up full throttle to “love one another”. We wish we could say, “Well easy for him to say, he doesn’t have _____ in his life.” We fill in the blank with “my boss” “my family” “my in-laws”. We have our personal list. We’d like to say that; except Jesus had the Sadducees and the Pharisees and the Romans after him. Only a handful supported him and some of those stumbled at the end. And, ultimately, he died for his beliefs. So we can’t really say Jesus had it easy and whine about how hard it is for **us** to love one another, can we?

So how do we get on with the task of becoming love and loving everybody always? First, I think we have to be kind to ourselves and acknowledge that it is an ongoing process that we can practice every day and still fail miserably at a fair number of days.

I like to say that I am a work in progress and the fact that I am still here on earth is evidence that the Universe feels I still have some more progress to make. Some days I might be more earnest about making progress than other days but I hope I am always trying. If we make perfection the goal, we'll quit before we try. It is like saying, "Well for my first hike I'll try Kilimanjaro." And even Kilimanjaro is more attainable than perfection. So it is helpful to begin by saying, "I'm going to be kind today." "I'm going to love others today." If you achieve even a couple hours of being loving and kind out of twenty-four and they aren't **only** the hours you are asleep, Yeah for you!

The author of Everybody Always is Bob Goff. He is a wealthy attorney who discovered love. His first book was "Love Does-Discover A Secretly Incredible Life in an Ordinary World". He donates all the proceeds to a foundation that empowers children in Uganda, Nepal, India, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. He doesn't have a lot of specific theology in his book. He just says, "Love One Another is the directive of Jesus. We should try." This book, Everybody Always, is about what he learns in the trying. Last week we talked about trying to see the Face of God in everyone's face. As impossible as that feels, look at our Unity teachings. There is a spark of the divine in **each one of us**. Unity doesn't teach, "There is a spark of the divine in **many** of us" or "**some** of us" because that isn't what Jesus taught. So Bob is really just inviting us to live the Truth we already know!

Reading the book, you discover Bob is a bit unorthodox. Not sure why **that** appeals to me! So today, we're going to turn some ideas around from the direction we usually approach them. Unity tends to focus on the self. Dr. Phil asks, "How's that working for **you**?" We are mostly interested in looking at how our life is working for us. How is my life working for **me**? Bob says a more interesting question is, "How is my life working for **those around me**?" I guess he got curious enough and one day he started asking people around him how his life was working for them. Much to his dismay, most of the people around him were irritated by his impatience. My favorite line is "I'd order sushi so they didn't have to cook it and I don't even like sushi." As he began to ponder the consequences of his irritating impatience, he realized that if his life is not working for the many people around him, it really wasn't working for him either. Not in a core, being love in the world, kind of way. No one thought his impatience felt loving or supportive or connecting. Imagine that!

Unity teaches us that manifestation operates from within to the without. Yet sometimes, we have to look at the outer to discern what is going on within and adjust our thoughts. If we want to change the outer we have to change the inner. We get that. We skip the part about first we have to become **aware** of the outer and how we are showing up in the world.

Goff says, “What we do in the world is who we are becoming.” Unity might say, “What we do in the world demonstrates the thoughts we hold. If we pay attention to how often we show up as less than our true selves, with a new awareness we can shift our thoughts. With a new intention, we begin to retrain our thoughts so we demonstrate more in alignment with our true self.” Unity uses a lot more words. Same basic idea. What we **do** arises from our true beliefs and is a more accurate indicator of who we believe we are. Love is our true nature. The more we act with love and kindness, the more we become love or the more we act in alignment with our true nature.

Unorthodox Bob decided to use a **bucket** to remind himself that how he wanted to show up in the world was as a patient, loving person. He bought a big, galvanized pail, like a dairy farmer going out into the world. His goal was to put patience and love through his actions in the bucket throughout the day. Now Bob lived for 20 years in San Diego and had a law office in Seattle. Every day he was at the airport at 5:30am and home most nights in time for dinner. Seems like a weird way to do things to me but he calls his wife Sweet Maria and she likes him home for dinner. So Bob accepts a speaking engagement at a church in Austin, Texas on a Sunday, not noticing that it is Super Bowl Sunday. He and Sweet Maria don't watch a lot of football EXCEPT they always watch the Super Bowl together. And eat nachos. This one year Bob jets off to Austin with a return trip scheduled just in time to catch the end of the game and snack with Sweet Maria. After 3 services are complete, Bob bolts for the airport. He gets in line to return the rental car. There are three lines and he has to pick one. Bob sits as the glaciers melt, other lines move forward and the agent at the end of his line moves slower than the sloth on Zootopia. For a while, the inching forward has him drumming on the dashboard, tapping his foot and trying to keep the window rolled up so he doesn't shout something unfortunate. Then he notices the galvanized bucket on the seat next to him. He is still in his experiment to put patience in the bucket. He has plenty of time to add patience and more patience to the bucket before he finally gets to the rental car agent at the front of his line. “How was your rental car experience?” the agent inquires. “Fantastic! The car was awesome and the trip was awesome!” Bob enthusiastically replies.

The words filled his mouth, crowding out the more sarcastic, scathing thoughts that normally might have spilled out. Finally turning the keys in, Bob heads for the airport terminal. Soon he notices the agent running after him. Reaching him a bit breathless, the agent says, “I just wanted to say that was a great sermon at church today! I’m really glad I was there to hear it.” Bob realizes in that moment his sermon’s message was saved only because he took the effort to live the love he preached. Had he not had that bucket of patience, his response to the rental agent would have destroyed the impact of anything he had said in church. Unity’s 5th principle: It is not enough to know the Truth, you have to live the Truth you know. People will not remember what we *say* we believe but they will remember **how we treated them**. We can say the divine is within each of us AND if we treat others as if we see the divine in them, they will see us as the activity of the divine spark we are.

In the past, we may have been exposed to the idea “*God sees everything you do.*” At the holidays, parents use the creepy “Elf on the shelf” to spy on children. We don’t need the oppressive imagery of a vengeful God judging our every move. Or even a creepy elf trying to separate us from Christmas joy.

We simply need to be **aware** of how much of the time we are able to show up in the world as our true self: Loving and kind. We need to engage our “observer self” in honest ways to see ourselves as others see us. We need to aspire to live the Love we ARE and be kind with ourselves in daily practice.

The tricky part of actually living our truth is we never know who is seeing how we show up. Each of us has the ministry of our lives. Imagine you are cursing another driver, honking and making gestures out the window. You have to use your imagination because I know no one here would ever do that. They cut you off and now you are behind them. Now imagine they turn in the church parking lot right in front of you. Well, that’s going to be awkward. So you quietly resolve never to act up on the way to church—just in case. Imagine that you are tired and frustrated and the poor grocery clerk gets the brunt of your wrath at the whole world. Unknown to you, she is related to a dear friend. Unfortunately, she has your name from the credit card so her story of the unkind customer includes a name. Now your friend may have a glimpse of another side of you.

Most of us want to be better people. Often we add to our bucket of “how I showed up today” without much conscious thought. We don’t reflect that every action we take demonstrates that we are or we are **not** in alignment with

our true self—LOVE. The good news is that each day we start with an empty bucket. Throughout the day we get to choose what we put in the bucket.

Our practice this week is to play with using a bucket or a pail or a cup as a reminder to pay attention to what we are demonstrating in the world.

My suggestion is to get a bucket. Carry a bunch of blank slips of paper and a pen. During the day, stop to notice how you are showing up. You can just write a word or two on the paper: Love, Anger, Kindness, Frustration, Patience. IF you notice in time, you can make a correction on the spot and add another slip of paper. Maybe the first slip says, Frustrated, but the second slip says, Kind. At the end of the day, look at what's in your bucket. If the world will know us by our love, what do they know about you today? Are you living from the truth of your being or from the ego directed aspect of your humanity? It's ok either way. It is simply an **awareness** and an opportunity to make what is in our bucket more of the truth we know. It is an awareness that allows us to keep becoming love.

In the book, Bob eventually gets home to Sweet Maria, long after the Super Bowl is over. Bob tells his story with gusto. He says, "She nodded as I waved my arms and she looked at me with a grin and a twinkle in her eye as I told her about how much progress I had made in being patient. When I was all done, I asked her what she thought about everything I was learning. With the sincerity of Mother Teresa and the wisdom of the ages, she leaned over to me and said, 'Get a bigger bucket.'" No matter what size bucket we have, we choose how we fill it. We do not get to control what the world sends us or maybe throws at us. We do get to choose what we throw out into the world. Instead of worrying about the negative people around us, be aware if you are the negative person others avoid. Use your practice card. Practice this week and see if you can end the day with at least a little love and kindness in your bucket.