



Today's Lesson
**Living in Process –
The Open Heart**
Power Point notes available at:
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Living in Process – The Open Heart



What does it take for us to live with an open heart when we are faced with situations or events that tell us we must shelter the heart, to protect it from harm?

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You're sitting with a group of people that have come to hear the words of a man who has a new way of creating a relationship with God. You want to know how to make your life better under the rule of Rome....

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Then the chatter starts:
This man is crazy! Love your enemy, give him your shirt too, love your neighbor as myself? Does he live in the same world as we do? Doesn't he see what is going on around us and how we are treated by the Romans? Impossible, can't do it, it won't work!
He never said it was going to be easy.

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However, if we are to have the kind of relationship with God that Jesus showed us we could, then it has to start somewhere. And that somewhere is from the heart.
For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:33)

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The law is simply this: Love Always Works
However, it requires three very basic action steps: Courage, Faith, Commitment
Step 1: Courage lets you see the world of differences with your heart. This activity allows you to look past the beliefs, cultures, skin color, beyond the appearances, beyond the hurt or pain to see a fellow brother or sister instead of an adversary.

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It took courage for Jesus to do what he did. This first step is very hard for many people because it requires that one who would live life with an open heart also be able to live life with a willingness to experience being hurt.

Step 2: Faith in our nature as spiritual beings allows us to realize that no matter what is going on all around us, we are still connected with our spiritual source, God.

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There's a story that is told about a wave:

A wave was having the time of its life being a wave as it moved across the top of the water. Then all of a sudden it looked ahead to see the rocky coast line and saw the waves in front of him crashing against the rocks. The wave became very upset seeing this and knowing this was going to happen to him too, that he would soon be no more.

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When the wave behind him said, "Why are you so upset? Don't you know that you are a part of the ocean and because of that you live forever and you can even come back as a bigger and greater wave."

Step 3: Commitment to the responsibility we have as spiritual beings while experiencing life and processing the human condition.

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Even Jesus had his moments about his commitment that caused him to feel pain, to feel suffering. We are no different. The compassion, sympathy, the empathy we feel towards others stems from our own experiences. This is what links us together in the human experiences. We have all shared the suffering and we all share the release.

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As we practice the three steps to creating an open heart we will come to realize a very important aspect to living in process:

We are not to see ourselves as victims. As the writer of Jeremiah stated: *And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

Paul Ferrini reminds us of this in his book Reflections of the Christ Mind: *Don't play at being a victim.*

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It is a game of mirrors, in which the one who trespasses on you is but a reflection of your own lack of self-confidence, as you are a reflection of his. Holding grievances against him will not help you. Do not hold him to you with thoughts of retribution, but release him with love, knowing that as you release him, you release yourself. If loving others is based on agreeing with them, there will be very few people you can love.

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Fortunately, love runs deeper than that. When you love without conditions, when you love with an open heart, without fear of being hurt, you support the freedom of others to choose their own way, even when you disagree with them. You trust them to make the best choice for themselves. You trust God's plan for their awakening. You know that they can never make a mistake that will cut them off from God's love or from yours.

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For me this is how I view living in process with an open heart as I learn to navigate the human condition:

O = Opportunities that
P = Present an
E = Effective and
N = Natural

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H = Healing
E = Environment for
A = Allowing
R = Redemptive
T = Transformation

If you take one idea with you today, remember this: An open heart is a sanctuary where all are welcome. What you seek, you will find. As you offer, so will you receive.