



U N I T Y
T E M P L E
U N I T A R I A N
U N I V E R S A L I S T
C O N G R E G A T I O N

November 2017

“Abundance”

What Does It Mean To Be A People of Abundance?

It's been an odd fall this year, and as I look out my window, late into the season, most of the trees on our block are still full of green leaves. Only one tree, down on the corner, is on its own calendar, and it is radiant and bursting with reds and yellows and oranges. Its abundance is glorious. My eyes and spirit want to drink in its sheer gloriousness.

I am always struck this time of year at how the leaves seems to cry out to us, "Notice me!" right now, just before they fall and die. Sometimes it is at these precise moments where the fullness of life is juxtaposed with loss that abundance is most vivid. And that can be true no matter the degree of importance. I thought of abundance as I watched a deciding playoff baseball game the other night--one that our team won, but through long, hard, work, through nail biting moment after nail biting moment, when it could have gone either way. Because it was so hard won, because loss seemed so close (and so familiar), the abundance of the win seemed even sweeter. I felt an abundance and incredible gratitude at the end of a person's life recently, someone who touched so many with her love and joy and compassion and wisdom, even amidst all my tears of great sadness.

What does it mean to be a people of abundance? I think in part that it means opening ourselves up to all that life has to offer; both the joys and the challenges, since we can't fully experience one without fully experiencing the other. I think, in part, it also means shifting our perspective on occasion. These days, it is easy for things happening in the world to bring me into a place of sadness and worry and discouragement. I realized this week that I can spend my time focusing on that sadness and worry and discouragement OR I could spend my time focusing on the abundance of gifts in my life. Someone shared a Winona LaDuke quote with me which helped me understand this in a new way: "One of our people in the Native community said the difference between white people and Indians is that Indian people know they are oppressed but don't feel powerless. White people don't feel oppressed, but feel powerless. Deconstruct that disempowerment. Part of the mythology that they've been teaching you is that you have no power. Power is not brute force and money; power is in your spirit. Power is in your soul. It is what your ancestors, your old people gave you. Power is in the earth; it is in your relationship to the earth." Power is in your spirit. Power is in your soul.

I think, too, when we are reminded of that power in our spirit, of that sense of abundance, it can motivate us even more deeply of how we can work to shape the world towards our vision.

Sometimes, in considering what it means to be a people of abundance, we might be led towards choices about what is most important in our lives. One of my favorite children's books about abundance is Byrd Baylor's *The Table Where Rich People Sit*. In the book, a young girl questions her parents' choices about their lifestyle; the parents clearly value the beauty of the outdoors over all else, while their daughter is not so sure. At one point she says, "I bet you could make more money working in a building somewhere in town." "Remember our number one rule," he says, "we have to see the sky." Our number one rule: we have to see the sky.

What is your number one rule? Where do you find the most abundance? I invite you to ponder these questions this month, and to find abundance all around you.

Emily

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A : Abundance On a Scale of 1-10

This exercise invites us not only to recognize the abundance in our lives, but also recalibrate it. Sometimes abundance is a blessing; other times, too much of it is suffocating. Same with scarcity. Much of the time, scarcity feels like a desert, but other times it is the key to freedom. With this in mind, look over the below list and rate how abundant or scarce each is in your life, on a scale of 1 (scarce) to 10 (abundant). Then make time to reflect on the results. What surprised you? What insight came from placing all the rankings side by side? What clearly needs recalibration?

1. *Access to food*
2. *Freedom to make decisions about what you wear*
3. *Friends*
4. *Moments of beauty*
5. *Moments of [micro-aggression](#)*
6. *Freedom to make decisions about how you use your time*
7. *Exercise*
8. *Financial independence*
9. *Regret*
10. *A sense of purpose*
11. *Access to health care*
12. *Time to volunteer*
13. *Access to reliable shelter*
14. *Worry*
15. *Entertainment devices and activities*
16. *Novels read*
17. *Dinners where your loved ones sit and talk*
18. *Play*
19. *Passion*
20. *Respect of your peers*
21. *Envy*
22. *People to talk to when tough times come*
23. *Fond memories*
24. *Family obligations*
25. *Work/professional obligations*
26. *Time for meditation/prayer*
27. *Self care*
28. *Self love*

(note: this exercise is an adaptation of <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/call/workshop7/172948.shtml>)

Option B: Find It By Giving It Away

A student went to his master and said, "I am very discouraged. What should I do?"
The Zen Master replied, "Encourage others." *Nakagawa Roshi*

When we are feeling the poorest, that's time to give a gift." *Dhyani Ywahoo*

It's a great spiritual truth: We find abundance when we give ours away. Jesus put this insight at the heart of his ministry: "You must lose your life to find it." We lift it up every time we say "To give is to receive."

If you are struggling with a lack of personal abundance right now, turn this truth into your spiritual exercise this month. Don't try to find encouragement; give it to others. Don't tackle your problem head on; look for others with the same struggle and find a way to offer them help. If you are feeling "poor," figure out a gift you can give. In short, address others' needs for more abundance and see what you end up with in return.

Come to your group ready to share if the old formula worked.

Option C: The Abundance of Clutter

Abundance gets in the way of abundance. Sounds silly but it's true. Too much stuff leaves us trapped. An over-packed schedule leaves us feeling empty. Clutter -material or spiritual - acts like a cage, leaving us little room to move, or breath.

There's no better month than November to take on this clutter in our lives. Fall trees shed their leaves, inviting us to do some of the same. The holidays are right around the corner, with their yearly attempt to get us to pack even more into our lives.

So find a few ways this fall to "declutter." Of course, you will first need to figure out what that means to you. Often it is material clutter we need to tackle. Just as often it is spiritual clutter that needs addressed. Truth is, most of the time, it's hard to separate the two. Whatever you decide to focus on, choose at least one strategy to address it. And remember that not all clutter is junk. Our work is not simply to throw the clutter out, but to sort through it. Almost always, there are gems buried in the mess.

Here's some inspiration and guidance to help you along the way:

Thirty tips to unclutter your life
http://bpcenter.com/?page_id=63

The ten-item wardrobe | Jennifer L. Scott | TEDxStGeorge
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3CLRL32Mcw>

The less you own, the more you have | Angela Horn | TEDxCapeTown
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyKmpyYy14k>

Is your stuff stopping you? | Elizabeth Dulemba | TEDxUniversityofEdinburgh
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Pb-hjqdjbY>

Getting rid of 1000 things | Liz Wright | TEDxBedford
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T33vGEPL-wg>

The Art of Letting Go | *The Minimalists* | TEDxFargo
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7rewjFNiys>

A Secular Sabbath - Pico Iyer
<https://ideas.ted.com/why-we-need-a-secular-sabbath/>

The art of stillness | Pico Iyer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUBawr1hUwo>

Option D: A Week of Abundant Poetry

This month, take a week and weave abundance into your daily meditation practice. There are a number of moving and challenging poems in our “Companion Pieces” section. As your spiritual exercise this month, use five of them to create a week’s worth of meditations on abundance. Consider the practice of reading through the poem 2-3 times, choosing a different focus question for each reading. For instance, when reading through it the first time, simply ask yourself, “What line or phrase pops out for me?” On your second reading, ask yourself, “Who or what am I in the poem?” Other focus questions might be: “What is the poem asking me to do today?” or “Who is the poem asking me to engage in a new way?” Pause after each reading to reflect. Carry the experience with you into your day. Come to your group ready to share how your week’s worth of poetry and meditation altered your days.

Here’s the list of poems we recommend, but of course alter as needed:

MONDAY

Desire by Michael Blumenthal

<https://wordsoftheyear.com/2015/06/06/desire-by-michael-blumenthal/>

TUESDAY

Otherwise by Jane Kenyon

<https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/050.html>

WEDNESDAY

Monet Refuses the Operation by Lisel Mueller

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52577/monet-refuses-the-operation-56d231289e6db>

THURSDAY

The Fountain by Denise Levertov

<https://poethead.wordpress.com/2008/06/10/the-fountain-by-denise-levertov/>

FRIDAY

An Abundant Spirit by Edward Frost

I love those who are angry with me
Because they care deeply about something
They feel I may have hurt.
I love those who criticize me
Because they need something they think I can give.
I love 'wifty' people
Because their minds are usually in a nicer place
Than where we think we really are.
I love shy people
Because they are more like me, really,
Than the blustery and self-assured
Whom I love because I know how they really feel.
I love the know-it-alls
Because they know they don't know what is really important.
I love those who talk too much
Because I know how much they fear the silence.
And I love the quiet ones
Because they are usually listening.
I love those who love me - - in spite of what they know."

Your Question

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of abundance means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

1. What would happen if you decided that abundance was lying around waiting for you to notice it, rather than something you earn or win?
2. What might it mean to allow yourself to be healed by the abundance all around you?
3. Do you love that which is plentiful or that which is scarce?
4. Is clinging to the pursuit of what you want cutting you off from noticing what you have?
5. So life's led you into a puddle. Are you still staring at your mud-covered feet? Or are you ready to look up and notice that the wide open sky never went away?
6. Are you a swamp or a stream? Do you collect and hoard abundance or let it flow through you?
7. Have you had enough of not feeling like you are enough?
8. Does time no longer feel abundant? Is that being forced on you? Or might you have a choice?
9. Are the best things in life really free? If so, how many will you pick up or lean into today?
10. Are you jealous of others' abundance? Have you ever considered the possibility that those very same folks are jealous of yours?
11. Who validates the abundance of who you are? Who has helped you present your whole self to the world? Have you thanked them lately?
12. Is it really true that you are right and they are wrong? Or could the truth be more abundant than that?
13. For many of us autumn is abundant with leaves blazing full of color. But if you blink, they are gone. What temporary blaze of abundance do you need to pay attention to before time runs out?
14. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The below recommended resources are not “required reading.” We will not analyze these pieces at our small group meeting. Instead they are here to companion you on your personal journey this month, get your thinking started, and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of ABUNDANCE.

Word Roots

In Latin, *unda* means "wave", or poetically "sea". The Romans combined *ab*, "from", and *unda* into the word *abundare*, "to overflow"; literally, "to come from the waves" or "from the sea"; applied to anything very plentiful. Inundate, "to flood", also comes from *unda*, as does undulate, "to move like the waves". An interesting side-note: in ancient Egyptian *ab* means heart.

Wise Words

Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes.

Walt Whitman

It's not what we have that constitutes our abundance, but what we appreciate.

Jules Petit-Senn

When we see that our days are replete with abundance, we are less afraid. When we are less afraid, we connect more. The more connections we see in our lives, the more abundance we notice.

Rev. Deanna Vandiver

I have the world's largest collection of sea shells. I keep it scattered on the beaches of the world. Have you seen it?

Steven Wright, comedian

This could be our revolution: to love what is plentiful as much as what is scarce.

Alice Walker

The soul does not grow by addition but by subtraction.

Meister Eckhart

If you let go a little, you will have a little peace. If you let go a lot, you will have a lot of peace.

Ajahn Chah

Abundance is a process of letting go; that which is empty can receive.

Bryant H. McGill

“The Buddhist word for attachment is “do shag” which literally translates to mean “sticky desire.” I love this translation! If you really think about how you feel when you are grasping for something that you really want, you can feel its sticky pull. And until you figure out a way to get it, you feel this longing and obsession. We have all been there with different things and at different times in our lives. In a world that entices us with constant cravings and sticky desires, we can slow ourselves down and let go of attachment to that desire for more. And surprisingly, without fail, if we let go, we will receive...” Rev. Karon Sandberg

The feeling of peace is something that happens in the present moment. It's not something that we bring with us from the past or project into the future.

Jill Bolte Taylor, My Stroke of Insight

“It takes three things to attain a sense of significant being: God, A Soul, and a Moment. And the three are always here.”

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Out of abundance, they took abundance, and still abundance remained.

Upanishads

My barn having burned down I can now see the moon.

Mizuta Masahide

Abundance is not about having what you want, but about noticing what you have, and multiplying it through sharing it, multiplying it through your manner of being in this world.

Rev. Angela Herrera

Be a stream, not a swamp. Remember, it is the mountain stream that carries fresh, life-giving water because it flows out. However, the swamp is stagnant. A swamp collects and retains water that comes its way. Don't be the kind of person who seeks to accumulate much before allowing a little to flow through.

Victor M. Parachin

"Our task is to learn who planted this orchard that we are now sitting in and to lift up their names. Our task is to name the names and celebrate the fact that... we are standing on the shoulders of many giants. As the season of harvest as it comes upon us - it is a time to celebrate the lasting gifts and the many fruits of unseen hands."

Rev. Daniel Gregoire

For me, the opposite of scarcity is not abundance. It's enough. I'm enough. My kids are enough. You're enough."

Brené Brown

We are beset with the fear of scarcity – not just economic scarcity, but fear that all our resources are limited... We grow up thinking that we are not good enough or wise enough or athletic enough or rich enough... enough to do what? To live up to the expectations others thrust upon us. We should decide for ourselves when enough is enough – but too often we let

the pressures of the world decide this for us, and we find ourselves lacking.

Rev. Anne Mason

Just Enough

Nanao Sakaki

Soil for legs
Axe for hands
Flower for eyes
Bird for ears
Mushrooms for nose
Smile for mouth
Songs for lungs
Sweat for skin
Wind for mind

Those who know my mantra sometimes test me with it. "So, Forrest, do you really want cancer?" "I want what I have," I reply. "...Each day that I am sick, I pray for the sun to come up, for people to love me, for manageable tasks that I can still accomplish, for a little extra courage, for reality to blow all the detritus off my plate. In short, I back away from the be-darkened pane of my health to gain a prospect of the whole window I am blessed to look through. The light then dances again in my daughter, Nina's, eyes. I laugh once more at my little foibles. My son, Frank, and I celebrate the Mets' acquisition of an all-star pitcher. I call my dear friends, Jack Watson or Peter Fenn, on the phone and talk for an hour about everything under the sun. Yes, I kvetch at unseemly waits at the chemo center (until I realize how many other folks have cancer and are waiting in line for their treatments also). I fall into a sour humor when my body wears down and cannot do what I want it to (until I shift gears and tackle something that lies well within my powers, like a moderately difficult sudoku or one of Robin Hobb's splendid fantasy novels, where almost every character is doing worse than I am). I even snap at my wife, Carolyn, when she tries too hard to fatten me up for the kill. But that, too, eventually is good for a laugh. So I do want what I have, even as I do what I can...

Forrest Church, from Love & Death

The Wild Geese / What We Need is Here

Wendell Berry

Full poem found [here](#).

“...Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye
clear. What we need is here.”

Desire (Don't miss this one!)

Michael Blumenthal

Full poem found [here](#)

“Let's just say I seem to be enjoying these three
chicken drumsticks
far more than the young man doing sit-ups just
across the lawn...”

Otherwise

Jane Kenyon

Full poem found at

<https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/050.html>

I got out of bed on two strong legs.
It might have been otherwise.
I ate cereal, sweet milk, a ripe, flawless peach.
It might have been otherwise...

Monet Refuses the Operation

Lisel Mueller

*The ability to find abundance in the midst of
supposed scarcity*

Full poem found [here](#)

Read by author [here](#)

“Doctor, you say there are no haloes
around the streetlights in Paris
and what I see is an aberration
caused by old age, an affliction.
I tell you it has taken me all my life
to arrive at the vision of gas lamps as angels,
to soften and blur and finally banish
the edges you regret I don't see...”

The Fountain

Denise Levertov.

Full poem found at

<https://pothead.wordpress.com/2008/06/10/the-fountain-by-denise-levertov/>

“Don't say, don't say there is no water
to solace the dryness at our hearts.
I have seen the fountain springing out of the
rock wall
and you drinking there. And I too
before your eyes...”

Inventing Sin

George Ella Lyon

<http://reddoorsblog.blogspot.com/2009/06/inventing-sin.html>

God is fed up
All the oceans she gave us
All the fields
All the acres of steep seedful forests...

God sees us now
gorging ourselves &
starving our neighbors
starving ourselves &
storing our grain
& She says
I've had it...”

An Abundant Spirit

Edward Frost

I love those who are angry with me
Because they care deeply about something
They feel I may have hurt.
I love those who criticize me
Because they need something they think I can
give.
I love 'wifty' people
Because their minds are usually in a nicer place
Than where we think we really are.
I love shy people
Because they are more like me, really,
Than the blustery and self-assured
Whom I love because I know how they really
feel.
I love the know-it-alls

Because they know they don't know what is really important.
I love those who talk too much
Because I know how much they fear the silence.
And I love the quiet ones
Because they are usually listening.
I love those who love me - - in spite of what they know."

Songs and Music

The Best Things In Life Are Free (sung by Sam Cooke)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M34B60Nct6k>

Soak Up The Sun

Sheryl Crow

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIYiGA_rlls

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raSb13MX1mc>
(acoustic)

Beautiful Day - U2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=co6WMzDOh1o>

Highway 4 cover:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7vbF_6zcnY

3B4JOY A Cappella:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOC0RrChNLQ>

Thankful

Jonny Lang (feat Michael McDonald)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sI00gtVg_Dk&list=RDsI00gtVg_Dk&index=1

Videos

When the Glass Looks Half Full

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWKNwzGL8CO>

The Free Hugs Movement & the Abundance of Connection...if we reach out

Official Campaign:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr3x_RRjdd4

In Sondrio, Italy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hN8CKwdosjE>

This Is Not A Humanising Poem

Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan

<https://www.facebook.com/roundhouseLDN/videos/10155509509406180/>

A call to celebrate the abundance of who you are, as you are! Do not allow yourself to be reduced to "the relatable and respectable"! "If you need me to prove my humanity, I'm not the one who's not human."

The Danger of a Single Story - TED Talk

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg&index=12&list=PL8PINNxdxiI6gcm6fxPDG9Yt_IMrMrluf

How single stories deplete and separate us. How an abundance stories and story lines save us and help us see each other in our fullness.

The Paradox of Choice - TED talk

Barry Schwartz

https://www.ted.com/talks/barry_schwartz_on_the_paradox_of_choice

Psychologist Barry Schwartz takes aim at a central tenet of western societies: freedom of choice. In Schwartz's estimation, choice has made us not freer but more paralyzed, not happier but more dissatisfied.

FOMO: The Fear of Missing Out

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsSmFZNrLc&index=51&list=PLgdvIBqNHvmb8BvKIEdmj6BzCaPYKpNRE>

Anxiety, abundant choices and the desire to have it all.

Enough Time: A short story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QISmafDidrU>

"Time is what I want most but what I use worst..."

Does time no longer feel abundant? What might it take for you to remember you have a choice to take it back?

The Lens of Intersectionality: Honoring the Abundance of Who We Are:

Intersectionality 101:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6dnj2IvYjE>

Kids Explain Intersectionality:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzbADY-CmTs>

Kimberlé Crenshaw - On Intersectionality

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DW4HLgYPIA>

In Honor of Native American History Month

MTV's "Decoded Tackles the Ugly Truth about Thanksgiving

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFfREh7G3ck>

TED talk by Aaron Huey about America's Native Prisoners of War

A tough, heart breaking talk about white privilege and Native Americans. If you share this, do a mindfulness Meditation using "Weightless" listed below to allow for centering.
https://www.ted.com/talks/aaron_huey

In Honor of Transgender Day of Remembrance

Trans women Share What Transgender Day of Remembrance Means

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgWpGLB-QKI>

The T Word: Full Documentary - MTV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDy0Dhfuxfl>

Laverne Cox on Bullying and Being a Trans Woman of Color

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zwy5PEEa6U&index=47&list=PL8MsClMZZNyq5DX7ZNq_Ftffxt3FJuGC

In recalling an event where she was confronted by misogyny, trans-phobia, and racism all at once, Laverne Cox advocates for love and a more abundant embrace of all of who we are.

Articles

Forgiving the Broken (Allowing ourselves to be healed by the abundance around us)

Rev. Myke Johnson

<https://findingourwayhome.blog/2014/01/16/forgiving-the-broken/>

"I am able to accept our brokenness when I feel the Sun shining down on us despite it all. When I feel the water claiming us as her own, the flowers blooming, the food growing, the birds singing. The beauty of this earth teaches me that there is something very good even in the midst of our brokenness..."

The Power of Gratitude and Perspective

Daphne Greer

<https://tinybuddha.com/blog/power-gratitude-perspective/>

My point: Among the daily stress, tension, and challenges of life, stop and search for gratitude. What a gift it is to even be alive. For that car that is broken, give thanks that you have a car to fix. For that necessary and expensive home repair, give thanks and realize what a gift it is to even have a home.

For that taxing job, give thanks that it pays the bills. For that exhausting child, give thanks for their strong personality and recall how wonderful it was the day they were born. Find perspective. Embrace it. Look with eyes of wonder..."

Five Ways to Allow Abundance in Your Life

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/inspiration/2014/03/five-ways-to-allow-abundance-in-your-life/>

When It's Bad to Have Good Choices

Maria Konnikova

<http://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/bad-good-choices>

Abundance Without Attachment

Arthur C Brooks

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/14/opinion/sunday/arthur-c-brooks-abundance-without-attachment.html?referrer&r=0>

"Call it the Christmas Conundrum. We are supposed to revel in gift-giving and generosity, yet the

season's lavishness and commercialization leave many people cold. The underlying contradiction runs throughout modern life. On one hand, we naturally seek and rejoice in prosperity. On the other hand, success in this endeavor is often marred by a materialism we find repellent and alienating... So here is my central claim: The frustration and emptiness so many people feel at this time of year is not an objection to the abundance per se... It is a healthy hunger for nonattachment..."

Purchase An Abundance of Experiences, Not Things!

The Atlantic

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/10/buy-experiences/381132/>

The Vitality of Diversity

Parker Palmer - On Being Essay

Found [here](#)

An exploration of the parallels between biodiversity and social diversity, and a call for America to embrace its abundance of cultures.

Books

The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less

Barry Schwartz

<https://www.amazon.com/Paradox-Choice-Why-More-Less/dp/149151423X>

The Tao of Abundance: Eight Ancient Principles for Abundant Living

By Laurence Boldt

<http://a.co/f6McdaS>

A Simple Act of Gratitude: How Learning to Say Thank You Changed My Life

John Kralik

https://www.amazon.com/Simple-Act-Gratitude-Learning-Changed/dp/1401310710/ref=pd_sim_14_1?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=1WVZ8BH9KQ603ME91DMF

"At age 53, John Kralik found his life at a terrible, frightening low: his small law firm was failing; he was struggling through a painful second divorce; he had grown distant from his two older children and was afraid he might lose contact with his young daughter; he was living

in a tiny apartment where he froze in the winter and baked in the summer; he was 40 pounds overweight; his girlfriend had just broken up with him. Then, during a desperate walk in the hills on New Year's Day, John was struck by the belief that his life might become at least tolerable if, instead of focusing on what he didn't have, he could find some way to be grateful for what he had..."

My Life with the Saints

James Martin

Both accessible and inspiring, Martin shares how church saints have served personal companions for him throughout his life's journey. He is "engaging and specific about the help and companionship he has received. When his pride proves trouble-some, he seeks help from Thomas Merton, the monk and writer who struggled with egotism. In sickness he turns to Thérèse of Lisieux, who knew about the boredom and self-pity that come with illness. Joan of Arc shores up his flagging courage. Aloysius Gonzaga deepens his compassion..."

From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Revolutionary Approach to Growing Older (the abundance of aging)

Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Ronald S. Mille

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/598133.From_Age_ing_to_Sage_ing?from_search=true

Over two decades ago, beloved and respected rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi felt an uneasiness. He was growing older, and fears about death and infirmity were haunting him. So he decided to embark on mission to get to the bottom of his fears. Through a series of events that included a vision quest in a secluded cabin and studying with Sufi masters, Buddhist teachers and Native-American shamans, Reb Zalman found a way to turn aging into the most meaningful and joyous time in his life.

Movies

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/curious_case_of_benjamin_button

Sometimes it takes living our lives in reverse to notice how abundant our lives really are!

It's A Wonderful Life

It is not too early to watch this holiday classic about noticing the abundant gifts right in front of us!

Smoke Signals (*Native American Heritage Month*)

Smoke Signals is a humorous yet serious story about Victor, a young man who Director Chris Eyre describes as "trying to forgive his father." The movie gives us a glimpse into the contemporary Native American world.

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120321/?ref=nm_sr_4

For Transgender Day of Remembrance (Nov.20)

Ma vie en rose/My Life in Pink ()

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ma_vie_en_rose

Transamerica

<https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/transamerica>

Boys Don't Cry

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/boys_dont_cry

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