



# UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF FREDERICK

## **How to Love Your Enemies...In Buddhism, in Christianity, and in Real Life**

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### **Spoken Meditation**

I would like for us to explore a spiritual practice called “3-2-1 Shadow” from the Integral Spirituality of Ken Wilber. That term “shadow” comes from the writings of Carl Jung, one of the most influential psychiatrists of the twentieth-century — especially at the intersection of psychology and spirituality. Jung used the word “shadow” as his term for the “repressed unconscious”: those aspects of ourselves that are *repressed* because we’ve pushed or “pressed” them out of our awareness, and *unconscious* because we’re not consciously aware of it! Our shadow is those parts of our experience that we have — often unconsciously — split off, rejected, denied, hidden from ourselves, projected onto others, or otherwise disowned.

But those unconscious, shadow parts of our experience that we consciously or unconsciously repress rarely stay repressed. Indeed, when something unduly or unexpectedly disturbs us on a deep level, it is often triggering some aspect of our repressed unconscious. One signal that an experience isn’t just intrinsically disturbing, but has also triggered your shadow is when someone or something makes you respond in a way that is *negatively hypersensitive* (someone or something makes you reactive, irritated, angry, hurt, upset far beyond what the situation seems to reasonably call for) or *positively hypersensitive* (someone or something makes you easily infatuated, possessive, overly attracted) — again, in a way that is far beyond what one would reasonably expect in the situation at hand.

Now, here's the good news, those shadow parts of ourselves can be precisely the things that have the most power to catalyze our spiritual growth — moving us toward greater health and wholeness — as we become ready to integrate our repressed unconscious in our *conscious* life.

Those of you familiar with Eckhart Tolle's work, I particularly like his discussion of working with your shadow — what he calls “The Pain-Body” — in chapter five of his bestselling book [A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose](#). Along these lines, I also once heard the Integral spirituality teacher Marc Gafni answer the question “Why should I want to integrate my shadow?” with something like the following reply, “Your shadow *is your light*: your unique gift/calling that is currently in darkness — that's what triggers you and calls you. Your light wants to be lived and will come out with unconscious/perverted shadow qualities if not made conscious and integrated.”

Many of you are likely familiar with the word from the Hindu tradition “Namaste,” which loosely means “the divine in me bows to the divine in you.” But what about those people's to whom it's hardest to say, “Namaste” and mean it; those people who trigger you and push your buttons; the people who sometimes make us question the validity of our UU first principle of “The inherent worth and dignity of every person”; those people who feel like our enemies, toward whom we are sometimes unduly, unexpectedly, and irrationally hypersensitive.

To begin to explore the what is underneath our interactions with those we experience as difficult or even our enemies, I would like to invite us to experiment with a spiritual practice called “3-2-1 Shadow” from the Integral spirituality of Ken Wilber. If you want to read more about the practice, it is described in detail in his 2008 book [Integral Life Practice](#) (41-66).

There are three relatively-brief steps, as the name “3-2-1 Shadow” implies. To experience this practice, I invite you first, if you are comfortable, to close your eyes. Sitting up straight in your chair — relaxed, but alert — with your feet flat on the floor, take a deep breath and release it when you are ready. After each of the three steps, I will pause briefly to allow you time to reflect silently on your response. And as with any spiritual practice, you are in control; only proceed as far as you feels right to you.

First, I invite you to think back over the last week or so. **Who is the first “difficult person” that comes to mind?** This may be an acquaintance, co-worker, boss, parent, or even someone you only met briefly.

*[Pause]*

Once a person you experience as difficult come to mind, **imagine the person and situation in vivid detail using 3rd-person pronouns** like “he/she, him/her, they/them” to describe what that person over there across from you is doing. Silently describe to yourself what bothers you about the situation. Don’t minimize the disturbance. Make the most of this opportunity. **Describe the experience to yourself as fully and in as much detail as possible.**

*[Pause]*

Having described the person to yourself, **imagine a simulated dialogue with this disturbing person using 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns** (you and yours). Imagine yourself talking directly to the person. Try You asking questions such as “What do you need to tell me?” or “What gift are you bringing me?” Once you ask a question of the disturbance, take some time to listen to how the disturbance responds back to you. **Allow yourself to be surprised by what emerges in the dialogue.**

*[Pause]*

I invite you to **speak in the 1st person** (using the pronouns I, me, and mine). **Imagine yourself as the disturbing person, situation, image, or sensation that you have been exploring.** See the world — including yourself — entirely from the perspective of that disturbance and **give yourself permission to take the risk of discovering any similarities between that disturbance and yourself.**

### **Sermon**

To become a Unitarian Universalist minister, one of the questions that sometimes comes up from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee is “What difference does your theology make on your daily life.” My response — which I suspect is similar for many of you — is that my Unitarian Universalist theology makes a tremendous difference in how I live my daily life. Since I have the luxury of coming in many respects from a place of privilege, I occasionally find

myself thinking how much easier life would be if I didn't believe in UU Principles like "The inherent worth and dignity of every person," "A free and responsible search for truth and meaning," and "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence." If I didn't believe in those and other UU Principles, I could likely feel content with the injustices of the *status quo*, many of which unduly benefit me. But that would be an *easier*, not better way. I say easier *not better* because I, like many of you, know the power and beauty that comes from celebrating when the inherent worth and dignity of every person come to be recognized (whether from glimpses of Martin Luther King's dream becoming reality or the breathtaking spread of same-sex marriage rights across our country). Easier for those in power is not always better.

And we all know that being in the same room with your enemies, much less learning to *love* them, is not easy. But easier is not always better. And this whole idea of loving your enemies is one of those ways of being in the world that would never have occurred to me without growing up in a religious community. It's the sort of values that we seek to grow into here at UUCF: to call one another to seek truth, compassion, and justice far beyond what would be possible alone. Alone, "loving my enemies" is not something that would have likely ever occurred to me because "love," of course," in many ways feels like the precisely opposite of what you should do to your enemies.

And although I grew up in a Bible-based, conservative Christian congregation I don't remember ever hearing an emphasis on loving your enemies even though it's right there in the Gospels. In Matthew 5:44, Jesus says during the Sermon on the Mount, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." That same passage is repeated twice in Luke 6:27, 35.

The first time I remember hearing someone take seriously Jesus' teaching to "love your enemies" was when I learned about the life of Clarence Jordan. Jordan began studying agriculture at the University of Georgia in 1929, the same year the Great Depression started.<sup>1</sup> During his spare time, he felt drawn to study the Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7.

As part of his undergraduate studies, Jordan was also in ROTC. And one day during cavalry practice, those words he had been studying from scripture started resounding in his head

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<sup>1</sup> Lee, 9-10.

as he went through cavalry drills that he had done previously many times. But that day, each time he went through the drill of riding forward and stabbing the practice dummies with his saber, he kept hearing: “LOVE YOUR ENEMIES.” He resigned from ROTC in the middle of practice that day.<sup>2</sup> His commanding officer tried to convince him to become a chaplain; instead, Jordan said, “I could not encourage someone else to do what I myself would not do.”<sup>3</sup>

Next, Jordan went to Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and combined his knowledge of agriculture with his desire to take even the most radical of Jesus’ teaching seriously by founding an interracial Christian community committed to shared property and nonviolence on 440 acres of land in Americus, Georgia. That was a bold move in 1942 in the deep south, more than a decade before the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. Jordan’s commitment to both racial justice and nonviolence in the face of what was to be tremendous persecution and resistance by the surrounding community — is one of many example of the transformation that can come from not wanting to kill your racist enemies, but from committing to the long, slow work of *befriending* those who wrongly see themselves as your enemies and working to change the systems that support racism. As Dr. King said in this 1967 *A Christmas Sermon for Peace*, “We will not only win freedom for ourselves; we will appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory.”

Along these lines, the Christian mystic and philosopher Beatrice Bruteau in her book [\*The Holy Thursday Revolution\*](#) writes that the only way to authentically practice Jesus’ teaching that the Second Greatest Commandment is “to love your neighbor as yourself” is to experience that in the deepest sense — she would say, “in God,” — our neighbor *is* ourself (6). That sense of deep connection and interdependence is also part of the Buddhist tradition as well as our UU 7th Principle of the “Interdependence web of all existence”: that we are all connected and what any of us does (or fails to do) affects the rest of the web.

Ethan Nichtern, a contemporary Buddhist teacher and founder of the [Interdependence Project](#), frames this perspective as a shift from the three S’s (“Separate, Selfish, and Scared”) to the three C’s (“Connection, Compassion, and Courage”). The practice of making enemies and of

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<sup>2</sup> Snider, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Lee, 13-14.

experiencing others as separate from you is a *learned* behavior — but one that is ubiquitous in our society and that is constantly modeled for us and that we are invited to imitate. But it often leaves us scared and acting on our our self-interest. There is a different, more expansive, life-giving way. At their best, wisdom traditions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism invite us to experience the world in a *different* way — and through an experiencing our deep connection and interdependence with one another, compassion and courage emerge. That shift is what the 3-2-1 Shadow Practice is all about: coming to experience that person or disturbance that seems so alien to us — that we talk about in 3rd person (what he or she did) — then to enter into a more intimate 2nd-person dialogue with it (so that the person over there that disturbs us is encountered face-to-face), and to experiment with experiencing the world as if you *were* that person, in their body, seeing out of their eyes. And taking the “risk of discovering any similarities” between that person — that enemy — and yourself.

Buddhist teachers Sharon Salzberg and Robert Thurman in their new book *Love Your Enemies: How to Break the Anger Habit & Be a Whole Lot Happier*, tell the story of

a man who was so displeased with the sight of his shadow and the sound of his footsteps that he determined to get rid of both. The method this fearful man hit upon was to run away from his shadow, but with every step he took, the shadow naturally accompanied him without the slightest difficulty. The man concluded that he wasn't running fast enough, so he stepped up the pace, running faster and faster without stopping until finally he dropped dead. This poor man failed to realize that if he merely stepped into the shade, his shadow would vanish instantly. And if he sat down and stayed still, there would be no more footsteps.

This ancient Chinese tale invites us to see the fruitlessness of trying defeat our enemies if we do not change ourselves and the larger systems and institutions in which we find ourselves (115-116).

Salzberg and Thurman relatedly share the challenging Buddhist teaching — updated to a contemporary setting — that, one should be “happier to come down for breakfast in the morning and meet [your] worst enemy at the door than to greet a TV prize-show host ringing the doorbell and presenting a check with \$10 million” (67). Now, Salzberg and Thurman readily admit that

they are not that evolved, and if given the choice, would take the money and run! But the point is that with the \$10 million, you still have all your same problems and issues and will bring all those pathologies with you in whatever ways you spend your windfall. But the opportunity to authentically and compassionately encounter your (perceived) worst enemy is an opportunity for deep, authentic transformation.

Many stories of lottery winners readily attest that their fortunes left them shaped much more by the three S's ("Separate, Selfish, and Scared") than the three C's ("Connection, Compassion, and Courage"). And an encounter with your worst enemy — although potentially an scary experience of separateness and selfishness — can also be seen as an opportunity to recognize and integrate some of the shadow parts of yourself that your enemy is triggering through practicing connection, compassion, and courage. What is it like to see the world from your enemy's perspective? What are some similarities between you and your enemy?

For now, I will leave you with one final thought from the *Universalist* half of our Unitarian Universalist tradition. Universalism began as a rejection of the idea that anyone's *finite* actions in this life — no matter how repugnant — could justify *infinite* punishment in an afterlife. This logic led our Universalist forebears to promote the idea of Universal salvation for all people. Over time, the emphasis shifted from concern about whether anyone was going to hell in the *next* world to "loving the hell out of *this* world." So as we have been reflecting on the challenging teachings of integrating your unconscious shadow into your conscious life and on loving your enemies, I invite you to experiment in the coming weeks with this Universalist wisdom from the Hindu guru Neem Karoli Baba, who taught his students, "Don't throw anyone out of your heart." What might change for you? What might unlock within you to experiment with that Universalist spiritual practice? "Don't throw anyone out of your heart": to hold the peace and well being of all beings — even your enemies — in your heart. To be able increasing to say to all beings — even your enemies — *Namaste*.