

**Welcome to Unity's Interactive
Worship Service**
**Today's Topic: Our Spiritual
Teachers**
Power Point notes available at:
www.unityofbakersfield.org

Our Spiritual Teachers

An interactive question: When you hear the term "our spiritual teachers" who comes to mind?
Confucius? Buddha? Jesus? Ghandi? Dali Lama? Mother Theresa? Authors and speakers, Don Miguel Ruiz, Eckhart Tolle, or the late Wayne Dyer, to name a few, are great spiritual teachers.
However, do you know who the best ones are for our soul growth?

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Difficult People

I am thankful for all those difficult people in my life, they have shown me exactly who I do not want to be.

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Tomorrow is Labor day, the last holiday of the summer. Oktoberfest, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and then Christmas soon follow thereafter. And with the holidays comes the gathering of families—the people we love to have around us and some we don't. They are the difficult people in our families. And yet difficult people can be found everywhere in the world: our workplaces, stores, malls, or social gatherings. Sooner or later we all get a chance to have a relationship with a difficult person.

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The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people.
G.K. CHESTERTON
Quoted by Dale Ahlquist in his book *The Apostle of Common Sense*
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The demand for Jesus to minister and heal the people of Judea was so great that he charged his disciples to go out 2 by 2 and do the work he had done. And if they ran into difficult people in the towns that didn't want their services they were to knock the dust off their feet and leave. (Matt 10:14)

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If it was just that simple. Many of the difficult people we encounter from time to time can be left alone as we go about our daily lives. However, the real teachers in our lives are family members and co-workers. It's hard to kick a family member out of our lives or quit a job we like because certain individuals are difficult to be around. So what is a person to do?

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Fifteen years ago I taught a class based on Dr. Mark I. Rosen's book, Thank You For Being Such a Pain: Spiritual Guidance for Dealing With Difficult People. And this is what he had to say:

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Thank You for Being Such a Pain is about the difficulties we experience in everyday relationships and the deeper spiritual meanings the underline them. This book is based on four premises: 1) that life's seemingly random encounters are not so random after all; 2) that the pain, frustration, and suffering we experience with certain people are just as important for our personal and spiritual growth as love and joy –

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—adversity is our teacher, pushing past our resistance and teaching us what we would fail to otherwise learn; 3) that difficult relationships can and should be healed; and 4) that healing requires being attentive to the spiritual lessons that life presents us – when we do the inner work we are here to do, our outer relationships and circumstances become transformed.

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People the world over are all looking for a solution to getting the other person to stop annoying them. They believe the best responses include fighting back, retaliation, enduring the difficulties, walking away, or just giving up. The true resolution comes only when you finally learn what the other person is teaching you.

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In an article Paige Burkes wrote for the website Mindfulness, 3 Ways We Can Learn From Difficult People, she gives us the following insight:

1. Difficult people give us a chance to see ourselves differently. They reflect our dark parts back to us, stirring up deep emotions from fears we try hard to hide. It's time we learned to open ourselves to their gifts.

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Difficult people wouldn't bother us so much if there wasn't something similar inside ourselves that was bothering us.

If you seem to be surrounded by difficult people or they show up frequently in your work and personal life, ask yourself what lessons you need to learn from them. These people will continue to show up for you until you take responsibility for your own being.

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Catch yourself the next time you think or say, "It drives me crazy when people do/say..." There's a nugget waiting to be discovered. When was the last time you did/said that same thing? Maybe you can't remember. I've seen people completely deny saying and doing things that the people around them observed. They deny it because their beliefs about themselves wouldn't allow them to see themselves doing or saying those things. It sounds crazy but I've experienced it on more than a few occasions.

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2. Hot Buttons. When someone hits one of your hot buttons, instead of reacting instinctively with anger or defensiveness and creating the same old argument, take a deep breath and consider why it's a hot button. What fears or painful memories have you not dealt with? Whose ways of being have you subconsciously adopted that no longer work for you but you haven't admitted it to yourself? What parts of you are you trying to hide that others can see?

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My husband and I repeated many of the same arguments until I opened myself to this concept. He knew what my hot buttons were and would strike whenever he felt threatened. And I did the same. Our relationship got to an extremely low point when I lost the will to argue. I was so tired of repeating the same negative patterns that I finally softened up and started looking for alternatives.

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I thought: My husband is a pretty sharp guy. Why would he make up things about me to argue over? Yes, he was seeing me through his own lens, colored by his past, but could there be something there that I've missed all these years?

It's so hard to see ourselves objectively. We see what we believe and our beliefs are clouded by a lifetime of false perceptions. If we were told that we weren't very bright by our second grade teacher, we can carry that with us throughout our lives.

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It turns into beliefs like "I'm not good enough," "I'm not smart enough" or "I'll never achieve anything." Even if the evidence in our life says otherwise, we carry those old beliefs with us and become blind to contrary facts.

I started to examine my hot buttons. I began to peel off the layers of false beliefs that hid my own truth from me. Instead of getting defensive and responding with such productive phrases as, "That's just the way I am," I looked for a different way.

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The next time he hit one of those hot buttons, instead of getting defensive, I asked for clarification. I told him that I didn't want to be that way anymore but I needed his help to change. I needed his objectivity and ideas for different ways of being. I thanked him for highlighting the issues for me and supporting me as I worked through my changes. And the hot buttons stopped being hot buttons.

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3. Learn From Difficult People and Let Them Be. If you have recurring issues with difficult people, know that they're there to help you, to guide you to a better place. Open yourself to their messages. Take responsibility for your part in the drama. If you build walls around yourself to protect yourself from difficult people, you'll be laying bricks for the rest of your life.

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These walls will also cut you off from people who love you and want to support you. It's a lonely place. When you understand the messages and act on them, you'll have no need for walls. You'll stop attracting the difficult people and situations. Once you shine the light on your own dark places and give them a loving home, you'll be loving and accepting yourself as you are. This is the first step toward being able to truly love and accept others for who they are. And the difficult people will stop being so difficult.

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One thing is certain, difficult people can be a pain, but they are also our spiritual teachers. So next week we'll look at:

1. Difficult People: There's No Escaping Them.
2. What Makes Someone Difficult?
3. Why Do Some People Drive Us Crazy?
4. Ways of Seeing (Others).
5. Why Do Relationships Have Difficulties?
6. Everyone Is Difficult to Someone.
7. A Spiritual Perspective.