

# “Enough is Enough”

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## Reading

From “Chicken Soup for the Soul” and the author Bob Perks.

“Recently I overheard a father and daughter  
in their last moments together at the airport.

They had announced the departure.

Standing near the security gate,  
they hugged and the father said,  
‘I love you, and I wish you enough.’

They kissed and the daughter left.

The father walked over to the window  
where I was seated.

I tried not to intrude on his privacy,  
but I could not refrain from asking:

‘When you were saying good-bye,  
I heard you say, ‘I wish you enough.’  
May I ask what that means?’

He began to smile.

‘That’s a wish that has been handed down  
from other generations.  
My parents used to say it to everyone.’

He paused a moment and looked up  
as if trying to remember it in detail,  
and he smiled even more.

‘When we said, ‘I wish you enough,’  
we were wanting the other person  
to have a life filled with just enough good things  
to sustain them.’

Then turning toward me,  
he shared the following  
as if he were reciting it from memory.

I wish you enough sun  
to keep your attitude bright  
no matter how gray the day may appear.

I wish you enough rain  
to appreciate the sun even more.

I wish you enough happiness  
to keep your spirit alive and everlasting.

I wish you enough pain  
so that even the smallest of joys in life  
may appear bigger.

I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.  
I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.

I wish you enough hellos  
to get you through the final good-bye.”

## **Sermon: “Enough is Enough”**

The other day, I was at my neighbourhood open mic.

It was getting late, and I was tired, so I decided to leave before hearing several other singers perform.

Not wanting to disturb anyone,  
I very carefully and quietly packed up my guitar...

As discreetly as possible, I paid my bill and put on my coat...

And waited for the precise moment of least disruption,  
when I could leave as peacefully as possible.

When that moment arrived,  
I stood up and turned toward the door...

causing my purse to collide  
with the empty glass on the table...

which then fell  
and smashed into smithereens  
on the restaurant floor!

As all eyes turned toward me,  
all bundled up and ready to go...

There was nothing more I could do  
than to bow and say “I’m sorry” to the room at large...

Then step aside for the waitress,  
who was already there,  
smiling and forgiving,  
broom in hand.

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The author Ursula K. LeGuin has a poem that's  
based on Chapter Two of the Tao te Ching,  
the ancient book of wisdom.

The poem "Soul Food" begins:

"Everybody on earth knowing  
that beauty is beautiful  
makes ugliness.

Everybody knowing  
that goodness is good  
makes wickedness."

As we contemplate this...  
and think also of the story we just read  
"I Wish You Enough"...

We realize that a life of meaningful sufficiency  
requires hardship as much as it requires joy.

Life will offer both, whether we like it or not.

"I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.  
I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess."

To have a life of "enough,"  
we must have enough  
of what we try to avoid.

In the ongoing and often surprising unfolding of life,  
we're offered this lesson over and over again...

...and often when we've been working hard  
to create our "enough" out of hard work,  
good intentions, and attempts to control.

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In a very helpful book called  
"A Life of Being, Having and Doing Enough,"  
the author Wayne Muller points out that...

"The Buddha's Eightfold Path contains time-tested prescriptions for  
Right Action, Right Livelihood,  
Right Speech, and the like.

But nowhere on this list will we find Right Result.  
This is because we have no such capacity.

We have authority over our actions, choices and behaviours.

We can monitor our speech so it is true, necessary and kind.

We can control our actions by refraining  
from intentional harm or working for the alleviation of suffering in  
others.

But we simply cannot control whether our speech  
or our actions will bear precisely the fruits  
we hope for."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Muller, *A Life of Being, Having and Doing Enough* (Harmony: New York, 2010), 184.

As we do our best to say “Enough is enough!”  
to the injustice we see in the world  
as well as our own shortcomings,

We may begin to interpret this simple phrase  
in a whole new way.

Not the “enough!” of intolerance and pushing away...

But the “...is enough” of love and compassion.

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Many people are drawn to Unitarian Universalism  
because of our First Principle:

“The inherent worth and dignity of every person.”

It comes up at pretty much every newcomers’ meeting,  
and provides an immediate sense of welcome.

It sounds so simple.

We are inherently worthy...  
We are “enough” exactly as we are!  
This is good news indeed.

But when you consider the many ways  
that we human beings frequently seem *far* from enough...

The simple and perhaps obvious idea  
of the “inherent worth and dignity of every person”  
doesn’t seem so simple anymore.

Considering the many ways we mess up,  
fall short, make terrible decisions,  
disappoint others, betray ourselves...

The idea that we are inherently worthy  
can be surprising at times.

Widening the lens,  
as we think about the terrible cost  
and the ongoing suffering of war,  
as we do each Remembrance Day...

It's clear that we live in a world where  
some people are treated as far more  
“worthy” than others.

What's more, the people who perpetuate  
the violence and suffering...  
well, it can be hard to see them as worthy.

As for us...even when we think of ourselves  
as oriented toward social justice,

We may fall short, at times,  
of putting our principles into action  
to stand up for human rights.

Even in our personal lives,  
and depending on our own  
background and situation,  
we may find it hard to see particular  
individuals as “enough”—

People who, in our eyes, don't measure up  
to whatever standard we're holding,  
whether consciously or unconsciously.

Finally, there will be times, in every life,  
when we ourselves are the people  
we don't believe to be "enough."

Yet the radical promise of the UU First Principle—  
the inherent worth and dignity of every person—  
teaches us otherwise.

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Our First Principle springs, of course,  
directly from our Christian Universalist heritage,

which held that in God's eyes,  
every person was "enough"  
and worthy of salvation or well-being.

The idea that all people are worthy of well-being  
is, needless to say, not limited to any one faith tradition.

Last week we heard it expressed in  
the hymn, Filled With Loving Kindness,  
which is based on the Metta Prayer of Buddhism.

I was surprised to discover that although our hymn makes reference  
to "I", "You" and "We" it doesn't say "All" as in the "All beings" of  
the original prayer.

So we could add the verse:

*"May all be filled with loving-kindness,  
May all be well..."*

*May all be filled with loving kindness  
May all be well...*

*May all be peaceful and at ease  
May all be whole.”*

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The worthiness of all to receive love and kindness is a concept shared by many world religions, as it is enshrined in our First Principle.

This wisdom will, we hope,  
affirm that we ourselves are sufficient  
and okay and worthy of inclusion...

And then to help us widen the circle  
to include all others...  
in an ever-expanding spirit of embracing Love.

How can this happen, though, when so much is “wrong?”

When there is so much violence, so much injustice?

Is it possible to see fully the pain of the world,  
yet know that each person within it, each moment of life,  
is “enough” and worthy?

How can we live in ways that seek  
to heal and improve what is wrong,  
while at the same time,  
affirming the inherent enough-ness  
of everything exactly as it is?

Well, perhaps that’s where our human limitations  
begin to be understood.

Perhaps, as we wrestle with this paradox,  
we might see that in our present stage of development  
we are just as likely to judge and divide  
as we are to forgive and include.

But that Life Itself, that God,  
that Love with a capital L  
doesn't get hung up like that at all.

And that when we turn, and return,  
again and again, to our Source of Greater Good,

We might become softer, more expansive.  
More compassionate and loving.

And better able to discern and  
carry out the right actions.

We might be able to glimpse  
how "enough" could be enough...

Even when we can't quite believe it.

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The songwriter Van Morrison  
has a beautiful ballad called  
"When will I ever learn to live in God?"

He was raised Irish Anglican,  
so, in keeping with his tradition, the lyrics continue:

"He gives me everything I need and more.  
When will I ever learn?"

Taking away the religious language,  
this expresses not only the question of a person of faith...

But the longing of any human being  
who seeks a new way of life...  
but keeps falling back into the habits of living  
that are painfully familiar.

It's hard for most of us to stay in the  
peace of "enough" for very long,  
before thinking that we need to acquire,  
control or subdue.

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When we live in a way that's disconnected  
from the natural world...

When we allow ourselves to be caught up  
in external value systems based on  
competition and status rather than  
simplicity and kindness,

We set ourselves up to behave in ways  
that can harm ourselves and others.

Wayne Muller writes:

"When we live without listening  
to the timing of things,  
when we live and work  
in twenty-four-hour shifts without rest –  
we are on war time, mobilized for battle.

Yes, we are strong and capable people,  
we can work without stopping, faster and faster,  
electric lights making artificial day  
so the whole machine can labor without ceasing.

But remember:  
No living thing lives like this.  
There are greater rhythms,  
seasons and hormonal cycles  
and sunsets and moonrises  
and great movements of seas and stars.

We are part of the creation story,  
subject to all its laws and rhythms.”<sup>2</sup>



The simple focus on the rhythm  
of breathing in meditation...

The act of turning  
toward a Higher Power in prayer...

The quieting down to connect deeply in nature...

All of these can interrupt our  
familiar pattern of  
“too-much-yet-never-enough.”

They can bring us into  
quiet contact with  
the inherent worth of our lives, as is.

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<sup>2</sup> Wayne Muller: *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Daily Lives*.

And then, having found some measure  
of peace and rest in that enoughness...

We can direct our worth—  
our precious time,  
our unique life energy—  
with clarity  
and with courage.

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I quoted an excerpt from it earlier..  
and here is the complete poem “Soul Work”  
by Ursula K. LeGuin  
(and Lao Tse, 8 centuries before the Common Era).

“Everybody on earth knowing  
that beauty is beautiful  
makes ugliness.

Everybody knowing  
that goodness is good  
makes wickedness.

For being and nonbeing  
arise together;

Hard and easy  
complete each other;

Long and short  
shape each other;

High and low  
depend on each other;

Note and voice  
make the music together;

Before and after  
follow each other.

That's why the wise soul  
does without doing,  
teaches without talking.

The things of this world exist,  
they are;  
you can't refuse them.

To bear and not to own;  
to act and not lay claim;  
to do the work and let it go;

For just letting it go  
is what makes it stay.”

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It seems to me that most of us are not sages, nor saints.

We may fill our days with more than enough,  
that prevents us from seeing what's truly worthy.

We may feel that we've had more than  
we can take of sorrow and injustice...

We may push away what seems too much to bear.

Yet I hope that gradually,  
and through the support of loving community,  
we may grow into our inherent capacities...

To stay present.  
To bear witness.  
To love and to heal.

To know that enough *is* enough  
to sustain us for our journey

as long as it shall last.

Amen.

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