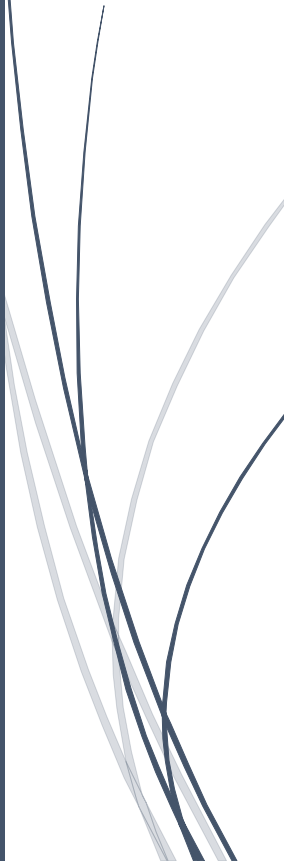


2018

# Unity Spiritual Center In-Home Fall Program



Welcome to Unity Spiritual Center's 2018 Fall Program. We have created a program that is a significant departure from other years – there is no book to read!

This year we are experimenting with in-home discussion groups that are centered on videoed TED Talks. Ten separate talks have been selected that focus on specific themes, and a generous number of questions have been created to support the group discussions.

The church will be playing these weekly videos during the Fall Program on Sunday mornings, starting promptly at 10:25 AM. The first week's video will be shown the morning of September 9<sup>th</sup>. Hosts/Facilitators may choose to review the videos together as a group as a prelude to the weekly in-home discussions. Videos are approximately 20 minutes in length, so if hardware is available the videos can easily be shown before the weekly discussions. If desired, talks can be downloaded directly from TED.com and saved to files or DVDs.

Please check [www.UnityDenton.com](http://www.UnityDenton.com) to find direct links to each weekly TED Talk. Otherwise, go to [www.TED.com](http://www.TED.com) and type in the talk title and author in the search tool.

If you wish to view the talks with subtitles, open the video for play and then access the subtitle icon (looks like a conversation block with three dots in it). Select "ENGLISH" and the text will appear at the bottom of the screen as the video plays. This may help with clarity if there are volume issues on your device.

If you like this video format for the Fall Program, please let the committee know. If you don't like this video format and prefer a book, please let the committee know. Yes, we really want to know!

## 2018 PROGRAM SUMMARY AND SCHEDULE

Week	Theme	Color	TED Talks
Sep 9-15	Truth	Gold	12 truths I learned from life and writing – Anne Lamott
Sep 16-22	Authenticity	Purple	Say your truths and seek them in others – Elizabeth Lesser
Sep 23-29	Challenge	Red	A lesson from a volunteer firefighter – Mark Bezos; 9 life lessons from rock climbing - Matthew Childs; Before I die I want to . . . – Candy Chang
Sep 30 – Oct 6	Happiness	Blue	The surprising science of happiness – Dan Gilbert
Oct 7–13	Vulnerability	Yellow	The power of vulnerability – Brene Brown
Oct 14-20	Listening	Green	I grew up in the Westboro Baptist Church. Here’s why I left – Megan Phelps-Roper
Oct 21-27	Gratitude	Orange	Remember to say thank you – Laura Trice; Nature. Beauty. Gratitude. – Louie Schwartzberg

Go to [www.UnityDenton.com](http://www.UnityDenton.com) if you want direct links to each of these talks.



## Creating Soul Connections WEEK ONE - TRUTH

This week we explore the first TED Talk entitled:

### **“12 truths I learned from life and writing” presented by acclaimed author Anne Lamott**

1. “Life is a paradox – life is both a precious, unfathomably beautiful gift, and it’s impossible here, on the incarnational side of things.” Lamott points out the challenge of being ultra-sensitive. How do you relate to the ‘life is good/bad’ notion?
2. “Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes – including you.” Profound statement or laughter-seeking joke? Why do you suppose machinery works this way and, ironically, why do we often work this way as well?
3. “You can’t buy, achieve or date serenity and peace of mind.” How have you tried to do this in the past? How have your desires changed over the years? How difficult is it for you to ‘let go’ and let your loved ones find their own ways in this area as well? “Help is the sunny side of control.” Discuss.
4. “Try not to compare your insides to other peoples’ outsides.” What does she mean? How can we accomplish this? “Radical self-care is quantum . . . It’s a huge gift to the world.” Discuss.
5. Dark chocolate. Discuss
6. She suggests the secret of life (or success) is persistence, citing a terrible first-draft as a common writer’s beginning. What is your ‘first draft’ and how can you use this analogy to create some persistence or patience in your own work?
7. She intimates that success can be damaging. Perhaps this is why a fear of failure may not be as big a hurdle as fear of success. Can you see ways in which this may have impacted your life? How can you recover from this?
8. “Families are hard, hard, hard . . . “ “Earth is forgiveness school.” How have your families taught you lessons, and what lessons are you still learning?
9. “Food. Try to do a little better. I think you know what I mean.” How about simply embracing “a little better” as a starting point in many aspects of your life? What are those other aspects for you, besides food? Can you do it?

10. “Grace is spiritual WD-40 . . . “ “Laughter really is carbonated holiness.”  
Discuss.
11. “God just means goodness – it’s really not all that scary.” Nicely put. Discuss.
12. “Death” – she says people will live again in your heart if you don’t seal it off.  
Do you believe this? Have you experienced this? This is all holy ground . . .

Notes:



## Creating Soul Connections WEEK TWO - AUTHENTICITY

This week we explore the second TED Talk entitled:

### **“Say your truths and seek them in others” presented by Elizabeth Lesser**

1. Remember the first job that had meaning for you? How did that job set the foundation for your career, or did it?
2. Can you remember how you’ve ‘covered your soul, layer by layer’? Remember a time when you were operating out of your soul-place, your truth-place, and see if you can feel that feeling again.
3. “ADD – authenticity deficit disorder” –can you think of ways to get ‘cured’ of this disorder? How can you look for your and others’ soul sparks?
4. Re: women in labor, Lesser’s message is about “Staying open, even when things are painful.” “If you fight against that pain, it just creates more pain . . .” Like the Unity thought of ‘what you resist, persists’, how does this relate to other things in your life?
5. Lesser recommends when looking at your painful issues, “Stay open. Stay curious. Ask the pain what it’s come to deliver. Something new wants to be born.” Relate this to a painful experience in your life. Could you do it, or did you resist? What was the result?
6. Lesser talks about time and Albert Einstein, stating that we are on a treadmill trying to always get somewhere. She uses the term ‘deep time’ – and being in a state of “only being”. So, are you a human doing or a human being? How can you slow down and ‘be’ more?
7. “Sacred awe” – what a beautiful term! Discuss this and share moments when you’ve experienced sacred awe.
8. The sibling experience summed up – “love, friendship, protection . . . and jealousy, competition, rejection, attack.” She believes this is where we start to layer or cover our soul. Discuss your relationship with siblings, both then and now. (If no siblings, think of a close friend or relative.) How do you think this has contributed to your ‘layers’?
9. Describe the impact you felt when you heard her story of the bone marrow transplant, and the soul marrow transplant. Could you do this for someone

with whom you have had a negative relationship in the past? What level of courage would it take for you to do the soul work, too?

10. Lesser's guidance? "Uncover your soul. Open to what's scary and painful. Look for the sacred awe." Do we really need a life-threatening event to become "our own unapologetic self"? Perhaps we can bypass this and learn to tell and seek truths.
11. Think about who, today, needs to be given the marrow of your soul. Can you offer it to them today? Or soon? Would you need a life-threatening event to do it?

Notes:



## Creating Soul Connections WEEK THREE - CHALLENGE

This week we explore the third week of TED Talks, which are entitled:

- (1) “A life lesson from a volunteer firefighter”  
presented by Mark Bezos**
  - (2) “9 life lessons from rock climbing”  
presented by Matthew Childs**
  - (3) “Before I die I want to . . . “  
presented by Candy Chang**
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### **TED Talk: “A lesson from a volunteer firefighter” by Mark Bezos**

1. Why do you suppose there would be a ‘foot race’ to get to the assignments in an emergency fire situation? What type of person would want to be the first to take on a life-threatening challenge like that? Remember, this is a VOLUNTEER position. Does a passionate desire to be involved require a paycheck? Do you have this type of desire? If so, share experiences that illustrate.
2. Bezos says, “. . . every day offers us an opportunity to affect [someone’s life].” Have you experienced times in your life when you felt that your contribution was insignificant, his “pair of shoes”? Did you have an unexpected ‘thank you’ or turn of events that illustrated that the small act was, in fact, more powerful than you believed?
3. “Don’t wait until you make your first million to make a difference in somebody’s life. If you have something to give, give it now.” This echoes a lesson we’ve heard in our Unity services. What do you think about this idea, and why is it important?
4. What else did you take away from his story, besides “don’t wait to be a hero”?



**TED Talk: “9 life lessons from rock climbing”  
by Matthew Childs**

Obviously the rules Childs outlines are all about rock climbing, but what phenomenal parallels can we glean for our every day or work day lives? Visit each of these ‘lessons’ and relate them to your world.

1. Don’t let go
2. Hesitation is bad (momentum is good – don’t stop)
3. Have a plan (as you focus on getting through the hardest part, you may let the ‘easy’ part go and that will get you)
4. The move is the end (gotta keep your focus)
5. Know how to rest (rest, regroup, refocus, and keep going)
6. Fear sucks (it means you’re not focusing on what you’re doing; rather you’re focusing on the consequences of failing at what you’re doing)
7. Opposites are good (may not be best to follow the most obvious solution – look at options)
8. Strength doesn’t always equal success – balance is the critical issue
9. Know how to let go – if you’re falling, consider the best way to fall

**TED Talk: “Before I die I want to . . .”  
By Candy Chang**

1. Do we need to be faced with death, either our own or someone we dearly love, to begin to live? Why does it seem to take this for so many of us?
2. “So this neglected space became a constructive one, and people’s hopes and dreams made me laugh out loud, tear up, and they consoled me during my own tough times.” Chang opened her talk with her passion for connecting others in a public way. Was this her own therapy? If so, how can each of us take a more active role in our own ‘therapy’?
3. “Two of the most valuable things we have are time, and our relationships with other people.” She reminds us to remember that “life is brief and tender.” She also notes that “thinking about death clarifies your life.” What can you do to cast your seed into the sea of humanity and make a wave of change?

Notes:



## Creating Soul Connections WEEK FOUR - HAPPINESS

This week we explore the fourth TED Talk entitled:

### **“The surprising science of happiness” presented by Dan Gilbert**

1. “In two million years the human brain has nearly tripled in mass.” What is your impression of the implications of this? How do you suppose we ‘evolved’ to get a pre-frontal cortex or “experience simulator”?
2. So here’s the silly question: Which did you prefer – winning the lottery or becoming paraplegic? How is it remotely possible that these two experiences create equal happiness over time? Do you have a personal experience that illustrates this?
3. “If a major life trauma happened over three months ago, with few exceptions, it has no impact whatsoever on your happiness.” Do you believe this? Share your own personal experience(s).
4. Do you use your ‘machine’ to make yourself happy, or are you unaware of it at this point?
5. Gilbert postulates that the secret to happiness is “accrue wealth, power, and prestige, then lose it, ” or “spend as much of your life in prison as you possibly can,” or “make someone else really, really rich,” or “never join the Beatles.” After the laugh, he points out that we believe synthetic happiness is not of the same quality as what we call natural happiness. Discuss ‘synthetic happiness’.
6. Do the differences between synthetic and natural happiness make sense to you? Are they truly different? If not, why do we believe they are?
7. Gilbert says, “Synthetic happiness is every bit as real and enduring as the kind of happiness you stumble upon when you get exactly what you were aiming for.” Again, do you believe this?
8. What did you think of the experiment about the art prints and the choices? Surprised? What about with those who have lost their memories?
9. So, is the experiment “proof” that synthetic happiness is truly as powerful as natural happiness? Regarding those with memory loss, he says, “What these

people did when they synthesized happiness is they really, truly changed their affective, hedonic, aesthetic reactions to that poster.” How does this relate to the Law of Attraction or The Secret, if you’re familiar?

10. Freedom to choose is the ‘friend’ of natural happiness but the ‘enemy’ of synthetic happiness, he says. “The psychological immune system works best when we are totally stuck, when we are trapped.” Again, does this make sense to you?
11. Discuss the photo experiment where subjects took photos, picked their two favorites, but had to give one up. Surprising results? Lots of these experiments seem surprising. Do we really like being ‘stuck’ instead of having a choice?
12. Gilbert does the experiment again and gives the options up front about choice or no choice, and 66% want the choice. However, it has been shown that those who have a choice “will ultimately be deeply dissatisfied with the picture.” This is his warning to us – understand this about yourself, but what does that mean on a daily basis for us?
13. Gilbert’s advice – yes, we should have preferences, options, “but when those preferences drive us too hard and too fast because we have overrated the difference between these futures, we are at risk. When our ambition is bounded, it leads us to work joyfully. When our ambition is unbounded, it leads us to lie, to cheat, to steal, to hurt others, to sacrifice things of real value. When our fears are bounded, we’re prudent, we’re cautious, we’re thoughtful. When our fears are unbounded and overblown, we’re reckless and we’re cowardly.” Discuss this paradox and how understanding it might help you live a happier life.
14. Finally, “our longings and our worries are both to some degree overblown, because we have within us the capacity to manufacture the very commodity we are constantly chasing when we choose experience.” What is your take on this final statement? Relate it to a spiritual message.

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## Creating Soul Connections WEEK FIVE - VULNERABILITY

This week we explore the fifth TED Talk entitled:

### **“The power of vulnerability” presented by Brene Brown**

1. She starts off talking about insecurities about what she and a presenter want to call her. Have you experienced this? Why do you suppose this was an issue, and what should the real issue address? Are both parties experiencing vulnerability issues in this exchange?
2. “If you cannot measure it, it doesn’t exist.” How does this statement impact you?
3. “Connection is what it’s all about.” Have you considered the strength and importance of connecting with others and how that impacts your purpose in this world? Is this overstated? Understated?
4. Discuss shame. Remember a time when you felt that, and see if you can understand your reaction of shame as being the fear of disconnection.
5. “A sense of worthiness” – could having this or not really be all that drives us in our existence, shaping our relationships along the way?
6. Describing people with a strong sense of worthiness - “They had the courage to be imperfect, the compassion to be kind to themselves first and then to others, and connection as a result of their authenticity.” Do you see some clues here that might help you or others feel more worthy in your life?
7. Brown says she discovered these people, whom she calls “whole-hearted”, also fully embraced vulnerability. “They believed that what made them vulnerable made them beautiful.” Is vulnerability necessary? How have you experienced this?
8. How is the desire to control having an impact on your life? Could you see ‘letting that go’ as a spiritual awakening?
9. Are you able to walk into tenderness and vulnerability with grace, or are you like Brown who takes this on as a street fight?
10. How would you define vulnerability? What makes you feel vulnerable?

11. Do you numb vulnerability, like Brown suggests? If so, how does it make you feel to have Brown point out that you cannot 'selectively numb' and the result is numbing everything, like joy, gratitude, and happiness?
12. Do you take your uncertainties and make them certain in your life in order to 'deal' with it (i.e. control it, understand it, be defensive about it)? It looks like, "I'm right, you're wrong." What about religion and our Unity Movement?
13. "Blame is a way to discharge pain and discomfort." Do you see others behaving this way? Can you see this in your own life?
14. We spend time perfecting ourselves and others, and we pretend that our actions do not have an impact on others. Can you think of ways you can become more aware of this in your own life?
15. "I am enough." What does this statement mean to you? How do you think you can embrace this to help your life become richer and more fulfilling?

Notes:



## Creating Soul Connections WEEK SIX - LISTENING

This week we explore the sixth TED Talk entitled:

### **“I grew up in the Westboro Baptist Church. Here’s why I left” presented by Megan Phelps-Roper**

1. Do you remember mimicking words or thought from your parents, which later you realized didn’t resonate with you at all? How hard was it to break out of that habit for you?
2. “. . . life was framed as an epic spiritual battle between good and evil.” Beyond Phelps-Ropers’ experience, discuss the damage this attitude creates. How do you see this damage impacting our whole world today?
3. How effective was the fighting? Did the Westboro Church put in the effort to ‘get the job done’? If so, why didn’t it work? What spiritual principles are at work here?
4. Genuine curiosity – “How had the other come to such outrageous conclusions about the world?” was apparently the question that began to unlock the door to compassion and understanding. How can you incorporate this into your life?
5. “There was no confusion about our positions, but the line between friend and foe was becoming blurred. We started to see each other as human beings and it changed the way we spoke to one another.” Is this the ‘key’ to creating a more peaceful world? Think of a person you now ‘detest’, or at least a position they have that you detest. Do you think this attitude might help to build a more amicable relationship with that person? Can that happen for you?
6. How hard is it for you to admit and face your own flaws? How hard is it to actually change after that admittance?
7. Should leaving a church create ‘overwhelming grief and terror’? Does this then make it a cult? Unity has been called a ‘cult’ by some. Why do you think anyone would state that? Discuss what you believe a cult entails and why.
8. Even after she realized all the damage she had done through her church, she was shocked when she realized “. . . so many embraced me with open arms

anyway.” “. . . forgiveness and the benefit of the doubt.” Is this the key to love? To peace?

9. One of the things helping Phelps-Roper continue forward was the realization “. . . that it was a relief and a privilege to let go of the harsh judgments that instinctively ran through my mind about nearly every person I saw.” Do you have judgments that instinctively crop up in your mind when you see someone you fear or don’t understand? What could you do to similarly help free yourself from that bondage?
10. “I needed to learn. I needed to listen.” Is this attitude the beginning of our growth? Is it ever too late?
11. Do you hear her warnings about “us” versus “them”, and how damaging it is to all of us? Think of some “us” versus “them” situations in your own life and share some ideas about how you can create your own bridges.
12. Regarding making changes, she says, “The good news is that it’s simple. The bad news is that it’s hard.” Discuss.
13. “Righteous indignation . . . is so seductive.” How has this seduced you?
14. She claims four things enable real conversation: 1) don’t assume bad intent; 2) ask questions; 3) stay calm; and 4) make the argument.
15. Phelps-Roper says we lament that digital communication makes us less civil, but one advantage is that in online conversations we have a buffer of time and space. “We can use that buffer. Instead of lashing out we can pause, breathe, change the subject or walk away, and then come back to it when we’re ready.” Thoughts?
16. “If someone doesn’t get it, it’s their problem.” Do you take this ‘cop out’ when dealing with a tough situation? How can you change that? “We are all a product of our upbringing and our beliefs reflect our experiences.” “If we want change, we have to make the case for it.”
17. “Escalating disgust and intractable conflict are not what we want for ourselves, or our country, or our next generation.” “The end of this spiral of rage and blame begins with one person who refuses to indulge these destructive, seductive impulses.” Can this start with you? Think about how you can make this change.

Notes:



## Creating Soul Connections WEEK SEVEN - GRATITUDE

This week we explore the seventh week of TED Talks entitled:

- 1) **“Remember to say thank you” by Laura Trice**
- 2) **“Nature. Beauty. Gratitude.” by Louie Schwartzberg**

### **TED Talk: “Remember to say thank you” by Laura Trice**

1. Why don't we ask for the things (praise, appreciation) that we need? Do you ask? What are the possible risks and rewards of doing so?
2. What is the power play (fear) going on with either withholding this praise/appreciation or with not accepting it?
3. How simple is this? How can you incorporate this as a habit in your life?
4. Take a few minutes now and express appreciation to those in the room. Now ask them for what you need from them in the moment to feel appreciated.
5. Seek to make the act of expressing gratitude a habit by practicing it daily.

### **TED Talk: “Nature. Beauty. Gratitude.” presented by Louie Schwartzberg**

1. “I didn't have much money, but I had time and a sense of wonder.” How often do you think this combination becomes the generator of something very beautiful? Has this happened in your life?
2. “Beauty and seduction are nature's tools for survival, because we protect what we fall in love with.” Discuss this statement from the perspective of gardening, art, relationships, and any other subjects that are triggered in your mind.
3. “. . . we are a part of nature . . . we're not separate from it.” Did watching Schwartzberg's images make you feel as if you were a part of nature? Could you feel yourself relaxing as you enjoyed the visuals?
4. Discuss his definition of “Oh my God.” (‘Oh’ – it caught your attention, makes you mindful; ‘my’ means it connects with something deep in your



soul; ‘God’ - that personal journey we all want to be on, to feel like we’re connected . . . )

5. “. . . 80% of the information we receive comes through our eyes . . . and if you compare light energy to musical scales, it would only be one octave that the naked eye could see . . .” Spend a moment to put this in perspective. What impact does that have or what conclusions can you make from this statement?
6. Schwartzberg invites us to be grateful for our eyes to see, our brains to interpret that vision, and our hearts to ‘feel’ the beauty of nature. “Nature’s beauty is a gift that cultivates appreciation and gratitude.” Spend some time in nature at your first opportunity, and approach your nature visit with the openness and gratitude that is expressed here.
7. Discuss the child’s perspective, especially her quest to find things that are beautifuller.
8. The ‘elderly man’ is Benedictine monk Brother David Steindl-Rast, and his beautifuller words deserve printing here:

“You think this is just another day in your life? It’s not just another day. It’s the one day that is given to you today. It’s given to you. It’s a gift. It’s the only gift that you have right now, and the only appropriate response is gratefulness.

“If you do nothing else but to cultivate that response to the great gift that this unique day is, if you learn to respond as if it were the first day in your life and the very last day, then you will have spent this day very well. Begin by opening your eyes and be surprised that you have eyes you can open, that incredible array of colors that is constantly offered to us for pure enjoyment.

“Look at the sky. We so rarely look at the sky. We so rarely note how different it is from moment to moment, with clouds coming and going. We just think of the weather, and even with the weather, we don’t think of all the many nuances of weather. We just think of good weather and bad weather. This day, right now, has unique weather, maybe a kind that will never exactly in that form come again. That formation of clouds in the sky will never be the same that is right now. Open your eyes. Look at that.

“Look at the faces of people who you meet. Each one has an incredible story behind their face, a story that you could never fully fathom – not only their own story, but the story of their ancestors. We all go back so far, and in this present moment, on this day, all the people you meet, all that life from generations and from so many places all over the world, flows together and meets you here like a life-giving water if you only open your heart and drink.

Notes:

**We hope your life has been enriched by participating in the 2018 Fall Program. Thank you!**

