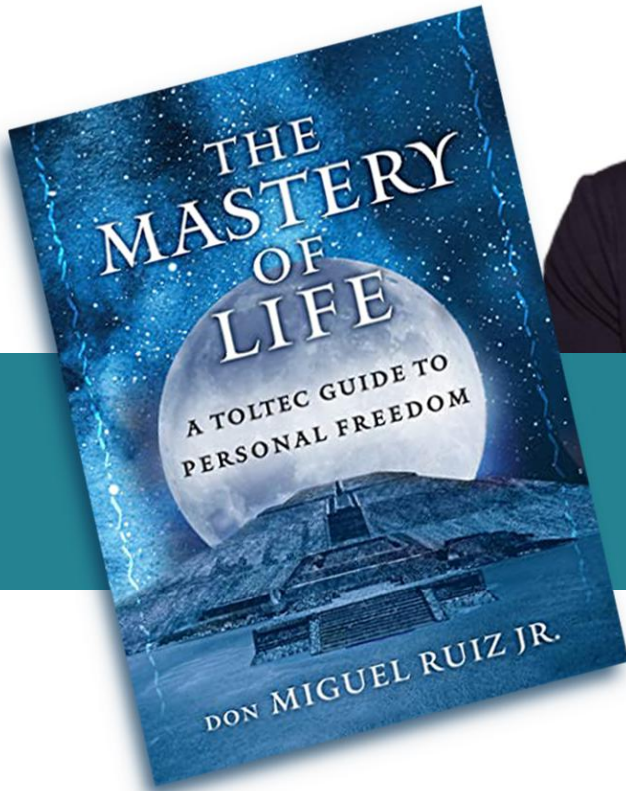


UNITY CHURCH OF OVERLAND PARK

Fall Faith 2022



October 2 - November 18
Sunday Talks | Small Groups | Celebration

**“The greatest journey you can take
is the one within yourself.”**

don Miguel Ruiz, Jr, The Mastery of Life: A Toltec Guide to Personal Freedom

CHAPTERS & WEEKLY AGENDA

INCORPORATING SUNDAY MESSAGES AND SMALL GROUPS CENTERED AROUND
A COMMON BOOK, WE STUDY AND EXPLORE TOGETHER, DEEPENING OUR
SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND BUILDING COMMUNITY.

WEEK 1

Introductions & Group Bonding
Introduction: The Toltec Path
Ch 1 The Art of Life

WEEK 2

Ch 2 The Plaza of Quetzalcoatl

WEEK 3

Ch 3 The Island of Safety
Ch 4 The Plaza of the Mind

WEEK 4

Ch 5 The Plaza of Water
Ch 6 The Plaza of Air

WEEK 5

Ch 7 The Plaza of Fire
Ch 8 The Plaza of Earth

WEEK 6

Ch 9 The Pyramid of the Moon

WEEK 7

Ch 10 The Pyramid of the Sun
Conclusion: Journey's End

FINALE!

Fall Faith Celebration with don Miguel Ruiz, Jr and more!
Friday, November 18th
See newsletter or visit ucop.org for details

WEEKLY GROUP FORMAT

Toltec Circle of Fire Prayer

Today, the day of the Creator
when the divinity returns to me
when living my free will, and with all the power of my spirit
I decide to live my life in free communion with God
with no expectations.

I will live my life with gratitude, love, loyalty, and justice
beginning with myself
and continuing with my brothers and sisters.

I will respect all creation
as the symbol of my love communion with the One who created me
to the eternal happiness of humanity.

Affirmation

When I master life, I know the presence of God in every being and in every experience.

Housekeeping & Check-In

Commitments, Sacred Agreements, and Announcements.

Share what is most alive for you this week from the chapter(s), Sunday talk, or journal.

Discussion

1. What touched your heart, inspired you, or captured your attention during this week's reading?
2. How did this week's reading show up in your life to cultivate spiritual growth and abundant living?
3. Review and discuss the questions/exercises from this week's reading.

Meditation/Mindfulness Exercise

We take a moment to bring our attention and intention to this present moment. *(Pause)*

Setting aside anything that may have been on our minds and simply allowing the breath to take us deeply into this moment.

Tune in to the breath. *(Pause)*

[STATE WEEKLY MANTRA]. Let us breathe here for a moment in the silence. *(1-7 minutes in silence)*

By the power of this practice, may all beings have freedom from suffering and the causes of suffering. May all beings know God as love and themselves as an emanation of this love. May all beings know they are born blessed and here to be a blessing to all. Namaste.

Spirit Work Opportunities for the Week

Each Small Group member is invited to select an area of spirit work and growth during our time together. Individuals support one another in that opportunity by serving as accountability partners.

Closing

Prayer requests

Acknowledgement of Spiritual Community

Small Groups are part of the core services of our ministry. There is no financial offering received during this meeting. Your ongoing contributions make gatherings like this possible for everyone in our spiritual community!

Blessing Statement

Divine love through us, blesses and multiplies all of the love offerings and tithes flowing to our spiritual center now. And so it is. Amen.

Prayer for Protection

The light of God surrounds us; The love of God enfolds us;

The power of God protects us; The presence of God watches over us.

Wherever we are, God is!

THE COMMITMENT

Commitment transforms promise into reality. It is fueled by words that speak boldly of our intentions and the actions which speak louder than words. It is making time where there is none. It is following through. It is the power that transforms our lives and our world. It is the daily triumph of integrity and empowerment over skepticism.

- Commit** I commit myself to this process of spiritual exploration, fulfilling my soul's longing to understand and express the divine to the best of my ability with my thoughts, words, and actions.
- Heart** I go to my heart and invite other Small Group members to do the same. I believe in the connecting power of God that dwells in the one heart of which we are all a part.
- Celebrate** I celebrate the greatness in myself and in you. Our lives are filled with infinite possibilities woven together in Oneness.
- Love** I love and accept you just the way you are and I respect your right to be different and to think differently than I do.
- Share** I openly share my thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. I care enough to share my personal experiences authentically and to lovingly listen, with intention, to your truth.
- Choose** I choose words of kindness, encouragement, appreciation, and gratitude to build a strong foundation of mutual support.

THE SACRED AGREEMENTS

Sacred Agreements help create a safe and healthy environment for the group. It is important that the group review these agreements and reach consensus.

Confidentiality

We honor confidentiality. We do not share another person's story, even good news, without permission. What is shared here stays here. If there is something you hope to share, ask permission and honor the response.

Compassion

We relate to each other with unconditional, compassionate acceptance. Judgmental comments, even unspoken judgmental thoughts, are toxic to the group. When we need to process, we ask our host or minister for sacred and confidential support.

Truth & Integrity

We are encouraged and supported by one another to honestly and authentically be ourselves. Although it involves risk, speaking our personal truth can occur safely in a compassionate environment.

Respect

We show respect for each other and the group by attending each week, arriving on time, not interrupting others and allowing everyone to participate.

Conflict

When people come together and speak truthfully, the potential for hurt feelings, triangulation and misunderstanding exists. When left unresolved, these are toxic to the sacred safety of the environment. We encourage speaking *with* people, not *about* them, and we refrain from talking about people when they are not present.

Group Process

This process is for our own personal and spiritual growth, not group therapy. When discussing program related material, use "I" statements to deepen your sharing. Avoid advising, coaching, or problem-solving for other members.

Participation

We agree to prepare for and participate in discussions and group activities; however, each person has the right to modify their participation.

WEEK 1: Introduction & Ch 1 The Art of Life

Key Terms

Note the key terms listed before the introduction. Familiarize yourself with these terms to more deeply understand the ideas presented in the book. The introduction begins with the line “Words are powerful tools.” In Unity, we understand that words inherently hold the creative idea in them that is inherited from Spirit. Words are the vehicle through which ideas are made manifest.

Spirit Guide

Spend some time in prayer and ask for a Spirit Guide to join you on this journey. This may be an ancestor, an angel, the Holy Spirit, or any avatar that will be a loving and wise companion as you embark on this power journey.

Once you have identified a Guide, use this space to write what gift this particular Guide brings to you on this journey.

If you aren’t sure just yet, stay in the question and come back to this page when you are ready.

Ch 1: The Art of Life

PERSONAL STUDY: JOURNAL & MEDITATION

You might choose a journal or notebook to use for the journal prompts at the end of each chapter, or you might add paper to this Study Guide. The chapter journal prompts are designed to help you deepen your experience of the ideas in the book. Create a sacred time for yourself to engage this exploration, it is a gift you deserve!

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Use one of the journal prompts to discuss or share some ideas that came to you in your journaling process.

Consider some of these questions:

When you master life, you see God everywhere you look. If you are completely honest, where don’t you see God? Are you willing to share with your group? Hint: Think of where you feel the grip of fear, or experience pain in your being or witness it in others. If you can name it, you can surrender to life- which leads to personal freedom. (Introduction xxiv)

Where do you want to add more artistry to your life? The very word *Toltec* means artist and their practice was to tap into the radiant energy and potential that moves through all things. Is there something in your life that is waiting for you to tap into its radiant energy as pure potential? Note: It might be something life-changing or it might seem small or insignificant, this is not a spiritual contest! Not all awareness is profound, but it is important and sacred and absolutely significant if it allows for the fulfillment of your soul.

In the Toltec tradition, the Nagual is defined as the Divine inside of you. Many traditions have a similar concept, in Unity describe is the Christ in you, other terms are Holy Spirit, chi, shakti, prana and so on. What terms have you used in your life? What current term do you use to describe the Divine essence of you? Do you remember when you first realized or felt this presence? (pg 2, paragraph 1)

The Toltecs believed that your perception creates your reality (pg 8)- and that is a fundamental Unity principle! Can you think of a time where your perception created an unintended reality?

As you walk a path of the Toltec Warrior, you come to understand it is an inner journey- one in which you will return again and again to circumstances or situations, each time with greater awareness, but always returning until you have learned what it is there to teach you. (pg 14, paragraph 1) Have you experienced this?

I accept myself exactly as I am in this moment.

WEEK 2: Ch 2 The Plaza of Quetzalcoatl

Quetza-what?

Quetzalcoatl is the feathered serpent god- quetzal (the name of the bird its tail feather resembled) and coatl (meaning serpent). There are many stories about the Feathered Serpent god that permeates Mesoamerican pantheons.

Quetzalcoatl is the Aztec name, Kukulcan is the Yucatec Mayan name of the same god.

Pronounced kehtz-al-coh-ot (the final l is usually silent), the Feathered Serpent was considered to be the god of wind and inventor of calendars and books. His role is multifaceted and complex. He was responsible for creating humanity, and providing them with their staple crops, especially maize.

Mitote

Pronounced mee-toe-tay. Mitote is the name of the negative voices in your head, typically formed in early childhood as a result of domestication. In Unity we describe aspects of the mitote as “monkey mind”- the unsettled, chaotic, judgmental thinking that can run rampant when we have lost our grounding. Meditation is a tool we use to quiet the monkey mind, or mitote, and center ourselves in the knowing of our divine identity. When we can identify our mitote, we learn to recognize it for what it is and rather than believing these voices or thoughts, we can re-identify with our sacred truth. From the journal exercise in chapter 2, jot down some ways you experience mitote. This is just a list, not a deep dive into memories.

Now consider some traumatic experiences you have had in your life. How have your mitote and these experiences contributed to your beliefs about who you are? Is that identity true? Is there anything you want to release from your personal “Sea of Hell” in order to experience yourself in a new way?

Ch 2: The Plaza of Quetzalcoatl

PERSONAL STUDY: JOURNAL & MEDITATION

You might choose a journal or notebook to use for the journal prompts at the end of each chapter, or you might add paper to this Study Guide. The chapter journal prompts are designed to help you deepen your experience of the ideas in the book. Create a sacred time for yourself to engage this exploration, it is a gift you deserve!

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Use one of the journal prompts to discuss or share some ideas that came to you in your journaling process.

Consider some of these questions:

How have your *mitote* stifled your creativity, activated fear, or caused you to create a negative identity for yourself? Is there another way your mitote have ruled your beliefs or decision-making? (pg 27)

Domestication begins with the voices of our caretakers, but eventually we internalize these voices and begin to self-domesticate, reinforcing domestication with our internal thoughts. (pg 31, paragraph 2) Does an example come to mind of how you have self-domesticated?

The parasite, the judge, and the victim are three kinds of mitote. Which of these voices wants to be released and healed? Naming this voice in front of your loving group can be intimidating, and it is a powerful way to begin the healing process. Let your group members hold sacred space for you. If you are not in a group, ask a trusted confidant to hold this space for you.

I accept myself exactly as I am in this moment. I am the beloved child of the Universe.

WEEK 3: Ch 3 The Island of Safety, Ch 4 The Plaza of the Mind

Illusion & Identity

“One of the biggest taks you face on the journey to master life is that you must examine all the ways in which you create your identity. (pg 45) We tend to live in the illusion of our humanity, forgetting our true nature- *nagual* in the Toltec tradition, *Christ* in the Unity tradition. In our efforts to identify with our true nature, we can fall into the trap of thinking our positive aspects are our true identity, this is also an illusion. You are not the things you do, not the accomplishments you have achieved or the mistakes you have made. You are a unique expression of the nagual/Christ! Use this space to write your identity list (pg 55). Write any positive aspects of yourself or accomplishments you use to establish your self-worth.

*Be sure to follow up with the subsequent Letting Go exercise in the book, using a small stone.

The Story-Telling Mind

Using your list above and the list you made from Chapter 2, complete the steps in Stilling the Story-Telling Mind exercise on pg 77-78. This is a discovery process of really taking in the stories you have attached to both your negative self-talk and attachments to your accomplishments or positive aspects. This is not to remove joy or pride for your accomplishments, any more than it is to discount feelings of failure or sadness for mistakes you have made. It is simply to notice the stories we attach to these experiences and how these stories weave into identity.

Ch 3: The Island of Safety

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

The Toltec tradition teaches that the Island of Safety is created by those personality traits, talents, and accomplishments you like about yourself. This Island offers a break from the mitote and a sense of freedom and security, but just like the mitote, the Island of Safety is also an illusion. (pg 47-48) Where have you set this trap for yourself- putting your sense of worth into your accomplishments, roles, career choices, or personality traits?

“Toltec Warriors know that all attempts at control are illusory and that, ultimately, they all originate in fear- fear of the collapse of the stories we have created.” This fear can be a tool to help you understand how you move away from reasonable planning into attempted control of yourself, others, or outcome. (pg 53) Can you identify a time now or in the past where you now recognize you are trying to exert control? *Be gentle with yourself in your new awareness!*

Ch 4: The Plaza of the Mind

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

The ancient Toltecs were very interested in the power of perception, they knew that perception is what creates our experience of reality. They realized that our minds are always telling stories, what they call *dreaming*. Some stories we tell ourselves for so long, we believe them to be facts. Utilizing the power of your inner jaguar, what stories have you come to believe as fact? Are you willing to wake up from these stories so that you can live centered in your truth?

Think of someone whom you admire. Now describe the traits you admire most as if they are your own.
(Hint: They are your own!)

I release any false sense of security and embrace my true worth. I am the beloved child of the Universe.

WEEK 4: Ch 5 The Plaza of Water, Ch 6 The Plaza of Air

Toltec Recapitulation

Create time and space to complete the exercise on pag 105, Toltec Recapitulation. This is not meant to re-traumatize you so be sure to nurture yourself through the exercise and hold the intention that this is for healing. It might take several session. Use this space to jot down thoughts or note a new awareness or feeling that results.

*Follow up with a nap, a walk, or the Connecting to Water exercise on pg 108.

Strengthening Your Intuition

Practice, practice, practice! Your intuition is always available to you, just waiting for your attention. Use the exercise on pg 126 to strengthen your intuition. Note your experience and your take-away from it.

Ch 5: The Plaza of Water

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Your emotions are real, but you are not your feelings. Over time we often come to identify as our feelings, rather than as one who “is feeling _____” we might say “I am _____.” Notice the difference and how it feels in your body. (pg 92) What is your relationship to your feelings? Do you easily connect to and identify your feelings? Do you tend to repress or hide your feelings?

“Your freedom often lies right on the other side of a painful emotion.” Healing forgiveness is a path to personal freedom. Forgiveness is the work you do to first accept whatever you are feeling, then to forgive yourself so that your pain doesn’t dictate your future actions. (pg 96-98) Ruiz offers this critical, yet difficult truth: ‘...it can be incredibly powerful to take a deeper look at how keeping a wound open may actually be serving you in some way. (pg 97 paragraph 1) As a Toltec Warrior, can you identify wounds you have intentionally kept open that may now or soon be ready to heal?

Ch 6: The Plaza of Air

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

The word *inspire* is from the Latin word that means to “breath in or blow into.” Air brings the flow of inspiration that is your unique expression of the nagual/Christ. As you release old agreements and create new awareness on your journey as a Toltec Warrior, you create space to be the artist of your life. (pg 113-114) What do you want to say yes to in a new way? Where do you feel the flow of inspiration in your life today?

“The Plaza of Air invites you to look within and make sure you are really living the life you want to live. If not, why not? What can you do to change it? And if you truly cannot change your circumstances, how can you change your mindset? What is your potential? (pg 118)

I am inspired to accept my feelings, whatever they are. I freely forgive myself and embrace the life I want to live.

WEEK 5: Ch 7 The Plaza of Fire, Ch 8 The Plaza of Earth

Igniting the Spark of Life

The metaphor of fire allows you to feel the nagual's motivating energy. Complete the exercise on pg 144-147. Record new inspiration or awareness below. Has a new idea come to mind, or do you feel reignited about an old project?

*As noted on pg 146, take stock of goals, dreams, and desires you've held back of mind- it may be time!

Listening to Your Body

Emotions are experienced in the body. Aspects of health are experienced in the body. Your body is the sacred temple of your soul. Listen to it! Using the exercise on pg 168-170, note below your objective response to the questions: *How does my body feel?* and *What does my body need?* Be sure to quiet the mind and its opinions about what the body feels/needs.

Ch 7: The Plaza of Fire

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

In Toltec cosmology, it was the desire (fire) of the nagual that created the world. Unity Twelve Powers teaches that Love is divine desire, and it was the desire of the Divine to express Itself which resulted in creation. (pg 131-132) What activities make your heart sing? Are you doing these things often? If not, why not- how can you live your life in a way that better feeds your passions and desires?

Our culture has instilled a lot of shame around desire- be it sexual, emotional, fulfillment, even self-care. How can you use the power of fire to burn away what you no longer need in that old belief system that perpetuates shame? Fire is both creativity and destruction- how can you harness this complex dynamic to release false identities and embrace joy? (pgs 133-143) Note: Sexual expression and orientation, gender identity, and desire are all aspects of your unique expression of the nagual/Christ. If you have felt shame in the past, or currently, this is the time for you to release that shame. Allow the loving support of your group to be a reflection of your divine identity and sacred worth.

Ch 8: The Plaza of Earth

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

"The fear of death is incredibly powerful and pervasive...But I suggest that, even greater than our fear of dying, is our fear of truly living." (pg 156) Is there now, or in the past, a manner in which you hold back your "truly living" because of fear or uncertainty? How can death be an invitation to be the artist of your life and paint your masterpiece?

How does the mirror of truth speak to you? We all hold a single shard, living as if it is the entire mirror of truth on a daily basis. What single shard are you willing to put down so that you can see the whole picture? Or perhaps, you only need to shift perspective to see that you are both fully on Earth, and entirely of the stars. How does this awareness shift your daily life? (pg 163-164)

I am at home in my body and I am also of the stars. I am a beloved child of the Universe.

WEEK 6: Ch 9 The Pyramid of the Moon

Retreat Yourself

If not for a whole day, set aside a few hours to engage the Daylong Reflection Retreat exercise on pg 182. You have done a great deal of personal work on this journey and the moon reminds us to make time to reflect and renew. Write down an intention for your retreat- it can be as serious or as silly as you like, as long as it is genuine and nurturing to your soul. Use your journal or notebook (or add paper to this Study Guide) to reflect on how your retreat felt and how your intention served you.

Saying Goodbye

As we round the corner to the completion of our journey, it is time to say goodbye to your former self. The self that is reflected in your journaling, that has been bound to the domestications and old beliefs that now release in the light of your awareness. The gift in the exercise on pg 185 is a true honoring of all that you have been, returning your old self to the nagual and allowing your new self to be fully born. Rest. Renew. Reflect. Release.

Ch 9: The Pyramid of the Moon

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

You are now in an in between place, no longer your old self, not quite your new self. At the beginning of our journey, you chose a Spirit Guide to accompany you on this journey. How can your Spirit Guide support you in this “in between place” at the Pyramid of the Moon? Do you understand more fully why this particular Spirit Guide was chosen to accompany you on this journey?

The Pyramid of the Moon is a kind of rebirth, a place where you can symbolically return to the Mother. On this journey, you have surrendered much and gained awareness. In light of all the inner work you have accomplished, how do you interpret or understand this statement: “We create everything we know, and knowledge obeys us. Not the other way around”? (pg 175-176) How does this idea relate to Unity’s teaching that our thoughts create our reality?

What domestications, assumptions, or distortions have you held about gender roles and your own gender expression? What would it mean for you to free yourself from these old beliefs and embrace what resonates with you in any given moment in terms of masculine or feminine energy. (pg 177-180)

If you did the Saying Goodbye exercise to say goodbye to your former self- what did it feel like to create your energetic double? Did you notice any particular feelings toward your double? Were you able to release your double back into the nagual? Was it difficult for you or did you experience any resistance? (pg 180; pg 185-189)

How is intent the same as unconditional love? Have you experienced more conditional love or more unconditional love in your lifetime? Have you been a presence of unconditional love for yourself in the past? If not, can you lean into the possibility of choosing unconditional self love?

Unencumbered by past agreements and beliefs, I get to express myself as a work of art.

WEEK 7: Ch 10 The Pyramid of the Sun & Conclusion

What Are You Going To Do?

“The mastery of life is a journey of transformation, not transcendence. You are not going to exist in a higher spiritual frequency, floating above others in superior awareness or grace...When you unlearn your previous patterns, you realize that the nagual inside you, your unique ray of sunlight, did not need any improvement... You can dream and play; you can flow. You can accept and give unconditional love. You can offer your life in service to life itself.

So what are you going to do?” (pg 207-208) Use the space below, your journal, or add paper to this Study Guide to answer the question, what are you going to do?

Ch 10: The Pyramid of the Sun

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

When you begin the journey of the mastery of life, you start in one place, believing whatever you believe. Then you transform as curiosity pushes you toward new information and awareness. Now that you have arrived at the Pyramid of the Sun, what old beliefs or illusions of yours will be burned away in the sunlight of truth? (pg 192)

What domestications (positive or negative) have you held about masculine energy? If you release these domestications, the positive and negative, how might you experience the flow of your own masculine energy differently? (pg 194-195)

You are alive in this moment, and while there is life, anything is possible. Do you believe this wholeheartedly? Where do you doubt? Doubt is not a spiritual failure, instead it points to a domesticated belief. When you can identify your doubts, it is like shining the light of the sun to burn away the illusion of the past and future. Share your doubts and fears with your group so you can magnify the light of possibility. (pg 196)

“Here at the Pyramid of the Sun, you step into life as an artist, consciously cocreating the Dream of the Planet with every other living thing, yet knowing you are only responsible for your own perception.” (pg 203) Share with your group how the group has served you as an opportunity to cocreate the Dream of the Planet. Reflect together how you have each been able to shift your perception, perspective, and awareness through sharing and discussion.

Share general thoughts on your personal transformation on this journey- have you realized that you want to make a profound change? Is this change outwardly apparent or does it reflect an inner shift of attitude or awareness? How have you expanded your understanding of what it means to be the artist of your own life? (pg 207)

*I am a Toltec Warrior, master and artist of my own life and choices. I accept and give unconditional love.
I choose to live free from domesticated ideas so that I may create, experience, reflect, and serve the beauty of life itself.*

THE ART OF LISTENING

You are **NOT** listening to me when:

- You do not care about me.
- You say you understand before you know me well enough.
- You have an answer for my problem before I've finished telling you what my problem is.
- You cut me off before I've finished speaking.
- You finish my sentence for me.
- You feel critical of my vocabulary, grammar, or accent.
- You are dying to tell me something.
- You tell me about your experience making mine seem unimportant.
- You are communicating to someone else in the room.
- You refuse my thanks by saying you haven't done anything.

You **ARE** listening to me when:

- You come quietly into my private world and let me be me.
- You really try to understand me even if I'm not making much sense.
- You grasp my point of view even when it's against your own sincere convictions.
- You have given me your positive energy.
- You allow me the dignity of making my own decisions even though you think they might be wrong.
- You do not take my problem from me, but allow me to deal with it in my own way.
- You hold back your desire to give me good advice.
- You do not offer me religious solace when you sense I am not ready for it.
- You give me enough room to discover for myself what is really going on.
- You accept my gift of gratitude by telling me how good it makes you feel to know you have been helpful.

Small Group Guide structure is adapted from
Unity Village Chapel, designed and customized for

Unity Church of Overland Park Fall Faith 2022

by Rev. Jacquie Fernandez

In this study guide, exercises from the book *The Mastery of Life* by don Miguel Ruiz, Jr, are combined with key Unity teachings for deeper reflection.

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