

Favorite Opening Words/Readings/Quotes

Frederick Buechner: The life I touch for good or ill will touch another life, and that in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place my touch will be felt.

Herman Melville:We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results.

John Muir: When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.

Rabindranath Tagore: The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers. It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow. I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

Parker J. Palmer: If we want to see and hear a person's soul, there is another truth we must remember: the soul is like a wild animal -- tough, resilient, and yet shy. When we go crashing through the woods shouting for it to come out so we can help it, the soul will stay in hiding. But if we are willing to sit quietly and wait for a while, the soul may show itself.

E. B. White: If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day.

Urantia Book - 1098:03: It is not so important to love all men today as it is that each day you learn to love one more human being.

George Bernard Shaw: This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

Calvin O. Dame : Spirit of life and love that lives in us and in all people, be present with us this day. Help us to be grateful for all that we have, grateful for this time of connection, grateful for these friends and for all those who enrich our lives. Spirit of life, be present with us as compassion, that we may open our hearts, listen with care, and be truly present with one another. Spirit of life, be present with us as a spirit of generosity, that we may meet the world with good will. Be present with us as vision, that we may see beyond this moment and beyond the limits of our daily concerns. And may we remember, once again, that we are a part of a larger world, and of all that lives therein.

Mark Morrison-Reed, UU minister: The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others...

Joseph Campbell: Each of us is a completely unique creature...and if we are ever to give any gift to the world, it will have to come out of our own experiences and fulfillment of our own potentialities, not someone else's.

Aristotle: Happiness is the utilization of one's own talents along lines of excellence.

Annie Dillard: How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.

James Luther Adams: Church is a place where you get to practice what it means to be human.

“Mystical Song” by Mark Belletini—from Sonata for Voice and Silence.

“Come my way,
a way that takes me
past all my escape routes,
a way shadowed by mountains serenely
floating overhead, and with
flattened molehills all around me.
Come my truth,
a truth that has no loopholes
or moth-holes, or frayed edges.
A truth as exciting as fire, and as bright—
as powerful as water, and as fluid—
as solid as earth, but as transparent as air.
Come my life,
a life that devotes itself to love,
a life that coaxes,
and ungums the works,
and gets me to waltzing on the hot coals
of my amazement.
A life that precedes all the words of my mouth,
and survives them into silence.

What's now by Ralph Marston

Before you rush away from this moment, take a look around and see its beauty. Instead of worrying about what's next, see the immense value that's already yours in what's now.

Savor the time you're in and the place where you are. Appreciate all that you have instead of being obsessed with how to get more.

You are already wealthy beyond all measure. Open your eyes to now, open your heart to purpose, and experience in rich detail the miracle that is your life.

There's nothing to be gained by racing furiously away from this moment in search of more. Instead, put your energy into accepting all that is and you'll find it is more than enough.

Put your focus, care, love, attention, interest, curiosity, purpose and passion into where

you are right now. This is your time and place to live, to achieve, to feel, to learn and to experience.

Everything you are, you are right now. Be here and live the richness.

Words Adapted from Peter Lee Scott

We come together in an attitude of openness - not knowing quite what will happen, yet daring to receive a new idea, a new experience, sustenance for our minds and our hearts.

We come with an attitude of praise, expressing our thankfulness for the good that has come into our lives.

We come with an attitude of humility, knowing how much we need one another, how alone we can be in the world, how vulnerable if we face life solely by ourselves.

We come in the spirit of love, seeking human warmth and fellowship in the hands and faces of those around us.

We come in the spirit of joy, seeking reconfirmation and renewal of life, of love, and of hope.

From Set in Stone -- Victoria Stafford

In a cemetery, once, I found a soothing epitaph. The name of the deceased and dates had been scoured away by wind and rain, but there was a carving of a tree with roots and branches (a classic nineteenth century motif) and among them the words, "She attended well and faithfully to a few worthy things." At first this seemed to me a little meager, a little stingy on the part of her survivors, but I wrote it down and have thought about it since, and now I can't imagine a more

proud or satisfying legacy.

"She attended well and faithfully to a few worthy things."

Every day I stand in danger of being struck by lightning and having the obituary in the local paper for all the world to see, "She attended frantically and ineffectually to a great many unimportant, meaningless details." How do you want your obituary to read?

"He got all the dishes washed and dried before playing with his children in the evening."

"She balanced her checkbook with meticulous precision and never missed a day of work – missed a lot of sunsets, missed a lot of love, missed a lot of risk, missed a lot - but her money was in order."

"She answered all her calls, all her e-mail, all her voicemail, but along the way she forgot to answer the call to service and compassion, and forgiveness, first and foremost of herself."

"He gave and forgave sparingly, without radical intention, without passion or conviction."

"She could not, or would not hear the calling of her heart."

How will it read, how does it read, and if you had to name a few worthy things to which you attended well and faithfully, what, I wonder would they be?

The Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal

of your body love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of rain are moving across the landscapes,

over the prairies and the deep trees,

the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,

are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting--over and over
announcing your place in the family of things.

Thich Nhat Hanh:

Our true home is in the present moment.
To live in the present moment is a miracle.
The miracle is not to walk on water.
The miracle is to walk on the green Earth in the present moment,
to appreciate the peace and beauty that are available now.
Peace is all around us
in the world and in nature -
and within us -
in our bodies and our spirits.
Once we learn to touch this peace,
we will be healed and transformed.
It is not a matter of faith;
it is a matter of practice.

God Says Yes To Me by Kaylin Haught

I asked God if it was okay to be melodramatic
and she said yes
I asked her if it was okay to be short
and she said it sure is
I asked her if I could wear nail polish
or not wear nail polish
and she said honey
she calls me that sometimes
she said you can do just exactly
what you want to
Thanks God I said

And is it even okay if I don't paragraph
my letters
Sweetcakes God said
who knows where she picked that up
what I'm telling you is
Yes Yes Yes