

**I Fall Down on My Knees  
Rev. Tony Lorenzen  
Pathways Church  
Southlake, TX  
Sunday, August 15, 2010**

*At the moment of surrender  
I folded to my knees  
I did not notice the passers-by  
And they did not notice me  
-U2*

I don't know about you, but I remember the times I fold to my knees vividly. I fold to my knees often. Sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally. Sometimes it's the whole entire package. Sometimes I fold so completely, I'm numb. I remember them though, these times I fold to my knees.

I love the way Bono puts it in this lyric "At the moment of surrender, I folded to my knees. I did not notice the passers by and they did not notice me." I remember a lot of times like that: The moments of surrender. I love moments of surrender. These are the moments when I give myself

over to something larger than myself. And in spite of my size, there is quite a bit that is larger than me.

The moment of surrender is so important to our spiritual well being. These moments of surrender are times of complete and total prayer. We don't stop to think or analyze. We don't stop to rationalize or reason. We don't stop to think what our friends or co-religionists will think of us if we give in, we just give in, we surrender to the moment. We let the big moment of pain or joy or the awe-inspiring moment of wonder or the mind-numbing moment of tragedy or the giddy moment of happiness or the gut wrenching moment of sadness, or the spirit lifting moment of exultation or the soul emptying moment of sadness overwhelm us and consume us in an obliterating experience of being human.

I think we take a pass on some of these moments because we've been culturally conditioned through our social and religious and political and intellectual upbringing to censor ourselves from experiencing our human reality

emotionally in the moment. I can't possibly let everyone know how I feel right now, that wouldn't be right. Bless their hearts, they'll think I'm \_\_\_\_\_, well you can fill in the blank – depressed, a nut case, angry, drunk, high, (funny how if you're too happy, you must be on drugs!), - and what if you are depressed or angry or exhilarated? There are just some states of being human that have been written off the map. You can't surrender to being yourself or feeling how you feel. How dare you experience your joy or admit to your anger or your depression, and for God's sake certainly we don't want to know about your grief or your shame or any of it! Can't you hide it!

But we all fold to our knees with the highs and lows, the wonder and agony of it all. The extreme rawness of this human condition. And still how often have we been there, for good or bad, and we folded to our knees and we did not notice the passers by and inside, we wanted to share our

experience, wanted someone to notice our experience, and no one did, they passers by did not notice us?

Experiencing the wonder and the agony of it all is probably what led human beings to being praying. The first prayers of “Help” and “Thank You” had to have come from our primal moments of surrender, noticing that we were not in charge.

I know it’s August but one of the first times I folded to my knees was Christmas Eve. I was eleven. I had just finished my paper route. I was at the top of the hill walking home. It a clear and cold New England night, the stars were all out. It was quiet. Snow was on the ground. An occasional car drove by and crunched the snow packed street. People pulled into their driveways and walked into their houses, but I did not notice them and they did not notice me.

I was wrapped into attention by the stars. I was into stars. It was just a couple of years before Carl Sagan and *Cosmos* would blow my mind. Stars and the story of a star

leading kings to a baby who preached kindness and compassion, peace on earth, this small little earth, silent night holy night. I never actually fell to my knees, but I still don't remember how long I stood there. I know I was late for dinner. That may have been the moment when something in me knew I would be doing this now.

Other moments of surrender would bring me to my knees. During college I suffered a major bout with depression. Didn't know what was going on. Couldn't eat, couldn't sleep, couldn't get out of bed. Almost failed out of college. Worse than that though, is when you're depressed, you feel like a failure as a person. People can tell you the difference between I've done something wrong and I am someone wrong, but you don't feel it or believe it. Through a trust in something greater than myself, in the power of love and justice, in hope, and support, I made it through the days of feeling like my body was a begging bowl.

Moments of surrender are not always about failure, giving up is not always giving in. Resignation is not always resigning. Letting go is itself a prayer. It's a big one. It's a prayer of admission. It's saying, "I'm big enough to not always have to have my own way. I'm big enough to realize that the universe does not cater to me."

Maybe praying is partly learning how to cultivate moments of surrender, creating the time and space to fall down on our knees. I'm not talking about falling down on your knees in subservience to a Deity that is an old white man in the sky, but realizing that surrender is part of the human condition, that like it or not, you and I are not always in control, and the phrase let go and let God can still apply to Unitarian Universalists of all spiritual paths because let go and let god means living for something greater than yourself, such as the transforming power of love and justice. Let Go and Let God means trust that the journey will be worth the sacrifices for love and justice are the loftiest of ideals.

On June 14, 2007 I marched with the Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry in Boston. We gathered at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul on the Boston Common and marched across the Boston Common to the Massachusetts State House where we joined thousands of others bearing witness, standing on the side of love for Marriage Equality. This was the day that the Massachusetts legislature would vote in constitutional convention on an amendment seeking to repeal the state's equal marriage law. If defeated, it would be years, if ever, that the law would ever be challenged again and marriage equality would be safe in Massachusetts. As we marched up the Common to the State House, and through a small crowd of people demonstrating against gay rights, we sang, "We are marching, We are marching, we are marching in the light of God."

It was eleven days after my ordination. And although I had knocked on hundreds, if not thousands of doors, for

Mass Equality in the fight for Marriage Equality, and met with legislators, and attended all the rallies at the state house, this time, this time I was a Unitarian Universalist Minister. This time I wore a clergy shirt and collar. This was my first public act as a Unitarian Universalist minister. This time, I noticed the passers by and they definitely noticed me and I was marching and singing, yet I was on my knees. I was in a total moment of surrender. William Ellery Channing did this. Theodore Parker did this. James Reeb did this. It's a good thing I had something to carry and something to sing. I had been doing this work for a couple of years, but a whole lot of stuff was coming together real, real fast and the crowd I was marching with contained a whole lot of new colleagues and our destination was right next to 25 Beacon Street and I was folding to my knees and my knees needed to keep marching in the light of God. The fight for marriage equality is something much larger than me and I was in complete surrender to it, vision over visibility, my body a begging bowl

asking for what I needed to keep going in the fight for love and justice. You can fall down on your knees in joy as well as anguish.

Without moments of surrender and falling down on our knees there isn't wonder and acceptance of ourselves. At some point there is gratitude for the way things are and there is a stopping point in the constant pursuit of perfection – isn't our society addicted to perfection and being perfect? The best moments of surrender and the most eloquent bending at the knee is the moment of quiet contentment. The moment of Grace when we feel that yes, everything is just fine right now. I could live in right now forever. You've met your soul there in that moment; I know you have. It was fleeting or it lingered and if you could have wrapped your arms around the air and embraced the time of it you would have. You know what I mean.

My moments of surrender usually come at two places now, during my daily walks and during my morning

meditation. You don't know how many sermons you lose during my walks, but if there were any way to take notes, I'd lose the surrender. And there are frequently many passerby on the trails I walk and I sometimes notice them and they sometimes notice me, but I don't think they ever imagine I've fallen to my knees. Sometimes I wonder if any of them have fallen to their knees as well and we're all just in chapel together.