



# Soul Matters

**Luck**



Small Group

June 2018

# What Does It Mean To Be A People of Luck?

A Soul Matters facilitator once shared, “I guess after plan A fails, I need to remember there's still a whole alphabet out there.”

It's not just our friend who needs help remembering that there's a whole alphabet out there; it's all of us. We all get stuck in wanting things a certain way. We all, at times, focus so intently on the few things going wrong that we completely miss the dozens of things going right. Tunnel vision too often takes over our days.

In more traditional religious frameworks, people sometimes talk about the Plan As and the Plan Bs--and all the things that happen in our lives--as part of a plan. In the Ethical Culture, humanist tradition, we are more likely to say “that's just life,” to talk about having bad luck or good luck.

But how about the luck we make? Not in our own lives, but in the lives of others? This month, we explore the idea of having lucky and unlucky lives, and the idea of bringing good luck to those around us through our care for them.

# Our Exercises

## *Option A: Secret Wishes*

Wayne Muller, in his book *Sabbath*, encourages a practice he calls secret blessing. He writes, "Bless strangers quietly, secretly. Offer it to people you notice on the street, in the market, on the bus. [Silently say to yourself] "May you be happy. May you be at peace." Feel the blessing move through your body as you offer it. Notice how you both receive some benefit from the blessing."

In our tradition, we might think about wishing people good luck--sending them our care and support, even without them knowing it. At first blush it's hard to imagine how a secret wish can produce much good. How can a person receive something they aren't aware you're giving them? But, of course, this practice is more about what happens to us than what happens to them. It alters our attention, making us scan and become more aware of our surroundings. It changes our attitude toward others. Just imagine going through your day looking for excuses to wish people well or think the best of them rather than looking for threats and assuming ill intent. And it connects us to others, helping us acknowledge common struggles and hungers.

But how *exactly* might it change *you*? That is what this exercise is all about.

Do it for a day or maybe two. Be disciplined about it and set a target for yourself like, "I will secretly offer 10 wishes/blessings to 10 different people throughout the day." Don't be afraid to keep it simple. A blessing is as straightforward as completing the sentence: "I wish \_\_\_\_\_ for you."

At the end of the day meditate on or write about how offering those wishes and seeking out people to send luck to altered your day.

Come to your group ready to share a few stories about who you sent wishes to, how, and why.

## ***Option B: A Good Luck List***

One of the most famous Good Luck Lists comes from The Sound of Music and the song, [My Favorite Things](#). The point of the song is that ordinary wonderful things save us. “We don’t feel so sad” the song says. We also don’t feel so isolated, anxious or disconnected from life. As we notice the ordinary luck around us, we experience life as a generous friend not a threatening foe. When we focus on our *favorite* things, it can feel like these beautiful things were created just for us.

So take a week and connect to your own good luck by making a list of “your favorite things.” Add at least 2-3 each day.

And yes, make it a literal list.

Put the list in a place you will see it each day: by your bed, on your desk, on the fridge. It’s important to watch it fill up so you can more easily see connections and themes. Don’t worry about being profound. Think of the Sound of Music song: it was full of simple things. Similarly, the point of this exercise is to identify *YOUR* favorite simple things: french press coffee rather than automatic drip; the way the cat curls up on your lap in the evening when you are watching TV; the way your son unconsciously sticks his tongue out when he’s concentrating; the sound of your daughter’s laugh; the Saturday morning reruns of car-talk on NPR.

Come to your group ready to share the list, if you are comfortable. Also be ready to share how noticing these beautiful, lucky things brought you joy.

# Your Question

*As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of luck means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"? Where is that question trying to lead you?*

1. What is your very favorite thing to do? When was the last time you did it? Why again aren't you doing it all the time? Or at least much more often?
2. Has age helped or hurt? At what age were you best at noticing the beauty and the "good luck" around you? Have you gotten better as time has gone on? Or worse? What would improve your gaze?
3. Did your words bless or curse others this past week? A Soul Matters facilitator writes, "My Mom often told us to consider our words before offering an opinion. Her mantra was: "Are your words kind and helpful? If both adjectives do not apply, keep the thought to yourself!" What words have fallen from your lips lately that you need to go back and turn into a wish?
4. Have you thanked all of your "fathers" for the good luck they have brought you? Many of us have more than one father figure in our lives. When was the last time you told them thanks for their gifts? And let them know you carry them and their influence with you still?
5. Sometimes there *isn't* good luck hidden in our pain. Sometimes it's *not* you overlooking the luck; it simply *isn't* there. In those cases, we need space to acknowledge the emptiness, rather than have people try to minimize it, make it go away or convince us we should find a silver lining. Do you need space to do nothing but mourn the loss and feel the pain? What will it take for you to get it?
6. Are you more often anxious about scarcity than you are stunned by all the undeserved luck in your life?
7. What was your biggest "unexpected good luck moment"? When did a good luck surprise and sustain you in the midst of pain? What gift or lesson from that story do you need to most remember today?
8. What if you told yourself that this was the best and most lucky part of your life? What might look or feel differently to you?
9. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

# Companion Pieces

## Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The below recommended resources are not “required reading.” We will not analyze these pieces at our small group meeting. Instead they are here to companion you on your personal journey this month, get your thinking started, and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of blessing.

## Word Roots

noun: luck

1. success or failure apparently brought by chance rather than through one's own actions.
2. something regarded as bringing about or portending good or bad things.
3. chance considered as a force that causes good or bad things to happen.

synony **success, prosperity**, good fortune,  
ms: good luck

antonyms **failure,**  
: **misfortune**

## Wise Words

So what, then, does it mean to offer a blessing, to be a blessing? To bless something or someone is to invoke its wholeness, to help remind the person or thing you are blessing of its essence, its sacredness, its beauty, and to help remind yourself of that, too. Blessing does not fix anything. It is not a cure... It does not instill health or well-being or strength. Instead, it reminds us that those things are already there, within us.

[Rev. Elea Kemler](#)

A blessing is not something that one person gives another. A blessing is a moment of meeting, a certain kind of relationship in which both people involved remember and acknowledge their true nature and worth and strengthen what is whole in one another. By making a place for wholeness within our relationships, we offer others the opportunity to be whole without shame and become a

place of refuge from everything in them and around them that is not genuine. We enable people to remember who they are.

*Rachel Naomi Remen, My Grandfather's Blessings*

It's hardest to love the ordinary things, she said, but you get lots of opportunities to practice.

*Brian Andreas*

## Something Wild and Unbroken

*Carrie Newcomer*

Full poem here: <http://>

[carriewcomer.tumblr.com/post/122883509259/something-wild-and-unbroken](http://carriewcomer.tumblr.com/post/122883509259/something-wild-and-unbroken)

“Riding my bike down a narrow country road...

A graceful young doe

Was bounding in beautiful unhurried leaps...

Then with a burst of speed

She dashed in front of me

And disappeared into the woods

Leaving me breathless

With a feeling of visitation...

Since that moment,

The world has felt less weary...”

It could happen any time, tornado, earthquake, Armageddon. It could happen.

Or sunshine, love, salvation.

It could, you know. That's why we wake and look out – no guarantees in this life.

But some bonuses, like morning, like right now, like noon, like evening.

Yes!

*-William Stafford*

## Thank you, faithful things!

*Mark Strand*

Thank you, faithful things!

Thank you, world!

To know that the city is still there, that the woods are still there,

and the houses, and the hum of traffic  
and the slow cows grazing in the field;  
that the earth continues to turn  
and time hasn't stopped,  
that we come back whole  
to suck the sweet marrow of day,  
thank you, bright morning,  
thank you, thank you!

## Videos

**We are going to die, and that makes us the lucky ones**

*Richard Dawkins*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOXMjCnKwb4>

**The Best Gift (and Blessing) I Ever Survived**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/stacey\\_kramer\\_the\\_best\\_gift\\_i\\_ever\\_survived#t-163255](https://www.ted.com/talks/stacey_kramer_the_best_gift_i_ever_survived#t-163255)

Stacey Kramer offers a moving, personal, 3-minute parable that shows how an unwanted experience -- frightening, traumatic, costly -- can turn out to also be a priceless blessing.

**Responding to Life's Beauty - TED talk and video meditation**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/louie\\_schwartzberg\\_nature\\_beauty\\_gratitude](https://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude)

Nature's beauty can be fleeting -- but not through Louie Schwartzberg's lens. He shares his stunning time-lapse photography and invites us into a video meditation on being grateful for every day.

**Blessed by the Moon**

<https://vimeo.com/259818647>

**The Paradox**

*Sarah Kay*

On the luck of being where you're supposed to be.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VShVwQtIFF8>

**How Race Settled the Suburbs - Not All Are Equally Lucky**

*Adam Ruins Everything*

<https://www.facebook.com/truTVAdamRuinsEverything/videos/710617992474278/>

## Books

**The Gentle Art of Blessing: A Simple Practice That Will Transform You and Your World**  
*by Pierre Pradervand (Author)*

[https://www.amazon.com/Gentle-Art-Blessing-Practice-Transform-ebook/dp/B002TNGBJU/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1521469988&sr=1-1&keywords=9781439153635](https://www.amazon.com/Gentle-Art-Blessing-Practice-Transform-ebook/dp/B002TNGBJU/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1521469988&sr=1-1&keywords=9781439153635)

**On Gratitude: 51 Micro-Essays**

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/1440505942/ref=as\\_at?imprToken=uVtj.s3MHDceGhhf3ADfyQ&slotNum=2&tag=braipick-20&camp=213381&creative=390973&linkCode=w61&creativeASIN=1440505942&adid=1EFV6YMKWWGYFCG3EC5G&](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1440505942/ref=as_at?imprToken=uVtj.s3MHDceGhhf3ADfyQ&slotNum=2&tag=braipick-20&camp=213381&creative=390973&linkCode=w61&creativeASIN=1440505942&adid=1EFV6YMKWWGYFCG3EC5G&)  
<https://www.brainpickings.org/2010/10/25/on-gratitude/>

## Music

**Grateful: A Love Song to the World**

*Empty Hands Music*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzg8>

**To This Life**

*Kim Churchill*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glO6eQu9OA0>

**Wonder**

*Naughty Boy*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kASjW\\_aPbQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kASjW_aPbQ)

**My Favorite Things**

*from The Sound of Music*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lagRZBvLtw&feature=youtu.be>

Jazz cover: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlwMTQFLHdU>

The Willis Clan Cover (song starts at 2:40):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7h8J48UXoBc>

**Thank You Very Much**

*Leah Song*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKFed9LCong&index=19&list=RDm3rLLALWYyk>

**Thank You**

*Alanis Morissette*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDp6F\\_Baf5l](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDp6F_Baf5l)

### May I Suggest

Susan Werner: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eW1DDSQnEYo&feature=youtu.be>  
Red Molly: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMWk9J\\_riPw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMWk9J_riPw)

### Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Cover by Sarah Noëlle:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3w9nvXuVnk>

Cover by Elenyi & Sarah Young: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Z3pjXmNq2g&index=1&list=PLyvBLXLjvLeyj3wsVboWHgtFaev-LQfRQ>

### Slow Down (Savoring the blessing of our children)

Nichole Nordeman

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clcNB\\_EUao8&index=6&list=RDlaOExJJJa\\_YA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clcNB_EUao8&index=6&list=RDlaOExJJJa_YA)

### Soul Matters Spotify Playlists

Check out these and other songs on our monthly theme by following our Blessing playlist on Spotify. Here's a link to the playlists for all of our monthly themes: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>

## Movies

### Garden State

[https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/garden\\_state](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/garden_state)  
A quietly troubled young man returns home for his mother's funeral after being estranged from his family for a decade.

### Little Miss Sunshine

[https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/little\\_miss\\_sunshine](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/little_miss_sunshine)

### Amelie

<http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/amelie/>  
One woman decides to change the world by secretly blessing the lives of the people she knows...

### 127 Hours

[https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/127\\_hours](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/127_hours)

### Isle of Dogs

<https://www.commonsemmedia.org/movie-reviews/isle-of-dogs>  
The blessing of friends and teamwork in this Wes Anderson stop motion animated film.

Get daily inspiration on the monthly theme  
by liking the Soul Matters Facebook inspiration page: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>



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