

Let Go and Let God

My Higher Power Doesn't Take Flight

Last summer I had an experience that reminds me of what my sponsor often says: "Make plans and let God (what I call my H.P.) make decisions." Sometimes when life gets really crazy, the only reasonable thing to do is to Let Go and Let God.

I woke up at home in Nashville having made plans along with five other co-workers to be in Oslo, Norway twenty-four hours later. This was a business trip to a small town about three hours north of the Oslo airport. No small journey, but what I didn't know was what I was in for before I even got out of the country.

We arrived at the Nashville Airport early that morning. After being issued our tickets, we went through security and made it to our departure gate. After relaxing at the gate for a while, the tour manager came up to inform me that for some unknown reason, I and another man in our party were on stand-by and may not get on the plane. After a few minutes, my co-worker was taken off stand-by but I was not. After a lot of hoping and haggling, I watched as my five buddies got on that plane to Newark to make their connection to Oslo while I stayed behind. The tour manager gave me some last minute instructions and the number of the travel agent, but aside from this I was on my own.

The airline we were originally booked on could not get me into Newark in time to make the connection overseas with the rest of the group, so the travel agent started over. On her instructions I went back to the ticket counter and booked a flight on a different airline into JFK in New York after which I would take a cab from NYC to New Jersey to catch the connection with the rest. Two coincidences happened during this nerve-racking, no-guarantee arrangement. First, the woman at the ticket counter who booked my flight to JFK was from New York City. She told me exactly what to do to get to the taxi ASAP and what to tell the cab driver. Second, on the flight to JFK I told the flight attendant about my predicament. She gave me her cell phone number and told me that if I had trouble getting a cab at the airport taxi stand to call her. She was off-duty after the flight and could give me a ride to the other airport if need be....because she lived in New Jersey!

The plane landed in New York and I made my way to the taxi stand to a waiting cab. As he zipped off for the Jersey Tunnel, he commented on how light the traffic was compared to normal. I asked him why. He just shrugged his shoulders and said, "I don't know." But it appeared he spoke too soon. Several blocks from the tunnel the Manhattan rush was on, and we were in stop-and-go traffic for the next 30 minutes. When I landed at JFK I had about 90 minutes to get to the connection in Jersey. The cab ride was estimated by a co-worker's wife I talked to by cell phone to be at least 45 minutes, without heavy traffic. Would I get there, get through security and to the gate in time? I didn't know...no one did.

I sent periodic progress reports to the tour manager by cell phone. I also called my sponsor. I was surprisingly calm. When you're in a taxi in Manhattan trying to get somewhere, what can you do....ask God to part traffic like the Red Sea? Should I tell the cab driver to step on it? What good would it do? Besides, anyone who's ever been in a cab in NYC knows that they drive as fast as they can! My sponsor assured me that I was doing the right thing, which was the next right thing (or 'intuitive thought', as he says.) I had no control over whether I would make it. If I did, great; if not, then I would do whatever was next. Believe me, I was not fearless. If I didn't connect with the group I was going to have to arrange a separate trans-Atlantic flight, stay in Oslo overnight when I arrived, and not meet up with the group until the following day when they sent a ride to take me to our destination three hours from Oslo. That was a little scary; a little lonely. I was hungry and had no food for the next several hours. It was not the way I had planned it, but I was still ok. (continued on back)

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I made the connection in New Jersey, and the rest of the trip went smoothly. Did God get me there? Maybe, I don't know. Did he put the ticket counter woman and the flight attendant in my path to help me? I suspect so. Did he lighten the New York traffic to get me to my destination quicker? For me, that's even harder to imagine. These are all intriguing questions, but the answers aren't important. What is important is that my H.P. can give me the courage to be calm and brave and to do the next right thing. If I can do this in less dramatic circumstances, I will be ok no matter what happens.—Brian G.



The Roving Reporter Asks...

What's been your experience with Letting Go and Letting God? Is this effortless for you or do you have to "work at it." How has your life changed by embracing this concept?

Many times I try to do God's job – I am trying to run the show by attempts at manipulating people and situations to make events and people's behavior turn out the way I want them. When I "Let God" do His job, I experience His power in my life and much more serenity. --Dottie

I recently experienced letting go and letting God around the holidays. My mother-in-law had another flare up of cancer (we thought), and thus it was going to change our whole Christmas holiday, with regards to travel. I prayed about this and asked for guidance from my HP. Then I did what the Big Book says to do: I prayed, then asked for guidance, then relaxed because I knew that an answer would come. It did. Albeit, I had to wait a bit, but the answer came in that the flare up was NOT cancer, so the decision to change plans for Christmas was not the highest priority. Absolutely amazing! I forget where it says this about letting go and relaxing...either somewhere around step 3 or step 11. I am not sure. --Melissa H.

For me, this is probably the toughest concept in the 12 steps. Before working the steps, I thought my job was to decide what I wanted – and to go to any lengths to MAKE it happen. When I didn't get what I'd demanded (which was most of the time), I was frustrated, resentful, and angry.

Now, I've come to understand that my job is to align my will and my life with a higher power. As part of working the third step, I affirm this each morning, asking God to use me and to keep me out of self and selfishness, to show me the way, and to take away my difficulties and allow me to do the footwork – so that I can be useful to others. It's not so much that I no longer want what I want – but that I'm learning to accept that things turn out as they are meant to be.

For me, this is a process and requires daily action. It's not something I can just do and be done with, but it's "progress -- not perfection" and I'm still new at this . . . it's only been 24 years! –Jason B.

For me, surrender is the opposite of struggling. When I am struggling with someone or thing, I am my own higher power and there is no room amongst the chatter in my mind for help- from my HP or anyone else. When I catch myself really struggling, sooner or later I realize I am not surrendered and I must Let Go and Let God. Having an open attitude and mind really seems to bring about solutions I may never have thought of on my own. And it's a lot less "work" when I step aside!!! –Angela H.

The Roving Reporter "roves" via e-mail. If you would like to receive the question of the month and have opportunity to respond, e-mail b.brown8@comcast.net.

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Happy New Year!