

# My Grandfather's Blessings

Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.

**A question for all sections:** Is there something else that you would like to talk about that was in the readings?

Page numbers for the chapter to which the questions apply are inside the parentheses.

## I. Introduction and Receiving Your Blessings

<i>Introduction (1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you have a word for The Holy?</li><li>• Do you have any spiritual practices?</li><li>• Was there any conflict in your family over religion or spiritual practices?</li><li>• Did you have a special relationship with one of your grandparents?</li></ul>
<i>Introduction (17)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you think you have received blessings?</li><li>• Have you ever felt depleted by serving others?</li></ul>
<b>Things in Our Lives</b>	
<i>Having What You Have (39)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do you feel about the following statement that Remen made? "All we get to keep are our memories....Perhaps the only way to get to keep anything may be to use it up."</li><li>• Do you have things you are saving for special times and never use?</li></ul>
<i>Owning (43)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you feel that you have too much?</li><li>• Do you agree with the following statement that Remen made? "having and experiencing are very different... Perhaps we only have as much as we can love."</li></ul>
<b>Life View</b>	
<i>The Shell Game (28)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you see illness as a soul loss?</li><li>• Have you found meaning that has helped with a physical illness?</li></ul>
<i>Lot's Wife (36)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have you ever had a time when grief overwhelmed you? What did you do?</li><li>• Have you ever talked or written to someone you lost?</li></ul>
<i>Keeping It Together (46)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have you ever sacrificed integrity for expediency?</li><li>• Are you living your authentic self?</li></ul>
<i>Knowing the Heart (70)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remen states: "Days pass and the years vanish. We walk sightless among miracles....How filled with awe is this place and we did not know it." Do you feel you have experienced miracles?</li></ul>

## II. Becoming a Blessing

<b>The Forms Blessings Take</b>	
<i>Getting it Right</i> (86)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maimonides describes the eight levels of charity. Can you give examples of giving that you have done or observed and which levels they represent?</li> </ul>
<i>Being Used</i> (90)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever realized you have helped someone without knowing it?</li> <li>• Have you ever tried to help someone in one way and discovered you had been helpful in another way?</li> </ul>
<i>Strengthening Life</i> (120)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you aware of strengthening the life of someone you know?</li> <li>• Is that person aware of it, and if so, how do they know?</li> </ul>
<i>The Friend</i> (124)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever given by receiving?</li> <li>• Is it hard for you to take?</li> </ul>
<b>The Web of Goodness</b>	
<i>All in the Family</i> (99)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the connection between forgiveness and becoming a blessing? Can you give an example?</li> </ul>
<i>Bearing Witness</i> (103) and <i>Lost and Found</i> (112)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One definition of love is “paying attention.” The blessings in these two stories require paying attention. Have you ever witnessed or performed this kind of blessing?</li> </ul>
<i>Finding New Eyes</i> (116)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes we are unaware of the blessings we receive and of the ones we give. Try asking the three questions Rachel Naomi Remen recommended Josh ask himself each night and see what you notice.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What surprised me today?</li> <li>2) What moved or touched me today?</li> <li>3) What inspired me today?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

### III. Finding Strength, Taking Refuge

<b>Wholeness and Courage</b>	
<i>From the Heart</i> (146)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you wear a mask are you the same person you are when not wearing your mask? Why or why not?</li> <li>• When do you wear a mask? Why?</li> <li>• In what ways has your life or profession forced you to disengage your heart? How did doing so make you more successful? Or did it hinder you? If so, how?</li> </ul>
<i>Wholeness</i> (150)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have vulnerabilities that you hide from others?</li> <li>• Does doing so make you stronger? Weaker? Happier?</li> <li>• Do you chafe at these vulnerabilities?</li> <li>• Will they grow deeper as you grow older? What will you do then?</li> </ul>
<i>The Link</i> (152)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you had a King Arthur moment in your life? Tell us about it.</li> </ul>
<i>Getting Clear</i> (157)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you clear?</li> <li>• Is anyone truly clear all the time?</li> <li>• What would you need to release/give up to become clear?</li> </ul>
<b>Safety and Empowerment</b>	
<i>When Somebody Knows</i> (163)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you ever feel really heard? If so, by whom?</li> <li>• How is their behavior different from others? How do you feel when in their presence?</li> </ul>
<i>A Place of Refuge</i> (165)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who or what gives you refuge? Why?</li> </ul>
<i>In the Gray Zone</i> (169)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever had an experience of being comfortable in the gray zone?</li> <li>• Why/how was this different from your other experiences?</li> </ul>
<i>Broken</i> (187)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever pursued a path that was clearly not meant for you? If so, how long did you pursue it?</li> <li>• What made you change?</li> <li>• How did this pursuit change you?</li> </ul>

## IV. The Web of Blessings

<b>Blessings from Surprising Sources</b>	
<i>Untitled Story</i> (193)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you aware of the effect you have on the people around you?</li> <li>• Can you give an example of a time you strengthened someone's life?</li> </ul>
<i>Learning to serve</i> (205) <i>We Are Enough</i> (209) <i>The Gift of Service</i> (218)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you received help and service from a surprising source? Why was it a surprise?</li> <li>• Have you received a blessing that changed your life from that moment on? What was it and how did it change your life?</li> </ul>
<b>Honesty as a Blessing</b>	
<i>Lifeline</i> (201) <i>We Are Enough</i> (209)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever received a blessing of surprising honesty?</li> <li>• Is honesty always the best policy? Why or why not and what are the criteria?</li> <li>• Have you given a blessing of honesty?</li> <li>• Are you known as an honest person?</li> </ul>
<i>Greater than the Sum of its Parts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes we do not reveal important experiences because we feel we might appear strange or unusual. Can you relate to this story?</li> </ul>
<i>One Little Candle</i> (239)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have addressed many deep and personal questions in the reading of this book. Has answering them been uncomfortable for you?</li> </ul>

## V. Befriending Life

<b>Opening Up</b>	
<i>The Gift of New Eyes</i> (269)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of the reasons you give money away?</li> <li>• Did you ever help someone you didn't know on the spur of the moment?</li> </ul>
<i>Crazy Clean</i> (279)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever had a “way of living” like Cindy? Did you change your behavior?</li> <li>• Talk about perfection in your life. Do you agree with the statement: “The marks life leaves on everything it touches transforms perfection into wholeness.”</li> </ul>
<i>The Path</i> (288)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you agree with the architects or Remen in terms of her choice of access to her front door? Why?</li> <li>• Do you believe that “we are always moving toward mystery”?</li> <li>• Do you like not knowing where you are going? Does it foster aliveness or does it foster dread?</li> </ul>
<i>The Mirror</i> (293)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give an example of how helping others changed you.</li> <li>• Is it important to see yourself through another person’s eyes?</li> </ul>
<b>Maturity</b>	
<i>A Matter of Life and Death</i> (290)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was there a time in your life when you needed someone to believe in you?</li> <li>• How did you learn to stand on your own two feet?</li> </ul>
<i>Who Serves</i> (297)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has there been a time when you bucked convention and tried something new/different? How did it go?</li> <li>• When people put roadblocks in your way, do you accept the status quo or go ahead with your plans?</li> </ul>
<i>The Emperor’s New Clothes</i> (303)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it possible that there may be an unknowable purpose to life itself?</li> <li>• Is this question in itself a source of strength?</li> </ul>
<i>Completion</i> (314)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When was the moment when you became an adult? When was your relationship to your parents as a child completed?</li> <li>• Can you recall a time with your mother or father that mirrors the author’s experience with her mother?</li> </ul>

## VI. Restoring the World

<b>Life</b>	
<i>Introduction (325)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you believe that life itself is a blessing? If so, in what way?</li> <li>• How do you feel about the following statements by Remen?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Every life has a spiritual path, and all life has a spiritual agenda.”</li> <li>• “Service is the work of the soul.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>The Friction in the System (365)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel about the following statement by Remen? “[Mistakes] will not prevent us from reaching our dreams nearly so much as wanting to be right will.”</li> <li>• Has your life been a work of the ego, a choice of the soul, or some of both?</li> </ul>
<i>The Real World (370)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever felt enslaved to an inner voice when making a choice about your life?</li> <li>• Do you feel truly free in the choices you are now making about your life?</li> </ul>
<b>Mystery and Death</b>	
<i>Mystery (337)</i>	<p>How do you feel about the following statements by Remen? Do you agree or disagree with them? In what way(s)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “To be living is to be unfinished. Nothing and no one is complete. The world and everything in it is ALIVE.”</li> <li>• “Mystery requires that we relinquish an endless search for answers and become willing to not understand.”</li> </ul>
<i>A Question of Style (339)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you believe that death “gives life its meaning and values”?</li> <li>• Have you experienced “the mystery at the heart of life?”</li> </ul>
<i>Mary (346)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remen states: “The mystery is that it is possible to be comforted after experiencing a great loss.” How have you found comfort after a loss?</li> </ul>
<i>On the Cutting Edge (343)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you had any special experiences when sitting with someone who was dying?</li> <li>• Have you ever had a near-death experience? If so, would you like to share it?</li> <li>• What do you believe happens after death?</li> <li>• Remen states: “Life is larger than science. Life is process, and process has Mystery woven into it.” How do you feel about that statement? Has science defined life too small?</li> </ul>