

**thing, n**

1. a material object without life or consciousness; an inanimate object.
2. some entity, object, or creature that is not or cannot be specifically designated or precisely described.

**synonyms:** object, article, implement, machine, device, tool, instrument, mechanism, apparatus, gadget, gizmo, contrivance, whatsit, doo-dah, thingummy, thingummyjig

## Taking It Home:

**Activity: Sharing what matters**

We often go through our lives keeping to ourselves our stories. What things do you have in your life that those around you don't know about? What needs to be shared at this time?

**Your assignment:** Pick out an object and tell someone else about it. Or ask someone about something they have?

**Book:**

Shop Class as Soulcraft- Matthew B. Crawford

**Online Resource:**

Preserving Your Family Treasures-  
<http://www.loc.gov/preservation/family/>

**Extra Reading:**

The Daddy Prize- Robert Fulghum  
<http://jforres.tumblr.com/post/6797751899/daddy-prize-by-robert-fulghum>

The Things We Keep-  
<http://hamptonroads.com/2011/06/things-we-keep-sentimental-value>

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These materials are part of the small group ministry program at Jefferson Unitarian Church. For more information on using them, or to set up your small group, please contact Rev. Eric Banner.

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# Jefferson Unitarian Church Small Group Session: Things

**Opening/  
Chalice  
Lighting:**

As we come together,  
I go into myself.  
I dig into myself for a deep answer.  
I have patience with everything that remains  
unsolved in my heart, and I live the question.  
What is required of us is that we love the difficult  
and learn to deal with it.  
In the difficult are the friendly forces, the hands  
that work on us.  
It is clear that we must embrace the struggle.  
Right in the difficult we must have our joys, our  
happiness, our dreams.  
We create this space to go into ourselves and see  
how deep the place is from which our  
lives flow. **(RM Rilke, adapted by Scott Rudolf)**

**Check In:**

Up to 2 minutes per person to share what they  
bring with them since the last time the group met

**Reading:**

I am too sentimental for the job of  
discarding/sorting the things that my parents  
amassed. Seriously. You know this. Even the  
dumb stuff is bound to my heart with razorwire.  
It's like I'm a ghost collector... and the ghosts live  
in everything from old teacups to cast iron  
cookware, faded cracking photos to hand quilted  
pillows, clocks that don't work, and tchotchkes of  
every sort. Whatever I'm unable to keep, I will  
smear a tear on and whisper magic blessings into,  
and then send it on a journey, to travel the world  
and find adventure, like the lost sock, spoon, and  
seashell from the Tom Robbins novel or some  
other magical lore. I am coaching myself on the  
spiritual practice of letting go. But parts of me just  
don't want to hear it.- **Jyl Johnson**

**Resting in  
the  
Silence:**

Take 2 minutes to just sit. If your group is up to it,  
go longer, as long as you let people know how  
long the silence will be.

**Questions  
and  
Quotes  
From The  
Common  
Bowl:**

Share the quotes and questions for today's  
session in the way that is customary in your small  
group. You can pass the sheet, you can select  
them randomly from a bowl after having cut them  
into individual pieces. Or whatever works well for  
your small group.

**Sharing/  
Deep  
Listening:**

Allow each person up to five minutes to  
share about the object they brought with them. If  
someone does not use the full five minutes, make  
sure you count to ten full breaths before moving  
on to the next person, in case the speaker is not  
truly finished.

**A Second  
Share:**

If time allows, you may have a brief second share  
from those who have found they have more to  
say, keeping in mind your commitment to going  
no longer than ninety minutes.

**Closing  
Reading:**

“You never really understand a person until you  
consider things from his point of view... Until you  
climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.”  
— **Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird**

**Extinguish  
the  
Chalice:**

Join hands and say the following together:  
“With the extinguishing of this chalice, we close  
our time together, and go into the world anew.”  
And then, extinguish your chalice until you meet  
again.

The other day I was talking with my wife about an upcoming move that might, or might not, happen. It's likely, just not guaranteed. We were discussing what to pack and when, and who would do it. And as we were talking there I happened to be standing next to a shelf in our bedroom on which she keeps the reminders of the life she has lived. Little things that tell parts and pieces of her story, and in that moment I realized I didn't have the words to describe them in a way that felt good. Think about it. What are the words we use to describe these things?

Tzotchkies, trinkets, baubles, knickknack, or even, when in particularly difficult mood, junk. And yet to each of us, these are things that mark the remembrances of our lives, and as easy as it is to tell someone else to get rid of theirs, it's equally challenging to get rid of our own. They're not junk, they're memories. Which is what makes moving them so hard, and what makes it so much easier for professionals to pack your house away and move it across town or across the country. They don't know the stories. The vacations remembered, the children now grown that were once tiny babies, the places you've lived and loved, and been loved in. To the movers it's all just stuff, but to us they are markers, reminders of a treasured past, a link to our history, a link to the stories. - Eric Banner

“We love the things we love for what they are.” — Robert Frost

“We keep these material things because they represent the people we no longer have. We keep them to remind us we can do or be or mean something and that the people we admire can inspire us.” -Rebecca Brown

“The things we keep proclaim who we are. What a society preserves plays an intrinsic role in the way in which that society fashions its identity. We live in a world that is cluttered with objects, specimens, buildings, sites and ephemera. Since it is not possible to keep everything, it is reasonable to ask: what should we keep? And what methods do we use to safeguard these material things, given that they will degrade, as all material things do?” -Museum Victoria

‘I bought it for my little room. It isn’t much, but I bring to it, from time to time, through the years, only the very best and most beautiful things. You see, that is where I live.’ - Howard Thurman (Deep is the Hunger)

“We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.” — Anaïs Nin

“Destroying things is much easier than making them.” — Suzanne Collins

“But luxury has never appealed to me, I like simple things, books, being alone, or with somebody who understands.” — Daphne du Maurier

“Some things don't last forever, but some things do. Like a good song, or a good book, or a good memory you can take out and unfold in your darkest times, pressing down on the corners and peering in close, hoping you still recognize the person you see there.” — Sarah Dessen

“The most important things are the hardest to say. They are the things you get ashamed of, because words diminish them -- words shrink things that seemed limitless when they were in your head to no more than living size when they're brought out. But it's more than that, isn't it? The most important things lie too close to wherever your secret heart is buried, like landmarks to a treasure your enemies would love to steal away. And you may make revelations that cost you dearly only to have people look at you in a funny way, not understanding what you've said at all, or why you thought it was so important that you almost cried while you were saying it. That's the worst, I think. When the secret stays locked within not for want of a teller but for want of an understanding ear.” — Stephen King, *Different Seasons*

“Eventually everything connects - people, ideas, objects. The quality of the connections is the key to quality per se.” — Charles Eames

I'm looking for a bunch of new tchotchkes that represent the new part of my life. — Sally Field

My most cherished possessions are my grandma's letters and my vintage Martha Washington cookbook.  
— Sandra Lee

I tend to look out for things with a resonance to my youth - artists or objects that seemed romantic all those years ago. I never buy anything purely for its value. I like possessions that smile back at me.  
— Nicholas Haslam