

The Monkey with The Wooden Apples

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There once was a happy monkey wandering the jungle, eating delicious fruit when hungry, and resting when tired. One day he came upon a house, where he saw a bowl of the most beautiful apples. He took one in each hand and ran back into the forest.

He sniffed the apples and smelled nothing. He tried to eat them, but hurt his teeth. They were made of wood, but they were beautiful, and when the other monkeys saw them, he held onto them even tighter.

He admired his new possessions proudly as he wandered the jungle. They glistened red in the sun, and seemed perfect to him. He became so attached to them, that he didn't even notice his hunger at first.

A fruit tree reminded him, but he felt the apples in his hands. He couldn't bear to set them down to reach for the fruit. In fact, he couldn't relax, either, if he was to defend his apples. A proud, but less happy monkey continued to walk along the forest trails.

The apples became heavier, and the poor little monkey thought about leaving them behind. He was tired, hungry, and he couldn't climb trees or collect fruit with his hands full. What if he just let go?

Letting go of such valuable things seemed crazy, but what else could he do? He was so tired. Seeing the next fruit tree, and smelling it's fruit was enough. He dropped the wooden apples and reached up for his meal. He was happy again.

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Like that little monkey, we sometimes carry things that seem too valuable to let go. A man carries an image of himself as "productive" - carries it like a shiny wooden apple. But in reality, his busyness leaves him tired, and hungry for a better life. Still, letting go seems crazy. Even his worries are sacred apples - they prove he's "doing everything he can." He holds onto them compulsively.

This is a hard thing to see. We identify so strongly with our things, even feeling pain when our cars are dented. How much more powerfully do we identify with our beliefs and self-ideas? Yet they don't always feed our souls, do they? And we become tired of defending them.

How else could the story end? The monkey might be found dead of hunger, under a beautiful tree, with fruit within reach, but still grasping his wooden apples. I chose to end it with him letting go, because only with open hands can we receive.

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