

Freedom



Inside

A Newsletter For Prisoners
Based on the Conversations with God Material

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Just A Little Bit Better

I realized recently that life is really, really not as difficult as I had always assumed. (Let's please, please, NOT go into what 'assume' can stand for!)

So here I am, a 57 year old woman who for the last 11 years has been reading about, studying and practicing how to live a more spiritual life. And I was doing a pretty good job of it, if I do say so myself!

And then I've come to conclude that what I really have to do is live exactly in the moment.

So okay, okay, I've been saying this for quite a while. But I've also been trying to let go of all expectations (because they're about the future) and all the resentments (because they're about the past) and letting all my thoughts and feelings flow with the acceptance of life as it is showing up.

This way of looking at things is very appealing to me. It gives me a beautiful picture of how I would live my life if I were a highly evolved human being.

Sounds great but it also feels like a LOT of work. At least to me it does.

And then, now, 11 years after starting this journey, I have had a real light-bulb moment (this I take from Oprah :-))

You could say that this light appeared on its own after receiving so much of my energy. But that's not how it happened. The light-bulb moment came on by way of a book. (What a surprise that must be for those of you who have

"So the big secret that it took me so long to find is simply this: find a way to feel a little better. That's all, just a little bit better."

(January '08).

Here are the words that blew me away:

*« When you continually look for a way of looking at everything that feels slightly better than what you are currently feeling, you are getting closer and closer to seeing your world as your Inner Being sees it. And, in the process, you will be leaving resistance behind. [...] All things that you consider to be bad exist only because of resistance to your natural Well-Being » (from *The Amazing Power of Deliberate Intent* (p. 91) by Esther and Jerry Hicks)*

So the big secret that it took me so long to find is simply this: find a way to feel a little better. That's all, just a little bit better. The beauty of this is that if ap-

plies to absolutely anything you are thinking about now. Whether 'good' or 'bad', whether you are feeling wonderful or terrible. Just find a thought that will make you feel just a little bit better.

This is how we can start thinking as God thinks, seeing as God sees, feel as God feels. Because God is the joy we feel when we are connected to the Universe.

And to achieve this God-dom, we don't have to do anything specific, difficult, time consuming or anything of the sort. All we need to do is find a thought that makes us feel a bit of relief from whatever we are feeling.

At the end of this article, I am reprinting the list of emotions from the book cited above. This list might help you identify where you are at any given moment and find thoughts that lift you up even one level.

But you don't even have to use this list. Just try to catch yourself whenever you are not feeling as good as you would like and find thoughts that would help you feel better, even just a little better. The relief will be immediate and wonderful. And very real.

It's the most powerful thing we can do for ourselves. For our Selves. It connects us to our creative power.

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Just A Little Bit Better
(continued from the previous page)

I have come to believe that we create what we think about the most and that the intensity of the emotions we feel behind these thoughts will determine how quickly our thoughts turn into our reality.

Which is why we often create problems when we are so very angry at what is showing up in our lives. We create betrayal when we lack trust; we create illness when we hate our bodies, we create attacks when we hate our neighbors; and we create addictions and prisons when we hate ourselves.

Which is also why St-Francis' prayer is so powerful for he does not ask for God to fill his own lack but to be an instrument of peace. To think of nothing but bringing good to others.

Here is this most beautiful prayer:

Lord,

Make me an instrument of Thy peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to
Eternal Life.

Amen.

St-Francis, of course was a saint. I personally aspire to living a life such as he describes. But we don't all have to do that. We don't all have to choose the same thing. I believe the world would be much too boring if we all thought the same way, did the same things, aspired to the same ideals.

But I also believe we have come to this human life in order to experience joy and one way to do that is to feel a little bit better at this very moment.

Hopefully reading this newsletter helps you to do that. I know writing it certainly does that for me. And for now, at this precise moment, I can make myself feel a little bit better by thinking of all who will read this and of the strong connection I feel with all of you. This connection is one of my greatest sources of joy. Thank you for reading me.

I encourage you all to try to remember to find a way to feel even a little bit better about your situation, whatever it may be.

Granted, some of you are living lives that most would think of as intolerable. But they are NOT intolerable because, of course, you are tolerating them.

I send you joy in your own connection with the Universe, with your Inner Self, with your life as it is. I hope you will find that joy comes from within. It does not need anything in particular to show up in order to simply BE. It is not an impossibility to feel joy even in dark places. We can get there a little bit at a time.

Too often, our lives are about repeated feelings, thoughts, and actions. Our perspectives seldom change. Let us try to let go of all thoughts that make us unhappy and grab hold of all that make us happier, less fearful; all that brings us relief and joy.

This is my dream for all of us.

I leave you with the famous words from George Bernard Shaw:

"Some men see things as they are and say why - I dream things that never were and say why not."

In Joy,

Janine

Emotional Scale

(Emotional Guidance System)

1. Joy/Knowledge/ Empowerment/Freedom/Love/Appreciation
2. Passion
3. Enthusiasm/Eagerness/Happiness
4. Positive Expectation/Belief
5. Optimism
6. Hopefulness
7. Contentment
8. Boredom
9. Pessimism
10. Frustration/Irritation/Impatient
11. 'Overwhelment'
12. Disappointment
13. Doubt
14. Worry
15. Blame
16. Discouragement
17. Anger
18. Revenge
19. Hatred/Rage
20. Jealousy
21. Insecurity/Guilt/Unworthiness
22. Fear/Grief/Depression/Despair/Powerlessness

*from: Ask and It Is Given,
(p.114)
by Esther and Jerry Hicks*

Often, when considering the idea of being the creator of their own reality, people will argue that it is extremely difficult to be standing in the middle of a very much unwanted condition and at the same time offer more pleasant thoughts about their future experience. They argue that it would be so much easier to create a bright and beautiful future from a more pleasant *now* experience. We understand their thinking, and we do agree that it is easier to feel good under positive conditions than negative ones. Therefore, we understand people's wishes that things could have gone better for them before now so that *now* could be a happier launching pad for that which is still to come.

Some people feel deep resentment over the unpleasant facts of their earlier life experiences as they recount unpleasant details of unfairness, or even physical abuse, that took place during their childhood. They often feel defensive, and we do not argue with their right to feel that way. We often agree that under the conditions they have lived, their negative response is justified. But we also always add that even though they are justified in their negative response to what happened to them, still, that negative emotion indicates that they are holding themselves in a place where they cannot receive what they really desire.

Those words, however, usually only serve to annoy them further, for they feel the way they feel, and they have been practicing this position for so

long that our words (even though very wise ones) do not dissuade them from their practiced belief about the injustices they have experienced.

Have you been Creating Deliberately, of by Default?

Many of our physical friends feel a deep memory stirring when we explain to them that they are the creator of their reality. They *do* want to create their own reality. And many, in time, resonate with the idea that they are born with an *Emotional Guidance System* within them that helps them know the content of their own personal vibrational offering, which helps them know, at all times, if what they are in the process of creating will be pleasing to them when it arrives. *But most people, even those who consciously acknowledge their vibrational nature and Emotional Guidance System, still offer most of their vibrations—and therefore create most of their reality—by default. They do so because they offer most of their vibrations in response to the reality that they are observing rather than in response to the reality that they prefer.*

There is something so compelling about what has already materialized into your experience. You call it *reality*; you call it *fact*; you call it *evidence*; you call it *proof*. You document it in writing, and with pictures. You call it *history*...and in doing all of that, you overlook the absolutely temporary nature of it

(whatever it is). From our point of view, you have allowed your 'reality' to hold a more dominant place in your perception of life than it deserves, and by your ardent attention to your current "reality" you slow your progress to the reception of even more pleasing "now" experiences.

We would like you to understand that NOW is mostly only the platform from which you move into what is next. And LIFE is really about the MOVING into what is next. We want you to recall the delicious nature of focusing upon the SENSATION OF CREATING YOUR OWN REALITY rather than giving so much attention to the REALITY THAT YOU ARE CREATING. Can you feel the distinction?

You Are Traveling on Two Concurrent Journeys

We visited recently with a woman who was experiencing the severe discomfort of arthritic hips. Her current state of reality was one of nearly constant physical discomfort.

If we could just help her to understand that her painful physical condition is only the temporary place that she is currently standing, then she could begin to move to a better-feeling condition immediately. If we could just get her to focus upon WHERE she is MOVING TO instead of focusing upon the REALITY that is right now occurring....If we could just get her to focus upon the SENSATION of MOVING To a better-feeling place rather than focusing

upon the REALITY that seems to have concluded—her situation would begin to improve immediately.

We wanted to help her see that there are two journeys running along concurrently in her experience: the *Action Journey* (or the reality of her painful arthritic hips), and the *Emotional Journey* (the emotion that she is choosing to feel) as she moves through her day.

From her current reality, or the platform from which she is now launching into her next experiences, she has these choices:

- She has painful arthritic hips and feels fear, anger, worry, blame, or despair.
- She has painful arthritic hips and feels *hope*.

You see, her current condition of painful hips is her *Action Journey*. That is happening. It is reality. That is her current condition. And we certainly can understand why it would have her attention. But if she could, just for a little while, try to focus upon her *Emotional Journey*—if she could just accept that her hips hurt for now and set that *Action Journey* aside in her mind for just a little while, and focus upon her *Emotional Journey* options, then her vibrational point of attraction would begin to change. And in doing that, her physical condition would begin to change.

You cannot continue to offer the same vibration that got you to where you are, and now get to someplace different. You have to do something different with your attention, with your focus, and with your vibration.

A Magazine based on A Course in Miracles

Jon Mundy, one of the original people who frequented Helen Schucman, the scribe of *A Course in Miracles*, is sending **The Miracles Magazine** to prisoners. If you are interested in receiving this magazine, please let us know at *Freedom Inside* and we will forward your information to Joseph Wolfe who is responsible for the distribution. A year's subscription is \$20.00. If you cannot afford this, there are a few donated subscriptions available.

Strangers Behind Glass

from *Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul* (2000)

July 2008

"You never find yourself until you face the truth" Pearl Bailey

Columbia County Jail. I entered the visiting room, found a seat near the wall and picked up the telephone that would connect me with my visitor on the other side of a three-quarter-inch Plexiglass security shield. The Plexiglass was clouded with age and the wear of too many harsh cleanings. The stools both my visitor and I sat on were made of round, bare metal and bolted to the concrete floor. In bright orange coveralls that were too small, I attempted to gain some sort of comfortable position as I looked through the glass.

"How is she going den, Kenny?" the old man said, his hands shaking as he held the telephone.

"Aw, it's okay. How are you feeling?" I asked.

"Oh, good as can be expected, I guess," he answered. I noticed his hands—they are nothing but skin-covered bones—not the big powerful hands of the farmer, rancher and garbage collector he had been in days past. He seemed smaller somehow. His hair was gray, his eyes were bloodshot from the medication he was forced to take; even his voice seemed to tremble.

"Did you have to wait long before they let you in?" I asked.

"Naw, yest had a cup of coffee an' the guard let me in," he tells me in his English-Norwegian mixture that I knew so well.

"I got something to show you now, Kenny," he says as he takes an old metal box from a paper sack. Carefully he opens the box. I can see the box is antique, hand-painted metal. Proudly, shaking, he picks out a gold-plated railroad watch with a long, gold chain.

"Bet you never seen one like dis one before," he tells me as he tries to untangle the chain from the rest of the remaining treasure in his box with his free hand. Finally, he just lays the phone down and with shaky hands he separated the contents of the box.

"Yup, they just don't make 'em like dis anymore. Look at dis one too," he continues as he digs out several old wristwatches, some old gold rings and several dozen old coins.

He shows each one to me proudly. They are his private treasures—he has found every one of them in the garbage over the last twenty-five years. Each item has its own little story of how he found it, when and where, and how lucky he was to have always looked into the garbage.

"Yep, one never knows what he will find, ya know," he says. I'm sad—I watch the face of this dying stranger—my father. Then I lie to him.

"Well, I think you are looking better these days."

"Oh, maybe some days it's better than others, you know," he says, trying to make light of what we both know.

"They tell me dat you might be leaving from the prison in the morning, Kenny, so I júst thought maybe I better get down an' see ya before ya go. So, you listen to me now, Kenny, yúst in case something happens before you get out of that prison. You listen good now, Kenny. If something happens I want you to go see your sister, Sandra—she knows. It's about the house an' stuff, ya know. I already took care of everything an' Sandra knows what to do. I don't think I'll be able to get all the way down to dat prison to see you, so it's better we talk now," he says with his hands shaking and tears in his eyes.

My insides are turning to

mush. I don't want to hear what he has to say, don't want to admit what we both know is the awful truth. He knows that death is just around the corner. We both know and can feel that this will be the last time we will ever see each other. A dying father, speaking his final words to his only son; two fractured hearts attempting to communicate; two grown men who love each other dearly attempting to face their final good-bye. He fingers those treasure before him, behind that scratched and clouded glass; each of us carefully avoiding direct eye contact. We are both afraid to face the other, years of guilt and shame, fear of tears and in denial of what is happening.

So many times I had seen the guilt in his eyes over the years; guilt he felt for the beating I had suffered as a child from his once-big, powerful hands. So many times I wanted to tell him that it was okay; it was over; it wasn't his fault, but I never did. As time passed, my going to prison created guilt and shame on my part. Now we sit, strangers in guilt, father and son, bound by blood and love; strangers through violence and shame. I wanted to say, "Dad, I'm sorry your only son turned out to be the black sheep of the family, the only member of the family to every go to prison. Sorry for the pain, shame and disappointment I've brought you." And I'm sure he would have liked to say he should never have beat me like he did when I was little, but we said nothing. We didn't even know how to say, "I'm sorry, and I love you."

"Your twenty minutes are up," the guard said.

"Well, guess I better be going," he said. "You take care of yourself now, Kenny." "I'll be okay, Dad, don't worry about me," I said,

watching his old and shaking hands gathering his treasure.

The tears come, I can hid them no longer. When he looks up, he too has tears streaming down both cheeks. Finally, we look directly at one another. In a trembling voice he says, "Good-bye, Kenny, you take care of yourself now."

"Bye Dad" is all I can manage to say.

I watch this old man through the clouded glass as he turns slowly and leaves the room in tears, in silence, speechless and in pain. I feel anger at myself for not taking the time to know this stranger that I love so much—this stranger I've always called Dad. Why didn't we go camping just once?

Why didn't I try harder to lift the guilt he carried for so many years? Why have we never learned to talk to each other like the men we were, father and son? Now it's too late—time has run out; he is dying and all I can do is watch him walking away slowly, through this clouded glass, in tears.

"Good-bye, Kenny."

"Good-bye, Dad."

A father and son out of time. My father died two months after I got to prison. I didn't get to go to his funeral, so I guess we were both right. It was the last time I would ever see him. Guilt and shame made us strangers to the very end. That clouded Plexiglass separating my father and me was, in fact no more a barrier than the guilt and shame we had carried for so many years. The Plexiglass, however, I could touch with my hand; the shame I could only touch with my heart.

Good-bye, Dad!

Ken "Duke" Monse' Broten
(1996)

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Freedom Inside now contains 12 pages. We're growing and I just love it.

A while back I bought an internet course called The Thomas Messages that I found wonderfully uplifting. I am now choosing to share this course with you in these new pages. There are 16 messages in all, I will include one in each issue until all 16 messages have been shared with you.

If some of you would like to receive the messages more quickly, please go to www.emissaryoflight.com and for a suggested donation of 50 US dollars, you will receive one of these messages every few days.

Here is how James Twyman, the author of the course, describes it.

THE THOMAS MESSAGES:

In 2002, a book was published called "Emissary of Love: the Psychic Children Speak to the World" chronicling my journey into the mountains of Bulgaria to meet a group of children who possess amazing psychic powers. One of those children, a young boy named Thomas, claimed to be able to send messages and insights over great distances, even to the other side of the world. I didn't remember this until I was sitting in a hot tub some months later and "felt him" inside me.

It was the first time I ever had an experience like this, and it was the beginning of a long discourse on the role of the New Children (sometimes called the Indigo Children) and their role in healing the world. These amazing lessons, all from the mind of Thomas, are the result of that dialogue. He claims that there are thousands of children in the world today who have the same gift, the ability to "align" with others who can then help them complete their Great Work.

If you are interested in learning this, or connecting with one of these young masters, then this course is the way. Thomas shares insights that will help you live a fulfilled life, and even teaches how to enter the "Grid" where the children work together.

It is important for you to decide why you are taking this course. Is it because you want to perform miracles? Do you want to feel more powerful than you have ever allowed yourself to be in the past? If these ideas approach the reasons you are reading this right now, then it would be best for you to stop. Find something else to occupy your time. You will not achieve these things if they are the goal you seek. However, if you are reading this because you have decided that you are on this planet to be an "Instrument of Peace," and to heal the world by healing your own mind, then please continue. If you open your heart and mind to these simple lessons and dedicate yourself to this mission, then you will achieve it. Guaranteed!

And here is the paradox: If you do seek these higher ideals, to love and to realize that you are already whole and enlightened, then the miracles will surely follow, and you will realize yourself to be more powerful than you have ever allowed yourself to be in the past. They are not the goals, but they are the products of a higher goal. You are here to learn how to apply the force we call LOVE. It is as easy as learning a certain technology that has been known by the mystics of many spiritual traditions for thousands of years. Now it is your turn to learn it, then apply it to your life.

Message Seven

Beloved Family,

I have just finished teaching a workshop at a yoga ashram in New York, and I want to share the amazing energy I am feeling. I was to give a talk on Peace, but no matter what the subject is, there is really only one topic to discuss. Whether we're discussing the role of the Psychic Children or the message of the Emissaries of Light, in the end we always end up with the same truth. It comes to us from every imaginable angle, every possible combination of facts and theories. And it will continue to find us until we once and for all embrace it with our whole hearts, our whole minds and our whole souls. The Children make this statement in the form of a simple question, and it is this question we will focus on today.

“How would you act and what would you do if you knew that you are an Emissary of Love right now?”

Stop for a moment and really BE with those words. What if this is more than just a nice idea, but an actual reality? What if you really are enlightened right now? How would it change your life if you finally realized that fact? How would it change the way you deal with the people in your lives, the members of your family or the people you interact with on a daily basis? What if the Children's statement was more than a simple question, but the most essential fact of your life? Think about that, not with your mind, but with your heart.

As I was giving the talk at the ashram a short while ago, I really "felt" this reality. There it was, right in front of me, reflecting off the faces of everyone I was talking to. They were radiant, full of grace and holiness, vibrating with the essence of Peace. It wasn't my imagination, for a moment later I felt Marco at my side, whispering the words into my ears and stirring my heart. It was the first time I felt his presence since my visit to the monastery in Bulgaria in 2001. He had kept his promise, for I knew that I wasn't alone and that the words I was sharing were real. "You are enlightened right now," he said through my mouth. "There is nothing you can do to deserve this gift, but you can welcome it into your life. That is all that is required...your welcome."

How many times have you heard this message? This is only the seventh lesson of this course and you have already had it presented in so many ways; different words perhaps, but the same message. One may be tempted to think once is enough, as if this message can get old. "I've already heard this...when will we get to something new?"

This reminds me of something that Thomas expressed in the third message. He said that many people may think they've already heard this message. Then he politely tells us that if you are thinking this, then you haven't heard it at all. If you're wondering what's next, when you'll move on to the next teaching, then you've missed the point. There is no higher teaching. There is only your Eternal Embrace of the truth within you. When you have done that, then every time you hear this message expressed your heart will leap with joy, because you will suddenly recognize the truth that set your soul free. Once you REALLY hear this, then you will not be able to look back and say anything other than: "I am that NOW." Even if you hear it a thousand times, still you will feel as if you've never heard it before, and your heart will sing.

This is the only place the Children are leading us. They may not use the same words, but it is the Light that extends from their hearts, and that Light illumines everything...but only if you allow it to.

And that is the critical point, isn't it? You have to allow, or welcome that truth, otherwise you are playing a game with yourself, making it seem you are looking for the Truth Within, but all the while denying its reality. Do not underestimate your desire to avoid the impact of this. (In fact, if you believe that this statement doesn't apply to you, then it is the surest way to know you are denying everything, playing a game with your head, while isolating your heart from the Truth that would set you free.) As we said in lesson four, you must constantly be vigilant with your own mind. If you are really choosing to GET this, to fully open your heart to the message of the Psychic Children, then you must be willing to challenge every motivation. Only then will you have the clarity and the humility to realize when you're running away from God, rather than running toward.

But ultimately, there is only one destination. If you run away from something, even if you run all the way around the world (since it is round...bare with me here) you will inevitably end up where you left. The question is, how much time do you think you have? You can do it now, or five lifetimes from now. It's your choice. I suggest you do it now, because you have no idea what you're missing by denying reality. You have no idea how much joy you could be experiencing every moment if you only realized that you fought a battle you couldn't possibly win. The battle is over, and you lost. And therein lies your salvation.

In the last lesson you were asked to open your heart to a deeper level of communication with your Child Guide. Their challenge is trying to slide past the thoughts that you would offer, and give their message without your interference. It is easy to tell if you were able to get out of the way sufficiently enough to let their message break through your consciousness, or if it was tinted with your own thoughts. Read the words you wrote and honestly decide if they fully

represent the simple message at the very heart of this course. Is there only one thought at the center of everything they revealed? And is that thought, if fully accepted and integrated into your life, the ultimate answer to any question you could ask? If the answer is yes to these questions, then you have done very well. But you must be honest about this. If there seems to be another agenda, other offering in addition to this truth, then it was probably your own mind. And yet, there is the paradox you must remember: There is no Child outside your mind, so in the end there will be no difference between you and the message you received. You are talking to yourself, even when the Children's Voices are clearest in your soul.

Are you confused yet?

Words can never fully relate what I am trying to communicate. You must look past the words and listen with your heart. Then you will know and understand.

This short message from Thomas is very important at this stage of our course, so listen with an open heart.

Thomas' Message

There are those of you who have stepped aside from your mind enough to hear your Child Guide speak to your heart. If you feel joy every time you feel them at your side, then you will know you are one of those people. There are also those who think they are communicating with their Guide, but in reality haven't looked past their own thoughts. How will you know? If it brings you any degree of confusion or fear, then it is not from your Guide. It is from your own fearful need to avoid the deeper message they would offer. If you believe that your Guide is leading you away from the Truth rather than toward it, then know that you are talking to yourself, that part of your mind that is afraid of God. Are you willing to look at this? If there is no Guide, or anything for that matter, outside you, then there is no one else to accuse. But if you feel unbounded joy every time you open your heart to the possibility that you have everything you need to be happy and whole...that you are already enlightened, then you are right on track.

You have to choose not to fool yourself. The Children aren't here to soothe your nerves or stroke your ego. They are here to shake you until you wake up from your dream. Sometimes being shaken while you're still asleep can be very traumatic. But it is for your own good. There is nothing we can do that you are not asking for in your soul. You can wake up on your own or be pulled forcefully. Your willingness to embark on this course means you want this, and we will do whatever it takes to make it real for you. But don't expect it to always be comfortable, because it isn't. You have no idea how proficient you are at denying who you are, and avoiding the love that is all around you. The moment you accept this, then surrender to the Call of Love, then you will see everything as it really is.

You have chosen to be free, and we are here to assist you. This week you will spend time listening even deeper to the message from your Child Guide. You now know how to tell where that message is coming from. If it brings only joy and release, then you are listening well. If anything else comes up, then you are talking in your sleep, and no one is listening but you. Write down what you hear, and share it with the rest of the family on the message board.

We love you,

Thomas.

FIVE SIGNS

By Joseph Wolfe

The First Sign

My first recollection of the sensation of 'being in a body' was very uncomfortable. The clothes felt tight and restraining and extremely unnatural and alien. I cried uncontrollably as I viewed the bleak surroundings of an old wooden farm house and unkempt conditions of the front yard where my older brother happily played with a small group of other children.

I was about three or four years old then and my father, who had recently acquired legal custody of his two sons, was in the process of negotiating with the owners of the farm over the care of my brother who, for the next few years, would remain under their supervision. I would be taken to The Carmelite Home for Boys, a Catholic orphanage, in Gary Indiana and until the time when my father, now divorced, was settled and able to reunite his family in a new home environment.

I continued to sob and rejected my brothers requests for me to join them in play, instead became increasingly aware of the distinct feelings of despair, hopelessness and deep anxiety over the sudden realization that "*I had to do this all over again.*" I was back in this *terrible place* once again, after a brief period of having left it once before for a much more peaceful 'place' only to return once more for another bout with an existence I did not look forward to.

Many years later, in retrospect, I'd recall this experience as the reentry into the form of a body, reincarnated into another human entity. With this retrospective realization came the understanding that the term *recurrence* might better describe the events, and *any* body only serves as the temporary re-enclosure from unconscious feelings of guilt and fear at a much deeper level.

The Second Sign

In the orphanage some time later, under the care of Carmelite nuns, I was suddenly stricken with a very severe case of the mumps. In the nineteen-fifties, the mumps was a terrible childhood sickness, highly contagious and since it was not an uncommon cause of death for some, it was taken very seriously.

I was quarantined in a private dorm. There, placed in a crib, one of several that lined one side of the rectangular dormitory and directly across from a row of large six foot

windows from which shone the light of day or the dim street lights at night.

A nun was assigned my personal care giver. She was the little one who rarely spoke but spent most of her days in quiet service to do the bidding of other, more senior nuns. She was the silent one, who under other circumstances, I would toddle behind as she cleaned floors, dusted rooms and piously attended menial duties. She'd always fill my little pockets with candy when the days chores were completed.

When I fell sick, she tucked me lovingly and gently in for that night, leaving an opened bag of root beer barrels on the night stand at the head of the crib. When she left and retired for the night, I fell into a deep feverish sleep.

When I awoke all was quiet. The normal bustling of the busy sounds of the orphanage had all but been replaced by the stillness of the night. My head, swollen at the cheeks, throbbed in pain and my little body was very weak. I remembered the bag of candy left for me and reached through the wooden bars of the crib to retrieve a piece and placed it into my mouth between my teeth and cheek before turning on my back to stare at the ceiling. I remember counting the squares of ceiling tile above me and was grateful for the faint but comforting light of the streets that illuminated the room just enough to see.

Then it happened.

Out from nowhere and through the wooden side bars of my crib, a very large hand began to move over my chest area, patting it, and communicating to me that "*I will be alright.*" There was no sound, just the unmistakable presence of *one who cared* and the hand that completely covered my entire upper torso. At first, I expected to see my little nun or another who might have sought to look in on me, but when I turned to my right to look in the direction where one would be standing I saw nothing. *There was no one there.*

The light from the windows would have definitely created an outline or silhouette if anyone were standing there, between me and the rest of the room, but there was nothing. Just the hand that continued to soothe and comfort me, assuring me with feelings of gentle compassion that "*I will be alright.*"

I was suddenly terrified. I reached out and

grabbed the fore-finger of the hand and leaned up to bite it. I bit down very hard with all of the energy and fury I could muster. Despite my full set of teeth, and the fearful force applied, the hand didn't even flinch. It gave no indication that it even felt me but rather allowed me to continue. When I released the finger, the hand just faded away.

Shaking uncontrollably with fear I threw the covers over my head and trembled for what seemed like a long time. I must have fallen asleep then, because when I awoke again, the room was bright with the morning light of the sun that streamed through the windows. I stood up and grasped the wooden railing of the crib, wide eyed and full of recollection of the visitor event of the night before and I could feel a tiny remnant of the root beer barrel that was still lodged in the corner of my mouth.

But what I felt most, was the complete sensation of wellness. The sickness was gone. There was no swelling and the pain and throbbing in my head had left. I had been completely cured. And when after my feeble attempts in little boy terminology failed to convince the mother superior of my late night visitor, and the host of nuns who were shocked at my quick recovery, and after the doctor was summoned and he too shook his head in bewilderment over a miraculously sudden turn about for the better, and after they were all gone and only my little nun and I remained, she lifted me from the crib and knelt me down beside her on the floor and together we gave thanks to God.

From then on, the message, "*I will be alright,*" stayed with me throughout this lifetime and in times of despair, pain or fear it would always remind me.

The Third Sign

I was eleven or twelve when I first experienced Love. My brother and I occupied one bedroom on the top floor of my father's house, and it happened while I lay in my bed in that place between sleep and waking.

Real Love is unlike anything even remotely describable. Multiply your deepest passionate feeling ever felt by thousands and it still doesn't give it a hint of the vastest and constancy of what flowed to me that memorable morning.

(continued on the next page)

In my half sleep, half awake state I was suddenly starring upward at an image of an elegantly attired female, whose rich robes and exquisite adornment spread from the tight collar to the tops of her sandals. She radiated bright light like a shimmering star and an aura of majesty that glued my attention to her with utter and complete awe.

She emanated feeling and emotion so completely overwhelming that tears welled in my eyes. We looked at each other, while I stood speechless at her feet and she looked down at me with an expression I can only describe as indifferent yet compassionate. Love of a degree as deep as the oceans flowed from her presence and spilled over me like raging waterfall that saturated everything around her. She wasn't smiling; the stare was one of simple tolerant acknowledgement, nothing more.

I was deeply moved and blown away with love and a sense of constancy and permanence unlike anything ever experienced before or since.

I ventured a thought. I begged her to let me stay there with her forever. At that instant, at the moment I made the request, she faded away. It was as if she was deliberately rejecting the very idea. I felt crushed and devastated. I rose from my bed and remember the streams of tears that flowed down my face as I made my way to the bathroom, sobbing quietly and feeling loss and abandonment. It was as if I were loosing connection with the dearest one to me...the closest loved one...yet no human experience of love even comes close.

Many years later, while strolling in an outdoor art gallery in Sedona Arizona, I came face to face with the image of the Being I'd experienced in the vision. It was Kuan Yin. There was no mistaking it. It was Her. Kuan Yin, the enlightened Buddhist Goddess of Love.

The Fourth Sign

Many years later while serving a ten year sentence in a maximum security prison, I laid on the cot in my cell half asleep and half awake when suddenly I felt a strange sensation of power, not unlike what electricity might feel like unto itself, as it slowly and comfortingly emerged from deep within me. It felt like pure power as it gently began to flow 'up' into a gradual but defining steady increase.

I 'watched' it in awe and as soon as I focused

my own attention on it, it subsided.

This experience occurred several times over the next few months, where it would seem to want to emerge in full blown expression, but just before it completed its total manifestation it would fade back to where it had come.

Then one day I felt it again. It was as if the electricity moved its way slowly up into the terminal of a light bulb, then enter the filament that would ignite the bulb, and rather than mingle my own thoughts with what it was, instead I allowed it to flow and all of a sudden I smiled from deep within because I "knew" what would happen next.

A blinding white light emerged from deep within and shown from me to fill that tiny cell with a brightness so great as to be uncommon in the world. It shown outward, out of the cell and completely illuminated the gallery outside the cell. It was late at night and I sensed that I was the only convict awake as I experienced the light explosion totally illuminate the entire area.

Forty cells away at his watch station at the end of the gallery was a guard who immediately jumped up at the strange sight and began to run quickly down the gallery toward my cell. I witnessed his view of the event *as if through his eyes*. It was as if my own legs carried him toward me and stopped directly in front of my cell. By then the light, interrupted with the guard's reaction had subsided and disappeared. When he looked into the cell all he saw was another convict who appeared to be asleep. He walked slowly away, dumbfounded. I never heard a report about the event.

The Fifth Sign

Some years later, still in prison, I felt another experience of power one warm summer afternoon after a previous sleepless night filled with apathy, despair and hopelessness. Earlier that day I'd gotten into a verbal confrontation with another convict, the leader of one of the largest prison and street gangs in the Chicago area.

I don't fully recall what the argument was about, but it was serious enough that the order came down that on the following morning I was to be killed, and there was no escape.

Alone in my cell that night, I paced the floor nervously and smoked the last cigarettes as I experienced the darkest moments of dread

and fear ever in this lifetime. Images and visions of a horrible physical struggle followed by my inevitable death filled my thoughts.

So for the first time in many years I turned to God. I got down on that concrete cell floor and prayed. I'd long since given up on the God thing. That, to me, had become nothing less than a fairy tale, something only the gullible believed in. Until that moment, God had all but been forgotten or at least replaced with the predominate blame for all my sorrows and circumstances.

I prayed for hours. Begging, pleading, promising, asking for a way out. Soon I had the thought to write out a note for help and give it to the next guard who would pass by my cell. In the note, I described my predicament and the impending danger.

After many more hours my prayers were answered. I'd passed the note to a guard to who returned much later, just before the dawn of the new day and was led away. Eventually that same morning I was transferred from that maximum security prison to another facility, a minimum security confinement prison miles away.

And when they delivered me to that new environment and locked the door of my new cell behind me, I immediately got down on my knees and thanked God for what could have been nothing less than divine intervention. I thanked for a long time, remaining on my knees in grateful prayer until I became weary. Then I laid down on my new bed and the instant my head rested on the pillow it happened.

A feeling engulfed my body with a vibrant sensation of comforting lightness that was gentle while all powerful, as it lifted 'me' away from my body and raised me to inches below the ceiling of my cell. Sounds filled my being...the sounds of a gradual progression up the musical scale...three notes in all...do, re, mi...all of the instruments of all of the bands and orchestras in all the world and in heaven saturated that tiny cell in perfect harmony and then something else began to occur.

'I' felt an expansion. I was slowly *becoming everything* around. I *was* the cell, the floor the ceiling, the walls, the air, the trees and grass outside my bared window, the rustle of the leaves and the sunlight...

(continued on page 11)

A Father's Prayer

The ardent longing in my life
Is not a prayer for me;
In the deep watches of the night
I pray, not selfishly.
I lift six lives to You, O God,
Six hearts I know You love.
I cannot help them now below,
Please bless them from above.

You see their need as I cannot,
You hear their prayers, I know.
You feel their tears upon Your cheek,
Please hold them as I go.
No man could love them as I do,
No heart could miss them so.
But only You can lift their heads
And hold them as I go.

Give them strength when they are weak,
And peace in place of fear.
Give them eyes of faith that watch
As miracles appear.

Hold them close in Your embrace,
The way I know I would.
Hold them tight in Your embrace,
The way a father should.
Be their fortress from the storms,
A place where they can hide.
A father strong whom they can trust,
In You they can have pride.

Although I cannot touch a face,
Or hold my loved ones near,
Or see them in the morning light,
Or wipe away their tears,
Or talk with them about their day,
Or pray with them at night,
I know that you will be with them,
You'll be their guiding light.

I give them to You, one by one,
My wife and five dear stars.
Please keep them close and love them strong!
I'll love them from afar.

John W. Gillette Jr.

In *Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul* (2000)

Wasted Time

The time that I've wasted is my biggest regret,
Spent in these places I will never forget.
Just sitting and thinking about the things that I've done,
The crying, the laughing, the hurt and the fun.

Now, it's just me and my hard-driven guilt
Behind a wall of emptiness I allowed to be built.
I'm trapped in my body, just wanting to run
Back to my youth with its laughter and fun.

But the chase is over and there's no place to hide.
Everything is gone, including my pride.
With reality suddenly right in my face
I'm scared, alone and stuck in this place.

Now memories of the past flash through my head
And the pain is obvious by the tears that I shed.
I ask myself why and where I went wrong.
I guess I was weak when I should have been strong.

Living for the drugs and the wings I had grown,
My feelings were lost, afraid to be shown.
As I look at my past it's so easy to see
The fear that I had, afraid to be me.

I'd pretend to be rugged, so fast and so cool
When actually lost like a blinded old fool.
I'm getting too old for this tiresome game
Of acting real hard with no sense of shame.

It's time that I change and get on with my life,
Fulfilling my dreams for a family and wife.
What my future will hold I really don't know,
But the years that I've wasted are starting to show.

I just live for the day when I'll get a new start
And the dreams I still hold deep in my heart.
I hope I can make it, I at least have to try
Because I'm heading toward death,
and I don't want to die.

Dave LeFave

in *Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul* (2000)

I was everything.

I wanted to go farther but as quickly as the power began to flow it subsided and very gently returned me into the body. I was dumbfounded. What was this strange feeling? While it seemed oddly familiar and comforting it remained like something out of science fiction or religion which never before held my interest for any notable period of time. In fact, until that precarious previous night, when I begged for help and prayed for the first time in years, I'd long since given up any hope or belief in spiritual subjects or that God guy.

This had to be something bigger than all of that...bigger than anything I'd ever been told about or taught. This was BIG.

I was convinced that the feeling I'd just experienced had *something* to do with God-stuff, or maybe there was some scientific explanation, but without knowledge or a reference of any sort I could only wonder in awe.

What was it? Where did it come from? How could I feel it again?

I would spend the next thirty years asking those questions before finally understanding that the "I" who searched would never find the answers.

While many books on the subjects of spirituality and 'enlightenment' fell into my lap and years of engagement with various seeker study groups occupied a rigid discipline of regular attendance, I found myself struggling between the search and the attraction of every day needs and desires. Making a living and finding happiness with worldly success was important and gradually took precedence over the search, until the very memory of that profound experience in prison had become almost completely obliterated from memory.

I even began to doubt its very occurrence, attributing the event as a product of a dream or some explainable scientific phenomena of mental delusion. I fell completely off the path. I sank into a twenty year depression, losing all possessions, my marriage and family, and all desire to do anything but saturate myself in drinking and drug use. I would be fifty before

finally beginning to return.

I met a friend who encouraged me with unconditional love and compassion. She sent me books, like Neale Donald Walsch's *Conversations With God*, which served to reignite the search in me and lead me back to the path. Other books fell into my lap, introduced by members of our study group and finally one day, *A Course in Miracles*. And when I was able to pick it up, read it and do the lessons as instructed, I realized the truth in the idea that an untrained mind can do nothing; I was grateful for this treasure. *Here was a practical application of a disciplined course of action that could lead me to the truth and I embraced it, like a long lost treasure map.*

I would eventually come to realize that these doubts arouse in the ego, the false personality of this Joe guy whose totality of emotional investment refused to permit anything other than cherished beliefs that went along and coincided with attractions of the illusion and linear Newtonian world. The 'world,' I began to realize, was everything I created and everything I called into being through my own distorted perception.

I wrote and published *Letter To A Prisoner*, a small book created to send the message to prisoners of the events of the time spent in prison and the *verifying testimony of the experience* of the existence of something greater than the eyes could perceive. And that *this something* was the true source for all questions and answers. I realize now that the "I" who searched for answers would never find them and that all confusion, doubt, insecurity, fear, guilt, embarrassment, loneliness, anger, frustration, judgment, boredom, annoyance, feelings of inferiority or superiority all arise from that false personality, that ego, that perception of specialness embodied in flesh, something I *have*, not what I Am.

A Course in Miracles came into my life, and shortly thereafter, *an introduction to ACIM Gather*, a live interactive on line group of teachers and students. And then, after completing the workbook, (the 365 lessons) I was led to *The Way of Mastery*.

After years of study with Gurdjeiff, Ouspensky,

sky, Walsch, Zukav, Dr. Hawkins, and many others, finally the gravy on the mashed potatoes reignited the Light within and reclaimed *the need for a spiritual discipline*. While grateful for all authentic teachers and authors of the past thirty years and recognizing that each made a contribution of another step on the path, one very distinct and vitally important element emerged.

I began to understand the truths that,

- (1) Of myself I can do nothing,
- (2) Nothing "outside" of me is the cause,
- (3) I am not a victim of the world I see,
- (4) An untrained mind can accomplish nothing,
- (5) All judgment blocks the awareness of Love's presence,
- (6) Forgiveness is the means to peace, trust and faith.
- (7) I am not this temporary body but pure Spirit created in the likeness of the Source of everything, the Absolute, the All and Everything, God.

Armed with the teachings of all of these great messengers I realized that it was important that these ideas be shared with anyone with an ear to hear. And that if one truly realizes that *there is something greater* behind everything the body's eyes can perceive, if that truth resonates somewhere within, then it is necessary to *pick an integrious spiritual discipline and stick to it*. Replace negative thoughts with compassion and love for all of life and all of its expressions. Spend less time identified with things in the perceived world that have no real value. Pray more. Ask for help more often. *Practice true forgiveness*. Do something on a daily, hourly, and finally on a moment to moment regularity. Your Higher Self (or Holy Spirit) will not let you down.

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