



**A Newsletter For Prisoners
Based on the Conversations with God Material**

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Living a Spiritual Life: What IS That Anyway?

It's been years now since I first read Conversations with God, Book One. It changed my life. It changed the way I saw things, how I perceived the world around me.

It gave me my first glimpse of a God I could relate to, a God of Love, Unconditional Love. I really liked that. I liked how I felt when I thought about this God being all around me, inside me.

It also put me on a path of discovery. Discovering who I am, how I want to treat others, how I want to live my life.

For years now, I have felt that I am a spiritual being living a human experience (paraphrased from T. De Chardin). This was and is a wonderful feeling, a feeling of being exactly where I "should" be, doing exactly what I "should" be doing. Living a spiritual life.

But these days, I am questioning myself (again!!??!!). What exactly is spirituality? What does it mean to "be spiritual" to "live a spiritual life"?

Most of you will know by now that I do not practice any particular religion. I have nothing against any of the basic beliefs in any religion I have ever heard or read about. It is just that I,

"How do I take my Divine connection with me when I am grocery shopping?"

personally, find my connection to the Divine through other means than those suggested by the great religions of today.

I believe spirituality is a personal experience with the Divine. Whether you get that through a religion, through reading, through meditation, prayer or any other means does not really matter (at least not to me). What is important, I think, is the feeling of inner peace, love, and joy that comes when we connect with God.

That, to me, is spirituality. But how do I live a spiritual life? How do I translate this connection to an everyday activity? How do I make my bed... spiritually? How do I go to work as a Spiritual Being? How do I take my Divine connection with me when I am grocery shopping?

And maybe more importantly... and more difficult...how do I stay connected to my Divine Source when I am facing the irritations of my everyday life?

How do I stay in Love, when accusations are coming my way? How do I stay in Peace when attacked?

It's easy enough to "be spiritual" when I'm meditating. But how do I stay centered when I am faced with a situation that irritates the heck out of me?

I'm betting that all of you can think of (at least) one person who almost always knows exactly what buttons to push. And don't they seem to do that deliberately??

One of Miguel Ruiz's agreements (found in The Four Agreements) applies here in a big way : "Don't take things personally: Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering."

WOW!

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It's been years since I've read that book but just reading this explanation on the internet made me sit up and take notice again.

*And it reminds me of another book, this one by Terry Cole Whitaker, titled *What other people think of me is none of my business.**

I don't believe I can live my best life, my most spiritual life, the life most connected to Divine Source if I take things personally, if I believe it is my business to change how others see me.

And that's a big one for me. I feel it's like the last bastion toward living a completely peaceful existence. One where the storms and dramas around me don't affect my peace.

But that sounds cold, doesn't it? It sounds like I don't care what others think and feel, that I don't want to care. And that's not it at all.

What I am finding in my own life is that in order to live in peace, joy, love, everything that I choose for myself, I must live that way regardless of what is around me.

In order to be happy, I cannot wait for any particular person, much less every person in my life to do, say, act and be everything I would wish. That will never happen nor, if truth be told, would I wish to have that kind of power over people.

Living in peace is a priority for me and has been for a long time. In order to do that, I need to recognize when something or someone has disturbed my peace, acknowledge it, bless it and let it go. Those last two take a bit of practice, I must admit they do not come easily to me. But easy or not, they are necessary in order for me to be all that I can be.

Not what someone else believes I should be, but what I know deep inside myself that I can be. Who I

really am.

It is a completely self-centered way of living. Centered on the Self, on the Higher Self, on the Love and Peace that I choose to Be.

But there is nothing selfish about it. Because once you connect with your Source, with the abundance of love that you have within, that you ARE, then you can do nothing other than share it, than put it in service to others.

Next to this article, you will find the prayer of St-Francis of Assisi who is, to me, the true embodiment of someone who lived a spiritual life. Who found a way to true peace, love, and joy through his connection with God.

Just taking one part of this prayer and putting it into practice shows us the true magnitude of its power.

That prayer, to me, is the answer to the question posed as the title of this article. St-Francis showed us the way to live a truly spiritual life.

I am at a time in my life when I need to be of service. This has nothing to do with sacrifice (which gives away something we feel we could miss). Service is giving that which we have an abundance of. No one can tell you what you should or shouldn't give. Only you can know what is inside you that just needs to be shared.

When you find what that is, when you start sharing it, you will find the bliss of knowing you are exactly where you "should" be, doing exactly what you "should" be doing.

There is such joy in that, you will feel it even while making your bed.

*In Joy,
Janine*

Prayer of St-Francis

Lord,

make me an instrument of your 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

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.

My dear friends...

As I'm sure you must know, most human beings imagine themselves to be separate from God. Out of this idea, humans imagine themselves to be separate from each other as well.

Yet no human is separate from God, since God is Everything That Is. Therefore humans are not, and *cannot* be, separate from each other.

Yet it would be inaccurate to conclude that the concept of separation itself is a "bad idea" (that it does not serve your purpose). Indeed, the Idea of Separation is a blessed idea, allowing for The Whole to understand that It is the Sum of Its Parts, and even greater still.

Separation, God tell us in the book *Communion with God*, is an illusion that serves your purpose magnificently *when you use The Illusion as a tool to create experience*.

When you *forget* that separation is an illusion, you imagine that it is the Real State of Things. The Illusion no longer creates experience, it becomes experience.

It is like feigning anger to make someone else more solicitous, and then actually becoming angry. Or feigning interest in another in order to make a third party jealous, only to find that the illusion of interest has become very real indeed...

The device becomes the experience.

By this process you have come to actually believe that you are separate; that Disunity is possible in the Unified Field you call the Universe --- ignoring the fact that the word "uni-verse" itself means "all in one."

The illusion of separation, when not fully understood or utilized as it was intended, can have enormous impact in your day-to-day experience. The most signifi-

cant outcome is that your belief that separation is true, rather than an illusion, leads to your idea that there is "not enough."

When there was only One Thing, and you knew that you were that One Thing, there was never a question of there not being "enough." There was always "enough of You." But when you decided that there was more than One Thing, then (and only then) it could appear that there was not enough of "the other thing."

This "other thing" that you think that there is, is the stuff of Life. Yet you are Life, and that which Life IS -which is God, Itself.

Still, so long as you imagine that you are separate from God, you will imagine that you are something other than what God is-which is Life Itself. You may think that you are that which *lives*, but you will not imagine yourself to be Life Itself.

This separation OF Itself FROM Itself is what we have called, in one of our mythologies, the casting out from the Garden of Eden. Suddenly, where once there was eternal life, now there is death. Suddenly, where once there was abundance, now there is "not enough."

Suddenly, it seems that there are many Aspects of Life competing for Life Itself. This is impossible in Ultimate Reality, but not in our imagination.

You can even imagine that you are in competition. With the birds, with the bees, with every other living thing, and with all other human beings.

You can create a nightmare in which all that supports your life seems not to support your life at all, but to limit it. Thus, you will actually attempt to subdue that which supports you.

You were told to have *dominion*, but you have decided that this means *domination*. So, you

have actually begun a war with Nature, and with the Natural Order of Things.

We have used our science and our technologies to twist and turn and manipulate Nature, so that it bends to our will. We are slowly destroying Nature as it naturally is, in an attempt to experience ourselves as we already naturally are.

You already are what you seek to be-eternal, unlimited, and One with All - yet you do not remember this. And so, you seek to subdue Life in order that you may have Life more abundantly. And you do not even see what you are doing.

Life becomes the single common denominator. Everyone wants Life, and the things that support Life, and, because we think there is more than one of us, we are afraid that there may not be enough Life to go around.

Out of this fear we produce our next imagined reality: death.

A life that we thought to be eternal (until we imagined that we were "separate," it never occurred to us that we would not always "be") now seems to have a beginning and an end.

This is The Illusion of Insufficiency played out at the highest level.

The experience of our life beginning and ending is really nothing more than the onset and the dissolution of our idea of ourselves as "separate." At a conscious level we may not know this. Only at a higher level is this always clear.

It is at this higher level that we seek to end the experience of separation, to remind ourselves that this is An Illusion, and that we have created it.

It is a good time now to discuss once more *why* we have created it.

We have created the Illusion of Separation in order that we may

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From the Inside

The Stranger I Kept Avoiding

For most of my life, my identity has depended on an endless collection of things to prop it up: my name, my “biography”, my partners, home, job, friends, bank balance... It was on their fragile and temporary support that I relied for my security. So when I came to prison and was stripped of everything, I didn’t have any idea what my identity could be.

Without the familiar props, I was focused on just myself, a person I did not know, and unnerving stranger with whom I had been living all the time, but never really wanted to meet. I had filled my days with countless distractions, with noise and activity, no matter how boring or trivial, to ensure that I would not be left

in silence with this stranger.

Finally, I met this stranger in a prison cell. No longer could I use my computer, my TV, and every gadget and activity I could think of to divert my attention. All that was left for me to do was face myself.

At long last, layer after layer of resistances and denials were peeled away and what was left was a tenderness I had not known before. When my core was finally reached, everything was felt in a new and deeper way.

I learned that seeing one’s own unwanted behaviors and claiming them, declaring them, and owning them is a first step that many peo-

ple never take. It’s too painful. When we share our painful experiences, though, others will see themselves there as well. And they, too, will move closer to healing. When we lay our life open and allow our flaws and frailties to be known, our magnificence shines through, too, and through our example, others are healed. Through the sharing of our pain, others are relieved of theirs. Through our experience, others have hope.

We’re here to wake each other up so we’ll be able to see that this stranger can be our best friend. Let us, therefore, be a model for all the world.

CTB

The Happiness of a Child Remember to Bounce

With the weight of the world on our shoulders, getting off the ground becomes problematic. Our minds have trouble soaring aloft because they are heavy laden with cares, anxieties, worries and deadlines of one sort or another. These things have a psychological weight that smothers our capacity to imagine and to play. Burdened so, we forget to lighten up, to let our hair down and go lightly through the days and nights. We forget about our wings so our wings forget about us.

We can, however, easily arouse the miraculous, the awe inside. One of our finest capacities as human beings is to wonder at ourselves and the world; to bring curiosity, vitality, and bounce to our lives.

Here is an exercise for your

“awe muscle,” which is the muscle that makes your jaw drop open in amazement. Often a little reflection on something like the simple fact of your beating heart—a muscle that automatically flexes a few billion times in an average human lifespan and pumps blood through a circulatory system that if laid end to end would stretch all the way around the earth—can completely change your mood.

Being willing to bounce means being willing to be stretched, to expand and take in the enormity of it all—ourselves, the world, the mystery. We belong to the stars in the night sky and to the silence of the wilderness in the darkness. We are made to express ourselves in singing, dancing, studying, learning, working and playing. We belong to all of this and much

more. This is our awe. And it is awesome!

Several years ago the Dalai Lama was scheduled to speak in Madison Square Garden. After the crowd of thousands was seated, the Dalai Lama entered, walked down the carpet and climbed the step to take a seat at the top of the throne. To make the seat comfortable, the organizers had placed mattresses at the top, covered by carpet and silk. When the Dalai Lama sat down on the throne, it bounced. A smile lit his face. He bounced again and smiled some more. Then in front of thousands of students, he bounced up and down as happily as a child.

CTB

Dancing With Joy Simple Joy

There's an old Buddhist saying; "Ah, the joy to discover there's no happiness to be found."

When we think we're looking for happiness, what we're really looking for is joy. We can be temporarily happy, but simple joy is our natural state when we're not being distracted by our desires and fears. Life can be rich and rewarding, but we have to give up our constant demand for more, newer, bigger, better.

Are we going to have the insight to hop off the internet and watch the sun go down? Are we going to have the patience to be quiet and make time for "unproductive," unstructured time every day? Or are we under

the delusion that somehow we're going to create this big busy thing that by its success is going to fill us and bring us enlightenment and peace?

Just think of how many labor-saving devices have come along that make food, shelter, and warmth so much easier and quicker to get than ever before. Yet, look at what pace people are living today. Where is all the time that has been freed up? We have to look at it all in its simplest terms which is "it's intrinsically good just to be here and be alive."

Joy by its very nature is simple and we must become simple people. If we're going to solve the

pressing problems of our world and find joy, we're going to have to go back to the advice of all our elders from all the traditions and religions. "Be simple people of goodwill who spend some time touching into the unknown and all of our outer focus on caring for each other."

There's so much mystery, so much goodness when we're not beleaguered by our busy-ness. Even "good busy" doesn't lead to simple joy unless we find a balance and a way to slow down as well. The kingdom is within and it's revealed in solitude, in humility, in stillness.

CTB

Using Laughter

[...]

One temptation that besets many of us is that we take ourselves so seriously that we begin to attach great weight to unimportant matters. Laughter is a marvelous tool for shaping us back down to size. It's a gift of the human spirit and sometimes (especially in here), it's the only weapon we have against official absurdity.

Instead of always taking the ra-

tional approach, with humor we can tap into an inner well of spontaneous delight. We can choose to see that we live in a world of many illusions and that much of human belief and behavior is conditioned nonsense. Laughter flips the world upside down and backward until everything becomes perfectly clear.

I asked Ralphie * if he has anything to say to us on this subject

and he reminds us to take a daily "laughsitive".

CTB

**Ralphie is a true pun master I always enjoy hearing from.
Janine*

Quotable Quotes

The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter — Mark Twain

Laughter gives us distance. It allows us to step back from an event, deal with it and then move on— Bob Newhart

Laugh often, Dream big, Reach for the stars! — Author Unknown

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experience the Reality of Oneness. Only when we are outside the Reality can we experience it. When we are part of The Whole, we cannot experience ourselves AS The Whole, because there is nothing else, and, in the absence of that which we are not, that which we are, is not.

In the absence of cold, hot is not. In the absence of tall, short is not. If everything is short, then *nothing is short*, because "short" does not exist as something that can be known. It may exist as a concept, but it is a concept that you cannot experience. It can only be an idea, never your "experienced reality."

Similarly, in the absence of

disunity, unity is not.

If everything is experienced as unified, then *nothing can be experienced as unified*, because "unity" does not exist as a discreet experience. It is not something that can be known. It may exist as a concept, but it is a concept that you cannot experience. It can only be an idea, never your "experienced reality."

In brief, you cannot know yourself as Who You Really Are.

Yet it is Our wish to know Ourselves as Who We Really Are. Thus, we must first create the experience of Who We Are Not. Since we cannot create this experience in Ultimate Reality (reality is what reality is), we

must do so through Illusion.

In this way, we can rejoice in what is Really So, and know it. In this way we can experience Who We Really Are.

The All of It.

The One and Only.

We are The Collective, the Single Reality in Multiple Form - having *taken* Multiple Form that we might notice and experience the glory of our Single Reality.

This is a simple explanation of the purpose of relativity. It is offered here so that we may all understand it thoroughly; so that we may all awaken from our dream.

Bringing Dignity

by Jane Davis in *Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul*

Do not do unto your neighbor what you would not have him do unto you; this is the whole Law [The Torah]; the rest is commentary. Go learn it. Hillel, Elder Jewish Rabbi—First Century BCE

One day in 1970 I had my first encounter with violence. An intruder had attacked my grandparents in their high-rise Manhattan apartment. My grandfather was so badly injured that it wasn't certain if he would live. My family drove down from our home in upstate New York. The two-hour trip was agonizing.

When we arrived, the apartment was still a mess: there was blood splattered around the bedroom, on the walls and carpet. What fury, what animal had produced this? It looked like a scene from a nightmare. In the middle of the chaos, my grandfather lay in his bed. I tiptoed into the room and stood there looking at him.

His face was distorted. The attacker had hit him, stabbed him, bit him. His eyes looked like those of a bullfrog, puffy and slitted from where the attacker had tried to gouge them out with his bare hands. The rest of my grandfa-

ther's body was covered with sheets and blankets, hiding the other spots where this man-turned beast had tried to eat my grandpa alive and where he had stabbed him numerous times, venting his unknown rages.

"There are bites taken out of the soles of his feet," I remember hearing my mother say. In twenty-nine years I still have not gotten this picture out of my mind.

The attack, we were told, had happened at 5:30 in the morning. Upon hearing noises in the kitchen, my grandpa had arisen and seen a man frantically rummaging through the silverware drawers. It never dawned on him that this man was going to harm him or my grandmother, asleep in the bedroom.

"May I help you, sir?" my grandfather asked.

The man turned quickly, wielding a huge butcher knife. He approached my grandfather and said,

"Gimme the white stuff." He led my grandfather to the bedroom, flicked on the lights and awakened my grandmother. The young man, who was apparently high on drugs, ordered her to get up and get him a towel. He had cut his hand open when he broke into their apartment. He approached my grandmother and held the knife to her delicate throat, a warning.

My grandfather knew at that moment that he was going to fight. *This man was going to kill us*, he thought, *two helpless old people in the early morning. But not without a battle*, my grandfather decided. He was going to fight and save my grandmother, even at the cost of his life. No one was going to harm his dear wife.

My grandmother handed the intruder a towel. As the stranger went into the bathroom to wash his profusely bleeding hand, he placed the knife on the side of the sink and

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turned his back to the door. My grandfather seized the moment. He lunged for the knife, grabbing it quickly, not realizing that as he did so he had grabbed it blade-end first. The knife sank into his hand, cutting and severing the tendons in his fingers. Still, he held on tight. He was fighting for his life.

The intruder turned and grabbed my grandfather, a big man, throwing him onto the floor, and then picked up a floor lamp and smashed it over his head. My grandmother, a small woman, jumped onto the intruder's back, pulling his hair and kicking him desperately trying to get him off of my grandfather. She broke her foot in the process.

My grandfather screamed at her to go get help. As she ran out of the apartment, the door slammed behind her and locked. She ran, crying and screaming for help, banging on the neighbors' doors in a panic.

Inside, my grandfather and the intruder fought for twenty minutes. As my grandfather felt himself slowly slipping into oblivion, drained, he uttered, "Oh...there they are. There are the police now." With that, the intruder fled. My grandfather crawled into the bathroom, painfully reached up to lock the door, and passed out.

The intruder was never caught. I remember going out onto Central Park West to trace the trail of blood left by this enraged, violent man. I followed it into the park as it dribbled away into a field of grass.

My grandfather miraculously survived, but my family was ripped apart. They were understandably full of hatred, full of vicious words and resentment. What happened to them almost scared me more than the senseless attack.

Part of me retreated because I was not feeling the rage that they were. Oh, I hated what this man had done. I hated seeing my grandfather, almost unrecognizable from the violent distortions evidenced on his face. I hated the rage and bitterness that was permeating my family. I hated all of it.

But I felt something different: I found myself wondering about the intruder. I wondered what had motivated him to do such a terrible thing. I thought, *How could one human being do this to another? What was wrong with him? Was he sick? He must be in a lot of pain and need help.*

Those were my thoughts, but I had no one to express them to. So I retreated inside myself, full of shame and guilt. Maybe there was something wrong with me because I did not hate this man and wish harm to him.

I remember going to a meadow on top of a mountain in Woodstock, New York, where I always went to connect with God. I prayed to God to please fill me with whatever I was missing. I was so ashamed that I had compassion for this man who had harmed my family. But that hatred and desire to revenge never came.

To this day I often wonder whatever happened to that intruder. I really believe that we are all much more than the worst thing we have ever done. I really believe in the goodness of each and every one of us. I really believe in the power we have for change and recovery. Today when I go in the prisons and death rows I look every person in the eyes to connect and bring a moment of dignity to the human being, and I often wonder if I have ever looked in the eyes of the man who wreaked havoc on my family.

SUNRISE

In the morning
When our spirit
Rises high
It's the fragrance
Of nature that
Lifts our spirit high
And it's the sun rays
That brighten up our path.
When the sun sets
It's when our spirit
Will rest at last
Until the sun rises
And brightens up the sky

AG
Nevada

MY PRIVATE LIGHT

Cut glass bent the light,
after dark, during the night.
A pinprick of white
caught my sight.

A confirmation of God's watchful eye?
Or a chance reflection beaming by?
The cosmic order of the divine mind;
sent a message
"Here am I!"

And in the silent darkness time went by.
Communication happened between it and I.
That's when the dawn began to rise
and shone its brightness in my tired eyes;
I reflected back on my private light
and I've thought about it again and again...
since that night.

Rebecca Roth
As published in *Rosas en destierro*
Compilación de textos del Centro Preventivo
y de Readaptación Femenil
by *María Luisa Burillo and Arturo Ipiéns*

A COURSE IN MIRACLES and more

Spirit Light Outreach was founded by an ex-prisoner, Joe Wolfe, specifically with the intention to deliver spiritual inspiration (free books, etc.,) to prisoners.

Some of the books that are provided include the full 1,300 page original edition of *A Course in Miracles*. This wonderful message has changed the lives of thousands and thousands of people throughout the world.

Other books we offer are the works of Dr. David R. Harkins, Gary Renard, Marianne Williamson, Jon Mundy, Byron Katie and others as well as Joe Wolfe's own, *The Five Signs*, that describe his spiritual awakening.

Any prisoner may request to be listed with Spirit Light Outreach simply by sending us a request at the address posted below. Express permission must be granted before we will post any names.

If you are requesting a book, please be sure to indicate your prison's mail policies and guidelines.

Prisoners may also request a subscription to *The Miracles Magazine*, which is based on *A Course In Miracles*.

Those of you who are studying ACIM and have questions about the material can address those questions to Joe at the address below or to Janine at *Freedom Inside* and we will forward them to loving people, students of the material, who have volunteered their time to answer such questions.

To contact Joe:

Joe Wolfe
Spirit light Outreach
c/o The Peace Center
6833 Stanley Ave.
Berwyn, IL. 60402

Or email him at
booklist@sbcglobal.net

THE WEBSITE HAS BEEN LAUCHED

www.freedominside.com

Freedom Inside now has a website. It includes all past issues of the newsletter as well as current articles.

Prisoner Art

I am very happy to say that we are now able to showcase prisoner art on the website.

Those of you who wish to have their art featured on the website can submit it at the Freedom Inside address.

We are thinking of eventually selling T-shirts with selected prisoner art pieces. The money received would be used to help defray the cost of publishing this newsletter. Your generous donation of art would be greatly appreciated.

Freedom Inside-Out

It is my intent to stay in touch with as many of you as are willing to do so after your release. For this purpose, I have started a new program Freedom Inside-Out. I am inviting all interested parties to connect with me there, listen to our audios, go to our Facebook discussion page and write any and all comments and questions you may have. Please let your friends and family know about this website and that their participation is what this new program is all about. Here is the link:

<http://freedominside.com/freedom-inside-out.html>

And don't forget to listen to the audios at:

<http://freedominside.com/audio.html>

Please keep in touch.

Janine

Prison Outreach Program on Hold

I am sorry to say that the Prison Outreach program of the CWG Foundation has been put on hold for the time being, due to lack of funds.

It is not now possible for me to continued sending free books to prisoners. I am hoping this situation will resolve itself quickly.

Freedom Inside, being my "baby", will not be affected by this lack of funds so you will continue to receive it as before.

I hope those of you waiting for books will not be too disappointed.

*In love and peace,
Janine*



From the Mail Bag

Making The Change

Dear Janine,

[...] On a past issue of this newsletter, you invited us to write our story about “change”. I hope I’m not too late to participate, but I’ve been going through some changes myself.

I am recently residing in a maximum security prison. I just got out of the hospital where I have been in and out for the past few months. And I am waiting to be transferred in a few months to minimum security correctional and I recently paroled my first sentence of 10-25 years after 15 years served for good behavior and participating in High School classes as well as programs for rehabilitation—which I have been working on for the past 7 years and finally accomplished. It has not been easy but it was something worth working on. (Proverbs 1:7)

It all started 15 years ago when I first came to prison at 17 years old. At the time, it was easy to get involved in problems and prison gangs, and I didn’t know any better. But through the years, I’ve been growing up and have seen a lot of problems, drama, and personalities that are not worth being around. But in this place it’s hard not to. So I just did my best to stay out of trouble even though trouble seemed to follow me. At 24, I was having doubts about the lifestyle I was living and the way I did things. Some questions came to mind. Like, why do I have to do things the Prison way? Why do I have to be someone I don’t want to be? Why do I have to do what I don’t want to do? But the best question of all was why do I have to live my life the wrong way? I know I don’t want to or have to. So—some better questions arose:

1. Why can’t I be who I really am?
2. Why can’t I be a better person?
3. Why can’t I take this confinement as part of my rehabilitation and make the best of it instead of taking it as a punishment?!!
4. Why not do what God intended for me to do?!!!

And the list goes on. And it went on for days, months and years. Getting bigger and bigger until one day I decided not to deal with the struggle any more. No more!!! (Proverbs 22:6)

In 2007, I made the change; I decided to turn my life around and to answer God’s call. I started to listen to my inner self—myself—not to anybody else and let God guide me through the rough path ahead.

I walked away from the old style of life I was living and stopping hanging out with inmates, persons that were always up to no good.

At the same time, I stopped being “Trapped in Small Selves, or Sub-Personalities” which were

1. Know-it-all
2. Stressed out
3. Controlling
4. Insecure
5. Angry
6. Critical

Which were the package deal that came with the No-Good lifestyle I had chosen when I first came to prison and were such a burden to me for over a decade. Until I made the commitment to change. But that doesn’t leave out the spiritual struggle and the family problems I still have to deal with.

All because I chose to live my life in a way God didn’t intend for me.

But now I have found “God and I have found Myself”. Now I am anchored and I realize my intrinsic value and self-worth as a human being as well as that of others. The emotional healing has been amazing and is still a work in progress as I adjust to my New-Life and my New-Self as I let God take charge. (Luke 6:45)

No more Anger and Resentment, no more holding on to something that sickens the mind, heart and body that at the end will sicken the Spirit. That’s something God didn’t create or intend for us. With God’s blessing I am becoming aware of His Love. He started a healing process on me physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and relationally as well and it has been a blessing. I am not perfect or free of sin. But I am a changed man and I am God’s child.

God has forgiven all my sins through Jesus Christ and I have forgiven myself. (Psalm 26)

The spiritual awakening has been the most important thing that could happen to me. I realize that we are all spiritual beings by nature. Just as we grow physically, emotionally and mentally, we have an inborn drive and need to grow spiritually—and when we do grow spiritually our lives are forever changed in a profoundly positive way. The spiritual path is not for those who need it, but for those who want it.

(continued on page 10)



Making the Change

(continued from page 9)

If we want it, we can undertake that journey through commitment and participate in religion in any way we can, whichever way we feel drawn to. All good paths lead to the hidden treasure of Love, Wholeness and a sense of Peace. We all have a higher purpose. It's up to us to undertake the challenges that our life and this world offer; and it's up to us to make the best of them. Let's count our blessings

instead of our tragedies. (Luke 4:18)
Let's make the positive changes needed in our lives. There are good things waiting to happen to us. Let's review our selves and our lives, and be grateful for everyday blessings.

I know I have done that and it has helped me get through the recent years. It has been a struggle and life still is in general,

especially here in prison, but more blessings come our way when we make the change. (Matthew 6: 9-13)

[...]

Take care and God Bless you and all the participants of *Freedom Inside*.

AGI
Nevada

That's Enough

I pray that this letter finds you and everyone at *Freedom Inside* in the best of health and great spirits. As for me, I'm blessed and highly favored.

[...] I'm only 27 years old and I'm going through so many changes. I have been in prison for 7 years now; thank God my time is up soon, but by the grace of God, I have been changed.

When I first came to jail, I wasn't 100% with God. Well He already knew that, that's what's so special, He already knew what I had done. Along this course, God has lifted me up, far above what I could ever think. I came to realize, no matter how dark the day, I had to live and, no matter how sad the circumstances, I prayed on.

We all have pleasure and pain, sunshine and rain, we will all laugh ourselves to tears one day and cry ourselves to sleep the next day. The pleasure or pain of the soul is an indication that whatever is wrong can be made repaired. [...] We are beautiful

human beings in God's army. [...] We need to always thank God that our present season of disaster has not lasted forever and will not last forever into the future.

I realize the long list of gifts that remain in my life, even in the midst of my trials, defeats and disappointments. Gratitude is a sure antidote to self-pity and defeatism. I now understand God has a reason for me to be here. I don't know exactly what His purpose is for me, but I know there is one. As I get older, I start understanding life a little more and things get clearer. People who knew the old me always ask, "How did you change?". I always tell them it's really about knowing what's right from what's wrong and knowing when you're in over your head. There's a point in everybody's life, when we say, "That's enough" and know we have to take that chance. That's what survival, failure, success is all about. I feel protected now that I am living the life I have chosen, I feel blessed by God.

I got my HS education, I am enrolled in college since 2007. I now have 34 credits, I never knew I could get this far. God is amazing, right?

What matters to me now is less about how much money and stuff I have and more about the people who look to me for inspiration. I want to help people change through my past and my actions. I believe in the value of human life. I believe in redemption. I believe in trying to educate people about what they don't understand and daring them to not allow their silence or ignorance to be seen as acceptance. All of us are sinners. All of us have done wrong. Just because we don't do wrong in front of America doesn't mean that we don't have to be forgiven for something and given another shot. Put the light on forgiveness.

[...]

I'm ready to be free...

HH
Wisconsin



Forgiveness

Forgiveness has been a challenge and a means toward my personal peace of mind and a lightness of my being. In earlier years, I sought reasons and ways to forgive myself because I'd been angry, frustrated, and overwhelmed as an adolescent and young adult during the Black Revolution and Civil Rights struggle of the 1960's and lower 1970's. I ended up acting more reactionary than revolutionary.

Ultimately, I needed to forgive myself in order to be comfortable and at peace within my own skin. I was still involved in the struggle, but it was superficial—there was no depth to it; it was all in my head, I wasn't really feeling it. Later, and after some intense introspection and self-awareness, I developed an interest and a kind of deeper mingling with people. All culminating in a desire and a choice to be forgiven by others—specifically, my family, society, humanity, Source...

But because I'm a prison inmate,

being forgiven by "all others" is pretty much out-of-the-question. Though I ask others for forgiveness—in essence, I don't think they even know what I mean. And when I contemplate what Neale—and CWG—state about forgiveness, e.g. when understanding is present, forgiveness is moot/not necessary/ not an issue—a concept that resonates with prior impressions I've gathered about forgiveness, I find myself in a mood and attitude of behavior that addresses our ONENESS with each other. For example, since I cannot reach and/or impress the injured parties of my crimes with my desires to be forgiven, I presently choose to respond to others (those souls in my immediate environment) with a form of acceptance, appreciation, and light—that suggests and intends to re-enforce that "They are Me/ We are each other". Thus, what I choose for myself in spirit, I choose to empathetically apply to them...to the best of my capabilities.

And to quote Jesus Christ "What

one does to the least of my brothers, is done to me". In short, I am choosing to live a type of forgiveness among the people; a type of harmony like you made reference to in your article on forgiveness (see July issue # 52) I believe I can realize my transitory purpose through my acceptance of other soul-persons by really listening to them and being sensitive to the subtle cues and clues that suggest how I can help heal them and help to build upon their oneness and conscious awareness. Sometimes, I believe that if I cannot proactively help someone, then I most certainly can BE in such a way that will not aggravate or add to their suffering. My own choosing to radiate my version of love and light will add that to the abundance of fear, hate and darkness that plague so many. This, Janine, is a source of my Freedom Inside.

In living forgiveness

HJ
North Carolina

The Samurai Story

A young Samurai warrior stood respectfully before the aged Zen master and said, "Master, teach me about Heaven and Hell." The master snapped his head up in disgust and said, "Teach you about Heaven and Hell?! Why, I doubt that you could even learn to keep your own sword from rusting, you ignorant fool! How dare you suppose that you could understand anything I might have to say?"

The old man went on and on, becoming more insulting, while the young swordsman's surprise turned first to confusion and then

to hot anger, rising by the moment. Master or not, who can insult a Samurai and live? At last, with teeth clenched and blood nearly boiling in fury, the warrior blindly drew his sword and prepared to end the old man's sharp tongue and life in one furious stroke. But at that very moment the master looked straight into his eyes and said gently, "That's Hell."

Even at the peak of his rage, the Samurai realized that the master had indeed given him the teaching he had asked for. He had hounded him into a living Hell,

driven by uncontrolled anger and ego.

The young man, deeply humbled, sheathed his sword and bowed low in awe to this great spiritual teacher. Looking up into the master's ancient, smiling face, he felt more love and compassion than he had ever felt in all his life. And at that point the master raised his index finger and said kindly, 'And that's Heaven.'

-An old story

Thank you, WS, for sharing this with us.



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You are blessed and a blessing to all

Janine