



A Newsletter For Prisoners
Based on the Conversations with God Material

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The Death of a Friend

A friend of mine died this week. His death was anticipated so we had time to say the most important things we wanted to say.

But it doesn't feel that we had enough time. Does it ever when a loved one dies?

Death is a very strange experience. I am talking, of course, from the perspective of one left behind. I really won't know that the actual experience of death will be like until I live through my own. Even when the dying person tries to explain what they are going through, it's still much like someone describing what a fruit tastes like. They can come close but won't ever give us the experience unless we taste it for ourselves.

Death is strange to me because it is so sudden, even when the dying process seemed to drag on and on. The death itself happens in a moment. One minute the person is there, the next they are gone. And gone forever.

It always feels quite shocking to me.

It makes me question what life is

really about. What is that energy, that force, that allows life one moment and is gone the next? What is it that makes us breathe, our hearts pump, our bodies continue its work even

"The death itself happens in a moment. One minute the person is there, the next they are gone. And gone forever. It always feels quite shocking to me."

Another question is more personal, more emotional. Why does my friend's passing hurt so much even when I can only imagine the relief his death brought to him?

I consider myself to be a deeply spiritual person. I know that I am, first and foremost, a Spirit come to have a human experience. I know that the deaths of the loved ones I have experienced all brought me some incredible gifts. I know there are always good, loving reasons for painful things to happen. These reasons keep me from suffering about my losses.

So knowing all of this, why do I still feel pain when I lose some-

one? I wonder how many of you see and feel the same difference that I do between pain and suffering.

Pain, I believe, is unavoidable in this life. While living in these bodies, while having the relationships we have, we will all without exception, feel pain on a regular basis.

It's very much like when I stub my toe. Sometimes I only realize I've done it when I notice my foot becoming black and blue. At other times, I get really frustrated, for instance, if I hurt my foot on something that should not have been there, that someone failed to put away. Those times, the same stubbed toe will produce quite a bit of suffering—with the accompanying frustrating, anger, a general feeling of being a victim.

Does any of this sound familiar to any of you?

So when I learned that my friend had passed away, I felt pain. I felt that I would have liked more time; that I hadn't really finished our relationship, closed that chapter, as it were. That makes me suffer

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The Death of a Friend

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And I know that suffering is not unavoidable. It is a choice, it is a reaction not to what happens to us but to how we perceive what has happened, to how we interpret it.

Some of you may not agree with me. And that's totally okay. What I am saying here is what I believe and what works for me. It is what helps me deal with life's painful moments. It is what I do when I remember, as Teilhard de Chardin said, that I am a spiritual being living a human experience and not a human being living spiritual experiences.

I believe true masters would accept everything in life with the same equanimity. Here's a story illustrating what I mean.

"Is That So?"

A beautiful girl in the village was pregnant. Her angry parents demanded to know who was the father. At first resistant to confess, the anxious and embarrassed girl finally pointed to Hakuin, the Zen master whom everyone previously revered for living such a pure life. When the outraged parents confronted Hakuin with their daughter's accusation, he simply replied "Is that so?"

When the child was born, the parents brought it to the Hakuin, who now was viewed as a pariah by the whole village. They demanded that he take care of the child since it was his responsibility. "Is that so?" Hakuin said calmly as he accepted the child.

For many months he took very good care of the child until the daughter could no longer withstand the lie she had told. She confessed that the real father was a young man in the village whom she had tried to protect. The parents immediately went to Hakuin to see if he would return the baby. With profuse apologies they explained what had happened. "Is that so?" Hakuin said as he

handed them the child."

I am not a master. I don't think I would be able to accept, without any inner grumbling, the kind of unfair judgmental attitude that Hakuin faced.

Nevertheless, I aspire to this status. I aspire to so master my emotions that they never keep me from total acceptance of any situation.

I believe that if I am to live the life of a deeply spiritual person (and that is my choice) then I have to face the fact that my emotions are sometimes off.

Not wrong, mind you. I could never say, for instance, that being sad about the death of a loved one, feeling grief for that loss, could ever be wrong. I am saying, though, that when I am centered, when I am connected to Spirit, when Divine Mother (who is my Spiritual Guide) surrounds me, any emotion that is not total, unconditional love is impossible.

I am not a master. I am living my life to the best of my ability, juggling both my ego—my personality, my story—and that which I know I am really about, my ever-lasting, ever-loving Spirit.

So my ego tells me that it is sad to lose a friend. My Spirit knows I have lost nothing.

My ego tells me that if I had only had a little more time, I could have made his death—and my acceptance of it—easier for both of us. My Spirit knows that things always happen for a very loving reason and in the best possible way.

So here I am, a bit confused as you can see about how I am to deal with this loss. But I will muddle through and find the gifts in it all,

as I always do.

I know that I need to accept myself as I am. I know that more than anything else, this is what I need to do.

Although I strive to become a master, I know I am human. I am wherever I am at any given time on my path to mastery. I accept that I am not perfect but my imperfections are giving me the perfect opportunities to grow.

I also know that I love my life. I love the experiences that it is bringing me and I choose to learn and grow from them all.

And in the meantime, I know that I loved my friend a great deal. I know that he and I lived through his dying very well indeed, very lovingly.

I know that I am very, very grateful for having had him in my life and for his openness in sharing with me his most profound thoughts and feelings about his life and his death.

He was a joy to me and continues to be even now, maybe especially now..

He was a gift to me as I hope I was to him.

We can ask nothing more of our relationships that to put into them the very best that we are, to allow them to bring out the best in us.

Rick and I did that for each other. I will always remember him with love and gratitude.

And, given time, with joy.

Rest in peace, my loving friend.

Janine

by Christine Hunter-Robertson

All of us are frequently presented with opportunities for growth, and one of the most universal is the process of loss and grief. With every loss, transition and change in our life we will grieve for what we perceive has been lost. When we go through major loss or transition, we feel the deep loss of that which once was, whether it be the connection with the person in relationship, or the identity we feel we had, that is, the person we knew ourselves to be. Ultimately we are building up to access our deepest grief of all, the pain of separation from our Divinity, from God, or Source. We are Spirit in body, we have forgotten, we search for a way home and flounder in our suffering.

We fear change and what it will bring, and yet everything changes, change is inevitable, we are changing whether we are conscious of it or not. When we allow ourselves to go with the flow we can emerge transformed. Like a beautiful gemstone encased in rock, many forces smash and crack it until the beauty appears underneath. It was always there it just couldn't be seen.

Whenever we have felt an attachment to someone or something if we are torn from it, by choice or not, we can feel the wrench of separation and will grieve. Grief is our internal process, all of the feelings, the emotions, pain,

sadness, anguish, despair. Mourning assists us to move it externally. To move this internal process outward we need to mourn; to cry, to wail, to speak the truth of what we are feeling, for without mourning we do not heal from our losses but accumulate this pain and sadness over time.

We are not taught how to process our grief, to mourn or to cope with the feelings that arise. The path that is often chosen is to seek unhealthy means of coping with the intense pain of grief. When the pain is too great to bear, any way to stop it can seem better at the time: drinking, drugs, addictions of any form.

Not honoring our selves and our process brings great difficulty when we do have a bereavement or loss that is a big event in our lives such as the death of someone we love or loss of freedom. This can bring all of our feelings to the surface, like a sleeping volcano where all the energy has been accumulating, old feelings that have been stuffed down, repressed or denied going back to childhood. Then the event occurs that will cause a major eruption of all that has gone before.

One reason to not judge another person's feelings or the extent of their feelings surrounding a loss is that we do not know what they

have been carrying or what this loss may have triggered within them. They may even be unaware of it themselves. Perhaps this rings true for you, maybe it makes some sense as to the depth or level of pain surrounding your own situation.

So....what if it were true that every event we experience was perfectly coordinated (at the soul level) by all concerned, including ourselves, to assist in our growth and healing at the Highest levels? Could our soul be bringing us to this moment for healing? There are no accidents and no mistakes, we may feel isolated and alone but if we could see the grandest truth of all, that all is given to us in love, and everything is wrapped with compassion for us to transform, perhaps we could embrace the opportunity rather than turn away from it.

To view grief and loss as an opportunity for growth, rather than a tragedy of living, comes from understanding the role of loss throughout life, the transformative potential of grief and the nature of the grieving process. Carolyn Myss PhD. is a pioneer in the work of understanding the link between disease and emotional dysfunction, she tells us that we must break the cycles of repeated difficult experiences or transcend the unfair circumstances of our lives. *"Remaining*

angry or clinging to a feeling that something is unfair is not only unproductive it is unhealthy. The only way to take the sting out of life's "unfair" or "repeatedly painful" situations is to seek the learning present in the challenge. For those who can do this, their lives move forward. For those who cannot, their lives become embittered experiences. And it is the feeling that lies at the root of many chronic illnesses."
The Creation of Health.
Carolyn Myss p.14

When we open to the process of grieving with intention and willingness to move through this, it will change us, and that can be in ways we never imagined. By opening ourselves up to the flow of emotion, of energy in motion--EMOTION--, each movement of fear, sadness, anger, guilt, is gently acknowledged and released. We open up to all of the energy that we are and can release creative, passionate energy from the painful place that can be beautiful.

It may be the written word in a journal, a poem, a song, or expressed through our hands in a painting or a memory box. By opening up our hearts we open up to everything. We do not tend to focus on this aspect of our grief because the pain can be so overwhelming, but out of our pain

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THE RIPPLE EFFECT

The classroom was quiet as I helped Jim, a fellow prisoner, with his math. He has had a long, difficult struggle with drugs and is trying to rehabilitate himself. Jim left the table during a break and while he was gone, I grabbed his paper and drew a cartoon character who was smiling with his arms outstretched. Under it—"HURRAH FOR JIM!"

When he returned, he looked at the drawing and his eyes filled with tears. He said, "That's a message from God! Earlier I was offered drugs and I said, 'No!' This is God speaking through you to encourage me!"

I thought I was cheering him on with his math, but he experienced it from an entirely different level. This reminded me that there is so much to be learned from a moment like this. It is sometimes hard to see how our

actions—drops in the proverbial bucket—matter. Instead, we feel our tiny drops evaporate before they touch the ground. If only we could see the bucket filling!

As we go about our daily activities, it is important to remember that we are part of something bigger in ways we never know. Each time we embrace possibility instead of despair, it is like a pebble cast in a pond. Good deeds create ripples that spread in all directions.

The call to help others is a yearning from the heart to live and move beyond ourselves. This call is the heart of our humanity—being here, open and giving to others. When we restrict the natural compassion of the heart, a tension develops between the head and the heart that often leaves us tentative and confused. As we reach out, then pull back,

love and fear are pitted against one another. As hard as this is for us, what must it be like for those who need our help?

However, when we perform caring acts for one another, we glimpse an essential quality of our being. A little comfort has been shared, and we feel a little more at home with ourselves. We're reminded of who we are and what we have to offer to others.

Though we are not able to fully see the ripple effect of our actions, we can be lights for each other and through each other's illumination, we will see the way. Each of us is a seed, a silent promise, and it is always spring.

CTB
Arizona

LIFE'S IRONIES

Sometimes life's wake-up calls are the equivalent of being hit by a two-by-four. In my case, a long prison sentence has served this purpose. It's the ultimate irony that I had to lose everything to find out what real wealth is, and I had to come to prison to learn how to be free.

Life's cycles with its twists and turns often make it seem like we're living many lifetimes within this one. Each step of the way, though, builds on the one before it. When nothing appears to help, I think of the stone cutter hammering away at a rock perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing on it. Yet at the hundred and first blow, it splits in two. I know it was not that blow that did it, but the hundred that

had gone before as well.

What we experience as ironies and paradoxes are, from a higher standpoint, the joyful play of Consciousness. The existence of this world with its endless multiplicity, its ceaseless variety, its wonder and beauty, is dependent on fundamental differences. After all, a world without these varying seasons would be intolerably dull, the mill of life requires some grist.

Life's ironies are the result of continual changes taking place, and that can feel like a blessing or a curse, depending on our desires, the same rain welcomed by the flowers is mourned by picnickers wishing for a sunny day.

Doors open and close, energies

rise and fall, and we are challenged to align our lives with the cycles of time and embrace each season for its own gifts. Each of us, in our own way, in our own times, is learning to open to the timeless unfolding of all the seasons of life.

George Washington Carver eloquently expressed this when he wrote, "How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong because someday in life you will have been all of these.

CTB
Arizona

EMBRACING THE SILENCE

An elderly couple sat at the next table in the prison visitation room. He was an inmate in a wheel-chair; his wife sat next to him.

In the half hour that I observed them, not a word was spoken. They sat there holding hands and looking at each other. Several times he reached over and gently patted his wife's cheek.

Words simply don't apply beyond a certain point. There was no place here for noisy chatter, the possessive clutch, the clinging arm...only the silence and the gentle holding of each other's hands. I was reminded that it is not what is said that is sacred, but that which is embraced in looks, touch, and

solitude that intoxicates. These two were partners moving in the same rhythm, creating a pattern together and being invisibly nourished by it.

I wondered what they had been through, why he was imprisoned...so many questions. They obviously had reached a place in their relationship where words would have only diminished the flow of feelings between them.

The feeling of love was so thick in the room I felt I was participating in something sacred...sharing in their communion, in their pain, their love, something sad and also joyful; the full range of a human relationship.

As Meher Baba, who was silent for the last forty-four years of his life, said, "Things that are real are given and received in silence."

Once the atmosphere of mutual trust is present, we can be silent together and let God be the One who speaks, gently and softly. In this silence we find the way into our heart and when we listen with our soul, we come into rhythm and unity with the music of the universe.

CTB
Arizona

BETWEEN THE REALITY AND THE DREAM

I just received the April issue of IF and want to tell you how much I appreciate what you wrote in "What the Heck is Happening in the World?" You say what needs to be said—desperately needs to be said. You asked the reader to imagine a different perspective. With only a change in perspective, the most ordinary things take on an inexplicable beauty. Then the light of our awareness is unfiltered by intellectual understanding or evaluation. It's hard for us to believe that attention is all there is to it, so we complicate things with our judgment—debasement of the ordinary as insignificant and idealizing the spiritual as unattainable—never seeing that the two are one.

These are times of severe change for all of us, but we need to remember that every jump to a higher level of energy and awareness involves a rite of passage that included a period of discomfort, of initiation. Our challenge during these times is to keep grounded in the foundation of what is (the reality), while at the same time, to dream the dreams and do what we can to bring about what could be (the dream).

These are character-building times. As we heed the concept of going within to refine ourselves, we can ride through the storms that appear and be ready for the opportunities for positive growth. Winter comes...it always does; yet indeed, spring always follows.

It's easy to jump into the future as the time of my reentry approaches. How often do we wish we were somewhere else; this is especially true here in prison. Calendars are marked with X's, days are counted, and the most frequently asked questions is, "How much longer do you have?" But we won't discover who we really are without submitting fully to where we are. Where we are is our tilling ground, our battleground, our growing ground.

So here I am this morning—jumping back and forth between this precious moment of writing to you and an uncertain future that will be whatever we choose to make of it...and enjoying it all.

I read a Peanuts comic strip that I'd like to share with you, Janine. If we're open to it, life is always teaching us lessons—even in the funnies.

Charlie Brown is eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. He looks admiringly at his hands and says, "hands are fascinating things. I like my hands. I think I have nice hands. My hands seem to have a lot of character. These are the hands that may someday do marvelous works and accomplish great things. They may build mighty bridges, heal the sick, hit home-runs, or write soul-stirring novels. These are the hands that may someday change the course of destiny."

Lucy looks down at Charlie's hands and says, "They've got jelly on them!"

Lucy's comment, although insensitive, is right on target. Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced. Thus, we start by recognizing that our own hands are covered with jelly. And they always will be. But they are all we have. They are who we are. Messy to be sure, we keep using our hands in acts of caring and kindness so that lives might be touched and lifted up.

The path that you and I are one—this path of awakening—is a deep way, a way that digs into the heart of things; it looks past our jelly-covered hands and sees what physical eyes alone fail to see, the intangibles at the heart of every happening. It is relentless in beckoning us to come down from elevated perches, to vacate the comfortable surrounding of life's surface and to enter life's depths where authentic suffering, joy, and meaning await us.

And thinking of dipping into the heart of things, the heart knows only simplicity. It's the mind that creates complications and logical reasons. When we get in touch with the incredible simplicity that is beyond all colors, all names, all forms, all shapes, there is nothing but love.

CTB
Arizona

A STARTLING NEW IDEA ABOUT DEATH
From: Notes From NEALE (Donald Walsch)
As published in the CwG Foundation Weekly Bulletin
February 19, 2011

July 2011

Hello, Everyone...

I am going to share with you an extraordinary exchange that took place between me and a visitor to my public blogsite at www.TheAlternativeVoice.org

On that site I have been exploring in recent days the topic of death - or what I call our Continuation Day. Many of you may not now be regular visitors to that site, and so you may be missing the regular conversations that are taking place there, including the remarkable interaction that follows. It is remarkable because it contains an extraordinary revelation. Read this...

NEALE...I often think of dying and cannot believe that, although people are getting rid of all the pain and suffering of this life, the pain of leaving their beloved ones does not have priority! I would love an answer about this, but would like to stay anonymous if this is possible. I admire you for your wisdom and envy you for your gifts. Thanks in advance. (Signature deleted by request)

MY FRIEND...your comment is addressed in the book HOME WITH GOD in a life That Never Ends. I want to encourage you to

read that book as soon as you can. In it, God speaks directly to the issue of leaving beloved ones behind. I can tell you here, in short, what God said in the latest revelation to me about what is happening when we "die."

We leave no one 'behind' when we die!
 The good news and the incredible news is that we do not leave beloved ones behind. And so, there is no emotional pain involved in death for the Soul that has died. When we die, we meet our "still living" loved ones on the Other Side - where the largest part of them exists in the place of No Time/No Space.

A truth that religions do not teach us is this: We exist simultaneously on both sides of the veil that separates the Realm of the Physical from the Realm of the Spiritual. We divide ourselves in order to experience the Realm of the Physical, we do not leave the Spiritual Realm.

Leaving the Spiritual Realm is not necessary for us to experience ourselves as Who We Really Are. We simply send a Part of Ourselves into the physical world, collecting and coalescing a portion of our Soul Energy in a

particular location of Here and Now, in order to identify as who we are to be in any given life.

What actually happens at the moment of death
 When we do the thing called "die" we simply Dissipate Identifying Energies (DIE), flowing our Essence once again back into the Whole Soul and the One Identity that we are.

There, waiting for us on the Other Side when we pass, are the Whole Souls of all those we have loved - in this lifetime and in all lifetimes. These Whole Souls have the ability to coalesce themselves into any shape or form they wish...and they do so...assuming the shape of the beloved ones that we have just left in the Physical Realm.

We recognize these Souls at once, of course! And we laugh and dance with joy at the immediate knowing that we never left each other at all - and never will, for WE ARE ALL ONE, existing always and all ways in the eternal glory of the Singularization Of Unified life (S-O-U-L) that is God knowing Itself!

Love and Hugs

SOCRATES' TRIPLE-FILTER TEST

In ancient Greece, Socrates was reputed to hold knowledge in high esteem. One day an acquaintance met the great philosopher and said, "Do you know what I just heard about your friend?"

"Hold on a minute," Socrates replied. "Before you talk to me about my friend, it might be a

good idea to take a moment and filter what you're going to say. That's why I call it the triple filter test. The first filter is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"Well, no," the man said, "actually I just heard about it and..."

"All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now, let's try the second filter, the filter of Goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about my friend something good?"

"Umm, no, on the contrary..."

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FREEDOM IN PRACTICE: A Buddhist's Perspective

My alarm clock is the sound of metal cell bars clanging open at approximately five in the morning as an inmate living below me is awakened to attend their mob in the kitchen. I then proceed to make my bed, wash my hands and face, and then meditate for thirty minutes before my cell opens and I have to go out and join the chaos of prison life. That's right—prison.

Now some might wonder, "what in the world has prison got to do with what the Buddha taught? I mean, aren't people in prison because they were living the antithesis of the Buddha's teachings?" While this may be true there is still much to learn from the experience of a prisoner. Also, one should not forget the story of Milarepa who was able to abandon his ways as a murderer thanks to discovery of the Dharma.

While most prisoners are not fortunate enough to encounter the Dharma prior to their incarceration, their situation provides the perfect atmosphere for the ripening of their karmic seeds which will bring them in touch with the Buddha's teachings. When it seems like you've hit rock bottom, one of the biggest questions you have is why things are the way they are. You often times feel abandoned by your family, your friends, and quite possibly even your god (or capital G as the case may be). There is this vast emptiness inside looking for answers that might fill it.

Into this vast, dark emptiness can come the light of Buddha's teachings. Perhaps a bored inmate comes across a free Dharma book that someone re-

ceived from an organization such as Prison Dharma Network or liberation Prison Project. Maybe another inmate invites you to attend the institution's Buddhist meeting to learn about meditation or even just experience a bit of solitude in the midst of all the hustle and noise. Either way (or any of a number of others for that matter), some things start to click for some of us. I'm in this situation as a result of actions I committed—karma. I've got a release date so it's not like I'm going to be here forever—impermanence. The list goes on.

Once a person in prison comes to know the Buddha's teachings, he or she needs only to look around to see evidence of their truths. By having direct experience of the teachings a prisoner is hopefully able to develop a stronger faith in them. Let us take the Four Noble Truths as an example.

The First Noble Truth tells us that suffering exists. If you can't see the truth behind this in a prison, you need glasses. Everyday brings a litany of complaints, "I deserve this...The food is disgusting...These mattresses are too thin..." It's endless. Then we can toss on top of that the suffering that comes from identifying with the ego. Everyone wants to be top dog. Reputations can be such a big deal that fights can break out over such insignificant things as what to watch on television or whether or not a window should be open. So yeah, prisoners are familiar with suffering.

The Second Noble Truth states that we cause our own suffering through our attachment. To the

prisoner this becomes obvious upon arrest. Everything gets taken from you when you go to prison. You lose your job, your standing in society, possibly money, cars, even friends and family often times vanish when you think you need them most. In the worst case scenario you even lose your very identity and have your name taken from you and have it replaced with an identification number. This causes a great deal of pain as you long for what you used to have. Eventually, at least for those who come across a true spiritual path, this suffering eases as we learn to become content with what we have.

The Third Noble Truth, that there is an end to suffering, is the hardest to find proof of in the prison system. Endlessly we see more and more people getting locker up. We see families being destroyed. If anything, we see suffering being perpetuated rather than destroyed. Every once in a while though, we see the upside. People go home from these places. We see the changes as cases go to court and sentences get reduced.

The Fourth Noble Truth, the path of the Middle Way, is the means by which one puts an end to suffering. Realization of this truth is seen through the example of those who practice it. Those who follow the Noble Eightfold Path of Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration manage to exude an aura of peace despite the environment of turmoil. If the lunch menu changes they are pleased by the

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A REQUEST TO THE LOVERS OF A *COURSE IN MIRACLES*

Dear prisoner,

Write to everyone you can. All of your family and friends and even people you don't know. Tell them to buy a copy of *Letter To A Prisoner*. For every copy sold to the general public another copy is automatically delivered to a prisoner. Help this effort to continue to be able to help you. It can be bought at any good bookstore or online at LetterToAPrisoner.com

Letter to a Prisoner is a newly edited 370 page volume that contains all of the 365 daily lessons in *A Course in Miracles*. Also included are Carrie Triffet's The Crash Course from her book *Long Time No See* and Gary R. Renard's text transcription of *The End of Reincarnation*. Gary is the world renowned author of *The Disappearance of the Universe*.

The book begins with the personal account of an ex-prisoner's remarkable mystical experiences, his time in prison, escape attempts and years of solitary confinement. It blends an introduction to a practical spiritual discipline anyone can apply found in the teachings of the *Course*. It builds a bridge of camaraderie between all prisoners and one from their own ranks whose intention is to share a message that can change their lives forever. Practicing the lessons with dedication will lead anyone to the experience of Heaven right here and now, wherever you are!

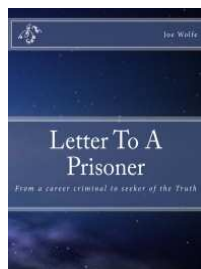
"I was hungry, and you gave me meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; Naked, and you clothed me; I was in prison, and you came unto me." (Mathew 25:35, 36)

Letter to A Prisoner comes to where it can do the most good. Most "prison ministries" are largely fundamentalists and continue to instill the ego's flavor of fire and brimstone. This is a different message to prisoners. But not specifically for those bound by walls and bars. A prisoner can be anyone confined by their own beliefs, points of view and preconceived notions. A prisoner is anyone who has not yet replaced vindictiveness with compassion.

For every copy of *Letter To A Prisoner* sold, another is automatically delivered to one of the hundreds and hundreds of confined individuals who have expressed interest in help with applying the practical spiritual discipline of forgiveness as taught in *A Course in Miracles*. Please share this message with friends and help to be a part of changing the lives for the better, forever. Tell your friends about this. Have them purchase a copy of *Letter To A prisoner* so we can continue to send them: Buy at any good bookstore or Amazon online <http://LetterToAPrisoner.com> or <http://AcimAudio.com>

If You Are A Prisoner, we need you to help us continue to help you! Write to everyone you can; friends, family and even people you don't know. Tell them to buy a copy of *Letter To A Prisoner*. For every copy sold to the public another copy is delivered to a prisoner.

Love, Light and the Peace of God,
Joe Wolfe



Joe Wolfe, Spirit Light Outreach
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8951 W. Cermak Road,
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FREE BOOKS
FOR PRISONERS

Neale Donald Walsch along with Em Claire, whose poems are in the book, have generously offered to donate

- *When Everything Changes, Change Everything* (WECCE)

to any prisoner who is interested. This book can change your life. It was written to help those who are in bad places in their lives, who see no way out, who are ready for a real change. If this sounds good to you, this book may just be the answer to your prayers. Please write *Freedom Inside* for your copy of WECCE.

Make sure you let me know if you are allowed to receive hard cover books or not.

ALSO, you can still receive a free copy of the booklet,

- *ReCreating Your Self*

donated by the CWG Foundation

Plus, there is a download of the

- *WECCE Workbook*

that Neale has offered to donate to interested prisoners. This download is a 75 page book that can be copied and mailed to you. Please make sure you can receive so many copied pages as some prisons do not allow more than 15 copies or so in one mailing

*Thank you so much
Neale, Em Claire,
and the CWG Foundation!*

(continued from page 3)

comes transformation. To be aware of the beauty that comes forth is as important to this process as the sorrow. To acknowledge all that has been gained in our growth and transformation is empowering. We are forever changed by our grief but we can choose to emerge from it in beauty and love rather than fear and darkness.

How many are willing to sit with another, to hear their pain, to bear witness to their story? In our culture it has become too hard; another person's pain simply mirrors all of the losses and griefs that are unhealed in ourselves. We have lost the awareness and skills to deal with loss and grief, in ourselves and for others. There was a time when sharing our story; joyful, sad, melancholy, fun, any story was a part of life.

Indigenous tribes know this wis-

dom, there are some Native American tribes that hold sacred space in the sweat lodge so that the grieving person can share their story fully and completely. The tribe stay present and support the person as they let go of the pain and sadness in the telling of their story. The griever is given 3 separate occasions to tell their story and then it is done, and time has come to embrace who they are now. Since this is the practice they have held throughout their lives it is complete after 3 occasions. In our culture we hold onto everything for so long that we need more than 3 occasions to unburden all of the grief that is held.

When a major loss occurs in our lives it is an opportunity for us to pour out all of the sadness and pain from all of the griefs never spoken of and held within. Many people are taken completely unaware by the enormity of this and

the old repressed memories that come in. The understanding and awareness of this process is essential in our world where emotions are so often repressed or denied.

The gift that loss and major change bring to us, is to give us the opportunity to open ourselves up to being more of our Authentic Self, living large and going beyond who we have been. Each story of loss and grief is woven into the tapestry of our lives, it makes us who we are now, in this new moment. Grief does not have to define us, it is a springboard for emotional transformation. As we clear the shadow of heavy emotions there is a beautiful garden flowering in our hearts, watered with compassion, and thus we transform from our darkest winter into a bright and beautiful spring...to seed and birth new stories, to manifest new creations and to be all that we can be.

FREEDOM IN PRACTICE: A Buddhist's Perspective

(continued from page 7)

surprise rather than complain about not getting what they were expecting. If the institution locks down and they are forced to spend days, weeks, or even months isolated in their cell they do not complain, but simply use it as a time for more intense practice and meditation. This shows others that it is possible to live a peaceful, pleasing life in spite of external circumstances.

So now you can see that a prison environment can give many direct examples of the Buddha's teachings. Combine that with the fact that most prisoners do not have to worry about the daily grind of bills, laundry, meal preparation, and the like and you are presented with a great oppor-

tunity to practice and obtain direct realizations of the Dharma. All many of us lack are qualified teachers to guide us on the path.

All paraphrasing of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are those of the author and any errors are his and his alone. I hope that any merits I might accumulate by sharing these musings might be dedicated to all sentient beings that they may reach nirvana and escape the bonds of cyclic existence.

Much metta to all,

JK
Illinois

SOCRATES' TRIPLE-FILTER TEST

(continued from page 6)

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about my friend, but you're not certain it's true. You may still pass the test though, because there's one filter left—the filter of Usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my friend going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really."

"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither true, nor good, nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?"

FALLING FORWARD

Far from the Infinite,
From the moment I drew breath.
I was once an innocent,
Now my eyes only see death.

Woke up to realize
That my dreams had gone astray
No justice now only lies
Keep my darkness locked away

Is this really me,
This beast beyond control?
My fear collar's only key,
Keep the wolf out of the fold.

Is this truly me,
This battered broken soul?
Somewhere is a place I'm free
With a loving hand to hold.

Nearing the Infinite,
My Rebirth almost complete.
True Self now must I present
Dead soon ego and deceit.

Woke up to realize
Illusions have passed away
Truth has freed me from my ties
Sunset King must greet the day.

Can you really see
My shining gentle Soul?
Somewhere deep inside of me
There's a place where I am whole.

Can you see in me
The Child of Light I am?
Right there inside we're free
Our heart home the Summerland.

Being the Infinite
From the moment we drew breath
Never were we separate
A delusional mind set.

Wake up and realize
We dreamers have dreamt The Way
Opened up each other's eyes
To behold our Souls at play

Now we really see
There's naught for us to fear
No clouding of purity
Angels kiss away our tears

Finally I see,
Our dear Creators goal
Every Being that I meet
Is a balm to heal my Soul.

My humble thanks to the Creator for giving this world the
special beacon of Love that you are, to guide me through
the stormy night and back home to the safety of your
loving embrace.

Embody the Light

RL
South Carolina

The following is not a poem, per se. It is a beautiful text, paraphrased by a member of A Course in Miracles study group. Truly lovely! I publish it here so you can all find the beauty in it that I did.

Love, Janine

THE FORGOTTEN SONG

Listen, perhaps you catch a hint of an ancient state not quite forgotten; dim, perhaps, and yet not altogether unfamiliar, like a song whose name is long forgotten, and the circumstances in which you heard completely unremembered,. Not the whole song has stayed with you, but just a little wisp of melody. But you remember, from just this little part, how lovely was the song, how wonderful the setting where you heard it, and how you loved those who were there and listened with you. The notes are long forgotten, yet you have kept them with you as a soft reminder of what would make you weep if you remembered how dear it was to you. You could remember, yet you are afraid, believing you would love the world you learned since then and yet you know that nothing is the world you learned is half so dear as this. Listen, and see if you remember an ancient song you knew so long ago and held more dear than any melody you taught yourself to cherish since. Listen.

Shared by RL
Wisconsin

ANOTHER NITE...

**Holding my breath I wait
For my anticipated release date**

**Days crawl by, the pain sets deep
Silence, alone, Grown men weep**

**Time continues to fly by
While the masses succumb to society's lie**

"An ex-con can never change"

**Yet change is what I've done
Wish I could take back the negatives I once found fun
Regret living a life on the run**

**Wishes cannot close the hole in my heart
Dying inside I've fallen apart**

**Where did illusions of forever go?
Just when my confidence begins to grow
Mailman passes my cell, another no show**

**Family ties broken for others lust for more
Where are those I used to adore?**

**Yet imprisoned I sit alone
Scars from my broken home**

**Used to cry as crack stole my childhood
Now I cry cause I yearn to be understood**

**I'm not the man that came to jail
I'm a new ship ready to sail**

**All my effort to grow in God's light
Now if only I can survive the Nite...**

**GB
New York**

Do you have a poem that reflects
the message in Freedom Inside?
If so, send it in, it just may be
chosen for a future

POETRY CORNER



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You are blessed and a blessing to all

Janine