



A Newsletter For Prisoners
Based on the Conversations with God Material

PO Box 507
Ashland, OR 97520
USA
freedom_inside@hotmail.com
www.freedominside.com

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One Decision Away

I'm writing this during the lunch break of a Conversations with God Retreat led by Neale Walsh. This retreat covers four basic topics: money, love, sex, and God. What about that for covering it all!

But what I want to talk about now is what happened in this group as it has happened in all the retreats I've been to.

The retreat started Monday evening with the usual getting-to-know-each-other time and what each can expect from the other.

The "serious" talks started Tuesday morning and have continued up to now (we're Thursday now). Whenever a topic touches someone's pain, Neale addresses them directly in a very healing way.

The point is that from the very beginning, people feel very safe in these groups. The retreats last from 4 to 6 days so that the trust shown here does not depend on the length of time these people have known each other.

The trust, the safety we all feel here happens because each of the

people in the room chooses it. We decided, often even before getting here, that we were safe here and, by extension, would hold a safe place for everyone else.

It is amazing to feel the quiet, supportive stillness throughout the space when every one of the participants shares his or her pain.

"So what happens when I am in a "safe" space? And, maybe more importantly, how can I make all my spaces safe?"

I have rarely felt such open, quiet support anywhere other than at these retreats. At least support coming from a whole group of people sharing the same space.

Why is that? Why is it possible to not only feel safe but actually be safe in a group of people who are basically strangers? Why is it possible to open ourselves so completely, to make ourselves totally vulnerable in front of strangers? How come we can do that in one place but not in another, with one group of people and not with another?

I know that being in a room with like-minded people who have all read the CwG material and wish

to learn more gives us something in common from the beginning.

But we all know that not everyone in any group has the same level of understanding or, even then, consistently lives the principles of those beliefs.

Moreover, most of my readers are in prison. I know that particular environment can be dangerous. Not an easy place to be open, kind, loving, all the things that help create a safe place around us.

But I also believe we all live in our own world. I know that our experience of our lives exists in our own minds, is created by our perspectives, our perceptions of what is really happening, why it is happening, and how we should react to it.

I believe life is an inside job.

So what happens when I am in a "safe" space? And, maybe more importantly, how can I make all my spaces safe?

I am speaking here of two perspectives of who I am. First, there is my ego-self. The part

(continued on page 2)

One Decision Away

(continued from page 1)

that is Janine, that is a White woman, French Canadian mother and grand-mother, with the life story that I have. This is the part that suffers, evaluates her life and what happens around her, chooses what to do and what not to do, makes mistakes, judges herself and others, looks for happiness, success and all the rest.

This is the part of me that makes me different, separate from every other human being.

The second part of Who I Am is the most important one for me: my spirit self, my Universal Self. This is the part that is very strong but also soft and kind, warm and loving, wise and grateful, everything that is the very best of me, the very best of us. This is the part of me that connects me with everyone else.

This is the part of me that lets me see we are all the same. We Are All One

How do we live our life with these two very different parts. How do we deal with it all? How do we live in this world while knowing we are not of this world?

Those lucky enough to have been in the presence of a true Master will tell you that there is an aura about them, a very quiet, loving space that surrounds them. A place you start feeling immediately when they enter a room.

This space, I believe, is what is created by the Universal Self. It happens when the person lets go of the ego self, healing all of its wounds, and allows the spirit self to take over.

This is what I believe allows a space to be safe for every person who shares it. This is what I've felt in the rooms of each retreat

Freedom Inside Prisons

I would like your help in fulfilling a dream of mine.

I have long been wanting to go to prisons all over the country to talk to groups of prisoners about what real Freedom is, what I mean by freedom inside, how to make our lives better, more aligned with what we hope for ourselves.

So I am putting in this offer for talks, half-days, full-days, week-ends, any time that would be open for me to go to any given prison.

I am asking my readers to see if they know of a contact person I speak with who would help open the doors for one of my dreams to become reality.

How cool would that be!

Please use Freedom Inside's mailing or email address to contact me.

With much love and hope!

Janine

I've ever been to. Everyone there had chosen to bring their Universal Selves in that room.

Which does not mean the ego-selves were left behind. I believe all of the suffering that needs healing is at the level of the ego. It shows up all the time (unless you're a Master!).

So what am I saying? I'm reiterating a wonderful philosophy that Gandhi lived by: "Be the change you want to see in the world"

I believe it is only by being Peace that we will have peace in the world. Peace, prosperity, happiness, anything else we may wish to have, everything we say we want for the world we must first be that.

I am saying that if it is true that life is an inside job, then I have to live in a way I want reflected in the world. I may not immediately affect what is happening all over the world, but I can absolutely immediately change what happens in my personal space.

My inner life is all important to me. My personal space is where I send that inner energy I feel. I don't do it to change everyone else, I do it

because it feels really good to show up as my Universal Self.

Being my best self does not have anything to do with what is happening around me, how others act.

But being my best self creates a space around me that exudes peace, love, compassion, and wisdom for this is Who I Am. And having created this oh-so-safe personal space, I am affecting everyone around me, thus creating a more peaceful, loving, compassionate and wise world.

The idea is to use my life, to use all circumstances and opportunities that arise. Use them to the very best of my abilities to show up as Who I Really Am, my universal Self. The more I do that, the more I heal myself and the better I feel about myself and my life. And, incidentally, the world around me heals.

I need nothing in order to be my best. I am one decision away from it each moment of my life, one decision away from creating the world of my dreams. From the inside.

Sending love to you all,
Janine

CONVERSATIONS WITH HUMANITY

Questions from *The Storm before the Calm. Book One is the Conversations with Humanity Series*
by Neale Donald Walsch

In one of latest books, "The Storm before the Calm", Neale Walsch describes what he believes is happening in 2012 and the new world we could be creating. He suggests we start a <Conversation with Humanity> in order to decide what this new world will look like. To start this conversation, he asks some questions, the first of which was answered by members of a discussion group who happens to be incarcerated at this time. The first question is this: "How is it possible that 6.9 billion people can all claim to want the same thing (peace, security, opportunity, prosperity, happiness, and love) and be singularly unable to get it?"

Here are some of the answers this group gave. Please join in this conversation.

ANSWER ONE

Our group started answering the first question in Neale's new book. The answers were so varied just as I thought they would be.

One was "Our way is the only way", speaking of religions. Another said it was "a learned experience". There were so many good answers that it took up the whole time we had together before some had to leave.

Moments ago, I had to borrow the book back from an inmate who was reading it. It is on loan to us from the original owner. I wanted to write out the questions so we could continue asking them in our group. I asked him what would be his answer. It left me with my jaw dropped to the floor. "It's because our governments don't want us to have that because there would be no more need for governments". I felt, but didn't say, "That goes for most of the world's religions too." They might change dramatically or go out of existence." Is that what God wants? Will the 22nd of December 2012 be day one of our true birth into the cosmic community of evolved beings? The end of our gestation period? I hope we are all around to see it. Everyone wanting the same thing (peace, security, opportunity, prosperity, happiness, and love). There would be no need for the military or law enforcement of any kind. What a wonderful world it will be.

My own answer was pale in comparison to that. I merely said, "When I read the book "The Secret" and Neale's "Happier than God", one thing stood out clearly in my mind.

The wording we use is why we never get it.

The Universe, or God as some put it, can only deliver what you ask. If you say you want something, the Universe will say, "Okay, I will give you the wanting of that."

So it does. We have gone on for millennia wanting this or that and the Universe has delivered the "wanting" of it.

Gratitude is the secret, and remembering "what you resist persists". Acceptance plays a huge role as well. Our group went on discussing how everything is what we perceive it to be, how everything is an illusion, we are just actors in a play, and when I opened my copy of "Happier than God" moments ago, I saw Neale's two prayers that truly express gratitude.

You can substitute the word God for whatever your belief may be; "Dear God, I thank you today for that which is in my world and in my life. I rest my heart in the knowing that I will yet see pain turn into joy, sorrow into gladness, and even death into everlasting life." Then his second: "Thank you, God, for helping me understand that this problem has already been solved for me."

But I'm in prison you say! So am I. Look at the words there. Are you showing gratitude to your God for already solving the problem for you? Your freedom is on its way. Use the suggestion starting on page 198 of "Happier than God". Most of us can't go to the websites mentioned there but we can start our own

groups or write down our thoughts about this first question and send them to Janine. Maybe she can publish a few and we can form our own group having our own "conversation with Humanity". Our own blog of sorts, with *Freedom Inside*.

Let's face it. You've read this article. If you've read any of Neale's books and want to get involved, get involved! Get some paper, a pen, an envelope and right now or today during lockdown, write to Janine, letting her know your thoughts on the first question. That's if you truly want to make a change and have a conversation with humanity.

As a fellow inmate I will continue to ask the questions presented and who knows what might end up in book two or three of the Conversations with Humanity series.

Say your prayer, meditate on what it is we all truly desire and prefer in the world. As "The Secret" tells us to do; let's manifest this in our lives and in our world. We can even manifest it right here in our prisons (peace, security, opportunity, prosperity, happiness and love). Do it now!

With metta to all,

MB
Illinois

ANSWER TWO

As far as I can tell, the reason 6.9 billion people can say that they want peace, security, prosperity, health, and freedom yet not one person can seem to achieve it is relatively simple. We all sit here and say that is what we want then instead of letting our thoughts and actions prove that to be true we instead put all our time,

energy and focus on the opposite. If we would stop putting so much energy into focusing on and thinking about what we don't want and took that energy and put it into focusing on and thinking about what we do want, then we will achieve the peace, security, prosperity, health and freedom we claim to want. Basically,

instead of saying you're anti-war, be pro-peace. Instead of putting all your energy and focus into being against something put it into being for its opposite.

JM
Illinois

ANSWER THREE

I think that most people of the world expect their individual peace, security, love, happiness, etc. to be provided for them by sources outside of themselves, such as governments and other individuals. Because those people fail to realize that the peace, security, love, happiness, etc. must first come from within, they are unable to truly have such things. And because I am

speaking of the majority of the world, the majority's expectations re-infect new generations creating a vicious cycle. If every individual were to realize that peace, security, love, happiness, etc. must first come from within, so that human and moral conscience is their guide, rather than outside "parental" life commandments (laws), then their peace, secu-

rity, love, happiness, etc. would come naturally, as that would be the incidental result, which would consequently spread into future generations, for each generation is, naturally, the teacher and/or inspiration of the next.

AW
Illinois

MORE ANSWERS??

If any of you wish to continue this conversation about Question One, please write us and we will publish as many answers as we can. Share your thoughts, help us create the New World we would like to live in.

QUESTION TWO

For those who wish to contribute to this ongoing conversation with humanity, here is the second question you may ask yourself:

Is it possible that there is something we don't fully understand about God and about life, the understanding of which would change everything?

Think about it, discuss it in your groups and, if you wish, send your answers in. There are no right or wrong answers, just what we choose to live by.

THE EARTH IS FULL

by Thomas Friedman

(as published in *The Storm before the Calm* by ND Walsch)

You really do have to wonder whether a few years from now we'll look back at the first decade of the 21st century—when food prices spiked, energy prices soared, world population surged, tornadoes plowed through cities, floods and droughts set record, populations were displaced and governments were threatened by the confluence of it all—and ask ourselves: What were we thinking? How did we not panic when the evidence was so obvious that we'd crossed some growth/climate/natural resource/ population redlines all at once?

“The only answer can be denial,” argues Paul Gilding, the veteran Australian environmentalist-entrepreneur, who described this moment in a new book called ‘The Great Disruption: Why the Climate Crisis Will Bring On the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World.’

“When you are surrounded by something so big that requires you to change everything about the way you think and see the world, then denial is the natural response. But the longer we wait, the bigger the response required.”

Gilding cites the work of the Global Footprint Network, and alliance of scientists, which calculates how many “planet Earths” we need to sustain our current growth rates. GFN measures how much land and water area we need to produce the resources we consume and absorb our waste, using prevailing technology. On the whole, says GFN, we are currently growing at a rate that is using up the Earth's resources far faster than they can be sustainably replenished, so we are eating into the future. “Having only one planet makes this a rather significant problem,” says Gilding.

This is not science fiction. This is what happens when our system of growth and the system of nature hit the wall at once. While in Yemen last year, I saw a

tanker truck delivering water in the capital, Sana. Why? Because Sana could be the first big city in the world to run out of water, within a decade. That is what happens when one generation in one country lives at 150 percent of sustainable capacity.

“If you cut down more trees than you grow, you run out of trees,” writes Gilding. “If you put additional nitrogen into a water system, you change the type and quantity of life that water can support. If you thicken the Earth's CO2 blanket, the Earth gets warmer. If you do all these and many more things at once, you change the way the whole system of planet Earth behaves, with social, economic, and life support impacts. This is not speculation; this is high school science.”

It is also current affairs. “In China's thousands of years of civilization, the conflict between humankind and nature has never been as serious as it is today,” China's environment minister, Zhou Shengxian, said recently, “The depletion, deterioration and exhaustion of resources and the worsening ecological environment have become bottlenecks and grave impediments to the nation's economic and social development.” What China's minister is telling us, says Gilding, is that “the Earth is full. We are now using so many resources and putting out so much waste into the Earth that we have reached some kind of limit, given current technologies. The economy is going to have to get smaller in terms of physical impact.”

We will not change systems, though, without a crisis. But don't worry, we're getting there.

We're currently caught in two loops: One is that more population growth and more global warming together are pushing up food prices; rising food prices cause political instability in the Middle East, which leads to higher oil

prices, which leads to higher food prices, which leads to more instability. At the same time, improved productivity means fewer people are needed in every factory to produce more stuff. So if we want to have more jobs, we need more factories. More factories making more stuff make more global warming, and that is where the two loops meet.

But Gilding is actually an eco-optimist. As the impact of the imminent Great Disruption hits us, he says, “our response will be proportionally dramatic, mobilizing as we do in war. We will change at a scale and speed we can barely imagine today, completely transforming our economy, including our energy and transport industries, in just a few short decades.”

We will realize, he predicts, that the consumer-driven growth model is broken and we have to move to a more happiness-driven growth model, based on people working less and owning less. “How many people,” Gilding asks, “lie on their death bed and say, ‘I wish I had worked harder or built more shareholder value,’ and how many say, ‘I wish I had gone to more ballgames, read more books to my kids, taken more walks?’ To do that, you need a growth model based on giving people more time to enjoy life, but with less stuff.”

Sounds utopian? Gilding insists he is a realist.

“We are heading for a crisis-driven choice,” he says. “We either allow collapse to overtake us or develop a new sustainable economic model. We will choose the latter. We may be slow, but we're not stupid.”

(A version of this op-ed appeared in print on June 8, 2011, on page A23 of the New York edition with the headline: The Earth Is Full.)

OFFERING KRISHNA GOLD

Gold is a precious metal mined from deep within the earth. It goes through the processes of purification, refinement, and then is transformed into objects of great art and beauty. Gold has always been highly valued by different people and cultures throughout the world. Offering Krishna (God) gold could also be a beautiful metaphor. That is to say we want to offer God the best, the brightest, and the most valuable gifts we could possibly produce.

But that's not the kind of gold I'm talking about. Try thinking of "GOLD" as an acronym. The **G** stands for gratitude. The **O** stands for obedience. **L** stands for loyalty. **D** stands for devotion. I suggest offering Krishna pure GOLD. May my love of God (Krishna) be expressed by this new GOLD standard.

I am grateful to Krishna for all of creation but especially for taking human form. How else could the Creator experience His

Creation? Thank you, Krishna for dwelling among us, for laughing, playing, and teaching us. May all of humanity remember your incarnation and teachings with deep gratitude.

I offer my humble obeisances to Krishna. I am obedient to God. Krishna is much like a loving parent that teaches us obedience and lovingly the consequences of disobedience. Life has taught me that obedience to Krishna is rewarding and disobedience to Krishna is very painful and unrewarding. God deserves absolute and total obedience.

I offer Krishna my loyalty. There is but one God. I am loyal and faithful to Krishna. Krishna deserves my loyalty because He is loyal to me and all of his devotees. I can give no less than I have received. Krishna loves and honors loyalty and faithfulness. Don't withhold this important quality. To do so is to limit the

expression of your love for God. God deserves your loyalty.

I offer Krishna my devotion. My love for Krishna is the cause of my devotion. When you love someone you think of them constantly. You want to demonstrate your love. You always want the best for those you love. Krishna loves devotion. How better could I possibly express my love of God (Krishna) than to offer my absolute and complete devotion. I am devoted to Krishna Consciousness.

Won't you join me in offering Krishna GOLD. Dig deep within yourself. Purify yourself. Dissolve your ego. Refine yourself. God loves a pure hearth. Give Krishna that which you value the most. Give yourself to Krishna. Give Krishna lots of GOLD.

WPR
Virginia

DEAR SOUL

by WPR
Virginia

Dear Soul,
Hello. I love you. At least, I'm trying to love you. You look a bit battered and bruised. You've been hurt. May the Love and Light of God heal you and dispel all darkness. May the Love of God heal every false notion you ever had about yourself. May the pain and sadness slowly dissolve into nothingness!

Bring in the Light. Let there be Love. Let there be peace. Let there be joy and happiness and allow me the opportunity to share that joy and happiness with others. Allow my every stumble to become a giant leap in Consciousness. Allow every obstacle to spur me to greater heights.

And most importantly let me thank you for being you. "I" could not exist without "You". I am nothing without You. Because of "You" I am everything. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Signed: Yourself

THE RYTHMS OF TIME

By Tom Brown

While sitting on the steps of a prison yard with my inmate friend, Ed, he asked a question that startled me, "How would you like to face a 200 year sentence?" he asked.

Still trying to grasp what that would be life, I asked, "Ed, how have you managed to face this with such a calmness and serenity?"

Looking like a college professor as he gazed at me over his reading glasses, he replied in that slow drawl of his, "well, age helps, I've been in prison since '77. I'm not a happy camper about it, but what can I do?"

"However," he added with a twinkle in his eyes, "I'll be eligible for parole when I'm 111."

As I struggled to comprehend this, I was reminded that the essence of all time well spent is that it helps us to experience the peace, dignity, and positive potential of our true nature.

One of the best compliments one inmate can give to another is to mention the ability to do his or her time well. As I try to come to terms with my own sentence, I look around and see some who

have become hard and cynical and others who have used their time to find a peace and centeredness within.

We can see the rhythms of time everywhere—the sun rises and sets, the hours pass, the days come and go, the seasons change. People age and die, babies are born. Life goes on.

Our concept of time and whether it's passing quickly or slowly, depends on which side of the bathroom door we're on. Modern research has found that our experience of time shifts according to our age, mental state, health, occupation, and basic attitudes toward life. This explains why the perception of the passage of time is different for each individual.

The eye of eternity is not found in the future; neither is it found at the end of time. The eye of eternity is only found NOW. When we come to accept and embrace NOW, we're open to experience infinity within our present circumstances—which is the only place it lies. Our lesson is to just stay in the present—that fleeting, eternal, precious moment where past and future meet.

From the Outside

THE STUFF OF LIFE

by Tom Brown

I had written to Tom when I was going through some emotional stuff. Here is his wonderful reply. Thank you so much, dear friend.

Janine

The “stuff” of life reminds us that things will always break apart and come together. Each cocoon must break so the next butterfly can be. SO many sheddings. So many wings.

But it’s in the difficulties we find the chief work of love: to comfort each other again and again. In my own life, I have found that the difficulties have made me more humble, more contrite, and more open to the guidance I had rejected before. Sometimes the fire we go through be-

comes our purifying agent. Sometimes difficult experiences have the effect of a storm. Afterwards, we see a beauty in the sky and a clearness in the air that were not there before.

What was chaotic at the time, ultimately had a healing effect. And sometimes, when we’re really fortunate, we look up in the sky and see a rainbow. Then we remember that I could not have happened without the rain.

Wishing you many rainbows and sending you a hug that is so big it’ll knock your socks off.

With lots of love,

Tom

*Thank you, my friend. It sure did!
Love,*

Janine

TIGERS ABOVE, TIGERS BELOW

by Tom Brown

The frightened man was running away from tigers. He ran and ran, and the tigers were getting closer and closer. When he came to the edge of a cliff, he saw some vines there, so he climbed down and held on to the vines. Looking down, he saw that there were tigers below him as well. He then noticed that a mouse was gnawing away at the vine to which he was clinging. He also saw a beautiful little bunch of strawberries close to him, growing out of a clump of grass. He looked up and he looked down. He looked at the mouse. Then he took a strawberry, put it in his month, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Tigers above. Tigers below. This is actually the predicament that we are always in, in terms of birth and death. Each moment is just what it is. It might be the only moment of our life, it might be the only strawberry we will ever eat. We could get depressed about it, or we could finally appreciate it and delight in the preciousness of every single moment of our life.

When we face the tigers and open our heart to things as they are, we come to rest in the present moment. Only in this moment can we taste the strawberries and discover that which is timeless. Then

we hold our own joy and suffering as inseparable. We honor the sacredness in both emptiness and form. We see it all as the dance of our spirit, we hold it all with ease and humor, and we are at peace with it all.

The ocean of life rises and falls within us—birth and death, joy and pain, it is all ours and our heart is full and empty, large enough to embrace it all. When we have faced death and loneliness, we are unafraid to live and life flowers under our feet.

Quotable Quotes

TaoTe Ching Quotes

Those who know don't talk. Those who talk don't know. Close your mouth, block off your senses, blunt your sharpness, untie your knots, soften your glare, settle your dust. This is the primal identity. Be like the Tao. It can't be approached or withdrawn from, benefited or harmed, honored or brought into disgrace. It gives itself up continually. That is why it endures. (Chapter 56)

*Manifest plainness,
Embrace simplicity,
Reduce selfishness,
Have few desires*

SUGGESTED READING FOR PRISONERS

Dear Prisoner,

The list of books below are some of the most profoundly helpful and the ones I would highly suggest for your library. You can request them from me, and if it's within my power, I'll send one or more to you, free of charge.

I could use your help. Save this list and send it to friends or family. I've included the internet links for them to access each particular title..

- (1) A Course in Miracles,
- (2) Letter To A Prisoner, by Joe Wolfe
<http://LettertoAPrisoner.com>
- (3) The End of Reincarnation with The Five Signs, by Joe Wolfe, Gary Renard and Carrie Triffet
<http://TheFiveSigns.com>
- (4) Conversations With God, by Neale Donald Walsch
<http://CWG.org>
- (5) The Holy Spirit's Interpretation of The New Testament by Regina Dawn Akers
<http://ForHolySpirit.org>
- (6) Power vs Force by Dr. David R. Hawkins
<http://Veritaspublish.com>
- (7) A New Earth by Eckhart Tolle,
<http://NamastePublishing.com>
- (8) A Parenthesis In Eternity, by Joel Goldsmith
<http://Amazon.com>
- (9) The Disappearance of The Universe, by Gary R. Renard
<http://GaryRenard.com>
- (10) Long Time No See, by Carrie Triffet,
<http://UnlikelyMessenger.com>
- (11) Books by Dr. Jon Mundy,
<http://MiraclesMagazine.org>
- (12) Books by Beverly Hutchison,
<http://MiraclesDistributionCenter.org>
- (13) Time Ocular (A Novel) by Joe Wolfe
<http://TimeOcular.com>
- (14) Books by Robert Perry
- (15) Books by David Hoffmeister
- (16) Books by Ken Wapnick

Joe Wolfe

Joe Wolfe, Spirit Light Outreach
c/o American Chiropractic & Wellness Center
8951 W. Cermak Road,
North Riverside, Illinois 60546

FREE BOOKS FOR PRISONERS

- NEW BOOKLET OFFERED:

As of today, I have been allowed to offer you a printed copy of the booklet, *BRINGERS OF THE LIGHT*, that completes the list of concepts found in *ReCreating Your Self*. This will be about 20 double-sided and stapled pages. Again, make sure you are allowed to receive these many copies before requesting *Bringers of the Light*

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*
- *WECCE Workbook*

This is a downloaded edition, 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 NEALE , EM and the
CWG FOUNDATION FOR YOUR
CONTINUED SUPPORT

GOD'S WILL

by WPR
Virginia

I had a bit of an epiphany the other day I'd like to share with you. But first, allow me to lay the foundation from which this realization arose. I've become a bit obsessed with the idea of enlightenment. In fact, I've told everyone including myself that enlightenment is my primary goal, my primary directive. Mind you, I don't know what enlightenment is but I've read about it. I know it's out there and I really want it!

In fact, I read spiritual and metaphysical books all day, every day. The terms "surrender" and "God's Will" consistently appear. In fact, many spiritual paths recommend surrendering one's will to God's Will. Great idea I thought. That's what I'll do! Okay, God..."I surrender my will to Your Will."

Nothing happened. I tried bargaining with God. Now I know none of you would do such a thing. But I said, "Okay God...I'll do Your Will...just let me know what it is." I heard nothing. I tried pleading. It went kind like this..."Come on God...I surrender...I give up...but You've got to let me know something...at least give me a clue...a hint maybe." Nothing. Silence.

So for months I prayed, meditated, and contemplated God's Will. I swear if I had Neale Donald Walsch's cell phone number I'd call him up and ask..."Neale, O'buddy, would you mind asking God what His Will is...I think I'm ready to start doing it now."

The prison I'm in is very spiritu-

ally diverse and multicultural. So I started asking people from a variety of different spiritual paths a serious question. How do you discern God's Will from your own will? The answers I got ranged from "I don't know" to a very rigid set of dogmatic rules and regulations posing as God's "Word" or God's "Laws".

None of the answers I received satisfied me. I continued to ponder "God's Will" and what that meant to me personally and spiritually. But today was different. I had written out the word enlightenment and focused on it obsessively as my primary goal and sole purpose for living, but again today was different.

I decided for some reason to expand my goals and objectives. To enlightenment, I added: love, peace, harmony. I also included further down on the list "alignment with God's Will." Then I had an epiphany. Love, peace, and harmony is what I feel when I'm aligned with God's Will. Anger, fear, and conflict occur when I'm aligned with my ego. "A ha!" I was looking for a message from God. The answer is to be aware of how I'm feeling.

In fact, in book one of Conversations with God, God describes feelings as the language of the Soul. Little did I know that the negative feelings I was experiencing were actually messages from my Soul gently reminding me to redirect my attention or to reposition my-

self. So even though I was reading and studying about God, in reality, I had "forgotten" God and was "remembering" my ego.

Now it seems like a simple choice. Do I want to hang out with God? Or do I want to hang out with my ego? Simple but not always easy. My ego hasn't disappeared. I'm constantly reminded I still have an ego. My ego even threatened me saying "you'll be nothing without me!" To which I said, "I'd rather be nothing to you and everything to God instead!"

At least now I have a way of knowing whether I'm aligned with God or my ego. I'm glad to say I'm spending more time with God. A Course in Miracles and the lessons in the workbook are helping to remind me that I really want to hang out with God. When I'm in pain, engaged in conflict, or not at peace, guess what?...I'm hanging out with my ego again.

More God, less ego. That's the plan. Awareness of my feelings tells me whether I'm aligned with God's Will or my personal ego. Trust me, I've had enough pain, conflict, and disharmony. I'm hanging out with God from now on. And if my ego appears again, I will remember, realign, or reposition myself. Thank you, God for those messages You were sending to my Soul. I'm sorry it took me so long to hear you and feel you at the same time.

Inner Peace: Oh so true...

If you can start the day without caffeine,
If you can always be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,
If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,

If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,

If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time,

If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,
If you can conquer tension without medical help,
If you can relax without alcohol,
If you can sleep without the aid of drugs
Then you are probably.....the family dog!

Bet you thought that I was going to get all spiritual, didn't ya?



The Great Shift from Punishment to Healing

by James O'Dea

(from *The Mystery of 2012*, by Gregg Braden et al)

When the most rudimentary moral categories of right and wrong are used as the rationale for violent aggression and societal oppression, this duality becomes the central organizing principle for polarizing forms of inclusion and exclusion. Causality is reduced to a series of proofs involving blame, and once culpability is determined, it is almost invariably the precursor to punishment. The good are rewarded and the bad punished without any deeper examination of the true complexity of the causal weave: in this worldview, perpetrators of bad deeds arise out of the blue and have no causal links to anything other than their own malevolence. This simple duality serves only to perpetuate the power of those who wish to maintain status quo conditions. The more transformational stance is not guided by artificially circumscribed categories of who is right or who is wrong, but rather by looking at who among us is hurt or more deeply wounded and how they can find healing. There is no denying that wounds can form dangerous pathological behaviors—we see the evidence of that everywhere—but misidentifying wounds as sourced by an evil that must be punished or avenged does not make them go away.

Once the punitive and polarizing paradigm of right versus wrong is replaced with one of wounding and healing, judgmental posturing also fades away because we are no longer concerned with proving who is superior and who is inferior, but with restoring balance, reconciling differences, and restoring health. Can we see how our entire societal worldview and the fundamental constructs of international relations would be changed, or even irreversibly transformed, by an orientation guided by healing strategies and modalities? When is the day coming when one of the primary qualifications for leadership and public office will be a capacity to heal, to engage in deep reconciliatory dialogue that demonstrates genuine skill in moving beyond enmity to collaboration and the achievement of common objectives?

If 2012 represents the cresting of the breakdown, the death knell of empire, the graphic exposé of irrational fundamentalism, the inevitable ecological reckoning of systemic patterns of overconsumption, it also represents a decisive turning point

when we have no other option than to seek healing and to collaborate our way out of chaos.

A QUICKENING IN OUR COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

We do not know with certainty what will actually occur tomorrow, let alone what will happen across the planet in the years ahead. What we do know is how to:

- Read the contents of our own hearts and minds
- Discern in each other's eyes an undiminished capacity for compassion
- Heed our persistent capacity for truth-telling in the face of unprecedented manipulation
- Cultivate forgiveness for those who have harmed us or sought to suffocate our dreams

We can also notice that those who are more loving and conciliatory do not try to force their truth upon us and have learned to express their truth in ways that still allow for others' truth to be heard and felt. We can see in our daily experience that there are, in fact, many people who carry in their presence a magnanimity and life-enhancing energetic that invites tolerance, spaciousness for difference, and a capacity to be comfortable with ambiguity. When we look closely, we find a story unfolding within consciousness itself that is subtly taking shape and transforming our world from the inside out.

From the interior place, like a great root system growing invisibly beneath the surface, you and many others are having a potent sensory experience of much more love present in the world than is reflected by the dominant institutions or media. You are coming to know, in a primary, experiential way, that love is at the heart of evolution and the source of healing. Love is an evolutionary force because it is the primogenitor or nurturance. We live at a time when many people are discovering that the materialist paradigm, with all its wonderful attractions and distractions, is still unable to feed the more fundamental human longing for nurturance and relationship. Now, so-called hard-core pragmatists and realists are likely to pooh-poo these notions. Familiar with

their arguments, we don't have to rehash them.

The phenomenon we are discussing is not an ideological counter to the status quo; it is to be understood more accurately as a quickening in the center of our being—a quickening less susceptible to fear arousal, not conditioned by the gratifications of competitive advantage, but stimulated by experiences of wholeness, unity, and interconnection. It is what philosophers and theologians call the emergence of nondual consciousness.

In recent decades a science has been emerging that supports the strength and power of this loving and generous inner reality. Forgiveness, it tells us, is healthy. Anger, resentment, and isolation constrict the heart and breed corrosive stress and depression. We live longer and healthier lives if we sustain deep relational ties to loved ones. Meditation, altruistic service, and gratitude are profound sources of wellness. Positive attitudes help us surmount loss and trauma. We thrive on affirmation, recognition, and respect. We blossom when we are appreciated and encouraged. We have learned that we have the capacity for extraordinary emotional intelligence and that our ability to tap the well spring of creativity is greatly enhanced when we are nurtured and accepted and feel the presence of love in our hearts. Healing is still a mysterious process, but the evidence suggests that disease can sometimes be arrested, psychological affliction overcome. Even cycles of abuse can be transformed when we unleash the resilient powers of love and compassion and let go of fear, guilt, shame, regret, and the addiction to punitive vengeance.

Though I have seen mind-searing, heartbreaking levels of cruelty and indifference, I have also seen survivors of torture, oppression, and genocide demonstrate luminous capacities for reconciliation and transformation. I have seen perpetrators and victims forgive and reaffirm their common humanity. I have seen the indomitable nature of the human spirit, tested by all that pathological hatred can unleash, nevertheless rise above to find higher ground. This is the triumph of reality over delusion and the triumph of higher reason over narrow self-interest. It represents the way forward.

SHINE

Published in
silent sacred holy deepening heart
by Em Claire

God says for me to tell you this:
Nothing needs fixing;
everything desires
a
Celebration.

You were made to bend
so that you could find
all of the many miracles at your feet.
You were made to stretch
so that you could discover
your own beautiful face of Heaven
just above
all that you think you must shoulder.
*

When I appeal to God to speak to me,
I'm feeling just as small and alone as you might feel.
But this is when, for no particular reason at all,
I begin to

shine

Good Morning, Jesus

by WBT
South Carolina

You are ushering in another day,
Untouched and freshly new
So here I come to ask You, Jesus,
If you'll renew me too.

Forgive the many errors
That I made yesterday,
And let me try again, Lord Jesus,
To walk closer in thy way.

Oh Jesus, I am well aware
I can't make it on my own;
So take my hand and hold it tight,
For I can't walk it alone...

**WHAT COMES TO MY MIND
WHEN I THINK OF BEAUTY**

by NBT
Texas

When I think of beauty what comes to my mind is
the loving faces of the people I hold dearly to my
heart, the gift of creativity, I have been given and
the ability to help others less fortunate than my-
self.

When I think of beauty, what comes to my mind
is the healing power of the music I love to listen
to, the crying miracles of my children's birth, and
your lovely, smiling face.

When I think of beauty what comes to my mind is
the beautiful flowers I've planted in the garden of
my imagination, and the acts of kindness I have
received from some strangers.

When I think of beauty what comes to my mind is
the awareness of the perfect beats of my heart
and the possibility to think pure thoughts and
stay positive always in unity with our friendly
universe because we are all one.

A PRAYER

O Thou, who are the perfection of
Love, Harmony and Beauty,
The Lord of Heaven and Beauty,
Open our hearts that we may hear Thy voice,
which constantly comes from within.
Disclose to us Thy Divine Light
which is hidden in our souls,
that we may know and understand life better.

Most merciful and compassionate God,
give us Thy goodness.
Teach us Thy loving forgiveness.
Raise us above the distinctions and differences
which divide us.
Send us the peace of Thy Divine Spirit,
and unite us in Thy Perfect Being.
So be it.

Hazrat Mayat Khan
As published in *We're All Doing Time*
By Bo Lozoff

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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Janine