



ANNIVERSARY 2000

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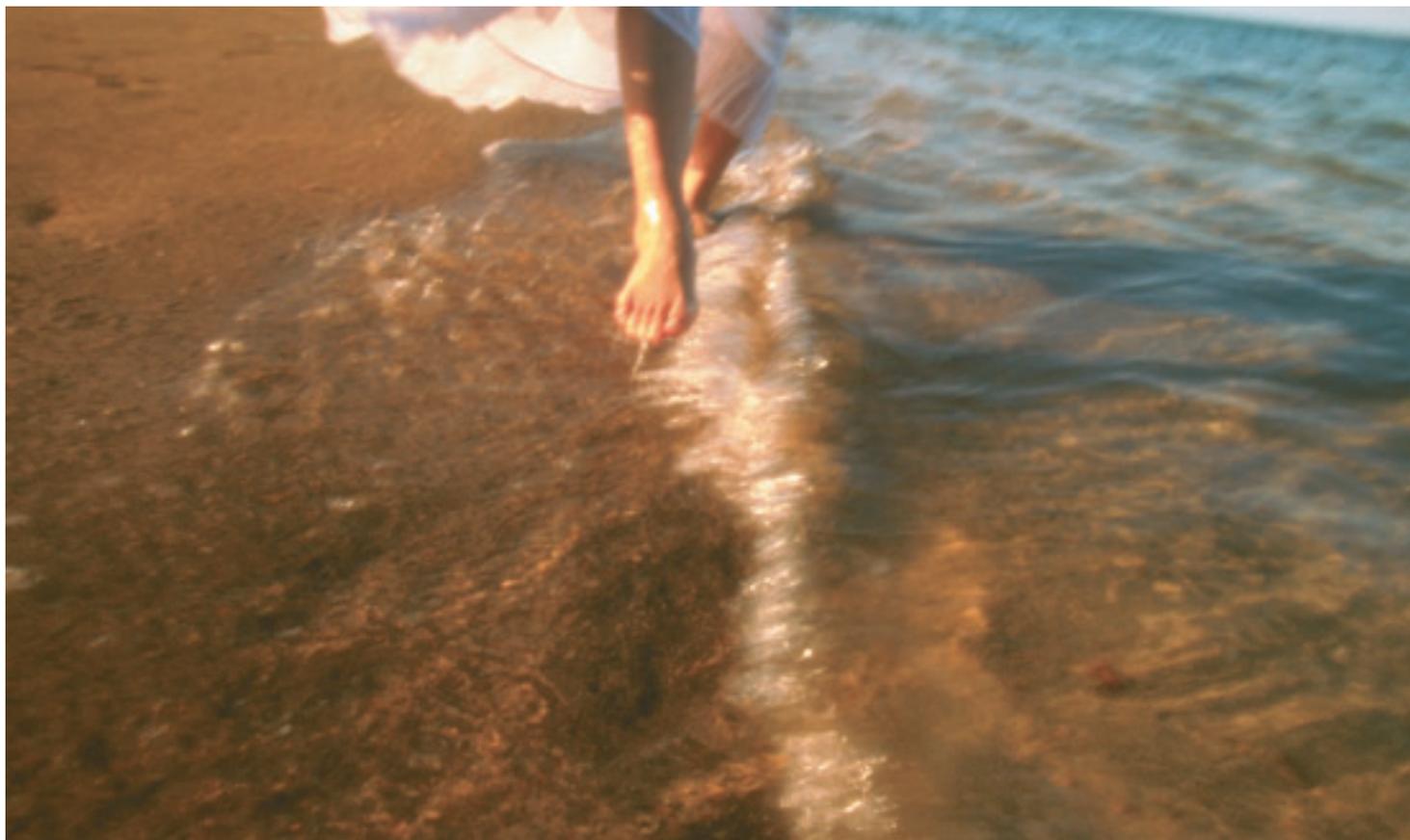
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ANNIVERSARY 2000

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.—Albert Schweitzer

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Publisher's Note



Personal transformation is about becoming whole and being adequate as we are. That includes respecting our own wisdom. As a friend said, "I am learning to stand under my own authority." In spite of her advanced degrees and years of experience, she found it easier to rely on the words of experts than to trust her own wisdom, of which she has plenty. For

her, becoming whole includes feeling sufficient as she is. She is learning to value what she has to offer to others. And now, at the end of her career, she is writing a book. The first draft was a digesting of her professional experiences. Her current draft is an offering of her wisdom to others.

Being whole includes accepting our emotions. Happiness is easy to accept; other feelings, such as sadness, are not. At a recent family reunion a relative left abruptly causing concern in those remaining. Later he said, "I felt too blue to stay." Like this loved one, we have all had feelings that were uncomfortable to us. If all of our feelings are allowed, we can be in close relationship with others no matter what we feel. If they are not, then we can only be in relationship with others if we feel certain ways, or we have to hide our feelings from others. Paradoxically, had he stayed with us and told us about his pain, most likely he would have felt less blue.

When our relationship with ourselves is unconditional, our fears, disappointments, and resentments are experienced as natural and normal. Shakespeare said, "This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man." When we accept ourselves, no matter what, we lose motivation to keep secrets from loved ones or to avoid them because of what is going on in our emotional life. We feel more acceptable in our humanness and we can be more authentic.

Being whole means feeling worthy irrespective of our circumstances. It is ironic that we can feel like a success one day and a failure the next. We are okay if life is one way and not okay if life is another. Then life becomes moments of "this is it" and "this isn't it." It is sad when our innate value lives so quietly in our consciousness that its voice can hardly be heard above the din of the ups and downs of life.

May this issue remind you that you are complete as you are.

Rick NurrieStearns
Rick NurrieStearns
Publisher

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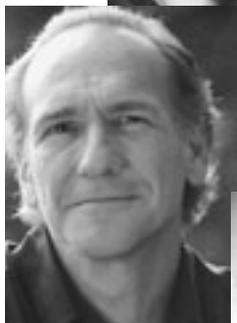


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RAY GREENLEAF

Editor's Note

In this issue of PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION we explore the real meaning of wealth. In our Pathways to Wholeness column, Parker Palmer suggests that true wealth comes from the "true self." This self resides deep inside each of us and is where the seed of authentic vocation takes root. When we take our talents, interests, and values out into the world we are on the path of our vocational calling. That is when we know that our lives matter. We have a sense of being suited for this life and experience the deeper meaning of personal wealth.

Like many of us, Palmer first learned about vocation from his religious upbringing. He thought that vocational calling came from a voice outside of ourselves, a voice of moral authority directing us to be someone we were not yet. Through his own life search he discovered that vocational calling comes from within. The question is how do we come to know our personal calling, how do we accept the gifts given us by life and give them back to life? Sometimes the inner knowing comes effortlessly. For example, I had no doubt about the rightness of becoming a psychotherapist. It was as if the career sought me out as much as I did it. I simply knew that was what I was supposed to do.

Other times this knowing comes as a result of prayer and meditation or through trial and tribulation. When that is the case, over time, we gain access to an inner voice that gives us good counsel. To be guided by that voice we must be able to differentiate it from the voices of ego that seek safety, control, and approval. Sometimes the guidance does not seem obvious. For example, one of my clients was an executive with an oil company. For some time he had felt restless and out of place, even though he was successful and had a prestigious position. He knew his work didn't feel like "right livelihood" but he didn't know what did feel

right. He had a younger wife and a toddler to provide for and took his responsibility seriously. In his late forties, he could also see retirement creeping up. One voice told him to find other outlets for his yearning and not to rock the financial boat. Another voice told him it did not make sense to leave one career until he knew what he was moving toward. Yet another voice said he needed time away, a sabbatical, to discover his next career. He knew what he wanted to say "no" to. He just didn't know what he wanted to say "yes" to. Unable to

decide, he made no changes.

Three years later we ran into each other and he told me he had quit his job. He had been unable to do so until he was clear about what he was saying "yes" to. The "yes" was to a not knowing that meant going into a time of not working. Although he still had many questions, he was clear that jumping into the unknown was the right move. He now trusted that inner message.

Not knowing is rarely an admired response in our culture and therefore not a voice readily trusted. Yet, paradoxically, we have to become comfortable with not having answers. We have to allow time for answers to emerge. My client had to make space in his outer life for the sprouting of new career to take place in his inner life.

Times of not knowing are natural and not to be feared. Just as the sky clears after spring showers, knowing follows not knowing. We just have to have faith that each step we take in accordance with our inner counsel is a step on the road of personal wealth.

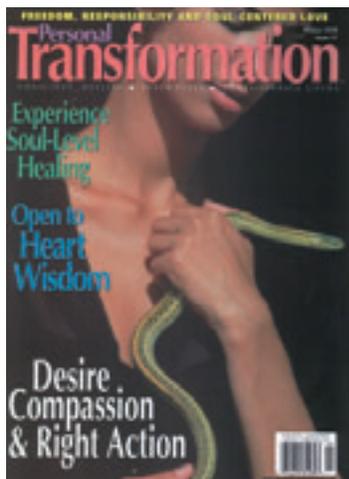
Welcome to PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION.

Mary NurrieStearns

Mary NurrieStearns
Editor



Letters from Readers



THANK YOU

I wanted to write and thank you for the truly helpful message that your magazine brings. Mr. Guy Finley's article in the winter issue struck me as being of uncommon value, and makes me want to learn more of his message.

I really like the idea of "Prayer in action" and am impressed with the concept of walking one's spiritual talk through consciously changing one's behavior. A person can feel the rightness of Mr. Finley's teachings, as he reveals the unseen laws and contenders in a person's psychology like no one else I've found. I hope that you will continue and perhaps increase your involvement with his foundation, as it is an excellent choice for our needs in this day and age. I am sure it will help bring much needed life discovery to its readers.—*Jeff Stacey, Portland, Oregon*

PRESENCE OF COMPASSION

The issue that I am writing to you about is winter 1999. The article that I want to comment on is the interview with John O'Donohue. I am a long time reader of spiritual and inspirational material. It's part of my daily dose of sanity in that I am reminded about what matters and who I really am. There is a certain kind of material that really touches my core. It is material that makes sense to my mind, moves my heart and permeates the cells of my body. John O'Donohue's words qualify. I have read his article several times and each time I understand exactly what Mary NurrieStearns, the interviewer, said in her introduction. She said that readers would feel the presence of compassion in the interview. I know what she was saying. There is a compassionate presence that comes through his words. I feel as though I am being bathed in compassion, which is what takes me back into the article again and again. After soaking in his words I find myself to be a gentler, kinder person. I hope that you will feature him again.—*Beverly Johnson, Fresno, California.*

UPLIFTING

I'm reading PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION for the first time... Would "Brilliant" say enough? I'm not sure.

Thank you for a magazine that lifts me up, not pushes me down

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 78

READERS ON...

DO YOU WANT TO SHARE your insights and reflections with other PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION readers? We want to know about your transformative experiences—what you learned, how you changed, and how these aspects of transformation affected you and the way you relate to life. Send us a 400-500 word essay on one of the following aspects of transformation.

RETREAT—A vacation, weekend alone, meditation retreat, healing workshop, nature hike, etc.
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Due April 27, 2000

Send manuscript, your address, and daytime phone number. Essays chosen for print will receive two free gift subscriptions. (Please note: Manuscripts will be edited and will not be returned.)

LETTERS —

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ANN MEDLOCK

The Giraffe Project

ANN MEDLOCK
BY MELISSA WEST

Above Ann Medlock's desk hangs a small sign that reads, "Some blessings wear a hell of a disguise." Ann acknowledges with a laugh that some very disguised blessings led her to find her place of passionate service as the founder and president of the Giraffe Project, a nonprofit organization inspiring people to "stick their neck out for the common good."

Ann describes the years that led to her calling as one long process of doors closing in her face, "watching and hearing them slam while knowing that meant somehow another door would open. It was almost like being corralled. Each time I'd catch my breath and say, 'Oh I get it, I'm supposed to go that way.'"

A series of doors banged shut on Ann twenty-five years ago. Her business partnership with her husband and her marriage ended in a nasty divorce, leaving her deeply depressed, without home or income, and with two small children to care for. In desperation Ann took a yoga class and, inspired by her yoga teacher's serenity, immersed herself in yoga and meditation. Ann refound her spiritual center, felt called to service, and passed on her healing by running a hotline and creating an organization for abandoned and abused women.

After another business ended—"Slam!"—she moved to New York City with her children and worked for a magazine on a promotion called the Giraffe Society. When the magazine went bankrupt—"Slam!"—Ann realized that the idea for the promotion was too good to



let go, so she renamed it the Giraffe Project and began writing scripts for radio about everyday heroes and heroines sticking their necks out for the common good.

The project blossomed, driven by Ann's energy and passion. Since 1982, the Giraffe Project has designated more than 900 Giraffes, awarding certificates to the Giraffes and placing their stories in hundreds of local and national print and broadcast media. Giraffes, ranging from 7- to 97-year-olds, take on pollution, homelessness, corporate unethical practices, illness, drug and alcohol abuse, and a host of other issues. They have risked rejection, jail, and peer ridicule. "Real, life-serving change gets fixed in the social fabric by thousands of ordinary people doing what is, for them, extraordinary stretching. We want to stop people from acting like ostriches." The organization's latest project is The Heroes Program, a story-based K-12 character education curriculum that teaches courageous compassion and active citizenship.

Ann is grateful for the opportunity to gather all of her life skills into one project for service. "I am very concerned about the health of the body politic. I think we're like that frog who's been dropped in water that's slowly getting hotter and hotter, but can't register that it's boiling to death. We've been absorbing social and political toxins for so long that we're losing sight of the fact that we're being poisoned. We need some antidotes, quick, and the way to offer them is to use

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media, which are the most powerful distribution avenues that have ever existed in humanity. Look at all of the ways now that we have to pass along information and ideas and concepts to people. We've allowed these avenues to be filled up with garbage, but the avenues themselves are still excellent. If we begin loading these avenues to people's hearts and minds with real life stories that are healing and antidotal, we can recover our health as a society."

Ann believes service is imperative at this point in our culture's history. "Compassionate service is the cornerstone of every spiritual tradition. Anybody can see that rampant greed and personal aggrandizement are putting us in a very bad place. If you are concerned about the fact that our kids are killing themselves and each other, with drugs, with violence, with bulimia, doing things that destroy the possibilities of their own futures, you have to realize that. Our children are turning away from us in any way they can because they see that what this society is offering them is meaningless. We have to create a society that has meaning, and that offers our kids meaningful lives."

Ann, now 66, wakes up grateful each day for her work, which takes place in a small house on Whidbey Island, a short ferry ride from Seattle. She and her husband and Executive Director John Graham spend a typical day creating a curricula for high school students called The Giraffe Heroes Program, working with her staff of six full-time employees, writing profiles of new Giraffes for the media, fund-raising, fielding e-mails, screening nominations for new Giraffes, working with editors,

producers and writers who are looking for stories, and having ongoing conversations with a nationwide network of character educators.

Ann credits the work with challenging her to be braver in her own life. "Everybody works on their own issue, and mine is courage. The Giraffes are a constant inspiration. When my own knees start to fold: are we going to make payroll, are we going to make the printing date, will we get the materials to the kids on time?—there is so much that could scare me right back into getting a nice, sane, job—I see the courageous work the Giraffes are doing, and my knees don't feel so weak anymore."

Her hectic schedule has simplified Ann's spiritual life. "For a long time my spirituality has been two words: 'Yes, thanks.' Meditation now has to fit in the cracks; the ferry ride is about the perfect length for a nice meditation. I consider 'Yes' and 'Thanks' meditations; they're quickies, but they get me back in touch with spirit. I've recently doubled my spirituality to four words; I've added, 'God bless.'"

Ann is concerned about the scar tissue most of us carry over our hearts, the perceived necessity to protect ourselves from hurt in a risk-averse culture. "If you open up and show your concern, somebody could hurt you. Well," she says in her no-nonsense, powerful way, "The only way to avoid risk is to be dead. I think a lot of us have chosen to be dead while we are still walking around breathing. We talk in our materials with high school kids about becoming a zombie, and I think a lot of people in our society have made that

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 74

Turning Ogres into Allies

ALANA KARRAN

There are days when I simply forget who I used to be. Instead of selective amnesia, it is more a cocoon of healing, reminding me that bit by bit I am shedding the past and becoming a new creature, a new being. I take more and more responsibility for my actions, I make choices that lead me away from victimizing circumstances, and I am surrounded by loving friends and colleagues who nurture and cherish me. This was not always so.

Ten years ago I met and married the man with whom I thought I would build a life of love, the man with whom I thought I would grow old. We had two chil-

dren but the rest of my dream was short-lived. Sometime in the years after our marriage, he became an abusive alcoholic. Berating and bullish, this ogre that had once been my husband stripped me of self-confidence, self-respect, self-love. When the abuse turned toward my children, I escaped. A lengthy, bitter, and costly divorce eventually cost me my house and my children.

Having exhausted all of my resources, I saw only one plausible solution left: I must kill this ogre. Metaphorically, that is. But how does one kill an ogre? I pleaded for help. "Help, God!" "Help, Goddess!" "Help, Great Spirit!" "Help, Universe!" I didn't care



TONY STONE/CLAUDIA KUNIN

Ogres are the embodiment of our deepest fears. They are, in essence, an archetypical rendering of our shadow. Ogres mirror our dark potential—all of the murky and frightening thoughts and actions we continually keep in check. Making peace with the ogres that confront us is ultimately about making peace with ourselves.

what form help came in, I just wanted it, and in a big way. As I surrendered my will to “The Great I Is,” I found myself transported to the doorstep of a shamanic healer. In ritualistic reverence, she guided me back to confront my enemy. By using the shamanic practice of extraction, she showed me how the chains of bondage were embedded in my psyche.

As I lay face down on the floor of the shaman’s dwelling, she identified a place where I was still energetically connected to the ogre. She called on the birds of the forest to claw and peck away the intrusions deep inside me. Even though this was happening on an energetic level, I screamed in horror at the physical pain of it. Agony and I became one as my fists beat on the floor. Sobbing and nearly incoherent, I watched as the lifeline between ogre and self was severed.

Through a blur of tears, I searched the shaman’s face and realized it wasn’t over. She informed me that I must destroy the cord. What did she mean, I must destroy the cord? Wasn’t she going to do it for me? Some part of me knew she was right; this task was mine to complete. I searched my psyche for the weapon of destruction. From the bowels of my being, I conjured a flame of such fervor that it instantaneously consumed the cord and its master. My

ogre was reduced to ash. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” I sobbed over and over again. “I really did love you; I didn’t want it to come to this. I’m sorry, so sorry.”

As if the words themselves had the power to imbue life, an image began to form from the ash. Inside a soft, incandescent bubble was a prince in shining armor, posed high upon a grand steed. It was the ogre, transformed. Truly, this was the spirit that embodied the ogre—a light being full of potential and love. Slowly, the bubble lifted from the ash and floated away. The image grew fainter and fainter until it disappeared into the great abyss altogether. I was free.

I had transformed my ogre into an ally. He could no longer hurt me as long as I maintained the image of the shining prince. The ability to make that perceptual shift was inside of me. Instead of bemoaning the injustices my ogre had served up for me, I could rejoice in the knowledge I had gained by his presence. This ogre represents the most significant catalyst for change in my life. Because of him, I have learned to stand up for myself. I’ve learned that I deserve to be treated with respect and kindness, that I have choices about my life, and that inside of me lies the strength and ability to transform any circumstance into a positive one.

Integrating these truths has been

a constant, deliberate endeavor. Each time I hear the chains of bondage rattling, I must make a conscious choice to alter my perception. I ask myself why the ogre has reemerged. Whether it is my ex-husband, back in ogre form, or a new ogre blocking my path, I must look beyond deceptive appearances. What knowledge does this ogre hold? What can the ogre teach me about myself? About how I interact with others? What gifts is the ogre bringing me? This is not always easy. I often spend days and weeks dueling with the enemy before I realize the amount of energy I have wasted in battle.

It is when I finally put down my sword that my ogre fades and I can bring forth the true messenger. There is so much to be learned from those we fear. Sometimes the most difficult lesson of all is what they are mirroring for us about ourselves. Ogres are the embodiment of our deepest fears. They are, in essence, an archetypical rendering of our shadow. Ogres mirror our dark potential—all of the murky and frightening thoughts and actions we continually keep in check. Making peace with the ogres that confront us is ultimately about making peace with ourselves. The more I am able to tame the monster within, the less I find myself confronted by their external manifestations.

From Darkness into Light

JULIE MATNEY

I was born into a world of fear and spent my entire childhood, teenage years, and most of my twenties trying to find a way out of my dilemma. I knew that fear was not natural and that the side effects were debilitating, but it seemed to have an unrelenting grip upon my mind. I was a prisoner.

My father was a concentration camp survivor. He spent five years in the Nazi death camps of Europe and lost his entire family there, including his parents and five siblings. My father could not talk about his experiences and never openly grieved for his loss. My father did not remember his birth date nor did he ever tell us the names of his family members. As a result of his frustration and anguish, he drank and was openly hostile toward his living family. He never showed affection or allowed us to love him. Sometimes, he would stare off into space and I knew he was going back into this other world, a dark place beneath the world we tried to survive in. I felt hopeless since joy was not allowed in our home. I was petrified of my father. I never knew when he would fly into a rage over any little everyday life occurrence. I remember once, at the age of four, hearing his truck pull into the driveway and wishing I were dead.

I managed to get through high school and college but I continual-

ly felt insecure. I did not have any confidence and was hopeless about the future. I suffered numerous bouts of depression that prevented me from completing the advanced degree I was pursuing. I manifested terrible headaches that drove me to a neurologist. There was nothing physically wrong with me; I was coming face to face with my fear and the pressure was unbearable. I tried psychotherapy and read books about healing childhood trauma. I read some metaphysical books but I didn't connect to what I read. These resources did not hit upon the essence of my problem. I instinctively knew that prayer was the only way out of my desperation. If God did exist I needed to know now! One night as I lay in my bed in total darkness, a miracle happened. I heard a little voice in the distance. The voice was actually singing to me! Then it became louder and other voices joined the song. The voices increased until they grew into multitudes, producing octaves and ranges almost beyond human comprehension. The notes seem to go on and on forever like never-ending chants praising God and the kingdom within. I began to expand into the music, thus feeling one with the love and peace that resonated throughout my being. By morning, I knew that the veil of darkness had been permanently lifted. I had

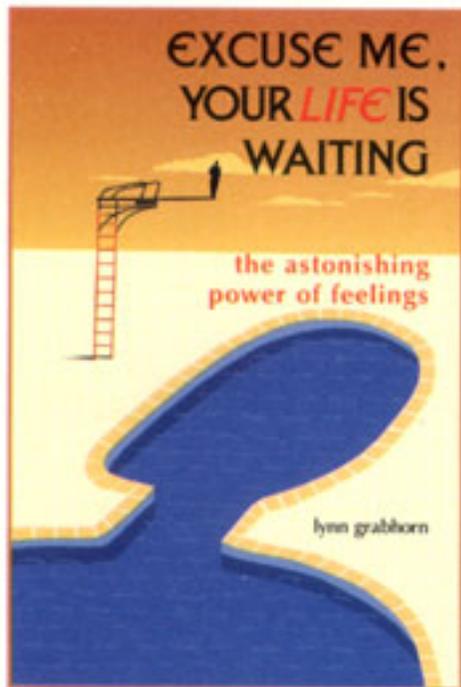


walked through a new door. Thus my journey toward The Light of God had begun.

Years later, I stumbled upon a book, "The Kingdom of the Shining Ones," by the renowned expert on the angelic order, Flower A. Newhouse. I was thrilled to have my miracle described to a "T":

"In the kingdom of the Angels exists an order consecrated to music. This order is not composed of an orchestra, but a choir. The songs are released as chants; many of them are heard in march time. The magnitude of this choir is almost inconceivable, still more difficult to realize are the various octaves and keys in which this great assembly sings. Angels do not use vocal chords for speech or song. They speak from the mind and sing from the heart. When heard, their melodic variations are almost overpowering. The enthralling effects hymns of praise, courage, gratitude, love worship have upon our world are very great... alone an individual aspirant in moments of stress, heroism or illumination is inwardly aligned with the chorus singing the anthem he requires for courage, balance or serenity. Though the

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reception of the heavenly music is seldom relayed to the conscious mind, the effects of the songs upon the inner self are noticeable by a surging and enlivening of the higher states of consciousness."

The music continues to this day. I hear it when someone I love has just passed over into another dimension. It rushes in to encourage me forward anytime I receive an inspirational thought. I use it in meditation groups to invoke the Angelic Kingdom. (The groups sing the chants along with me.)

This experience was the beginning of my transformation from darkness into light. My family, who directly witnessed my "rebirth," have all begun their own spiritual journeys. As my sister put it, "You are a totally new person. I want to share in the peace you have found!" My father has been touched by my spiritual awakening as well. He is the recipient of a tremendous outpouring of love and light from his family, who was once afraid to even look in his direction. My life has been made easy, and I can now pursue my spiritual work of writing and speaking about my own realizations and paths to peace.

The Universe responds to every call for help. We are not alone and we are not left comfortless. We are an integral part of God and we are being called to remember our true nature. We grow and expand as we allow the light into our lives and share our blessings and understanding with others. Every inspirational thought we receive and acknowledge is charged by the power of all creation and magnified a million fold.

May we all hear the angels' songs of peace, courage, hope, joy and freedom!•

Forgiveness

Incest—A Journey to Forgiveness

Sweat. Streaming from my forehead, neck, underarms. Glasses steamy, I tentatively dialed his number, knowing he wouldn't recognize my voice. Eight years is a long time.

Uncle Eric, this is Evy. Please don't hang up. I'm calling to ... My throat seemed swollen.

Evy, how are you? Where are you calling from? Are you here in New York?

The gentleness and hesitation in his voice caused

a shudder throughout my body. He didn't sound like a child abuser! Memories revived during my cancer treatment program flashed through my awareness.

Uncle Eric, I've just completed a personal growth program. After letting go of years of resentment and anger toward you, I'm calling to say, "I forgive you" and ask for your forgiveness. What happened years ago between us doesn't have meaning any more. I've released all my judgment, blame and anger. Simply, I've forgiven you!

My uncle's reactions were understandable. He wanted to convince me that he never harmed me, or his daughter—that accusations against him were false.



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I remained clear, aware that if I tried to prove anything or took a position of wanting to be right, peace would be lost. Forgiveness wasn't about justifying. I wasn't forgetting, excusing, condoning or being weak, but rather, as "A Course of Miracles" taught me, I was "giving up." I responded lovingly, compassionately, to his persistent questioning—firmly restating my belief that forgiveness was the missing link to our physical, spiritual, and emotional healing. Since he wanted facts I encouraged him to do his own inner exploration. I asked for forgiveness.

By the end of that phone conversation, a pile of used Kleenex beside me on the couch, I felt energy flooding my entire body. Peace and love have stayed with me ever since. When I'm angry or blaming someone I remember the adage, "One finger pointing toward someone leaves three pointing back at me!" I've learned to forgive daily, letting go as soon as resentments arise. Forgiveness is a choice. Not a function of the mind, but a practice from the heart.

In November of this year, four years after that phone conversation, I visited my uncle in his hospice-equipped apartment, traversing 3,000 miles to say "good-bye." During our final hours together he reminded me of the phone conversation. I talked about the power of forgiveness, explaining that it wasn't dependent on the person's response. Giving and receiving are the same. He spoke of integrity, reminding me of what I had forgotten. His arms rigid at his side, he grasped my hand tightly as we looked into each other's eyes,

Now I can say it, he smiled. "I forgive you."—Talasteena, Montacito, California.

The Dance of Forgiveness

I always thought forgiveness would come easier between my father and me after he passed from this dimension to the next. After all, he would then see me in a different light and I would be able to see him as only Light. So I was quite surprised when the message came to me one day that this relationship needed to be healed. Now. And having known the consequences of not following the soundless sure Voice within me, I caught a flight to Texas during the next break in my schedule.

Staring through the oval window high above the clouds, I wondered what I would say to the man I had felt at odds with for more than 40 years. How would we resolve the issues we had since I was 14 years old? I had no answers. All I had was a packful of grievances and a strange propelling desire for healing. At 80, was my father going to suddenly become warm and approving? At 56, was I going to suddenly become nondefensive and forgiving?

My father seemed to have changed little since my visit three years prior. He sat in his recliner in front of the TV, engrossed in golf or football at a volume so loud to my ears that I could not talk above it. Or he would sit silently, gazing downward as though no other direction existed.

But there were moments, like when I helped him to his bed for a nap. I heard myself saying, "tell me what it was like when I was a baby." His tired eyes actually met mine. "Well," he began, "your mother was so sick, I would come home in the morning from working the night shift at the post office. I

would wash your diapers in that old ringer washer. Then I would get you and your brother up and feed you breakfast." I suddenly realized that is how my Dad showed his love for me. He didn't speak the words, but he washed my diapers and made my breakfast. I could feel his caring and fatigue and worry. With those few short sentences, years of feeling famished for signs of love were washed away without another spoken word.

We continued to have our moments, here and there. A spoken sentence here. An understanding there. He would bring up a time when he felt misunderstood, like when I was 14 and he took a promotion to Memphis shortly after my mother died. A sentence and understanding later, the aging resentment we both had carried vanished.

I returned in a couple months and we continued with our healing process in this manner over the next year. Our simple speaking led to understanding. Our understanding led to release. Instantaneously. Neither of us ever identified what was transpiring. We both knew. Once I told him God would bless him. He responded with, "He already has. He gave me you."

He waited for me that last visit. I told him that if he wanted to go Home, my spirit would be there to greet him and we would dance together. Sometimes now when I am very still, I sense his presence asking me for a dance. And as our souls meld, I can't, for the life of me, recall any grievances.—*Christina Rosenthal, Orlando, Florida*

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Solitude, Community, and Inner Peace

RUTH FISHEL

When I was in grade school I loved to ride my bike to a beautiful estate a few miles from my home where I spent wonderful hours in solitude. I always brought a snack, a pen, a notebook, and a favorite book with me. I headed straight for my favorite place, a large pond filled with goldfish. A massive tree flourished beside the pond with a flat branch, wide enough for me to sit on, extending about ten feet out over the water. I sat there for hours reading or writing poetry, totally absorbed, completely content with my time alone. At other times, I climbed up to the flat roof of our apartment house where I spent hours happily painting pictures of nearby rooftops nestled among the tops of the trees.

Something deep within me guided me to these places. I never questioned whether I should be going there. I just knew it was where I belonged. I followed some inner guidance I did not understand at the time. I simply knew that was what I needed and wanted to do.

I remember that, at some point, my mother became concerned with the long hours I spent alone. She was worried that there was something wrong with me and wanted me to spend more time with other children. She thought I was unhappy. But I knew there was nothing wrong with me. I was following a natural rhythm of solitude and community, moving back and forth in a way that came very naturally to me.

This became one of the many sources of confusion I had to resolve later in my adult life; the conflict between doing what comes naturally and feeds my soul versus the “shoulds” I had been taught by family and society. To resolve it, I needed to find time for solitude in my life. As Sarah Ban Breathnach writes, “Solitude is as necessary for our creative spirits to develop and flourish as are sleep and food for our bodies to survive.”

Inner peace cannot magically appear when we are consumed with our daily activities, no matter how much we will it to be so. At some point we must make the decision to excuse ourselves from everyday life, walk away, close the door on noise and responsibilities, and spend some quiet time alone. In solitude we can find our authentic self, our true nature, our connection to each other and to God. We can discover where we belong in the universe and find our own true purpose. In solitude we can reach a place deep within where we can find peace.

We seek solitude in countless ways and places. It’s not limited to whether we are active or still. Its meaning, too, varies from individual to individual, and what it means to us can change from day to day, depending on what is going on in our lives at any given time. What worked for us earlier last week might not bring us satisfaction this week. And what didn’t seem fulfilling yesterday might be just what we need today.

The inner peace of solitude can be found while quietly stitching our family history on a tapestry, meditating in an ashram on a mountaintop, soaking in a tub, journaling, gardening, walking, writing, painting, reading, swimming, eating, hiking, going on a retreat with others or alone, or creating a personal retreat at home.

Solitude can be whatever you want it to be, for any purpose or no purpose at all. It can be a time for growing, learning, seeing, relaxing, accomplishing, contemplating, problem solving, meditating, praying, finding peace of mind, or just plain having fun!

We can be surprised at times like these to find that while we weren’t looking for anything, an inner voice

nudges us to get our attention. It might speak to us in a whisper so faint we have to hold our breath to hear it or in a shout that really gets our attention. We will know when it happens. It might be something unfinished from the past. Perhaps it is time for a change that we have not yet been ready to make. Whatever comes up for us is where we are at that moment. Whatever comes up is ready for us to look at.

In the quiet of solitude we listen to the smiles as well as the tears in our hearts and become more and more familiar with the totality of our being. We can observe that we are prisoners to our own habits, fears, and conditioning. We see what has been holding us back and we can pray for the grace to be released from it.

There certainly will be some periods in our lives when we choose not to seek solitude because we feel we are alone too much. Others among us who seek the peace, comfort, and connection that solitude can bring to a busy and sometimes overwhelming world believe we can't have enough solitude.

Our job might keep us isolated and alone. Perhaps we work by ourselves or in a one-person office or work for ourselves at home. Sometimes we might come home to an empty house or live alone. We might become "hooked" on the Internet and spend hours alone at our computer, only to fall into bed alone and go to work the next morning still alone.

Some people have a great fear of solitude. Painful memories can rise to the surface. Thoughts of old resentments, loss, abandonment, and disappointments can fill the empty space. Old traumas, abuse, and negative experiences might feel

**"They are able
because they think
they are able"**

—Virgil



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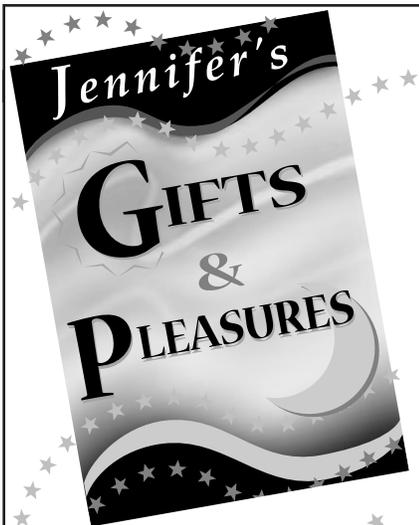
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too painful to be relived. There is also fear that we won't be able to handle the emptiness or that we'll be bored without our comfortable activities. Paul Tillich said that language has created the word "loneliness" to express the pain of being alone, and the word "solitude" to express the glory of being alone.

There are numerous obstacles that often keep us from taking this precious time for ourselves. Finding new ways to go beyond these obstacles, we can see how solitude can help us to heal, better know and understand ourselves, open our hearts to expand the love we have for ourselves, and deepen our connection with our spiritual selves, God, or any power, Spirit, or Supreme Being in which we believe.

"If you want the kernel you must break the shell," notes Meister Eikart. The shell can be all the walls we keep up to avoid knowing ourselves. It can be everything on our "to do" list, all our busyness, our co-dependence, our perfectionism, our sense of self-importance, our indispensable sense that we are the only ones who can get the job done right. We are the kernel, the prize. Our lives are so special; each and every one of us is special. We deserve this time for ourselves to get to know ourselves and to be our own best friend.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh warns us that all our busyness and demands in our lives lead to fragmentation. She writes that the life of multiplicity does not bring grace; it destroys the soul.

How do we take time if we don't think we deserve time? How do we take time if we don't put ourselves first? How do we let ourselves grow when we don't value the needs of our souls?

We do it by first making a decision, whether we believe we deserve to take time for ourselves or not. Simply by making this decision, we actually begin to change a negative thought in our subconscious. We begin to remove a barrier that has held us back from our authentic selves. This decision gives us personal power. We are choosing to take charge of our lives.

We say "Yes!" to ourselves and follow through with action. We form a firm and clear intention. We do it a step at a time, a minute at a time, a day at a time.

There are times when days get so full that it might seem too hard to squeeze in even ten minutes alone. Three- to five-minute mini-breaks can change the mood of our day and turn what might have been a pressure keg experience into a more bearable one.

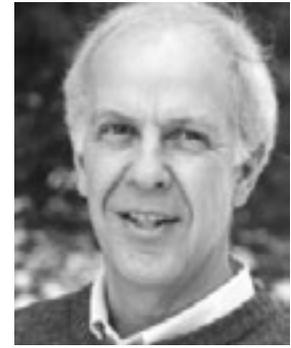
Mindfulness, simply being fully present with whatever is going on in the moment, can be a wonderful solitude break. Bringing our awareness to whatever we are doing in the present moment can get to be a wonderful habit. That's when, as author Thich Nhat Hanh tells us, we have peace within us at all times.

Surprisingly, solitude can also be found while being with someone else. Finding activities such as walking, reading, or painting that we can do with others while maintaining our own sense of solitude is a wonderful gift for everyone. We can feel close and at the same time separate, some part of us knowing we are sharing a special experience together, and yet at another level not even aware that anyone else exists.

Take time to discover and explore the joys of solitude, the precious, delicious experience of choosing to spend time with your-

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 78

Pathways to Wholeness



True Wealth

PARKER PALMER

In my experience, there are but two reliable forms of wealth that can come to us through spiritual practice. One is the treasure called “true self.” We are born with it and we die with it—but between birth and death, things happen. In the first half of our lives, we often find ourselves robbed of the treasure. Then, if we are awake, aware, and able to admit our loss, we spend the second half trying to reclaim the wealth we once possessed.

Reclaiming true self is not narcissism but a pathway toward community—which is the other great treasure we receive as birthright gift. Until we know who we are, we cannot know whose we are, and until we know whose we are, we are impoverished.

I was born into a social stratum of great affluence, but “my people” are haunted by the spectre of scarcity: they constantly grasp for more, and yet they never have enough. They imagine that money and material goods can substitute for selfhood and community, and so they lack the only wealth that we can count on, that can sustain us when all else fails, that can never be depreciated or devalued.

In every tradition I know anything about, spiritual practice means reclaiming the only wealth that counts, the wealth that comes when we are grounded in our own truth and interwoven one with another.

What a long time it can take to become the person one has always been. How often in the process we mask ourselves in faces that are not our own. How much dissolving and shaking of ego we must endure before we discover our deep identity—the true self within every human being that is the seed of authentic vocation.

I first learned about vocation growing up in the church. I value much about the religious tradition in which I was raised: its humility about its own convictions, its respect for the world’s diversity, its concern for justice. But the idea of “vocation” I picked up in those circles created distortion until I grew strong enough to discard it. I mean the idea that vocation, or calling, comes from a voice external to ourselves, a voice of moral demand that asks us to become someone we are not yet—someone different, someone better, someone just beyond our reach.

That concept of vocation is rooted in a deep distrust of selfhood, in the belief that the sinful self will always be “selfish” unless corrected by external forces of virtue. It is a notion that made me feel inadequate to the task of living my own life, creating guilt about the distance between who I was and who I was supposed to be, leaving me exhausted as I labored to close the gap.

Today I understand vocation quite differently—not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received. Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice “out there” calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice “in here” calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God.

It is a strange gift, this birthright gift of self. Accepting it turns out to be even more demanding than attempting to become someone else! I have sometimes responded to that demand by ignoring the gift, or hiding it, or fleeing from it, or squandering it—and I think I am not alone. There is a Hasidic tale that reveals, with amazing brevity, both the universal tendency to want to be someone else and the ultimate importance of becoming one’s self: Rabbi Zusya, when he was an old man, said, “In the coming world, they will not ask me: ‘Why were you not Moses?’ They will ask me: ‘Why were you not Zusya?’”

If you doubt that we all arrive in this world with

gifts, and as a gift, pay attention to an infant or a very young child. A few years ago, my daughter and her newborn baby came to live with me for a while. Watching my granddaughter from her earliest days on earth, I was able, in my early fifties, to see something that had eluded me as a twenty-something parent: my granddaughter arrived in the world as *this* kind of person rather than *that*, or *that*, or *that*.

She did not show up as raw material to be shaped into whatever image the world might want her to take. She arrived with her own gifted form, with the shape of her own sacred soul. Biblical faith calls it the image of God in which we are all created. Thomas Merton calls it true self. Quakers call it the inner light, or “that of God” in every person. The humanist tradition calls it identity and integrity. No matter what you call it, it is a pearl of great price.

From the beginning, our lives lay down clues to selfhood and vocation, though the clues may be hard to decode. But trying to interpret them is profoundly worthwhile—especially when we are in our twenties or thirties or forties, feeling profoundly lost, having wandered, or been dragged, far away from our birthright gifts.

Those clues are helpful in counteracting the conventional concept of vocation, which insists that our lives must be driven by “oughts.” As noble as that may sound, we do not find our callings by conforming ourselves to some abstract moral code. We find our callings by claiming authentic selfhood, by being who we are, by dwelling in the world as Zusya rather than straining to be Moses. The deepest vocational question is not “What ought I to do with my life?” It is the more elemental and demanding

“Who am I? What is my nature?”

Everything in the universe has a nature, which means limits as well as potentials, a truth well known by people who work daily with the things of the world. Making pottery, for example, involves more than telling the clay what to become. The clay presses back on the potter’s hands, telling her what it can and cannot do—and if she fails to listen, the outcome will be both frail and ungainly. Engineering involves more than telling materials what they must do. If the engineer does not honor the nature of the steel or the wood or the stone, his failure will go well beyond aesthetics: the bridge or the building will collapse and put human life in peril.

The human self also has a nature, limits as well as potentials. If you seek vocation without understanding the material you are working with, what you build with your life will be ungainly and may well put lives in peril, your own and some of those around you. “Faking it” in the service of high values is no virtue and has nothing to do with vocation. It is an ignorant, sometimes arrogant, attempt to override one’s nature, and it will always fail.

Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we *ought* to be. As we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks—we will also find our path of authentic service in the world. True vocation joins self and service, as Frederick Buechner asserts when he defines vocation as “the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.”

Buechner’s definition starts with the self and moves toward the

needs of the world: it begins, wisely, where vocation begins—not in what the world needs (which is everything), but in the nature of the human self, in what brings the self joy, the deep joy of knowing that we are here on earth to be the gifts that God created.

Contrary to the conventions of our thinly moralistic culture, this emphasis on gladness and selfhood is not selfish. The Quaker teacher Douglas Steere was fond of saying that the ancient human question “Who am I?” leads inevitably to the equally important question “Whose am I?”—for there is no selfhood outside of relationship. We must ask the question of selfhood and answer it as honestly as we can, no matter where it takes us. Only as we do so can we discover the community of our lives.

As I learn more about the seed of true self that was planted when I was born, I also learn more about the ecosystem in which I was planted—the network of communal relations in which I am called to live responsively, accountably, and joyfully with beings of every sort. Only when I know both seed and system, self and community, can I embody the great commandment to love both my neighbor and myself. •

Parker Palmer is a writer, teacher, and activist who works independently on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality, and social change. He conducts workshops, lectures, and leads retreats domestically and abroad. He is senior associate of the American Association of Higher Education and senior adviser to the Fetzer Institute. His writing—poetry, essays, and books—has been honored with numerous awards. He received his doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley. He is a Quaker and lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

From the Heart

Finding Your True Voice

MARY DELANEY

Songwriting is more than chords, lyrics, and a melody. Songwriting is an adventure inward. A place we go to tease out our issues—a true soul excavation. When we write songs about our losses, our gains, our hopes, our regrets, we're writing about the experiences of our souls. This pouring out of our selves helps us to connect with our deepest issues. Songwriting, for me, is the ultimate therapy session.

I have the good fortune of working with a treatment center staff that recognizes the therapeutic value of songwriting. I help recovering alcoholics and drug addicts find their true voice through the process of songwriting. The first question I ask my songwriting clients is "What are you struggling with most today?" The responses range anywhere from "I need to learn how to stay in the moment" to "I haven't seen my child in six months and I miss her terribly." The beauty of songwriting is that we can take these feelings and manifest them in song. From here the healing process begins. While the nature of an alcoholic and an addict is to suppress their own feelings, expressing feelings is a must to their recovery. The feelings of the past and present must be dealt with and expressed. Instead of using drugs and alcohol to medicate such uncomfortable feelings, songwriting gives an individual a healthier way to emote.

I'm in no way suggesting that songwriting can



replace the personal sharing that goes on at AA and NA meetings. I am suggesting, however, that songwriting is an excellent companion to recovery. Somewhere the Bible says, "Singing is praying twice." With this in mind, songwriting not only helps a person nail down his or her issues, but also helps with the important recovery concept of spirituality. The act of singing our songs helps us to connect with something bigger than ourselves. Call it God or Higher Power or Nature or Buddha, singing produces something—a chemical reaction perhaps—that stimulates our ability to connect to sources outside of ourselves.

The process of songwriting, like creating any original work, may require a conflict, rising action, and a solution (or resolution). This process can offer a perfect framework for the individual to work through personal issues. I'll demonstrate my point by walking you through a real life situation. About two months ago I was working with a group of recovering women of all races between the ages of twenty and fifty. As usual, the first question of my songwriting session was "What are you struggling most with today?" They collectively agreed that they were having a difficult time "staying out of their heads" (a recovery phrase that means obsessing and/or ruminating) because they feared that all their problems were "unsolvable." We identified their *conflict* as feeling hopeless. The *rising action* was a laundry list of their struggles—no place to live, little to no child support, low paying jobs, continued cravings to use drugs and alcohol. When I asked my clients what could be a possible *solution* to their problems, two of them shouted simultaneously the well-known AA/NA recovery affirmation "easy does it!" That became the song's title and catchy hook. In essence, they were able to solve their own issue through this songwriting process. They came into the group feeling defeated and deflated and left feeling proud for having written a song and hopeful about their future. They were able to figure out that the key to their difficulties could be found in the phrase "easy does it," a common slogan in

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twelve-step programs which means that recovering people should not get so bogged down with all of life's difficulties. Instead, they should remember that "easy does it." We later performed this song at our annual talent show. I will never forget the glow on their faces as they sang about their lives and their solutions.

Songwriting is an elixir to our problems. To solve any of life's difficulties we must "go within." The songwriting process gives us the perfect opportunity to do so. It uncovers ghosts we didn't know were there. Losses we didn't know we missed. And dreams we didn't know we had. Songwriting is an immediate conduit to our true selves and should therefore be considered an effective therapeutic tool. Songwriting not only helps us to connect with ourselves but also helps us connect with others. When we collaborate with others through songwriting, we find a unity and connection. In a sense we've shared our deepest secrets with one another and, through this sharing, a special bond is created. Like any group of people who have experienced an intense situation together—on some level—they remain joined together forever from that day forth.

Songwriting can be a powerful way to identify your feelings, find solutions to your problems, access a Higher Power, bond with others, and maybe even to experience the excitement of performing. You'll never write a lyric that doesn't help you understand yourself a little better, or help you find a solution to an aching problem. Songwriting will give you unbreakable bonds with like-minded people and will help you discover what's truly important in your life. Songwriting is free

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Conscious Healing



Riding the Wave of Breath

STEPHEN COPE

Breathing! We do it all day long. It is literally our connection with life. And yet most of us take it completely for granted. Many Eastern contemplative traditions do not. They revere the breath as a magical doorway into our inner world. In the yogic traditions, for example, the breath is seen as the bridge to the energy body, and to the emotional body (or prana body), which is an aspect of it.

Yogis describe the breath as lying precisely at the boundary between the body and the mind. This is hardly surprising. We all have experienced the breath as a direct link to some aspect of our inner world. Most of us have experienced the shallow breath of terror, or the long deep sighs of melancholy. We have experienced the attempt to control our breath to choke back tears and sobs. Or perhaps we've noticed the tender attunement of our breath with a lover as we sleep.

The body's breathing apparatus is the only physiological function which is both voluntary and involuntary. It lies at the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious. Breath connects the inside of the body with the outside world—taking the outside world in, and expelling the inside world out.

For yogis, the breath's position as a kind of "switching station" between the physical body and the energy body is exemplified by the role of the diaphragm, the primary muscle of respiration. The muscles of the body are of two primary types—skeletal muscles which are

striated and under voluntary control, and smooth muscles which make up our internal organs, not usually thought to be under our conscious control. The diaphragm, unlike any other muscle in the body, is a semi-striated muscle, and, as such, it partakes of both the conscious and unconscious functioning of the body.

When the breath is fully open, relaxed and free, and when all of the breathing apparatus—lungs, diaphragm, muscles of the ribcage and chest—are unconstricted in their movements, we have full access to our internal emotional experience. This pattern of breathing is called "abdominal-diaphragmatic breath" because the wave of breath moves unobstructed through the lower abdomen, the mid-lung and the top of the lung. It is characterized by a slow, rhythmic rate of respiration, with a large "tidal volume" of air. Yogis call this the "full yogic breath." It is, essentially, the normal human breath—the breath the healthy infant breathes.

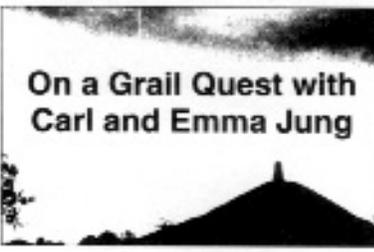
Because the breath is so intimately connected with the emotional body, any attempt to inhibit awareness of feelings, sensations, and thoughts is immediately reflected in the breath. All defensive maneuvers involving what psychologists in the West call "the false-self" inevitably involve some suppression of the breath, because they require dissociation from the emotional body. Many of us cannot bear to let the wave of breath move naturally through our body, and so our breath is chronically held, shallow, restricted.

Full breathing can be restricted—and most of us unconsciously rely on at least one of these defensive maneuvers. The most common is called "chest breathing" or "thoracic breathing"—which is the body's automatic response to fight or flight and to all sorts of overwhelming stress. In traumatic situations, as we all have experienced, the diaphragm is constricted and we breathe only part way down into the lungs. The lower lobes of the lungs are then split off from the breath, and there is an uneasy sense of the breath not being fully satisfying. The rate of breathing is somewhat more rapid and irregular, and there is a much lower "tidal

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volume” of air than in normal breathing. “Chest breathing” may be accompanied by raised shoulders and contraction of the chest. Shallow breathing can also affect the voice, by narrowing the throat and thereby heightening the choke response.

Inhibition of full abdominal-diaphragmatic breath immediately cuts us off from feelings. But it also cuts us off from prana—and deeply depletes the life force in the body. An increased reliance on chest breathing to supply the body’s oxygen requirements produces chronic muscle tension in the chest and abdomen, but that’s only the beginning. It also increases cardio-pulmonary stress, increases blood sugar and lactate levels, increases our perception of pain, decreases oxygen to the heart and brain, inhibits transfer of oxygen from hemoglobin to tissues, and increases our sense of fatigue.

The differences between deep diaphragmatic breathing and chest breathing are significant, both to the physical body and the energy body. Abdominal breathing can increase the amount of air we take into the lungs by 600 percent—and this makes a huge difference in the oxygenation of tissues throughout the body. While humans can live for long periods without food or water, tissues begin to die almost immediately when deprived of oxygen.

The impact on the nervous system is similarly powerful. While chest breathing stimulates the production of shorter, more “restless” beta waves in the brain, full diaphragmatic breath stimulates the longer, slower alpha waves associated with relaxation and calm mind states. The slow, even, and deep quality of full abdominal-

diaphragmatic breath relaxes of the chest muscles and creates a calm and relaxed state of mind.

Yogis understood that even in the absence of any immediate stressors, “disturbed breathing,” or thoracic breathing could perpetuate or recreate a state of sympathetic nervous system arousal, causing anxiety states, panic, and fear reactions. Because respiratory movements by the chest are biologically and instinctually tied to the emergency responses of fight or flight, they automatically tend to stir up these feelings.

Many of us, especially those who have been scared out of our bodies and those who don’t feel comfortable taking up room in the world, have difficulty trusting the wisdom of the breath and the energy body it enlivens. We have trouble letting the “wave of breath” penetrate down into the heart, the belly and the abdomen—the seat of deep feelings. The first task, in that case, is to learn to have a full experience of feelings in the body and to learn to tolerate the depth, range, and realness of this life force moving in us.

Yogis discovered that humans experience prana in the form of a wave—a wave of energy, sensation, and feelings. In order to learn to attune to the wisdom of the breath and the prana body, we need to learn how to “ride the wave of breath,” how to be present for the wavelike movement of energy—acknowledging, experiencing, and bearing the inner world of sensation.

Here is a simple, yogic-based practice designed to use the breath to help integrate physical, emotional, and energy experience. It is a five-part technique which helps us remain present for the experience

of the wisdom of the prana body.

1. BREATHE. The first step in the process of connecting with the wisdom of prana is conscious breathing—using the full yogic breath, or diaphragmatic breathing. The breath immediately penetrates the frozen structure of the false self. Says the poet Lao Tsu:

*The softest of stuff in the world
Penetrates quickly the hardest.
Insubstantial, it enters
Where no room is.*

Anything that brings us back to the switching station of breath has the potential to loosen our identification with the gross body and heighten our connection with the prana body. What happens when we redirect our attention to breath is that we immediately enter the world of energy, of movement, of arising and passing away, of constant change. There is no distance to travel to this world. We are right there. The technique of riding the wave both evokes this level of experience and helps us to be with it more and more fully.

Since the breath is the switch that integrates the emotional body/prana body with the physical body, conscious breathing opens parts of the body that may have long been shut off from the life force. And when the wave of breath moves into these exiled areas, the results can sometimes be instantly dramatic.

2. RELAX. Muscular tension in the body can inhibit the flow of energy, sensation, and feeling, keeping areas of the body defended against the wave of energy. While intentionally riding the wave, it is usually best to find a comfortable posture that allows full, deep breathing and an open chest and heart, a posture into which the body can relax, and keep relaxing.

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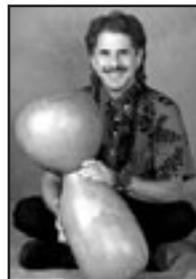
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The most effective area to begin relaxing is usually the belly. I have found it helpful to repeat the mantra: "Soft belly." It's so simple. In the midst of the waves of life, just soften the belly. This is a brilliant device, because when we think, "soft belly," we immediately soften our breathing and take deep, diaphragmatic breaths. This automatically shifts our entire energy experience, cutting through obsession. It grounds us. We can feel energy flowing all the way down to the lower part of the body, to our feet and legs. Suddenly, what appear to be dense and solid thoughts and feelings become permeable to the wave of energy. They're broken up. They become transparent. They move. We feel alive again.

Full yogic breathing will help the muscles relax and will automatically cut through any "fight or flight" response. Areas of the body that continue to hold tension and constriction, and unconscious visceral attempts to choke back intense sensation and feelings will become obvious. We can move our awareness directly there to explore and to consciously relax as much as possible.

As the wave of breath and energy intensifies, we will surely want to get off, and we may repeatedly "tense up" in order to defend against it. We must remember that the tension of the false self is chronic and unconscious and that it constantly works against the spontaneous energy of prana. We must, therefore, consciously remember to relax and keep relaxing in order to stay with the wave.

3. FEEL. "Feeling" in this technique is an active state. It does not mean just "having feelings;" it means moving actively toward the

sensations, the energy, the emotions, and into them. We "breathe into them" as if we could send breath right into their epicenter. We develop the acuity of our awareness so we can begin to feel the whole range of sensations—their color, their texture, their intensity, their mood.

Actively feeling means turning our attention minutely toward our moment by moment experience—dropping what we think about what is happening, our evaluations and judgments about it, and becoming fully absorbed at the level of sensation, feeling, and energy. Learning to focus deeply on sensation in this way develops our capacity to be with sensation and feeling. We develop curiosity so that we're interested in the exact topography of the feeling. "Where in the body is the feeling most intense? What is the exact texture of the sensation? Are there patterns of movement?"

This kind of pro-active feeling reveals one of the central laws of the energy body: energy follows awareness. As we bring awareness to exiled aspects of our energy body, we open these previously unconscious areas to the flow of prana. Consciousness and energy are deeply linked. More consciousness results in more wave of life.

4. WATCH. There now can be a profound and natural shift to witness consciousness, to the zone of neutrality, where we're not choosing for or against any kind of experience, but just being with experience exactly as it is. As we become absorbed in the witness, we're free both to participate in and to stand apart from our experience. We no longer fight with what is. As we drop into witness consciousness, we may experience some intuition arising from deep within our

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cells—a knowing that cannot be experienced through the mind alone. “Watching” is a special place we can stand vis-a-vis our experience, where we just “let life be” the way it is. In the zone of the witness, our attention is focused on “how is it?” rather than “why is it?” or “do I like it?”

It is important to remember that the “watcher” or observer is also the coach of the entire experience, the part of us that remains unidentified with the “problem” and remains able to coach us to stay on the wave of energy. It is the abiding voice constantly repeating the mantra “breathe, relax, feel, watch, allow.” It is the still point at the center of the storm of energy, and it is the seat of our trusting in the wisdom of energy.

5. ALLOW. When we don't try to control our energy experience, we're free to surrender to the wave of sensation, of feeling, and of energy. In these remarkable moments of freedom, we can let life as it is touch us because at our core we know that “everything is already OK.” We know that the energy moving in the prana body is intelligent. We know that it is moving in just the right way for healing and full integration to happen. We relinquish our resistance. We let the whole, natural process happen to us. Somehow, we trust that all we need to do is support the process in these simple ways, and it moves itself to full integration. The key to the fifth step is this: We don't have to make the wave of life happen. We can just let it happen. As we learn this kind of trust in the process, our capacity to ride the waves of life increases dramatically.

An essential aspect of the fifth step is this: We must allow the process to happen without neces-

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Caught in a Tangled Web

I don't know what to do. I'm a 47-year-old successful businessman with a wife and two kids who are now in college. I've lived by spiritual principles and tried to be a good man. I've been faithful to my wife until this last year when I fell in love with a beautiful younger woman. My business partner has distanced himself from me; my wife doesn't know and I can't bear to hurt her. I don't want to destroy my family life yet I can't give up this relationship and the love I feel for this woman. How do I sort this out?

MARILYN BARRICK: It is difficult to be in love with two women at once, especially when you know that whatever decision you make is going to hurt someone. Let's try a sorting-out process to guide you toward a decision.

First, tune into your thoughts and feelings in three possible scenarios. One: Do nothing and keep living a double life. Two: Leave your wife and try to make a go of it with the younger woman. Three: Stay with your wife and let go of the other woman. Imagine one scene at a time as though it were already a done deal. Probe your deepest

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thoughts and feelings and answer these questions: Am I in sync with my spiritual principles? Do I still think of myself as a good man? What are my good and not-so-good feelings in this scenario? Am I at peace with my decision? If not, why not?

Second, take an inventory of both relationships. Start with your wife. Your phrase, "I can't bear to hurt her," tells me you still have feelings for her. Think back to when you first fell in love and remember the good times you had as a couple and as a family over the years. Write down your thoughts and feelings as they were at the beginning of the relationship and as you have weathered the years together. Write down the pluses and minuses of the relationship with your wife.

Now think about the relationship with your new love. Reflect on the way you feel about her now, and how the relationship might be 20 years from now. Ask yourself, "How is she going to look at me when I am 67 and she is (?) How will I feel as she begins to age?" Write down your thoughts and feelings in the now, and in the projected future. Write down the pluses and minuses of this relationship now and 20 years hence.

Ask some tough questions: Scenario one: How will I feel about myself if I keep living a double life and my wife or children find out? What if their reactions are so intense that the younger woman can't cope with it? Am I being fair to her by continuing a relationship that has no future if I don't leave my wife? How will I handle it if I end up losing both relationships?

Scenario two: How will my wife take the break-up and divorce if I leave her? How will I feel knowing

how much I am hurting her? How will our children react? How about my business partner, since he's already distancing himself? What will be the financial impact after property settlement, alimony and whatever it takes to help our children finish college?

Scenario three: How will my new love take the break-up if I leave her? How will I feel knowing I am hurting her? Will there be complications if she gets angry with me? What if she tells my wife and children we have been involved? How will I handle that? What if she tires of me over time and ends up leaving me for a younger man? How would I feel then?

Realistically, it isn't likely you can keep both situations going. In my 35 years as a psychotherapist, I haven't seen it work except in the movies. In real life, people get hurt. They experience the anguish of loss if nothing else, the loss of the dream of what might have been.

You have free will to choose, and no one can make this choice for you. However, let's consider other factors. There really is such a thing as "mid-life crisis," for men as well as women. Some of it is hormonal; much is psychological. We feel somehow younger and more virile when we are involved with younger people. All of us want to hold onto the springtime of youth and love.

In reality, we grow older and love changes as relationships move through time. I think of enduring relationships as Elizabeth Barrett Browning poetically described, "Grow old with me, the best is yet to come, the last for which the first was made." Growing pains in marriage can produce golden years of togetherness where we relax into being ourselves rather than the person someone else expects us to be.

We learn to love the essence of one another and to put up with each other's flaws, which creates the blessed experience of being loved for who we really are.

Research indicates that couples who enjoy loving, satisfying marriages make a lifetime commitment to marriage; nurture their love and devotion; respect, trust and support one another; communicate openly; and encourage each other's individuality. Happy couples share values, time, and interests as well as sexual fulfillment and/or companionate love, the affection people feel for those with whom their lives are deeply entwined even when physical attraction wanes.

Whatever choice you make, strive to be true to self and Spirit. Pray for right discrimination, inner strength and the highest levels of compassion for everyone concerned as you make your decision and follow through. Take each step with prayerful, loving concern for all—including yourself.

Dealing with Racism

We were raised in Alabama and although we've moved on, my brother is still racist. His youngest daughter has a bi-racial child and my brother is struggling to accept this child as well as the African-American father. My niece wants her father's blessings on her life and feels hurt. I ache for them all. Is there anything I can do besides listen, support and encourage?

AEESHAH ABABIO-CLOTTEY AND KOKOMON CLOTTEY: Your



request has many layers. First is the grandfather who is refusing a wonderful gift—

his grandchild. Secondly is your niece and her African-American husband.

Thirdly is the child caught between two cultures. And lastly, you, whose heart aches so much inside for issues as ancient as time.

We know from experience that exploring these issues can be a painful process, but not exploring them can be life-threatening. The work that you are doing is serving your entire family, your brother, his grandchild, and your niece. We believe that when we are healed we are never healed alone. Therefore, there is something you can do besides listen, support, and encourage.

As we move into the new millennium more and more people will be faced with these issues. Census surveys show that the number of interracial married couples in the United States jumped from 149,000 in 1960 to 1.35 million in 1998, even though total marriages rose far less dramatically (from 40.5 million to 55.3 million) during those years. Marriages between African-Americans and whites accounted for 51,000 of those couples in 1960 and 330,000 in 1998. The point is that this increase is due to overturning miscegenation laws. As recent as 1977, interracial marriage was unacceptable.

As we wrote in our book, "Beyond Fear," "The concept of race is a social and cultural construction. Race simply cannot be tested or proven scientifically," according to the American Anthropological Association. The idea of race is something that humans made up to divide and separate people. We define racism as a life-threatening illness that we are all dying from. We can relieve ourselves of this malady by taking per-

sonal responsibility for our own healing process.

We can only heal by joining with others. We are never healed alone. Having said that, by asking for help for this problem that your niece is faced with you are creating a healing balm for your brother and your niece. Your personal healing process is intricately connected to theirs. The underpinning of this approach is not to change other people. However, once you are completely committed to your healing and seriously begin to remove the blocks and impediments that cloud your peace and happiness, shift happens. We are deeply aware that the road to racial healing requires us to let go of our painful past. We must be like a Sankofa bird, an ancient mythology from the Akan Tribe of Ghana, West Africa. This ancient bird reaches back, picks up its past and cleanses it as it moves forward. We must do the same. To cleanse our past we must forgive and let go. In order to forgive we must open our hearts to compassion and love. When we forgive, we heal the past, which allows us to be more fully in the present, so we can then move harmoniously forward. Speak to your niece of forgiveness and allow the forgiveness you share with your niece to flow into your heart for your brother and for your ancestors.

Let us not be afraid to explore the past. Looking at the past through the eyes of forgiveness is one way we can stop the pain, fear, and guilt of our painful collective history from destroying the present. Lao Tzu—the Chinese philosopher said, "The wholeness of life has from of old, been made manifest in its parts." Wear this metaphor as a badge of honor to

remind you to look on the whole of life rather than the fragments. As the Bible says, "For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." And as you truly embrace the belief that the essence of your being is love, include all of your family, your community, and the world as part of that essence.

Seven things you can do to help heal racism:

1. I will do my best to put into practice in my daily life these three spiritual principles.

We can learn to love others and ourselves by forgiving rather than judging.

We can become love finders rather than fault-finders.

We can focus on the whole of life rather than the fragments.

2. I will work to understand that admitting that racism is a problem is the first step that I take toward recovery and healing.

3. I will learn more about cultures and ethnic groups that I consider to be the "other."

4. I will strive to be open-minded by practicing the art of nonjudgmental acceptance of racial and ethnic differences.

5. I will speak up when I hear someone make a racist remark, while endeavoring to see this as a call for help, and coming from a place of compassion.

6. I will acknowledge my attitudes and beliefs that are based in racial prejudice and bigotry.

7. I believe that who I am and what I believe are valuable; therefore I know I can make a difference, and I intend to do my part to bridge the gap of racial divide.

Ask The Experts

Caring for Mom

I have been estranged from my mother for many years. A year ago, she moved to the city where I live to be closer to me during her final years. She is increasingly debilitated with Alzheimer's. I check on her daily and tend to her errands. Always irritable and critical, her personality is becoming more difficult to deal with. She has driven everyone away and turned to me, her only daughter, to care for her. I will provide for her, but this will be one of the biggest challenges of my life. Some days I think I can't stand it. How can I get through this?



HARRIET SARNOFF SCHIFF: You are in a very difficult situation. I want you, first of all, to understand you are not alone. This is, indeed, a time of great anguish for any son or daughter. I certainly understand your mother's irritability. It has been my experience that people do everything the way they do everything. As you said, her irritability is nothing new—just more of the same. It is so hard on the family when a parent drives everyone away, but it is unrealistic for you to carry the entire burden alone if you have siblings. Do they live in the same town? If so, please establish a schedule with them. If you assign specific tasks—like please pick up the prescription for Mom, you will find people (even those driven away) will help out because they are not being overwhelmed with the enormity of Mom's situation *in its entirety*. You are just asking people to carry a piece of the responsibility.

If family members are away, I believe you need to let them know that at the very least you need their

moral support because you are the primary caregiver. You need them to call you and write to you and find out what is happening so you have someone to air your frustration with. If you are married it is unrealistic to dump all of this on a spouse. Please remember this and value your marriage.

Also, you might well need to think ahead. Look to the future and begin to consider nursing facilities that can help Mom; there are special places that work well with Alzheimer's patients. Begin to look around now before you need to deal with this issue as an emergency. Decisions that must be made in haste are often inappropriate, so consider your options now and look for alternatives.

Be kind to yourself and remember to do something daily that is pleasurable. Meditate. Read something that gives you satisfaction. Journal, because it is always wise to write what you are feeling. You can then look back at what you've written and feel a release of tension.

In the final analysis, you have been given a gift. You are taking care of Mom. If you do the things necessary for yourself to find peace at some place in your day you will ultimately become a better caregiver. When you look back on Mom's life after she is gone, that can afford you enormous peace. You have an opportunity to grow with this experience and lend dignity to Mom and yourself in the process. Please take advantage of this opportunity and use it wisely. My best to you.

Finding What's Missing

I'm a 46-year-old professional woman. I have a good heart and people like me. However, my career is not thriving and my love life is the same. I've always yearned for a long-

term committed relationship, which hasn't happened. I've tried it all—spiritual practices, psychotherapy, yoga, reading transformational books. I've come to terms with my life, yet still feel something is missing. Must I just accept what is or can I do something to move beyond surviving into thriving?

Ronald Mann: You sound like a sophisticated individual. I am assuming that your efforts in "trying it all" have been sincere,



in-depth work at both emotional and spiritual levels. A few months spent in any psychotherapy or spiritual practice is a good beginning, but not enough time to accomplish much. Since it takes years of early childhood experiences to establish our personality, it takes a few years of dedicated work to change those patterns and learned behaviors.

My guess is that you may be too passive in your approach to your professional life and love life.

Relationships take one hundred percent commitment and a lot of work. They do not just happen—you make them happen! You might want to consider how much initiative you bring to your love life. How much are you willing to engage in the process? How much are you willing to give?

On a more philosophical note, there are always hidden karmic factors involved in our lives. Life is not always as it appears on the surface. As you probably know, we are here to grow spiritually and realize our true Divine nature. Given that most of us have been working on this lesson for many, many incarnations, we bring a lot of history with us that affects us in this lifetime.

Often, it seems that there is some unseen wall or force keeping us from our goals and desires. These current circumstances are the result of our past actions and past decisions from this life and before.

My advice to you is never give up. There is a balance between accepting life as it is “right now” and continuing to strive for personal improvement. Along with the psychological work, you need to change your karma as well. Preconditions have established this current life circumstance. If you want to change your life, you need to commit one hundred percent of your energy to do so. Don’t give up and don’t lose hope for more abundance in your life. Use more advanced yogic techniques that transmute energy and change karma along with the psychological changes you may need to make. I have discussed this in detail in my book, “Sacred Healing.”

Don’t try to accomplish these changes on your own. Invite God into your life for help. Sometimes, difficult circumstances exist to teach us to turn to God for help. After all, this is a spiritual school. So talk to God every day and say, “Listen God, I did not make this world. I did not even ask to be created. You created all this and you can certainly help change my life. I am doing everything I can to improve my life. I can’t do this on my own.” Thus, the first thing I would do is to deepen your connection with God and feel His/Her presence as an active part of your life. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and then all things will be added unto you.”

The feeling you described—“something is missing”—may be your connection to God. You may

be looking outside of yourself for something that your soul longs for: divine love. Most of us feel some sense of emptiness when we feel separate from God. Meditation, devotion, service, and prayer are the means for deepening your relationship with God. It has been said, “God is a jealous god.” I believe that this means that God wants us to love Him or Her above all else. In deepening that love, all desires can be fulfilled and the longing for something outside tends to vanish.

Of course, being successful in your professional life and fulfilled in your love life are natural and appropriate desires. The paradox is that the more we focus on deepening our relationship with God, the more peace and contentment we bring to every aspect of our life. You can increase your ability to fulfill your desires as you discover the power of your soul to manifest. Your soul, in alignment with God, can bring things into your life much more effectively and efficiently than your personality or ego. Your spiritual power is great. Learn to use it and apply it to every aspect of your life. God’s grace can change any aspect of your life. Use your life circumstance to go deeper into Spirit. Any moment could be the final end to eons of karma. You never know when you have reached a critical mass and circumstances will change. You say that “I’ve tried it all.” You sound like you have stopped doing those things that will lead to success. Never give up!

There is a fine line between “accepting what is” and “doing something to change our circumstances.” Acceptance should not mean defeat and resignation. Acceptance should be a dynamic

state in which we are fully present with our current circumstance without any desire or attempt to push it away or believe we are trapped by it. Life is always changing. The mystery is that as we give up “trying to do something,” from an ego point of view, the soul’s capacity to shift circumstances through the power of consciousness is activated. The paradox is, the less you do, the more will happen.

Dreaming about Snakes

I have recorded and discussed dreams for the past 10 years. For the past couple of years I have been dreaming about snakes. I am in a dream group and others have had snake dreams also. The feedback from the group has been invaluable. These dreams seem significant and I am seeking additional input about snakes as a symbol and/or ways to approach the dreams.

ROBERT MOSS: The snake in



dreams may represent many things: a sexual energy, a possible enemy or deceiver, the rising of Kundalini, a power of healing and transformation—or the entirely literal snake you could meet by the creek or in the basement next week. A woman in my native Australia dreamed that a highly poisonous snake slipped into her kitchen via an open window above the sink. Dream analysts, especially Freudians, might have had a field day psychologizing her dream. But in fact her dream was a quite specific rehearsal for an incident that took place in her home the following day, when a poisonous snake entered her kitchen via an open

window above the sink. This dream may still have symbolic resonance, but the symbolism is located in events played out in waking life.

If your dreams were my dreams, I would try to go back inside them, explore them more deeply, and dream them onward. I am convinced that the full meaning of dreams lies inside the dream *experience* itself (which is not to be confused with our often broken or blurred *memory* of the dream). Through the technique of dream re-entry, as explained in my book "Conscious Dreaming," we can learn to travel quite fluidly into other orders of reality and gain direct access to powerful sources of insight and healing. We can invite others to travel with us into our dreamscapes, which often produces rich experiences of telepathy or group dreaming. You might find this practice a marvelous adventure for your dream group.

Your experiences lead me to think about snake medicine and the symbol of the caduceus, the serpent-staff of healing. The snake is a mascot and companion of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, and his caduceus is still the favorite logo for physicians and medical caregivers. Asclepius, to be quite specific, is the patron of *dream* healing. You go to his precinct not only to seek diagnosis and prescription, but in hopes of receiving a *big* dream that, in itself, may bring through the healing. In the ancient world, to be allowed entry into the sacred dormitory (*abaton*) of the god, you had (a) to release yourself from your old habits and expectations, through purification and (b) produce a dream of invitation. In the sanctuary, you were required to overcome fear by lying down among the serpents of

the god (quite harmless, but unsettling nonetheless). During the night, the healing power might come through in the form of a snake, as well as in other forms—animal, human, divine.

The serpent sheds its skin, and its teaching is that we, too, can slough off our old lives, our self-limiting beliefs, and even our unwanted physical symptoms. The serpent also lives in the body of the Earth and connects us to the realm of the Great Mother. The serpent rising may be the Kundalini power that is at once highly sexual and yet capable of connecting us to the divine and of channeling immense healing energy for others. Maybe the snake in your dreams is calling you to realize your own potential as healer and transformer. May you live your best dreams!

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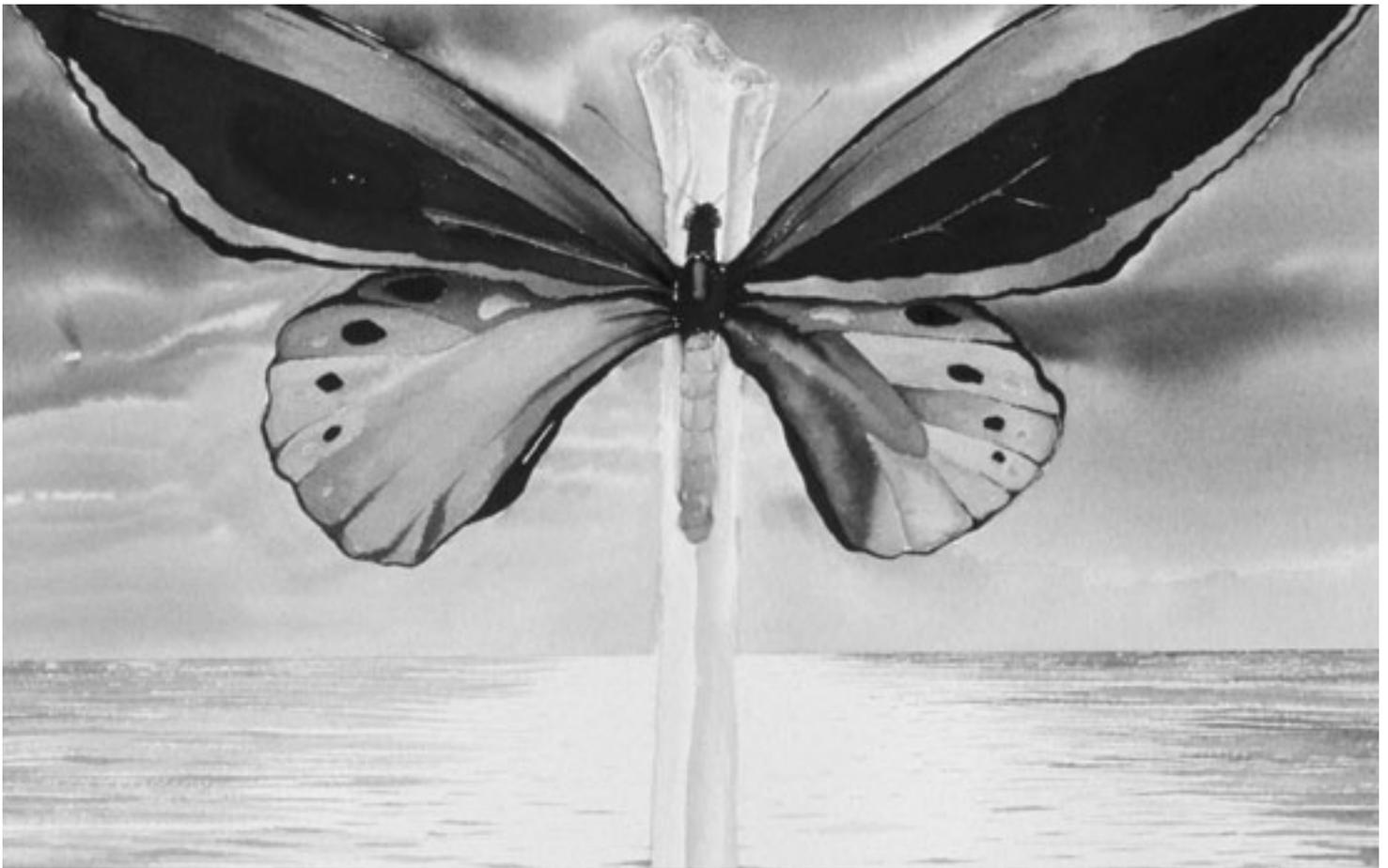
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DAVID SIRGANY

Abundance and the Hero's Journey

MARIA NEMETH, P.H.D.

The idea of abundance as the totality of life is famously expressed in the Bible, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted..." Life teaches us that comfort and discomfort, joy and sadness are all qualities that will be expressed in the fullness of time. Abundance is all of it, even the bitter moments that serve to teach us and wake us up.

The well-lived life is a conscious life. When we are conscious, we're aware of everything, living fully. We don't choose what we want to become conscious of. We don't say, "Let me be aware of this aspect of my life, but not that." As the veil lifts from our perception, we see both the miracles and the lessons that surround us. Every time you say "Yes" to everything on your path, you express the hero inside of you.

To answer "Yes"—an emphatic "Yes"—to every-

thing is to put us in the position to experience prosperity. Prosperity comes when you participate fully in every aspect of your life. That's because you thrive when you participate. It's a state of growth. You're not pushing away anything, you're using everything as an opportunity to wake up and express who you are in your heart.

Take a deep breath. With this new understanding of abundance and prosperity, you can handle the flow of energy in your life. When you're not blocking anything, are willing to learn from everything, and are committed to expressing your true nature, you are in that moment prospering. From this we can see that prosperity is not something out there, waiting to happen in the future. Prosperity occurs now, every time you are willing to be fully present to your life. That's why "Yes" is the most powerful word you can utter.

You discern when to say "No" to your driven behavior, so that you gather energy and focus it on

In order to imagine abundance, draw a circle on a clean piece of paper. Next, fill in the circle with examples of everything we experience in life: happiness and sadness, good and bad times, joy and sorrow, play and work, scarcity and plenty. You could spend the rest of your life filling in the circle, couldn't you? Our experience of life is infinite in its variety, isn't it? This circle represents abundance. Abundance is everything. Every possible aspect of life's experience. All of it, including scarcity. From this perspective, you can see that scarcity is one of the manifestations of abundance.

worthwhile pursuits. But using "No" to push away anything in our internal experience that we fear or dislike can limit our experience of abundance. Attempting to avoid unpleasant aspects of our lives, as we have seen, drains our energy and power. As American-born Buddhist abbess Pema Chodron put it, "It doesn't do any good to get rid of our so-called negative aspects because in that process we also get rid of our basic wonderfulness."

One way to encounter abundance is by developing the art of gratitude. We turn to this next.

THE FINE ART OF GRATITUDE

Spiritual leaders tell us that it's important to develop gratefulness. Theologian Brother David Steindl-Rast says we have gotten what makes for a full life all backward by waiting for good circumstances to occur before we express gratitude. The key to growing into your goals is bringing gratefulness to your everyday circumstances, no matter what they may be.

To have a goal designed to try to get away from an uncomfortable or painful circumstance only prolongs the very circumstance you seek to escape. Trying to escape gives you no breathing room or creativity. Gratitude shifts your energy and takes you out of the fight, flight, or freeze mode. You breathe deeply and unclench from your fears. Your belly is soft and receptive. You are open to possibility.

How do you become grateful for everything? You may not want to be grateful for whatever is in your life. You may think it's a bad idea to be grateful for a difficult circumstance because it will empower that circumstance. For example, you may find you owe \$1,000 more on your income tax than you thought, or you may lose your job to downsizing. How do you wrap gratitude around that?

You may also feel worried about making too much of the beneficial circumstances in your life and believe that there's no use tempting the Fates with your happiness. This is not logical, but it's human, and the superstition shows up in many cultures. My older Jewish relatives, for instance, would look at a healthy and beautiful baby and say loudly, "It's too bad she's so ugly and sickly." Tradition had it that evil spirits would ignore a sick, ugly child. It was best to fool them by feigning misfortune.

Gratitude does not mean that you jump for joy at whatever occurs in your life. Rather, it means that you note, bear witness to, and see whatever is put before you. You are willing to let it be there, doing nothing to postpone whatever lesson or opportunity comes from fortune and misfortune. •

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Tie Your Camel to the Hitching Post

AN INTERVIEW WITH JACOB NEEDLEMAN
BY MELISSA WEST

Jacob Needleman, professor of philosophy at San Francisco State University, has been on a lifelong quest to integrate the great spiritual and wisdom teachings of the world with how to live the challenges of everyday life, writing books on love, time, medicine, and psychiatry. In his search, Needleman realized almost a decade ago that embedded in our relationship with money lay many of the answers to the great questions about who we are. For this issue on Prosperity, PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION decided to find out more about money and the meaning of life from a pioneer who has broken our culture's deep-seated taboo about exploring what money really means.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: You write in “Money and the Meaning of Life” that “money is the key to the question of who and what we are.” What does that mean?

JACOB NEEDLEMAN: The invention called money has entered into our life in a much more complete way than it ever has in all of human history. It has entered into all aspects of our culture; it is one of the great overwhelming forces that influence our life. Everywhere we turn, every move we make, requires that we take into account the money factor. Yet very few of us are unflinchingly honest about our relationship to money. It's like sex was 50 years ago in our culture—a force that operates everywhere, and

yet one that very few of us can face squarely and honestly. If we're going to know who and what we are both as individuals and as a culture, we need to take money much more seriously than we do: not to despise it, and not to be devoured by it, but to take it seriously and study it. As we begin to study our relationship with money, we may begin to see things about ourselves that are hard to accept, but which represent a very important part of ourselves. To study money is to study a very large part of what we are.

TRANSFORMATION: You reiterate in your book that we don't take money seriously enough. Discuss that...

NEEDLEMAN: Right. I know it sounds paradoxical: People can be obsessed with money, but that doesn't mean they take it seriously. If we're on a spiritual quest for self-transformation, we need to give our best attention to how we are with money because it's one of the keys to a big part of our human nature. A human being, according to the great spiritual teachings of the world, has two natures or aspects: a side that is meant to be engaged in activity in the world, making and doing, having a family, creating, building; the other side has to do with the spiritual, the transcendent, the relationship to God, one's deepest inner consciousness. Those two natures make up who we are. We are called on to find the relationship between these two opposing parts of ourselves, and to develop the kind of awareness that relates each to the other in a harmonious way. We can't do that unless we really understand each part and take each very seriously. Money is the principal means in the modern world for organizing the material part of our selves and our lives. To know money is to know the organizing, desiring, creating ways that we act in the world.

TRANSFORMATION: You write in your book that "meaning only appears in the place between the worlds."

NEEDLEMAN: We are neither pure spirit, nor pure egos and animals. We are that which relates these two levels or forces together. The meaning of our life in the material world—how we eat, how we work and raise families and create—only emerges when it is connected to the spiritual world. The

meaning of spirit appears when it's related to our life in the world. While we're on this earth, we are meant to be in relationship to these two worlds. The real meaning of life comes when you feel and know that there is a connection.

TRANSFORMATION: What does money have to do with that place between the two worlds?

NEEDLEMAN: Not much; it represents one of the worlds in this culture. Fifty percent of who we are, in this day and age, has to do with the money question. Our health, where we live, where we go, what we do with our time, how we are respected or not, what we can accomplish, all our sufferings and pleasures, one way or the other, are related to money. Money doesn't have meaning, but we can't have meaning in our lives until we are related to money in a conscious way.

TRANSFORMATION: And what does relating to money in a conscious way mean?

NEEDLEMAN: It starts by having the courage and sincerity to really look at money, to see how we feel about it and how we relate to it. If we can do this, which very few of us do, we will see our relationship with money to be full of fears and contradictions and conditioning, and it will be quite shocking. But that's the first step toward self-knowledge, to get rid of our illusions about ourselves and our relationship with money. We're all pretty weird about money. Do you know anyone who's "normal" about money? We don't even know what that means. And yet money plays such a central part in our lives, from morning to night. If most of us kept a complete record of what we spent, every day, down to the last penny, we'd be terribly shocked. Money is a key to what we actually value.

TRANSFORMATION: Are you saying that money is a mirror of who we are?

NEEDLEMAN: Money is a mirror of almost one half of our nature. That's pretty big.

TRANSFORMATION: When you compared money today to sex 50 years ago, I think of the revolution of our culture's relationship to sex from Freud to the present, from taboo to people now speaking of sex as a doorway into the divine. Is money similarly taboo? Does a conscious relationship to money hold the same promise as a conscious relationship to our

The inner world—the world of self-knowledge, the world of self-exploration—can be immensely more vivid than the world of money, of another quality. But most of us, unfortunately, have a very dull inner world. Therefore, the outer world, the world of money, seems more real. Our society has not helped us cultivate a real inner life.

own sexuality?

NEEDLEMAN: Insofar as the doorway to the divine is a difficult and narrow passageway which requires a lot of honesty about ourselves, money is a golden key. It's not like sex insofar as sex is connected to love and deeply organic; money doesn't have that organic quality, but it's like sex in that it's such a powerful force that almost nobody seems to be able to be sincere about it, the spiritual masters as well as corporate business people, the academics as well as the poets.

TRANSFORMATION: How did consciousness about money come to be so taboo?

NEEDLEMAN: That's a good question. You can ask almost anybody about sexuality these days, but try asking someone how much money they make or how much they've got in the bank! Money is so tied into our sense of self-worth. It may be rooted in the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Max Weber had a thesis that Calvinistic Protestantism looked upon success in the world as a sign of God's favor. How one succeeded in the world of business and commerce became a sign of not just our material worth, but our spiritual worth and our worth as human beings as well. Money then became very intimately connected with a sense of self.

TRANSFORMATION: Those two worlds got mixed up in ways they weren't meant to be.

NEEDLEMAN: Exactly. Our job now is to re-separate them and take them both seriously.

TRANSFORMATION: How do we do that?

NEEDLEMAN: We begin by cultivating an attitude of non-judgmental observation of how exactly we are in this realm, and then recognizing, as the religious philosophers have shown us, that the act of seeing is separate from what is seen. The seer—the

witness within ourselves—is not of the same reality as that which it is witnessing. That is the beginning of the separation of the two realities within ourselves, the spiritual and the material. The cultivation of the capacity to step back from one's own reactions, emotions, behavior, and thoughts is to find the Self that is untouched by all of that, but is aware of it. This separation, if we do it deeply enough, will result in a new unity within oneself.

TRANSFORMATION: Is stepping back in order to become more conscious of our entanglements with money a first step toward developing that witness which can then take us deeply into the spiritual life?

NEEDLEMAN: Yes. That witness, when it is more fully developed, is the conductor of a force which will unify us.

TRANSFORMATION: What is the place of money in the spiritual life?

NEEDLEMAN: It is one of the keys to sincerity within ourselves. One of the things we have to be more sincere about is the recognition that without money, we can't do many of the things on the spiritual path. We can't search for God, for example, without money. We have to have money in order to have time, in order to find people, go places, be secure enough in the world to engage in a search for transformation. Without being people who crave or who are obsessed by money, or being so-called spiritual or artistic types who claim that money is not important at all, we must acknowledge how important money is to everyone. I don't think it was always like that. There were times when people didn't have to be so concerned about money; they could live a poor life and not attend so much to things of this world. Nowadays, you

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “Man is born to be rich.” He didn’t mean being a fat cat, but he meant human beings are born to experience as much as the earth has to offer, and money helps. In that way, money is a tremendously good thing. It’s just when it becomes our master that it’s deadly.

simply can’t do that. The artist has to stand on his own feet in the world of everyday concerns and even be a bit of a businessman. The important question now is, can you be a good business person and still have spirit take first place in your life? I think you can. It’s extremely difficult, but to me it’s the key to the old dynamic of how to be in the world but not of the world.

TRANSFORMATION: What challenges have you faced in learning to be a businessman with a spiritual life?

NEEDLEMAN: It’s not easy! The challenge has been—and I’m still trying to meet it—first of all, to really try to not compromise what I wish to say in my writing and in my teaching, and at the same time keep my eye on the material realities of life: to be a good business person, but to not sell out my thoughts in any way. There’s a great saying in the Islamic tradition, “Trust in Allah but tie your camel first to the hitching post.” The challenge is how to tie my camel enough—earn enough—to feel like I’m grounded in the physical world, but hold my work to a standard I can recognize. At the inner, more subtle level, it’s not always easy to discern the real reasons for doing something. I like money. I don’t love it, but I do like what money can do. I think it’s something we all need to recognize. The other challenge is, can you use money as an instrument for the spiritual search?

TRANSFORMATION: How does one do that?

NEEDLEMAN: First by creating the space in your life for doing things which are absolutely unmotivated by money, which has to do with self-knowledge and spiritual work and serving others in the way they need. There are things we need to do which are totally untouched by money, but in

order to do them, we need money! We need to earn money in order to engage in the kind of spiritual search and the kinds of activities that money can’t buy.

TRANSFORMATION: You raised a question in your book: “In a culture dominated by money and by the principle of personal gain, could there arise a wholly realistic way of giving and serving beyond the cliches of altruism and hidden fears for our own safety or the opinions of others?” How do you answer that question?

NEEDLEMAN: One way is how we give our attention and care to other people. To do that for its own sake, and not for the sake of personal gain, is possible. When you sacrifice your self interests for the good of the other person, a joy and a sense of meaning that nothing else can give you appears. To be deeply human with another person—it doesn’t matter what the context—brings a current of life into the interaction. We are born to give. Deep down in our essence, love is our nature, and I believe that we have to touch even when we’re making our money and scoring our points.

TRANSFORMATION: You wrote in “Money and the Meaning of Life,” “The money question is so strong not because money is ultimately real but because our experiences with it have become—for most of us—the most vivid and intense experiences of our lives.” What is the way out of this tyranny of “money’s seemingly ultimate reality?”

NEEDLEMAN: The inner world—the world of self-knowledge, the world of self-exploration—can be immensely more vivid than the world of money, of another quality. But most of us, unfortunately, have a very dull inner world. Therefore, the outer

world, the world of money, seems more real. Our society has not helped us cultivate a real inner life.

TRANSFORMATION: What motivated you to think about money in such a deep way?

NEEDLEMAN: In all my writings, my aim has been to connect the wisdom teachings of the world, which I have studied with so much interest, to the actual problems and challenges of our contemporary day to day life. Could I find a bridge that allows these great spiritual teachings to throw light on how we actually live, a connection between the great questions of life and the great problems of life? I've written about love, about education, about psychiatry, but at a certain point I realized that the problem that haunts everyone the most is the money problem, and no one had written about money asking, what light does the spiritual vision of the world throw on how we are toward money? Plenty of people had written about being spiritual about money, but I found that mostly unworkable and somewhat hypocritical. People wrote about making money, but not about what money really means. "Money and the Meaning of Life" was the most difficult book I ever wrote.

TRANSFORMATION: Why?

NEEDLEMAN: Because as I wrote it I was lying. As a writer you develop a sense of smell toward your own writing. Every time I started the book, it was a lie. It was so hard to find one honest sentence about the whole money question. It took me a long time to find out how to really write this book.

TRANSFORMATION: What was the most important thing you learned writing the book?

NEEDLEMAN: Two things. The first is that money is the means of organizing this human part of ourselves. That's the way to look at money, to see money as an instrument for putting into order what the spiritual traditions call "the desire nature." The second thing is a discovery that the world of money seems so real only because our inner life is not real enough. The strange paradox is that money is nothing; it's "just paper," as people say, and yet the "bottom line" is it's taken to be the most real thing in life. The experience of the inner world, for most

people, is not enough to give real faith that there is something more important than money.

In terms of my life, writing the book helped me to be much more honest about my own relationship to money, to find something between being a stupid saint and a greedy materialist. I had to learn to be honest, that I did need to be a businessman and make enough money to be self-respecting. Many of us don't have that good common sense and toughness about money. Others have no problem asking for money, but they're not the ones usually engaged in writing the spiritual or philosophical books!

TRANSFORMATION: Can you see any gifts to living in a money-driven world?

NEEDLEMAN: There are wonderful things about living in a very rich culture. It's not bad to be comfortable; to go places and see things and help other people; to taste various aspects of life. In that sense, you're being presented with a lot of good gifts. If you can be non-attached to them, it's wonderful, because you're being provided with experiences about life and the world that others not from this culture can't come near. Money is a brilliant and ingenious invention which has helped people materially. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Man is born to be rich." He didn't mean being a fat cat, but he meant human beings are born to experience as much as the earth has to offer, and money helps. In that way, money is a tremendously good thing. It's just when it becomes our master that it's deadly.

TRANSFORMATION: Any other thoughts on money?

NEEDLEMAN: Phrases in the great traditions, "a pearl of great price" and "the one thing needful," speak of that one thing which is the only really important thing in life: the spiritual truth in your own heart. Let's keep that in mind. At the same time, there are a lot of secondary things that are pretty important, that need our attention and care; otherwise, "the one thing needful" will be impossible. So, tie your camel to the hitching post, but if you don't trust in Allah, then the camel's of no help anyway. •



Real World Spirituality

RODNEY ROMNEY

A new understanding of spirituality is emerging. It used to be that those who accepted the “higher” call to a contemplative lifestyle disengaged themselves from the world of sensual, competitive, messy human existence. God was not to be found in the marketplace but as far from the marketplace as possible. But today we are beginning to challenge the separation of spirituality and social action. We are beginning to realize that the truly holy people, the “saints” if you will, are those through whom the presence and power of God is mediated to the world rather than those who have forsaken the world.

This link between spirituality and liberation is most clearly demonstrated in the piety of Latin American Christianity as well as feminist theology in North America. Maintaining the balance between enlighten-

ment and action is not as easy as it sounds, even though it is essential. Motives behind each have to be examined. The spiritual discipline of giving is expressed not just in what we do with our money—although that is certainly one very important aspect of it—but also to be found in our acts of charity and our deeds of mercy.

What is missing in much of our good works is sincere, genuine compassion. Henri Nouwen points out that compassion is derived from the Latin words *pati* and *cum*, which together mean “to suffer with.” True compassion, he says, asks us to go where it hurts; to enter into places of pain; to share in brokenness, fear, confusion and anguish; to be weak with the weak and powerless with the powerless. This kind of compassion requires more than a general sort of kindness or

TONY STONE/DAVID ALLAN BRANDT

act of well-doing. It requires putting ourselves in the shoes of the needy and walking in the direction of collective solutions to end their suffering.

Most of us are skeptical of such a compassion. We see it as masochistic or unrealistic. We are all appreciative of the late Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity, who go about the world serving the poorest of the poor. But for the majority, such a life is unattractive, repelling and even disgusting. The less we are confronted with real human suffering, the less we have to deal with it and do anything about it.

Something sinister often lies at the heart of our impulses to do good, and that is, as Nouwen suggests, a sense of competition. We are trained in this world to be competitive rather than compassionate. Even our national gestures of compassion are generated more by the politics of competition than genuine, sincere caring. This is no reason to stop the help. It is only analyzing it for what it is.

Many First World Christians see an incompatibility between political/economic liberation and spirituality. That is because in the past Christians involved themselves in withdrawal from the world rather than engagement in it. Even the contemplative lifestyle often served as an escape from the needs and pains of the world. Today we know better. We are beginning to realize that spirituality calls us to be fully aware of the world in which we live, to be present in it with all its needs and pains, to serve it with compassionate action, and to see more clearly than ever before the systemic reasons for poverty and need. This is what made Mother Teresa the great figure of compassion that

Spiritual Exercises for Giving

These exercises require physical action, while holding to this aphorism: That which I give to others, I give to myself.

1. Walk down a street and smile at every person whose eyes meet your own. Keep walking but observe the reactions you receive.

2. Give something to someone who has a greater need than you. How does it make you feel to do this? Are you anxious about how your gift will be used or received? Or are you willing to let go of your gift once it is offered?

3. Make a monetary gift to a charitable organization or an institution whose work you believe in.

4. Give something to the earth or the earth's creatures, something that will bless and not harm in any way.

5. Give something to yourself, something that gives you pleasure, satisfaction and joy.

In your spiritual journal write about each of these giving experiences and answer these questions. What single word embodies all these gifts? Why did I give? If I did not complete all the above exercises, which ones did I skip and why? Which gift was the hardest to give? Which was the easiest? What was given to me as a result of my giving?

she was—she knew that she had been called to follow Jesus into the valley of tears and suffering, to serve a portion of humanity that is in agony. Her call grew from her own life of prayer and spiritual devotion.

We are not all called to work with the poorest of the poor. Mother Teresa would be the first to avow that. However, we are all called to be compassionate, whether we follow Jesus or not, and from that call comes our vocation, the work we are to do, where and with whom we do it.

It would be naive to assume that everyone has the contemplative temperament. Some of us are strong social activists. Others are more comfortable with academic pursuits. The spiritual disciplines have never appealed to the masses, partially because not everyone has the temperamental bent that makes the contemplative life appealing and natural. But recognizing these individual differences does not cancel out the possibility of all of us sharing in the spiritual enterprise. It only means that we may select different arteries of approach. Whether our religious temperament be mental, social, mystical or sacrificial does not negate the fact that each of us is called to make our home in God, to come to God in simple

faith, by earnest repentance and with the kind of prayer that is most natural to us, and to be a compassionate, loving presence in the world.

The temptation of activism is known to many of us. This was the temptation that Jesus fought in the wilderness, that the disciples fought on numerous occasions. It is the temptation to give visibility to our own power. But the spiritual life directs us to give visibility not to our own power but to God's

compassion. While we may never be able to claim pure motives in everything we do, it is important to recognize the places and times where our personal needs begin to dominate our actions.

“I am not appreciated for what I do” is the common cry in churches among those who are trying to serve God in the social arena. This is usually a clear signal that “what I do,” whether it is feeding the hungry, clothing the poor or some other worthwhile activity, is more an expression of one’s individual needs than God’s compassion. Our needs dominate our actions when we offer our services to someone in this way. We communicate subtly yet powerfully this message: “I have something you don’t have; I am now going to give it to you. Then I will be doing my duty, and you will be better off than you are now.” Having done that, we look around and wait for praise to be expressed for our good deeds. What this is really saying is that we are involved in competition rather than compassion. We can continue to hold power over the ones who are down by the dole we give out.

Eventually we will become exhausted, burned out and even embittered by such efforts. It happened to me. I have seen it happen to others. When we are primarily concerned about being praised, rewarded or liked, then we have chosen to do those things that we hope will elicit such responses.

Our anxiety to solve social problems usually stems from our lack of self-knowledge. The quality of our work depends decisively on the manner and extent to which we know ourselves. Yet we tackle the big problems of life with only the slenderest knowledge about ourselves. The main content of all religious teaching should be the cultivation of self-knowledge, but it has been sadly lacking in our Westernized version of Christianity. It is this missing element that modern mysticism is trying to replace. Why do I do what I do? Why do I react the way I do? Who am I, and what is my purpose in the world? These questions are rarely confronted at any significant depth before we plunge ourselves madly and feverishly into the morass of trying to offer help to the suffering or redirecting the human race away from the self-destructive course it has started to follow.

We need a confrontation with the wilderness of

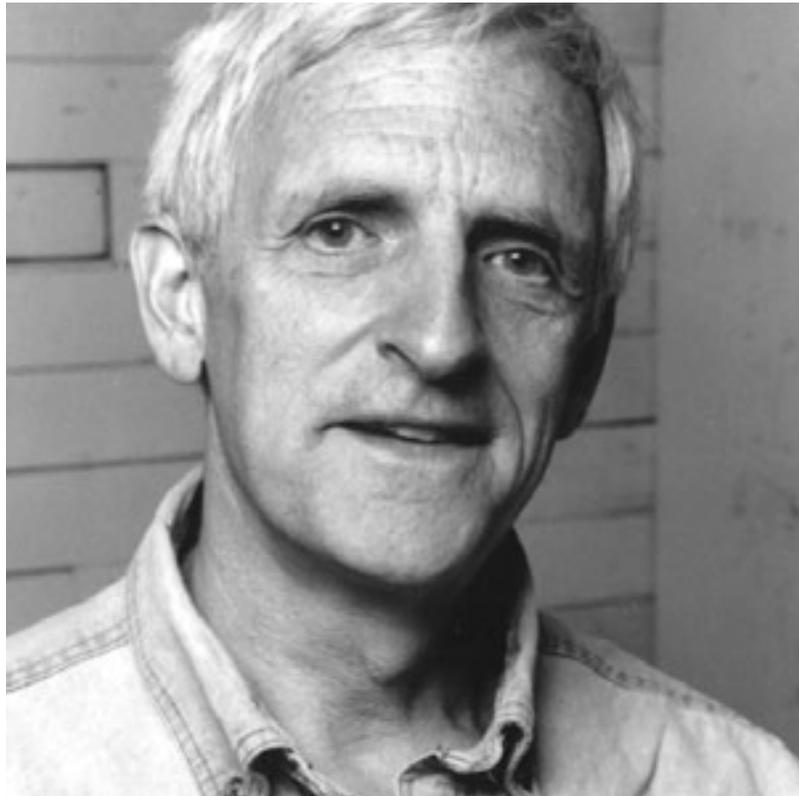
self, an open, honest engagement with our inner being that will unmask our illusions of power and free us from idolatry of all kinds. We cannot profess a solidarity with the oppressed and suffering peoples of this world if we have no sense of solidarity in ourselves. Self-knowledge will prevent us from becoming alienated from the world as we confront it.

Our acts of charity and deeds of kindness can be systems of competition or control for us. We are always trying to make things happen, wanting to be in control of our own lives, the lives of those close to us, and endless projects. Until we can accept things as they are, rather than attempting to shape them according to our own desires and needs, we have no hope of bringing about the right changes. I can’t recall who said it, but I like this statement: “Creation generously showers her blessings upon us, as long as we don’t try to wrest them from her.”

We do not need to take life for granted. Neither do we need to labor to make it happen. Life is a miracle, a miracle that can only be fully realized by living through God. Our routines of social and economic patterns sometimes interfere with that miracle, but still, it is life itself that is our best asset. Our deeds in the social arenas need to be adventures in the realm of the spiritual, if indeed our deeds are to bring hope into the sordid and despairing poverty that afflicts many.

The world often demands of us a show of strength. But God asks of us a show of vulnerability. That is why in the spiritual life we are asked only to give ourselves. Our deeds of charity, our gifts and tithes, will automatically follow when we have given ourselves. Our reality is not our strength but our vulnerability. Paul reminds us if we give away all we have but have not love, we have given nothing. We need to find ourselves as one small piece of fragmented humanity, to know that we are no more loved and no better than the person we try to help, before we can work to bring the broken pieces of life back together. •

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Beyond a Job: Doing The Great Work

AN INTERVIEW WITH MATTHEW FOX
BY MARY NURRIESTEARN

Much of our life is spent in the world of work. Our time, energy, and even identity are wrapped up in what we do and how much money we have. Therefore it is important to explore how work is associated with prosperity. At times, work is a job—an exchange of effort for money. But work can also be vocation. When work is vocation, it is where we express our unique talents, find meaning, and contribute to what Matthew Fox calls “the great work,” the work of the universe.

To discuss this subject with Matthew Fox was like finding a gold mine. The author of many books, Fox describes in “The Reinvention of Work” a new vision of livelihood. In his envisioned world of work intellect, heart, and health come together to celebrate the whole person. He is a true teacher of what he espouses. He was dismissed by the Dominican order in 1993 over his radical views and has recreated his career. A

priest, he is president of the University of Creation Spirituality and co-chair of the Naropa/Oakland MLA program in Oakland.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: What is your understanding of prosperity?

MATTHEW FOX: It is not in my vocabulary, to be honest. I do not like the word, as it is used. The way it is often used these days in American culture has more to do with getting rich and acquiring material goods, which I consider inappropriate. A better word than prosperity would be health. We want the Earth to prosper, we want our children to prosper, we want our imaginations and spirits to prosper. We want other generations to prosper. From that point of view, I can be at home with the word. I like the word as a verb. As a verb the word prosper retains a very useful meaning. Too often the words prosperity and spirituality smack of manipulation, abuse, or espousing

materialism in the name of spirituality and prayer, and I'm not at home with that.

TRANSFORMATION: Given that meaning of prosperity, what is the link between prospering and work?

FOX: Work needs to be an occasion for our own and for others' spirits to prosper. There needs to be joy in work; the joy that we experience in it and the joy that others experience from our work, which also increases our joy, because to contribute to other people's joys is part of what makes one happy. Another important dimension of work is healing. Not only is joy a part of the human heart, so is grief and suffering. You could ask, "How does my work bring joy to myself and others?" and "How does my work relieve the suffering of others?" Are you creating something useful that people need that relieves their suffering? Work being the relief of suffering is a part of prospering because we have obstacles to prospering—to being healthy and well and alive in spirit—and so removing these obstacles is what our work is meant to do.

TRANSFORMATION: In "The Reinvention of Work," you talk about vocational calling. Describe vocational calling.

FOX: At times in our lives we feel called to work at this more than that, to respond to this need in society and to let go of what we have been working at. I distinguish this between job and work. A job is something we do to get a paycheck and pay our bills. Jobs are legitimate, at times, but work is why we are here in the universe. Work and calling often go together. Work is something we feel called to do, it is that which speaks to our hearts in terms of joy and commitment. Work can evolve, however. We may have one calling twenty years ago and another one more recently. Work also connects us to the universe. If we thought less anthropomorphically, we would realize that our whole universe is at work. There is an ancient affinity between the great work and our daily lives. The great work is the work of the universe, it is the unfolding of creation. Somehow, our work, our daily life, should contribute to that. We should feel that we are connected to the great work of the universe. Without that, we lose meaning in our work and the only meaning is a paycheck. Work is no longer work, it is a job. The same

is true of unemployment. If you think less anthropomorphically, you realize that every being in the universe has work. The planets, galaxies and stars have work, as do horses, grasses and fish. Only humans have unemployment. We invent unemployment. If people fit the habits of the universe, the idea that there is work for everybody, that everybody has a calling, and that we are all here for a reason is pretty basic.

TRANSFORMATION: How do we know if our work is in alignment with the work of the universe, the great work?

FOX: I like Jesus's advice, "by their fruits, you will know them." We can look at our work and see if there is joy. We can look at our work and see if there is relief of pain and suffering. Maybe what you are asking is, in this context, how do we define success or prosperity at work? It is a discernment process. Like so much of spirituality, there is no clear-cut answer. Take people like Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. or Jesus. At many levels they failed. You cannot judge their success in shallow terms. The same must be true of us and our work. How do parents, for example, judge the value of their parenting? It often takes many years, and even then, we do not know. There is mystery in all of this, and there is trust, and I do not think that there are clear signs. Part of the delusion of the modern era was the notion we got from John Calvin, and many capitalists since him, that if you are successful, in the sense of making a lot of money, God is smiling on your work. I do not think it is as simple as that. It is a subtle question that you are asking. We have to keep critiquing the values that we believe in and ask if justice, compassion, joy, and celebration are the results of our work.

TRANSFORMATION: In the book you say there are mystical dimensions to work. What are the mystical dimensions in work?

FOX: Joy and awe and wonder. Studs Turkel, in his great book on working, says that work must be about meaning and astonishment and wonder as well as daily bread. The Chinese scripture, the Tao Tai Ching, says, "In work, do what you enjoy." Finding the joy in work is part of the mystical path. So is recognizing the grief and the pain in work. There is a passage in "The Reinvention of Work"

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where Studs Turkel says that work is also a place where we get ulcers and do violence to the soul as well as the body at times. This is the negative side of work, what the mystics call the dark night of the soul. This shows how profound work is. Work brings out both joy and pain. Part of mysticism is going into the pain and darkness, not running from it, covering it up or denying it.

TRANSFORMATION: You are saying that the dark side of work is inevitable.

FOX: Wendell Barry, the poet farmer, says, “There’s drudgery in all work,” and he ought to know because he is a farmer. But, he says, there is meaning, too, and meaning raises the drudgery to a new level of giving, sacrifice, and generosity. Yes, there is drudgery in all work. But, if there is only drudgery, then there is a problem. There should also be meaning and there should be joy. We have to ask how we lessen the drudgery and increase the joy, and how we can make work more ennobling and creative.

TRANSFORMATION: Where does responsibility fit in—responsibility for family, responsibility for the Earth?

FOX: Work is where adults most express themselves. At the university I started here in Oakland, there is a doctor of ministry program for anyone who is about bringing spirit to our professions, whatever the profession be. The point is to bring spirituality to our work worlds because we really affect history through our work. In all work, our values are meant to come through—environmental values, gender justice, social justice, racial justice and so forth. Most middle class people spend their week working or training for work or recovering from work, while raising kids, hoping they will get good work, then life is over. Work is where much of our energy is spent. Certainly our values are meant to be played out at work. That is the respon-

sibility we have toward the Earth, future generations, and toward one another. The issues of justice and responsibility are played out in our work place. It is the place where we earn our living, so it is where we express our responsibility to our family, who we support financially and otherwise.

TRANSFORMATION: Many people experience work as something to be endured. What advice do you have for people who are surviving work day by day?

FOX: It is probably not work. They are surviving a job. Work has a quality of joy to it. When I was on a book tour a couple of years ago, in Washington, D.C., a woman told me a story. She said, “I really understand the difference between work and a job, because I had a job for years. I knew it was a job, it did not satisfy my spirit, but I’m a single mom, and I didn’t dare quit.” Then she said, “I got so angry one day that I quit. It took me two or three months to find another job. This job has become work and I’ve never been happier in my life. I’m soaring like a bird because I’m doing my work and I’m getting paid for it at the same time.” Notice what she had to do. She had to quit her job in order to be available for her work. That hiatus of two or three months was a time of concern and worry, but that demonstrates how profound work is to the human person. It is interesting that it took anger to get her out of a co-dependent relationship with her job so that she was actually available for work. In a way, it may have been low self-esteem on her part to assume that she could not quit the job and find work. She found herself kind of being beaten up at the job.

E.F. Schumacher says that we have insurance if your body is hurt at work but we do not have insurance if your soul is hurt at work. That shows up in our culture in the form of two excesses. One is entertainment and the other is counseling. Both of

these derive from the fact that many people get beat up at work soulwise. Like this woman, they take it in a masochistic way, a co-dependent way, and that probably comes from low self-esteem. We are overdosing on entertainment. Every culture has entertainment and appropriately so; people have to refresh themselves. But how many cultures in the history of the human species spend \$80 million on a ball player and \$60 million on a movie star? What is the meaning of this? We talk about more football teams as if we would never have enough, and more nights of the week watching football. What is this? I think it relates to work. People are so damaged at work, they come home so exhausted, they turn on a machine to watch other people and live vicariously through them. This is a deep soul problem. The same is true of counseling. It is as if we never have enough counselors in our culture. Why is that? I think it is often related to the soul damage that happens at work.

TRANSFORMATION: If someone says, “I work for a corporation with wonderful benefits. It’s a job to me, I don’t use my creativity or my heart at work, but it meets the needs of my family. I’m raising four children and I love my family.” How would you respond to that?

FOX: Nonsense. The presumption is that our family obligations are strictly materialistic, about money. Anyone who thinks that way is underestimating the love of their family and the richness of true family life. I know a couple who did something like that. He had a good job and they were doing well but everyone in the family agreed that he was not happy in the work. They had a family meeting, kids and all, and they agreed to lessen their style of life if he took a job he would enjoy. So, he did. He took a job that cut his salary in half. They learned to live more simply and had more fun together. That is what family is about. It is not about guaranteeing the perfect college education and the collection of cars in the garage. It is about sharing good times together and most good times are not about money. He had time to take up a musical instrument and to go camping with the kids. This question is an important one, it raises the issue of what is family. Our culture has a set of values that it wants us to adhere to, but we have to critique those values.

Sharing joy and time together and celebrating are far more important than being able to buy the latest fashions. The movement toward a more spiritual lifestyle is a simple movement. Anyone who confuses spirituality with the gathering of goodies is missing the point. If we confuse spiritual living with the collection of goods, we need to do more meditation on death. You do not take it with you. What do you take with you if not the experiences of shared beauty? To do that, you need a somewhat emptied heart and you need time. Those are things you cannot buy.

TRANSFORMATION: You say that our most important work is inner work. What is inner work?

FOX: Out of that process of dealing with joy and with grief emerges creativity, because creativity comes from within. Creativity yearns, as Thomas Klida says, “to be conspicuous,” to put itself out there. Inner work is the work of the heart, the work of joy and grief. When we do that we stir up our being and not just our doing, then we can work from that place. The East talks about it as action flowing from non-action. Inner work is kind of non-action. Joy and sorrow is non-action which gives birth to action. Our whole attitude changes. Here is a concrete example. I met a fellow, a car mechanic, at a convention a year ago. He told me he was bored in his work and the only reason he did it was to pay the bills for his family. He became increasingly bored. One day he talked to a fellow, who said, “Every time you turn the ratchet, say Allah.” He started to do that. Every time he turned the ratchet, he said “Allah.” This became a spiritual practice for him and his whole attitude toward his work changed. He began to love working on cars. He said to me, “If you listen carefully, a car will tell you whether it wants to die or whether it needs repair. Cars are real beings and not just cold machines.” His attitude toward his job changed because he did some inner work.

There are interesting experiments going on with meditation in prison. A woman warden in India took over the most violent prison in all of India. It was a terrible place. She said, “We have to do something,” and she brought in some teachers of Vipassana meditation, a Buddhist form of medita-

There is an ancient affinity between the great work and our daily lives. The great work is the work of the universe, it is the unfolding of creation. Somehow, our work, our daily life, should contribute to that. We should feel that we are connected to the great work of the universe.

tion. They started with about fifteen inmates. The inmates became so joyful through the meditation that the word got out and others wanted to do it. Soon, the entire prison, including the guards, was doing this meditation. There is a documentary on this called “Doing Time: Meet the Sound of Meditation.” It is amazing—they turned around this violent prison simply through meditation. The documentary shows the prison before, during, and after the meditation experience. It became a joyful place.

Something similar happened in Los Angeles at the biggest youth prison in America. There were about six hundred 16- to 19-year-olds. It was a hellhole for years. They were so desperate they invited three Buddhist monks to teach the kids meditation. I was told that the prison changed 180 degrees. That is inner work, learning to meditate, learning to deal with your feelings, learning to deal with your anger and joy. The Buddhist monks probably charge about three bowls of rice. To think that you can turn a prison around so simply and cheaply gives one hope. Maybe you can turn education, business, and politics around through meditation.

TRANSFORMATION: I would like to get your comment on the popular slogan, “Do what you love and the money will follow.”

FOX: There is a lot to be said for that. We have to take risks to do what we feel called to do, what really needs doing, and it is not always evident that the pay will be steady in those circumstances. Here, at this alternative university, we are not doing traditional education. Education has to be reinvented in our time but it is much harder financially. The faculty has to believe in us enough to take lower pay and fewer financial guarantees than they would if they were at a regular university. We work greater insofar as we are pioneers and we are taking a risk. Taking a risk is a sacrifice and a gift. It is a part of generosity and part of the energy that makes this

place operate. But it is a daily struggle when you start something new like this and there are no guarantees. You have to allow yourself to fail. We talked earlier about success and failure. Is it a failure if an experiment does not last ten years? Not necessarily, it may be spreading seeds that another generation can pick up on. You may be ahead of the crowd and you pay a price for that, that is part of being prophetic. Prophets are never popular.

TRANSFORMATION: Irrespective of material success, do you feel you are prospering in the sense of being vital and having health of spirit and health of community?

FOX: Yes, and assisting others to prosper more fully.

TRANSFORMATION: What motivates people to tithe and how does tithing fit into this discussion of work and money?

FOX: People ought to tithe because they belong to a community that they believe in and they want to see prosper. Tithing is a form of voluntary taxation. In our culture, we should spend more time thinking in communitarian terms about taxation. Politicians tell us how awful taxes are. It is interesting to read polls. Some polls say that Americans as a group, 80 percent or so, would pay greater taxes if they were guaranteed it would really save the environment. That shows me that we are community-oriented. Our species is a social species and we do care. I think the negative attitude toward taxing is detrimental to us. Some of our tax money is wasted, but not all of it. There are community purposes for which we do tithe. We do give some of our work money away for the greater good. It is an expression of interdependence. I am not a parent but my taxes go to schools. I do not resent that. People paid for my school when I was nine years old, and they did not know me, so I should pay for another generation even though I may not know the kids. It is about a sense of community. One of the mistakes in

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the modern era is to over-individualize our existences, as if we are all rugged, individual atoms. The new physics says there are no individual atoms. Atoms link up and join to make molecules and cells and organisms and societies. Tithing is a healthy tradition if it's done healthfully and is not about a power trip or control.

I do want to make this point, on another subject. To reinvent work and make work healthy again we have to reinvent education, because education is the training ground for our work, the funnel through which we pass our workers. Universities have become not so much funnels as strainers, where we strain the soul out of people. It is difficult to find a sense of spirit and soulfulness in our educational institutions. That is why I started this university. We have to criticize education, in the positive sense, and find other models. We are not going to change our professions until we change the matrix in which we train people for our professions. I do not have faith in academia as we know it, in terms of its ability to excite values and to teach people their place in the universe and how their work relates to the work of the universe.

TRANSFORMATION: This leads to my last question. You talk about the importance of asking what life is calling forth from you. Expand on that.

FOX: Why are you here? It has taken fifteen billion years to get you here. That is scientific fact. We are not just the products of our parents. Sixty percent of our body is hydrogen atoms. The hydrogen atoms in us go back to the fireball fourteen billion years ago. We have been around a long time, and it has been a great birthing process to bring us forward. So you have to presume there is some reason for being here, other than going shopping. We have to probe that reason. What are our talents? What is the pain in the world that speaks to us that we want to respond to? What

gifts do we have, whether material goods or power to influence? What gifts do we have to make a difference? We are all living under this sword of the collapse of the ecosystem and what are we doing about it? Are we planting trees, are we working in the media to awaken consciousness, are we working to preserve the species that are disappearing or the soil or the forests? Are we cutting back on our addiction to meat, changing our eating habits, using less land, water and grain for our eating habits? Are we being responsible, and how does it come through in our work and in our job?

I met this fellow who worked in a large corporation. He sent memos within the organization for some time saying, "We could do a better job of packaging our goods, using fewer throw-away materials." They ignored him. It was a drug corporation and their main clients were doctors. So he sent a letter to the doctors saying that this company could do a better job. He asked the doctors to write and tell them that. The doctors flooded the company with letters. This guy was then made vice president of ecological packaging. He is a prophet. Prophets work by imagination. He stayed within the company. He did not leave, he got the company to change by going to their clients. He used his imagination, he used his strong points. He took a risk, he was willing to be fired.

A question everybody has to ask at work is what is the bottom line? What am I willing to be fired for? What am I willing to die for? I can speak of that not just from theory. In the midst of writing "The Reinvention of Work," I received a pink slip from the Vatican. Every one of us has to have a conscience. Because work is so influential in the world and affects morality at so many levels, every one of us has to be willing to lose our job over something we believe in. •

For information on Matthew Fox or the Institute of Creation Spirituality, call (510)835-4827.



The Courage for Peace

LOUISE DIAMOND

Eileen Borris, who runs a peace-building organization in Paradise Valley, Arizona, gives us an example of the power of empathy and compassion to feed reconciliation. She tells of a situation involving Palestinian women living during the Intifada, under military occupation by the Israelis. On the day of the event she witnessed, she writes,

Emotions were running high, one moment very excited and the next very depressed. I was going to a nearby town to give a workshop for the women there. As I was walking toward the building a shot flew past me. When I got inside, I found out that the electricity was turned off, probably on purpose. This was the reality the women dealt with every day because of the occupation.

The workshop began with the women telling stories of husbands being killed, sons thrown in jail, and children hurt and maimed. Fists were in my face, as the women yelled, “You are an American, why aren’t you doing anything for us?”

In the midst of all this anger, a woman began telling a story. She said that one day her son ran out of the house. He was throwing stones at some soldiers

and was caught. The mother went to the soldiers, demanding to have her son back. Suddenly she looked into their eyes and saw fear. She was astonished to think that these soldiers were as afraid as she was!

At that moment, something shifted inside of her. She felt compassion, and told the soldiers that she wanted her son to stay inside so he could not bring harm to himself or to others. She began to feel at peace with the soldiers, something she never experienced before. She went to the main army headquarters to request her son back, and to her amazement he was released to her. When the woman finished telling her story, another woman said, “Now I understand compassion.”

OPENING THE HEART OF PEACE: LETTING GO

If we are to understand and experience reconciliation, we need to go through a shift like the one this Palestinian woman describes. The shift is the moment the heart opens, and whatever we have been holding moves ever so slightly aside to make room for a new understanding.

This shift can be the result of hard work and conscious choice, or it can be a gift of grace; it can result from meeting the other person heart to heart, or from experiencing a piece of the sacred hoop restored to its rightful place. However it happens, the shift is the moment when we open a new door on a familiar scene, and nothing is ever the same.

To be able to receive the new energy or information coming in, we need to make space for it. That means letting go of that which no longer serves us. Letting go is, I believe, one of the most important skills a human being can develop. It is what allows us to stay in the river of love, without putting the brakes on our journey by clinging to branches along the way. To let go is to release what we feel comfortable or secure hanging on to, and allow ourselves to flow with the natural impermanence of life into the next turn of the river, without necessarily knowing what we will find there. Some say, “Let go and let God.” My variation on that theme is, “Let go and let love...”

What is it we need to let go of for reconciliation? It may be the pain, or the bitterness we are feeling. Perhaps it is the anger or desire for revenge—to punish or strike back. Maybe it is our attachment to the victim script, or to a particular story we have convinced ourselves is the only truth. It could be our need to be right, our desire to be on top, our need for control, or our sense of what justice would look like in a given situation. Perhaps it is fear of humiliation and shame, or a resistance to facing into our loss and completing our mourning, or simply our pride and ego.

Whatever it is we need to let go of, ultimately, it is some variation of fear. That’s because, if we are not in a state of love, we are in a state of fear. As love is the glue of our inherent oneness, so fear is the primal anxiety that comes from mistakenly believing we are separate. Fear closes us off, love opens us up. When fear is released, love can flow in and through us. If love comes knocking, and our heart is so full of fear that we cannot open the door, a great opportunity is missed.

Often what makes letting go possible is separating the lessons in the experience from the experience itself. I understand this as extracting the

essence or meaning so I can release the form, or the package it came in. I remember the moment I first understood this notion. I was divorcing; I had cancer; I was a single mother—I was terrified of what my immediate future held. I had attended a weekend residential workshop on some topic, and the community of learners had bonded deeply, as often happens in such settings. When Sunday afternoon came around, and the workshop was over, I didn’t want to go back to my life’s frightening circumstances. I wanted to hang on to the wonderful people, the warm experience, the sense of group safety.

One of the facilitators felt my clinging, and shared with me one of the major paradoxes of human experience. He said, “If you want to have it, you have to let it go.” It took me many years to unfold the mystery of this paradox. I finally came to an understanding that I can retain the essence of an experience while letting go of its outer form or structure. To do this, I must reach into the very core of any experience and extract the essential lessons.

Extracting the lessons comes through asking the right questions: “What is this experience about in my life? What can I learn from it? What opportunities is it affording me for taking my next steps on this wild and wondrous human-spiritual journey? How is this situation helping me grow in love, or in taking responsibility for what I create? How can it help me remember myself as truly divine, one with all that is? What new information or skill can I draw from this that I can use in other situations? What essential meaning can I integrate from this, so I no longer feel the need to cling to the outer form?”

Drawing out the lessons is like emptying a box. I have a box that holds certain objects. Once I sort through the box, throwing away those objects I no longer want and finding a different way to keep those I do, I have no further need for that particular box. In the case of reconciliation, the box is the outward expression of the relationship. If I change the inner meaning, taking what is useful from the box, I can find a new and more appropriate container for the relationship.

The ultimate challenge of letting go has to do with one of the great paradoxes of human life,

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Fear, Faith, and Money

RICHARD MOSS

Having money is an aspect of prosperity, but it is not its basis. We each must have food and shelter to survive and money is the means for procuring these and much more. But for many people money becomes confused not simply with the necessities and the potential for comfort, but with the fulfillment of one's dreams and even with the meaning of life itself. Specifically, for many people money becomes the basis of their identity. Indeed, money is such a potent force that for most of us loss of money is accompanied by a dreadful sense of loss of self, while acquiring money, especially in large amounts, tends to cause an inflation of self-importance. Suffice it to say that faced with the archetypal significance that money has come to symbolize in our culture, most people are unable to sustain a clear sense of themselves. Virtually nothing in our world has the power to make us false and to give us false hope as money. And once there is false hope, debt is not far behind. In this way too many people become prisoners of their dreams—trying to fulfill themselves and

buy happiness from the outside in.

Faced with something so charged in our psyches, I find it helpful to try to simplify, to try to find the keel that holds our ship on a steady course. First let's acknowledge that the nature of our universe is relationship: everything is in relationship to everything else. Indeed, consciousness is our capacity to perceive and correctly interpret relationship. Taken to its ultimate potential, enlightened consciousness is an exceptional capacity for relationship moment by moment, a relationship that both honors one's individuality yet simultaneously knows oneself to be participating with an infinite continuum of being. When we bring money into this picture we see that money is the material representation of relationship, a material expression of the energy ceaselessly exchanged between individuals, and between humankind and the world. In this sense money is metaphysical: on one level it has a discrete physical existence, but it actually is a material representation or symbol for something infinitely complex and essentially quite spiritu-

al. We can argue about the differing value of the various ways relationship is enacted and acknowledged—how much we should pay for this service or that resource—but we cannot doubt that money has any existence save through relationship. If we are to understand money and what it means to have a healthy relationship to it, we first must understand it as an expression of relationship.

Obviously, money will have different meaning and different value from person to person depending on how deeply we know ourselves. If we believe we are exclusively separate entities, then money becomes an extension of our identity and separateness. I am reminded of the cover on an issue of “World Watch” magazine showing each family privately living with its own house, car, lawn mower, etc., atop what looked like a vertical walled, unsailable butte. The headline read “Sharing?” This image captures the sense we have today in which money becomes an instrument for our separation from others, for self-protection, and thus, to varying extent, a means for immunity from relationship. In this instance, if we have sufficient money we have the power to avoid some relationships and situations have the freedom to participate in those we desire. For many people in our culture it is this freedom that is considered prosperity. If, on the other hand, we have very little money, then we have much less power to avoid certain circumstances and we are less able to control who we will be in relationship with.

Money is directly related to time. The myth is that money gives us the power to control our time and wealth often translates into the power to determine how others spend their time. Ironically, despite all that we buy to supposedly make our lives easier, it is the pressure of not having enough time that most people struggle with. This pressure is greatest where people identify money and what it seems to promise as more real and important than soul. Then it is but a short step to leveraging buying power with debt, insuring that one becomes an initiate of the financial system and, if not cautious, its slave. Indeed, exceeding seventy-hour work weeks is no longer an uncommon event and in some instances, even longer hours are considered a normal aspect of sacrificing self for a well-paying job.

If money can be seen as a source of immunity when self-protection and separateness dominate in our consciousness, it can likewise be seen as the basis of community when it is the sense of openness and ceaseless connection that is our predominant understanding. When money becomes respected as the material expression of the energy of connection, it exists as a force for the sustaining of community among mutually-empowering individuals. When we recognize—not merely intellectually but as a life-organizing realization—that we are connected to everyone, then the Golden Rule is not only to do unto others as we would have them do to us, but rather to do to others because they are us. Then we experience the suffering of others as an obligation to live our lives in such a way as to try to alleviate that suffering, however long this may take. Then compassion, not self-protection, is the predominant impulse and prosperity for oneself means working for the prosperity of the whole. Money is no longer merely a private resource but a community resource and this gives profound meaning to our labor.

Immunity and community: this is the conundrum of money for it rests in two fundamental truths—that we are both separate and ceaselessly interconnected. When the emphasis tilts too far in the direction of immunity then money and the use we make of it becomes a source of isolation, self-protection and division. This is the danger in capitalist democracies. When it tilts too far toward community, as it did in the socialism of the communist states, then individual rights and the natural expression of individual needs and tendencies is suppressed. The science of economics shows that when either polarity is overly emphasized there is the possibility of distortion and the society can become diseased. A global economic disease exist today in the over-emphasis of money as a source of immunity and salvation. But the real problem is not with money, it is with human nature and, specifically, with our inability to deal with fear in a conscious and healthy way.

Fear has always had the power to dehumanize us. It does this because it intensifies our sense of separation. It is this, in turn, that leads to greed. When fear is the dominant force we are trying to compensate, money becomes an instrument for personal

Money itself is not evil. It is making money the primary object of meaning in one's life that is evil. It is the subjugation of one's life to the pursuit of money rather than living to uncover and express the soul's own unique genius that is the evil.

security, for recognition, and for power, and the more the safer. Even if we use our money for "our" family, "our" tribe, "our" nation, this is often just the collective expression of fear-driven insular tendencies. And intellect becomes the superb tool for rationalizing greed and dishonesty because, after all, "others do the same thing and if we're not clever they'll get more." At every step, fear and greed dance hand in hand.

Yet, as we all know (but don't necessarily believe) money itself is not the cure for fear. It can alleviate certain anxieties, it can provide a degree of hope, a degree of prosperity, but fear is a far deeper disturbance in our psyches that has at its roots a profound ignorance of our real nature. Fear feeds on our perception of being exclusively separate psychic entities. Only the most earnest and intelligent examination of ourselves can show us that this is a delusion and establish us in a right relationship to ourselves and to each other. A true relationship to our essential nature, to whatever extent we have realized and lived it, requires that we acknowledge, even if only intellectually at first, that there is something prior to this thing called "me," this "me" that seems to fill our whole field of being every morning when we awaken from sleep. It is odd that, having forgotten "me" while asleep, we become re-intoxicated every morning with the sense of its ultimate, irrefutable existence. Only deep insight can awaken us from this intoxication, and the potential to awaken is clearly present for we have the testimony of the lives of great souls throughout time.

It is only in faith that we receive a form of nourishment that can help us look squarely into our fear and the power our intellects have to rationalize greed. It is only in faith that we can hope to face the conundrum of money, integrity, intelligence, and compassion.

This moves us into the question of the relation-

ship between prosperity and responsibility. Again we are in the domain where we each exercise altruism or selfishness in accordance with our realization of faith, or in accordance with our vulnerability to fear. This is not the domain of philosophy or good intentions. I can assert the highest values and principles, but I can only pray that in my life I will be able to fulfill these. Prosperity and a right relationship to money grows from a deeper relationship to self lived moment by moment. At a deeper level of realization of self, there is no absolute separation between you and me, and none of us are separate from the Earth. At this level prosperity is no longer about being able to control your relationships or circumstances, because all relationships are valuable and all circumstances are a mirror in which we can learn about ourselves. We are no longer victims of fear; it is our teacher, not our ruler. Once we have this relationship to fear, then we can also have a healthier relationship to money as an instrument for honoring compassionate relationships.

Freeing ourselves from the conundrum of money requires a spiritual understanding. Money itself cannot oblige us to its own use. It is trust in our sense of obligation to each other born of spiritual understanding, person by person, that is the basis of any healthy economy. It is a profound irony (despite the historical reasons) that in the United States we have divided government and the laws ordering our economic relationships from our spiritual institutions. Indeed, it is an understatement to say that in our society there is a profound confusion between money and spirituality. This confusion is easily furthered by a superficial reading of, for example, the New Testament. It is said that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (Timothy 11:10), but money itself is not evil. It is making money the primary object of meaning in one's life that is evil. It is the subjugation of one's life to the

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Prosperity and Spirituality

AN INTERVIEW WITH RABBI SHONI LABOWITZ
BY RAY GREENLEAF

Born into a long line of rabbis, Rabbi Shoni Labowitz has been exploring the spiritual path all her life. From a Jewish girls school in Baltimore to spiritual journeys in ashrams in the United States and India, and finally to a return to her Kabbalistic roots after being inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi (See PT, Fall 1999), Labowitz has developed a deep spiritual understanding of life. Labowitz lives in Florida where she draws on Kabbalistic and other mystical traditions in her work developing Living Waters, a spiritual health spa. She also hosts the radio program Spiritual Focus and serves as a co-rabbi with her husband at Temple Adath Or in Fort Lauderdale.

She is a believer in miracles and her first book, "Miraculous Living," is a wonderfully written guide through the "Ten Gates of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life." Combining Taoist, meditative and traditional kabbalistic teachings, Labowitz in her book, gives us a

rich tapestry in exploring the Ten Gates which are, intention, wisdom, understanding, compassion, strength, harmony, success, glory, creativity and nobility. She recently published her second book, "God, Sex and Women of the Bible: Discovering Our Sensual, Spiritual Selves" which reinterprets the stories of women of the Bible. I spoke with Rabbi Labowitz at her home in Florida and we began by exploring the subject of prosperity.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: Begin by discussing prosperity from your personal perspective.

RABBI SHONI LABOWITZ: I will start with tithing. I know well the power of tithing and what it can do in someone's life. There was a time when my husband and I did not earn a salary. We weren't sure where our income was going to come from. I attended a lecture where a young man talked about how tithing had turned his life around. I thought we were charitable

and generous, but I realized that tithing meant taking ten percent off the gross of your income. I returned home—we had maybe \$40,000 to our name, and we had two children in high school, ready to go to college—and I looked at my husband and I said, “It feels right, and I want to tithe \$4,000.” We gave anonymously and all of a sudden, we had incredible sources of income.

My husband is also a rabbi. We formed our own community when we realized that we were transforming the way we were living religiously. We attracted people and had our own prayer services. There came a time when we needed to ask these people, if they were serious, to start a membership and to make the community financially viable. My father is a rabbi, and I flew up north to ask his blessing, because it was hard for me to ask people to make a commitment with money. He taught from the Talmud, and told me that even if someone tithes for the sake of getting ten times in return, it is good tithes. Sometimes we tithe altruistically but even if you want to get ten times back, it is okay. He blessed me and I came back and started a membership, introducing people to the fact that they needed to pay membership and make the community financially viable. It worked. Today, when we get nervous about the temple or our own finances, and I feel like we might slip into the red, I look to see where we tithed last. Even if tithing puts us in the red, somehow things come back. In my tradition, Kabbala, the Kabbalists teach that God does not want a schlepper as a partner. God wants you to be prosperous, God wants you to have pleasure in life. What kind of a partner would you be if you did not feel your own sense of wealth and richness and abundance with all of God’s gifts?

TRANSFORMATION: This speaks to how prosperity and spirituality go hand in hand.

LABOWITZ: It is all one and the same. If you feel you do not have time, then you give time. If you feel you do not have money, then you give money. If you feel you do not have love, you give love. It works in everything.

TRANSFORMATION : In your book “Miraculous Living,” you describe the ten branches of the tree of life. One branch is success. Talk about the relationship between success and prosperity.

LABOWITZ: They are tied into each other. On the tree of life, you have to first go through intention. You have to know what your intention is. You can not know if you have succeeded if you do not know what your intention was to begin with. Then, from intention, you have to be open to accepting all of what God is giving you, which is wisdom. From wisdom, you have to siphon all that God is giving you and move it into understanding, and then you need to have compassion. Before you can be strong, you have to have compassion. This is the path of the tree of life. Compassion means giving because it feels good to give, not because you want to have something in return, loving because it feels good to love, regardless of whether you are loved back. You move from compassion to strength and from strength to a sense of harmony. Then you understand what you are succeeding in, then success comes in. Success has to do with being able to maintain a certain lifestyle. Success does not always mean getting the goal. Success means understanding that you receive the goal along the way, in the process of what you are doing. Often, when we walk the spiritual path and we reach moments of consciousness, we slack off. Success is being able to maintain the path and to know that if you slack off, or take a side road that gets you nowhere, you can come back, you can always come back to the path.

TRANSFORMATION: On the path, what role does psychological work have with spiritual development?

LABOWITZ: I am not well versed in psychology, that is not my background; however, I am called more and more by therapists to help their patients spiritually. This says to me that the heart yearns for something beyond what my local life may dictate. We are part of a greater plan; we are part of a larger story than our local lives. Everybody born into this world has a mission, a unique mission to each person, and so psychology and spirituality are beginning to blend. The local story is the process by which we move toward a much larger story—the story of the spirit residing in each person that lets us know our lives have meaning and purpose.

TRANSFORMATION: An aspect of psychotherapy is telling your story.

LABOWITZ: Telling your story is so important. Stories affect how we think about ourselves. We are

walking myths. I have led women's spirituality groups for more than 20 years. I hear women's stories, especially through the different sexual stages of their lives. In the Bible, we can, without changing the text, retranslate some of the Hebrew words and come up with stories that empower rather than disempower women. Take, for instance, the story of Eve. Throughout Western history, Eve is seen as the one who brought sin into the world. In the verse, God tells Eve, "Don't eat from the tree, for you will die." In Hebrew, that verse says something completely different. It says, "When you will eat from the tree, you will die a certain death." To me, that is the template for the meaning of stories. To eat from the tree of knowledge means that if you ingest your own knowing, if you speak about what your spirit inside of you knows to be true, then you need to be prepared to get old, die, and burst anew.

TRANSFORMATION: Which is the central aspect of the psycho-spiritual journey and the process of individuation.

LABOWITZ: It is telling your story in a whole new way. This is why I wrote "God, Sex, and Women in the Bible." The Bible never says sex is for intercourse. Instead, it says, "to know." What we yearn for more than anything is to know each other and be known by each other.

TRANSFORMATION: In both books, you write about sexuality. In "Miraculous Living," it is cultivating divine sexuality, and in "God, Sex, and Women in the Bible," it is about the passionate nature of the women.

LABOWITZ: Yes, and also about how they cultivated divine sexuality. We live in a tumultuous, chaotic, violent era, but there are people who say "We are one." If we are one, then we are one with God as well as everything else, and God is one with everything. We are God, God is us, and we are sexual beings. We are not just human sexual beings, we also have divinity within our sexuality. I talk about that in the biblical story of Leah. In Genesis, it says that Leah was hated and despised and God opened her womb. She developed a relationship with a source beyond herself that made her feel beautiful. The Talmud says that when women came into her presence, they felt joy. The teaching is to take a negative and turn it into a positive through your relationship with God. I am talking about a sense of

godliness. When you have that relationship with godliness, you begin seeing it in everyone with whom you come in contact.

TRANSFORMATION: This speaks to the issue of deserving prosperity and richness.

LABOWITZ: So often we do not feel that we deserve it. I am sure you scrap with that and so do I. I do not know anyone who does not. I remember seeing the magnificent movie "Schindler's List." I did not cry until the end of the movie when Schindler made the statement, "I could have done more. If only I had done more." That hit me, because that is what everyone feels. I feel that the message of God is that you are beautiful, you are good enough, you are succeeding, because when you go to bed at night, you feel wholesome and whole. That does not mean you are going to stop here, but here you are good enough, and for the next step, you will be ready for that, too.

TRANSFORMATION: Talk about manifesting vocationally and how that relates to prosperity.

LABOWITZ: Miracles are the simplest way that people see manifestation. You look for a parking space and it appears or you think of a friend and he calls. When I think of my life, everything is a miracle. Before I wrote my first book, I did not think I was a writer. I was a teacher and a rabbi and I was doing a ceremony for this man from New York. The family came in for an unveiling, the ritual where you unveil the gravestone a year after your loved one's passing. I met this man at the cemetery and he happened to be a literary agent. Within ten minutes, he said, "You have a book in you," and within six weeks, I was contracted to write a book.

TRANSFORMATION: You wrote that the writing of the book "Miraculous Living" was a miracle.

LABOWITZ: I was at dinner celebrating this book I was supposed to write and in he walks, a man I had not seen for one year. I asked him to join us for a drink. He said, "You'll need a place to write." He gave me a magnificent apartment facing the ocean, on the beach, for four years, in which I was able to write two books. These are miracles.

TRANSFORMATION: In "Miraculous Living," you talk about the importance of breath in prayer and meditation.

LABOWITZ: Breath. There's a prayer that we say in the morning, in Hebrew, that means, "every

breath shall praise you, God.” The Kabbala teaches that God is the breath that breathes inside of you. The key, for me, in meditation, is to focus in on my breath and to realize when I am breathing, that it is God breathing in me.

TRANSFORMATION: So, befriending your breath is befriending God within you.

LABOWITZ: Right, it enables you to become porous. As you get into your breath, you empty and you become porous. You leave yourself open for new things to happen, but first you have to be really porous, you have to say to yourself and intend in every cell of your body to let go. You let go of your last moment, your last thought, and you become porous, like material, and God breathes in your life. Adam was created by the breath of God. The breath of God gives us life and continuously refreshes and renews us.

TRANSFORMATION: Can you talk about the use of prayer in your work?

LABOWITZ: Prayer, like God, is in everything. Prayer is the transmission of energy. Some of us are inspired by words, others by music, others by chants. When we have prayer services, we include all of the above, and people usually dance in the aisles. The Kabbalists teach that to reach true enlightenment, you need to know how to dance. It is the spirit dancing through your feet. We celebrate Shabbat, the Sabbath, and whether we’re doing it in our community or in the privacy of our own home, our prayer becomes song, and our song becomes dance. Prayer is also living a prayerful life. It is not just saying the words, it is action. It may not always be loud actions or big actions. Even in small actions you feel the transmission of energy from God to you, from you to God of another, and from you to the God of the world.

TRANSFORMATION: Which brings us to the question about compassion and responsibility and social action.

LABOWITZ: The Kabbalist tree of life has ten gates. The first three gates are gates of the mind, they all exist in thought.

TRANSFORMATION: Intention, wisdom, and understanding.

LABOWITZ: Yes. In order to move from your mind to the actual living of it in the world, you need compassion. Compassion is truly uncondi-

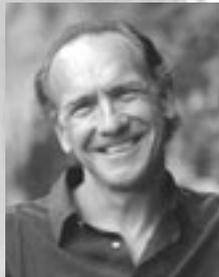
tional love—giving because it feels good to give, not because you are going to receive. It is giving because you know you need to give, because you know it is your place in this world. Not everyone gives in the same way in the same place. We each have a unique mission. I remember speaking once with Sister Joan Chiddister. She is socially and politically active, and she travels all over the world. She told me, “I speak because I need to speak.” God gives her this message, she puts it out, and then she leaves. What the recipients do with it is their responsibility. Often, we make our compassion like strings tied to people, when in actuality, compassion means to give and to receive without strings. Giving is one thing, receiving others for who they are is another. I might not agree with you, but I can honor you for your mission in this world.

TRANSFORMATION: In “Miraculous Living,” the ninth branch of the tree of life is creativity. Speak about creativity in relation to prosperity and spirituality.

LABOWITZ: The Kabbala calls the ninth branch the gate of creation, which means sexuality, and is considered the foundation. It is interesting that sexuality and creativity and foundation are all one in the Kabbalistic tree of life. Everybody has the ability to create, and it is not just creating children. Every thought is another child that you birth into this world, and thoughts are seeded in you from God. We are born of God and we have a mission to fulfill. We are not an “oops” of creation, we are not an accident that happened. We were meant to come in, and we were meant to come in through the parents that we chose, and we were meant to do something. In order to feel that creativity, we need to acknowledge ourselves and love ourselves, recognizing that we carry a spark of God. Every part of who we are has a divine aspect. What is unique about Judaism is that we have an invisible God. God is in everything, everywhere, at all times. God’s glory shines throughout the world. If God is a god I cannot see visually, then God is a god I can only imagine. How I create that image of God for me at any moment speaks to not only who that God is in the universe, but who that God is in me. I am as limited as I limit my image of God. I am as creative as I am with that image of God. •

Richard Moss

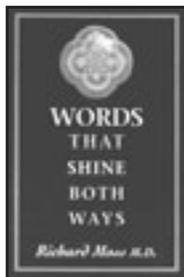
*"It's the thing you can't say 'Yes' to
that is your door to the Universe"*



Richard Moss, author of *Words That Shine Both Ways*, *The Second Miracle*, *The Black Butterfly* and *The I That Is We*, addresses the fundamental necessity for practical spirituality, spirituality that enhances our capacity for conscious relationships, relationships that teach us how to shift from suffering and avoidance to openness and joyousness. His teaching skillfully integrates meditation, energy work, dream work, body consciousness and self-inquiry, awakening each participant to a relationship to truth and to the transformative grace of life's intelligence.

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April 15

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Atlanta, GA

May 12-21

10 Day Foundational Conference
Sedona, AZ

The Wave of Breath

Continued from page 34

sarily understanding it. Insight may come later, but it will come always simply as a by-product of being present for experience. In this final step is a quality of surrender, of "falling into the gap" where life can change us. There can be an exhilarating sense of freedom when this happens, a deep letting go of our "grip" on life. This kind of surrender requires a willingness to be changed. It involves, too, a willingness to trust life, to keep the focus of our awareness on energy in motion instead of on trying to understand what is happening. Prana is intelligent, after all.

This simple technique of "riding the wave" can become for us a kind of bridge that we can use at any moment to cross over from isolation and separation to relationship with the phenomenal world—the world of the senses, of nature, of the heart and the body. It can become one of the boats that we row as we traverse the wild inner river of feelings and life. •

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Briefly Noted

Exploring the Labyrinth: A Guide for Healing and Spiritual Growth, by Melissa West. Broadway Books, 2000, 198 pages.



If you feel like you're lost in an unsolvable maze, perhaps it's time you tried a labyrinth. The labyrinth, psychotherapist Melissa West writes, is one of the oldest contemplative and transformational tools known to exist. The labyrinth represents journey, West writes, the journey through life, death, and rebirth, the spiritual journey, the initiatory journey. Labyrinths have been used for centuries for prayer, ritual, initiation, and personal and spiritual growth. Walking a labyrinth is a physical metaphor for the journey of healing, spiritual and emotional growth, and transformation.

A labyrinth offers only one route to the center and back out again. Once you enter the labyrinth, its paths lead you to the center, West writes, of both the labyrinth and yourself: the center of your life, heart, spirit, soul. The walk is often deeply meditative as walkers journey to their center, focused inward in meditation or healing work.

West's book focuses on the two main types of labyrinths now in use. The oldest, the Cretan, leads walkers to the center through seven circuits. The Chartres labyrinth has eleven concentric paths that wind through four quadrants of a circle.

A Christian pattern, an equal-armed cross, is visible in its layout and the center design is a rosette, symbolizing the Virgin Mary.

Labyrinths are gaining popularity, West says, because they fulfill six contemporary needs: deepening spirituality; inwardness and connection to soul; access to intuition and creativity; simplicity; integration of body and spirit; and intimacy and community.

Her book has three parts. The first offers some history and introduces readers to walking and working with the labyrinth. The second tells how to create temporary or permanent indoor and outdoor labyrinths, how to prepare the labyrinth space for walking, tend the labyrinth as a meditative discipline and create labyrinth altars. The third gives ways to use the labyrinth for spiritual growth, healing work, creativity enhancement, goal-setting, and ritual and celebration.

West is a leader in the labyrinth movement and has led numerous labyrinth-based workshops as program director of Harmony Hill retreat center.

Knowledge of the Heart: Gnostic Secrets of Inner Wisdom, by June Singer. Element Books, 1999, 224 pages.



June Singer is a clinical psychologist and Jungian analyst as well as an acknowledged authority on Gnosticism. In her latest book, Singer captures the essence and reveals the profound relevance of the Gnostic Gospels to our everyday lives.

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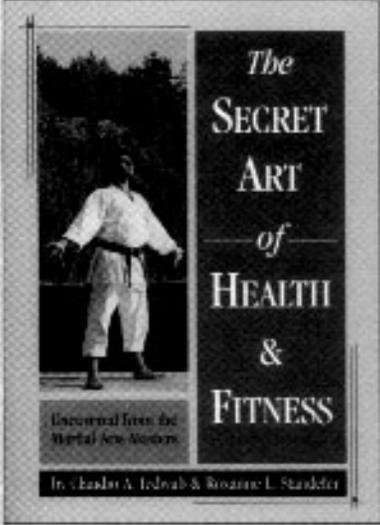
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The book opens with an introduction to the Gnostic tradition, a discussion of Gnosticism, Gnostics, and Gnosis, a brief history of Gnosticism, and a note about the Nag Hammadi Library.

After that, the book is arranged as a Book of Hours, a traditional plan for meditative practice. Its eight sections represent the eight monastic periods of prayer and meditation: Midnight, Sunrise, Early morning, Mid-morning, Midday and Afternoon, Sunset and Night.

Singer introduces each chapter with First Thoughts, then provides in each chapter seven excerpts from the Gnostic Gospels. She has rephrased the messages of the Gnostics into contemporary language, and ends each with her own personal contemplation in the form of a meditation. The Gnostic excerpts also serve as a focus for meditation or worship.

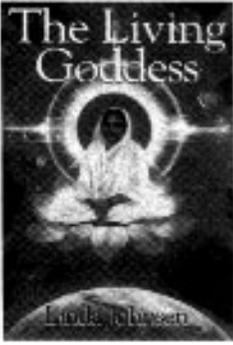
The excerpts selected for inclusion, Singer writes, were chosen because of their powerful ideas and special relevance to our times. She also was cognizant of the way each excerpt illuminates our own psychological processes.

The gnostic writings, Singer says, express the timeless longings of the human soul to penetrate the mysteries of existence, and to bring light into our own lives.

Getting to Where You Are: The Life of Meditation, by Steven Harrison. Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999, 208 pages.

Admit it. At least occasionally, the time you set aside for your morning meditation is spent not in blissful relaxation and expanded consciousness. It's spent fretting about how much you have to do that day, and how little time you

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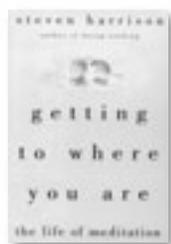
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have to do it.

Relax. Steven Harrison says you're not alone. In fact, he says, for many people, the very meditation that is supposed to relax the body and help you achieve an inner peace merely adds another stress factor into your lives.

And he has a solution to this conundrum. In his irreverent book "Getting to Where You Are: The Life of Meditation," Harrison (author of "Doing Nothing" and "Being One") says the only meditation we need to do is the one we are already doing: Actuality Meditation, or, as he calls it, full-contact living.

Actuality Meditation, as Harrison describes it, is the active exploration of life without the constraints of doctrine, religious belief, and technique-oriented practices. It is experiencing the experiencer: you. True meditation is our natural state of existence and we do it effortlessly. To reap its benefits, we simply need to do less, not more. It's about letting go of what isn't and being what is; it's about embracing the simple recognition of where we are, and living life fully.

The book, with a light dose of humor and some awareness experiments, is as much about what meditation is not as it is about what meditation is. It was written, he says, to free the reader from the burdens imposed by the dogmatic structures of meditation techniques and to replace it with ... nothing, except exuberance for life.

Harrison's book is a call to experience life fully, and meditation, rather than a means to find peace,

is the very expression of that peace in each moment of our lives. It is not something we do, it is something that is. It is full-contact living.

The Lost Secrets of Prayer: Practices for Self-Awakening, by Guy Finley. Llewellyn Publications, 1998, 210 pages.



For many people, prayer seems to be the habit of appealing to God for something we think we want or need in our lives.

In "The Lost Secrets of Prayer," Guy Finley redirects our thinking. We don't need to pray for this or that, because everything we need we already have. Our focus in prayer should not be a litany of requests, says Finley. Rather, it should be awakening and becoming aware of the illusion that stands between us and the ability to see that we have everything we need. There's no need to pray for what we already have; we must pray for the ability to see and be aware that we already have what we need.

Finley's approach to prayer, for most people, involves a change of perception. We have what we need but cannot see it because of a blockage in us: thought that limits our world to our own imagination and blinds us from seeing Reality. His book offers practices for changing our eyes, the way we see, so that the blockage is removed and the connection to Reality, which has always been there, is revealed.

"The Lost Secrets of Prayer" is a book of practices for self-awakening: awakening within ourselves to ourselves. God is not missing in

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our lives, but likely has become covered up with all the trappings of modern-day life. The insights and practices in Finley's book helps us peel away the layers and uncover God, and in the process, reveal to us that we do indeed have everything we need to be content, compassionate, and happy.

The Mystic Heart: Discovering Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions, by Wayne Teasdale. New World Library, 1999, 272 pages.



When you look at an oak tree and an orchid, you can, depending on your perspective, see either a multitude of similarities

or a multitude of differences.

The same is true when looking at the world's great religions.

Brother Wayne Teasdale, an inter-religious monk and mystic, prefers to look at the similarities. In his book, "The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions," Teasdale shows that the same aspects that can form the basis for conflict between religions of the world can also be a meeting place of understanding and commonality.

He calls it interspirituality and defines it as a genuine and comprehensive spirituality that draws on the mystical core of the world's great religious traditions.

Teasdale's interspirituality is more than just developing tolerance: It opens the door to even greater truths.

Teasdale outlines the practical elements of a universal spirituality: solidarity with all life, moral capacity, nonviolence, self-knowledge,



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selfless service, simplicity of lifestyle, daily practice, and serving as a prophetic witness in the causes of justice, peace, and protecting creation.

The final goal of authentic spirituality, Teasdale says in his book, is realizing our own true nature as mystics.

Manger and Mystery: An Advent Adventure, by Marilyn Brown Oden. Upper Room Books, 1999, 123 pages.



It often takes a profound effort and sincere diligence to stay focused on the meaning of the Christmas season and not get swept up in the rampant commercialism of the holiday.

Marilyn Brown Oden's book, "Manger and Mystery: An Advent Adventure," offers that focus and can guide you on a spiritual path through the season.

Advent is traditionally a season of preparing for the birth of Christ in the world and in our hearts. Oden's book is arranged to coincide with the Advent season: the first four chapters correspond with the four weeks of Advent and the last chapter focuses on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Each chapter begins with an introduction, includes scripture and readings, and closes with a guide for thought and reflection, all aimed at awakening to the meaning of Christ's birth and to living our own lives more fully.

Chapter by chapter, "Manger and Mystery" offers readers a chance to recover the simplicity of the stable, rekindle the sacredness of the Advent season, remember

the Song of Mary, reclaim and follow the star, and recall our story and restore our call to live in God's presence and in responsiveness to God's love.

The book encourages readers to make time to read scripture, reflect on the readings, and discover again God's presence in the world and in their lives.

Advent is a time of waiting in hopeful anticipation, and Oden's Advent devotional is designed to rekindle that flame of faith.

Working on Yourself Doesn't Work: A Book About Instantaneous Transformation, by Ariel and Shya Kane. ASK Productions, Inc., 1999, 126 pages.



Skip that "fix me" seminar you signed up for. Cancel your next "fix me" retreat. Working on yourself doesn't work, say authors Ariel and Shya Kane, who offer a simple answer to transforming your life: Awareness.

The essence, the key, to transformation is awareness, but it's important to understand exactly what awareness is: noticing or neutrally observing your life without trying to manipulate or change what you see. It's being a non-judgmental observer, an anthropologist: You see the Awareness is neutral. It means seeing what is but not feeling like you have to change it or fix it. It is integrating anything that happens in your life into your life and a state of well-being.

This awareness is what allows transformation. Unlike change—which is linear, directed, measurable, provable, and happens over time—transformation, the Kanes

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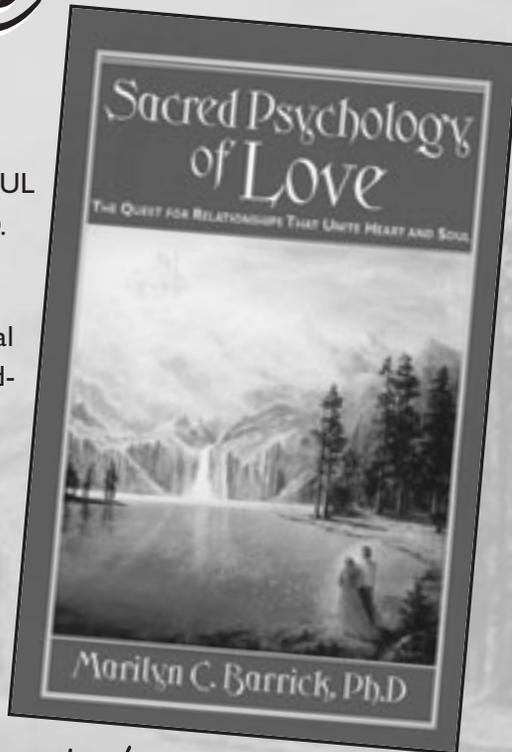
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say, is instantaneous and can only happen in the present moment.

That present moment emerges when we forgive people and events from the past and let go of our history. Instead of focusing on and trying to fix the past or our problems, the focus is on being in the present moment, being there as life unfolds. Forget the past and quit worrying about the future: When you are living in the moment, the authors write, there is nothing you need to achieve, fix or get rid of; instead, there is a deep sense of satisfaction within.

The Kanes offer three principles of transformation, again simple:

- Anything you resist persists, and gets stronger, or for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. So don't resist the way your life is showing up in this moment, or it will stick around.

- No two things can occupy the same space at the same time, whether it's two people sitting in the exact same spot in a chair or two emotions. You can't be happy if you are actually sad.

- Anything that you recreate or have be exactly as it is will complete itself and disappear. If you allow yourself to feel what you are feeling when you are feeling it, it will clear up and disappear.

The Kanes' message is simple: Don't fight life, whatever it dishes up—past or future—by trying to fix everything. Instead, immerse yourself in awareness of every moment and every experience—good or bad—and that awareness will transform your life. •

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Compassion in Action

Continued from page 12

choice. Being fully alive is dangerous, because you can get hurt, but that's what we're here for: we're here to live fully and to take every chance that's involved in doing that. It takes courage, because you have to reach out of your own self-protective shell to express your compassion. It's not enough to just

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feel bad for people. You have to do something.”

There's a Giraffe in everyone, says Ann. “Just start with the smallest action you're comfortable with. Get involved in something organized where you're not the only one. Get out of the cultural soup that says you don't count and nothing you do can affect this mess. We're overwhelmed constantly by a culture that tells us all the problems are huge and unsolvable. If you pick up a tiny corner of the problem and see that you're solving it, you're not going to buy that anymore. You're going to have much more faith in yourself as an effective presence in the world, and much more faith in your society as a place where things can change. I want us all to feel the dignity we get from seeing that something that we do matters.”

Ann's advice for finding one's place in service actually comes from her kitchen. “The basic cooking recipe in my kitchen is ‘What have you got?’ That's what you make a meal from. When I was looking for my path I asked myself that question, and I realized I had communication skills. I started looking at the best way to use my gifts. Everybody has something. You could be the best talker around, you might have an enormous ability with your hands, or you can fix anything. You need to look at every gift you've got and ask, ‘How can I use that to serve?’”

Ann is not naive about the suffering around her. She has learned to avoid compassion fatigue by holding onto the image of being in a rowboat in rough water. “A lot of people are drowning, and if you're in the boat you don't want to get

in the water with them. You want to help them get in the boat. If you let yourself be pulled into the water, everybody drowns. You just can't do that. It's like on the airplanes: if the air masks come down, you put yours on before you help someone else, because if you don't you're going to die and you won't be able to help. It's very important for people to be healthy and centered. The more present you are and the steadier that you are on your own pins, the easier it is to help people without getting consumed by their suffering. But, at the same time, you can't wait until you're perfect to act. You sort of rub your stomach and pat your head at the same time.”

Ann laughs when she admits that she lives by the saying over her desk, “Some blessings wear a hell of a disguise.” “I know sometimes I sound like a blooming idiot around these cynical little mottoes like, ‘If you can keep your head, you just don't understand the situation.’ I have been trained as an intellectual and every once in a while, I have to laugh at how intellectually disreputable my operations are, because a proper intellectual runs on despair. I guess that makes me an outcast from the intelligentsia. But you know, I've got years and decades of experience now and it's all blessings, all of it. Every last ounce, a blessing.”•

To find out more about the Giraffe Project and The Giraffe Heroes Program, to nominate a Giraffe, or to join the Giraffe Project, visit its website at www.giraffe.org, e-mail them at office@giraffe.org, or call (360)221-7989.

The Courage for Peace

Continued from page 58

which is that we are each whole and unbreakable, yet in need of mending what is broken in our lives. We need to actively release what precipitates the brokenness in order to recall the wholeness.

Here again, we need to think simultaneously of two levels of reality: the particular and the absolute; the drop of water and the ocean. In our everyday, matter-of-fact life, our hearts are chipped, scuffed, poked, bashed, and sometimes broken in our attempts to love and be loved. In our absolute, divine and holy nature, we are Love incarnate, one with the sacred circle of life, inviolate, whole, and wholly unbreakable. Our task is to come again and again to remember that wholeness, and the ultimate task of reconciliation is to reconcile ourselves with that remembrance. With time and practice, we might do this with ever greater speed, ease, and grace.

In my inner life, just as the Spirit of Peace inhabits the ideal world of my hopes and dreams for peace and harmony, so too is there another great being who carries the ideal of Love. I call this being the Angel of Love. I imagine the Angel of Love and the Spirit of Peace as partners, entwined in a single dance to set loose vast energies of love and peace on the planet, so that humanity might remember itself as it truly is, a single, sacred circle of life.

For me to receive this message, and concretely incorporate it into my everyday life, I need to be constantly letting go of whatever attitudes, feelings, beliefs, patterns, urges, or fears may hinder that ultimate reconciliation. Only then can I reach beyond my small self into the realm where the power of love

and the joy of peace simply are.

When I can do that, I can draw down whatever I need to mend what simply appears to be broken. When I can do that, I can better care for all those precious beings who are my relatives, to whom I belong, and in whose keeping my heart is placed. When I can do that, I have touched the heart of the one, holy, heart, and the Spirit of Peace lives through me. What a blessing. •

From "The Courage for Peace: Daring to Create Harmony in Ourselves and the World," by Louise Diamond. Copyright 2000 by Louise Diamond. Printed by arrangement with Conari Press.

Letters from Readers

Continued from page 8

like much of our communication these days.

If aliens exist and are monitoring our communications, their conclusion must be, "They don't know how to love." You change that. I'm happy to support your magazine.—Jim Seagull.

H O F F M A N P R O C E S S

I am writing in appreciation for the article in your magazine on the Hoffman Process. After sending for further information I decided to step out beyond my boundaries. I just completed the process. If it hadn't been for sharing your personal experience through that article I may have never done the process.

At the moment I have never felt this prepared to re-enter the world with renewed strength and the courage to begin life with a freshly unburdened spirit.—*Michael, San Diego, California.* •

Finding Your Voice

Continued from page 26

(except for the cost of a used guitar), nonfattening, and can be done alone or with others. Songwriting at best can make you famous and at the very least can help you become a very centered, happy, and connected individual. •

About the author: Mary Delaney received a master of science degree in counseling from Georgia State University in 1991. In addition to working with recovering clients, she is a published songwriter, poet, and artist. Delaney currently works at St. Jude's Recovery Center in Atlanta, Georgia, where she engages in "songwriting therapy" with her clients. Her interest in the relationship between recovery and creativity led her to write "The Art of Recovery" (Ultimate Purpose Press), available in select bookstores January of 2000.

Solitude and Peace

Continued from page 22

selfes for a specific reason, or for no reason at all. In this world overflowing with too much to do and too little time in which to do it, you can discover ways to find the time, to take the time, and to value yourselves enough to know that you deserve the time for this precious gift. •

Ruth Fishel, is a therapist, retreat and workshop leader, and author of several books, including "Precious Solitude," "The Journey Within, A Spiritual Path to Recovery," a pioneer book on meditation, spirituality, and recovery, and the best-selling "Time for Joy." She also teaches "Stop! Do You Know You're Breathing?" a program she developed for teachers and health care workers. She now co-directs Spirithaven, Inc., which she co-founded in 1989.

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Fear, Faith & Money

Continued from page 61

pursuit of money rather than living to uncover and express the soul's own unique genius that is the evil. Joseph Campbell spoke of "following one's bliss," referring to the necessity to live a life that supports the fulfillment of the soul's true aspiration, that this above all else honors spirit and holds out the hope for true prosperity. In this sense merely seeking to acquire money can often be profound self-betrayal. It is often said "do what you love and the money will follow," and I believe this is true because when our hearts are open we are already in relationship far beyond the time-space locality of our bodies. This extended relationship provides for us economically as well. It may not be great wealth, but it is impossible to be open in this way and not feel oneself to have sufficient means.

A second source of the professed gulf between money and spirituality is the truth that spiritual understanding cannot be purchased with money. Thus Peter forcefully abjures Simon the magician, "Your money perish with you because you thought the gift of God could be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20). Many have taken this to mean, particularly in Christian society, that spiritual teaching should be offered without monetary compensation, thus driving a confusing wedge between money and spirituality. But this is not what is being challenged by Peter's remark. The error is Simon's arrogance in presuming that he can use his wealth to acquire the spiritual power demonstrated by the apostles. There is no quid pro quo between money spent and spiritual growth, but spiritual understanding is expressed in how we earn our living. Does our work

honor the soul? This is not so much the nature of the work itself, but the good heartedness with which we live our work in ourselves. Likewise, spiritual understanding is at the basis of how we spend our money. How could it be otherwise, for money is but the extension of our own realization of relationship. Indeed, money is rightly used to support a spiritual teaching to which you feel affinity as long as there is no expectation that the amount of money spent insures the acquisition of spiritual power or the liberation from suffering.

Neither prosperity nor money are an end in themselves. They are but an expression of relationship, first to one's core self and simultaneously out from this source to others. The responsibility is not in living to make money, but in living in such a way that

faith converts fear into relationships that enable others and our planet to thrive. Right relationship to self is lived moment by moment. Right relationship to money follows from that. •

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A H A S I D I C S T O R Y

There were once two brothers who farmed together. They shared equally in all of the work and split the profits exactly. Each had his own granary. One of the brothers was married and had a large family; the other brother was single.

One day the single brother thought to himself, "It is not fair that we divide the grain evenly. My brother has many mouths to feed, while I have but one. I know what I'll do, I will take a sack of grain from my granary each evening and put it in my brother's granary." So, each night when it was dark, he carefully carried a sack of grain, placing it in his brother's barn.

Now the married brother thought to himself, "It is

not fair that we divide the grain evenly. I have many children who will care for me in my old age and my brother has none. I know what I'll do, I will take sack of grain from my granary each evening and put it in my brother's granary. And he did.

Each morning the two brothers were amazed to discover that though they had removed a sack of grain the night before, they had just as many.

One night the two brothers met each other halfway between their barns, each carrying a sack of grain. Then they understood the mystery. And they embraced, and loved each other deeply. That place has ever since been hallowed ground. •