

# LESSONS FOR LIFE

HOW TO BE HAPPY



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## THE KINGDOM WITHIN

### *THE GUEST HOUSE* Rumi

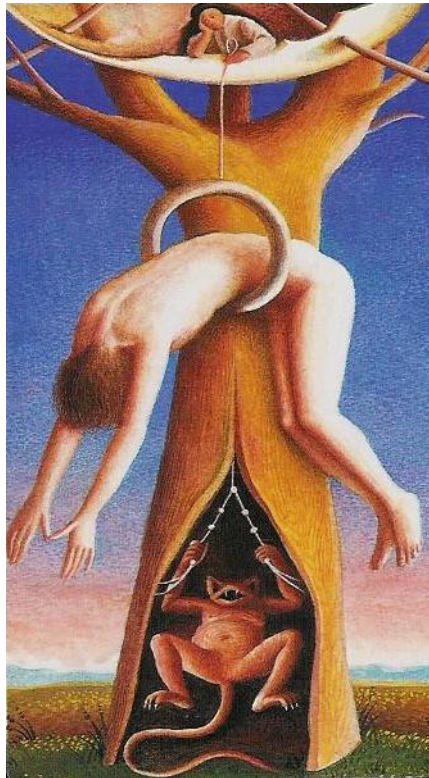
*This, being human is a guest house  
Every morning a new arrival*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
Some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
Who violently sweep your house  
Empty of all its furniture,  
Still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
For some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
Meet them at the door laughing,  
And invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,  
Because each has been sent  
As a guide from beyond.*



The illustrations in this chapter are cut-outs from a famous medieval painting by the Flemish monk Heyronimus Bosch. This fabulous vision of the World, Heaven and Hell is in the Prado gallery in Madrid. I was so moved when I saw it, that I stood riveted for half an hour, gazing at the thousands of tiny figures, creatures and fantastic plants, trees and buildings. Because of the surreal and phantasmagoric aspect of the work, many have speculated that Bosch was probably schizophrenic. I find these multidimensional and luminous images very beautiful. They capture the complexity of the full range of human experience; from the vulgar, the ugly and the foolish aspect of humanity, to the innocent, the sublime and the sacred. I don't think Bosch was insane. I think he was enlightened.

## THE GOOD NEWS

If you are reading this, you long to be more free and flowing. You know that much of your suffering, limitation and dysfunction is unnecessary. You wish for a mind that is clearer, more luminous and more consistently joyous than it is. You intuit that there is more to you than the little self – the ego – trapped in the stressful and superficial details of your life. You have glimpsed your more **magnificent and higher Self** - the real you. You suspect that your stress is a veil masking a more meaningful and ecstatic way of being. You long for that sometimes fleeting, but deliciously vibrant feeling of being fully alive. You have experienced flow and freedom, but you haven't discovered the trick of holding on to it.

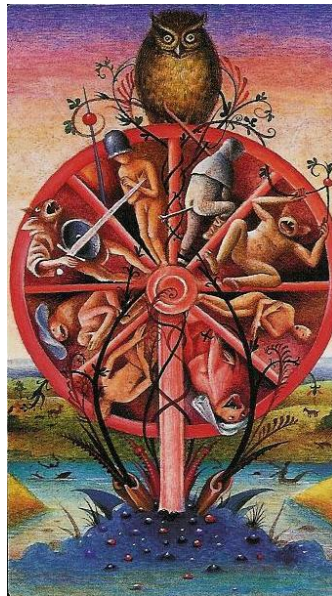
The good news is that you don't need to **change**. Nor are you sick, so there is really nothing to heal. The fact that your medical insurance covers your psychotherapy suggests that sadness, fear and anger are diseases to be cured. According to the **medical model** the cure is a magic bullet to be aimed at a specific target – the precise cause of an illness. If a bio-chemical imbalance is the cause, the cure is medication. If you can remember that you were abused as a child, the injury may be erased, perhaps through hypnosis. Indeed, your medical aid scheme requires an accurate diagnosis of your problem expressed as a code from the DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS, for example a Borderline Personality Disorder, or the latest psychiatric designer label, a Bipolar Depression.

The idea that my work is to change people was challenged by my life partner and part-time guru. Over the years he would bring me back to earth by saying, "You're wasting your time. People don't change." I had to concede the truth. Despite superficial change, my "patients" (as I used to call them) did not change. Personalities remain the same. The leopard does not change its spots, as the saying goes. What then am I doing? This question has a heart-rending echo when I contemplate my own life and the lives of my loved ones. The fact is that there is no magic wand. There are no quick-fixes. It is the very same search for love, joy, and meaning which brings people back to the consulting room, despite the Prozac, the Xanax, the Lithium, or the Viagra.

An answer came in the silence of an early morning meditation. It was a counter question: "What makes you think your job is to change people?" "I thought that's what I'm paid for," I protested. "**I have created them perfect,**" said the Voice. "All you need to do, is to **remind** them of this." "Why didn't anybody tell me this when I

was in Psychology 101?” I wondered. “That would have had a bad effect on your marks, wouldn’t it?” I had to concede the truth again.

Carl Jung said that whereas Psychology needs to take cognizance of other sciences like Biology and Physiology, it is essentially knowledge of the soul – the true Self. The person is whole from the beginning. A person is not a collection of parts which need to be assembled like the pieces of a puzzle by education and experience. We do not strive for wholeness; we are whole when we come into this world. Although as children learning is necessary so that we can live in the world and make a living, our original unlimited being is also progressively limited by society’s do’s and don’ts. What needs to be done in the second half of life is to **regain our inherent lost wholeness**. The final purpose of psycho-analysis is psycho-synthesis.



## THE CYCLE OF LIFE

### *THE WORM'S WAKING* *Rumi*

*This is how a human being can change:*

*There's a worm addicted to eating  
Grape leaves.  
Suddenly, he wakes up,  
Call it grace, whatever, something  
Wakes him, and he's no longer  
A worm.*

*He's the entire vineyard,  
And the orchard too, the fruit, the trunks,  
A growing wisdom and joy  
That doesn't need  
To devour.*

**We begin in innocence.** As innocent children we learn **optimism and trust**. Because a child has an insatiable hunger for love, while also needing to learn rules and boundaries, and because parents are mere human beings, we also inevitably experience **disappointment, abandonment, betrayal, and impossible expectations**. In this sense every one of us is also an **orphan**, having been somehow let down by those who were supposed to care for us most. Many clients tell me that they sometimes wondered whether they were in fact adopted. Thanks to the experience of our **aloneness**, we learn **independence**, to make friends and to co-operate for survival.

We learn to **fight**, to **set goals** and to develop strategies to attain those goals. In the process we also learn **discipline and courage**. If there were enough innocence and trust in the early years, we develop the ability to **care for others**, and eventually, also **for ourselves**. We begin to understand how to find the **balance** between love for others and love for ourselves and how not to do the one at the cost of the other. These four building blocks – basic optimism, co-operation, the courage to fight for self and others, and the compassion to care for ourselves and others – are the foundation of our life skills and our ability to live in the world successfully. No matter how successful we are, however, we still feel an emptiness.

We inevitably long for something **beyond ourselves**; we remain **seekers**, searching for that elusive something that will fulfill us. We embark on many journeys and we experience suffering. Something (perhaps self-sabotage?) within ourselves or in life ensures that we lose what we regard as precious or necessary for survival. This **initiation through pain** awakens authentic passion (the god Eros), and (sometimes only after the age of 30) we truly fall in love for the first time with causes, people, places, or work. The more consuming the love, the more devotion is demanded, and we **lose our freedom**.

The treasure we may discover in the confrontation with loss, death and love, is **the authentic Self**. Our true inherent creativity is mobilized as we begin to live our life from the soul. After the first half of life, where we have to figure out **what life wants from us**, we now need to wake up and understand **what the soul desires for us**. These four abilities, to strive, to **let go**, to **love**, and to (re-)create, teach us the basic processes of allowing the old self (the ego) to die, so that we may **give birth to the Self**. An awareness dawns that we are radically **responsible for our own life**.

We realize that we cannot blame anyone for our life, and that nobody is going to rescue us. Each one of us is the **creator** and **ruler** of his or her **own kingdom**. This realization may bring shock and disappointment when we discover that the inner landscape is neglected and desolate. But as we gradually awaken to a previously unnoticed **deeper wisdom** and **larger identity**, the desert within begins to bloom. There are unexpected resources of inner abundance and we find that we are able to **nourish, heal and transform ourselves**.

We are not, however, completely fulfilled or happy until we are able to **recognize our own subjectivity**. In the silence within we re-connect with an **ancient wisdom** and we begin to understand what truth is. We learn to accept our subjectivity and the relativity of all our opinions and beliefs. We become sensitive when we hear ourselves using the phrase “of course.” “It is so” and “This is the person I am”



become red lights. We discover that it is far more elegant to wear the cloak of the **personality** lightly, like a disposable overall, which will inevitably be shed when we go home, hopefully with a smile. No-one goes to heaven as a personality; hell, however, is populated by personalities.

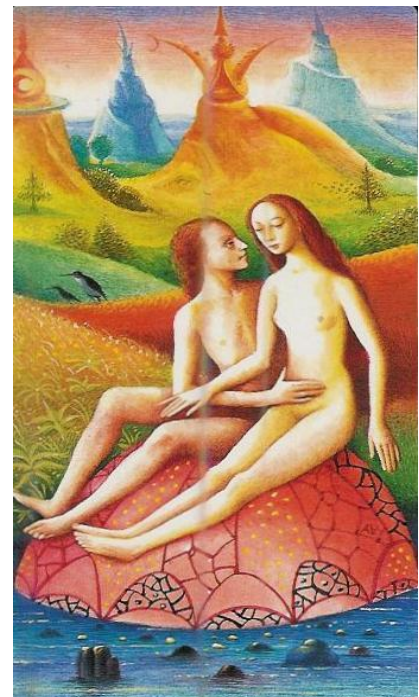
Perhaps hell is the state of being where we are identified with the personality and the actions and possessions of the body. One of my clients is an artist who maintains that he is sick and tired of his unhappiness. Yet he tells me that he doesn't want to change his personality. After all, he is a Scorpio and proud of his passionate artist's temperament. We eventually learn to let go of our limiting opinions, illusions and small desires and in the process we are liberated through **non-attachment**. We see through our own foolishness and we stop taking ourselves so seriously. With a touch of **humour** we learn to live **joyously in the moment**, neither dwelling on the past nor worrying too much about the future.

The destination and the reward of life's journey are attained when we assume total responsibility for our life, when we learn to transform and heal ourselves and others, when we let go of our attachments, devoting ourselves to truth no matter how uncomfortable, and to live simply, joyously and spontaneously. Thus the final phase of the journey folds back into first – we **return to the innocent state of children**. But this is on a higher level than before. Now the innocence is not due to naiveté, but the fruit of wisdom.

*At the highest level, the Fool becomes the Wise and Holy Fool who experiences the joy in all life and becomes almost translucent. There is no longer any need to hide or deny anything because nothing is bad or wrong that is simply human; at this level, the Fool merely is. At the journey's beginning, the Fool is evidenced in the undifferentiated quality of little children, who are alive, spontaneous, wholly themselves, and in the moment, and at its end we see the "holy fools" of many spiritual traditions. Zen Buddhism is the path of the holy fool. It means to burn the house, or the Ego, living entirely in the moment. Burning out the ego allows one to stop acting to fit in and please others, and allows one's innate wisdom – the wisdom that is one with the transcendent – to emerge and be revealed."*

*(Carol Pearson: AWAKENING THE HEROES WITHIN)*

This means to be **at one with the self and the universe**, trusting in and surrendering to the process of life as it unfolds. It is to exist with the simplicity of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. It is to live with insight in the great cosmic joke: that the treasures for which we searched so desperately outside and within ourselves, were never gone. Indeed, the treasure is all that is. Carol Pearson says: "The Fool helps us create the Ego, and then it helps us let it go so that we can be one with the All, and discover in that Oneness, great joy."



## THERE IS A SHORT-CUT

### *JUDGE A MOTH BY THE BEAUTY OF ITS CANDLE* Rumi

*You are a king's son.  
Why do you close yourself up?  
Become a lover.*

*Don't aspire to be a general  
Or a minister of state.*

*One is a boredom for you,  
The other a disgrace.  
You've been a picture on a bathhouse wall  
Long enough. No one recognizes you here, do they?*

*God's lion disguised as a human being!  
The only way to measure a lover  
Is by the grandeur of the beloved.*

What is the answer? To put it in a nutshell: drop the stress. **Relax.** Chill. Live in the moment. **Open your eyes.** Everything you need, is already here. Don't worry, be happy! Embrace the perfection of all that is and your own being, enjoy the miracle of your aliveness. Wake up and smell the coffee – and the daisies. Learn to say: "Who cares who moved my cheese?" Happiness is not about what you do or have; it's an **attitude to life.** You don't need to change yourself – but you do need to change your **focus.** It's about your **point of view.** Stop trying to change the world. Change your **perspective** and your **world** changes. It's not your **circumstances** that cause the state you're in, it's the **state you're in that is the problem.** It's about **what you believe.** It's about **how you see yourself.** Do what you need to do to **find the peace within yourself,** and then see what you want to do or say regarding the circumstances.

There is a **short-cut** to power and peace. It is the **kingdom within – a heaven on earth.** What keeps you outside of it, is **ignorance.** You have just temporarily forgotten who and what you really are and all you need to do is remember. However, you cannot enter into the state of heavenly peace and remain there if you insist on holding on to your **baggage.** You need to let go of your unrealistic desires and unnecessary fears. Remember, it is more difficult for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, as the Bible says. This does not mean that if your bank balance is healthy you can never go to heaven. It does mean that the more stuff – material things and circumstances - you think you need to be happy, the less likely you are to be happy. And remember that relationships are also material things.

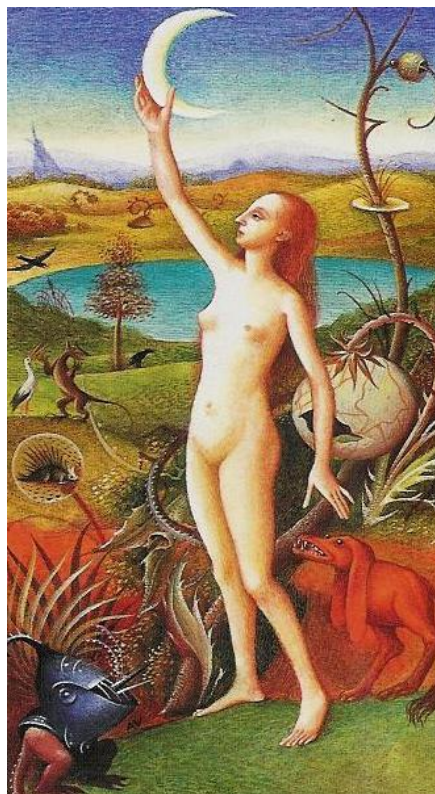
Let us begin at the beginning. Perhaps you don't believe it, but the Bible is not the only book ever written that tells us that **we are created perfect, in the image and likeness of God.** This means **there is nothing you need.** You really are OK just

the way you are. Even if you are not a practicing Christian, you know deep in your soul that **God is Love**. Our origin is a divine Thought (Greek: Logos), which is perfect and good.

The very same loving power that organizes and animates the universe, is also present in the electrical impulses in your brain and nervous system. It is the light in your eyes and the intelligence that digests your food and instructs your heart to beat. It is the mystery of desire and potential life in your sexual organs. All the great religions tell the same story. We are individual manifestations in physical form of what God is: immeasurable **love**, limitless **possibilities**, radiant **energy**. Life projects life into all that is and delights in the dance.

Modern Physics and Astronomy confirm that the universe exploded from a single point of no-thingness. We were created from the energy and the elemental matter – the star-stuff – which came into being in the first millisecond after the big bang. And yet, in every sub-atomic particle, there remains the memory of that moment when all that is was one. Perhaps this is what love is – the **longing for that original state of oneness**, like a phantom itch in the amputated limbs of what was once one body.

We are concentrations of atomic particles with a certain temporary cohesion, through which the loving intelligence of the universe streams. We are collections of dancing atoms, and through us flow air and water, food and drink, music and light, children's voices and the very stuff of stars. In a moment of sexual union it all comes together and bursts into flame. In this fire we receive the **gift of life**. The fire remains in us – **it is our essential being**. It has colour and heat, but lacks real substance. Yet it has the ability to transmute matter. This fire burns in our loins and in our hearts. We can choose to banish it from our consciousness, or we can **cherish and be warmed by the light** through the storms of life. This is perhaps what **free will** really means.



## WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE?

It's really about the kind of person you ultimately want to be. Do you really want to remain an emotional child, always upset about everything that does not go your way? Do you want to remain a **victim** of the **circumstances** of your life, or do you aspire to possess a state of **abiding inner peace**? Do you really want to continue to base your self-worth on your possessions and your relationships, on what people say and think about you, or do you wish to begin to build your self-esteem on how little these things matter to you? Do you want to be **really free**? "Desiderata" means that which is to be desired – an inner state of tranquility, strength, wisdom and acceptance of circumstances, beautifully summarized by an anonymous author:

### DESIDERATA

*Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.*

*As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others; even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.*

*Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself to others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.*

*Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.*

*Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is. Many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism.*

*Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.*

*Take kindly the council of the years; gracefully surrendering the things of youth.*

*Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.*

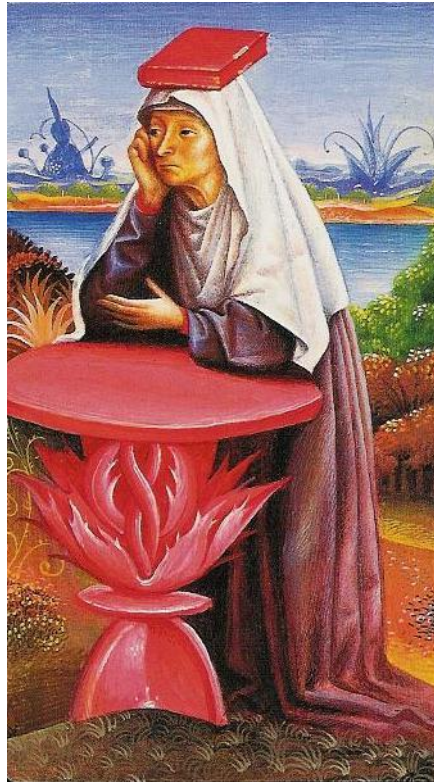
*Beyond a healthy discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the Universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here, and whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.*

*Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labours and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul.*

*With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world.*

*Be cheerful.*

*Strive to be happy.*



## STOP STRESSING

To **resist the world as it is**, to always try to change things to suit you, to worry about what may happen, are futile exercises. All your struggle and striving only waste your energy – an **unnecessary crucifixion**.

The Bible says:

*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?*

*And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

(MATTHEW 6:25-34)

There is nothing inherently evil or wrong in material things. Indeed material success and human relationships may bring you a great deal of pleasure and happiness. Once again it is a question of **balance**. Walking around with the Bible under your arm, quoting New Age platitudes, or sitting with closed eyes and meditating for hours will not do it either. To nurture the inner life while neglecting your relationships and your work will not suffice. In a TV interview the Dalai Lama said with that characteristic twinkle in his eyes that there is nothing wrong with seeking happiness in the traditional Western ways. It's just that it is a little foolish, because there is a **short-cut to happiness**. The more **things and people** you need to be content, **the longer it will take** to attain happiness, and the easier it will be **lose it**. You have probably already heard this as a child in Sunday school, but it bears repetition:

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

(MATTHEW 6:19-20)

If **life is a school** and we are here to **learn lessons**, South Africa is one of the best class-rooms in the world. This is an excellent place to get your priorities right. The first time I began to think seriously about what "treasures in heaven" might be, it was a puzzle to me. My first thought was that these are something like brownie points which you can accumulate in order to get to go to heaven one day when you die. As I had heard it in Sunday school, these credits are awarded to "good Christians", who regularly read their Bibles, pray, go to church, bear witness that they believe in Christ and give something to the poor. Now I understand that the treasures are **inner qualities** which may make a heaven of my life while I am here on earth.

It's not so much about what you do, but rather about **why and how** you do what you do. God is **Love**. To devote yourself to God, means to do everything you do because of love and for the sake of love, not motivated by fear or because you want something in return. It's not so important what you do or what you don't do. It's not about the results or the outcomes of what you do. What is important is how you do what you do and especially why you do what you do.

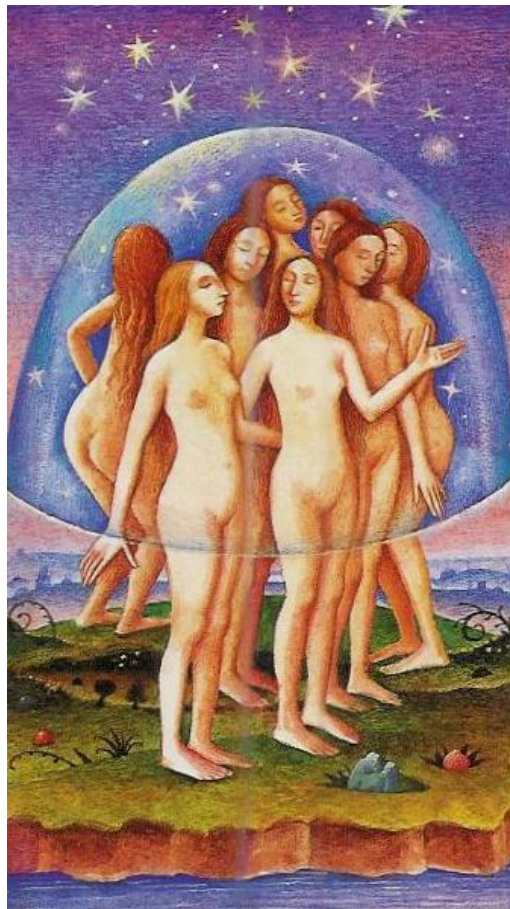
One of my clients was a young medical student who was deeply depressed. I explained that he was not going to achieve happiness by basing his whole life on a futile attempt to **avoid sinful behaviour**. The Bible says if you look at someone with desire, you have already committed adultery. This does not mean you are not supposed to look. It means you might as well forget about trying to keep the Ten Commandments. My client was 28 years old and he proudly told me he had never kissed a girl while lying down, because this is dangerous. This can lead to the unforgivable sin of sex before marriage. He was trying to walk the straight and narrow path.

My client's history was a list of Christian youth camps, outreach seminars and prayer groups. And the young women whose hearts he had broken because they could not live up to his impossible requirements of Christian virtue and chastity. The real problem was of course that my young friend was still stuck in his childhood

obsession to try to get his parents' **approval** and he was projecting this conditional paradigm onto God, who in his mind was the strict "Sky Parent." He was still trying to be **special**. He didn't understand yet that maturity and peace mean to **make peace with our humanity and our ordinariness**, while also recognizing the inherent wonder-fulness in ourselves and all others. He still needed to learn that nothing we do can increase our **worth** in God's eyes and that everybody is special.

The point I want to make about **sex** is not that it is good or bad before or outside of marriage. It is about realizing that all forms of energy and life – including sex – come from God. Life itself is a physical manifestation of God and therefore sacred. Every thing and every living being is sacred and whether we can see it or not, all of existence is illuminated by the divine glory and holiness. Therefore everything and all persons should be treated with **reverence, respected, enjoyed and appreciated**.

We need to **say "yes, thank you," in stead of "no" to life**, no matter the form it takes when it knocks on our door. Indeed we become alienated from our complete humanness and from our soul to the extent that we live in **fear of making mistakes**, or avoid certain experiences - and judge or reject others - for fear of committing a sin. **God is Love and Life**. If our relationship to God alienates us from Life in all its richness or if it serves to separate us from others rather than uniting us lovingly with all beings, there is something terribly wrong with our perception of God.



## THE TEMPLE IS EVERYWHERE

### *BIRDSONG FROM INSIDE THE EGG*

*Rumi*

*Sometimes a lover of God may faint  
In the presence. Then the beloved bends  
And whispers in his ear, "beggar, spread out  
Your robe. I'll fill it with gold.*

*I've come to protect your consciousness.  
Where has it gone? Come back to awareness!"*

*This fainting is because  
Lovers want so much.*

*A chicken invites a camel into her henhouse,  
And the whole structure is demolished.*

*A rabbit nestles down  
With its eyes closed  
In the arms of a lion.*

*There is an excess  
In spiritual searching  
That is profound ignorance.*

*Let that ignorance be our teacher!  
The Friend breathes into one  
Who has no breath.*

*A deep silence revives the listening  
And the speaking of those two  
Who meet on the riverbank.*

*Like the ground turning green in a spring wind.  
Like birdsong beginning inside the egg.*

*Like this universe coming into existence,  
The lover wakes, and whirls  
In a dancing joy,*

*Then kneels down  
In praise.*

These days I don't go to church much, but the more I live in **gratitude** for my talents and inspired by love for my work and people (and money!), the more money I make. My life, my work, my relationships, my mind and my body are my church. The temple is everywhere. There is nowhere that God is not. A friend recently went on a retreat to Sedona in Arizona to meditate, because he desired to get his body and

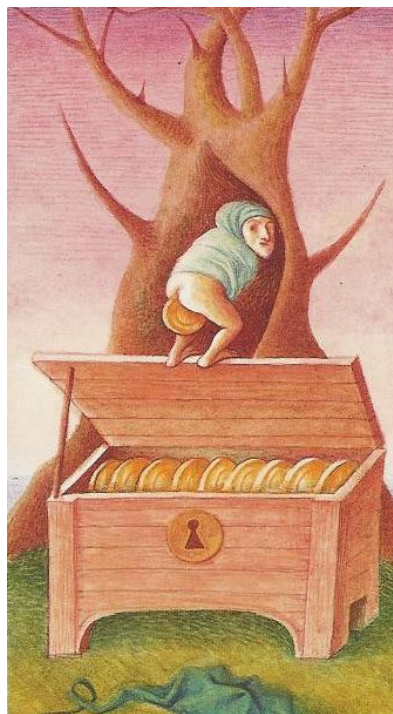


soul in harmony with God. Although I admire his devotion, I can't help wondering why he thinks he should go **elsewhere** to experience God.

You can experience God in your garden, in the night sky, in a glass of water, in an ant, in sunlight, in every tree. Just open your eyes. The Bible says the eye is the lamp of the body. The **light must come from within**. If there is darkness in the body, you live in a world of darkness. Switch on the lights. **Change your vision** from fear, judgment and resistance, to love, acceptance and appreciation. See everything in love and you live in a beautiful world.

Of course it is not difficult to see the beauty and the goodness (God) in a lovely sunset, in the clear eyes of a child, or in a perfect flower. To also see the Goodness when **there seems to be darkness around you**, is more difficult. This is where **faith** is needed. If your faith depends upon the evidence of your **body's eyes**, it is not faith. Faith demands a choice; it is the vision that **sees the perfection** where it does not seem to be.

There is a story which illustrates this truth. There was a saintly woman who lived in a remote village. People had seen her performing miracles, but she wanted to learn more. She traveled a great distance to the great guru who accepted only a few select pupils into his ashram. The master granted her an interview and after he had asked her a few questions, he shook his head, saying, "I don't think so. You do possess intensity, which I can work with, but I think you should go home." Realizing that this was her last chance, and just as he was leaving, she pulled up her sari and urinated on a holy statue that was in the room. The master asked, "Why are you doing that?" She answered, "I am demonstrating that I know that God is **no more present** in those things where **it is easy to recognize the divine** than in the excreta of the body." The guru accepted her.



## INNER ABUNDANCE

*I am done with great things and big plans, great institutions and big success. I am for those tiny, invisible loving human forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, yet which, if given time, will rend the hardest mountains of human pride.*

*(William James)*

What follows is a short list of the inner treasures you might like to accumulate. To focus on your **circumstances** will inevitably cause unhappiness. Firstly, you will always be **comparing** yourself to others. There is always someone who is more beautiful, thinner, richer or more fortunate than you. I have a friend who began as a rugby coach, now lives in a Tuscan mansion in a golf estate, suffers from high blood pressure, has already had his first affair and thinks that he will be content if he buys a farm in California. Secondly, when you have everything you think you need to be happy, you will be so busy trying to **hold on** to what you've got, and **worrying** about how to increase it, that you won't be able to really enjoy it.

Because we are never **satisfied**, are we? That house, or car, or partner that you will kill for, very quickly lose their glitter and glitz when you own them. Sometimes I look at people and think they will probably very soon find fault with the accommodation and the service if they should ever get to heaven.

To use the list of heavenly treasures, bear the following in mind:

*To those who have, more will be added onto, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have not, from them will be taken away, and they will lose the little that they had.*

*(MATTHEW 13:12)*

Love	Peace	Wealth	Self-worth
Strength	Innocence	Joy	Contentment
Surrender	Wholeness	Forgiveness	Generosity
Vitality	Inspiration	Ecstasy	Simplicity
Clarity	Certainty	Courage	Charity
Tenderness	Freedom	Sparkle	Excitement
Safety	Gratitude	Happiness	Wonder
Wisdom	Boldness	Stability	Flexibility
Integrity	Creativity	Acceptance	Abundance
Magnanimity	Insight	Elegance	Self-reliance
Lightness	Humour	Reverence	Positivity
Endurance	Patience	Tranquility	Faith

May I challenge you to expand this list for yourself? It really is worth the trouble to expand your **vocabulary** so that you can say in words what you want in life. God gave Adam and Eve the task of ruling over the earth and to do this they had to invent names for everything. You cannot own anything if don't have a word for it. You can look at a plant or a bird in your garden a hundred times, yet not truly see it – until someone tells you, "That's a wild Iris" or "That's a Lilac-breasted Roller." Then it

takes on a new reality and you can also recognize it when you see it again. This is even more true regarding the invisible qualities which you desire to create in your inner realm, or recognize if they exist there already.

What I am saying is that you should stop the struggle and dance with life. Stop trying to change situations and people. In every situation, rather begin by focusing on **the person you want to be** as you **respond** creatively – rather than reacting automatically.

**Responsibility** (response-ability) means that you begin to understand it is life asking you a question and **you choose your answer**. I saw a television interview with a mother whose child had been killed a year previously in the hostage drama in a Russian school. She said that in that past year she had become a different person. She has become an angry and bitter person. You are **accountable** when life throws you a curve-ball. You need to **create the person you choose to become** as you respond creatively. To become angry, or guilty, is an uncreative response which will keep you stuck in the state which probably caused the problem in the first place.

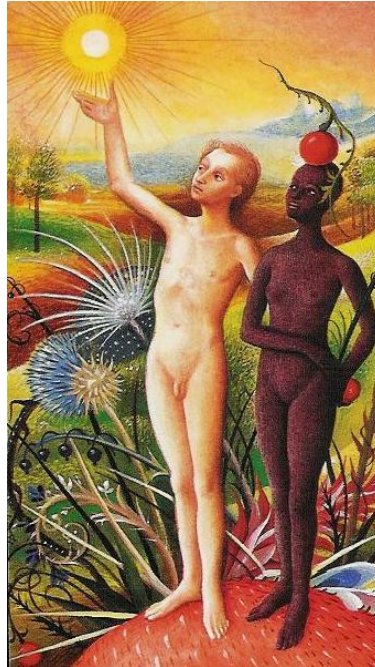
Begin to think about who and what you want to **be** rather than about whom you want to own and what you want to do. See life and your relationships as a **challenge** to reveal the person you are able to become. Allow misfortunes and disappointments to chisel you, like a beautiful statue that is already hidden in the rough marble when the sculptor finds it in the quarry.

I used to think that the verse (“To those who have, more will be added...”) refers to rich men and girls who already have a boyfriend. At the time, it only fuelled my aggrieved perception that life is not fair. Now I understand that it is a **universal energy law** which refers to our **inner states of being**. It can also be formulated as the Law of Attraction. Let me explain. Say I were to tell you that I want a silver BMW Z4. Well, you don’t have to be genius to figure out that my thinking is pretty screwed up. In the first place, I don’t know what I really want. What I actually want (and think I lack), is self-worth, power, joy, abundance, freedom, magnificence, respect, and perhaps a little ecstasy, a feeling of youthfulness and daringness. My second erroneous thought is that these inner states are connected to a material thing – a sports car. I think I’ll **be** important, strong, joyous, young, etcetera if I **have** that thing.

It is an open question whether this is true – bear in mind that I am over 50 and shall probably feel a little ridiculous driving it, and shall definitely stress even more about my tax return. Moreover, I’ll have to **do** something to get that car, namely work more hours to afford it. And that will mean that in the process I shall probably diminish the already abundant vitality, respect, strength, joy, and freedom in my life.

I’m not serious about the Z4, but you get my drift. It is the same kind of foolishness when a woman destroys her marriage and her whole life in the illusion that she will **be** happy, fulfilled, and worthy if she **has** a baby. If only she could focus on what she already **has** and **be** grateful and joyous about the small miracles of daily living, her chances of falling pregnant without *in vitro* fertilization would increase. And if she is not **destined** to be a mother, she would be able to accept it with grace and find other ways of expressing and experiencing her creativity and warmth.

Exactly the same principle applies to anything else you **want desperately** because you think there is a **lack** in your life, including success, admiration, excitement, money, romance, a life partner, or whatever. Usually you end up with precisely the **opposite** of what you so desperately pursued.



## IT'S ABOUT FOCUS

*Turn your face to the sun and the shadows fall behind you.*

*(Maori saying)*

## HOW AWARENESS WORKS WHAT YOU FOCUS ON, WILL MANIFEST AND INCREASE

SOUL SELF  
SPIRITUAL  
KINGDOM  
ETERNAL  
REALITY  
KNOWING / FAITH  
PEACE / FORGIVENESS  
PERFECTION  
JOY  
HEALTH / WHOLENESS  
ABUNDANCE  
FREEDOM / FREE  
EASE / FLOW  
LOVE / ONENESS

ego self  
material / sensory  
world / tangible  
temporary / mortal  
illusion / changeable  
thinking / senses / reason  
conflict / anger / criticism  
duality / error / accident  
pain / injustice  
disease / brokenness  
limitation / poverty / lack  
trapped / expensive  
struggle / difficult  
fear / hate / separation

There is another way to formulate this fundamental principle of life. **You can't have anything if you fear or hate its opposite.** It's a question of focus. Whether it is positive or negative, what you focus on will appear (for you) and it will persist and

increase. As the saying goes, “What you resist, will persist.” **What you fear and hate, will appear everywhere.** If you fear crime, or disease, or injustice, you will notice and perceive it everywhere, even where it does not exist. This is what you will notice when you open the newspaper or switch on the TV. And before you know it, you begin to **attract and create** the very thing you abhor.

Therefore, however strange this may sound at first – do not resist evil. You will never have a fulfilling or productive relationship if you are not OK with **being alone.** If you are desperate, you could easily imagine that the first person who knocks on your door is your soul mate. And even if this person were a possible loving partner, your neediness and possessiveness will scare them away in the blink of an eye.

*People who have not been in Narnia sometimes think that  
A thing cannot be good and terrible at the same time.*

(C.S. Lewis)

If you cannot accept that sex also includes discomfort, boredom, frustration, and crudeness, you will never experience the erotic and romantic ecstasy you desire. To tell the truth, you will most probably soon be without a sex partner. The same principle is illustrated dramatically when a woman who has for years desperately tried to have a baby, finally accepts that she is not going to become a mother. She relaxes, goes on holiday, and... hey presto! You may have noticed that when you are comfortable with the possibility of making a fool of yourself, your speech or presentation will be much better than if you try too hard. When you are **at peace with the outcome**, the result of what you do is always better.

In the beautiful Hindu BHAGAVAD GITA (Gandhi’s “mother’s milk”) it is formulated in this way: Do what you do, and lay the (material) outcomes as flowers at God’s feet.

*The spiritually mature human being lets all things come and go without effort, without desire for any foreseen result, carried along on the current of a vast intelligence. The idea that there is a goal is wrong. We are the goal; we are always peace. To get rid of the idea that we are not peace is all that is required.*

(Introduction)

Remember that if for you contentment or peace depends upon a happy relationship or your weight or your bank balance, your happiness **does not really belong to you.** There was a Zen master who told his pupils, “If you think the silence and the tranquility of your meditation depends upon the loveliness of the garden where you can hear only birdsong and the melody of the wind chimes, it is not you who are meditating – it is the garden that is meditating.” In the Bible, the book Job is a dramatic illustration of the truth that you first need to give up or emotionally **surrender** everything – possessions, family, even your health – in order to really possess anything. Paradoxically you cannot truly possess anything in this world as long as you are **desperately attached** to those things. It is only in releasing that you can possess.

I am not saying that you are not allowed to possess anything; you just need to get your focus right. Get rid of the illusion that your happiness, peace and salvation are

dependent upon these things. Make your happiness an inner state of being which is essentially **independent of circumstances around you**. Buddhism teaches that we need to distinguish between “happiness” which has visible causes, and “bliss”, which is an inner state and **cannot be disturbed** because it is **without cause and therefore unconditional**. It took me a long time to understand that this is what is meant in the Bible in 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-19:

*Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit.*

To focus on and be grateful for what is **already present in your life**, is undoubtedly a key to the kingdom of peace. And there is no better way to demonstrate gratitude and to manifest **abundance** than by **sharing** what you have with others. To make someone else feel beautiful and worthy, is a short-cut to experiencing your **own beauty and worth**. That is why it is more blessed to give than to receive. Giving may indeed be the most self-serving thing you can do. It makes you feel better. Don't do things for other people; you will only be disappointed if you don't get anything in return. **Do it for yourself**, or for the sake of Love, then it does not matter whether it is appreciated or even noticed at all.

*Each of us must make our own true way  
And when we do, that way will express the universe.*

*(Suzuki Roshi)*



## HOW TO PRAY

*Looking for God is like seeking a path in a field of snow; if there is no path and you are looking for one, walk across it and there is your path.*

*(Thomas Merton)*

In my practice I have found that there is nothing in the Bible that causes more grief to people than the apparent promise that all prayers will be answered, “Ask and it shall be given unto you, knock and it shall be opened unto you.” People understand this incorrectly, because within the context the promise does not refer to **material things**, but to **the kingdom**. It should be read together with the part where you are warned not to accumulate material treasures, because they are subject to decay and loss. The door we should knock on, is of course the gate to the kingdom of eternal peace.

Many people pray for a disease to be cured, or that a marriage be saved, or for whatever else in the material dimension. Their faith can be shattered when these prayers are not answered, although it has also been said that more tears are shed due to answered prayers than to unanswered ones. Praying for material things often causes anger at God. And a happy marriage or the health and well-being of your children are just as much material things as money. Not being materialistic, does not only mean you don't particularly value possessions. **Attachment to money is not the only the kind of materialism.** Materialism means to be attached to or **dependent** upon any thing or circumstance in the physical dimension for your happiness.

With stars in her eyes, a friend told me a while ago that she now knows without a doubt that there is a God because an SMS prayer chain succeeded – a ten year old boy who had tried to commit suicide, had awakened from his coma. I don't doubt that such prayers are often answered, but it is a **misplaced perception of what a miracle is** if our faith depends upon **extraordinary incidents** where the laws of nature seem to be reversed, for example where someone who has been in a wheelchair walks again, or where someone who was dying of cancer is completely healed.

The truth is that every one of us, including those who have experienced an extraordinary healing, will eventually die. The body is only a temporary vehicle of life and being cured of a disease is merely a postponement of the inevitable. My best friend is a medical doctor and when she says that she has saved someone's life, I have inquired gently whether what she really means is that she has been the instrument in a Higher Hand to postpone the person's death. My point is actually that we should **distinguish between magic and miracles.**

The COURSE IN MIRACLES, my second Bible, says a **miracle is a change in perception.** It is an inner event whereby perception (what is perceived by the senses) is exchanged for vision. Through the ego's or the body's eyes it may seem as if something is an accident, wrong, coincidence, or an injustice. Through the soul's eyes we see that everything is exactly as it should be – perfect.

In the moment when **my vision and will are united with the Will of God**, I can only see the perfection in the situation and the Love which underlies all that is, and the

“mistake” or the “**wrong**” is corrected. Then true **forgiveness** follows automatically. Then I can thank and praise God for the situation as it is, without needing to ask Him to **change it to suit me**. Often the result of such a shift in perception – the miracle – is a bit of magic, where the circumstances change to accord with the perfection of the vision. Mostly it is unnecessary for the situation to change when I understand and embrace **the gift in the situation** as it is.

This may sound very abstract, so let me explain. I recently thanked my life partner because he had **not** given me the kind of emotional support I had for many years wanted from him. This was in the circumstance which is probably any parent’s worst nightmare – one of my beautiful, talented daughters was a hopeless drug addict. I used to weep and beseech my dear best friend to change his seemingly unsympathetic attitude. I must add that there is a difference between sympathy and compassion. He was always compassionate.

I now have the vision that what I wanted, and what I believed I needed – someone who would weep with me - would not have been in my best interest. Pity would have **nurtured an illusion** which I needed to let go. It would have nurtured my **attachment to the perception of the situation as a tragedy**, as well as my self-pity. Because he did not give me what I had childishly wanted, I received a much greater gift: acceptance of the situation. Along with that, I could develop a few **muscles of character**, for example, humility, courage, surrender, insight, the ability to support myself and, most important, the habit of prayer so that I can now receive comfort from God. Indeed these are treasures in my inner kingdom, which can never be lost. I never got his sympathy; what I did earn was my best friend’s respect.

For years I prayed desperately for my daughter to change. I found inner peace – and a new, deep connection with her – when I started to **pray for the vision to see the perfection** of the path her soul had chosen for this life and for the grace to accept the destiny that God had in mind for her. I learned that the most profound expression of love is to **love as God loves**. I told her that my will for her was reconciled with her soul’s will for her and God’s will for her. When she died, I was prepared to allow the waves of sorrow to carry me to a peaceful shore where I can fully embrace the perfection of her seemingly broken life and the manner of her transition to an even greater perfection. In the process I have finally **grown up** and I hope I am more able to help others to transcend their sorrows and grow up also.

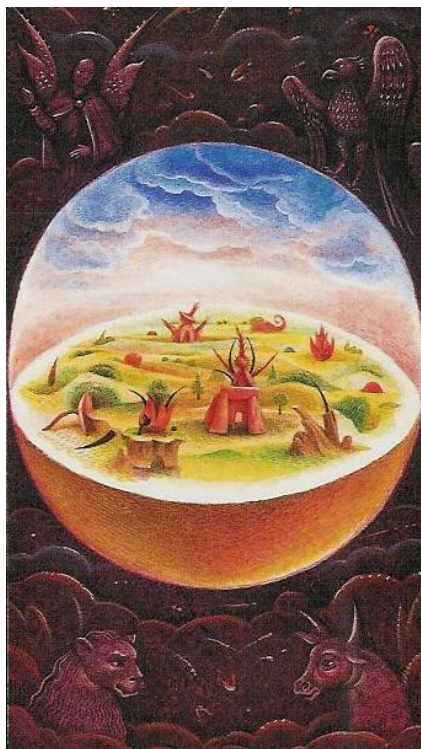
My losses and disappointments have all turned out to be **blessings in disguise**. Growing up poor taught me gratitude and endurance. Divorce taught me compassion and self-reliance. Being passed over for a well-deserved promotion at the university brought me to the practice where I fulfill my true purpose. When things did **not go my way**, I got character. Now I never pray for a situation to be changed; I pray for the vision to **see the blessings** in it.

A **prayer of gratitude is a short-cut to a miracle**. This insight made me wonder about the Lord’s Prayer as we know it. It looks like list of requests. The lights went on for me when I read Ron Roth’s wonderful book, THE HEALING PATH OF PRAYER. The translation we know differs considerably from the original text. A more accurate translation of the original Aramaic text reveals that “Our Father” does not contain a single request – it is rather a **prayer of praise** and gratitude. Its



purpose is not to remind God of our needs – it is **to remind ourselves** that He is already perfectly attending to all our needs. It sounds like this:

*Dear Daddy who is in the unseen dimension,  
Your Name is Holy;  
Your kingdom is all around us;  
Your will unfolds perfectly,  
On earth as it does in heaven.  
You give us each day the nourishment our souls need;  
You correct our misguided thoughts,  
As we also overlook each other's erroneous thinking; and  
You free us from the error of attachment to material things.  
So it is eternally.  
Amen.*



## DEVELOP VISION

*One has not only an ability to perceive the world, but an ability to alter one's perception of it. More simply, one can change things by the manner in which one looks at them.*

*(Tom Robbins: EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE BLUES)*

Indeed your Father knows better than you what you need and provides it even before you ask for it. This is the vision of divine providence that is so powerfully portrayed in the Bible in the book Job, which is a poem in the form of a question in God's words. After Job has **lost everything**, including possessions, his whole family, and his health, because God (Love / Life) unleashed the Devil (Destruction / Disaster) into his life, God answers Job from the whirlwind. Perhaps it sounds like a

harsh response when Job is told to stop asking his short-sighted questions (“Why me? Why now? Why this?”). **I AM the One who asks the questions**, and you must answer. Try to remember that your shattered dreams are God’s pathway to a deeper peace and a sweeter joy.

Life – or God – is asking the questions. We must answer. The Job poem in the form of a question is a profoundly moving description of nature. “Where were you when I created the universe, the heavenly bodies, the earth, the forces of nature and all living beings?” God asks. The canvass is cosmic in scale and then zooms in to focus on the smallest details of creation – the precise moment when a gazelle is born, the fire in the eye of a wild pony, the delicate pattern in the scales of a lizard.

The Voice from the whirlwind reminds Job that there is an attentively **loving** and vastly **intelligent power** which underlies, organizes, and animates all that is. In Taoism this omnipresent energy is called the Tao. This – Love, the Light, Life, the Higher Power, Perfection – is equally recognizable in the dazzling dimensions of the cosmos and in the intricate veins of a single petal. Open your eyes. The miracle surrounds you. The miracle is who you are. Nothing is random. Nothing is coincidence. There are no accidents. **Every thing is lucid with meaning.**

**All that is is lovingly planned.** The universe is an interconnected web, perfectly woven with astonishing care, goodness, and intelligence. When a seeming disaster happens in your life, remind yourself of this and remember to align yourself with the miraculous Process that is Life. The reward you reap will be a state of flow and peace which cannot be disturbed. When things in my life seem to be going “wrong”, I find great comfort in switching on Discovery or National Geographic on TV. The dance of insects, birds, the ballet of galaxies and inter-galactic nebulae, the evolution of species and the electro-chemical networks of the brain, remind me of the **miraculous unfolding of all that is around us and through us.**

You don’t need to go to church to experience God. The temple is you, and the universe. Deepak Chopra says:

*Peel away the layers of an onion, and at the center you will find emptiness; peel away the layers of a human being, and at the center you will find the seed of God.*

(HOW TO KNOW GOD)

**The brain** is born from a single fertilized cell with no discernable awareness; a mere speck of life. A hundred billion neurons were born from that single point of light, yet it remains pristine in its innocent simplicity. This is the G-spot, the “God-spot” in the brain. The brain knows it as its own **source and its final destination**. The ultimate purpose of the brain’s evolution is to remember that eternal spark of joy and truth. This is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega of the endless and restless electrical storms in the nervous system.

The brain is hard-wired to find God, but not in the dense forests of the intellect, nor through the process of rational thinking. For this you will need to use your S.Q., your spiritual intelligence. Until this happens, you won’t **know who you are**. The poet Hafiz says:

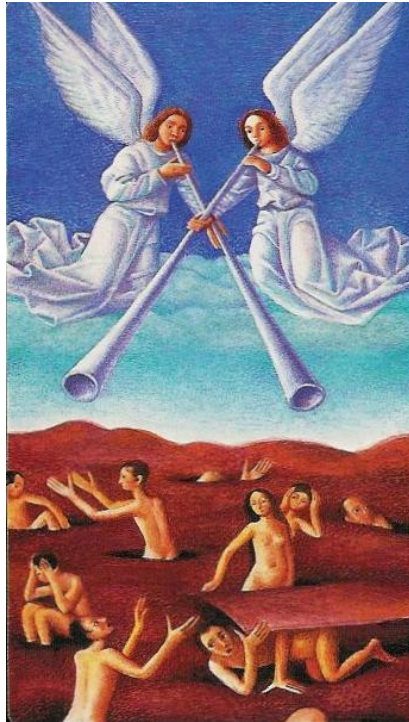
*Oh mind, visit the place where you can see the Beloved;  
Give up this world so that you may see the other world.*

The path to spiritual awakening is not through conceptual thinking, but through ecstasy; the **spiritually mature** person is not sober through intellectual understanding, but drunk with love.

*Every child that is born, is God asking, "Who am I?" and every lifetime is a unique attempt at finding an answer, yet at our common centre we already know what we are. The Mystery knowing itself. Love making love to itself. Beauty delighting in itself. Truth true to itself. Being being itself.*

*(Timothy Freke & Peter Gandy: JESUS AND THE GODDESS)*

Albert Einstein said that the most wonderful thing we can experience, is the **mysterious**. This is the true source of art and all science. If the mysterious is a stranger to you, if you can no longer stand in awe and fall silent in reverence, you are as good as dead. Your eyes are closed.



## **WAKE UP TO LIFE**

*Millions of persons long for immortality, who do not know  
What to do with themselves on a rainy afternoon.*

*(Author unknown)*

Father Anthony de Mello (in WAKING UP TO LIFE) said that most people don't know it, but they are fast asleep. They are born soundly asleep, get married, have children, and die without ever waking up. They never understand the wonder and beauty of that something that we may call life. All the great masters throughout the

ages, whether they were Catholic, Calvinistic, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or Taoist, have agreed on one thing. And that one truth that they all discovered is: **All is well.** It's a big mess, but all is as it should be. In the famous words of Dame Julian of Norwich, a Catholic nun and mystic: "And all will be well. And all manner of things will be well." A strange paradox.

The tragedy is that so few people wake up and grasp this. Most live in a nightmare. There is this little story about the father who knocks on his son's bedroom door and says, "Son, wake up! His son says, "I don't want to wake up, Dad." "Wake up," says his father, "You must go to school." "But I hate school," says his son. "Why?" inquires his father. The son says, "I'll give you three reasons. First, it's boring. Second, the children tease me. Third, the teachers hate me." His father answers, "I'm going to give you three reasons why you have to wake up and go to school. First, it is your duty. Second, you are 45 years old. Third, you are the principal."

Wake up! You are too old to be asleep! You are too old to play with your toys and throw a tantrum when you don't get your way. Stop complaining and whining and sulking and expecting **other people** to mend your broken toys. Stop trying to mend other people's broken toys. "Give me back my broken marriage." "Mend my broken career." "Fix my broken finances." "Give me back my broken reputation, my spoilt success." Everybody wants somebody to fix their toys.

Waking up is usually a **painful experience**. It is irritating to be woken up. I am not going to try to wake you up. All I'm going to do is to tell you what I think. I'm going to dance my little dance. If you learn something from my little dance, wonderful. If you don't, please carry on. Just remember, if **you keep on thinking in the same way, nothing in your life will change**. As the Arabs say:

*The nature of the rain is the same, but it grows thorns in the marshes and flowers in the garden.*

It is about what the **foundation of your peace** and wholeness is.

*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

(MATTHEW 7:24-27)



## THE GREAT ILLUSIONS

*A life spent in making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent in doing nothing.*

*(George Bernard Shaw)*

If you are anything like me (and I suspect you are, because we are very much the same despite superficial designer differences), you have tried out a number of solutions with great passion. When I was a child, I thought happiness was getting approval from my parents and teachers for **good behaviour**. I was head girl in Grade Seven and my school reports were a delight to behold. I thought **achievement** was the golden key to feeling good. I longed for my father to come and watch me doing flick-flacks at the (then) Northern Transvaal gymnastics contests. When this did not work, and hormones started erupting in embarrassing pimples on my skin, I thought salvation was “with it” outfits, “hip” slang and “cool boyfriends”, e.g. **acceptance** as defined by my little circle of gossiping bosom pals.

Desperate attempts to cure the zits, a “Twiggie” body by way of “Thins” (appetite suppressants) and wonder diets, are solutions that still come up when I look in the mirror. Only now I think more along the lines of Botox injections when I see the lines on my face. **Body obsessions** were often combined with or interspersed with periods where I thought my life would be fixed if only I prayed enough, or went to church more often. The first time I had a real diamond on my finger I thought, “This is it!” **“Happily ever after!”** I don’t need to tell you it didn’t turn out that way. As Muriel Rukeyser says, “My lifetime listens to yours.”

Back to plan A: achievement (another degree and the “professor” title) and looks (gym and a new hairstyle). Perhaps I should persuade my sulky husband to pray with me and drag him off to church to remind him that he had promised at the altar never ever to make me miserable. Or what about emigrating to America – then the promised land of milk and honey? Perhaps the architect could design us a **stunning house** while I read Wayne Dyer’s YOUR ERRONEOUS ZONES to build my sagging self-esteem. The ultimate and final, but oh so **temporary, solution** was of course to have a **baby**. Holding a totally dependent little being in my arms did indeed make me feel useful, loved and whole, for a while. Well, that’s easily solved – have another one!

After a year or two on Prozac, Xanax and sleeping pills, fruitless couples therapy and a few visits to a friendly pastor, the solution was obviously to **break out of the cage** and get a divorce. I did read Wayne’s latest best seller, EVERY PROBLEM HAS A SPIRITUAL SOLUTION, but I didn’t take it seriously. I also tried the Methodist Church, Doxa Deo, New Age, consulted a psychic, and considered moving to Cape Town. At the same time, I re-joined the “singles scene” got a new wardrobe, a new hairstyle, went on a diet, found a lover, re-married in haste, built a stunning house, had another baby, repented at leisure... do I need to tell you the rest?

Carl Jung remarked that marriage is seldom a fulfilling relationship in the absence of a crisis; **awareness is not born in the absence of pain**. It is difficult to grasp that in order to be loved, we must first learn to love. It is only when we begin to see **relationships as an opportunity for growth** and an **invitation to self-discovery**

that we can enter the Promised Land. Perfect love means to love the one through whom one becomes unhappy” (Harville Hendrix: FINDING THE LOVE YOU WANT). The courage and insight to see my relationships as a mirror where I can recognize my unhealed childhood wounds and unmet needs, as well as my denied Self and my deepest relationship to life and to God, opened a whole new world.

Now I know that my problems and conflicts in intimate relationships are a source of knowledge and a gateway to enlightenment. Marriage is a Tao, a Yoga, a **way of healing and evolution** for myself and my partner, and a **path to spiritual awakening**. Every interaction is a lesson in love, contains a grain of a greater truth, offers a glimpse into my own unconscious darkness and a glimmer of my lost but always potential wholeness. All growth and healing, even within a beautiful and fulfilling relationship, are in the final analysis “D.I.Y” tasks. Even here we need to finally accept that **nothing and nobody out there** are going to do it for you.

You must take responsibility for your own wholeness, and the way this happens in a relationship is, paradoxically, by focusing your energy away from yourself, on your mate’s wholeness and happiness. This is the progression from the neediness of being in love to the **unconditional giving** of “agape”, mature love. Again, it’s a paradox that you will not be able to do this before you have learnt to love yourself unconditionally and to be whole and happy within yourself. You can only give out of abundance. **You cannot give to another person what you do not have in yourself.**

Marriage, like every other aspect of life, is essentially a spiritual path. Holy matrimony with another person cannot really happen before the **sacred inner marriage (union / integration)** has taken place. The mystical marriage is sometimes interpreted as Christ coming to fetch His bride, namely the Church, or those who have accepted salvation. In a deeper sense it refers to an inner event, where the soul, remembering itself as the “Son of God”, returns to fetch and “marry” the ego, the personality. In this way the personality is transformed, cherished and guided by the loving, compassionate “bridegroom”, the True Self. **The longed for “soul mate” turns out to be our own soul.**

Nevertheless, it took me a long time to discover that she who waits for the knight in shining armour, will clean up after his horse. I always said that every prince I ever kissed turned into a frog. I married the prince and soon after the honeymoon he turned into the beast. As I got older the joke was no longer funny. I had to **look into the mirror** and recognize the monster as my own unconscious self-rejection, selfishness and aggression. I had to fight my way out of the kitchen of life and find ways to turn the pumpkin and the rats into a coach and horses. Fortunately, there is always a Fairy Godmother – the **motherly aspect of God** – to help.

Indeed, when I was a child I thought as a child. The problem was that I did not stop thinking like a child when I started inhabiting a grown-up body. Like many people who are intelligent and successful, I was just often **too clever for my own good**. My plans worked too well. I was too good at manipulating. I did it my way too often. That is why Jesus says blessed are the meek – they learn early in life to be **humble and to surrender**. Until the age of 43 I was still looking at life as a puzzle in a

smoky mirror. I had gone to Sunday school, and I had learned Matthew 6 by heart, but I did not take it to heart.

And yet as a farm child there were times when I lay flat on my back in a nest of tall yellow grass and gazed up at the pale blue Highveld sky and my soul floated free as a bird, at one with the clouds. There were ecstatic moments of mystical union and simple, silent joy without cause or reason, only the fragrance of the wind, the shy faces of wild flowers after rain and the sun-warmed, ancient wisdom of grey stones. But we need to be **brought to our knees a few times before we decide to stay there**. We need to be knocked on the head before we are finally able to **open our eyes and ears again**.

Then we fall silent enough to hear the Voice that only whispers. Only then do we attain mature perspective and deep insight. Surrounded by darkness, if we wait, the lights are switched on inside and we begin to understand our life as our **dialogue with Life**, our dance as our **dance with God**. You know how it is. You know your own story. I have told you mine. Perhaps you have already woken up.

#### THE AWAKENING

*A time comes in your life when you finally get it. When in the midst of all your fears and insanity you stop dead in your tracks and somewhere the voice inside your head cries out ENOUGH! Enough fighting and crying or struggling to hold on. And like a child quieting down after a blind tantrum, your sobs begin to subside, you shudder once or twice, you blink back your tears and through a mantle of wet lashes you begin to look at the world through new eyes. This is your awakening.*

*You realize that it's time to stop hoping and waiting for something to change or for happiness, safety and security to come galloping over the next horizon. You come to terms with the fact that he is not Prince Charming and you are not Cinderella and that in the real world there aren't always fairy tale endings (or beginnings for that matter) and that any guarantee of "happily ever after" must begin with you, and in the process, a sense of serenity is born of acceptance.*

*You awaken to the fact that you are not perfect and that not everyone will always love, appreciate or approve of who or what you are and that's OK. They are entitled to their own views and opinions. And you learn the importance of loving and championing yourself, and in the process a sense of new found confidence is born of self-approval.*

*You stop complaining and blaming other people for the things they did to you (or didn't do for you) and you learn the only thing you can really count on is the unexpected. You learn that people don't always say what they mean or mean what they say and that not everyone will always be there for you and that it's not always about you. So, you learn to stand on your own and to take care of yourself and in the process a sense of safety and security is born of self-reliance.*

*You stop judging and pointing fingers and you begin to accept people as they are and to overlook their shortcomings and human frailties and in the process a sense of peace and contentment is born of forgiveness.*

*You realize that much of the way you view yourself, and the world around you, is a result of all the messages and opinions that have been ingrained into your psyche. You begin to sift through all the "stuff" you've been fed about how to behave, how you should look, how much you should weigh and what you should wear and where you should shop and what you should drive, how and where you should live and what you should be doing for a living, who you should sleep with, who you should marry and what you should expect from a marriage, the importance of having and raising children or what you owe your parents.*

*You learn to open up to new worlds and different points of view. You begin reassessing and redefining who you are and what you really stand for. You learn the difference between wanting and*

*needing and you begin to discard the doctrines and values you've outgrown, or should never have bought into to begin with and in the process you learn to go with your instincts.*

*You learn that it is truly in giving that we receive. And that there is power and glory in creating and contributing and you stop maneuvering through life merely as a "consumer" looking for your next fix. You learn that principles such as honesty and integrity are not the outdated ideals of a bygone era but the mortar that holds together the foundation upon which you must build a life.*

*You learn that you don't know everything, it's not your job to save the world and that you can't teach a pig to sing. You learn to distinguish between guilt and responsibility and the importance of setting boundaries and learning to say NO. You learn that the only cross to bear is the one you choose to carry and that martyrs get burned at the stake.*

*Then you learn about love. Romantic love and familial love. How to love, how much to give in love, when to stop giving and when to walk away.*

*You learn not to project your needs or your feelings onto a relationship. You learn that you will not be more beautiful, more intelligent, more lovable or important because of the man on your arm or the child that bears your name.*

*You learn to look at relationships as they really are and not as you would have them be. You stop trying to control people, situations and outcomes. You learn that just as people grow and change so it is with love... and you learn that you don't have the right to demand love on your terms... just to make YOU happy.*

*You learn that alone does not mean lonely. And you look in the mirror and come to terms with the fact that you will never be a size five or a perfect "10" and you stop trying to compete with the image inside your head and agonizing over how you "stack up."*

*You also stop working so hard at putting your feelings aside, smoothing things over and ignoring your needs. You learn that feelings of entitlement are perfectly OK... and that it is your right to want things and to ask for the things that you want... and that sometimes it is necessary to make demands.*

*You come to the realization that you deserve to be treated with love, kindness, sensitivity and respect and you won't settle for less. And you allow only the hands of a lover who cherishes you to glorify you with his touch... and in the process you internalize the meaning of self-respect. And you learn that your body really is your temple, and you begin to care for it and treat it with respect. You begin eating a balanced diet, drinking more water and taking more time to exercise. You learn that fatigue diminishes the spirit and can create doubt and fear. So, you take more time to rest. And just as food fuels the body, laughter fuels our soul, so you take more time to laugh and play.*

*You learn, for the most part, in life you get what you believe you deserve... and that much of life truly is a self-fulfilling prophecy. You learn that anything worth achieving is worth working for and that wishing for something to happen is different than working toward making it happen.*

*More importantly, you learn that in order to achieve success you need direction, discipline and perseverance. You also learn that no one can do it all alone and that it's OK to risk asking for help.*

*You learn that the only thing you must truly fear is the great robber baron of all time – FEAR itself. You learn to step right into and through your fears because you know that whatever happens you can handle it and to give in to fear is to give away the right to live on your terms. And you learn to fight for your life and not to squander it living under a cloud of impending doom.*

*You learn that life isn't always fair, you don't always get what you think you deserve and that sometimes bad things happen to unsuspecting, good people. On these occasions you learn not to personalize things. You learn that God isn't punishing you or failing to answer your prayers. It's just life happening.*

*And you learn to deal with evil in its most primal state – the ego. You learn that negative feelings such as anger, envy, and resentment must be understood and directed or they will suffocate the life*



*out of you and poison the universe that surrounds you. You learn to admit when you are wrong and to build bridges instead of walls.*

*You learn to be thankful and to take comfort in many of the simple things we take for granted, things that millions of people upon the earth can only dream about, a full refrigerator, clean running water, a soft warm bed, or a long hot shower.*

*Slowly, you begin to take responsibility for yourself by yourself and to make yourself a promise to never betray yourself and to never ever settle for less than your heart's desire. And you hang a wind chime outside your window so you can listen to the wind. And you make it a point to keep smiling, to keep trusting and to stay open to every wonderful possibility.*

*Finally, with courage in your heart and God by your side you take a stand, you take a deep breath and you begin to design the life you want to live as best you can.*

*(Author unknown but deeply appreciated)*



## **THE FINAL PURPOSE**

The ultimate purpose is to attain the state of being where we are able to live simply and joyously in the moment as we reap the reward of being free **from ignorance, guilt, fear and fruitless desires**. It is to know that we are more than we ever dreamed. This is a reality shift, a world turned upside down, or outside in. As we painstakingly liberate ourselves from the conceptual matrix we thought was reality, we become more **comfortable with uncertainty** and more at home with the mystical, paradox and mystery. We learn to live patiently within life's questions.

The word "Gnosis" in the Bible is often translated as "**faith**" and this is taken to mean intellectual understanding or cognitive belief. The word really refers to a complete acceptance of the perfection. It actually means to **understand nothing**

**and love everything.** If we wish to experience what St Paul called the “Peace that passes understanding,” we need to surpass the level of mere rational understanding.

We create conceptual models of reality because we are afraid of life and want to understand what is happening, so that we can **feel safe**. But Enlightenment is to know that we are absolutely safe, because **essentially we exist outside the world**. Because your Self is soul, that is non-physical, in a certain sense you were not even born at all. When you grasp this, you can let go of the illusion of the conceptual matrix and live the Mystery. You can allow life to surprise and enchant you. You can remember that you actually always knew the answer.

*We start the spiritual quest because we experience life as a terrifying mystery which we want to understand. This is Hell. We end by trusting in the goodness of life, which we know is a Mystery beyond comprehension. This is Heaven.*

*(Freke & Gandy: JESUS AND THE GODDESS)*

Perhaps you are getting impatient. If you are reading this, you have asked a frustrated or even a desperate question. And you want an answer. The question was probably something like:

- *How do I get out of this hole?*
- *How do I change my life?*
- *How do I feel better about my self?*
- *How do I get rid of this anxiety?*
- *How do I end this depression?*
- *How do I get out of this relationship?*
- *How do I find a partner who loves me?*
- *How do I end my financial self-sabotage?*
- *How do I stop feeling not good enough?*

There is a very simple answer. **Focus inward**. Your salvation is not in any thing you can do, achieve, possess, or have. Stop struggling, wake up, grow up, let go, and surrender. **Everything you really need, is already here. Cry all you want to, relax, breathe deeply, stop whining, and look for the gift** that is already within you and that can be revealed by the circumstances. No, you say, you have tried that already. You have already given up hope and lain on the couch for days watching TV and eating chocolates or drinking beer.

That is not exactly what I mean. To wallow in self-pity, depression or drink will not do it. When I talk in this way, people have said to me, “Do you want me to become a hobo?” “How can I be successful if I don’t stress?” “Moet ek nou Gods water oor Gods akker laat loop?” Perhaps the latter is not the worst option you can try. Remember, however, that it is all a question of balance. Stop thinking in **black or white**, all or nothing terms. Life is much more complex and interesting than that. Get rid of your addiction to extremes, crisis and drama. **Choose peace** above drama. To summarize, here is what I believe:

### **ALL THAT IS...**

***Is love. Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists.*** God is Love and God is all there really is. Love is the Source of all there is. Nothing that is, is not of God. I do not acknowledge any other Power. Everything and everyone are only Love appearing in another form. The universe is a flawless physical manifestation of a perfect thought in the mind of God. Nothing else is real. What appears to be unholy is merely that: an appearance.

### **I AM...**

***Part of the Power that created me.*** I am a living, breathing part of God. I am a human manifestation of the breath of Love. If God stops thinking the thought that appears as me, I do not die, but return to my original form in the heart of God. As I exist in God, I create my world through my thoughts and words. I have the freedom to create any world I choose. The reality I create is a reflection of Who I think I Am. My world is perfect, whole and complete.

### **LOVE IS...**

***The vision that reveals the part of God that is in everyone and everything.*** In Love we are One Being appearing in many forms. Unconditional love is the vision of perfection in all beings, even if they have forgotten who they are. Love is not something I need, it is Who I Am. When I love, I celebrate, liberate, and nurture my True Self more than the One I love. I love in order to experience my Self as Who I Am and to remind another of Who They Are.

### **LIFE IS...**

***The perfect opportunity to awaken to Who I Am.*** I am here to experience my Self as the Light in the darkness. I welcome the darkness as the perfect opportunity to experience and express Who I choose to be. I rejoice in the good and the bad; this is how I evolve. Every crisis is an opportunity for a miracle; every loss an invitation to ascend to higher ground. I love my enemies as my teachers of life's lessons; God sends me nothing but angels.

### **TO SURVIVE...**

***I need only Be Who I Am.*** I am lovingly cared for. The Love in my heart resonating with events guides me to do and say the right things. The state of my Being naturally attracts situations, relationships, and people into my world which increase abundance, peace, and love. My gratitude is a magnet for more situations for which I can be grateful. I relinquish ambition and embrace inspiration; for me success is a life lived miraculously.

### **MY SAFETY...**

***Is in my defenselessness.*** I need never defend my innocent Self; that would only serve to make real what doesn't exist. I stand serenely as a messenger of a Love which is not of this world. I accept criticism; this is how I develop humility, honesty, courage, and integrity. I live and love passionately; the only failures I avoid are those from which I do not learn. The worst that can happen is death, and that's not the end of the world.

### **MY STORY...**

***Is the unfolding of soul's destiny***, which is infinitely more magnificent than the human story-line. My purpose is enlightenment; this is my higher agenda every day of my life; past, present and future. My real story is my journey into Christ Mind. I only truly exist in the eternal Now, where time does not even exist. The bottom line is that everything is exactly as it should be and all is, was, and will be well.

### **FEAR...**

***Is never necessary.*** If there is anything at all to fear, it is that I might forget Who I Am and Why I Am here. If I fall into fear, I can welcome the fear as a reminder to remember.

Perhaps you don't agree with me. There are plenty of things in the world which seem to contradict what I believe. Terrible things happen and often they happen to innocent people; this could make you think that something is wrong in the world. Actually I have no idea whether what I believe is true. Reality, and even the Bible, is open to many different interpretations. The point is that I choose to believe what I believe, because it makes me feel good and brings me what I really desire – joy and peace no matter what happens.

I want to conclude with my favourite prayer.

