

Self-Empowerment

Spring 2005

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

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IN-SIGHT OUT!

Have any challenges come your way this past year? Looking back, many of us can point to world events, as well as personal circumstances that affect our equilibrium.

The large-scale devastation of a tsunami touches the lives of victims, their families, and all whose eyes are open to their brothers' plight. Many people throughout the world have reached out in compassion, ready to help through prayers, contributions, and service.

Other natural disasters have taken a toll in many places around the world. From each trouble spot come cries for help, and thankfully there are many to answer the call.

On a relatively small-scale, a shift of personal circumstances can sweep us under a wave of emotion, and ripple out to touch many lives as well. It would be pointless to compare the magnitude of a natural catastrophe with a personal loss, yet the turbulence of our own situations can engulf us in fear, pain, helplessness and grief.

A sudden change in circumstances can be quite frightening. No matter how much work we do to meet the vicissitudes of life, there are often events that push us beyond the limits of our peace or understanding. Whether we are witness to a major world event or a change in our personal life, both internal and external resources can assist us on our life journey.

GOING INWARD AND OUTWARD

Internal and external resources are not as clear-cut as one might think, depending on your "point of view." Sounds crazy, no?

Let's try looking at this example – a point on a drinking mug. Selecting a point on the inside of the mug, where the beverage would cover if filled with a liquid, one would say that the point is definitely "inside" the mug. Now, from that point, imagine a line of points through the thickness of the mug to the corresponding point on the outside of the mug. The original chosen inside point of the mug and the final outside point of the mug are endpoints on a line. If the "between" points are inside the form of the mug, then

the two endpoints are "outside" the mug, proving that the originally chosen "inside" point is actually an "outside" point. It was only "inside" in relation to a liquid that could be held inside the mug; but it is "outside" in relation to the body of the mug itself. Can you see that?

In a similar way, when we turn our attention toward our internal resources of courage, strength, perseverance, skills, peace, love, etc., we may very well be reaching "outside" of previously held definitions of what is "in" us. Consider the possibility that going within actually steps outside of your daily conscious self to a Self that is greater than your present concept of yourself.

And again, when we "reach out" for help from others, our unity with the brotherhood of mankind (of which we may not be fully and consciously aware) may in reality be reaching out to the extension of ourselves. This may sound like gobbledygook, but mystics know the truth of recognizing others as self. Practice meditation and you will begin to understand the statement, "I am you and you are me."

So go within and also reach out for the help you need to meet the challenges of life. You may just find your idea of internal and external resources shifting in their meaning to you. They may just turn inside out.

Blessings, Love and Hugs!

Your fellow traveler, *Rev Jill*

A governor-poet visited a Zen master, and asked him, "What is the teaching of Buddhism?"

The master recited a verse from the Dhammapada:

Not to commit wrong actions

But to do all good ones

And keep the heart pure.

This is the teaching of all the Buddhas.

"But any three-year-old child knows that," the governor said.

"A three-year-old may know it," the Zen master said, "but even a person of eighty finds it difficult to practice."

— Zen mondo

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

By Rev. David Ault

Did I express love this year, real love? The kind of love that doesn't announce itself in flashy circumstances or structured conditions - but an authentic, quiet, internal love? The kind of love that bubbles to the surface when I gaze at another with understanding, a love that places me in their shoes, granting freedom from judgment and deepening my compassion? A philanthropic love that expresses because it simply feels compelled to, because it knows there is more than enough and everyone can benefit. If not, then I resolve to be and do better in my authentic loving.

Did I forgive this year, really forgive? The kind of forgiveness that cracks open my heart, peeling away one more layer of righteous indignation, thus allowing my soul to breathe? The kind of forgiveness that loosens my clinched fists held high at a situation so that I don't enter into the next one with guarded mistrust? The kind of forgiveness that comprehends there is a difference between understanding a behavioral choice and condoning it? If not, then I resolve to be and do better in my forgiving.

Did I stop this year, really stop? The kind of stopping that can't help but make me vulnerable by becoming more familiar with who I am without distraction, smoke screens, excuses or self-imposed numbing? The kind of stopping that turns me, naked, towards my feelings, giving them permission to express? No right or wrong - a stopping that simply lets me hear what I need to hear so that I can live more effectively? If not, then I resolve to be and do better in allowing myself to stop.

Did I seek adventure this year, real adventure? The kind of adventure that requires me to not only take a leap of faith off my cliff of familiarity but actually sends me back to get a running start? The kind of adventure that shakes the dust off my capable but underused wings and gives them an opportunity to catch the gorgeous wind of change? The kind of adventure that knows there is no outside safety net in this physical world, only an internal one? The kind of adventure that shouts, "I choose to live fully!" If not, then I resolve to be and do better in seeking adventure.

Did I seek wellness this year, real wellness? The kind of wellness that requires me to be fully conscious of what I put in my body - the kind of wellness that

requires me to practice what I preach when it comes to self-love while understanding that the power to dissolve poor habits starts by simply choosing to change? Wellness that says, "This is the only body you've got. Treat me with respect, praise me daily and honor me as the holy temple that I am?" If not, then I resolve to be and do better in allowing wellness in my life.

Did I play this year, really play? The kind of play that gives value to the heavenly activity of fun - knowing that fun is sacred, that play is the equivalent of work and that during play - renewal and relaxation usher in the newest ideas and the clearest choices for better manifestations? Did I view play as a necessary life function and not a debatable luxury? If not, then I resolve to be and do better in my relationship to playing.

Did I set a goal and see it to completion this year, really complete it? The kind of completion that lets the vibration of satisfaction and confidence in my abilities heal any opposing ideas of not being good enough? Did I honor my life and its sacred purpose by utilizing my time with forward thinking and letting my mistakes be motivators not antagonists? Did I dissolve my insecurities and procrastination by understanding that my untapped genius has but one mode of expression and that is through idea, thought, word and action? If not, then I resolve to be and do better in setting and completing my goals.

Did I open myself up to learn this year, really learn? The kind of learning that entices me to enroll in being a student of life with thirst and enthusiasm? Did I set an intention for uncovering more of my potential, letting divine intellect eat from my plate and stepping deeper into the waters of wisdom? Did I open a book, take a class, study a language, learn an instrument, write a poem, visit another culture? Did I learn to surprise and thrill myself with the infinite capacity I have to master more than I thought I could? If not, then I resolve to be and do better on my personal path of learning.

Did I clean up my relationships this year, really clean them up? The kind of cleaning that requires me to break open the lock, pull back the curtain, throw open the window and start removing the dust of harsh words, grudges, false accusations and misguided choices that have layered my heart? Did I make amends for the fearful ways that disheartened another, for neglecting to honor their point of view? With careful examination, did I communicate my truth, understanding that sometimes all we may be able to do is agree to disagree and to do so without judgement or malice? If not, then

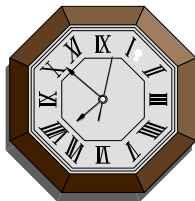
I resolve to be and do better on cleaning up my relationships.

Did I share my good this year, really share? The kind of sharing that comes from the pure joy of seeing another succeed, not from what I think they can or will do for me in return? Did I tithe back to where I was spiritually fed, transformed and inspired? Did I practice random acts of kindness and give of my time, talent, and treasure realizing that my good is a part of a never-ending wellspring that cannot run dry - whose source is and always will be the infinite wellspring of the Divine? Did I commit to walking the altruistic path, remembering that every step brings healing and enlightenment to the world? If not, then I resolve to be and do better in my sharing.

Did I pray this year, really pray? The kind of prayer that is spoken not to God but AS God – prayers that affirm rather than beseech, are pregnant with knowing rather than bloated with doubt? Did I make my every day activities a prayer - realizing that every thought I think carries with it the responsibility of an effect on the world? Did I remember how truly powerful my own prayer actually is and that by simply devoting myself to the practice of it, I become the change? Did I remember that my prayer takes what I seek and introduces it to me, the seeker? If not, then I resolve to be and do better with praying.

Did I do all these things because deep down inside I fully understand how precious I am and that these activities will help me to see that I am held in the light as a perfect idea? Did I remember that I have been perfectly conceived and am always held in the perfect mind of God as perfect being? Did I know that there is nothing that I can ever say, nothing I can ever do that will separate me from the love of God? If for any reason, I forgot my divinity this year, then I resolve to be and do better in my knowing of it, to fully understand and embody the truth that it is done unto me as I believe. And I believe in the power of Good, for me, for you, for all.

Rev. David Ault www.DavidAult.com
Author of *Where Regret Cannot Find Me*



The Moments of High Resolve

Despite the dullness and barrenness
of the days that pass,
if I search with due diligence, I can always find
a deposit left by some former radiance.
But I had forgotten.
At the time it was full-orbed, glorious,
and resplendent.
I was sure that I would never forget.
In the moment of its fullness,
I was sure it would illumine my path
for all the rest of my journey.
I had forgotten how easy it is to forget.
There was no intent to betray what seemed
so sure at the time.
My response was whole, clean, authentic.
But little by little, there crept into my life
the dust and grit of the journey.
Details, lower-level demands,
all kinds of cross currents--
nothing momentous, nothing overwhelming,
nothing flagrant--- just wear and tear.
If there had been some direct challenge—
a clear cut issue--
I would have fought it to the end, and beyond.
In the quietness of this place,
surrounded by the all-pervading Presence of God,
my heart whispers:
Keep fresh before me
the moments of my High Resolve,
that in fair weather or foul, in good times
or in tempests,
in the days when the darkness and the foe are
nameless or familiar, I may not forget that to which
my life is committed.
Keep fresh before me the moments of high resolve.

Howard Thurman
For The Inward Journey

Watching the Landscape

By Dan Joseph

When I began seriously working with *A Course in Miracles*, a strange thing happened. Up until that point, I had been harboring a number of egocentric attitudes. My mind was frequently awash in judgment, self-centeredness, competitive drives, and general badwill.

I probably wasn't a whole lot different from other people in this regard. But as I began to work with the ideas and exercises in the Course, I realized that there needed to be a change. What passed for a "normal" attitude wasn't going to work anymore.

So one day I made a commitment. "No more of this negativity for me," I said. "No more arrogance. No more put-downs. No more competition. I'm going to be kind to people. I'm going to be a more loving person." I threw down the gauntlet and tried to live a better life.

Looking back, it wasn't an empty commitment. I really tried my best to live in a more positive way. I apologized to people I had hurt in the past. I tried to accept – even help – people whom I found challenging. I refused to give in to my negativity, despite some extremely strong habits.

But here's where the twist happened. Even though I was somewhat successful during the day – even though I did experience a general brightening of my daily life – I immediately began to have some extremely violent dreams at night. They were like childhood nightmares, but with more force behind them. There came a time when I simply didn't want to go to sleep. I knew what was waiting for me.

I share this story because it illustrates a common tendency of the mind. When we make a commitment to improve one set of attitudes, the mind will often switch its negativity to some other quarter. A friend of mind compares this to the "gopher game" that you find in carnivals. As soon as you deal with one gopher, another one pops up in the corner.

If I had been prepared for this dynamic, I could have calmly said: "Oh! Here is an interesting new challenge. I'm learning to be kinder to people during the day. Now I can learn to be kinder to myself at night." There may have been some work to do – I might have needed to set aside some prayer time each night, to orient my mind "into a pattern of rest," as *A Course in Miracles* suggested.

But I was unprepared, and overwhelmed. I thought: What more can I do? I can't be expected to keep up this spiritual stuff around the clock.

I gave up on my night-time life, and unfortunately suffered from the nightmares for quite a long time.

Straws

One of the major teachings of *A Course in Miracles* – which I was missing at the time – is that there are no "safe harbors" for negative thinking. The Course encourages us to let God's Love enfold every area of our lives – every corner of our minds.

We're encouraged to do this not out of a desire for spiritual perfectionism. Instead, we're encouraged to do this because it's the only way to find true peace.

A common parallel to my daytime/nighttime story is the experience that many people have with the practice of forgiveness. They make a commitment to extend forgiveness toward the people in their lives. All goes well, until they hit that particular person – *that one* – toward whom kindness is simply impossible. They never dreamed that someone could be so contrary, so

unfair, so terribly difficult to forgive.

What usually is happening in that situation is that the negatively-oriented part of the mind is feeling its kingdom slipping away. So it grabs desperately at the last few straws, and hangs on with all its might.

This is it, the mind realizes – let this one realm of life slip away, or this one relationship, and the game is over. The mind will often cling to these last few grievances for dear life.

I find it helpful to understand this dynamic. It begins to make sense of what seems like complete senselessness. There have been times when I watched, in bafflement, as my mind seized on some tiny issue with a friend, and then magnified that issue into a giant, intractable argument. Why was I doing this? I wondered.

Now it's clear: I was doing it because the love between us was growing stronger, and was threatening to shine away my egocentric life. My mind, in a desperate attempt to hold onto its accustomed way of living, began to clutch wildly at any excuse for conflict.

Again, this is such a common dynamic on the spiritual path that few people escape it. But understanding the dynamic is an important step in dealing with it. Instead of being "thrown back" by the mind's resistance, we can understand it for what it is – a frightened, desperate, unsuccessful attempt to hold onto a failing system.

These last stabs may seem shocking – and in a way, they are. But they are the beginning of an end. Like a child who throws a temper-tantrum before finally collapsing into sleep, so do our minds often put up a final show of resistance before yielding to a new life.

Scouting

I find that one helpful practice to deal with the mind's resistance is simply to watch – calmly and broadly – for any signs of difficulty.

Imagine that you are a scout on a forest-covered mountain. Your job is to peacefully, quietly scan the landscape for any signs of trouble. When you find a plume of smoke, you immediately call in the reinforcements.

In a similar way, we can watch the landscape of our minds for any signs of resistance. When we find those plumes of negativity, we can call on our Inner Helper to douse them with Divine Love.

As one fire is extinguished, another may immediately pop up. That's normal; it's nothing to be discouraged about. We can simply call for help once again, and continue to monitor the landscape.

Our job is to patiently, honestly watch the land – and call, as often as necessary, on our limitless Help.

Blessings to you, Dan Joseph www.QuietMind.info
Author of *Inner Healing* and *Inspired by Miracles*.



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The Journey That Never Was: A guide to hearing God’s Voice regardless of one’s faith, religion, or personal beliefs

by DavidPaul and Candace Doyle

— A book review by Rev. Jill Sabin Carel

“Hearing God’s Voice is not a gift given to a rare few. We each have this Voice within us. Learning to hear It is not only teachable, but inevitable. *The Journey That Never Was* is a guide to hearing God’s Voice within you, not in some esoteric or mystical way, but in a way that is just as real as picking up the phone and actually hearing God’s Voice on the other end.” — That is the opening promise of this most delightful and inspirational book.

The Journey That Never Was makes good on that opening promise to guide each of us in developing and maintaining a two-way communication with the Divine.

This book is a balanced “meal” – with bite-sized pieces, each with plenty to chew on. The glimpses into their personal lives and spiritual journeys are inspiring, as readers can relate to their desires, fears and experiences. The exercises are well-developed, easy to do and easily integrated into any lifestyle. The question and answer dialogues between the authors and the Holy Spirit are in harmony with the principles of *A Course in Miracles*. The chapter highlights are great capsule summaries of the main points of each chapter, giving focus and clarity in regular intervals.

The personal journey of the two earthly authors bring a sense of emotional resonance to our own struggles to stay spiritually connected while dealing with the mundane obligations and challenges of our lives. This is not the story of enlightened monks sitting on a mountain, passing on the secrets of metaphysical principles. This is the down-to-earth

nitty-gritty practice of regular folk, like you and me, endeavoring to keep a two-way communication with Spirit and yielding to Divine Guidance.

If it is true that the Holy Spirit is always there, waiting to extend Love and Truth to you and to me, then it behooves us to find the methods that work for us to open that direct line of communication on a regular basis.

I highly recommend this book. Read it and you will see that it truly is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the Kingdom.

For more info: DavidPaul & Candace Doyle, P.O. Box 3125, Ashland, OR 97520 info@rightmindedness.com www.rightmindedness.com



SPRING FUNDRAISER

Each Spring I remind my readers that it is time for the financial support of this newsletter. Readers are encouraged to send a voluntary contribution to help cover the cost of publication.

This is a golden opportunity to say “yes” to the cycle of Giving and Receiving. Take a minute to write a check payable to “**Agape Interfaith Ministries**” or feel free to send a book or two of postage stamps, which also give great support.

Your help truly does make a difference. Whether you send \$5 *or more*, every bit of support makes this sharing of inspiration possible. **Thank you for your support!**

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Daily Word

God inspires me with a wellspring of divine ideas.

My path of life can take many turns, and some of them may be quite unexpected. Yet whenever it appears that something in the way before me is limiting me in reaching a goal, I know there is always another way – the way of prayer.

Prayer focuses my attention on the inspiration of God and allows me to be open to the wellspring of divine ideas that God provides for me. I go often to this source to draw from it. Each idea can become a new avenue for abundance and health, a fresh outlet for expression of my talents, or a deep realization of my own spiritual value.

I am a channel through which divine ideas are expressed in the world. Acting on the inspiration of God, I am successful.

The Daily Word, Unity Village, MO 64065. One year subscription \$10.95. Customer Svc: 1-800-669-0282.

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