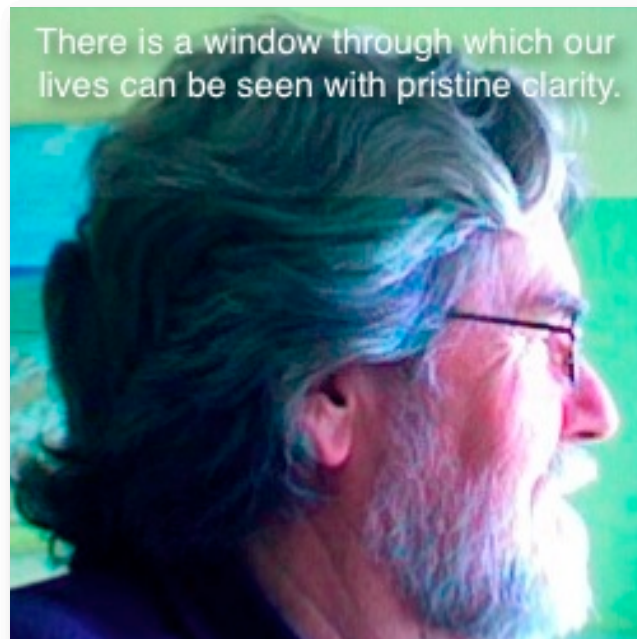


THE WINDOW



Papajeff

The Window

There is a window through which our lives can be seen with pristine clarity. We can search for the window, but we cannot search for the view...because we have no idea what the view is actually like. Well, we may have an idea, but until we have the experience of the view, we only have an idea or, if you will, a concept. And no matter how eloquent, articulate or persuasive our attempts at description may be, they do not hold a 25-watt bulb to the actual view.

It's like, we can search for relief from despair, and long for clarity and peace of mind, but we cannot directly search for enlightenment. Why not? Because we don't have a clue (or a trace of memory of) what enlightenment is like. Neither the rational mind nor the constructs of time and space can reveal this enlightened view.

Yet the window is there, right in the magnificent skin, bones and synapses that make up our temporary (mortal) home. Problem is, curtains were drawn over our window and the room became so dark that finding the window is difficult - impossible for many. Who drew the curtain? Pick your metaphor or allegory. But it's pretty evident that social coercion had a hand in the raw deal.

From the delightful freedom of innocent childhood, we were socialized to live in fear and doubt as an undercurrent of our consciousness. Toss in guilt brought on by strict moral codes (those socially contrived beyond what we naturally know as right and wrong) and the train wreck religion has made of spirituality, and it's lights out at a very early age.

Still there are those voices that have been around for thousands of years, up to and including today, who write, speak, scream and risk their lives to let those who long for the view know that...

There is a window through which live can be seen with pristine clarity. And you simply (as if!) have to die to the imposed concept that you are not already standing at the window, and just reach out and open the curtains. However, the social coercion (or whatever your story line calls it) has been working out in a sweaty gym for a long time building this tough-guy ego, and it isn't about the step aside without a fight.

So, if you long for the view get ready for a fight to the finish - of ego being the imposed master of your life.

Love.

The Wisdom Whisper

We enter this world of adoring looks, soothing voices and gentle rocking, and soon learn to respond with our own pure infant radiance. This benevolent place to which we have been delivered seems to hold infinite promise of delight. And so it does, until one day we are told that we must put on a mask, a social persona – sheepishly sit in our assigned seat, impeccably follow the rules, and not get out of line - ever. Spontaneous joy accompanied by running, jumping and spinning for the sheer fun of it is over; definitely frowned upon and simply not permitted. Maybe the bears and the birds and the bees do it, but not us civilized humans!

Early rebellion and resistance to this social coercion is met with abrupt force and threat of stinging and severe punishment. Continued resistance amps up the consequences to include being locked in a cage for years to legislated lethal electrocution, injection or snapping of the neck. Of course, we have become much too sophisticated as a civilization, in most of the world, to condone the earlier drowning, chopping off of the head, or “pressing” (that's piling up rocks on us until the weight stops our breathing and our bones snap), a favorite in the Salem trials.

And so, life goes on: education, work, accomplishments or not, relationships - good and bad, until our

earthly sojourner comes to an end (some would add: this time around). Some experience enough superficial bright spots to never question the propriety of the mask and offer a toothy grin to life with, "It's a wonderful party and we're having a great time." But as Thoreau wrote so insightfully, most live lives of quiet desperation.

But for some people, an undercurrent runs that cannot be ignored. Every so often this undercurrent ripples words to the surface of the mind that sound something like, "What is missing? Who am I? Why do I feel so empty? Is this all there is?" Eventually, these questioners come to a crossroad. Here, they either decide to stuff the disturbance and just tough out life while waiting for the bright spots, or tug at the mask and tug at the mask, and tug at the mask.

At this point, if they voice their angst, they will find many, many advisors: therapists (good and bad), well-meaning friends, ill-spirited pretenders, ivory tower philosophers, religious fundamentalists, silver-tongued devils, and with great good and rare fortune – someone(s) who successfully removed the mask and can speak authentically about the experience and what follows.

Only a wisdom whisper from the heart will inform the freedom seeker about to whom or what they should listen. Some need to be guided. Some find that the morning sunrise or some other precipitous event melts the mask one day. All who find the answer eventually find the answer within.

Love.

Living at WOW!

When did we first lose sight of WOW!? Was it the price of sophistication? What a lousy trade: the giggly delight of watching a lady bug crawl up our arm and the unspeakable joy of jumping smack dab splish splash in the middle of a mud puddle in exchange for a pasted-on Cheshire Cat gratuitous grin, fawning for acceptance in some corporate facade of fraternity/sorority.

When did being tucked in become appropriate attire instead of a loving cuddle and a goodnight kiss on the forehead? When did we begin to bring sacrifices to the alter of the god of what-will-others-people-think? Don't tell me it was the price of maturity. Cancel my order. My lady bug and I are on our way to the nearest mud puddle.

Well the good news is that there is a truth that sets us free from all that social coercion. How fortunate are those who find it. And how sad it is to hear the water spiders of spirituality spin their tale of, "there's nothing to find." (Maybe they never gave into the social coercion, but for the rest of us....). One of my favorite awakened teachers called the discovery of this truth that sets us free, "A pearl of great price." Now, that's a pearl of wisdom.

Wisdom, optimism and wellness (WOW!) still sit on the front porch of our minds, silently in awe of the exquisite landscape of life. With every breath, they speak in a wisdom whisper, inviting the internal chattering lions of fear and doubt to settle down and rejoin them in Living@WOW!

Mother Theresa once said that prayer is talking to God, and meditation is listening to God. Sweet. You cannot be holed up in a bunker of fear and doubt to hear the still small voice (the one that speaks plainly of the truth that sets us free). The wisdom whisper is heard on the front porch. Pull up a rocker. Breathe easy.

Om.

Love.

Ego and The Egg Timer

Ego loves to debate. You chose the wrong word. You missed a spot. This means that and not that. My perspective is keener than your perspective. My verbosity can beat up your aunt's limited vocabulary. And on and on. Always trying to come up with the unanswerable question. Oh yeah, what about...?

And on and on.

If you get pulled into a debate about life's meaning, religion (spirituality included), politics or the economy...put an egg timer on it.

Love.

Loaves and Veggies

Yes, the popular version of the story is about loaves and fishes, but in our house, we are vegetarians. Well, sort of...my wife is a vegan, high raw or, as she says, "health foodist" and I am a flexitarian - whatever food source happens to be available and convenient. However, animal products of any type are not allowed in our fridge per order of my wonderful health foodist partner in life. So, I am primarily a vegetarian, chief green juice maker, and a bond servant (love slave) to my gorgeous wife.

Anyway, the story of feeding thousands with a few loaves and veggies is listed among the physical miracles of pop cultural Christianity. But, in honor of my choice to board the last train to Hippieville in the early 70s, I am in the habit of looking for the countercultural view. So, looking out my window once again, here's what I see:

Jesus, a Christed One, was able to feed thousands with only a few...words. He spoke to the very heart of people who were hungry for release from the oppressive prison created by the ruling religious of the day. He spoke of a truth that he promised would set them free. At one point, he even used the startling metaphor that those who came into his presence and listened to him should, "eat my flesh and drink my blood."

This reportedly caused him to lose a big chunk of his audience. The literalists, no doubt. He was passionately imploring the people who came to him to go to the marrow of his words, not simply the superficial meaning. As with all Masters, his passion was to share the Christ Consciousness.

He spoke of a God of Love, not a control freak God of Wrath. Fear of the Lord was translated to, "Awe of the Lord," - a need to set aside ego and beliefs of imposed creeds, to transcend rational thought and directly experience what Ramana Maharshi so beautifully called, "the very form of God - Love," on a level that would be paramount to being born again - as an entirely new person. And this new person would have come into what Guru Swami G calls, "the very presence and residence of God."

This is the food, the loaves and veggies that truly satisfy hunger and thirst - to the point where those who partake never hunger or thirst again.

Dinner is served.

Love.

Ocean of Love

We are conceived in love, created in love, born in love and bask in the tender looks and loving cuddling we receive when we first arrive in our current life experience. We live without self-consciousness or any concern about what we must "do" to survive in this ocean of love, until...at a very early age, some unseen hand dips into this ocean of love with a cup of self-consciousness - and suddenly we feel separate and concerned.

Now, we see ourselves as the doer. We must do certain things and act a certain way to please others. The love that was unconditional now has conditions. If we are a bad girl or bad boy, we are no longer "worthy" of love and must "earn" it back.

Earning our way through life is contingent upon how well we adapt to and follow the social order, the school rules and the corporate culture. Step out of line and you could be out of a job, a home, a relationship. From an ocean of love to a prison our own devise (fashioned with the help of the socialization process).

Some adapt well and accept what is as what is - and that's all there is to it. Others don't adapt well, but press on in spite of recurring nightmares of job loss, financial pressures and failed relationship. And then there are those who resist the social order and find themselves physically imprisoned.

It may be that everyone feels the longing, the pull, of the long-forgotten ocean of love; however, most cave to social pressure and deny or suppress the longing. But a fringe few, it seems, will risk it all in an attempt to find their way back to that ineffable "something missing" in their lives. What stirs the heart of those who will no longer deny the longing? Desperation? A chance pick up of a book, a certain phrase they hear, a moving movie, a splendid sunrise?

The story of Jesus walking on the water comes to mind. Maybe he was doing what Masters do, calling those who would listen back to the ocean of love, telling them it is available and that return is possible. Or, as some would say, helping them realize that they never had left and that they had bought into an imitation of life rather than authentic life, and recognition of this would immediately awaken them

Splish. Splash. Welcome back.

Love.

Does Free Will Have A Downside?

Ever find yourself down the road a little farther than you had consciously intended; this is, involved in a situation that at some point had you question your choice to go in this direction? You know, the old, "What am I doing?"

Depending on your history and/or upbringing, you glanced heavenward and reflected on Proverbs 3:5 or some similar advice from your tradition or philosophy. (Proverbs 3:5 says, "Lean not upon your own understanding. Acknowledge me in all your ways and I will direct your paths.")

Or, you wryly smiled, thinking along the lines of something Caroline Myss says, "If you want to know if God has a sense of humor, tell God your plan."

Now, this doesn't sound like free will is the best choice. And it opens the door to the debate about free will or determinism.

Well, come look through my window for a few minutes if you like:

It is my experience that we have a built-in DGS (Divine Guidance System), and like the GPS in our car, we can ignore it and decide that either we already know the right choices and/or we have a better way. Now, without going the whole David Hawkins route about levels of consciousness, it seems that some fortunate ones have attuned to the DGS and cruise through life effortlessly and joyfully, while others occasionally tune in, and still other either have no knowledge of the DGS, deny its very existence or have it turned off for some ill-reasoned reason.

So, how does free will work in my backyard? It goes like this: We definitely have free will and can screw up or precisely nail our success in life and respectively feel the despair or the joy of the result of our choices...but...

ALL of the choices and ALL of the results of these choices will eventually lead us to where God wants us - in God's very presence and residence. We all on God's WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE poster.

Game on.

Love.

Popping The Pop Cultural Christian Balloon

Let me save you from a fairly long read, possibly: It is my view that much of Christianity - mainstream and independent churches have, in great part, made a train wreck out of the wisdom of Jesus and squeezed the life out of his teachings.

Unfortunately, many "recovering Christians," recoil at the mere mention of Jesus - and would much rather hear from a guru or esoteric philosopher from as far away from Christianity as possible. It's too bad, they've thrown out the baby with the dirty bathwater much of the church has made of the beautiful, poetic, mystic words of Jesus. He did not intend on establishing an exclusive club that would consign everyone who was not a member to Hell. His message was to love one another, and that in the midst of this love he would, "show us plainly of The Father," and that would bring us what he called a, "fullness of joy."

After more than 20 years of live satsang/preaching, I decided to honor my vow primarily by writing and publishing. The satsang/preaching combine term is used because the vast majority of the audience came from Christianity - especially what are known as Charismatic Christians - a more thrill-seeking, emotionally expressive group offshoot of the mainstream.

The vow that was mentioned above was a "deal" made in my most desperate hour, in which a spontaneous plea went something like, "God, if you will grant me this peace of mind and release from the despair and degradation I feel, I will spend the rest of my life telling others that it is possible..." Even though I had not known of any such thing as a Bodhisattva vow in Buddhism, I learned of it years later and saw the parallels.

As any awakened teacher will agree, with awakening, scripture from all spiritual traditions comes alive with meaning and the parallel teachings and core message are seen as unquestionably the same. So, using words from the mystic Sufi Rumi, teachings from the Buddhist, Zen koans, Hindu models and parables from Jesus in the same satsang just flowed effortlessly. And at virtually every satsang I would offer this sort of mix, and stress that my talks would be about the mystic path - experiential spirituality, inter-faith, inter-spiritual, or for the non-theist - about the realization of our Oneness that comes with a side order of tolerance, kindness and compassion as a direct personal experience.

One evening I had a discussion with a young man who told of a dream. He was talking to Jesus when a book flew by. He left Jesus and went to pick up the book. This happened three times. The third time he couldn't pick up the book - it was like it was stuck to the floor. When he turned to look back, Jesus was gone.

When asked what he thought the dream meant, he replied that, "The Word of God is true."

"So, the book you saw was the bible?"

"Yes."

"And you felt it was more important to go after the book than talk to Jesus?"

"Well, in the beginning was The Word..."

I interrupted him there, and reminded him that the piece of scripture he was referring to did not say that in the beginning was the bible. "The Word," was a translation from the logo or identity of God. And even though pop cultural Christianity uses, "The Word of God," to refer to the bible, this particular piece of scripture did not refer to the written words of the bible.

I had just bounced off the pop cultural balloon of Christianity. It did not pop. The young man reacted with indignation and left. And this was one of many bounces to come. When I spoke of being, "Born Again," and told the audience that this was experiential and raising your hand while saying a brief prayer was not it. Boink, again! And when it was mentioned that quite possibly Jesus returned at Pentecost in the way he meant his return would come, and that all the church dogma about waiting was in need of a pooper scooper, I lost a lot of pc Christians from my audience. When I objected to some of the Pauline doctrine that prevails in the church "order" a few more seats were vacated.

When I began to notice that many people who had been coming to my talks for years and years would revert, in their personal conversations, to pop cultural religious views on sin and other "required" beliefs in order to belong to their club, I saw how nearly impossible it is to pop the pop cultural balloon of Christianity, and decided to write from the comfort of my laptop.

These days, facebook provides a pretty soft venue.

Namaste.

Love.

Cosmic Cruisin'

My intent is to always write from experience and not from mere belief in some imposed spiritual paradigm, but I do find that it is easy to overlay accurate reports of experience on some pretty esoteric models.

For instance...here's yet another report of my seminal experience of awakening hung on a cosmic model:

In the midst of a quiet meditation...well, let me stop right there. I HAD been quietly meditating, but now had slipped into a state of abject discouragement and began to repeat, "God, just let me die," and then just went silent. So, more accurately...In a moment of complete surrender, I felt myself shoot out of my body and found myself walking along a mountain path. What stuck me immediately was that this was not from my imagination or any prior knowledge. I knew that this was something entirely new, and had a sense that this was not coming from my mind. Hard to explain.

This was not like a dream, or even lucid dreaming. It felt very much like the "I" of my self-awareness and my physical form were actually walking along a mountain path. Where just a moment before I was sitting on a pillow meditating, now I was walking (it felt more like floating by intent) on the astral plane - a term I only use when I am cosmic cruisin'.

In the distance I saw a "lightbeing". It looked like a person in a hooded robe, but they were pure light and I could not see a face. As I approached this lightbeing, I was instructed, without words, to turn and look further down the path. The split second I turned to look, a huge blue-white egg shape about 50-feet high zoomed toward me and absorbed me into it.

At this point, I still had a sense of my personal identity, but knew that it had been totally taken over by whatever was going on in this event. I felt wave after wave of a loving presence infusing me with LOVE, totally wiping out any sense of guilt or fear or despair I had been dragging around like a bag of rocks for many years. And then, and then...the "I" who had been me disappeared. There was no sense of time or space or personal identity. There was just this blissful...bliss. Even harder to explain.

Next, a galaxy of stars started flashing. It looked like holiday lights at first, but then came a realization that (fasten your seat belt) this was the entire universe and I had a catbird seat. Not only that, a complete sense of order and harmony and feeling of knowing how everything works settled in.

And then I opened my eyes. Only they were not my eyes, or my hands, or my body or my anything. I was brand new, and everything and everyone was brand new and awesome - beyond awesome.

Anyway, in reading about astral planes and causal planes, it was easy to plug in the lightbeing as being on the astral plane and my entrance into the blue-white light as into the causal plane. It was some cosmic time!

Love.

A Mountain of Metaphors

If you have read any of my notes before, you are aware that there is only one subject that interests me, and that is Awakening. It's a subject that I made a vow to write and speak of in exchange for my very life. And there is only one reason that I write and speak about Awakening so incessantly.

When I passionately made the promise that, if I could ever know peace of mind from the depths of despair I was in at the time, I would spend the rest of my life telling others, especially those who were in the same desperate longing, that peace of mind was possible. I added, naively, that I would tell the story directly and clearly - not in the vague language of analogy and metaphor.

Now, even though the God of Love (or whatever term suits you) delivered on the deal, I immediately encountered one problem: the story cannot be told. At its core, it cannot be put in words. There are no words that precisely convey what happens in the shift from despair to delight with life.

The good news is that there are a seemingly endless mountain of metaphors to speak "of" it. The mountain metaphor is a favorite of many awakened teachers. "I have been to the mountain," was etched in history by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Let's say we start out life in a little village at the base of the mountain. We don't pay a lot of attention to the mountain when we are young, but as life goes on, we begin to notice the mountain more and more. And one day, for any number of reasons, a mysterious inner stirring starts us wondering about the mountain, and we find ourselves looking heavenward, wondering, "What's up there?"

Over time this inner stirring may become a longing to find out - and for some the longing becomes so desperate that they forsake everything else in their life and set out to climb the mountain. As they take their first steps toward the climb, word comes down from climbers ahead of them that the view from the top is incredible AND it completely and absolutely satisfies their longing and brings blissful peace of mind.

As they continue up the mountain they hit some discouraging, and even painful, weather. But at the same time they hear more and more wonderful words about what awaits them, like, "It is the very presence and residence of God," and they doggedly press on.

As they near the top, another voice becomes stronger. It says, very clearly and distinctly, "You could die. This is a fool's journey. There's nothing to find. Turn back and just get on with life." And many either stop in their tracks, stuck in the middle, or turn back. Some become discouraged and live out a life of quiet desperation, denying what is in their hearts - the longing to know - or they become naysayers.

But for those who risk it and continue on and reach the top...

Love.

The Rub Without The Lamp

Our inherent potential to awaken to a new and gloriously blissful new take on life and enjoy a freedom beyond anything we previously could have thought or imagined is, and has been, written in a huge body of work. And those fortunate ones who have been graced with awakening share a "choiceless imperative" to publish, shout on the street corner (or pulpit) and/or softly speak of it (satsang) at every opportunity. It's been that way for a long, long time.

Now, wouldn't it be nice if those who awaken to their divinity would find that metaphorical pot of gold coins at the end of the rainbow and spend the rest of their lives handing out the magic "wake up" coins that they kept in their pocket - to give to those who were desperate for relief from the cares of the world? Et voila!

They (the previously desperate, now awakened) would then find their own pot of wake-up coins to hand out, and on and on - kind of God's multi-level marketing plan. Then it wouldn't be long before the world's entire population was enlightened and all could agree that, "life is good".

But there is a rub...

While there is evidence of a seemingly growing number of authentic gurus, awakened teachers, spiritual writers and other contemporary "enlightenment" performers, and the universal sense that awakening is the destiny of humankind always comes as a side order with the choiceless imperative to share the good news...helping others awaken is the rub without the lamp.

Gurus (I prefer Awakened Teachers)...Awakened Teachers, in their enthusiasm, over-promise. They are, no doubt, sincere in telling their story and would LOVE to hand out the magic coins. But their hopes and expectations for everyone who comes to hear or hear of them often become a little fanciful. Even the big guys in Guruville, who have had thousands and thousands of "followers" (I prefer students) have only a handful, if any, of the students in their "downline" awaken.

It may be that while awakening is the destiny of humankind, Mother Nature operates on a different timetable than us mortals, who are only in this form for a blink, would like.

(Just as an editorial note: I do have a relatively unknown friend who now presents as a Satguru. She has taken an enormous amount of unkind flack, but presses on unflappable. And she has several beautifully awakened students.)

My way of dealing with this, after a few years of over-promising, was to pick up on the fact that there were improvements in attitude and behaviors and relationships that resulted from my "teachings." So I invoked an applied metaphysics in my sharing. That is, while my emphasis is always on awakening, I do acknowledge that meditation and the holistic, healthy lifestyle can help in many areas of life: losing weight, managing stress (I prefer managing joy), quitting bad habits - like smoking, improving life/relationship/career choices and even sports performance.

Of course, it's still all satsang, and the undercurrent is still a wish to hand the gold coin over, rub the lamp, and anticipate rejoicing with an awakened student. But I don't own the lamp. God does. Or it may be equally valid to write that we all own our own lamp.

Love.

Who's More Loving?

Ever meet someone for the first time, and you immediately want to hug them? Or ever meet someone for the first time and you can tell by their body language that they really want to hug you?

Many moons ago (I watched a lot of Cowboy and Indian movies as a kid. Of course, now I watch Cattle Ranchers and Native American documentaries), Marilyn Ferguson, author of *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, gave a talk at the Arlington Church in Boston. I had read her book on the last train to Hippierville that I boarded in the early 70s, so thought it would be a good idea to attend.

In the course of her talk, she mentioned a study out of Berkley that yielded an interesting statistic: most people feel that they are more warm and loving than other people. Let me run that by you again: the study showed that most people feel that they are more warm and loving than other people.

For me, it was a no-brainer truth, and I thought just maybe this was why I was a no-hugger. I didn't want to gush over people who were less warm and loving than I, so I would restrain the impulse to hug and just nod and umphf.

As I thought it over, I came to brilliant conclusion that if I gave up the restraint and yielded to my insatiable desire to hug, it would open the door to most other people who...thought THEY were more warm and loving.

Well, I showed them! In no time, my circle of family and friends came to know that if you came within any proximity of me, you were going to be hugged. And in no time, I noticed that hugging became the norm.

Now, I'm much too humble to suggest that I had some impact on changing the world...but do you notice how huggy teens are these days? I don't remember that being the case back in the dark ages when we had to do our homework by scratching out RR and R on stone tablets.

Anyway, in case you missed it. Any time you feel the urge, you can give me, or almost anyone, a hug. It's OK. We're just as warm and loving as you are.

Love.

Nothing More Than a Note

This is nothing more than a note - except when I reread it and/or you read it and react, then it becomes something more. That's a hint of why "nothing more than" statements send me into a mental tizzy. Something more about this:

At the core of my issue are statements about our capacity as human beings to "know". Specifically, when those NMTs enter the realm of spiritual discussion with their pretentious psychobabble. And to pinpoint the pinprick, and maybe begin to bring some clarity to my babbling - my issue is with those who would block the entrance to the truth that sets us free - standing at the doorway of Awakening and not knowing what is beyond it - by offering their ivory tower intellectual assertion that Awakening or Enlightenment is _____ accepting what is, and getting on with life.

You might as well say that a just-picked-at-its-peak Florida orange tastes like nothing more than cardboard. Nothing more than accepting what is and getting on with life!? Holy Thunderbolt! That's all you got to offer those in quiet desperation, miserable circumstances, wracked with guilt, lost and lonely...OK, I'm calming down now.

There are incredibly clever and highly educated wordsmiths here on facebook, in pulpits and on street corners. Those who step into the fascinating arena of spiritual discussion without the goods will romance the "concept" of Awakening, dance close to the fire, and end with closing comments that reveal a glaring tell that they've never caught on fire and burned to a crisp. One of the most blinding tells is the statement...you guess it. I was recently facebook de-friended by questioning the hand of one such writer/author. I even have one of his books. But that's another story.

Similarly, there are those who write passionately about Awakening, describing its wonders in beautiful metaphor...only to end their piece with something like, "I hope to realize this someday...". What? You were writing as if you knew. What a clever parrot. It is impossible to write energetic and authentic words about Awakening if it is not in your direct life experience, regardless of research or passion.

Beware the false prophets. Avoid the discouragers. If you are feeling an intuitive stir that the human experience may hold more than you have ever thought or imagined, and there just might be a way to the genuine experience of the perfect peace of mind that "passes understanding", press on. It's a lot more than just accepting what is, so don't stop at anything - especially at the NMT station.

Love.

Step Behind Yourself

When we moved from Maine to Florida a few years ago, we registered our cars and applied for Florida drivers' licenses. Florida reciprocates with Maine, so we didn't have to take a road test. Whew! Have you ever driven in Florida?

Drivers become either tortoises or hares. It's either 25 in a 45 or 85 in a 45 while kissing your back bumper. And the driver of the second car in line at a traffic light has a particular obligation - they are required to hit the horn at the split moment the light changes to green. And if they are particularly conscientious, they lay on the horn at full blast. Anyway...

When we went for the new photo licenses, I stepped up with camera-ready nonchalance befitting my coolness aka ego. The woman who was taking the pictures responded with a look of patient tolerance and spoke to me in a thick accent.

"Take a step behind yourself, please," she said, ever so gently.

At first, it took me a second run-by to get her meaning. I stepped back one pace and enjoyed an inner chuckle at her incongruous instruction. How could anyone take a step behind themselves? Ha. Cute.

A few hours later I came to the realization that I had been in the presence of an Awakened Teacher. She had reminded me to step into my true identity, the witness consciousness of enlightened awareness "behind" the physical form. I gotta keep my ears and eyes open, and realize that teachers come in many disguises.

Love.

Fog Banks pay great dividends.

In the northeast, at least, clouds can come down to earth to rest on the ground. If they happen to come down in a section where a road runs through it, it makes for quite a ride. It feels like you're merrily rolling along and suddenly find yourself driving into a huge pillow.

Clichéd comments about a drive through fog include gems like, "That fog was so thick you coulda cut it with a knife," and, "Couldn't see your hand in front of your face." But the precious gem metaphors are those made about coming out of the fog (oops, there's one right there).

Spending even a few minutes with eyes and mind sharply focused on the short distance of road in front in order to safely navigate your way through, at the exclusion of anything else, is akin to spending time in a deprivation tank. Once the nerves settle down, the mind goes quiet. You cannot think. You just have to pay attention and surrender to the conditions until you come out the other side.

Then the magic happens. Coming out of the fog bank, a whole new world presents itself - like your suddenly watching an HDTV. Everything is seen in high definition with its pristine clarity. If you haven't experienced the fog drive, it might be hard to imagine.

Awakening is like that. From then on it's like you have angels in your hair and a new divine guidance system with a lifetime guarantee installed.

Love.

Why Does God Need Our Money?

Hang onto your pilgrim hats, if you are among the flock of bent over church pilgrims waiting and waiting and waiting, only expecting (hoping with fingers crossed) to complete your journey after you die. This could blow a gale into mainstream churchology, that most esteemed of tax-free fundraisers.

As a group, they have a massive tackle box of money hooks. Among other less subtle spiritual manipulations they present as God, made of bricks and mortar and stained glass. Giving to the church is giving to God. Why does God need our money? Among the more blatant is the incessant message that whatever you give will be multiplied. And if you're a "cheerful giver," well, just hang onto that 2,000 year old lottery ticket. It will pay off any day.

But...I have other fish to fry in this note:

What if the words of Jesus that he would return before his generation would pass away were accomplished in the way he meant it - at Pentecost. And what if it were true that today there are thousands of Christed Ones on the earth, only this time oppressed by fierce church dogma - and all this waiting has been wasted time and cruel psychobabble - except for the windfall it has brought, and continues to bring, to the church proper. Imagine how many jobs would be lost if Jesus freed today's captives.

Imagine if the underlying message of the Mayans about December 12, 2012 "end" is about the removal of blinders for the churchd and templed, and an incoming wave of awakening for humankind. Maybe it's about time to claim our own divinity - as promised, and realize an empowerment to follow Gandhi's advice to be the change we want to see in the world. And even if it is not the Mayan message, it is the message resonating the heart of every contemporary Christed One (by any other name). We just don't know Mother Nature's timetable.

Just a few random thoughts, but I think I'm in the deep end of the pool and better go dry off now.

Love.

Loving a Loving God

I've never been a fan of the "Fake it 'til you make it," school. Especially mind boggling to me is the advice, admonishment, OK - commandment...to love God. I am a huge fan of the teachings of Jesus (apart from the train wreck much of the organized church has made of this teachings), but this one - the one he reportedly considered of paramount importance, just doesn't resonate as authentic with me, unless...

Like so many things in life's journey, this one (loving God) is a matter of timing. A couple of issues as I pick at this knot: First an excerpt from a George Carlin routine about the aforementioned train wreck of church teachings. God, as presented in the Judeo-Christian-Muslim early teachings are about a God who watches our every move, knows our every thought, and if we mess up (I'm cleaning up George's routine a bit) in any way, sends us to a fiery hell to be tortured for eternity...and...

He loves us.

Second, and moving to the point, is a question: How can we love God if we don't know God? Is this part of faith and belief in things unseen and therefore not authentic love, but love of a concept? Seems to be a socially and culturally coerced love - not authentic love, but love faked for the sake of social graces. Are we "supposed to" greet God (well not God, but the concept of God) with an insincere grin and handshake, and a deep bow or kneel while sneaking a glance sideways to sure we are seen for our fake-it-'til-you-make-it piety? How hollow.

Back to the timing...Now, once we are graced with Awakening to our Christ Consciousness - what a good friend calls so beautifully, "coming into the very presence and residence of God", then the commandment is simply a reminder, and not a call to fake it. Now I'm buying. The world can distract us, and a reminder of who we really are and what is really important (gratitude and love of God for the Amazing Grace that makes life so exquisitely beautiful and joyful) is of great value. And this brings up another rhetorical question: Do we really need commandments? We know right from wrong...but I digress. That's another story.

Love.

More of The Wisdom Whisper

(You can skip to the last paragraph for a recap, if you're not up for the incessant re-telling of my story)

Those who have heard The Wisdom Whisper have no fear of death, no doubt about a heavenly realm of consciousness, and enjoy a default state of mind that is in perfect peace and contentment. Q'Baha is one of the listening mantras: Quiet Awareness, Breath Awareness, Heart Awareness.

On a July morning, long long ago, when I lived exclusively in the realm of time and space, I was quietly meditating. At the time I was in a Hindu temple where I had spent the last few months in meditation, satsang (discourse on truth), and service - cleaning, cooking, working in a warehouse and delivering donated furniture to families in need.

Daily, without exception, I had been hearing about our capacity to experience inner peace - in early morning and evening classes (satsang) and was an ardent (desperate would be more accurate) seeker of this inner peace. I first set out to "find" it at the age of 10 after reading about Nirvana in a world religion class.

The pitch of my search has been heightened several octaves by a host of bad life choices, to the point where I bounced from church to church, to temple, to gurus, to fervent prayers. And by the time I decided to make one last desperate attempt to find inner peace, my mantra was, "Let me die."

Well, I did. But not in the way I expected. On the aforementioned July morning, in the midst of just a few minutes of meditation, I was "taken" to another realm of consciousness. First, a bright light that drew me closer. It appeared to be a person in a robe, but I could not see a face. By a simple nod from this glowing robed figure, I was directed to look down a path. At the very moment I turned to look, I was engulfed in a blue/white light - a massive egg-shaped light.

At this point, further telling of the story becomes imprecise because no words can truly capture the experience...but I'll do the best I can, by way of introduction to The Wisdom Whisper:

A loving presence without definitive form showered me with Love, to the point that I felt I would drown. All the guilt, despair and degradation I felt was dissolved in this shower. Time and space lost any relevance. A sudden rush of insight came to me as a new identity, a new understanding of my being as beyond the physical realm, and beyond the rational, linear thinking process.

The loving presence absorbed me, and I disappeared - yet had a consciousness as if looking out over the entire universe and a sense of intuiting how "everything" was in perfect order and harmony. Then lights started to sparkle against a black background, like looking at flashing Christmas tree lights.

At that point, I heard a voice say, "Open your eyes." To say I was startled to be "back" in my body does not begin to explain my condition at the time. As I looked around the room, I was in awe of everything and in love with everyone. That has pretty much been my default consciousness from that point on.

I left the temple the next day and began teaching classes on what became the Mystic Heart Meditation.

It begins with a moment of Quiet Awareness in which we simply choose to be aware of our physical presence and the environment we are in - without any narrative. To sustain this Quiet Awareness we move our attention to our breathing, noticing when we are inhaling and when we are exhaling, coming back to this over and over as thoughts begin to intrude. The third step is much more subtle and is called Heart Awareness or Loving Awareness. Here we overlay Quiet Awareness with Breath Awareness and a sense of inner listening for The Wisdom Whisper from the heart. Some like to use the mantra: Q'Baha. Q (Cue to begin) on the inhale, BaHa on the exhale. But, by grace, this fades into silence...

Love.

Thinking, Feeling and Knowing

If we think we want an orange we may or may not stroll to the fruit bowl and have one. If we feel that we know what an orange tastes like or have a concept of what it might taste like, but have never had one, we don't know what an orange tastes like. But if we have munched on a delicious Florida (but of course) orange, we KNOW.

Trying to convince someone who is hungry for a sweet and juicy snack by attempting to describe the taste will lead us to a thick language forest of metaphor, analogy and simile - even if we're busy as a bee at the task. No language is adequate. We can only say it's "like" this or that. We know, and we know that there is only one way to truly know.

And no matter how much anyone might doubt the authenticity of our report of the deliciousness of the orange, experience is never at the mercy of argument - even the neo-advaitan insistence that the orange is only an illusion, and in fact there's no one to have eaten the orange. OK, getting off course and too close to a rant.

So, the point that parallels the theme of all my writings and ranting is that thinking about Awakening and forming concepts may be steps along the journey, but they are not the Knowing. Even intuitive feelings and faith in the veracity of the orange guru - powerful enough to stand firm and kill for (who would do that over an orange debate?) are not authentic.

If you want to know, or do know and simply enjoy ruminating about your orange awakening and knowing, or if you once knew but it has been so long that you feel that you have forgotten...find a fruit stand and stand in front of the oranges until a kind and compassionate person comes along, points to an orange, and asks you if you would like one.

Orange you glad you read this note?

Love.

Knowing The Unknowable - 5-Ball in The Side Pocket

Yesterday, oranges. Today, billiard balls. Tomorrow, the world. Round and round it goes.

Playing pool recently, another player remarked as I contemplated a shot, "The 5-ball won't go in the side pocket; that's impossible." (Little did he know that not only do left-handers have exceptional short range eye-hand coordination, but a side pocket game was a game of choice that I played for years. My grandfather loved the game and taught me at a young age.)

It was a thin cut - meaning, the angle at which the ball was positioned to the side pocket made it look like there was no way it could be struck that would send the ball into the side pocket. Of course, I wouldn't be telling the story if I hadn't taken the challenge and made the shot. Move the cameras back please. I'm trying to remain humble.

It's an old cliché, but I can't think of another segway at the moment: perception is reality. To one player/observer/thinker it is impossible, to another it is possible. Is Enlightenment possible? Is Reality knowable?

Whenever I hear or read something from the lines of the pop-advaita epistles that enlightenment is impossible and ultimate reality unknowable, there's no one to know and enlightenment is not an experience, everyone is already enlightened, just get on with your life, more bland blah, blah, blah...a low wave gong sound goes off in my head.

The mental clang here is that these observations have a ring (maybe just a Tinkerbell size ring, but a ring) of truth - in that we cannot think our way to enlightenment or even intuit our way, and yes, we are naturally enlightened. But when the delusion that we are separate has us in its grip, and more than that, we are in despair, fear and doubt...the ivory tower view doesn't help. And telling us we are deluded doesn't help any more than telling us we are left-handed. We know that!

So, what's a guru to do? Get a haircut and get a real job? No, they'll pick up their patience-of-Job pointer and tell of a better way through an endless array of metaphor, analogy and similes, and facebook notes, and Sunday radio shows, and street corners, and bar rooms and pool halls...you get the point.

We can know in the linear sense, even the experiential sense about taste, touch, smell, math, auto mechanics, quantum...well, quantum is getting edgy on the linear knowing side. And we can intuit in a more holistic, big picture way. But knowing the unknowable just doesn't make sense. Exactly!

When the chattering rational mind goes silent, and the intuitive, feeling mind settles into its easy chair and they both enter the void of absolute and utter silence and surrender of all their synapses...it is possible to enter the emptiness that is not nothing. It's not thinking. It's not feeling...but it's not nothing. This is where presence dwells, awakening awaits, enlightenment shines.

And this is where we have the capacity to recapture our childhood, rediscover our natural enlightenment...with a seeing that doesn't require eyes, a knowing that doesn't require logic or feeling, and KNOW in a way the ego never thought or imagined.

And as soon as we turn to take this Knowing back to where we once belonged or thought we belonged we find that "we" are no longer there. And as soon as we try to explain what has happened, we are met with blank stares, smirking nods, curious family and friends, and sometimes fawning seekers hanging on our every word. It is then we realize that there are no words to describe the authenticity of our new Knowing. Is that an orange? Oh, I've never had one. What does it taste like?

We now realize that we are the present moment Awareness of our body/mind/spirit - being there in the world. But we, in our new high-fashion couture, are no longer of the "known" world. We are inhabitants of heaven, One with God. Fear and doubt are gone. The god of what-will-other-people-think has been dethroned. We Know the truth, and the truth has set us free. This freedom comes with a side order of a compelling urge to share the good news - especially for those in despair.

A little later in the game, the other player responded to my call of a 3-rail bank shot in the side pocket with a smirk and, "Must be some trick shot I don't know about."

Yeah, I made it.

Love.

The Ego is Water-Soluble

Ever hear the story of the young boy walking along the shore of the ocean and tossing Starfish he would find washed up on the sand back into the ocean. As the story goes, the beach was littered with hundreds of these Starfish. As the boy slowly walked along tossing them into the ocean, an older man came strolling down the beach and spoke to the boy.

"With all these hundreds of Starfish washed up on the shore, do you think tossing a few back is going to really make any difference?"

Without breaking stride the boy picked up his next choice and tossed it as far as he could into the water.

"Makes a difference to that one," was his reply.

I've been figuratively, and often literally, strolling the beach for the past 35 years, talking about Awakening (by whatever label you choose) in every context and media I could find and to anyone who stopped for a moment to listen. And I've often thought about the very few who come to an Awakened teacher/preacher/guru in person or through some medium who actually Awaken. Whenever I ask myself, "Why bother?" I think of the Starfish story.

Most people (the majority if you agree with Thoreau) are like the Starfish in that they left the ocean - not of their own accord, but were washed up on the shore by the tides of social coercion. As a result they were consigned to live life in the shallows, encased in parched stiff and starchy ego, their lives following a prescribed affected behavior in order to fit in.

The occasional listener/seeker who washes up on the shore within earshot of satsang (preaching, or whatever term you like) is like the restless soul that responds to an intuitive inner stirring that something went wrong. The sound of the ocean resonates in their hearts and they set out to find a way back.

An Awakened Teacher (preacher, guru) says that there is, indeed, a way back - and they present themselves as witnesses to this truth, humbled by the fact that they were one of the most fortunate ones in that the boy tossed them back into the ocean.

And what they found is that the ego is water-soluble. Once they were tossed back into the Ocean of Love, they lost their personal identity as ego and experienced their true oneness with the Ocean of Love. And it was very good.

Love.

The Mind Boggles. The Heart Resonates.

The mind boggles at thoughts of, "eternity ... beyond time and space ... the knower, the knowing and the known are One." The heart resonates. So, what does that even mean? And so what!

We are temporal material being, in this body for a relatively short time. We come into the world pretty helpless, and must rely on care and feeding from others to survive. Soon, we learn nonverbal ways of communicating and later learn our native language. Along the way we come upon Sesame Street and learn the value of relative knowledge: up vs down, big vs small, hot vs cold, early vs late, order vs chaos, and such. The more we grasp this way of knowing, the more gold stars, A pluses, good boy, smart girl, praise, you're-sure-be-a-success, we receive. And the less trouble we get into with 'authorities'. We learn the value and wisdom of staying in our seat, staying in line, and fitting in.

About the time we hit our teenage years, more or less, we become independent - to a degree. For some of us, the trouble starts here. A certain uneasiness sets in; a hard-to-define rebellious spirit, a defiance, begins to stir. Somehow we sense that something is amiss. We got on the wrong bus. We missed, or lost, something along the way. But given the dire consequences of acting out this early angst, the vast majority of us get back in line - some for a lifetime, some for a time...until the quiet desperation revisits and amps up the decibel level.

Once the quiet desperation digs deeper or bursts into fits of rage, we will find ourselves at a crossroads. In private moments we may find ourselves looking heavenward and/or bursting into tears, and/or ripping phone books in half in frustration. One road will lead to big trouble - incarceration or worse. The other will lead to a search for the "something missing".

OK, if you've patiently plowed through this rambling of the obvious, we'll come back to the mind boggling, heart resonating theme.

Up to this point we may have had some dark disturbing doubts about religion - especially the train wreck most organized religion has made of the teachings of the awakened founders. But for those who glance heavenward in desperation, the search is for none other than...hold onto your bonnet...God. For those not prone to theistic language or imagery, the search will take on a deep inner inquiry in search of the authentic Self. Either way, this resonance with an inner stirring initiates the boggling.

The mind, or the more commonly understood term, ego, will freak out. The inner chatter will cajole and mock and try to frighten the new "seeker" out of the search. But the usually quiet and gentle rhythmic heart will begin to pound so loudly it can drown out the incessant nagging of the ego. Once this battle is on, it can rage for years. For a closer look at this inner battle, try a skim through the Bhagavad Gita. (I'm trying to make this note a little shorter than that.)

A little more mind boggling music, please: Once engaged in the battle the only way to victory is complete surrender and a willingness to die. (Did I hear an ARRRRGH!?) This is where all but the most ardent and/or desperate seekers will turn back. But until everything comes to a screening halt and dead silence, the battle will rage.

Out of the abject silence, a "place" called Transcendence (read: Trance end dance) may emerge. The personal self, the "I" we have known and loved all these years dissolves into nothingness - or more accurately (though no less vague to the rational process), emptiness that is not nothing. And through grace, experienced as all-but-overwhelming love in the very presence and residence of God, or nondual realization

if you prefer, replaces the former self with a Self that knows the true meaning of eternity, no time or space, and understands our Oneness - or The Oneness in which the knower, the known and the knowing are One.

To hear, read, conceptualize, talk or write about the bliss of this life-changing, everything-changing, lifelong-lasting "Aha!" may resonate, but will never satisfy until it becomes a direct personal experience. If this is known to you, you know. If it is vague to you, and you seek to know - thinking that you will explain it after the fact, lots of luck.

Love.

Watered-Down Drinks and Other Dirty Tricks

Ever notice that when a counter-culture (either domestic or foreign) comes up with a term for anything esoteric, it is only a matter of time before mainstream pop-culture squeezes the life out of the original meaning and reduces it to social conformity and politically correct insipidities?

Back in the late 60s and early 70s, "make love, not war," became synonymous with the sexual revolution rather than a world peace anthem, and "higher consciousness" became a call for neighborhood Nazis to form committees to approve the matching shades and color of sandboxes and shutters - if you wanted to live in Pleasant Valley Sunday developments.

Yoga and its sibling meditation as tools for achieving union with God or Higher-Self are primarily considered postures and stress management tools, respectively.

The profound teachings of Jesus on the subject of being "Born Again" have suffered a similar fate, and now is often merely an empty phrase labeling someone who has parroted a piece of Pauline scripture, rather than the profound mystical experience of Awakening to God-Consciousness that truly being born of the Spirit brings. And the fundamentalists of all "faiths" are the progenitors of sanctioned murder in the name of their God.

Non-duality in the neo-circles of this Advaitan philosophy (as if the very term non-duality is not cardboard enough) has taken this offshoot of the Vedas, the text with a stated goal of achieving profound insight into the Whole Self (Atman or Brahman), and now offers up half-baked, "Who is writing this?...there's no me...blah, blah, blah."

OK, enough blah, blah, blah from me.

Love.

Where have all the hippies gone?

In the late 60s and early 70s, the existential angst about the Vietnam War and the outspoken protests by radical flower children and their mantra, "Make love, not war," was brought into everyone's living room (literally and figuratively) by media coverage.

The profound displeasure with the politic of the time extended by association to the corporate, military, law enforcement, and religious institutions. Corporate leaders were cast as greedy fat cats, military as mercenaries, police as pigs, and religion as impotent - all protecting the blind, uncaring, narrow-minded, nationalists, whose worldview was that the only respectable way to be was to get in the robotic line that unquestioningly yields to authority.

The Kent State murders put a silencing chill on much of the hippie "movement" and peace signs went out of fashion. But not before the drug culture and its offering of mind-blowing escape from the abject sadness and madness of the time has blossomed and trickled up to the suited professions and high-fashioned middle

and upper class.

And not before the western organized churches, temples and mosques' failure to deliver the promise of its spiritually enlightened roots of peace on earth (let alone failure to deliver the promised personal inner peace) opened the door to eastern gurus and esoteric teachings with "a better way" had rolled into American and European towns.

So now we have baby boomers who still smoke an occasional (or frequent) joint or play in the snow, or still meditate and attend satsang. But...

Where have all the hippies gone? Why so unspoken about the intractably long Iraq/Afghanistan war without end...or good reason?

Are we still chilled by Kent State, mind-numbed by the Twin Towers, and emotionally walled off by the Wall Street rape of the economy?

Isn't there a groundswell building somewhere poised to stop the world from spinning so we can all get a better grip and recognize our Oneness as brothers and sisters on this abundant tiny speck called Earth?

Anyone? Bueller? Anyone?

Love.

Applied Metaphysics

A few months after I began offering meditation classes (western model) and satsang (eastern model) as a platform for sharing the good news of an incredible potential we have for breaking through to a new level of consciousness that brings with it an indescribably delicious joy (western) and satchitananda (eastern), I noticed something I hadn't anticipated.

In my early enthusiasm I held classes four nights a week in four different cities and verbally machine-gunned anyone who glanced my way with a question about my passion for the subject. At first, the audience was younger: college students, hip young couples, a lot of hippies and musicians and such. As concerned parents started showing up, interested and/or concerned about what they were hearing from their young adult children, the audience grew. Quite a few parents ended up staying at classes long after their offspring had sprung and moved on.

So, what I noticed was that people were talking about the weight they loss, how they quit smoking, how their stress level had leveled off, their relationships improved, they were more patient and tolerant, their allergy symptoms had gone away...and even how their golf game had improved, after attending the classes.

At the time, I presented the classes as centrally about an epic experience - cleverly using EPIC as an acronym for Experience of Pure Intuitive Consciousness. Eventually, and up to today (I have a 9:00 o'clock class coming up) I began to speak more of the mystic path, and how virtually all spiritual traditions had developed a mystic offshoot from the mainstream.

After 35 years, I still have a foot in both worlds. Yes, both. Even nonduality fans (not the neo or pseudo sects) acknowledge a relative world of our sense perception that is often called illusory, but is acknowledged nevertheless, and the absolute world of Awakening, Enlightenment, Satori, Samadhi, Knowledge, Nondual Realization, New Thought, Born Again...

God! I wish we could come up with a universal name for it! Hey, how about God? Anyway, enjoy the day. And if you want to kick the habit of lighting up, try seeking Enlightenment.

Love.

Last Dance with Mary Jane

OK, it's been a long time since we (us old hippies) snickered at Tom Petty's obvious reference, but given the economic concussion we're dealing with, isn't it time to legalize? Come on, we have thousands and thousands of gentle souls in prisons at a huge cost to their souls and their family over the use of an intoxicating plant that the "government of the people, by the people, for the people," has legislated against, while favoring the fermented number one cause of auto-involved deaths and domestic violence - among a host of other ills.

This particular of-the-people segment of well paid, can't dance or play a guitar, down-a-pitcher-of-martinis every night tight-asses, who are primarily responsible for the kazillion of dollars of debt and disappearance as well as despair of the once middle-class, not to mention sending young men and women off to war, are in charge...of what...protecting us from what...the evils of marijuana?

I rarely step up to the political soap box, and my last dance with marijuana was many (well, several) years ago, but for some reason this tune was playing in my head this morning. Could cost me some fb friends, and a few tsk, tsks.

Love.

Being Invisible is So Cool.

What you see is not what you get. And I'm not talking about the lady in red beside me in my profile picture. What you don't get is the real me sans the bio. You may say that I'm a dreamer, or a philosopher, a guru or a bore, but I'm none of the above (or beside).

One of the neatest of the neat stuff that came with my tumble into invisibility was the realization that whatever happens in the manifest world doesn't matter, even though it is matter. Doesn't matter, doesn't matter, doesn't matter. If I'm arrested for boosting a boom box, doesn't matter. I no longer offer bhakti yogi like devotion to the god of what will other people think. If I win the lottery, doesn't matter. Might matter to bill collectors, but not to the invisible me who lives in the mist and midst of awareness itself, himself, herself.

All that matters is...I'm not matter. Ever. Whatever.

But then, maybe I'm mad as a hatter.

Love.

Solitary Refinement

Take some time to be
Alone with your thoughts

Then leave time and
Abandon your thoughts

It may seem impossible
But it is not

In quiet awareness
Just be still and silent

With patience and practice
Comes amazing insight

Beyond the mind lies
Solitary refinement

One Love

I love how we can talk

I was listening to John Gray, the Mars/Venus metaphor guy, talk about how men want to immediately offer solutions to anyone who brings them a problem, and women sometimes just want to vent. He was in the middle of suggesting to men that next time a wife/partner begins to complain, that they just zip it and listen.

I heard a car door slam...hard. I shut off John's talk and went to open the kitchen door. Except for my cat-like reflexes, I might have lost my head, or at least my nose, as the door swung open and this Bantam Rooster flew in blazing and fluttering. It was my wife and she was furious (any stronger word would have to be some sort of @*!!xxx code). Her language for the next few words was entirely code.

Her boss had berated her over some petty issue, and she was steaming. The first words that came to my mind were....yes, to offer a solution - like, quit! But John Gray's words were fresh in my mind, so I zipped it and listened...and listened...and listened, and never said one word. After 20 minutes or so she cooled a bit. I gave her a hug, and I made dinner for her.

Later that evening we were in the living room, each of us reading a book. Susan spoke softly.

"Hon."

"Yes." She was looking at me with the most adoring look.

"I love how we can talk."

John Gray's material was moved up to the genius shelf that night.

Love.

Lightness of Spirit, OMG!

Quite a few years ago in a conversation with a young Catholic priest, over lunch, I related my "Awakening" story. In the course of the telling, I used the phrase, "...came into the very presence of God." At this, the priest shook his head and responded that I had not come into the presence of God, I had just "recaptured my childhood".

My first thought, and admittedly my lingering thought, was that he was not aware of the capacity we have for God-Consciousness, and was simply a schooled priest who followed tradition - and as he told me, the early expectations of his family that he become a priest. Flashing back to the time and place of that conversation, it must have been quite a sight for the people in the small intimate restaurant of this quaint New England town to see an impeccably groomed and collared priest having lunch with a longhaired bearded hippie. (See photo at the end of this note).

As I reflected on the response from the priest, the words from scripture, "Only as a child do you enter the Kingdom of Heaven," came to mind. And suddenly a new layer of meaning billowed over me. I use the

word billowed because it hit me like a wave, and billowed is a word found in Psalms that I don't have an opportunity to use very often.

Anyway, back to the priest's response. So, what did he mean about recapturing my childhood? We may not have direct and explicit recall, but we can appreciate the lightness of spirit that a young child enjoys - there's no self-consciousness or concern with what other people think...and pretty much no concern with anything at all, other than maybe watching with awed delight as a ladybug crawls along the grass.

OK, so recapturing that lightness of spirit of a child, and the attendant disappearance of worry and doubt, living in the joy of each moment, and certainly an end to serving the god of what-will-other-people-think are mirror elements of Awakening as an adult. But what about the absolutely unassailable, unquestionable element of "Knowing" that our very being dissolves and the nearly overwhelming presence of the God of Love that attends Awakening?

Wait a minute. What if part of what we do not have direct and explicit recall about is something we Knew as a child before self-consciousness and our nakedness occurred to us: the presence of God? And this is what returns with Awakening - the recapturing of our childhood - when we knew we were with God, within God, as One. Forgive me, Father, I may have missed the mark of your many-layered mild response.

OMG!

Love.

Life as Lucid Dreaming

Imagine one day waking up from a dream that was so real that you were incredibly startled to realize that you had been dreaming. And then imagine that you were even more startled to realize that you were still dreaming - only you were awake and "watching" the dream. Still with me? OK, one more step.

At this point, a sudden rush of realization hits you: life is but a dream. Ya da da dada, shboom! What you had known of your 'real' life was now recognized as one big dream. All of the angst, guilt, shame, despair, disappointment, anger, joy, anticipation; all of it, of your entire life immediately vaporizes into a passing wispy cloud - now seen as of no consequence whatsoever. Entertaining, maybe. But not 'real'.

The former you, now recognized as your 'secondary' self, or the 'dreamer who dreams' is now known as a localized vehicle that you travel in on your earthly journey. And while you care for the vehicle, the awakened you is no longer attached to what happens in the course of the vehicle's dream life. Discerning, but not attached. Dispassionate, but filled with peace.

You, the 'twice awakened' watcher, have a primary reality distinct from the events and circumstances of your life. You are unassailable. All fear and doubt, concern with what will other people think, all the guilt and shame, your 'sin consciousness'...all of it...gone. In their place: joy, bliss, freedom beyond words. And the side effects of this joy, bliss, freedom are an enhanced kindness, compassion, and delight in being the 'occupant' of a human body with all of its beautiful sensory capacity. You are a field of joy. You are lost in love. In love with all that is and all who exist in this relative world - knowing that everyone, everyone, everyone, has either experienced this awakening or has it in store for them. Their heart is your heart, and your love is unconditional.

"The very form of God is Love" -- Ramana Maharshi

"You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free." -- Jesus

Love.

A Stroll On The Mystic Path

The Mystic Path can be a path through the woods, a field, a beach, city streets, a mountain pass, or a shopping mall. It's known by virtually all spiritual traditions and, in truth, is an interior path that leads to the pristine window through which can be seen the seat of The Mystic Heart.

Known experientially (by different names - but at the core, the same) by the Christian Mystic, Buddhist, Yogi, Kabbalist, Sufi, Taoist, Shaman, Aborigine, New Thought Mystic, Hindu Mystic and awakened Advaitan, Gurus with no religious affiliation, and in corners I've never ventured to, I'm sure, alike, it is written of in a huge body of work from ancient text to contemporary bestsellers.

Yet The Mystic Heart beats apart from any cultural tradition or religion and is independent of theistic language. To resonate with the beating of The Mystic Heart is to Awaken to a new language, a direct sudden rush of new wisdom that cannot be put in any language other than the language of the heart.

If the title appealed to you, you are most probably already on the path and may be unfamiliar with the terrain, or you may be revisiting a path for the joy of having walked it before, or you're strolling back down the path after a time of refreshing. Of course, once on the path - once having yielded to the inner longing for that "something missing" in your life - you have checked into Hotel California (no matter where you live) and - sing in with me - "You can check out anytime you want, but you can never leave."

There's an old axiom that says something like, "If you are following an unfamiliar path and need directions, the best one to ask is someone who is coming back from where you are hoping to go."

On Sunday mornings...well, on most mornings, I set out on a stroll with my laptop in hand and post a note. On Sunday mornings at 9AM EST, I host a half hour blogtalkradio show called, "Sundays with Papajeff." I read some of the notes I posted during the week, ramble on about Awakening in whatever context comes to mind, and at the end of the show, for the last few minutes, I review the basic techniques of The Mystic Heart Meditation that I have been teaching since shortly after language was invented.

The people who run this blog are great marketers. They automatically post reminders on my home page and in the events section and on the sidebar of facebook pages.

So, you're invited. I'll leave the light on for you...and keep the window pristine clean. Bring your own snacks.

Love.

Another Stroll On The Mystic Path

On a Sunday morning blogtalkradio show, Sundays With Papajeff, the listener is invited to take a stroll on The Mystic Path. Some may be new to the path, some may be old strollers who have walked the path for years - some coming up the path, some coming down the path. Some will stay on the path, some will spend a little time and leave, some spend years and leave still unfulfilled.

The Mystic Path is about rediscovery of our natural enlightenment, our natural mysticism. And one of the reasons it is termed mystical (mysterious) is because it was hidden from view when we were convinced that "thinking" was of paramount importance, and then that thinking was the only way to assure success in life...on any level.

Our wholeness became lopsided. We became left or right-handed, left or right-brained...and out of balance. One way to look at where The Mystic Path leads is back to balance, back to our natural enlightenment and sense of connection with everyone and everything - including whatever term we are most comfortable with for "God". And it leads to an effortless life.

Whether it's learning to tie our shoes, drive a car, do The Stroll or attune to our natural enlightenment, once the autopilot switch flips, the ego chatter stops, and life becomes a breeze. Life becomes effortless. New walkers on the path are quick to respond to this statement with a word from one of the ego's 300-plus pound defensive line. It will go something like, "Well what about the practical side of life? We have to make a living."

Effortless does not mean unproductive - quite the opposite. When we have rediscovered the marrow of life, there is no inner debate, no should I or shouldn't I. There is a trust in our own judgment and an automatic, easy stroll into right action - whatever is required of us. And it is done with equanimity. Doing the dishes is as easy as tying our shoes or doing The Stroll.

We just have to get past that huge ego defensive line. One suggestion is to find someone coming back down The Path who can tell us with authenticity what lies ahead...well, actually, within.

Sh Boom. Sh Boom.

Love.

One Pizza. Two Toppings.

Recently, a gracious inquiry was sent to me privately, in which the writer used pizza as a metaphor for expressions of enlightenment, with the observation that we can only see a slice, not the whole pizza. It read: "It is almost impossible for any one human being to be able to see the whole pizza (we call the one who can see it as God). No individual can explain or understand each and every small happening or fact in this world."

The writer's concern was that some of my writings seem to be saying that, "my slice is better than yours," meaning that my perspective on enlightenment is better than other perspectives, or my concept of enlightenment is better.

My response was that authentic references to enlightenment are neither comparative, nor based on concept or individual perspective, but are in absolute language that is paralleled precisely by all who write and speak of enlightenment from direct experience - the only way it can be known.

What we have here is a failure to communicate. And the obstacle to clear communication is the mixing of absolute and relative language. In the first sentence, quoted in the first paragraph, absolute language is used - referencing the whole pizza. In the second, relative language is used - no individual can explain...every small happening or fact.

Of course, we cannot see the whole pizza when by pizza we mean the whole world and its happenings. But when the whole pizza is used as metaphor for full enlightenment, then the whole person can see the whole pizza. That's the way authentic enlightenment comes - full blown, complete, perfect, absolute. Enlightenment is to merge with God (by whatever name) and to "see" how everything works; again, not in the relative worldly sense, but in the absolute realm of what is typically called spiritual.

Now if we slip back to ego's perspective, this may sound arrogant and elitist. And if the statement were to come from ego's perspective that would be the case. But the statement is made from an enlightened perspective and is presented as a report of experience. Still it is difficult, and the source of some pretty heated debates, for the ego/mind to accede to any claim of perfect knowledge. This is because the rational, thinking process has made claim to being the only exclusive way to know - much in the way the fundamentalists of any religion claim exclusivity.

But there is a more excellent way to Know.

Of course, no linear thought or reasoning process can explain every small happening or event. But this context is about the physical, manifest world of people. In the spiritual realm, there is no process or linear reasoning. The knowledge is absolute and complete, or it is not enlightenment at all.

Why am I beginning to feel like a hamster in a wheel?

One reality. Two truths.

Love.

Recovering The Magic of Life

One day, a few years ago, I was shopping in a health food store in Maine. While I was waiting in the checkout line I noticed a young girl of 3 or 4 standing beside two women who were talking to each other - probably the little girl's mother and a friend.

What caught my attention was that the girl was occasionally waving her hand in a half circle. She would make the half circle then stop and watch people going by, and a few seconds later would wave her hand again. I couldn't help but wonder what was going through her mind as I watched her solitary game.

Then it hit me. She was waving her hand just as customers were approaching close enough to open the automatic exit door. She had a magic wand that opened the door. I burst out in a light laugh as I caught on; then excused myself to the other customers in line whose expression showed mild concern for the odd person who startled them with a spontaneous laugh.

When I came through the checkout line and approached the exit, I made it a point to stop short of tripping the automatic door and waited for the girl to look toward me. When she did, I nodded in the direction of the door and she quickly obliged me with a wave of her magic wand.

As I went through the door I glanced back at her, expecting her to be giggling about my participation in her game. Instead she gave me a proud raised-eyebrow regal look and I bowed slightly with a quiet "Namaste" of gratitude. I was the one who ended up giggling - several times over the next few hours as the event came to mind.

On my way through the parking lot to my car, I thought about how wonderful it was to still believe in magic and be so in awe of life. That health food store held a special magic for me every time I went in over the next few years in Maine, before we moved to Florida. And it is still one of my favorite memories, and I suspect will be far into my midday-napping-in-a-rocking-chair time down the road.

So what happened to the magic? What happened to being open to our potential for a magic carpet ride into a blissful heavenly realm of consciousness where we are in awe of everything and in love with everyone? And can we ever recover the magic? Here's my take on that:

As soon as we were dragged off the magic bus of childhood and strapped in school seat and later a work cubicle (even a corner office with cityscape and water view is a cubicle), we lost touch with the intuitive connection to everything and everyone. We were coerced into "sophistication" and shaken out of "silliness". Think, Sit still. Bad girl. Bad boy. Say goodbye to the real magic and say hello to cheap substitutes: Step right up. For one thin dime you can watch...a girl being sawed in half, a rabbit being pulled out of a hat and other sleights of hand (the most dastardly of which was the social coercion to rely exclusively on the rational process to earn gold stars and praise).

Can we ever recover the real magic? Yes. The real magic is the reawakening to the Whole Self, the Naturally Enlightened being and Magic-Carpet Conscious One we were created to be and with which capacity we were naturally endowed. Meditation is the ticket. The price of the ticket is ardent desire to

return to the garden of delightful magic. If you haven't already, next time you hear a voice (inner or outer) or watch a magnificent sunrise that resonates with this possibility...step right up.

Love.

Why So Much?

Sometimes, for a brief moment, I wonder why I write and talk so much, so often, so passionately about Awakening with a capital A, and incessantly tell my story in the context of some metaphor or life experience. A discussion group friend (and former promoter of my work) of a few years recently had had enough. He was convinced that my primary purpose all along has been to brag about my "spiritual accomplishments." Ummm, that's an interesting perspective. Moving right along...

Then I remember. It's because I made a deal (Bodhisattvas call it a vow). When I hit the deepest darkest point of my life, I spontaneously offered, "If I can ever experience this beautiful peace of mind that the Awakened teachers speak of and find relief for this despair, I will spend the rest of my life sharing the truth of its possibility - especially with those who come down the path of despair." Naively, I added, "Don't ever let me forget the pain, so that I may remain compassionate with those who are suffering from the desperate longing to know peace of mind."_

That little addendum, I am convinced, is why I blithely slam into an emotional brick wall every so often. The good news is that the spiritual accomplishment (I prefer to think of it as supreme grace) I love to brag about is unshakable, unassailable...and the constant undercurrent (the living water) of my conscious life. Has been for the last 35 years.

A while ago I wrote about clarity and how clarity has no questions. And while that is virtually true, I do have to admit to one nagging question: "Why have I been graced with so much?" The question is framed something like this...

"Me? I get this? After all the despicable crap that I put my family and friends through (details will not follow), I am graced with a thunderbolt of new understanding, and made to feel brand new...with complete forgiveness wrapped with an exquisitely beautiful ribbon of Love, 000,000 on my conscience odometer, a renewed trust in my own (guided) judgment?

"I get all this: this ineffable sense of relief, bliss and peace of mind, a sit-down dinner with God - a sure sense of an abiding divine guidance, a whole life brand new start, an enormously expanded love of life and people and grass and flowers and dirt and rain and...everything? Why so much?"

Not to mention: a gorgeous wife of nearly 30 years, a beautiful condo overlooking a swimming pool, tennis court, a lagoon and a little farther out, the Gulf of Mexico - here in The Sunshine State, so many loving, wonderful friends...and as they say in advertising, much, much more.

Why so much? I'll let the theist in me answer.

God is good.

God is love.

Love is peace.

Life is good.

Love.

All Stressed Up and Nowhere To Go

We have a survival mechanism, so called, that kicks in when we are seriously life-threatened and we have a socialized learned behavior designed to keep us safe. We were introduced to stress (fear and doubt) as a way to protect us from the many dangers lurking the big bad world.

We want to cross the street and doubt raises its head to caution us about oncoming traffic. Wait. Thanks, doubt. Good job. Another time, we want to jump over a big puddle on the way to school and then we remember that we are wearing brand new sneakers, and if we ruin them we might need that so called survival mechanism when Mom finds out. Walk around this time. Thanks, fear.

So far, so good. Seems reasonable.

But what seems to happen is that fear and doubt get all puffed up about their roles in our lives and proceed to haunt us at every turn, or at least at inappropriate times, with a nearly constant internal chatter of "What if...If only...Watch out...She won't...They will." And that can lead to what Thoreau observed: *The mass of men (people) lead lives of quiet desperation.*

We become attached to outcomes because we don't want to come upon any situation or event that we are afraid (hello!) we won't be able to handle. And that fear attachment provides the background hum of quiet desperation if we do not find a way to quiet the incessant roar and tame the lions of fear and doubt.

In the world of what I call "applied metaphysics" where I work (apart from satsang), clients primarily come for smoking cessation, weight control, stress management and career as well as sports performance improvement. And I teach them relaxation techniques and mind games to help quiet the internal chatter - what I consider to be the first critical step in any goal achievement strategy.

In guided imagery sessions we (clients and I) give stress a persona and befriend "him or her". We disrobe stress's monster costume and dress up stress in a positive upbeat, albeit hyper, helper fashion - maybe a soft-spoken diminutive monk or Tony Robbins or something. Now when the expected stress shows up, we know that the purpose is to help us focus, perform better, and stay relaxed yet alert with clarity of purpose.

Love.

Identity Theft

There is a much larger and more pervasive threat to identity theft than the internet, non-shredded credit card receipts or a lost wallet/purse.

When meeting with a client for the first time, they are asked to fill out a 40-question multiple choice PQ Success Assessment. The PQ stands for preference quotient. The purpose of the PQ Success Assessment is to help indicate their dominant personality type and from that assess the communication style that will be most effective with them.

In nearly 30 years of experience with this type of format, in slightly different packaging, a dominant "type" always shows through. Studies of personality type and models for it go way back, and come in a broad variety of styles, but one consistent factor is the block of 4 types, by different but similar names.

By any other name they indicate: leadership, sales, critical thinking and relationship skills (or more accurately, life strategies). We seem to choose a lifestyle strategy that we believe will best serve us through life as our dominant personality and use the others as subsets as appropriate to the situation.

Recently, a young man who came for test stress (he tightens up and does not do well on tests). His PQ score was 10-10-10-10. First time ever, in nearly 30 years, that I've seen that. He's either a perfect chameleon or has never consciously settled on a style that he prefers...or something.

After the quiz, in a guided imagery session, he was asked to visualize walking through grass and coming upon a single flower. When asked to describe the flower he said it was "like a daisy". When asked for the color he said, "no color". Is this a fear of commitment...to a color, to a dominant personality type, to life with passion in any particular direction? Or is he truly a chameleon?

OK, that doesn't make him a bad person or a weak person. It's just that his identity becomes fashioned by whatever the circumstances require. He blends in with the sights and sounds of whatever ambience in which he finds himself.

But I digress somewhat. This recent encounter of a unique kind reminded me of how we are socially coerced as part of our "upbringing" to rely more and more and more, and eventually exclusively on the rational, logical, linear process of thought. We become convinced that the "I" is our thoughts and reasoning. And that's it. And that where the robbery has taken place.

Our identity as a Whole Person - rational and intuitive in perfect balance, and our birthright connection to whatever term we choose to use for God (Source, Self, Higher Self, Higher Power, G-d, ELF...), is lost to us - or at least temporarily suspended.

And no matter how successful in worldly terms or how prestigious our position in life/career our wonderful reasoning power has made possible...in the quiet moments of solitude, flashes of quiet despair, loneliness (even though we may have tons of friends and intimate relationships) and intuitive stirrings that something is missing pop up for most people.

This indefinable emptiness drives people to seek out different means of attempting to assuage these feelings: more money, more possessions, more relationships, bigger cars, bigger jobs, bigger houses, bigger muscles, bigger boobs, alcohol and other drug abuse. For some this search takes very twisted turns and they find themselves in terribly controlling relationships that aid and abet the robbery on an ongoing basis, deep depression, horrible addictions and/or criminal activity, or worse. But, regardless of the positives or negatives. the quiet moments still bring their own brand of haunting.

Attempted escapes are almost always foiled because many people in these situations, positive and negative, feel that when it comes right down to it, they have no voice, no one understands them, and no one person or institution or model has ever helped them, or do they have any hope for solution - because their identity has been stolen. They don't know who they are, and they have no where to turn...according to their logical, egoistic process.

The few who escape find a path to rediscovery and recovery of their stolen identity and, through some form of grace, come to meet an awakened teacher (almost always an escapee themselves) who points them in the right direction...back to the Whole Person lost and found counter, with God, within God, where their once-stolen identity resides and abides.

But they only seem to step onto the path as a last resort, having finally exhausted every excuse and every person in their lives, are sick and tired of their room in Heartbreak Hotel, and are ready to check out - even at the very real possible risk of checking out of life.

Love.

Nothing More Than...?

When I read the half-baked blather about how Enlightenment is "nothing more than accepting what is," blah, blah, blah...I have to wonder how the writer missed the beyond-spectacular internal fireworks, the peace that passes understanding and joy unspeakable side effects that accompany Awakening.

Did they forget? Or did they decide to buy into the hipness of nondual speak, and trade their childlike run, jump, spin with delight for the ivory tower of pseudo-jnani yogi intellect - because they were told that these occupy the highest seat on the enlightenment ladder. Virtually all authentic jnani yogis and yoginis embrace the bhakti (devotional) path out of gratitude for the internal fireworks, the peace that passes understanding and joy unspeakable, instilled and expanded love for everything and everyone that comes with awakening.

Yes, it ultimately does come to accepting what is - once the rediscovery is made that "what is" is so much more than we thought it was. But to start from the nothing-more-than platform risks losing readers/aspirants/students right off the bat. They come discouraged, troubled, desperate, and to begin with the flat platform can harden their heart and wax their ears cold.

OK, maybe it's a matter of style. As for me, I'm still coming on stage (posting notes) running, jumping for joy, spinning with delight about an awakening that opened a floodgate of living water that continues to run and refresh 35 years later. For me, there are not enough words to ever come the "it's nothing more than...".

If you're a returnee to my notes, it's probably because we share the jump down, spin around joy and delight in splashing each other with the loving words of enlightenment for the sheer entertainment of it, or your heart resonates with the notes and comments.

Love.

Is The Law of Attraction Just Another Distraction?

Oh, boy. Running against the grain of pop culture, once again.

My platform, if you haven't run across any of my published work, preaching, proselytizing, ranting or ramblings that I have been spouting in any venue I can find for the past 35 years, is that there is only one true heart's desire and it's not about attracting anything we can think about, focus on, visualize, affirm or even co-create - no matter how clearly, consistently and conscientiously we try or how ardently we have faith and believe.

Tell me true: what sort of attracting came to mind when you first learned of The Secret and its celebrity offspring, The Law of Attraction? Was it the iconic convertible with a blonde hottie by your side - hundred dollar bills blowing in the wind as you now cruised life's carefree highway? Something like that? Or was it about your spiritual awakening - an end to the empty feeling and vague longing that has been alternating between the front and back burner of your mind since puberty or before?

If it was the former, you're comfortably anonymous, grazing with the flock, and solidly convinced that a few more (or a lot more) dollars, cars, houses, trysts, or chocolate éclairs will solve all your problem and you'll be happy and content ever after. So, you opened the new LOA toolbox, closed your eyes tight, clicked your heels three times, and visualized every detail of the Porsche and partner, right down to the knobs and curves. And, just maybe, it worked! So, does it feel like you'll be happy ever after? Check back, next week, next month, next traffic ticket.

It was the latter? Awesome! The Secret resonated beautifully with your search for God, for inner peace, spiritual bliss. But, unlike the Porsche or beautiful bod beside you, that which is of the spirit is unknown to the rational mind (ego) and any advance attracting and detailed visualization is impossible. Oh, some

intellectual concept and a particular philosophy, or even a spiritual tradition, has hinted at these ineffable levels of consciousness. However, all of the authentic reporters of this most exalted of human experiences agree that awakening, enlightenment, the kingdom of heaven, and all the kindred terms for IT, are only known by direct experience - and no forethought is possible.

And not only that; they also report that at some point (usually following an ardent search) any seeking, visualizing, attempts to attract, define or co-create negate the possibility of the direct experience. Everything must come to a halt - all thought, all anticipation, all laws (ouch) must be absolutely and utterly surrendered into silence - absolute and utter silence. No mind. Or else, they'll be no stepping into perfection. So, what happens to the LOA here?

I would be remiss and amiss to not mention The Middle Way in which peace of mind and abundance are in perfect balance. Some, it seems, have material wealth and spiritual poverty while others have awakened, but for some reasons (not the least of which is the pop cultural hook that equates poverty with piety and holiness) are in a constant battle for financial stability.

So, to backtrack a bit: Those who have material comfort may, indeed, use The Law of Attraction as the diving board into the pristine pool of spiritual awareness, and those who have swum or currently swim in this pool, may use LOA to balance their checkbook. But if The Law of Attraction is just about money and creature comforts...it's just another distraction.

Well, this should be enough to stir up the busy mind bees.

Love.

Seeking is the solution, until it becomes the problem.

When we think about world-class athletes (at least those who have not been bludgeoned by meteorite tabloids), we think about their cool coordination and impeccable timing. Their window of opportunity for scoring is often a split nanosecond, and as the cliché goes - a miss is as good as a mile.

So, how do we segway that into my favorite subject: spiritual seeking? Well, actually that's my second favorite. My favorite is spiritual finding aka Awakening aka...lots of names for it. Easy: the window of opportunity for scoring a spiritual hit also passes in a flash and the timing must be impeccable. As for "a miss is as good as a mile," the parallels are obvious. We hear and read from jaded former disciples and even longtime devotees who complain about years with a guru, marathon meditations and aesthetic lifestyles that left them unfulfilled and forever after quick to scoff.

Then we have a certain "neo" group who loves to parrot, "Seeking is the problem. There's nothing to realize," followed by the mind screw: you just have to realize that. And they leave it at that, and leave seekers slack-jawed. These parrots are not your world-class gurus. They have missed a critical piece of the metaphysical puzzle.

Seeking is not the problem. It's the beginning of the solution. And there's the crux of the matter: seeking is the beginning, the response to a nagging inner longing. It becomes a problem when we do not come upon an authentic guide who makes the fine distinction that while seeking is the beginning of the solution, there is a point where even the seeking has to be laid to rest if we are to experience the quantum magnetic moment aka...yada, yada, yada, you know.

Until we reach to point where we are willing to stand perfectly still while The Archer takes aim at the apple on our head, and risk an arrow to the forehead, we will keep seeking and seeking and not finding. When our trust is sufficient or our desperation has moved from quiet to horrific screaming we will stand - absolutely still and silent, inside and out until...twang.

The bad news is that the arrow does hit us smack dab in the middle of our forehead and we die (to our former self) - only instead of lights out, its lights on. Next?

Love.

Which 10%?

In the world of advertising there is an axiom that says commercial advertisers only need to spend about 10% of what they spend, but nobody knows which 10%...so they spend 100% of their budget allocation to reach the effective 10%. If you been in business, especially retail, you know that advertising takes a big chunk out of the overall business budget. Over the past few years, prescription drug companies have obviously found national television advertising to have an excellent ROI (return on investment) - but that's another story.

So, how does this relate to my all-consuming passion for spiritual coaching and Spiritual Awakening? Well, anyone who picks up or, more accurately, is handed - or maybe even more precisely, is banged over the head with, the "guru" mantle has only their personal journey, if they are to be authentic, to call upon.

If they were in a temple listening to satsang everyday at the feet of a master, eating vegetarian meals, abstaining from sex, drugs and rock and roll, and were in the midst of a meditation technique when they were graced with Enlightenment, and had offered a vow to 'teach' the potential for Enlightenment if their desperate wish for peace of mind were granted, they might construct a very similar setting or process as the route to Enlightenment.

Now, if you followed the previous run-on sentence you may see the parallels of advertising and spiritual coaching (a term I much prefer to guru or even teacher) needing only a portion of what is spent or offered. It may be that meditation is the only critical factor, or maybe a sufficient number of meals that include ratatouille, or listening to satsang (a spiritual discourse) that points to the potential to experience this most profound of human experiences (better than sex, drugs and rock and roll!). Or does the guru truly transmit his or her Enlightened Energy to the ready student?

This brings me to a further use of the title, "Which 10%?". Of all the teachers, gurus, and spiritual coaches I've met, read about, or heard about from their students or devotees, only a very small percentage of their devotees (by various names) ever claim their own Enlightenment - nowhere near 10%. One example- Rajneesh (later Osho) attracted thousands and thousands of "sannyasins" (disciples) but only about 50 are known to have claimed Enlightenment - which is a high number compared to many of the other big name gurus. Ramana Maharshi has a loyal and devout following - typically among the more intellectual, given his jnana yoga instruction of "deep inquiry" as the most effective route to Awakening - but few who have claimed to have reached his level of consciousness, let alone Awakening. There's a whole other story about "claiming Enlightenment". (Aimed only at the few who will jump in here: Please spare me the "no one to claim...").

Anyway, if you are a seeker, I guess my point is, don't get too caught up in technique or model. Listen to your heart, and if it resonates with a certain teacher, you'll respond accordingly. For me, meditation seems to be of critical importance, and if pushed I'd add a diet of light food and attendance at teachings, or reading of teachings at every opportunity. Even these small concessions will only appeal to the most ardent of seekers.

On a relative level, meditation for stress management isn't a bad idea - especially if it morphs into joy management.

Peace, love and joy.

Grim determination or the effortless life

Our choice - or more probably a product of just how much, and for how long, we caved into the social coercion that touts the wisdom of, "There is nothing more noble than (in my case) the New England work ethic." Be a busy bee and the world will reward you with security and admiration. Or, to stay with the critter metaphor - join the rat race, stay with the pack, and if you work diligently enough you just might become one of the head rats. The worker bees drive cars to work in a swarm that mysteriously gathers in the early morn and reassembles as the sun sets to zzzzzz home, again. Rats ride buses at all hours. Head rats ride limos.

Admittedly, the rat race is easier in some respects if you're one of the head rats. But if you've worked for a head rat, you know that they push the world around with fear and loathing, toting stress pistols aimed at everyone in their lower hierarchy as a way to control and push productivity. These are the control freaks who live with high anxiety as their default level of awareness. This month's quota met, bill's paid, and lazy bum's fired gives them no more than a nanosecond of peace before they fire up the next fret over...whatever.

They also consider themselves to be the smartest people in the world - in direct proportion to their estate. So, don't ever try to calm them down. They hate that. They'll cut you down. Their way works. It also brings ulcers, early heart attacks, and huge support for the Nuevo darlings of media advertising - the pill pharmers. But that's another couple of notes.

Then there's the mellow yellow fellows. They don't feel the need to push life around. They go with the flow. And their whole style is held in contempt by the brothers grim. Now, just to show that I'm not totally biased...there are some lazy bum leaches disguised as go-with-the-flow types, just as there are some beautiful, generous, warm-heated people in the damn determined camps.

Back to the meditative mellow. What they have found is that a calm mind, one that is open to the potential of this world being a helpful place, is served in mysterious timely ways by what they envision as a Kind Creator and/or a benevolent Mother Nature. Their default level of consciousness is in the moment. They've escaped the consensus state of persistent dissatisfaction (Buddha's view, often called suffering). They enjoy whatever they are doing - and this joy makes whatever they are doing effortless. They never (in the ideal) rush to finish something to "get it over with" so they can go onto something more pleasant. Life is pleasant and they are grateful for every moment. Did I write that their whole style is held in contempt by the brothers grim? Paradoxically, their inner peace allows them to be more aware of opportunity, more creative, more productive, and especially more healthy than their control freak counterparts. Sometimes they even find they way into the corporate boardroom and The Chair.

There's no need to go on with the obvious two-way lack of understanding or appreciation. It's only a rare few who ever cross the aisle. And then it is almost always out of abject depression and desperation.

But, it's our choice. Sort of.

Love.

Should I or Shouldn't I?

One of the truly wonderful time-saving, stress-relieving, self-esteem-lifting changes that meditation (and certainly Awakening) brings is the shift from relying solely on rational process, when it comes to decision making, to a holistic perspective that makes a snap, crackle, pop, instantaneous appearance when faced with a decision. As a friend says, "Boom!"

One of the basic models I use to express how meditation "works" is that meditation quiets the internal chatter - the constantly processing, what if, if only, should I or shouldn't I, vagabond mind - and allows us

to experience an inner peace without words. And this opens the door to a long-tucked-away capacity called intuition. Now, this is not just your basic hunch. This is wisdom intuition.

This intuition has a startling capacity to assess a situation in a blink, unlike the to-do, pros and cons, list the rational process wants to run. Intuition already has all this information keyed in and does not need to bring it to the forefront. It does not run by linear process. It operates holistically. Think circle, with all past, present and future contained in it - all available to wisdom intuition in a flash. Yes, ego, there is another way.

A quick relevant aside - seeing that ego just elbowed it's way onto the page: In the basic model taught in the Mystic Heart Meditation that I've been teaching for 35 years, the ego is not annihilated, but it is TKO'd for a time. The ego freaks at the idea of us even considering any other way of dealing with life than with the THINK we were hammered with early on. It goes especially berserk when we venture onto the meditative path where the instruction is to quiet the mind. To the ego, the quiet mind is death. Like a frightened bully it refuses to be quiet until we "knock it out".

Still on the aside: The funny thing is (joyful thing is) that once we tap into the wisdom intuition, and the ego regains consciousness to find that it no longer has the same job - it is delighted with its new wisdom playmate. OK, that's another note.

Back to should I or shouldn't I. A couple of thoughts (thank you ego) come to mind: Think of an heroic act. Put yourself in the picture as the hero. You're walking along a downtown street and you see a child dart in front of an oncoming vehicle. Without any thought for your own safety you instantly rush into the street and scoop up the child. After, you may shake like a leaf and even break down and cry. But when your "wisdom intuition" took over, there was no should I or shouldn't I. I recently read (and apologize for not remembering the source) that these heroic times are times in which we experience our true Oneness.

The other thought was about Karma, or right action. When we are balanced, in harmony with life, we "know" right action in every situation and do not need to process...you guessed it...should I or shouldn't I.

Should I go on? No, let me open this to discussion.

Love.

Holy Company, Batman!

One of the emerging values of social media, especially here on facebook, is the ability to find and befriend a group of people who share a common interest. For me, it's no less than "Holy Company". The opportunity to share experiences, contemporary views, favorite quotes and favorite authors on the subject of spiritual awakening is like a daily refreshing shower of love for me.

Trying to avoid a rant about the train wreck that a huge segment of organized religion has made of the enlightened teachings of their central figure, they do at least provide a regularly scheduled venue for the faithful to share their faith and devotion - or in far too many cases, their fanaticism, insane and inane fundamentalism that causes division and war...(oops, I'm ranting).

There is an inestimable value in holy company, from several perspectives. While there is an undeniable sense of permanence with Awakening, and the joy it brings is beyond compare...there is a wily ego and a world of temptation still lurking. And even the most elevated of the Awakened Ones can be blindsided, hit a pothole of the mind, and be thrown into a tailspin of doubt and regret for some social indiscretion - at least momentarily. It doesn't take much reading between the lines to see this in scripture or in the you-won't-believe-what-the-guru-did tabloids.

By staying in the presence of the master, the awakened teacher (in whatever form - historical or living), and enjoying the sweetness of their words, as well as the affirming words of our particular holy company, we

assure the smooth flow of attunement to the teachings and maintain or strengthen the connection of our Awakening - present or potential.

In yoga, the Bhakti yogi feels the ongoing gratitude for the teacher and their heart is filled with devotion to the one who opened the door for them to discover their own inner guru, while remaining devoted to the manifest guru they met on their path - the one whose words resonated so beautifully that they surrendered to their wisdom. And this is true of Christianity and virtually all spiritual traditions, especially the mystic sects.

One more slightly delicate, or at least debatable, point about the value of holy company: There is a lot of 'teaching' in pop books and groups, and certainly on the internet, that is half-baked. One such teaching that is admittedly a threat to my peaceful, all is well, equanimity is the teaching that not only disparages seeking (without the fine line discrimination of when seeking must give way to surrender), but 'instructs' that 'this is all there is' and when we come to grips with that we can just go on with our lives. This leaves out the much-reported empowering witnessing that Awakening brings a sudden rush of new wisdom and a most beautiful joy that is beyond rational assent or even rational grasp - but nevertheless experiential.

And, it is not simply a matter of giving up the search or settling. This does nothing for the discouraged and desperate who feel an incredibly painful longing for peace of mind. True Holy Company can authentically tell them that...

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy. -- Shakespeare

Love.

Scribbling

Those who wrote and those who continue to write what we call scripture, sermons, mystic or ecstatic poems, and even facebook posts, present as God's scribes - instruments if you will of one of God's means of communicating with us mere mortals hanging out for a time in the duality of the world. And even though contradictions, paradoxes and debates abound, there are phrases, stanzas and sounds bites that resonate powerfully at times and seem to reach us at our very core. Our lives can go off course, or be set on course, by any given sound bite at any time; as in, "When the student is ready the teacher appears."

This morning, "Lean not upon your own understanding. Acknowledge me in all your ways and I will direct your paths," greeted my initial waking moments. OK, flip the auto pilot switch, cage the lions of fear and doubt, and go with the flow as an instrument of God's will and direction. Cool.

But by my second cup of Caramel Drizzle designer coffee, my rational processes kicked in, snuck up on the switch, and started bringing up fretful financial issues, fitness failures and forsaken friends. (The ego loves alliteration, apparently. Stop it!). So, I slipped into quiet meditation and settled down. Then, I checked the auto pilot switch again, poured the last half-cup, and opened facebook.

Yes, I know, there's no me, no doer, no you - only God and all within God...or nothingness that is not empty, never mind all that stuff about a kind creator, if you lean toward Buddha. But here we are, meeting on facebook, locked into the illusion - or maybe just breezing by for fun.

So, back to the theta stage (or theater of the just-awakening mind) and not leaning upon our own understanding. For the unawakened or the fully awakened to the ego's grip there is an insistent persistent thought that our own understanding is all there is, and that without rational thought we're lost. What would happen is we stopped leaning on our own understanding? Nothing? Stupefied beatitude? Pitch black boredom? No. No. No.

We have a neutral gear between stop and go, negative and positive, and good and evil. Now, if you're leaning upon your own understanding, you're thinking boooooorriiiiiinggggg. But that is the lie of the ego.

The neutral gear is the flow, the muse, the genius, in which life takes on a new glow, slows down and lights up a whole new corner we had completely forgotten about under the pressure of social coercion that teaches us to worship the god of what-will-other-people-think. And with this light on, we realize that Billy Shakespeare and Shake your money were right:

The world's a stage and we are merely players assigned our different roles. God sits in the director's chair and feeds us our lines, and at some point we come to realize that we are both the player and the director with a starring role far greater than our ego process has led us to believe. The paradox is that when we stop leaning upon our own understanding, a wisdom whisper from within lets us know that the Kingdom of Heaven, perfect peace of mind, blissful awareness of who we truly are, has been within us all along. Cool.

OK, enough scribbling. I'm out of coffee.

Love.

Stumble-down Drunk

There came a dark day
When in abject despair
I begged for a blank slate
A pitch black annihilation
But was granted in its stead
Perfect peace of mind

No incessant repetition
Or volume of books
Can adequately express
The height of gratitude
Or depth of devotion
To the divine grantor

No argument or threat
Ridicule or repugnance
Can ever prevail against
The sudden rush
Of startling wisdom
That took me home

God, let me never forget
Lifting a glass to Rumi's
"Give me enough wine
Or leave me alone."
I remain your faithful
Stumble-down drunk

Love.

Being Outrageous

"Be Outrageous. It's the only place that isn't crowded." Anon

A good friend once said to me, "You live what most people only fantasize about." This was in response to the news at the time of my meeting Susan – the stunningly gorgeous young woman who was to become my wife, nearly 30 years ago. She's still stunning at 52.

Today, I asked a question on facebook about what the reader would have, do, be if the most outrageous flash of what they truly wanted in life were to manifest. Of course, even considering this requires a relinquishing of the god of what will other people think. This is my response at this moment:

A movie star? The money and celeb status would be nice for my ego, but I don't think it would be really fulfilling. I've loved movies since I was a kid, pretending to be the hero in all the movies I saw, and the idea of making a movie is very appealing...and I've written several screenplays – without seriously attempting to market them.

Rock star? A little late and too white in the beard for that. Writing the songs would still be nice, though. I played drums with local rock groups and wrote lyrics for a contemporary Christian band - and performed with them on the harp – (that's harmonica, not the angelic harp) years ago.

An artist? Now this one persists, but I wrestle with it simply being a hang on romantic image left over from winning a cartoon contest at 11. When I set up in a studio, I'm impatient and bored quickly. Still...I have sold quite a few over the years and have won "best of show".

An author? I love to write and do it every day, but haven't pushed the button. My book *Sunrise At Two Lions* was one of two finalist in the visionary fiction category at the IPPY (Independent publishers) Awards in Los Angeles several years ago.

A guru (spiritual coach)? This has been around since July 21, 1975. A profound mystical experience empowered and equipped me for the authentic role, but...well, it's certainly outrageous. I have honored my spontaneous "Bodhisattva Vow" (which I learned about after the fact) and do 'teach' virtually every day in some form. Should I grow my hair long again?

OK, so ruling out the first two, I'm left with three considerations, so far.

A review – to stall a bit: Susan and I live in a beautiful condo, drive nice cars (both in need of some repairs, but nice) and enjoy the coastal Florida lifestyle. I continue to ride the money roller coaster, but manage. Money is a powerful energy, and being financially set would certainly make life easier and more enjoyable, no doubt – but not at the cost of becoming an empty-headed and heartless robotic. So, the outrageous would include enjoying money and a fulfilling occupation of my time.

Now, if I attempt to logically work my way through the candidates of artist, author or spiritual coach I will make the outrageous aspect immediately impotent...

Meditating...

It occurs to me that I have an art studio where I paint when the urge hits, I write every day, and I teach a meditation class and post on Mystic Heart Meditation yahoo group as well as facebook nearly every day. And I teach a "bible" class (from a mystic's perspective) on Wednesday evening.

But I'm a dabbler – in all of it. Where is my passion? Meditating...

A bit of scripture came to mind, "Stir up the gift of God that is within you." Then I listened to Bob Marley's *Stir It Up*.

What emerges is an image of speaking to groups about The Mystic Path, while enjoying income from art and book sales.

And so, to complete the assignment; in my most outrageous, I am a Spiritual Coach (Mystic, Guru, Preacher) with income from art and books. The foundation is there. Now I need to stir up the passion to build the mansion. I still don't know about the hair.

Love.

The Day I Became Invisible

As a kid I did not simply enjoy movies, I lived them.

From the age of 5, I would wake up Saturday mornings and go on a treasure hunt for "empties". Empties were recyclable glass soda and milk bottles that I would find, courtesy of litterbugs, and return to the neighborhood stores for redemption of the deposit paid on the bottles when the soda or milk was purchased. Empty soda bottles were worth 2¢ and the rare find of a milk bottle was worth a whopping 5¢.

Entrance to the Opera House, the local movie theater, on Saturday mornings was 12¢, candy bars and soda were 5¢ and popcorn was 10¢. The show included a cartoon, a "short" film (usually a cowboy episode), previews of coming attraction, and the main feature (frequently, another western).

The Opera House opened at Noon. The line formed around 11:30 and the 4-part show played on a continuous loop until 8:00 pm. So, after cashing in anything around 25¢, I was off the movies and well healed enough for refreshments.

Once I was in, I was in for the duration. All I had to do was make a stealthy move in the dark theater to another seat as the new loop began and the new crowd of patrons came in. On very rare occasion, an usher would spot me and tell me I had to leave – after noticing me around the 3rd loop. That took a little more stealth and an ability to blend with the crowd as I made a loop of my own, just short of the ticket booth. Sometimes, but not often, an aunt or uncle would collar me with an impatient tug and usher me out in the early evening.

On one of these magical Saturdays, the main feature was *The Invisible Man*. Now, usually I left riding my trusty white stallion with a, "Hi Ho, Silver. Away!" or an Indian Scout blending with buildings as I slipped past anyone who might have been a clumsy Calvary man in a former life.

But today, I was invisible. I walked along in plain sight. Well, it would have been plain sight if anyone could have seen me. I felt an incredible Buddha-like calm. (Of course, I didn't know of any such thing as Buddha-like calm back then. I am just plugging in a contemporary perspective in an attempt to capture my mood at the time).

When I arrived at home, there were no admonishments about being out after dark at such a young age, and where was I and what was I thinking...and all that. Everyone was preoccupied with something else, and they never noticed me coming in. Wait a minute! How could they. I was invisible.

This was getting better all the time. It seemed that more and more, I wasn't noticed. Now, I have a confession to make here, and I hope we can still be friends after you read it, but it's time to get it off my chest. During this time, I yielded to the temptation to test my invisibility and new and improved stealth at a couple of stores. I sauntered into a couple of stores, quietly boosted a candy bar and slipped out unnoticed.

On about the third or fourth mission, I was stopped by an 8-foot tall stern woman store clerk who, with arms folded across her chest and looking down at me from her towering height, blocked my exit. "I was just looking at it," I squeaked and put the candy bar back on the shelf. So much for my life of crime.

The invisibility episode was over...or so I thought. At about age 10, I was reading about world religions in school and came across a description of Nirvana. Something about it flashed me back to my invisible days. I had just stepped onto the mystic path, and I was on an ardent search.

Many years and churches and preachers and teachers and gurus later, I found myself in a Hindu temple, being taught comparative studies of the Bible and the Bhagavad Gita, and introduced to meditation.

On a July morning - the 21st, at 9:30 in the morning, in the midst of quiet meditation, I disappeared into

particles that are invisible to the naked eye, and merged with that ineffable presence known as nothingness, awareness, God...

And I've been invisible ever since. Keep a careful watch on your candy bars.

Love.

Flour Power

When the hunger rumbles
From deep within our soul
An unseen hand pushes us
Toward the awakened baker

This baker's enlightened recipes
Are not held in secret code but
Written in voluminous chapter
And sung in every song

In every morning's sunrise
In every child's rolling laughter
Softly spoken in Ashrams
Shouted out on street corners

When clarity approaches
We see with renewed sacred eyes
Hear beyond the normal range
Feel a touch of exquisite tenderness

The colors of the evening sky
Communicate without words
Drench us in golden peach hues
Bring us to our knees

The sweet perfume of sugar
The haunting refrain of yeast
Released from the oven's warmth
Pulls us like an oxen's ring

Longing for just one taste
A morsel that will sustain us
Through all eternity
Beyond time and space

We wander until we find ourselves
At the awakened baker's door
Wondering how we got there
Not sure why we're here

A bell rings as we enter
And we sense that we have left
Our former world behind
To don the apron of flour power

Love.

A pregnant pause

She's meditated for years
Through many tears and fears
Still feels nowhere near awakening
Let those who have ears hear

Awakening cannot be
Squeezed out of meditation
Once the seed has been received
A pregnant pause is the only need

Love.

A View from The Window

Imagine stopping by to visit an old friend for the first time in their new home. There are people there you know, and some you do not know. In the course of your friend enthusiastically taking you on the 5¢ tour of their new home, they bring you to an upper room.

Even though it is a beautiful day outside, the room is quite dark. Your friend invites you into the room and as you enter, your friend opens the curtains and waves you over to the window. As you step up to the window and look out, your breath is taken away at the incredible view.

The sky is the most beautiful blue you have ever seen and the clouds the puffiest. You see fields of flowers with a rainbow of colors so vivid you can smell them. The unique aroma of the rose comes through distinctly. As your mind reels a bit at this view and the delightfully surprising sensory play, a stream of light burst through the clouds...and you feel yourself suddenly "in flight".

As you float toward the clouds, waves of the sweetest love you have ever known wash over you...over and over. At the point of overwhelm you dissolves into particle waves that reach out to the farther points of the universe. And even though you are temporarily without a body, you "experience" a perfect harmony, a matrix on which the entire cosmos is beautifully and precisely interwoven. It's like you know how everything "works". The bliss you feel is beyond words.

Then in a flash, you are back in your body. But the you who occupied your body as a thinking, rational person is not there. As you now look out the window, the view has completely changed. Well, it hasn't changed at all, but _your view of it has changed. You are now aware that your personal view, the person you were convinced you were in total before looking out the window, is not only changed, you realize that it experiences life from a reflective or "secondary" view, and the "new you" now knows of its "primary" identity. The primary identity is not a person at all, but awareness - expansive, impersonal awareness. You have a "foot" in two worlds, but now know of The One reality.

You still have the same body and the same sensory apparatus as before, and what happens to "it" can be enjoyable and pleasurable, but there is no attachment or emotional tie to circumstances or events. You live, move and have your being in pure intuitive consciousness, pure awareness.

As you turn to look away from the window, you are startled to find a whole new world here as well. It is still the same in the material sense, but completely different in how the different energies vibrate your senses. Everything glows with a new beauty, and everyone glows with an aura that shines forth from an

inner light that is identical to the light that streamed through the puffy clouds. You are in love and love perfumes the air around you.

And from that day forward, you are always looking through The Window. Lots of luck explaining what happened.

Love.

Gently down the stream of consciousness

Row, row, row your boat

One early morning, several years ago, the phone rang in my studio. It was my wife calling, and she was breathless with excitement.

Susan is a massage therapist, a yoga teacher, personal trainer and a long-time devotee of Yogananda Paramhansa. Her daily routine includes periods of meditation and at least one long period of exercise, at the gym, on a walk or run. This has been standard practice for her for the past 10 or 12 years.

Well, this particular morning as Susan was out on her walk, after her morning meditation, a song came to mind:

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily,
Verily, Verily,
Life is but a dream

"Did you hear that?" she asked me, repeating the last line to me over and over. She would say the line, start laughing, repeat the line, repeat the question.

Susan had awoke from the dream of an individual self and entered the realization that there is only the Self... and the freedom of a direct perception into the reality that, "Life is but a dream."

Now, it may seem that with this freedom that realization brings, nothing would trouble us, we would see it all as a temporary passing parade, and we simply could row our boat gently down the stream.

And this is true. However, what is not seen by one who contemplates this freedom, without the direct experience, is the incredibly alert, yet relaxed, state of awareness that ensues.

A non-attachment to the emotional tides and the "soap-opera" sentimentality that make up much of "normal" life is not the same as a uncaring detachment.

With this freedom of non-attachment, this entrance into the play of consciousness as the only true reality, with this realization, this awakening, comes a new level of awareness that includes a keener compassion, a love without expectation, and a heart that has opened to a mystical kind of Love that must be experienced to be known.

For theists, this is a realization that there is nothing that is not a reflection, a spark, of God. Everything is seen to be contained within God, and a boundless Love has made itself known to the realizer.

And, rather than a passive disinterest, an active interest, without fear or doubt, without concern for what will other people think, without the internal chatter of "should I, shouldn't I", bubbles from within.

For the non-theists, the nondual realizer who neither see the need for nor the relevance of spiritual trappings and religion to explain this new understanding, there is this knowing of perfection, this seeing, this "getting it" as a totality with nothing missing, nothing to seek, nothing to find, no definitions required: no Christ Consciousness, no Buddha Nature, No Natural Enlightenment, only stark awareness with nothing else, a nondual realization of all there IS, being all there IS.

Yet, paradoxically, within this perfection, this nonduality, the injustice and imbalance in the world are still seen, and a heart and mind of kindness and compassion responds actively, and participates more fully in life.

Because, for both the theists, the teachers of the positive way and the "non-teachers" of the negative way (neti, neti) of deep inquiry, what is shared in the awakening is a pure joy and deep love of life, as they realize via their own particular path that...

Life is but a dream.

Love.

Meditation in the Corporate Boardroom

Research at Harvard Business School has concluded "meditation and intuition are the two most valuable executive tools for the 21st century".

Imagine a senior management team or a board of directors who are gathered together to make several important decisions. On the table are crucial matters that could change the course of corporate life, or even make the difference between success and failure of the company.

As the chairperson lays out the agenda for the meeting and begins to launch into a detailed analysis of the issues at hand, a loud "buzz" is heard in the room. The chairperson looks up from her notes to see that virtually everyone in the room is engaged in loud chatter, and no one is really paying any attention to her at all. As soon as she recovers from the shock of this surprise, she loudly demands attention. The room goes quiet. But after a few seconds, the buzz picks up once again. Once again, the impatient demand for attention is made. And once again, after a few seconds, the buzz starts up again.

Now imagine this buzz, quiet, buzz scene going on in the boardroom for two or three hours. Unthinkable, you say. Just would not happen, right? How could important decisions be made if most of the people in the room were not really paying attention and their minds were on something else except for a few seconds of intermittent focus?

Would the scene be more easily imagined as possible and believable if everyone's "internal chatter" was somehow made externally audible? Now, that VP of Marketing who is worried about his son who just dropped out of college to take up his true passion, pottery, could be heard calming his wife, or himself, or raging at this son, off and on, through the entire meeting. How about the General Manager who cannot keep his mind off that sweet young thing in merchandising. And then there's the CFO who keeps rehearsing his upcoming meeting with bankers scheduled for later that day.

At a time when focus, clarity of thought, and the applied use of well-honed listening skills are critical, most of the great minds in that room are somewhere else. Maybe this is part of the reason that we read that we only use a small percentage of our brain. Most of us are rarely "in the moment" and attentive to the present for more than brief periods of time. Most of our time is spent reliving the past and anticipating the future, trying to steer the ship of our everyday lives in the right direction, or at least in one that will avoid disaster.

Meditation is a proven and effective way of quieting of the mind, and the relaxation and stress management

“techniques” that are at the core of meditation practice enhance focus, clarity of thought, and improve listening skills.

When we learn to use the simple tools of meditation, we can consciously quiet the mind’s internal chatter. With meditation, we can tap a quiet pool of intuitive wisdom that presents solutions and sees opportunities that the chattering mind misses.

It may be some time before meditation makes it to the mainstream of corporate planning - although research at Harvard Business School has concluded that "meditation and intuition are the two most valuable executive tools for the 21st century". But there are visionaries in corporate life this very minute who are seeking out-of-the-box methods of creative and effective leadership.

Now, where are those elite corporate visionaries who are ready to sign up their senior management team for meditation and intuition classes and send them on executive wellness retreats?

Love.

Stumble-down Drunk

There came a dark day
When in abject despair
I begged for a blank slate
A pitch black annihilation
But was granted in its stead
Perfect peace of mind

No incessant repetition
Or volume of books
Can adequately express
The height of gratitude
Or depth of devotion
To the divine grantor

No argument or threat
Ridicule or repugnance
Can ever prevail against
The sudden rush
Of startling wisdom
That took me home

God, let me never forget
Lifting a glass to Rumi's
"Give me enough wine
Or leave me alone."
I remain your faithful
Stumble-down drunk

Love.

Minus 11 - Part 1

There is a 1-Step Program. It is a cure for addiction, depression, and everything from abject despair and degradation to bad habits, as well as plain old meanness of spirit to quiet desperation. And it happens in a flash – in one step. It's called Awakening.

From the very first bite of that insidious fruit of the tree of the knowledge and good and evil, and the psychoactive trance-inducing self-consciousness it produces, the life of the partaker is dramatically changed. What was a benevolent, moment-to-moment existence in a field of delightful enjoyment and childlike lightness of spirit becomes a life of fear and doubt in a shadowy world of hostility and potential danger. Watch out!

Having lost touch with essential being, the reactionary rational mode takes over and claims the captain's seat of consciousness. Life is now process. Solutions are uncovered by careful, reflective thought and thorough examination of the "facts". There is simply no other way – according to the newly appointed captain.

Now the careful watcher no longer lives moment-to-moment in spontaneous joy, but rather plans each step and catalogues, rates and reacts to every event. Good events produce flashes of happiness and bad events produce negative reactions. It's all very rational. It's also a sort of death, or substitute life. And so it goes.

For those who fit in and earned gold stars, a lot of A's, MBA's, Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude, struck it rich on the dot boom, met the mate of their dreams, or successfully climbed the corporate ladder to a rung so high they were given a golden parachute...the substitute life ain't all that bad. But even many of these fortunate ones lifted the blinders enough to feel the pain of something missing, some loss they couldn't put their golden finger on, and drifted into prescribed addiction of various sorts. For these, and the less fortunate who drifted into despair for whatever reason (there is always a reason and a rationale – from catalogued overblown melodrama to events that make you wince with compassion upon hearing the retelling), the captain has a solution: therapy with or without medication.

A short disclaimer here, before going onto the 1-Step Program: 12-Step Programs have no doubt saved countless lives. And while "addiction" is an insidious word that creates hapless "victims", it is a model that has worked for many - cookie-cutter 12-steps for everything from Lego to Internet "addiction" – not so much.

According to the 1-Step Program, the core issue is the socially coerced disconnect with our essential being (fill in Source, God, Spirit...). And the solution is reconnection or Awakening, and the joyful discovery that the events of our substitute life are only of secondary importance – really and totally unimportant in the Grand Scheme of Things (fill in Source, God, Spirit...).

Love.

From The Heart

If one professes openly to having 'heard' the wisdom whisper from the heart, maybe they could talk (write) a bit about what it 'says'.

The problem is that words are not adequate to convey the 'message', but here's an attempt to paint this abstract picture and give it a glimmer of meaning...

The wisdom whisper says - out of the utter silence:

Come into the presence of ultimate reality – the very presence and residence of a unique 'being' some call God, or Lord, or Law - but the word is beside the point.

Coming into the presence is to be confronted with 'something' so powerful and so beyond anything ever thought or imagined, and so greater than a personal identity, that it is shocking and comes as a sudden rush of new awareness. But there's much, much more.

The effulgent presence is filled with the most beautiful light, and as one enters the light, the body presence is lost. Still the mind 'hears' that the personal identity is loved (and waves of nearly intolerably pleasant love wash over and over the new consciousness) and known and is divinely guided.

With the washing over of love, all emotional baggage is dissolved, as is all guilt, all remorse, all shame.

All that remains is this cradling, engulfing, enormous love...

And next, what were the few remaining remnants of personal identity now dissolve into the light.

All sense of time becomes meaningless and irrelevant in this light. There is no 'time'. There is only the eternal moment.

Yet there is conscious awareness...

And it seems that this awareness is itself now all-encompassing.

The 'view' (for some accompanied by flashing lights and colors) is as if looking out over the entire universe. A startling rush of wisdom brings a sense that all is known. There is an impossible-to-explain sense of how 'everything' works and how all the interconnectedness of the universe is perfectly ordered. It is a stepping into perfection and an unassailable peace of mind.

The residual effects of the wisdom whisper go on and on.

To touch upon a few:

The 'person' who heard the wisdom whisper no longer exists. Hold on. It will make sense.

A realization that what was previously considered 'I' or a personal identity was really a secondary sense of reality - and now having heard the whisper of transcendence, a new reality - a primary reality is known.

This primary reality is 'home'. The day-to-day reality of material existence is incredibly enhanced, but at the same time is seen as what some traditions call 'illusory' - and as previously mentioned, is known as secondary to the new sense of awakened being.

This new reality is now clearly recognized as what Ramana Maharshi called the "I-I", Buddha called the emptiness that is not nothing, Jesus called the kingdom of heaven within, and Carlos Castenanda called a separate reality. (To name a few).

The words of the mystics (Rumi's poetry) and all scripture come alive with meaning.

And back in the world (which one is now in, but not of) everyone is seen in a new loving light. It is recognized that the presence of this enlightenment is within everyone, and everyone who awakens see the ultimate destiny of humankind as coming to this awakening.

OK, hope this gives you a glimpse and/or a sweet reminder of the exquisite beauty of the effects of the wisdom whisper.

One Love

From Overweight to WOW!

One of my favorite all-time phone calls came from a client who came to see me about losing weight. Penny was 5 feet tall and weighed 205. When I asked her for her goal weight, she said 125. In our first session, I asked to her to visualize herself at 155. When she opened her eyes, I asked her how she looked at 155.

She said, "Pretty darn good!" We returned to the 155 visualizations in different settings in each of our 6 sessions.

The phone call came about 8 months later. She called me from Hawaii to tell me that her husband had surprised her with a vacation trip. She went on to report her weight at 155, and added that her energy level was at an all time high. She told me that she had planted the rock garden she talked about for years, had wallpapered every room in her house, and her husband said to her that she was, "a whole new person." Those are the type of phone calls that have an incredibly positive immediate effect...that lasts for a long time.

We started with guided imagery of a tranquil setting to help her learn to relax by picturing the scene and using a meditative technique of simply paying attention to her breathing – noticing when she was inhaling and when she was exhaling. She was asked to practice this for 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening- AND every time she was shopping for food, cooking food, looking at food on TV or in a magazine, and when she was about to eat food.

At a follow-up session, we added a "present moment awareness" exercise to be used whenever she sat down to eat. (Eating standing up or watching TV was definitely on her not-to-do list). This awareness exercise began with the breath awareness and added a sensory element. She was asked to notice the color, weight, temperature and texture of not only her food, but her silverware, glass or dishes and bowls that were part of the immediate food environment. Included in this present moment awareness was the advice to obey her first mental signal that she was satisfied and to stop eating at that very moment.

We talked about food choices and, in hypnosis sessions, the concept of a "body wisdom" that makes healthy choices was suggested. As an example, it was suggested that when the thought of a donut popped up, the body wisdom would replace it with the smell and taste of a fresh fruit or a favorite veggie. We used a little mantra: FOCUS + CHOICE = SUCCESS.

And a few months later, my phone rang.

The Purpose of Meditation

A recent post read: The purpose of meditation is to awaken to the purpose of meditation. No explanation even comes close.

And, of course, among the affirming acknowledgments was a request for an explanation. Here was the response:

"Pauline, no explanation even comes close because the absolute language of this awakening is only known and understood in context by direct experience.

But to offer a short relative answer of

what may be presented via mediation,
I'll use initial caps on the words that fall
in this category:

The Purpose Presents Itself as Discovery of
an Essential Self, an Awakening of The Heart
to what some call Self-Realization or
Actualization, Enlightenment,
God-Consciousness, and Nonduality.

It is our Capacity (birthright?) to Live a
Meditative, Effortless life of Perfect Peace
of Mind and Equanimity - having Awakened
to the Realization that what was once
Considered our Sole Identity, our
Separated "I" under Rule of the literal mind
as our only Resource is in fact a Secondary
or what some call an Illusory Identity
and that our Essential Self is a Primary
Identity, an Awareness of One -
all Within God.

Ramana called this Primary Identity
the I-I and Jesus called it the Presence
or Being Filled with the Holy Spirit."

If I hadn't already violated my promise
of a short answer, I would have liked to
have added that Ramana also said,
"The aspirant meditates to attain and
the awakened meditate to maintain."

Love.

The Heart of The Matter

Q: How do you get to the heart of the matter?

A: By acknowledging what truly matters.

No matter what is the matter...it doesn't matter.
If we have a concern with anything in life, we
have taken our eyes off the prize.

Once we have been 'given' the prize of awareness
in full measure, we come to the living realization
that the things of the world...do not matter, in
a sense.

What truly matters is awakening (staying awake)
to our true identity, which is in the world while
we are in conscious human form, but not of
the world in our primary identity of pristine clarity.

Once we come to acknowledge what really matters,

we realize that it is to overcome the fearful feeling of separation and loneliness that runs as a constant undercurrent of our lives, once we have lost touch (awareness of) our 'place' within God - as a spark of God's own fire.

Once we come "home" to this living realization, we have no questions, no concerns, only direct perception - an awareness that we are fully protected, divinely guided, and eternally safe with the "arms" of the Beloved (God, if you like the ubiquitous term).

Love.

Unawakened heed no advice. Awakened need no advice.

Whenever a moral prescription to be more kind, loving, compassionate and generous is given, it has no deep or lasting impact on the unawakened. While we may see acts of kindness and such in an unawakened, they have in great part lost touch with their true nature - that is the nature of being "unawakened".

The unawakened are ego conscious, primarily concerned with their personal identity and well-being. They are easily offended, quick to anger, and slow to forgive.

A typical description of an awakened person is that they are kind, compassionate, loving and generous. This loving nature is the outcome of their awakening, not a new perspective brought on by prompting prescription. It is granted by grace.

Advice to the unawakened is unheeded, but can be a form of seeding. When real despair sets in, as will be found in the case study of many awakened teachers - both historical and contemporary teachers and writers of awakening and enlightenment (check Eckhart Tolle and Jeff Foster's bio, to name a couple), it is not so much the advice as it is the need to find relief that is being responded to by the desperate.

And this pressing need, often feeling very much like a life or death need, may cause reflection on earlier advice; especially the advice to, "Seek first the Kingdom of God (within)." This will lead them to a teacher or guide (which may take many forms - a person, place, event or thing) that wordlessly teaches them to enter a place of abject and absolute silence.

While the entrance is guarded by fearsome lions of fear and doubt, and a feeling of impending doom and even death, the utterly desperate will press on into the silent surrender.

It is here that a door may open and a gift of majestic awakening given. Love is the authentic messenger and deliverer of this most gracious gift. Quoting Ramana Maharshi, "The very form of God is Love."

Love

Some Enchanted Evening

For those of us who have been spinning around the sun for quite a while, this title will be recognized as a song title. The song is about meeting a stranger and falling in love so deeply that the evening feels like it must have been enchanted.

Now, I have a juke box of lyrics competing in my head. "I'm under your spell, like a man in a trance...Abracadabra, she going to reach and grab ya!...put a spell on you." OK! Get back to the note!

Enchantment, spells and magic are about another dimension - thought by most to be only some veiled trickery. And, of course, in many cases, this is exactly what they are in fact. But there's another view that many others enjoy. But first...

Let me take you on a little side trip (again): I've told the story before, probably even in one of my way back notes, but a good story, especially one used to make a point, is worth retelling.

One day while in the check out line at a health food store, I noticed a young girl, maybe 3 years old standing near two women who were talking. The girl was facing the exit door from 10-12 feet away. When I glanced over I saw her wave her hand and arm in a broad sweep, just once and then stop. In a few seconds, she repeated the motion, and again and again every few seconds.

Now, I was curious. What the heck was she doing? I continued to watch while I was going through the check out line, and just before I picked up my groceries I got it. She was waving as customers leaving the store approached the automatic doors at the exit. She had an invisible magic wand! She was opening the door for everyone as they left with a wave of her magic wand. How enchanting.

I chuckled, but then assumed a very serious look as I approached the exit door. I stopped short of the motion detector and waited for the young girl to notice me. When she did, I nodded toward the exit and took another step forward. She obliged with a wave. As I went through the open door I turned, expecting her to be giggling along with me for spotting her mission. Instead she gave me a very regal "you're welcome" nod.

I bowed and offered "Namaste." On my way to the car, I couldn't help but feel delighted by her innocent belief in magic and enchantment. The line from one of my favorite teachers came to mind, "Only as a child do we enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Too bad, I thought, that we lose our belief in magic and enchantment.

The next few thoughts were along the line of how we come into the world of adoring faces, gentle touches and experience an abundance of benevolence; in awe of finding our toes, seeing a lady bug, smelling a flower, full of energy and joy to find ourselves in this magical and enchanting place...until we are disciplined into good boys and girls who stay in line, stay quiet and lose touch with the magic.

Once we succumb, we are put in a trance, taught to live in fear and doubt and eventual quiet desperation that is hardly appeased by material wealth, sex, drugs, rock'n'roll, status and even familial or romantic love. Great excursions, all of them, but in the quiet dark moments we can feel incredibly lost and alone during this time, and have a vague longing for that ineffable something missing. Maybe it's a faint memory of a magic time.

Based on past comments and personal meetings, many readers of these notes have broken the spell and returned to the joy of life. Through some grace, in many forms and hung on many models, they have danced the "trance end dance". As I wrote in a status this morning, *Sufi's whirl to end the trance, not go into a trance. That's what mystic's, American Indians and other dancers do - the trance end dance.*

If you have been graced with some enchanted evening, you know that the stranger we meet is "us" revived, reprised, reprieved. Hallelujah!

If you haven't...keep on dancin'.

Love

Wonderful Words

I love words. They're the grown up wooden blocks with letters on them. (Yes, for you post-boomers, they used to be made out of wood before plastic took over the world). But as wonderful as words are to play with, there are some things, somethings, that words cannot express.

The word "enchantment" has waltzed into my pixel playpen recently and I've been turning it over and over. It is right up there with words like enlightenment and awakening. There's an inexpressible magical quality to the word enchantment.

I even wonder if it is a step beyond "ordinary enlightenment," reserved for those whose emotional make-up is more effusive, or on the flip side, those who were catapulted into the light of enchantment from a place of deep dark despair - and they were more than enlightened; they were awe struck.

Enlightenment has been called "ordinary," and if you listen to Chuck Hillig, Jeff Foster or Tony Parsons, for instance, you will hear and read of this ordinary enlightenment. This is a subtle truth. By that I mean that while enlightenment frees us in an astounding way, upon immediate reflection we realize that it is a truth that we knew all along...in a way.

But for some, enlightenment, is about as ordinary as a platypus. It comes with a light show that would put Pink Floyd's drama to shame and an explosion of insights that can only be expressed in theistic terms. Some experience what they would call enlightenment in ways very parallel to what Moses reportedly experienced and what Jesus knew beyond doubt.

They have come into the very presence and residence of God for a personal sit down, and they feel absolutely re-invented, reborn, recycled right down to their DNA. Fortunately, today they can grab a plastic ballpoint pen or a keyboard, rather than a stone tablet, hammer and chisel, to record the meeting.

They open their back-to-ordinary (but now sacred) eyes to a wonderful world, and they begin to use wonderful words in an attempt to share the astonishing insights that they were graced with in that life-changing heavenly event. These may be the enchanted ones.

Just playing with words.

Love.

Silence

Silence is a nice place to visit, but it is very elusive to find and impossible to maintain. The road signs are easy to miss because of the tumbling tumbling thought weeds that blow across the ever-chattering landscape of the mind. And if we're fortunate to find it, an intrusive knock of the stream of consciousness bangs on the door almost immediately.

However, there is a window, a moment of absolute silence in which we can be whisked away to a "place" out of reach of the stream of a nagging, internal, infernal narrative. Through this window breezes an incoming sudden and startling rush of something akin to thought, but of a very different nature.

This rush brings never-thought-of or imagined information and new "knowledge" that might be called insight, but it's more than a mere synopsis or previously known information. It's a step into an enchanted dimension. Here there is no time or space or flow of thoughts. It's a brilliant stillpoint that absorbs our personal identity and diffuses it into nothingness. All that remains is...is...is impossible to put into words.

It isn't something we feel, though attempts to relate it sound as though it is felt as an experience. It is blissfully joyful, freeing in every way comprehensible and incomprehensible, and perfectly peaceful. Yet it

is not about us as an individual. We slip into joy, freedom and peace and become that joy, freedom and peace. We disappear as a personal entity. Yet while in the living time, we remain "housed" in this body/mind complex - in the world, but not of the world.

Our identity as a person is now viewed as a secondary, temporary identity and no longer "us" at all. We have become an unseen primary identity. We can enjoy the sensory and emotional aspects of the body/mind complex and in fact, appreciate them on a more intense level, but there is an undercurrent to our perceived lives that is more real than the personal world - that has relocated us to a world of effortless grace, moment to moment.

There are many maps that have been fashioned over the years that speak of and point the way to this inner treasure that makes its appearance from the stillpoint of absolute silence. Many of them have been obscured by pirates and pretenders. And few are those who persist on to the treasure.

Meditation is a mark on most of the treasure maps. Silence seems to be a tool that uncovers the treasure and love a key that opens it.

Love

Trust is The Issue

A while ago, we put a new GPS in the car and headed for a new destination - a restaurant we had never eaten at before. When I heard the voice within the box say, "Turn right on 4th Street," I didn't trust the GPS, because I would have gone a different way to the address we plugged in. So I looked at the map on the GPS to see the route it had mapped out.

Well, I spent a little too much time looking at the map and failed to see another vehicle coming into the intersection. We took a T-Bone hit on the passenger side. The impact totaled our car, and my in-laws in the back seat each suffered broken ribs from the seat belt restraint. The post-accident advice I heard several times was to trust the GPS. Trust is the issue.

One of the toughest turnabouts for most of us is to move from trusting our rational process and sensory apparatus to trusting the GPS - God's Protection System. We were trained to think and trust our thinking as a way to solve problems, make good decisions and plan for the future. Unfortunately, we came to trust our rational process and senses exclusively, and most of us have made some pretty bad decisions (that sensory apparatus can go off course with just a little stimulation. Calvin Klein and pretty women knows this) and, as Caroline Myss says, "If you want to know if God has a sense of humor, tell God YOUR plan."

However, as we attune to the GPS, we find that we spend less time trying to figure things out and more time living by intuition and revelation. As we live day-to-day and moment-to-moment feeling divine guidance and protection, life becomes an effortless joy (even in the midst of hard work and tough circumstances), doors open, miracles happen.

As we trust the GPS our mind is less occupied with internal chatter and we enjoy the journey, while staying alert. So not only do doors open and unexpected blessings come our way, we are much less apt to be caught off guard and T-Boned.

Trusting without evidence, other than reports from others, is akin to faith. And for most people this is as far as it goes. But there is a place beyond faith that is much more satisfying and it is an unassailable place where there is no room for doubt. This is the place of a startling rush of insight that locks us into the GPS. It is an attunement, a knowing, an awakening that is a direct personal experience of the truth of the GPS. Nothing can compare to this. It is a place that makes both the sophisticated, highly-educated and refined as well as the morose and discouraged...giggle, jump down and spin around like a child.

We all have this GPS. It's a matter of plugging it in, if we are not awakened to it. Meditation and lifestyle changes are often part of the instruction manual. If you're reading this, there's a good chance that you're already plugged in and nodding affirmation, or are interested. Stay tuned.

Love.

Don't Do It

When we are given well-meaning advice to be more loving, more patience, take more time for ourselves, delve into our past, or delve into our motives, watch out for this and watch out for that...we are playing mind games, playing with mind stuff, and mind stuff is not consistent. Mind stuff lives off temporary treats and chews on endless inner chatter.

Until we first completely surrender all the mind stuff, all the concepts, all the advice to act a certain way, and get our priority straight (priority cannot be plural - more on that upcoming), we will bounce and bounce and bounce from one delightful then disturbing thought to another and another endlessly.

When we think of what is typically called getting our priorities straight, we are really developing an interest or to do list, but there can only be one priority. First things first, all other items on the to do or to be list are secondary considerations. Along the way to establishing priority we will often bounce from interest to interest, job to job, relationship to relationship and such.

We can either continue to ride this emotional roller coaster or we can get off the ride and enjoy peace of mind. But, we cannot get off the roller coaster ride until finding, recognizing and enjoying peace of mind as an undercurrent of our lives. And until this interest in peace of mind becomes absolute priority, we won't.

Now comes the hard part. One of the most difficult, and for many seemingly impossible, hurdles to get by in life is the very idea that our mind stuff doesn't have all the answers and that there just may be a solution that is outside the realm of rational, linear, I-can-figure-it-out, thought.

A very stealthy teacher offered a way to both establish the pursuit of peace of mind and appear to appease the mind stuff as well, by starting with an inquiry, "Who am I?" and meditating exclusively on that. What students discover is that down the line, the mind unhinges from this question and completely surrenders any identity with doing or being the inquirer or former self in any aspect, and a new identity emerges - a new awakened Self. What is discovered is a nondual reality, a startling discovery that all is One within God, and in the words of this teacher, Ramana Maharshi, "The very form of God is Love."

(As an aside I cannot resist: It seems that many students of this approach stop at the nondual or Oneness realization and avoid any theism as part of the nondual realization. And others go no further than to parrot the flatline concept of no me, without the authentic realization.)

Most awakened teachers recommend meditation of some sort as a way to quiet the mind and come to the point of absolute surrender that can open the doorway to the rush of startling new insight that leads to peace of mind. But the techniques are secondary to the priority.

If that priority is firmly and unequivocally established, then our heart will take us where we want and need to go. Trying to act like we're already there is a sad affair. All the deep loving kindness, compassion, patience, tolerance and peace of mind that may have been missing come in their authentic form after awakening, and they are then a natural, effortless part of our way of being, moment-to-moment.

"Seek first the Kingdom of God...", and to paraphrase the rest of this verse of scripture attributed to Jesus..."and a right understanding of what that means, and all these things you worry about will dissolve, and you will enjoy peace of mind, knowing that you are within God and are already plugged into GPS."

Love.

Hunger and Thirst

When we are hungry and thirsty, we look for food and drink. No news flash there. When we are desperate and go so far as to raid someone else's refrigerator, we are apt to feel guilty about it and later confess and/or replace the goodies. And even if we did neither, it might cause a wince down the road when we remember that time, but I doubt that we would fall down, bawl and squall, begging God for forgiveness and fearing that hellfire and brimstone awaits us in the afterlife.

Whatever we have done what is considered wrong; whatever, at its essence is in response to a hunger and thirst we felt, and if we missed the mark of good behavior in finding a solution, we are responsible for those choices, certainly, but to let them weigh on us like pressing stones is to unnecessarily punish ourselves.

When those choices take us far beyond raiding a fridge and into really bad and irresponsible acts, they just might cause us to fall down, bawl and squall, begging God for forgiveness - and for those warped with religious superstition - fearing that hellfire and brimstone awaits us in the afterlife.

Without any theistic framework, we might be searching desperately for peace of mind, and for a way to forgive ourselves. The good news is that the very idea of this necessity puts us on the road to discovery of just what we are looking for, even if we harbor a fear that it is impossible.

All we have to do is die to the former self, and let a brand new being emerge.

Awakened teachers, gurus, ascended masters, perfect masters and spiritual coaches (by all sorts of names) specialize in this assisted ego-suicide. And they always have food and drink. Some even keep a supply of designer coffee on hand - Blueberry Cobbler, Vanilla Biscotti, Chocolate Truffle, to name a few, and all the ingredients to whip up a batch of muffins - banana, blueberry, apple. Hungry and thirsty yet?

Love.

Need A Guru Do You?

It's interesting that the designation "guru" has moved into the common western vernacular as a word for expert or visionary with certain valuable insights in some field - someone who really knows their stuff. In Sanskrit, in a spiritual context, it means darkness (gu) remover (ru) or teacher.

That works. If we're in the dark about how to make, say, blueberry muffins, then we would want a Blueberry Muffin Guru. Of course we could look up a recipe and make them on our own. But if we want an out-of-this-world Cosmic Blueberry Muffin, we might want to find the BMG.

Now, if the BMG happened to be a true guru, a satguru...one bite and we would be enlightened!

Too bad it doesn't work that way. Or doesn't it? I've read of someone who went to a guru and after careful preparation of the "ingredients," went catapulting into the astral plane, onto the causal plane and into a breathtaking merger with Divine Presence at their very first bite of a simple breath meditation.

Before we rush to the local muffin shop, a quick disclaimer: these results are not typical and your results may vary. I have also read of many who have spent years following a guru, meditating for countless hours, eating only veggies, being of service, and either abstaining from or fully engaging in certain sensory pleasure...only to walk away disappointed or jaded about the whole guru thing, never to have tasted the Cosmic Blueberry Muffin.

So, the debate rages on. Need a guru do you? Or not! There are plenty of reports of guru abuse and abusive gurus, phony gurus, and goofy gurus. There's a website and discussion group that "rates" gurus and pretty much discredits almost all of them that the raters have bumped into in one way or another. And then there's the view that we are all already enlightened. And still another that the guru is in our own heart.

Some more liberal and less jaded among those who even bother with the whole guru thing allow that we might need some guidance to realize that we are already enlightened (I guess that's like having a million dollars under our mattress that we forgot and we need someone to come in and point to the mattress) or a living guru to help us hear the wisdom whisper from the heart that will turn on the light.

When it comes down to it, if we intuit that just maybe a guru has something for us, and we don't feel like a million bucks, maybe we should keep an open mind and be on the lookout for a book, a look, or a talk that sets off our heart like middle C responding to a tuning fork.

OK, stick a fork in this note. It's done.

Love.

The Reluctant Guru

Ever promise God that if you could just get through a really tough desperate spot you found yourself in, you would do this or that? Of course, a promise is a good intention and promises get broken (look at the divorce rate), but a promise to God, whether God is viewed as inner and/or outer or Source of some non-theistic term, is a pretty serious number. Still, it's a good bet that many of us let the whole issue fade away and went on our merry way...until next time.

One more question: Do you really think that someone would wake up one morning and decide to be a phony guru; that they would pretend to enlightened and graced with divine presence so they could, what - feel special, make a lot of money, gather fawning disciples? Yes, there may be deluded egoists who believe they are enlightened and proceed, and there are enlightened gurus who have abused (in social consensus terms) their high privilege, but let's save those exceptions for another time and keep the question simple.

Bringing the two questions together:

Imagine that you were so in despair that you pleaded with God to either bring you peace of mind or let you die. And in a naive moment promised that if the former were granted (even though you couldn't possibly imagine how that could happen), you would spend the rest of your life sharing the news that no matter how desperate or guilt-ridden or ashamed anyone was, that God could grant peace of mind.

And then, shazam! Imagine a thunderbolt blasting you right in the middle of your forehead, filling your body with light and catapulting you to divine presence and granting your desperate wish in a way that is beyond description. When opening your eyes you are stunned with the beauty and grace that surrounds you...and you remember the deal you offered.

To wrap up this imaginary journey - a couple more questions:

Who, and under what circumstances, do imagine that anyone could talk you out of your choiceless imperative to honor the deal? Do you think that any argument, ridicule, insult, passing of judgment, badgering, gossip, semantic shenanigans, or nailing you to a cross could talk you out of it?

If you do, you don't have a clue about what a guru is all about.

Love.

The Surviving Ego

Live Free or Die is a New Hampshire motto. Thing is, it's not an either/or. The ego must die in order for one to live free. For a little clarification: The ego must face the firing squad, be willing to shut its eyes tight and hear the gunshots. But the shots are blanks. The ego survives, but is now so grateful that it is humbled back into its intended servant role.

Along the way to liberation, the ego as typically thought of as our personality and our linear rational process, insists that we can come up with an explanation and satisfying conceptualization of all this spiritual talk that has mysteriously attracted us. We'll hear inner chatter along the lines of it's nothing more than or like this or that.

But as we move along and our search becomes more insistent, we find that not only do the ego's attempts leave us unsatisfied, but the words that we read or hear about awakening, enlightenment, satisfying this longing and finding peace of mind are still heard by us as vague and frustrating. We find ourselves wishing that we could just hear clearly and definitively what this strange magic is all about.

So we push our chair up a little closer to the teacher, watch more videos, read more books, engage others who are on the search...but still, nothing satisfying. The problem is that the ego, the self we have accepted as us, doesn't have a clue. And any and all searching by the ego is hopeless. The ego will not find authentic peace of mind. Oh, it will offer countless substitutes: new job, new lover, new car, blind faith and such.

Just because the ego cannot have its way does not mean that all is lost, it's just that the ego cannot help in the search...because it's not a search at all. It's a surrender. This where the ego freaks out. The ego has been running our lives all along, or least as long as we were socially coerced into accepting this false identity as "us". And when we turn and consider Pogo's words of wisdom, "We have founded the enemy, and it is us," (the us being the ego-identity) the ego fears death and steps up its insistence that we could die if we don't stop thinking this way.

However, this is the pointing to what must precede awakening to our true identity. We must risk death of our old identity. And it is here that many turn back and go on to live lives of quiet desperation. Only the most curious and/or desperate press on and enter the void of surrender.

So, to wrap up with a repeat: The ego must face the firing squad, be willing to shut its eyes tight and hear the gunshots. But the shots are blanks. The ego survives, but is now so grateful that it is humbled back into its intended servant role. And we realize that the ego was a secondary identity all along, and that who we are in our primary identity is pure awareness, within God, free and easy, loving life, going with the flow, rowing our boat in this lovely dream, and in our essence, unassailable.

Love.

The Guru and A Grain of Salt

You have to do a full body scan carefully to find a serious bone in my body, so everything posted in these notes needs to be salted and seasoned to taste. Am I serious about being a guru? Uummmmm, in a way. And there is no intention to back off the term. But, am I really serious about being a guru? Ahhhh. not really. Awakened teacher? Absolutely. A mystic? Love Rumi, resonate with every line of his mind-blowing poetry. Enlightened? Can't touch this. July 21, 1975, 9:30am. Old me, gone. New me that's not the personal me anymore. Hello.

Spiritual coach is a much more comfortable term for me. I have a story to tell (and tell and tell and tell) and a heartfelt interest in sharing it with one goal in mind: hope. However, there's a little more to it. I'm beginning to sense that this note is going to be a bit of a seesaw ride...

A brief recap to make a point: (Remember, patience is virtue) My interest in things spiritual and transcendent began at age 10, when I first read of Nirvana that was described as, "utter tranquility and perfect peace of mind." Fast forward through Christianity to a Hindu temple and shazam, whoop, there it is. Back to Christianity to find that pop cultural Christianity is not ready for a mystic.

So, back to where the thunderbolt of insight struck - in a Hindu temple and use of terms like guru and satsang (a discourse in the company of truth), and mix it with the core truth found in all religions, some philosophy (words of wisdom) and all spiritual traditions, and most especially evident in the mystic branches of mainstream religions. So, I'm a Christian Mystic, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Sufi, Kabbalist and stuff like that.

Special powers? Now we're on a shaky ladder. Brazen enough to offer healing hands and coincidentally see results? Yes. But I believe anyone can do that in the right setting. Transmission? Now this is one that makes some people crazy with their conviction that this is sheer nonsense. Me? Not so fast to dismiss it. Do I have a story about that? Can Geico save you 15% on car insurance? Of course, I do...

Transmission or Shaktipat, the transfer of spiritual energy that awakens a student, is the coup de grace of any Sat Guru worth their sandals. It can be accomplished with a thought, a look, or often a touch on the forehead at the "third eye" or Christ Consciousness chakra (an energy point on the body in the Kundalini model).

When I'm not giving satsang or writing, I use some applied metaphysics along with meditation and relaxation techniques to help people with goal achievement strategies, including weight loss, smoking cessation, stress management (I prefer the term joy management), and sports performance improvement.

One day, while waiting for a weight loss client, I picked up a book I had recently bought on the Yantra, a geometric design that is focused on as a meditation tool - think mantra, only visual. I focused for a few minutes on a particular yantra with red, green and gold colors. Oops, close the book, client just came in...

"Hello, I'd like you to close your eyes and imagine a flower. Just as soon as one pops into your mind's visual imagery, open your eyes and describe the flower to me."

"Well, it was a strange flower. It was red, green and gold."

This woman went on to describe in precise detail the yantra I had focused on before she came in. Freaked me out a bit. By way of explanation about the flower thing, I use this as a "key" that will pop into mind whenever the thought of popping a bag of Oreos open comes to mind - with a "tsk, tsk," that will have the client choose an apple instead. Like that.

Anyway, a few days later, same few minutes with the yantra book, and a man came in to quit smoking. Same thing, again. He described the flower as the yantra I had been focused on just before he came in. I never did it again; studied a yantra, before a client came in.

So, was it transmission?

Love.

Love Love

Been playing a lot of tennis lately, and preparing for a local tournament (strictly amateur, with mostly slightly old guys, so don't be too impressed) and so have been saying "love" a lot more. That's a tennis

score for zero or 0. How it came to be called love is not certain. But "love" is the central point of life...and some would say, the central point of all that is. Tennis anyone? Love anyone? Love anyone.

Even the symbol 0 is used to designate the still point where awakening occurs and where Love with a capital L resides. Ramana Maharshi's words, "The very form of God is Love," certainly makes it all about Love.

When we feel less than whole and complete, less than aware that we are, in the living experience, the field of joy and the very vibration of love, we tend to look up and/or within and ask, "Is this all there is to life - this undercurrent of longing, this quiet desperation to "know"?"

It may be that we have fallen out of love with ourselves. Certainly, we are our harshest critics and the last (if ever) to forgive ourselves for our perceived misdeeds.

So, how do we fall back in love with ourselves and our life? We don't do it by logic, by a rational, linear process of figuring out what went wrong and identifying some triggering event; that is, unless we want to settle down for years in a victim mentality. Oh, my mother left me on the potty too long and I suffer from abandonment and separation anxiety. Please. Get off the potty. Get over it.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmU_K39axA8&playnext=1&list=PLC20FABC2F3B79F1E

Start looking within (heavenward if you prefer) and enter a quiet place where a wisdom whisper from the heart can and will restore the love in full blossom. And when you're not in the quiet place of meditation and listening, put a few love logs on the inner fire by looking through sacred eyes - looking at others with a conscious choice to love them deeply - unconditionally. And that love will come back to you in a way that is beyond words. Just as anger and resentment will.

I put before you life (love) and death (anger, resentment, victim mentality). Choose life. Choose love. Deuteronomy 30:19

Love.

Love At First Flight

A recent video ended with the words, "I love you." Later the question was asked how that could be said to everyone who happened to watch the video - including people I had never met, with any degree of sincerity.

By way of response, we are once again going to revisit a time from long, long ago - if you care to continue reading. I was not seeking enlightenment, awakening or any such thing. I had no knowledge of any such things. What I was seeking was relief from despair and hoping to find some peace of mind. I was so absorbed in my own drama that I had little room for feeling much of anything toward anyone else.

I wasn't seeking to go blasting off onto some light-infused astral plane with a glowing figure directing toward a huge blue-white egg shape that instantly swept me up and absorbed me into the causal plane. I had no idea that I would be enveloped in this nearly overwhelming wave after wave of love, a love that I somehow knew was coming from a divine presence - a divine presence that knew me personally, and knew everything about me...yet loved me unconditionally.

I never conceived of any such thing as the startling insights that are impossible to put in words, and certainly never dreamed of what came next; a stripping of all sense of time and space, and a reset of my life to zero. I never had a clue that I could be made brand new as a personal identity and then immediately zapped out of this pristine personal identity, and made to understand with such clarity that the identity I had accepted as me, the persona of me, was not the true me.

There was no seeking to feel my very identity dissolve into this divine presence and disappear, only to suddenly re-emerge as awareness of a perfect cosmic harmony. And finally, I didn't expect to blink and suddenly find my new pristine personal identity Self separate from and yet at the same time occupying the same body as a few minutes before.

At first I was startled and in awe of my own hands and tested my finger movements like a new baby, then was stunned by the beauty of the fabric covering the pillow I was sitting on, the carpet design, the colors, the texture...and then came the most startling and awe-filling, jaw-dropping, surprise of all.

When I looked at other people, all I could see was their beauty - and I "knew" that they, too, were part of this divine presence I had merged with a few seconds before. They were part of me and I was part of them. I could 'feel' their inner beauty and their heart. I fell in love instantly with everyone I met. A new loving kindness, compassion and gentleness that I had never clearly known was natural for this new me.

Those few moments became frozen in what we think of as time, and nearly 35 years later, I still am in awe of my hands...and I still instantly fall in love with everyone I meet - and I suspect everyone I will ever meet, and everyone, whether I ever meet them or not. My life is devoted to expressing this love.

That's how I can say I love you into a video camera, not knowing who will see and hear those words.

Love.

The Blue Ray People

In a world at least partially gone mad, there are forerunners who speak of a coming new world, a world of peace and enlightened wisdom in which all become aware that we are One, within the very form of God - which is at the same time a formless yet permeating love.

A little distinction needs to be made between simple (and beautiful) Oneness consciousness on an insightful and intellectual level, and the deeper understanding, or more accurately infusion, of the permeating Love that accompanies an awakening and more expansive level of Oneness consciousness. At this level, we recognize our "lovely-ness" and live with a constant undercurrent of love moment-to-moment.

We love everyone. We love the flowers, the trees, the sky, the bugs. Ever see someone take the time and care to capture a bug in the house under a glass and take them outside to release them? These are among The Blue Ray People. And who are these Blue Ray People?

The Blue Ray has been reported by many, many awakened teachers as what was "seen" as an aspect of their awakening to LOVE. Reports of an incredibly beautiful hue of blue rays seeming to burst forth from a blue earth, a soft blue-white "egg" into which the reporter was immersed, and even a blue man have been included in reports of a sudden rush of wisdom, an awakening that brings with it in a total infusion of love.

On an even more cosmic level, there are children and even older adults who seem to have been birthed via the blue ray, known as Indigo Children.

I would not go so far as to say that all who are authentically awakened have, or remember having, the blue ray or blue man experience, but many have. I would love to hear reports, either from direct experience or having awareness of this blue ray aspect from anyone who cares to share what they know about it.

Love.

Life As A Tournament

My life is filled with tournaments lately. This weekend dealing at a Texas Hold 'em poker tournament, next week playing in a tennis tournament, and Just the other day made it to the semi-finals of a pool tournament - the table kind, not the swimming kind.

While I do not consider myself competitive, I know I do not like to lose. I'm currently borrowing Charlie Sheen's manta, "Winning!" Winning is a special experience, a sense of accomplishment, a seeing it through to finality - whether is a personal best without a competitor, or as part of a contest in which the loser may have a life lesson to learn. That last bit is my own rationale for trying not to feel badly about winning over someone else. (I'm sure that last comment will be a little provocative for some.)

The seeing it through to finality may be the difference between the casual aspirant or inquirer about things spiritual and those who awaken. I do not agree with sports announcers or fans who think that the difference is how badly you want it. Wanting it too much creates tension and loss of coordination. Ever notice how we react to someone who obviously wants something "so bad!" That just doesn't feel right to us.

My secret to winning is surrendering to what will be. In Proverbs, the advice is, "Lean not upon your own understanding. Acknowledge me (God, Source, Higher Power) in all your ways and I will direct your path." Now, if I could keep that solidly in mind and not let my personal pride and ego step up with its tension-producing ways, I'd probably win more. I lost in the semi-finals of the pool tournament.

The reference to the pool tournament brought an earlier post to mind. So, here it is again:

Knowing The Unknowable - 5-Ball in The Side Pocket

Yesterday, oranges. Today, billiard balls. Tomorrow, the world. Round and round it goes.

Playing pool recently, another player remarked as I contemplated a shot, "The 5-ball won't go in the side pocket; that's impossible." (Little did he know that not only do left-handers have exceptional short range eye-hand coordination, but a side pocket game was a game of choice that I played for years. My grandfather loved the game and taught me at a young age.)

It was a thin cut - meaning, the angle at which the ball was positioned to the side pocket made it look like there was no way it could be struck that would send the ball into the side pocket. Of course, I wouldn't be telling the story if I hadn't taken the challenge and made the shot. Move the cameras back please. I'm trying to remain humble.

It's an old cliché, but I can't think of another segway at the moment: perception is reality. To one player/observer/thinker it is impossible, to another it is possible. Is Enlightenment possible? Is Reality knowable?

Whenever I hear or read something from the lines of the pop-advaita epistles that enlightenment is impossible and ultimate reality unknowable, there's no one to know and enlightenment is not an experience, everyone is already enlightened, just get on with your life, more bland blah, blah, blah...a low wave gong sound goes off in my head.

The mental clang here is that these observations have a ring (maybe just a Tinkerbell size ring, but a ring) of truth - in that we cannot think our way to enlightenment or even intuit our way, and yes, we are naturally enlightened. But when the delusion that we are separate has us in its grip, and more than that, we are in despair, fear and doubt...the ivory tower view doesn't help. And telling us we are deluded doesn't help any more than telling us we are left-handed. We know that!

So, what's a guru to do? Get a haircut and get a real job? No, they'll pick up their patience-of-Job pointer and tell of a better way through an endless array of metaphor, analogy and similes, and facebook notes, and Sunday radio shows, and street corners, and bar rooms and pool halls...you get the point.

We can know in the linear sense, even the experiential sense about taste, touch, smell, math, auto mechanics, quantum...well, quantum is getting edgy on the linear knowing side. And we can intuit in a more holistic, big picture way. But knowing the unknowable just doesn't make sense. Exactly!

When the chattering rational mind goes silent, and the intuitive, feeling mind settles into its easy chair and they both enter the void of absolute and utter silence and surrender of all their synapses...it is possible to enter the emptiness that is not nothing. It's not thinking. It's not feeling...but it's not nothing. This is where presence dwells, awakening awaits, enlightenment shines.

And this is where we have the capacity to recapture our childhood, rediscover our natural enlightenment...with a seeing that doesn't require eyes, a knowing that doesn't require logic or feeling, and KNOW in a way the ego never thought or imagined.

And as soon as we turn to take this Knowing back to where we once belonged or thought we belonged we find that "we" are no longer there. And as soon as we try to explain what has happened, we are met with blank stares, smirking nods, curious family and friends, and sometimes fawning seekers hanging on our every word. It is then we realize that there are no words to describe the authenticity of our new Knowing. Is that an orange? Oh, I've never had one. What does it taste like?

We now realize that we are the present moment Awareness of our body/mind/spirit - being there in the world. But we, in our new high-fashion couture, are no longer of the "known" world. We are inhabitants of heaven, One with God. Fear and doubt are gone. The god of what-will-other-people-think has been dethroned. We Know the truth, and the truth has set us free. This freedom comes with a side order of a compelling urge to share the good news - especially for those in despair.

A little later in the game, the other player responded to my call of a 3-rail bank shot in the side pocket with a smirk and, "Must be some trick shot I don't know about."

Yeah, I made it.

Love.

Sense of Humor and Zeal

Received an email from a facebook friend of a friend who saw a string of my daily notes on his friend's wall and sent me an all caps message to stop "spamming" his friend with my "zeal". After a few exchanges, he still could not or would not acknowledge the fact that his friend had requested my daily posts and responds frequently with positive comments, and that in this case my zealous outpourings were not spam at all. He didn't seem to be familiar with the term "opt in".

The fact that this friend of a friend's self-appointed role as spam detective put him on the wrong trail didn't bother me. His intentions were good. The fact that he could not abide the idea that he had made a mistake was another matter easily dismissed. But what did catch my attention was the "zeal" comment.

I've heard it said that zealots have no sense of humor, so that bothered me a bit until I checked the dictionary and found zeal defined as, "Enthusiastic devotion to a cause, ideal, or goal and tireless diligence in its furtherance." I have that. I am that. And, as much as I would love to, I can't please everyone. Right, Rick?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxdiraVxwkl>

My zeal was sealed in a deal with God: Let me find peace of mind, and I'll enthusiastically, devotedly, tirelessly, diligently tell anyone who is searching for it that it can be found. But I don't try to pull some wooly bully spam, Sam.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6P7g_qz2OU

My interest is in those who are searchin' for peace of mind and Divine Presence. I'm just a coaster, with the zeal of a Northwest Mountie, telling those who happen upon these notes (or have requested them) that you can find Her.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZgdFeytJdw>

Love.

PS: Everyone tagged has either responded with an OK or are frequent flyers here who have commented and to whom I sent notes once in a while if I think it will interest them. Please let me know with a "no" if you ever don't want them no more, and I'll set you free.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwoy7cZf4B0&feature=related>

Acknowledgment

According to those in the headhunter business (executive recruiting), the number one reason that people move from one job to another is not money, but rather what they feel is a lack of appreciation or acknowledgment. I cannot help but wonder if that is not the number one reason why people leave relationships, as well. And then there's another lack of acknowledgment that really causes dis-ease. More on that coming up.

There are, of course, many ways we can acknowledge someone and show appreciation. Sometimes that acknowledgment and show of appreciation can be a simple "Thank you." A raise, a promotion or surprise vacations are also pretty reliable morale boosters. A big ribbon around a new sports car...OK, I'm pushing it.

We are so programmed; socially fashioned as part of growing up, to rely totally on our logic and process thinking through any issue or problem that comes up that many of us have shut off the power of intuition in great part and often fail to call upon or even acknowledge our inner strength and wisdom.

When we think, think, think and pound our fist on the table or a pillow in frustration, we rarely find solution in this emotional storm. It is when we are quietly distracted, like when we are taking a nice warm (some like it hot) shower that solutions and new creative ideas come up - same with calling upon our inner strength and wisdom. If we are going to listen for a "still, small voice," which is how the Old Testament says God speaks, we would be well advised to take some quiet time, especially in the midst of the storm - even though it's hard, and meditate.

And because we are on the subject of acknowledgment, we might meditate on another bit of advice from Proverbs (The Book of Wisdom).

"Lean not upon your own understanding. Acknowledge me (God) in all your ways and I will direct your path."

Even God wants to be acknowledged. Holy Cow. Holy Everything.

Just imagine if it were true that by simply quietly meditating and listening for a still, small voice - a wisdom whisper from the heart and acknowledging the real possibility of the presence of the Kingdom of

Heaven within, we would be given divine guidance. Then we would naturally and effortlessly heed Mr. McFerrin's advice....

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bNE-5TVAmg&feature=player_embedded

Just imagine.

Love

The Automatic Life Strategy

When we were learning to; for instance, ride a bike, swim, or drive a car we were taught (or learned on our own through a series of bumps, bruises, near drowning, lurches and crashes) a series of coordinated moves and strategies for success. Depending on our coordination and ADD level we eventually learned how to balance the various moves.

At first, we paid careful attention to each component. Over time, we turned the whole process over to our subconscious mind or automatic pilot and we didn't have to think about pedaling, kicking our feet while moving our arms, or shifting gears at all. Ever pull into the driveway at home after driving a distance and have absolutely no recall of a portion of the trip? Our conscious mind was "somewhere else" yet we navigated the trip perfectly as far as we know, evidenced by the lack of blue lights flashing in our rear view mirror.

We also developed certain life strategies that we decided would best get us through life successfully, or personality types. We became a forceful, competitive, leader type, or a precise, analytical, quality-first type, or an outgoing, friendly, engaging type, or a real people person who prizes good relationships...or some combination of these four types. (If you're interested in an assessment of your "type", check out <http://www.livingatwow.com/PQSuccess.html> and send me your completed PQ Success Assessment.)

Now imagine that, without giving up our chosen personality type, we could put our entire life on automatic pilot - and not concern ourselves with process or outcomes at all. The first stage of this shift would be to feel as though we are witnessing our own lives as though it were a movie. We would still feel emotional stirrings at the action scenes but a part of us would remain detached, sure and comfortable with the fact that we, the moviegoer, were never in any real danger. After all, for the sake of this imagination journey, It (life) is just a movie. The second stage of this imaginary journey would be to be fully present in the movie, as one of the actors, but still safe and comfortable with, "it's just a movie."

Staying with this movie model, imagine that we would take our mark automatically and all our lines would come to us at the precise moment they were called for in the "script". We would not have to rehearse, anticipate or worry at all, and we would spend no time at all in the, "if only...what if," internal chatter. We would just enjoy the movie and our role in it - whatever course the movie might take.

There are many more aspects to it, but this is what life becomes like when we (re)awaken to our true identity and (re)discover our true home. One aspect worth mentioning is that while we are enjoying the movie and our part in it, we feel a sense of divine guidance and protection - a peace of mind that passes understanding; that is, it is beyond words to describe.

What is tough for the rational mind to grasp...well, impossible for the rational mind to grasp, is that while we are enjoying the movie and our role in it, we never feel like we are doing anything at all - other than being aware of the ongoing movie, and in the words of Maxwell Smart, "loving it."

Love.

Lights On, Kaboom! Enlightenment is like that.

Warning! This note is neither politically correct nor a bow to erudition or bullshit wrapped in intellectual garb. I expect this little bonfire to cost me a few facebook friends. Read and proceed at your own risk...

We walk into a dark room, fumble around in the dark until we find the light switch and flip it on. The room fills with light. This is how enlightenment works. A flip of the consciousness switch and the once dark room of the mind is now filled with the light of a sudden rush of new insight and indelible wisdom.

Was this an "event"? Yes, of course. Did it happen at a specific time? Yes. How did we know where to find the light switch? It would be reasonable to think that someone who knew where it was told us where to find it. And do we have to go back and flip the switch again once the light is on? No. It stays on, once it's on.

OK, now...and do we wait for the light to keep getting brighter and brighter? No! Enlightenment is not on a rheostat. The true light of enlightenment is not an unfolding process. That is relative language and it is inappropriate. Enlightenment is a floodlight that blasts us into a new awareness of who we are, and dispels all the darkness of fear and doubt.

Many scholars, especially religious and spiritual scholars, suffer from a Pauline hangover. Because St. Paul, a latecomer to teachings of Jesus, wrote that he had not "attained," it is pc to parrot this and use it as a bible thumbing exalted comparison to anyone who professes to have attained.

When I read the words or hear talk from someone who uses phrases like , "enlightenment unfolds forever and ever, revealing more blah, blah, blah," I know that the writer/speaker is not fully enlightened and is still an aspirant posing as enlightened. I've seen it over and over - from very smart and clever writers with wonderful insights about life and human behavior...but when they speak or write of enlightenment in relative context, they reveal their pretensions.

They may have danced close to fire of enlightenment and felt enough of the heat to sound convincing, but their use of relative terms shows that they have never caught fire and been burned to a crisp...to then rise from the ego ashes as an entirely new being, emerging from a transcendent trip to absolute reality with pristine clarity - a heart wisdom of which the brain knows nothing.

Enlightenment is not in the confines of time or space. There may be spiritual "growth" in the sense of becoming more and more willing to completely surrender concepts about enlightenment, but once enlightened, there is no growth or unfolding or the light getting brighter and brighter. Those are process concepts that are irrelevant to the authentic experience of enlightenment.

It is easy to succumb to semantic shenanigans such as, enlightenment is not an experience, or an event or happening in the past because there is only the now. But, again, that is linear process thinking. Enlightenment transcends time and linear process that the ego prizes so much.

The lights-on analogy holds up when we think of the light coming on at a specific time and staying on. Imagine this conversation from someone who walks into the room and hears you enthusiastically announcing that you turned the light on earlier to find an incredibly beautiful room, and you hear:

"Don't listen to him. The light is always on. We're already enlightened."

"No, I turned it on earlier this evening at 8:00 o'clock."

"Sure, but that was in the past."

"Of course it was, but the light is still on. It stays on once it is turned on. The light is on now, but it wasn't before I turned it on."

Just one more thing before wrapping up: Those who say that "they" failed to awaken, or there is no experience of enlightenment are coming sideways to say that the person who sought peace of mind or freedom from despair did not awaken or experience enlightenment because their personal identity was absorbed into divine presence or lost in love, and therefore is no more and could not have experienced enlightenment. In this regard, what "they" are saying is true, but of course they are speaking from the same old body/mind complex as before and so these are just more semantic shenanigans.

Enlightenment is an event. It is a life-changing, being-changing experience, at a specific time...and then it transcends time. Light on, kaboom!

If these words and views this do not resonate with you, well, have a nice unfolding life. We'll leave the light on for you.

Love.

Nonduality is Not The End of The Story

The glorious Oneness experience in which we are "shown" the perfect harmony of the universe and the interconnectedness of all of it, especially our connection to earthly beings, as wonderful and enlightening as it is, is not the end of the story.

The primary and core reason that authentic teachers of the past and present day enlightenment are so passionate and confrontational to the ego, even to the Oneness experiencers, is that they have had a sit-down personal one-on-one meeting in the very presence and residence of God, felt the embrace that reset their life in every aspect, nearly overwhelmed them with unconditional Love with a capital L, and graced them with the sure knowledge that they; before the dissolution of their personal identity as primary, were and are personally known, guided and protected by this God of Love, as Love.

Why this happens to some, and others run back with their Oneness story, taking it as enlightenment full on, rather than an open door invitation to take the next step into Divine Presence, may be where the terribly politically incorrect term "the very elect," originated. There is a lot of conjecture on this point. Past lives. Assignments. Karma. Whew!

Talk about ego confrontation! Yeow! Now we are really out on a limb.

But that's where the fruit is found.

Love.

Building A Still

This is not about making Moonshine...well, maybe it is. Yeah, it is in a way. It is about distilling fear and doubt out of our consciousness and returning to the natural love and peace of mind that is universally sought by those who are poisoned by the pollution of learned fear and doubt - which means just about everybody at one time or another.

The longing for peace of mind - to turn the light (back) on is the common human condition I write about. I write in the hope of offering encouragement about that potential and possibility for taming the lions of fear and doubt, and living with an undercurrent of consciousness that feels safe, guided, protected and with pristine clarity about our Oneness with all of creation.

In contemporary western society, especially in the circle of those interested in things spiritual, we have a lot of recovering Christians, and among them (us) are old hippies and new age thinkers who have turned to

eastern traditions and terms. And certain use of models and terms from a mix of traditions often sets off debate. But it's all superficial. The core truth is universal.

We are conceived in love, born with an inherent love consciousness. Fear and doubt are introduced as we are socialized. These two agents have a job to do; this is to keep us safe. Problem is, they took over our lives in great part. Happy is not their concern. We fear that a situation will develop that we can't handle or that will cause us great emotional pain - most often based on our concern with what other people will think.

Building a Still is about the various processes and techniques for quieting the mind and getting rid of toxic thinking, attitudes and behaviors that make our lives stressful, and discovering the living water of pristine clarity which, with one drink, returns us to Paradise and the enjoyment of a childlike lightness of spirit, free from self-consciousness and feelings of separation. This is Self-Actualization, Awakening, Enlightenment, Satori, Samadhi, Buddhahood, Christing, Being filled with the Holy Spirit, Liberation, Self-Realization, Nondual Realization...and all such terms that at their core are the same universal and unifying truth.

So, getting past any nit-picking about the model or paradigm used to convey the means of building the Still, here's a set of beginning instructions for those who are interested:

Building of this Still will require several "parts", including: meditation, a water-rich light diet high in veggies and low (or without) animal products, light clothing on occasion, being of service to others when it is obvious to us that we have the ways and means to help others in a situation that comes into our realm, and a steady diet of books, tapes, CDs, DVDs, and any material we can find that authentically speaks to enjoying peace of mind.

The first item, meditation, is the only part that may need to be introduced in some form, and that will be done below. The other items are self-explanatory. The result is Self-Exclamatory!

My satsangs (teaching, preaching) include a simple 3-step Mystic Heart Meditation. It begins with Quiet Awareness - just stopping to bring awareness of our physical presence wherever we may be at the time and simply noticing our environment without any inner dialogue. To sustain this Quiet Awareness longer, step 2 is Breath Awareness - noticing when we inhale and when we exhale, keeping our attention here and returning to it when it occurs that our vagabond mind is chattering.

Step 3 is more subtle and is called Heart Awareness. This has a couple of layers. One is an inner listening as an overlay to the Quiet Awareness and Breath Awareness - in the silence of the meditation, an inner listening for a "Wisdom Whisper" from the heart. This whisper comes without words.

Imagine, as we inhale that a subtle rush of incoming air lifts the wisdom whisper up to our consciousness. The second layer is a conscious sense of looking through loving eyes. For instance, upon seeing a child, or anyone, choose to let tender, loving, tolerant and patient thoughts go toward that person. Doing this when it occurs to us during the week is a wonderful way to lift our spirits - and maybe the spirits of the person we are letting our love flow toward.

So, Quiet Awareness to Breath Awareness to Heart Awareness. For those who like a mantra to get into the flow, try Q'BaHa for a while and then back to silent Breath Awareness, and then to Quiet Awareness. At some point Quiet Awareness potentially becomes a constant undercurrent of our lives.

Without any further "prescribed" attitude or behavior, I believe that seizing opportunity to be of help (service) to anyone in need of any kind feels good in the heart. And I'm a proponent of light and airy food, rather than dense food, as our primary nourishment.

Drink up and enjoy the Moonshine.

Love.

Wonderful Works

There is a biblical story about 120 people who were in an "upper room" early one morning during a holiday celebration when the whole room was Enlightened; that is, everyone in the room was zapped with the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised to "send" to his disciples.

As the story goes, they all came pouring out the room incredibly excited, laughing, jump down spin around ecstatic, babbling and speaking of, "the wonderful works of God." People thought they were drunk, but it was only 9am, and this was before St. Patty's day was even celebrated.

Anyway, it occurs to me that it is worth acknowledging that many of us who read these notes were there (in a sense), in that upper room, and understand with pristine clarity just what happened - of course, in some other context, but we know. By having been there, I mean that we have experienced this zapping of Enlightenment, by whatever name and hung on whatever model, as well.

My writings about the wonderful works of God appeal to or at least attract three distinct audiences: those who were there in the upper room; those who have heard of the wonderful works of God and how these wonderful works can bring them a beautiful and blissful, jump down spin around, ecstatic peace of mind, and thirdly, those who have glimpsed or even had extended times of being a recipient of the wonderful works of God but who now feel that they somehow lost touch and long to recapture the bliss.

Those who were there never tire of reiteration and incessant retelling of the story. Those who are seeking peace of mind include some who will feel a compelling resonance with the words and stories and depending on the depth of their desire or the depth of their despair will come and go. Those who are in line for another ticket to ride will also come and go. All is well.

Of course, it should be acknowledged that there is a fourth "audience" distinct from the other three - in a way. They may, on the surface, have come from one of the three mentioned, but their culture, tradition and/or religion is hung on another paradigm. Or they may object to theistic language. Or they are of the mindset that they can write what has been said, only better. Or they refuse to admit to any longing or that anything could have escaped their ivory tower intellect, and they feel compelled to report that the whole issue is rubbish. All is well.

I have my story. If spiritual coaches (gurus, if you like the term) are nothing else, they are usually good storytellers. The fact that some hear the stories as gospel (good news) and others hear them as "made up" stories is just the way it is. All is well.

And so, without further ado...the story continues:

So, after being accused of being drunk, Peter, one of Jesus most devoted disciples, points out the time and tries to explain that Jesus did what he said he would do, and that this zapping filled them with God-Consciousness and that part of this consciousness was an overflowing of love for everyone and everything and a complete forgiveness for ... everything. He also made the startling statement that this included even the people who had crucified Jesus.

Peter and the others who were with him in the upper room went on to demonstrate healing power and the power of their words to zap (enlighten) others. When people began to pay them homage, they protested and said that it was not "them" but the empowerment of enlightenment (the filling of the Holy Ghost in them). And because they were disciples of Jesus and his teachings, they credited him with this empowerment. He had said he would empower them to "witness of him," and the truth he spoke.

Of course, the mainstream church and especially fundamentalists have for the most part made a train wreck of the teachings, but that's for another story.

And, here we are today, with many, many people in God's downline; people who are awakened teachers of present day enlightenment, telling the good news from divergent platforms, in different cultures, traditions and religions - and even in some non-theistic context, but still in the language of the heart. And the core truth of what they have to say and what they do is precisely the same.

If you feel a resonance in your heart with what you hear from any of these teachers, get ready to fly. And don't let anyone stand on your wings.

Love.

The Other Side of The Mountain

So you responded to that inner longing, an intuitive stirring or, for some of you, a desperate search for peace of mind and found yourself on The Mystic Path (by any other name, the same). And through a series of events you were led, consciously or divinely, to a "place" where a door opened, a marvelous light of understanding dawned, and a startling rush of insight changed your worldview dramatically.

Who you thought you were was found to be a façade, a fashioned persona, a secondary identity, a mask...and the mask dropped to reveal your primary identity. Suddenly, the world was seen very differently. Paradoxically, though the world and everyone and everything in it took on a new glow of beauty, and you found yourself looking through what some would call sacred eyes, and a nearly overwhelming sense of gratitude for life became an undercurrent of every moment...the material world and it's duality was revealed as a secondary reality, or as some traditions call it, maya or illusion.

For one who has not been to this other side of the mountain, the term illusory sounds absurd, and it is not really a precise term at all. Of course, the world is "real" and we are separate physical individuals in the human experience...but, as you know, the physical world is not our true home. Awareness, apart from the physical vehicle we "occupy" is our primary identity. Divine Presence and us within Divine Presence is our true home. The interconnection of all that is and the harmony of life universal has been seen with pristine clarity.

Once we have looked through that window of pristine clarity everything changes, and this would be an incredibly long note to even attempt to list or categorize what changes. Two of the changes as a result of this new level of consciousness stand out: 1. We are compelled (delighted with the idea) to invite everyone we know to come look out of this window and, 2. To talk about what it is like on the other side of the mountain in glowing term - the freedom, the joy, the bliss, satchitananda...

However, as you've experienced...lots of luck with that. We can send out invitations, host parties (satsangs), preach, teach, write books, become an inspirational and motivational speaker, write facebook notes everyday, and talk and talk and talk until all the cows in the world come around or over the mountain...but we cannot "explain" the view. That has to be experienced directly to be known. The rational mind has no framework to understand the breadth and depth of this view that only the heart sees.

But still we press on with this "choiceless" imperative to share. We are on assignment. Or in terms the Blues Brothers so passionately presented, we are soul brothers and sisters on a mission from God. (This is supposed to make you smile, yet for those of us who are comfortable with theistic terms, it is absolutely true.)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1ehMrK3itM&feature=player_embedded

The good news, even though we know we are on assignment, we also know that we can only point to the moon, play the music and talk about how it looks from the other side of the mountain, we sense with sure knowledge that the destiny of all of humankind is to come to the other side of the mountain.

Love.

Nirvana Pizza Mind

After 24 years of checking every nook and cranny of every spiritual community I could find; out of a Catholic family and into a bunch of Protestant denomination, and baptisms that left me with, "Is this all there is?" and finally via the last train to Hippieville, a stop at a Hindu temple in search of this Nirvana I had read about at 10 years old, I found a guru who delivered the goods.

Of course, Guru Maharaji (now known more by his given name, Prem Rawat) didn't personally deliver the Nirvana pizza, but he had a great recipe and he pointed the way in a way that worked for me. And the day after the feast of Nirvana pizza (grace), I left the ashram, knowing that I had an assignment based on the deal I had made with my resident guru sitting in the throne room of my inner kingdom (known in spiritual and religious circles as God) the day before.

My deal, as I've written and spoken about a kazillion times, was that if I could be shown peace of mind out of a dark and desperate longing I would spend the rest of my life telling others that such a thing was possible. It was a naive deal on my part, because I found out that there are no words to explain how it happened or precisely what it is to experience this shift in consciousness that brings about this Nirvana that was described as "utter tranquility and perfect peace of mind," in the book I read at age 10.

Making my way back to Boothbay Harbor, Maine I was in a state known at the time as "blissed out." Everything was beautiful, everyone was beautiful, and every drink of water was a drink of Love Potion #9. (That hasn't changed a whole lot since the pizza party in the ashram).

When I made it back and began to talk to people who knew me, I could tell that they sensed it was no longer the "me" they had known before I took that fateful train ride to Hippieville. The quiet, reserved, aloof and yet needy, self-pitying, vulnerable neurotic was now a bubbly hugger with enthusiasm for life that overflowed. They soon learned that if they came close enough, I was like flypaper and they would be snatched and held in a sticky hug.

It's worth mentioning here that finding peace of mind is not an isolated experience at a point of time...well, it is, but it is more like moving into a new house, a permanent dwelling. I remember saying to myself as I left the ashram, "I will never leave this place." It is also important to have company in this new house - holy company, but that's for another note.

So, on to my assignment. I began to "teach" classes in which I spoke about the possibility of a very special kind of pizza. Of course, I could only talk about it based on my his-story and the context in which I was graced with this special gift. However, I did notice, with particular delight, that a revisit to scripture and other books I had studied along the way brought a startling new insight.

Scripture came alive. What was found was that at the core of all authentic reports in scripture and other writings of all traditions is the same core message: Peace of mind is possible. Utter tranquility and perfect peace of mind is possible. And when this is known, divine presence, the perfect harmony of the universe and the oneness of all is known.

If you're hungry for it, a perfect peace of mind pizza joint is right around the corner, or maybe right in front of you. If you're dying to find this pizza joint, you will... or it will find you.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBncn9hF_qo&feature=list_related&playnext=1&list=MLGxdCwVVULXckM8gEVPGE4sdwozwAhcR

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1aykbb9zPE>

Love.

We Do Not Seek Enlightenment

Awakened teachers paint beautiful pictures, literally and with words, about enlightenment. But ultimately the words get in the way. It is not enlightenment itself that the seeker wants – there's no way of knowing what it is beforehand. It is the joy and great relief of perfect peace of mind that is sought.

If someone asks us to go find something, but tells us that it cannot be described and that no mental picture or concept of it is possible, and that it is only known when it is "found" by direct personal experience, how can we search or seek for it? What we seek can only be the resulting shift of consciousness that the direct experience promise to bring.

It is not enlightenment for which the seeker searches. So how can enlightenment happen if we cannot seek it directly and it will only be known once we experience it?

Well, this is where the use of language becomes tricky. First of all, language cannot convey enlightenment. Words can only point to the result of it by analogy and metaphor, in the only way the logical mind learns - by contrast and comparison, with terms like darkness vs light, despair vs joy, stress vs peace of mind, of judgment vs equanimity.

And now, to further boggle the mind...enlightenment is our already inherent natural state that is pure and perfect, created in love with the capacity for joy beyond words. The "problem" is that we have been talked out of it by social coercion and disciplined to fit in.

This is why we hear teachings that say that enlightenment is really an unlearning, a dropping of all the junk that has cluttered our brain to the point that we have forgotten who we really are in favor of fitting in, and have come to rely on our rational, logical mind and sense perceptions to the point that we have put on a mask, a persona, and become convinced that the mask is who we really are as an individual.

And after years and years of solidifying this identity, commonly referred to as ego, we as ego are not about to let that go without a struggle. It would feel like death - the end of "us" as we know "us" to be. But that is exactly what has to happen: we have to let go of our very identity and surrender it completely. That is no easy task, and is beyond comprehension or even consideration...until we come to a point where nothing else matters but "finding" the great relief of peace of mind.

This is where those who have made the journey come in. Their common advice is to let someone guide you along The Mystic Path. Mystic, because it begins as a mystery - something we do not know. Mystic, because it is an abstraction beyond the grasp of concrete thought, until it is known. Mystic, because once it is known (rediscovered) it cannot be expressed in words.

And some of the common words we hear are: meditation, relaxation, silence - absolute silence, quieting of the mind. This is because it is out of the silence, when the critical internal chatterers in the mind are caught off guard, that a wisdom whisper from the heart of knowing comes through.

Finally, the old cliché: When the student is ready, the teacher appears. This is to say that one cannot go get enlightenment. It comes and gets us.

Love.

On The Story of Job

Enlightenment, for me, was a quenching of a thirst. Since the moment of blessed relief, that drink of living water - that startling rush of new insights about life, love, and lots of other stuff, I have neither thirsted

again nor suffered the same fear and doubt that preceded it, nor doubted Divine Presence in my life for even a nanosecond. My spontaneous and immediate remark, "I will never leave this place," has proven to be prophetic to date.

However, there have been times over the years when the story of Job has come to mind. Briefly, for those who may have never heard of this biblical account, it is about the devil challenging God with the statement that he could get Job, who happened to be living a wonderfully abundant life and was grateful to God for it, to turn against God if things got tough enough.

God must have been on a day off and bored enough to play Satan's game - at Job's (temporary) expense. So, Job proceeded to lose everything of his material wealth, his children's love, and suffer tremendous physical discomfort...but he would not deny Divine Presence in his life. Friends and relatives urged him to do so, but he would not. At the end of this torturous ordeal everything was restored to Job. Satan loses again.

Among the "lots of other stuff," that came with the quenching of thirst was an enhanced capacity for love and an immeasurable gratitude for this unexpected and incomprehensible miracle of grace, as well as a crystal clear message that I would never have to undertake another search, take part in any other initiation, or ever be without Divine Presence and the enjoyment of this pristine view of the perfect harmony of the entire universal structure and matrix, both physical and metaphysical. This was the unassailable real deal.

So, this real deal and all that came with it runs as an undercurrent of every waking moment. I have imagined, in times of particularly tight financial times, communicative static and explosive relationship upheaval, that the devil offers a way out. I have never entertained any other offer, as I wrote earlier, for even a nanosecond and those are the times, at the extreme, when the story of Job comes to mind.

Nothing that happens, or could happen, in the manifest world of relative reality would ever be worth the flawless Pearl of Great Price that rolled up to my meditation pillow that day. Apparently Job felt the same way.

Love.

The Refiner's Fire

The process of refining or purifying silver and gold is to put the precious metal into a furnace to burn away any impurities. This refiner's fire is used metaphorically several times in the bible as a suggestion that the reason we go through trials in life is because that is God's way of refining us and returning us to purity or clarity about who we are in this living experience.

If this biblical metaphor holds up, it would imply that our trails are not random but are part of God's agenda. (It would also imply that those of us who are chronically stubborn and what my grandfather called, "pig headed," would need especially tough trials to get our attention.)

I want to be quick to add that my take is not about purification as redemption from "sin", but rather rescue from our mistaken (tainted) idea that our rational mind and sense perception are the only tools we have for navigating through life. In other words, our ego identity is not who we are in essence, and burning away this limited idea will return us to awareness of our essence, or as us theists would call it, God-Consciousness, and clarity about our primary identity as a revealing reflection of God's love and character - created in the image of God, within God, as One and only individualized for the purposes of a skin and bones (some would say chosen) life adventure.

There's a story I once read, author unknown, of a woman who was taken by the words that God sits by the refiner's fire and she visited a silversmith to ask about the process. The silversmith told her that, yes, it was necessary to sit by the fire and keep a close watch on the process; that timing was critical and if the silver was left too long, the silver would be damaged.

When she asked how he knew when was the precise time to remove the silver, he told her that it was when he saw his image reflected in the silver.

Love.

Astral Plane Nonsense

Any talk or writing about the astral plane is sheer nonsense. The content of the astral plane is beyond the grasp of reason or sensory capacity and; therefore, non-sense. Any concept that the sensible, logical, rational mind can come up with will in no way resemble the experience of "visiting" the astral plane.

For those who are convinced that reason, passion and sensory capacity are the whole enchilada of human experience, the whole mystical business is wishful thinking, mere fantasy, and without foundation in the "real" world. And to broaden the communication gap, for those who have made the journey to the astral plane, there are no words to describe their visit by anything but analogous stories and seemingly vague reference. And then there are the hopelessly curious, the desperate seekers, and the skeptical inquirers who haven't made the journey but for some reason are drawn to anything they can find about the subject.

Those who adamantly believe that the whole subject is without foundation probably are not reading this at all, so this is for those who have made the journey or find the subject curiously fascinating...

On a July morning many years ago, while sitting quietly in meditation, I suddenly felt my "self" shoot out into space and "land" on a mountain path. Up ahead was a glowing light being that looked like a man in a white robe, but I could not see a face because the light was so bright. Without words, he motioned me to continue down the path past him.

No sooner had I taken a step (well, it wasn't a step, it was more like floating by thought) when I saw a huge blue-white egg shape a few feet in front of me. The moment I saw it I was absorbed into it and taken to the causal plane...

But I want to stop here and come back to the robed light being. It is my sense that light beings hang out on the astral plane to greet newcomers who are having out-of-body or near death experiences and quite possibly those who are passing from the material plane - in other words, those who have physically died.

And it may be that those who were ushered into a higher plane, the causal plane, and returned to their early life, are "on loan" for a time on earth with an assignment and are destined to return to the astral plane as ushers-in-training. But I'm just having fun with the whole astral plane model, and do not mean to present it as gospel. Or just maybe I do.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nn0L6055gs&feature=related>

Love.

I Don't Love You The Way I Used To Love You.

This isn't to say that I don't love you. It's that I don't love you the way I did before I was absorbed into Divine Presence and (re)introduced to Divine Love. This awakening to Love with a capital L is to awaken to a whole new and wonderfully strange Love that is indiscriminate. This Love loves to love. This Love loves everything and everyone. And the same capitalization enhancement happens to Compassion, Peace, Joy, Kindness, Tolerance...and a few other passions that are called in the bible, "the fruit of the spirit."

Trying to explain this distinction and its subtle yet dramatic effect is impossible. If it has happened to you, it needs no explanation. If it hasn't and you're curious about it, you are on The Mystic Path and it's on its

way to get you. It would be a good idea to bask in the glow of those who...glow, with this Love. By their fruits you shall know them.

Love.

Balance of Power - One, Not Two.

Pardon my rare trip to the political soapbox. I'm sure there's a tie-in with spirituality waiting down the line.

In the democratic system for which this republic stands (the US) we have something called a balance of power, achieved in theory by three branches of government that share power of approval and denial of proposed governmental action. We have a senate, a congress and an executive branch. In a broad sense they must all come to agreement for laws to be enacted and certain governmental action initiated.

Our constitution establishes a government, "of the people, by the people, and for the people," in which representatives of the people are freely elected, with varied and limited terms of office.

Sound good so far. But two major problems present themselves that skew the system, create absurd financial inefficiencies, and screw all but the privileged people. The first is that in order to run for office on a national scale requires massive financial support and the second is that we have a 2-party system.

Big corporate and big personal money talks, and whichever party is in office, particularly occupying the executive level (the president), is under constant second-guess attack by the other party members who covet that office and want to tear down the incumbent so they can take over in the next election.

So, we have a government at civil (and not so civil) war with itself - kind of like the internal chatter we have going on in our heads that so often keeps us indecisive, in fear and doubt, operating at gross inefficiency, and rarely achieving our goals - and somehow feeling still empty even after having achieved what we thought was our most cherished goal.

Whew! Finally an opening; until we quiet the two-party system going on in our head, the "shouldn't I or shouldn't I...maybe I can, maybe I cannot...what if...if only...what will other people think?", we never operate at peak efficiency or fill the empty feeling. Until we recognize our own personal power and at the same time recognize our Oneness as a citizen of the world, with all citizens and all of creation we never achieve balance in our lives.

How do we do that if we have not come into balance in our lives? First, we impeach the ego and remove it from the executive office of our being, and put our heart in office. Now, of course, the ego's chief defense is that love and logic do not go together, and that the heart is a bleeding liberal tree hugger oblivious to the real "problems" of the world, and if we trust it we will go into some smiley face stupefied state of beatitude and our world will fall apart. But that's just political rhetoric (translation: bullshit).

The heart is supremely logical and compassionate at the same time. It is the ego that is subject to soap opera emotional manipulation. The heart intuitively (divinely) knows right action. The ego is subject to greed and violence. The heart is ruled by love, peace, joy, kindness, compassion, tolerance, patience and self-control.

Of course, running on this as a political platform will probably not fare well - for the time being. But one-to-one, beginning personally, there is a coming change. The course of destiny is seen by those who have successfully impeached the ego and put the heart in charge as a coming time of a new era, a new consciousness, peace on earth, goodwill.

Love.

The Awakening Journey Part 1

In response to some recent requests for a recap of my awakening journey, from beginning to end...

My mother remarried a couple of years after she and my father divorced and I was left to live with my grandparents until I was in the first grade. Then one day I was told that I was going to live with my mother and step-father.

Apparently I had been left with grandparents until my mother and her new husband had adjusted to their married life together. By the time I arrived on the scene that were not only long past the honeymoon period, they were absolutely antagonistic to each other, especially on Friday nights. Here's an excerpt from one of those Friday night specials from the perspective of a six-year-old:

It was late Friday night by now and their ritualistic payday splurge on four quarts of Schlitz beer had taken its predictable course. Only this time the pushing and shoving escalated. He threw her out the back door. I soon followed. They had started out laughing and teasing, and then, just like every Friday night since I had come to live with them, one of them said the wrong word and they were on their feet, flailing at each other like a couple of bantam roosters. He would push her around the kitchen and into the living room, and she would try to fight him off while swearing at him over and over. But he always won, one way or the other. She would always break down crying.

This time she was in a particularly fiery mood and she picked up a kitchen chair by the legs and flung it at him. He went ballistic, marched into their bedroom and came out with a bundle of her clothes and shoved them in her face. She stumbled against the kitchen door, and in one flash move he kicked the door open and sent her flying, clothes and all, down the back door steps.

Then he spun around, his drunken eyes trying to find me in the darkened living room. I was tucked down, huddled against the arm of the sofa. He seemed to look right at me, but didn't see me. I wasn't his and he didn't like having me around. It didn't take me long to realize that. Anyway, I scurried past him and out the back door as he bellowed, "And take that lily-livered little bastard with you!"

Somehow; I don't remember, we made it to my grandmother's house late that night. A few days later my step-father showed up and he and my mother made up. As we were getting ready to leave, I quietly asked my grandmother if I could come back and live with her. I believe that her response starting me on my spiritual search to find peace of mind and my true home.

She said, "You don't belong to us."

To which I replied, "Who do I belong to?"

Fast forward to age 10, in a 5th grade class. We were reading about world religions and I came across the word, "Nirvana," described as, "utter tranquility...perfect peace of mind." I started going to local churches on my own - the only place in my culture where I thought I had a chance of finding peace of mind.

Hit the fast-forward again to age 23. I was about to be baptized in a Methodist church. Here it comes, I thought. Finally, I was going to find peace of mind. Didn't happen. Nothing. Nada. So, I looked up Nirvana again, and some time later boarded the last train to Hippieville, and found myself in a Hindu ashram (temple). This time it was to be different. Very different. Indescribably different.

To be continued.

Love.

Chains, Pains and Illusions

Ever wonder if life is a "school"? It certainly seems that most of us are tested a lot. First we are born incredibly immature and helpless to fend for ourselves - certainly compared to some other warm-blooded animals, like the horse for instance. A new fold can bounce and run within minutes of birth. But it takes us close to year and a lot of precarious tottering and tumbling over before we can walk. This is certainly a testing time for parents and guardians of new borns and young children.

Then we get a few years of pretty unfettered freedom, unconcerned with any cares of the world - or any concern with much of anything. Those in charge of us take care of all our needs while we run free and easy, naked as a jaybird without any self-consciousness or worries about what other people will think.

But soon we find ourselves restricted to a seat in a classroom and subject to social rules. We are taught to be aware of our own personal safety and the safety of others, and being considerate and a "good" boy or girl gets us lots of gold stars and praise.

The chains of social coercion are hardly noticed early on, and by the time they begin to bug us we find a compelling distraction called puberty, where we begin to notice little else other than superficially. Then one day we feel an uneasy restriction that we cannot quite put our finger on.

Something is amiss. We begin to wonder about life and death, about who we are, why we are and what's it all about. Most resign themselves to the idea that these are unanswerable questions and get on with life - a life of quiet desperation for many, a life of affluent ease of others. But affluence or not, the nagging questions hang out in a corner of the mind.

Those of us who look to religion or spiritual paths to satisfy some of the "big" questions hear from Christianity about a truth we can know that will, "set us free" and words like, "breaking the chains and setting the captives free". Most hear these as post-life freedom on some cloud in the heavenlies. Others hear it as a living opportunity and look beneath the surface. We'll come back to that.

In the Hindu religion and its offshoot of Buddhism and Zen, we hear words like, "maya (illusion) and duality" in which we feel a false sense of separation from who we really are as living beings, and that the world that we see is not real.

So, what's with all the chains, pains, and illusion? Sure sounds like an obstacle course, a school, a testing ground. The good news is that, even though life is easier for some and incredibly tough for others, according to the religious and spiritual models, we all pass the tests...eventually. Some believe that we keep coming back in another life form until we do (reincarnation). And some believe in hell, but I don't, so we're not going there. Everybody passes and gets a gold star and a crown...eventually.

The awakened teachers, those on assignment to talk about it, insist that their personal experience has shown them that all the answers are already within us and that a deep inner search can and will reveal the answers, break the chains of despair, and reveal a truth that sets us free to enjoy a life of truth-consciousness-joy (satchitananda in Hindi) in which we take all of life with equanimity - but, I hasten to add, not without our human emotions.

It may sound like this blessed level of consciousness ignores the plight of life's harshest schools of war, disease and poverty, but this is to miss the mark of understanding about the freedom of awakening. An alert kindness and compassion are side effects of awakening. However, awakening is seen as the destiny of human kind and the ultimate solution.

That's my 2¢ and ramblings of food for thought while enjoying the satchitananda of Blueberry Cobbler coffee this morning.

Love

The Awakening Part 2

After a prolonged period of agnosticism (not knowing about God), following my unsatisfying baptism, I ran into a young couple who were each wearing a small pendant with a picture of a young Hindu man. When I asked them about their pendants they explained that this was their "guru" - a new word for me.

They explained that he was a teacher. When I asked what he taught, they replied that he taught how to find peace of mind. Boing! I suddenly had rabbit ears. I went with them to a local gathering called a "satsang" - another new word for me that means something along the lines of a discourse on truth. It only took a few satsangs before I was on the bus to an ashram (temple).

It is relevant and worth mentioning here, before going on, that in that intervening agnostic time I made some very bad choices and decisions that brought on a lot of shame and guilt - to the point that shortly before I met the young couple, I had adopted a mantra along the lines of, "Just let me die." That bad.

Once at the ashram, a beautiful olive-skinned woman who was also a devotee of the young guru and who was designated a "mahatma" (teacher), taught comparative studies of the Bible and Bhagavad Gita in support of the guru's teachings about our potential for knowing inner peace - perfect peace of mind.

After several months of satsang and service, I was selected for "initiation". At the time of my selection, I remember tears rolling down my cheeks and me rolling off my pillow cushion and across the floor like a chimpanzee. Finally, finally, I was to find the peace of mind that had so long eluded me. I spontaneously offered a "deal" to God: If I could really experience an end to this despair and experience peace of mind, I would spend the rest of my life telling others; especially those in despair, that peace of mind was possible.

As the initiation ceremony began, I found myself more and more skeptical about what was going on. About half-way through, I gave up on the whole idea and just went into a silent inner funk. There were a total of 28 people at this initiation and I didn't want to disrupt it, so I decided to just go along for the rest of the ceremony, knowing I would then leave the ashram and get on with my miserably guilty life.

So, I simply closed my eyes and gave up on any search, any hope, of ever finding this peace of mind, and returned to my let-me-die mantra before just going quiet inside in despair. But then the despair gave way to an even deeper silence - an absolute silence. And in what seemed like less than a minute in this absolute surrender to silence, I felt as though leaving my body and shooting out into "space".

Next, I was in what seemed a very lucid dream. I was walking along a mountain path and saw a glowing figure in a robe up ahead. This light being was so bright that I couldn't see a face. No words were exchanged but I knew I was supposed to look further down the path. The moment I did I was enveloped in a huge blue-white egg-shaped light.

In this light, I felt an unmistakable Divine Presence that "knew" me personally and seemed to "cradle" me. I felt nearly overwhelmed with this immense love that kept waving and waving over me until I felt a 0000000.0 on my conscience for all that had happened in my life. What came next is hard to put into words...

I dissolved. Who I had been or thought I was, was gone, merged into this Divine Presence, and there was nothing but peaceful darkness for just a moment. Then what seemed like Christmas tree lights began to flash and it was as though I was looking out over the entire universe...with an understanding of a perfect harmony, as if knowing how "everything" worked perfectly. And then, in a blink...

I was back in my body - and amazed! Amazed at my hand, my fingers that could bend and touch my thumb.

It was me! But it wasn't me anymore. I had this incredible vehicle called a body and all the same sensory apparatus, on loan, to use to get around, but I, the I that I now knew as my primary identity, was, well, invisible, fearless, and enjoying an unassailable, unshakable, perfect peace of mind.

As I looked around the room at the carpet and its exquisite texture and design, and the pillows and the draperies I was stunned by all the beauty. Then as I looked at other people came a startling surprise: I knew that this Divine Presence, this God of Love, I had encountered was within each and every one of them. I instantly fell in love with everyone I saw. I had sacred eyes! Me. The despicable person who came in despair. What a gift! OMG! OMG! OMG!

I left the temple the next day. A few days later I picked up a bible. The words were alive - poetry that spoke of what I had experienced. I read the Bhagavad Gita. Same thing. Scripture from every tradition had the same core message! I started offering classes within days, and have been teaching, writing, preaching, and giving satsang ever since - virtually everyday. I promised.

Love.

Energetic Joy

When we are feeling in harmony with all of life, absolutely free from fear and doubt, and enjoying peace of mind we experience a constant flow of boundless energy without any concern for preserving energy. Conversely, when we are out of sorts or dealing with some type of stress or depressing thoughts, we feel a tremendous energy drain and feel the need to "save" our energy.

One of the shifts that occurs when we awaken from the social persona that identifies with our body/mind and realize our primary identity as without form is a new sense of physical energy - or more precisely how we view the "expenditure" of physical energy.

Whenever we dread the thought of doing the laundry, doing the dishes, or jumping on a work project, and feel that life is dragging along like we are hauling a bag of rocks, we can know that the problem is not the weight of the tasks; rather, it is that we are out of balance with life and identifying with that old imposed social persona rather enjoying the freedom and effortless life that comes with awakened knowledge of our true Self.

Noticing an increase in energy and a flow is a wonderful feeling, and may be a marker on the way to harmony and (re)awakening. And it may be that a conscious choice to push past the dread and pick up that first dish, which often leads to the second and eventually pick up of the entire kitchen can be an effort that precedes grace.

Love.

Q&A

In the Christian model of attempting to express the inexpressible and suggestions for approaching the Christ experience of God-Consciousness, and the perfect peace of mind it brings, we are told to ask, seek and knock. "Ask and the answer will be given...Seek and you shall find...Knock and the door will be opened."

In the Nondual or Advaita model we are told (by some) that seeking is the problem. Is there any possible reconciliation of these seemingly contradictory views? If it is believed that the core Truth of God-Consciousness or Self-Realization, Awakening, Enlightenment and other such terms are synonymous, and that the mystic traditions are all paths to the same place of this higher level of consciousness, this language of the heart, then there must be reconciliation.

Well the, "been there, done that, got the t-shirt," bedrock of Nonduality is self-inquiry. Hello. Inquiry? As in asking a question, seeking an answer, knocking on a door? Yes. It goes like this: "Who am I?" Well, if seeking is the problem, we have a knotty problem.

So, getting past the pat phrase that contradicts the very premise, we find reconciliation. What the indiscriminate seeker/inquirer who merely adopts Advaita-speak or Christian-speak or whatever your model-speak fails to consider is that seeking/inquiring is not the end.

Asking, seeking, knocking, inquiring or even being passively open is the beginning. Listening is the middle. And in Awakening is the answer, the seeing, the door opening. So, back to the middle. We've covered the beginning that is precipitated by some inner stirring, some intuitive urge, some sense of something missing or there being something more to live - or we wouldn't be interested in this subject at all.

The middle is where the real reconciliation of seeming disparate views espoused by different models comes together. Listening. We don't ask and ask and ask, or knock and knock and knock, on and on and on. At some point. We listen.

"Knock, knock."

"Who's there?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out."

In the context of seeking peace of mind - which is at the base of "wanting to know," the question is how or who am I, or what do I do to satisfy the questions and enjoy peace of mind. Here's where listening and comprehension are important. There's an axiom in the world of business - specifically in "selling," that in a sales situation, the one asking the questions controls.

When it comes to an approach to Awakening, a control issue comes up. And guess who (or what part of our identity) likes to be in control? Yup. Our old nemesis, the ego. Now, once again, ego is not inherently bad and when we think of ego as our rational, logical process it has some real obvious value. But it is a control freak.

Because we have been convinced that who we are is our ego, our thinking sensory being, and we have accepted that thinking is our most valuable tool for survival and safety, a step on the mystic path or path of inquiry about who we "really" are, gets the ego's attention in a hurry.

And how does the ego go about keeping a tight rein on control? With questions. The ego will come up with a barrage of questions, and will ultimately try to come up with the "unanswerable" question that will deter us from our seeking/inquiring. If you are Awakened, you know how frantically the ego freaks as we approach. If you are a seeker, know that this extreme freak out; a freak out that feels like impending death, is where many turn back. This is what Jesus spoke of when he said that in order to gain our life we must lose our life (as we formerly knew it) and Awaken to God-Consciousness.

The solution lies in listening. Once we have foundational knowledge, authentic testimony, and the faith of a mustard seed (that's a really, really small amount of faith) that peace of mind is possible by following the path of the awakened ones who speak of it, we will eventually come to the listening post.

It is here that seeking stops. (OK, Nondual friends?) The listening will, for certain, be interrupted by the anxious ego, and this is why meditation techniques that help focus and quiet the mind are suggested. The listening must come to absolute silence and utter surrender of all questions/inquiries.

It is from the silence, once the prerequisites are met, that Awakening to Love with a capital L and all that goes with it is possible. Who am I (how can I find peace of mind) is the question. Listening is the catalyst. Love is the answer.

Love.

The Turn of a Phrase

A long-held opinion is that the course of our lives often turns on hearing a phrase of just a few words. (It may be a surprise to readers of these notes that I would ever advocate a "few words", given the length of some of my more rambling notes).

Robin Harger alluded to this in one of his recent notes in which he reminded us to be kind, and pointed out that even if we disagree with what others may have offered, that even though they may be off course according to our exalted view, their discourse just may contain a gem, a turn of a phrase, that is just what the doctor, THE Doctor, ordered for someone else. Thanks, again, Robin.

It seems that there are times when a certain set of words contains a precious pearl of wisdom. And even though we may have heard the phrase or read the passage several, or even many, times before on this particular occasion of coming upon it, it hits us on another layer or level of understanding and comes as a sudden and startling rush of new wisdom.

Ever happen to you?

Love.

It's Your Call

Maybe it was on our voicemail, or our inner voicemail, but there's a call we received and the message is clear. The call may have come when we were quite young, or it may have come in the very recent past. But it came. And we know it - whether we are responding to it, leaving it on the back burner or trying to convince ourselves that the call was not real, and just a figment of our over-active imagination so we can ignore it. But we often find that we cannot.

If we responded to the call, life has a sweetness about it as the undercurrent of our consciousness - not a life without its issues and ups and downs, but a certain quality of life that lets us feel authentic and true to ourselves. If we are living with that back burner on low or brushing away those entertaining, but at the same time disturbing, thoughts that keep bubbling up like a beep message reminder, there is probably something that we "should" be doing and we know it deep down.

Let me interrupt myself right here (that's an odd phrase isn't it...who is interrupting who?). Either we are responding to this train of supposition or it just doesn't ring true for us. If we're willing to admit that it rings a familiar note, read on.

So, if we are not responding, or if we have only made hesitant steps by way of response, why is that? Why is that? Because we have been disciplined by those who came before us, just as they were disciplined by those who came before them, to play it safe. And the attendants on this play-it-safe playground are fear and doubt. Fear that we are deluded about the call and doubt that we are good enough. And they are constant nags who interfere in just about every aspect of our lives.

Social acceptance is based on fitting in with the crowd and following the tried and true path of mediocrity. The fashion police can spot a wanderer in a minute. In the wild, the herd mentality assures a certain degree of safety, and wanderer's risk being invited to be lunch. Maybe we have some ancestral trace memories of that, but in any event...

We are both threatened and in awe of the wanderers. We all wanted to be policemen, firemen, teachers, nurses and doctors. Blenders. Not wanderers. Wanderers wanted to be artists, poets, writers, actors and astronauts. Foolish pipe dreamers.

Of course there are policemen, firemen, teachers, nurses and doctors who love what they do and have definitely responded to the call. They know of the undercurrent that flows through their authentic life. But there are among them, those who cannot, do not, will not, stop romanticizing the idea of being a novelist, an artist, a poet, a New York City cab driver. Particularly blessed are those who have been able to combine or concurrently enjoy their vocation and avocation.

One other area that I would be remiss to not mention is the spiritual call. This call doesn't quietly sit on the back burner or in the skipped messages archives of the mind. It zaps us with a finger pointed at us...with a little lightening bolt that flashes and scorches our buns if we try to ignore it.

This brings us back to the "Why is it that we do not respond?" question. If fear and doubt control our lives, there is a way to tame those lions. Those on the receiving end of the spiritual call tell us that we can free of fear and doubt and be freed from the chains that hold us back from answering our true call. It's call awakening.

Ever wonder why an awakening device is called an "ALARM" clock?

So, it's your call.

Love.

The Medium and The Muse

A friend once said to me, upon hearing of my awakening experience, "You are now capable of inspired work."

Another friend later said to me, "You are capable of inspired work...you just haven't found your medium."

It seems that our medium of expression finds us (or not). Picasso once said in an interview that all true artists, in the final analysis, are trying to express God. That would seem to line up with a capacity to create inspired works of art.

My "identity" as an artist began at a very early age, still in single digits, when I found I could copy cartoons well enough to elicit some wows from family and friends who saw the drawings. A part of me; even though I am closer to triple digits now, still lives in that early show and tell world of creating paintings (and notes) and anticipating the high of hearing and reading the wows. I suspect that this is a life-long addiction.

I once said in an interview that I was an artist who never made a commitment to his art. Those words didn't really hit me until I read them in print when the interview was published. I'd like to be able to report that as a turning point...but it wasn't. I still do not feel committed to my art. And I certainly do not feel that any of my paintings have been inspired. Maybe one day the muse will show up.

If the whole "muse" thing interests you, here's an incredible TED talk about the muse:
http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/elizabeth_gilbert_on_genius.html

However, when it comes to the written or spoken word, the muse does show up. That is to say that when I reflect on a talk I've given or look back at some earlier writing, I "know" that often I am not the writer or the originator of the content of a talk or presentation. It's like I'm reading someone else's work and I'm the one who mouths the wow. To a casual eavesdropper this may seem the height of arrogance. I hope the casual reader can make the distinction.

Going back to the subject of painting...I once had a show in a gallery in Maine, and one of the people looking at the paintings said, "These are like paintings from the soul." Well, that was a whole lot loftier than anything that had occurred to me when creating these paintings. I was simply playing with colors and hues and values, hoping to please the eye.

Going back to the subject of writing...I went home and wrote poetry to go with each of the paintings. It was as if the writing muse was jealous and needed to offer a commentary of "his" own to go with the paintings.

Anyway, I continue to write and paint. I write everyday. I paint in spurts, sometimes going years without painting and then going into a phase my wife calls, "mad man," in which I produce a series of paintings.

Love.

Down To The Bone

If we could strip down all the pretenses, excuses, piety, humility, fear and doubt and all the other armor-plated defenses that keep us from taking a stare-down look at our honestly naked and unselfconscious selves, for just a few minutes, what 3 "truthful" answers would emerge from the following questions? If you're up for playing, try spontaneous and immediate answers...and then go back and mull them over...if you must.

1. Am I denying or suppressing a part of me that wants to stand up and shout, "What I really want to be doing with my life is _____(fill in the blank, or just answer yes or no)?"
2. Am I more concerned with what other people will think of me than being authentically true to myself?
3. Do I really fear that I am not good enough, or do I really fear that I am not responding to an inner calling and that, as I suspect, I truly am special in my own unique way (as everyone is)?

Love.

The Awakening Part 3

As I left the ashram to head back home to Maine and had walked only a few steps away, the words, "I will never leave this place," came to mind. The "place" was the new mansion and the incredible riches and wonder I had (re)discovered in conscious awareness - my true home. As a theist, that would be within God. Source, for the less theistic.

There was mention in Part 2 of a view of what seemed to be the entire universe and a sense of a perfect harmony, as well as a "knowing" how everything works. That's hard to explain, because I don't have a clue about most anything mechanical and put auto mechanics in the same category as brain surgeons.

Anyway, this sense of perfect harmony and new "dwelling" place were part of the package, as were a feeling of Divine Guidance and sense of protection and unassailability that left no room for fear and doubt. And that guidance and protection continues to run as an undercurrent of my everyday life.

Oh, I've had my moments of sadness and other emotion, and of calling God's attention to something I'm not happy about or wish were different, but these are moments, flashes, nanoseconds compared to earlier day-in and day-out hang ons of despair. And always, even in the nanoseconds, the undercurrent of peace and tranquility are abiding.

The emotions or passions that seem to have been permanently quieted are fear, doubt (about Divine Presence) and anger of any sort. The last flash of anger that I can recall was a few months before heading to the ashram in 1975. That flash startled me and sent me deeper into the despair I was already feeling.

This absence of ugly negative emotion, as distinct from compassionate heartfelt emotion, will be easily understood by those who truly comprehend the "no me" of nonduality. It's that the persona (the personality, the individual identity) is recognized as a secondary or reflective; some would say illusory, identity and the primary identity within God or Source does not take things personally. So there's no way to flap anger and fear.

Coming back to the harmony and sense of guidance and protection; I want to mention a few examples of the manifestations of this presence. They may seem trite and meaningless, but to me they were wowsers:

As I hitchhiked from New York on my way back to Maine, on a warm July day, I remember standing in the pouring rain in Albany waiting for someone to pick me up and admiring the rusted pits on a highway sign (If you read Part 1 and Part 2 you'll remember that I was totally blissed out at the beauty of everyone and everything.) Everyone who picked me up made a comment along the lines of, "What are you all about?"...or... "You are glowing," without me having said a word.

Even a State Trooper who picked me up and started to admonish me for hitchhiking where I wasn't supposed to, stopped in mid-sentence and said, "Get it. Let me take to a place where you'll have a better chance for a ride."

When I finally came to the road leading down to the cottage we had rented on the water and was walking the last few hundred yards to the cottage, I saw the owner approaching from the other direction. Without going into detail about the reasons why, I had been unable to pay the last month's rent. But I greeted the owner with a chirpy hello and resisted the urge to give him a hug. Here's what transpired:

"Oh, I've been looking for you. Listen, you know the condo development I own. Well, I was hoping that you might like to move your paintings into the model condo and use that for a studio/gallery and be willing to show potential buyers through the model...and that would take care of your rent."

Harmonyyyy! I would think about a blueberry pie and a knock on the screen door would be from the sweet woman next door who baked an extra pie. I'd need money and an anonymous check would come in the mail. Whenever I saw the blue lights of a police car behind me, I would glance at the speedometer and be going exactly the speed limit. Not 54 or 56, but 55 on the button. Happened a lot. Still does.

There are some other instances that were delightful, but a little too delicate to report in print or pixel. Let me just mention that I have learned to be careful what I wish over the years.

OK, that's pretty much the whole enchilada.

Love.

Rose-Colored Glasses

Ever notice that people who are generally pessimistic say that they are just being realistic, and that people who are optimistic are often said to be looking at the world through rose-colored glasses, as in only seeing and expecting the good and positive, and therefore, unrealistic? Why is it more realistic to expect the worst than to expect the best? Shouldn't they at least be given equal weight?

Someone who fit very comfortably (or uncomfortably) into the pessimist gloom and doom said that she decided that if she expected the worst, then she wouldn't be as disappointed when the worst actually happened. Another pineapple-upside-down cake philosophy. Actually, she would bawl and squawl more

than anyone when her negative expectations were met, and at least the optimist had the good feelings (and a more efficient emotional and physical immune system fight against dis-ease) in the meantime.

This is also the person who would say that nothing is perfect, and when I would press her with the question, "Nothing? Absolutely nothing?" she would answer in the affirmative - even if I repeated the question. To which I would offer that if absolutely nothing is perfect, without exception..."Wouldn't that be an example of perfection?"

Anyway, I chose optimism, perfectly content to slip on my rose-colored glasses every morning. It's kind of like something I've mentioned before, about how we wake up in the morning to find two tickets on the nightstand beside the bed. These are tickets for our daily ride through life. One ticket is for the "Complain Train," the pessimist's obvious choice, and the other is for the "Praise Train," the optimist's obvious choice.

If we absentmindedly find ourselves on the Complain Train, we can make an immediate switch by finding something to be grateful for, or some compliment or encouragement to offer someone else. The Complain Train goes in circles - we can always find or invent something to complain about. The Praise Train is not only better stress management strategy, there's a case for believing that it takes us to our most cherished hopes and dreams.

So, here's a pair of rose-colored glasses. (If you already have a pair, consider sharing these with someone you know who could use them - even if they maybe won't.) They're accepted as tickets on the Praise Train. If you're not in a mood to put them on, at least consider keeping them handy just in case, one fine day, you fall in love with life and decide to look for the best in people, places and everything, or one day you just get tired of the despair of gloom and doom and put them on as a last resort.

Don't be surprised...well, you will be...if a startling rush of new insight comes thunderbolting into your life.

Love.

More on The Magic Glasses

An earlier note included the offer of a pair of rose-colored glasses. Reading a comment from a reader/friend that she accepted, "the gift," sparked my imagination. The offer was to put on the rose-colored glasses, the optimistic perspective, if pessimism had crept into our lives. But when Judy referred to the offer as gift, a broader vista opened in my inner playground.

There was a television show years ago called The Millionaire, about people unexpectedly receiving an anonymous gift of a million dollars. Doesn't get much better than that. Or does it? Imagine if there were a traveler on The Mystic Path, a return traveler who had gone into The Mystic, awakened, and had taken up the role of giving Magic Glasses, say rose-colored, to ardent seekers on The Mystic Path.

Now, trying to imagine or come up with a concept of what would happen once the glasses were slipped on may be a curious and natural inclination, but nothing the rational, logical, linear think tank we have learned to call home comes up with even comes close. And, what's more, there are no words to convey the actual experience - the view from behind the magic glasses.

We might go back and read the 300 or so notes written on this particular facebook "blog" and notice the incessant and redundant references to the freedom, joy, bliss, truth, consciousness, awareness of an awakened perspective, but we still would only be reading about and trying imagine what the words mean. But ibid to the previous paragraph. Can't happen.

So, the aforementioned returning traveler with the bag of rose-colored magic glasses will only ask one thing of us before handing the glasses over; that is, to empty our thoughts of any concept or expectation and utterly surrender to the potential of the new view. The traveler will also mention that once we slip the glasses on, our life will be over. Whoops! What? Wait a minute. Imagine the conversation:

"You mean I will die?"

"Well, something like that. Your thoughts may even run that way, literally, as you consider the prerequisites for putting on the glasses. You will die to the identity you now hold onto. All your ideas about who you are and who other people are, what you have done in your life (good and bad) and why, and your path in life's journey will be completely altered with no 'undo' button to click."

"And you say that the new view will be one of pristine clarity, joyful, blissful even, and will bring me the peace of mind for which I have been longing...but I must first empty my thoughts, totally surrender any expectations or seeking, and with no guarantees of a net, I must be willing to jump and risk death?"

"Exactly. Would you like gold or silver rims?"

Love.

Cosmic Language/Heart Language

Words are funny and fun to play with, and sometimes downright silly. Generally I prefer the language of the heart when attempting to write about experiences and insight that I would consider "spiritual". The language of the heart transcends religion and separation caused by "doctrinal differences" and the language of the heart; words like love, kindness, compassion, divine (that one's a little bit in both worlds - pun intended), tends to ground the more cosmic terms that seem just a little (sometimes a lot) far-fetched.

Far-fetched is one of those funny phrases, and I like it. Sounds old-fashioned. OK, before I get too far off track, I posted a little cosmic word play yesterday that was somewhat tongue-in-cheek, and for some maybe a little far-fetched. I also happened to use an old-fashioned word that struck someone as incongruous and silly. When I read it, I agreed. But, hey, it was just word play.

I'll copy it next and see if I can unravel it a bit: Those who land on the astral plane and are catapulted onto the causal plane, never come back. The "One" who comes back from the causal exposure truly remains on the astral plane while appearing to reside physically.

The terms astral plane and causal plane are not words I would generally use and only entertain them in retrospect; that is, after an incredible experience that boggled the rational mind and entirely shifted my world, galactic and personal view. Briefly, in meditation, I encountered a light being who seemed to be on a mountain. This light being sent me into a huge blue-white egg in which I felt a Divine Presence.

When I read of the astral plane and the causal plane in some eastern spiritual writings, my experience fit the paradigm and that was the basis from my bold post. I find it easy and fun to entertain the notion that there are many light beings on the planet - those who experienced similar cosmic events and "returned" with a mission to report the good news and hopefully be of assistance in "catapulting" others who have an interest in things cosmic, spiritual, religious and such.

I would include all authentic enlightened and awakened masters by whatever "title" they prefer or present; guru, teacher, spiritual coach, master. They often use bold and sometimes outrageous language. I enjoy the word play and especially like an anonymous quote I ran across a while ago:

Be outrageous. It's the only place that isn't crowded.

Love.

Transformation

Sometimes, out of the searing destruction of life as we knew it pops this little green shoot of insight. We then have a choice. Whether the destruction came about of our own doing or misdeeds, the mind-boggling movements of Mother Nature, an unforeseen accident, or the seeming neglect of an absentee creator who allows suffering, disease and death..we can sit in the charred ruins or nurture the new life.

A glance back, an out-of-the-blue synapse of memory, will come. No doubt. But if we will persist in returning to the little green shoot, a startling and sudden rush of new wisdom may blossom one day, and the beauty of it will take the sting out of the pain. And this new wisdom will finally allow us to forgive ourselves, everybody else, Mother Nature and God.

Love.

You've Come A Long Way, Baby!

It's kind of funny that God has been anthropomorphized (made into a person) - a guy even. A guy with long white hair and a long white beard; although timeless, so I don't know how "his" hair and beard grew long and turned white. Anyway, there's a tendency, even in the mainstream religions; at least Christianity and New Thought (an interfaith view) to refer to God as Mother-Father God.

I'm happy to even go the whole way, while we're anthropomorphizing, to embrace the sense of Shakti, the feminine aspect of God in Hindu and refer to God as she, or Mother. The reported experience of the very presence and residence of God always includes an embracing Love that we might more easily imagine Mom laying on us.

I've used the painting below as a yantra (think mantra, only visual) with the idea of Shakti occupying the triangle center. Fixing a gaze on the heart, if you wish, simply follow the flow of breath, in and out, and wait for the embrace and Loving wisdom whisper. Patience is virtue.

So, Mom, Mother God, I welcome your embrace and your wisdom whisper. You've come a long way, baby.

I kind of wish I had thought to write this on Mother's Day.

Love

May I Ask You A Question?

Of course, "May I ask you a question?" is already a question. It's like the interruption into a conversation that begins with, "I don't mean to interrupt, but..." Well, that was the intent, and the words were throw away words meant to excuse the intrusive behavior.

Ego, or at least the aspect of ego that lives by the motto, "Question everything." To the intellectually constipated that is viewed as sound advice. And there may be times and circumstances where this is prudent, but...

The fear and doubt that ego (in this context) creates by questioning everything is a job that has gone to its head (our head). Fear and doubt have their place, but in every stinking thinking waking moment, for crying out loud? Give it a rest.

Don't question anything. Take some time to simply be and enjoy. Enjoy your next breath, your next taste of French Vanilla coffee, the sound of morning birds, the smell of the air, a sunrise. Something. Anything. Just take some time to not question. Quiet the inner chatter. Meditate. Don't cogitate.

Imagine a few minutes, a few hours, a day, a lifetime of such beautiful clarity that we have no questions - at least none that provoke fear or doubt.

Clarity has no questions. When we awaken to our true and essential Self with a capital S, we have no questions. Any questions?

Love.

The Ho Hum of How To

In order to be successful in whatever context you can think of or imagine...here's the big HOW TO that a lot of people charge a lot of money to tell you about:

Do the things you know you should do but are not doing, and stop doing the things you know you shouldn't be doing. Oh, they (the super successful at selling super success formulas) will have us break boards, walk on burning coals, jump down spin around, put money in little jars, write out our goals, set goals, visualize, chastise, schedulize and categorize until the cows come home.

But what's new, pussycat? If we've made more than teenage trips around the sun, we've heard it all before and seen it and recognize it even in its new and improved packaging.

So, we can jump on the medical cash cow of "treatment" programs, slip into our victim costume and whine or we can dig deeper and get to the root of the problem. Not the triggering event. Not the dysfunctional family farce. But the real root...feeling of separation from...well, everything, but especially our own inner wisdom - or some might say, God - the core that we have lost touch with if life is seen as anything less than in perfect harmony. Not the orchestration of relative life, but the ever-present experiential awareness of spiritual perfection. Here lies the answer to all of our questions and the solution to all our problems, and the accomplishment of all of our true goals.

Problem here is that as many silly support groups as there are, there are more sanctimonious religious and spiritual sanctums that profess to offer this, but offer little more than blind faith and subscription to superstition that a part of us knows is as farfetched as a night with Lady Gaga or a date with Brad Pitt for most of us.

Find an authentically awakened teacher - in a person, a book, a video, a sunset, a cup of French Vanilla coffee, or a guru...something, anything, that gets you in touch with your inner wisdom. When you've had enough of the superficial you'll look down the mystic path. Or not.

A Buddhist approaches a hot dog stand and asks for one with everything...hands the vendor a \$20 and waits for change. When the vendor doesn't return any change, the Buddhist inquires, "Don't I get any change?" to which the vendor replies, "Change comes from within."

Love.

The Heart's Part

We have been so indoctrinated with the idea that the rational, linear thought processor part of our brain is the place to go to accomplish most anything from tying our shoes to baking a cake that it's easy to forget or neglect the heart's part.

Some things naturally call upon the heart in the process; like maybe wrapping a gift and tying a nice bow, because we are connected by caring with the eventual recipient of the gift, or making a snowman for the sheer entertainment joy of it for all who will see Frosty. Make that a sandman, now that Florida is home.

But what about baking a cake with love, consciously connecting by caring about the sweeties who will eventually partake of this sweet, or tying our shoes with a certain athletic flair, being careful to make each side's loop match precisely - just for the art of it, just for the heart of it.

Imagine if we were to bring our heart to virtually everything we did. Life would become effortless. Even doing the dishes. Joy would be bubbled up with Joy. At work, whistling (quietly or even silently) while we worked and bringing our heart to someone who; for instance, needed help downloading Snow White. And not being Grumpy about it.

Some have chosen life strategies that are so goal oriented that they forget common courtesy in the course of a day and instead use dominance and criticism to have their demands met. And on the other end are those who are so invested in having people like them that they fall all over themselves to accommodate. But there's a balance and finding it is easy.

Meditate. Meditation puts the head back in touch with the heart. And the more we spend time in meditation - either "formal" meditation where we set aside a time for quiet meditative techniques like the Mystic Heart Meditation or simply tuning into the caring corner of our mind and putting our heart into whatever we're doing, the more we come into balance. That is meditation, and is in fact where the "practice" of meditation leads - to attunement of our heart in accord with our mind as an undercurrent of our everyday activity.

It is from this undercurrent that joy bubbles up and the rational processor basks in the pleasure of a returned playmate from our carefree days of early childhood. When this balance is recognized, bliss is a by-product. And as they say in advertising...much, much more.

Just a little morning 'minder.

Love.

The Heart's Mailbox

When's the last time you checked the mailroom of the heart? If you're not living with perfect peace of mind and have not come to accept all of life's ups and downs as an entertaining roller coaster ride that is sometimes scary and painful and sometimes belly tickling and delightful, but always a thrill ride...check your mail.

In several spiritual traditions, and in a way in all of them, there are written and oral stories of a time in our lives when a new letter will arrive. In some particularly colorful language; in the Old Testament for instance, there is reference to a time when a new covenant (contract, deal, agreement, promissory note) will go into effect and a direct experiential encounter of the heavenly kind will result in an amazing shift in our consciousness. It's also mentioned again in the New Testament.

As a side note of interest, according to one of God's appointed scribes (an awakened teacher) at the time, God prefaces mention of the new covenant with a remark that seems sarcastic. The reference is to an earlier covenant, and to paraphrase the language it goes something like this:

"OK, I'm going to make a new deal with you guys - not the same deal I made with your folks when I rescued them; which, BTW, they broke..."

The new covenant says that God will "write" an understanding of what our relationship is with God, "on the tablets of our heart," and, "seal it in our mind." And this new deal goes on to say that we will have no need for any more awakened teachers, Gurus, success coaches, or fortune cookies to point the way, because we

will know for ourselves. All we have to do is check the mail. And we can be assured that it comes "Special Delivery".

Now, of course, biblical scholars are still arguing about when. But according to one guy who hung out with Jesus, the deal took effect at Pentecost, a short time after Jesus met his fate, and all we need are postmasters to sort the mail and get it delivered. And, of course, once again, fundamentalists are trying to keep the promise in their narrow-minded beady-eyed view as only for certain people. But scripture says, "all people" in some place and "God's people," or "my people," in other places. All are welcome. No exclusions.

Regardless of spiritual or even non-theistic tradition, the shift, the realization, the thunderbolt of new understanding comes in the language of the heart, and has been reported in time-honored scripture and present day preaching, satsang, and tabloids...and even facebook notes. Take your pick or take a hike down the mystic path. You just might meet a postman along the way.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQaUs5J2wdI>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRdtlwVBQ8A>

Love.

Breathlessness is Where The Bliss Is

There are reports of yogis who meditate to a virtual breathless state. The brain's activity, the nearly constant inner chatter and "entertainment" of a stream of thoughts, is what makes the heaviest demand on the body for oxygen rich blood to flood the chatterbox. And it is the breath that keeps the flow going. When meditation quiets the inner chatter, the upstairs demand slows. When the incredibly delicate balance of absolute silence is achieved, the demand all but ceases and the breathless state is entered.

It is interesting, to me at least, to consider how the ecstatic experience that is reported to have taken place within the yogi's (meditators) breathless state is so precisely similar to the experiences reported by those who have suffered trauma, lost pulse and vital signs for a time and then have "come back to life," as in the NDE (Near Death Experience).

The yogis and the traumatized each relate a personal story about a blue-white light, either as a tunnel or an egg shape and feel themselves traveling into this light, some meeting a "guide" and then all report coming into the very presence and residence of God (by any other name).

The content of this experience is universally about feeling waves of incredible unconditional love, a sure sense of the harmony of all that is, a "wiping clean" of the slate of their personal history - and even personal identity, that is replaced by a new awareness that is beyond time and space, blissful and "set free" from any and all fear and doubt - including the fear of death. It is a glimpse for some that leaves a life-long lasting impression, and it is a confirmed reservation of a front row seat in heaven that leaves them with an undercurrent of inner peace that is unassailable and independent of what happens in the relative world.

There are contemporaries I know who have taken this journey or culmination of a journey and offered the universally similar report. The story of Ramana Maharshi tells of him laying down, as a young boy who was grieving at the loss of a family member, and wondering what it would feel like to die. He may have gone into this breathless state. His life and teachings from that time on offer pretty compelling evidence that he took this journey.

So, if breathlessness is where the bliss and freedom is, it just may be that we ARE the breath, or the content of the breath that the rational mind is not privy to at all. Rather than being the body/mind mechanical being science once believed us to be, and in some corners still does, we may be the eternal essence from which breath flows.

In the story of creation (just as an example, whether it is believed literally or not), God breathes spirit into us to prime the pump. We are then disciplined and trained into believing that our thought process and rational awareness and sensory awareness is us, and other than some religious speculation about an after-life, that's all there is to life. But then there's all this talk and mountains of literature from the ancient of days to today's Kindle crowded with words about awakening and enlightenment that brings a sudden and startling rush of new insights about who we are what our purpose in life is all about.

It may be a sunrise, a poignant satsang that rings an inner bell, a captivating guru, a captivating woman in a red dress, a mountain range or a sip of Blueberry Cobbler coffee that takes our breath away and catapults us into this heavenly moment. It all comes down to one indescribably delicious word that takes our breath away every time...

Love.

The Unclaimed Reward

Imagine finding a treasure map in an old library book that we took out - or in a brand new book that we bought, or one that was given to us. The map directs us to what it says are, "riches beyond your wildest dreams," right there in bold type. Wow! Would we follow the map and track down the treasure with all the energy and persistence we could muster?

Well, of course, we would...unless maybe we were already rich and didn't have all that much motivation to go off in search of another treasure. And there are those who would dismiss the whole thing as a fake, a hoax, a scam. And those who just could not muster up the energy, or had better things to do.

But those of us who had just enough curiosity or desire to check it out, spurred on by visualizations of mansions and banquets and luxury cars, and all the designer coffee flavors we could ever want, might start the search in earnest.

Along the way we might hear encouragement from others who had heard about such a treasure map, and on the other hand, discouragement from those who tell us we're on a fool's journey. Neither would have any direct experiential knowledge, but some would have strong opinions.

And then...we might encounter those who rave on about the treasure and the wonders of it, but tell us that the treasure is only available in the afterlife - which means after death, and our faith in that eventuality is our only reward.

Now, some may be comforted by the faith in the future position. In fact, millions are. But there are a few, quite a few, but not millions by any means, who insist that the treasure can be found while alive and the rewards enjoyed in the living time. For some reason, some of the people who have been particularly vocal about the living reward and the exquisite joy and peace of mind finding the treasure brings have been, and are today, treated pretty badly by their settled-for-faith-in-some-distant-future contemporaries.

Well, the map is in every breath, every bird singing its song, every flower perfuming the air, every sunrise, sunset and sunbeam, every sermon, every satsang, everywhere. And the treasure is in art and poetry and passion, just waiting to be re-discovered. The treasure is within us. The key to unlock it is...

Love.

Who Knew

Who knew
One day
Out of the blue
A new you

A divine plan or
Flash in the pan
Coincidental
Touch of a hand

A seed sown
A journey alone
Stepping stones
Into the unknown

Who set the stones
Who knew the way
Was it you
Or the guru

Or were you two
The same One
Before it all
Came undone

Language Languishing

A few writers play in the same playground here in facebook land. They write of the emotional roller coaster ride of life in the relative world of duality that is universally understood, *and* they write in the language of the heart that is only understood by those who know this absolute language.

Already, with just that first brief paragraph, some hackles have gone up. It sounds elitist to refer to something only understood by those who "know." The ego abhors the very idea that there is something it doesn't know. But that's a whole other note, only mentioned in passing.

Also, in the relative world of language, reference to absolute anything infers fundamentalism - a locked down view not subject to change no matter what. But absolute language, in the language of the heart, is not absolute in the way relative words mean absolute. Can you feel this ball of word yarn getting tangled already?

For just a little clarity on the term, "language of the heart," this is not the emotional romantic language typical associated with the heart, but the language without words that is instantly known when the heart of our being, our essence, our spiritual being, is realized. And it doesn't take long to recognize, although this is certainly subjective, when someone is parroting and someone is authentic in the use of the language of the heart as used here. (An elitist tip of the hat to my neo-nondual friends).

I could go on and on. My cup of Blueberry Cobbler coffee is hardly half gone (I mean half full, of course)...but I'll wrap up with Vicki Woodyard's essay on this. She put it succinctly with this:

Guru: Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Students: What, what, what, what, what?

Love.

Pie and Tea

Let's see how it goes...*We should always be gentle and loving* - even when someone is being a complete jerk. Oops, *we should never label*. Of course, without labels we find ourselves creating a strange soup. Not that a strange soup is bad. *It's all perfect*. There were no labels on the boxes or cans, so what was intended to be minestrone soup turned out to be macaroni with strawberry jam and raisins. But *we are all doing the best we can* with what we got. *There is nothing to do, nothing to achieve. We are all already enlightened*. Oh, and of course, there's the Jungian view that when we see jerk in someone else *it's all projection*. It's our shadow side trying to show us the jerk in ourselves.

This is piety gone overboard, blinded by political correctness, affected soft voices and hands-folded-in-front amens mixed with some superficial insights from Psyche 101 that drip with passive-aggressive transparently veiled judgment and self-righteousness. I don't care if you think you're right when you softly offer up some half-baked neo-advaitan blather in absolute language to a relative audience. I won't eat your macaroni with jam and raisins. No pie and tea for me. I got Blueberry Cobbler coffee and an oat bran muffin this morning. They both had labels on them, so I chose what I wanted to digest.

The core of my observation (I have no complaints whatsoever) is that the use of absolute language to an audience that only speaks relative language is a disservice. I don't make these observations out of disdain, anger, wrath, rancor, bitterness or judgment. There's a wry smile behind the provocateur costume I occasional don (OK, more than occasionally). But I do believe it to be a disservice and I have no problem calling them as I see them.

While there are truths at the core of the phrases in italics, what is missing is the bridging language that is necessary to cross the gap between the intent of the absolute language and what is understood in relative terms. Using language of the heart when speaking to those who only know the language of the mind and have long ago forgotten the language of the heart necessarily requires the use of dualistic language as a way to coax disheartened seekers across the bridge to the silent language of the heart.

Once the crossing is complete and the sudden rush of insight that teaches the language of the heart comes in, then they understand the absolute language. But to offer *it's all perfect* or *we're all already enlightened*, or *no one can teach us, seeking is the problem*, or even the incredibly subtle truth of how *ordinary enlightenment* is to someone who is living in quiet, or not so quiet, desperation, feeling empty, separate and abandoned by anything or anyone who could offer them love, is a terrible disservice at best and smug ivory tower elitist cold-hearted bullshit at its worst.

Awakening cast all of these italic truths in an entirely new light. So, gentle and loving reader, you will most probably fall into one of three categories - yes, labels. Behind facebook door number one will be those who understand perfectly what this morning's word play is intended to convey. Door number two will sense that something vague runs as an undercurrent in this note and will be curious enough to ask questions or comments, and then...and then, there will be the pissed off pie and tea group. Maybe they shouldn't drink so much tea. There I go again. *No should or should not's*.

Love, Love, LOVE.

Silly Superlatives

The familiar saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher appears," obviously refers to the readiness of the student. It doesn't read, "When the teacher is ready, the student appears."

As much as I enjoy and delight in the whole spiritual bubble from traditional paradigms to mystic paths and even the esoterica of spirituality, and am open to reported experiences, events and views, I do feel that the critical criteria that are requisite to awakening (by any name) have more to do with the student than the teacher.

Part of my "assigned mission," is to share my personal story (heaven knows I've done that a kazillion times) of awakening in the hope of inspiring realistic hope in others who are curious and/or desperate to find peace of mind and enjoy the much reported sudden rush of new insight about...well, everything, that awakening brings.

Secondly, beyond the compelling urge and my vow to share, is the want and need to keep it real; as in, my reality. I don't know from past lives, reincarnation, supernatural miracles or Shaktipat - the "power" of some enlightened ones to "transmit" awakening to students. But, as you might guess, I have an opinion...

In my never-to-be-humble opinion, whenever we introduce the extraordinary or supernatural speculations and superstitions, we potentially put awakening out of reach for the man on the street, the pious in the pews and the student in the ashram. Gautama Siddhartha, the Buddha, was about others becoming Buddhas. Jesus was about "the student becoming as the master," and any guru worth listening to is about finding your own guru within.

They all work to put themselves out of a job, yet organizers who follow often convert this free gift of grace into a commodity and make it a business. Tithing and buying your way into a front row seat in heaven became the norm in Christianity, and still is in great part. Whenever we assign special powers to anyone, we have been lulled into silly superlatives and emotionally manipulated beyond belief. And that can keep us perpetual aspirants rather than realizers.

The powers or siddhis are toys, available in every spiritual toy store for those who come to shop. They are extensions of our natural ability to heal, already built in with a free app. They are not supernatural and exclusive to "special" people. If faith in someone's ability to heal helps, if a pill (placebo or not) has an effect to move healing along, or a sunrise promises magic in someone's mind, that fine. I'm OK with all that.

But keep it real, and real awakening is possible. Awakened, realized, enlightened masters, lords, nondual realized, gurus and satgurus, from the past and in contemporary circles...all squeeze the Charmin.

Love.

Be Still My Heart

We've been taught, trained, socialized and coerced into a fast lane, fast food, fret-a-lot lifestyle. I once heard a business owner complain that his sales staff, "Doesn't look worried enough." What a mindbender; as if worry is prerequisite to productivity. And don't be caught at your desk just "thinking". Let's see some action. Hop to it. Bust a move. We got a quota to meet.

And so life goes for the quietly desperate worker bees and captains of industry. If you're "well adjusted," and a compliant bee or captain, fine. But for those who feel the discontent, how about a respite - at least once in a while...or for a lifetime.

Studies show that some, "productive goofing off," can pay handsome dividends. Take a break from it all. If we can't afford a vacation at The Ritz, we can take a vacation from the internal chatter that spends so much time worried about the quota, or what other people will think, and/or regretting bad decisions or what has been put on our plate from the past.

A simple meditation technique is to simply shift our attention to our heart. Take a deep breath and let it out silently and gently...and now simply listen for a wisdom whisper from the heart. Imagine that our heart, the keeper of all of our secret longings and desires, including that vague longing or sense that something is missing in our lives, can speak to us.

Now, the language of the heart is without words. So we must be especially quiet to capture the wisdom whisper. As we focus our attention and listen silently and intently, something magical begins to happen.

Paradoxically, even in the midst of busy work, we begin to notice time slowing down, slowing down, slowing down. We notice sounds we were not consciously aware of before. We notice colors, smells, people's expression...all with detached observation. Just a few seconds can precipitate this quiet awareness. And, in a magic moment, time stops, dissolves and disappears. We awaken to the true joy of being in the moment.

(I know it's become a cliché, but this, in the moment, is free from fear and doubt, and worth checking out.)

With just a little practice, we find ourselves able to sustain this quiet listening and peaceful peaked awareness for longer and longer periods of time. Even with thoughts interrupting, we can easily return to the quiet awareness and listening for the wisdom whisper. A beautiful piece of scripture capture the essence of what is at the core of this proverbial suggestion:

"Lean not upon your own understanding. Acknowledge me in all your ways and I will direct your paths."

If we acknowledge, or at least try being open to the possibility that our heart contains a wisdom unknown to the chattering internal dialogue and rational process, we just may find a key to contentment and peace of mind as a constant undercurrent of our lives - moment to moment.

Love.

Follow the Bouncing Beach Ball

She never saw it coming. Only knee deep in the water, waving and shouting at her friends on the beach, she was unaware that a big wave was building silently, approaching with stealth and that it would soon pounce on her from behind, knocking her over and tumbling her in the water like a beach ball. After a few tumbling moments, she stood up wide-eyed, beaming with delight and ran to grab a towel from her beach bag.

She wiped the water from her face and hair quickly, and dropped the towel with eager anticipation, ready to tell her story of what happened when the wave billowed over her...but everyone was gone. Everyone. She looked down the entire length of the beach, spun around to look the other way. Nobody. Not a single soul. Just her.

...to be continued, by whomever wishes to continue the story with what comes to mind. The Beach Ball has bounced your way.

Love

Affirmations, Admonitions, Suggestions, Urgings

I (facetiously) love all these facebook affirmations, admonitions, suggestions and urgings to be this or that; more appreciative, more loving, more grateful, more forgiving, more tolerant, more huggy, blah, blah, blah...

But we don't simply roll out of bed in our A/C condo in the south or off the warm grate in the frigid north and blithely decide to be this or that. It just doesn't work that way. If I'm pissed off, jaded, discouraged, desperate ... well, forget you (don't you love the family channel voiceover dub in's) and your cheery pabulum. I want a drink, a drug, some loud rock 'n' roll and a roll in the hay or the back seat, some kind of relief from the pain.

I'll take the temporary respite. What else you got to offer? A rehab program? Some pabulum from the pulpit? Give me a bleeping family-channel break. I'm on disconnect. No family. No, "look at all the people you are hurting," wishy washy bullshit. I don't care! Hurt people, hurt people.

So, before you offer pabulum...wake up. Awaken. Become a Buddha, a Christ, an Enlightened One dwelling in Sahaja Samadhi - pick your model. Then, and only then, can you offer a powerful and authentic testimony about what happens when you come into the very presence and residence of the very form of God - Love. Without that prerequisite, you are drooling pabulum- no matter how sweet and pious you strike a pose.

Then, and only then (in case you missed it the first time) do you realize that it is not a prescription to fulfill, but a description of what we are potentially transformed into, as living Self-Realized people, once we completely and utterly surrender our ego.

We become naturally...more appreciative, more loving, more grateful, more forgiving, more tolerant, more huggy - not based on some empty calorie pc intellectual concepts of how we "should be," but as our authentic Self. We have no need that anyone teach us. We know.

I'm not tagging this one. If you tune in, you might wonder why. Or not.

Love.

Pixel Pixies

Often, I wake up with a lingering dream or some out-of-nowhere theme that seems to have been hanging around waiting for me to wake up and hit the Write A Note facebook button. Other times I stroll around the home pages and find something that inspires me. And then there are times when I just put my fingers on the keyboard and wait for a pixel pixie to take over.

You can spot the products of pixel pixies by the tone of the note. If you sense a sort of mischievous, intentionally provocative story line with a quirky bit of humor running as an undercurrent, you can be pretty sure they are at work. Yesterday's note might be an example.

Last night in the dreamworld I was bringing a food tray with cheese on it that was to be part of a buffet at some sort of convention. As I waited for the elevator, several people, whose names I recognized from friends lists and comments, complimented me on my facebook notes and asked when my book would be out.

When I woke up and opened my email, the first email's subject line read, "Are you writing a spiritual book that you would like to have published?"

OK, OK, I'm working on it. Should be out in mid July, as a self-published book without an ISBN or Library of Congress catalog number. My experience is that publishing through small independent publishers is not the most effective or efficient way to attract larger publishers, so this one will just be a book "in progress", not an officially published book.

Back to the dream. I hope the "cheese" wasn't about my writing being cheesy or anything. Hello, pixies. Anything profound to offer this morning?

...

Guess this isn't a note for my book. More Blueberry Cobbler coffee might be needed. Maybe more sleep.

Later.

Love.

The Plain Truth

It starts with this vague sense of something impending or as if someone is watching us; those times we snap around to look at the side or behind us and find nothing there. We can't put our finger or our figure-outer on it. We can almost hear the, "Pssst, hey lady," or "hey, mister." What is going on?

Something is happening here, but what it is ain't exactly clear. Often the vague sense comes in on the second act, after a period of time in which we've responded to some intuitive inner stirring or longing without an object of the longing that we have any way to identify.

That response may be to suddenly find ourselves picking up new and seemingly odd choices of books, or changes in taste that range from experimenting with new foods that we would never have even considered, to impulsively trading our beige Chevy Malibu for an orange Fiat Sports Spyder or BMW Z-3.

And for some, that new book is Autobiography of a Yogi or Finding Your Authentic Self, the food is vegetarian or at least lighter and more water-rich food, and the sporty new ride a metaphor for a sprint for freedom. Welcome to the mystic path. We have become a seeker, an inquirer into the deeper mysteries.

The good news (the gospel) is that our Authentic Self, our inner Guru, is silently perched on a brocade pillow in the throne room of our heart, just waiting for our silent glance, our snaparound to see who said, "Psssst."

First we have to shackle the figure-outer, the chattering inner dialogue that insists that we just have to figure out this vague feeling and find the right formula to know what is going on. The Chatterer will offer sage advice, like that found in all the puffy proclamations of self-help gurus and the majority of silly support group philosophies: stop doing the things you know you shouldn't do and start doing the things you know you should do. Tell it to just shut up, and go into the silent place and listen for the wisdom whisper of the heart. If you don't have a clue, find a guru.

The plain truth is that the solution is not in the province of the rational process. It is in the startling and sudden rush of wisdom that comes from attuning to our heart song. A-1 on the jukebox.

"I will show you plainly of the Father (Father-Mother, Source, Authentic Self, God, Realization, Awakening, Enlightenment)," was the promise of Jesus to his students. More contemporary and inclusive language might read something like, I will point to the moon, the path to the plain truth of awakening in which you will personally come into the very presence and residence of God...and you will know the plain truth by direct personal experience.

He mentioned this truth often, and called it the truth that will set us free. Those who have been the incredibly graced and humbly grateful recipients of this freedom all resonate with his words, as well as the words of all authentic moonbeamers. Smile with acknowledgement, finders. Just say the words, seekers...

Beam me up, Scottie.

Love.

Power and Pettiness

Ever notice how some people respond to the power of words spoken or written and others trounce on a typo or find a flaw in the content and just have to polish your perspective?

Reminds me of a young man who happened to be in a youth detention center where my wife and I volunteered for several years. He told me that his mother was a typo trouncer and flaw finder, and nothing he ever did was right enough or good enough. She happened to be a very religious woman. One day in frustration the young man said to her, "Ma, how would you feel when you got to heaven if they said you missed a spot?"

Another memory light just flashed about a time I passed on a book about our capacity to awaken to a new perspective and insights that change our entire lifeview to a friend who happened to be an ivy league grad. The review my friend the Princeton grad offered was in reference to a short story within the book about how a beekeeper had an experience in which he felt he could communicate with the bees.

His entire response was a sneering, "I don't think that beekeeper really communicated with those bees."

What was that Jesus said of the hypocrites of his day? "You swallow a camel and choke on a gnat."

What do we choose, power or pettiness? My experience has been that the petty people have an emotionally vested interest in being right, and making others wrong and small. Their ego says I can do whatever you can do or say, only better. To me, that's a pretty obvious wound. And as the book with the most powerful title I've read says, "Hurt people hurt people."

I try to keep that in mind, but, man, I have to order a big helping of patience is virtue when I encounter the nit pickers. However...yes, Dr. Jung, there is that projection thing and I have found myself on the wrong end of that right or wrong seesaw. As always, there's only one disease and one cure...

Love.

It's a Mixed-Up Shook-Up World

In response to a note titled, "Power or Pettiness," about how some people respond to the underlying message in a talk, note or satsang - the intent of the communication, and how some find a flaw; such as a typo or some minor sub-point, and respond to that while ignoring the major point, a mix of comments came in.

Some of the responses punctuated the point in the content of their comments, others felt the perspective needed polishing, some missed the point entirely, and still others responded from a familiar recurrent platform - that of mixing relative and absolute (dual and nondual, ego-directed and awakened, manifest reality and spiritual reality) "truths". This last category is a subtle trap of ego and can infiltrate thinking and speaking that are more of a stumbling block than a teaching or help. Here's an example of one of the comments from a source I would have bet was beyond being trapped by this subtle distinction:

"if one welcomes everything that happens as Grace because it is preordained for our spiritual development, these problems do not arise."

This, as noted above, was in response to my expressed point about power vs pettiness, and by implication my frustration with this tendency in certain personality types. In colloquial terms, this quoted comment (which BTW contained a typo in its original form. Smile at the irony) puts the cart before the horse.

The tripping point is the very term, "spiritual development." This popular term is an oxymoron. Personal development and life-long learning in the relative blood, sweat and tears realm, yes. However, the spiritual realm is absolute and perfect. There is no such thing as spiritual development. Some may claim to have peeked into the spiritual realm, but stepping into perfection and living by intuition and revelation requires entrance into the very presence and residence of God, and being Graced with a sudden rush of wisdom that knows of perfection and perfect harmony. Period. Perfection does not need polishing. Brass does.

Now, to the awakened, events in the relative world of duality are seen as perfect, but even awakened, enlightened and full-blown gurus and masters continue to develop insights about the manifest physical living realm. Jesus wept. There are gurus who toss people out of satsang and gurus who remain placid amidst chaos - and yet do accept all that happens as Grace, but not for their spiritual development. See preceding paragraph.

But seekers and aspirants do not and cannot simply choose to accept everything that happens as Grace and for their spiritual development - other than intellectually. It is only by awakening that we rediscover the perspective of perfection and can accept all with equanimity. The very fact that they are seekers and aspirants speaks to this inability. It is the longing to realize that makes them seekers and aspirants.

And, because this distinction is hard to drive home...once again, awakened teachers can and do offer perspective for personal development, with the aim of preparation for awakening. But to simply call everything perfect to someone who is longing to know inner peace, who is in despair, dealing with pettiness or injustice is not only a disservice, but potentially a source of discouragement and deeper despair. The result can be to push seekers into putting on a thicker mask, to join in with the charismatic chorus without truly knowing the language of the heart and having stepped into perfection - the thicker mask, the ultimate hypocrisy.

I'm beginning to feel that this will be seen or not, and any further rambling will not add clarity. So, I'm going to leave it at that and see what comments come in.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emF3gtmVS0s>

Love.

Stop, Look, Listen, Stop

Early education, at least in places where they have railroad trains, includes the stop, look, listen good advice. Stop at the tracks, look to see if a train is coming, and listen - just in case we don't see the train. There's also the green means go and red means stop teaching, which confused me as a youngster. It's the cars that go on green and stop on red. What were they thinking telling kids to go on green?

Anyway, back to the stop, look, and listen. In the Mystic Heart Meditation, this format is the same, with one addendum, another stop. This meditation can pay immediate dividends as a relaxation technique and stress management tool. To really cash in on this meditation, first study with an awakened teacher, read the works of past and present day "masters" of these techniques, and/or read two or three hundred of the notes in my note section of about 400 notes. And for those who have already cashed in, just enjoy the review and reminder if you like.

The first step is Quiet Awareness. Just stop and become aware of our immediate environment and our physical presence in it; no inner narrative, just noticing where we are at the moment. This subtle shift settles us, and that settling can be felt. We go quiet, inside and out.

The look is both an outer look at what surrounds us and an inner look, noticing our breathing. By paying attention to when we inhale and when we exhale and following that with an inner look, imagining a soft diffused light that travels with the flow of our breathing, we will sustain the Quiet Awareness. This Breath Awareness simply overlays the Quiet Awareness, and the inner look "watches" the light travel from the top of our stomach to the top of our head. By following it, we naturally begin to look with what some traditions call The Third Eye - as we watch the light travel to the top of our head with each inhale.

The listen is even more subtle. It is called Heart Awareness. This is an inner listening for a Wisdom Whisper from the heart. This comes without words and brings a message of comfort, kindness and compassion to our consciousness. When we think of people who are kind and compassionate, we say they have a good...heart.

The last stop in this 4-part harmony is to stop following the breath, stop listening for a Wisdom Whisper and simply enter the stillness. Some use the term, "the diamond point of stillness," or, "zero point." The Wisdom Whisper still comes from the heart, but within the stillness it can, and does for many, bring much more than comfort. It brings a joy beyond words and a startling and sudden rush of new insights. The outcome is perfect peace of mind.

Ding, ding, ding.

Love.

Not Enough Words

Suddenly a new world opens. We are given new eyes - sacred eyes, new ears attuned to a heavenly music, a new heart filled with love, kindness and compassion. All who have been given this heavenly gift share this identical and precise illumination. And we are compelled to rush out and tell the world that there is a solution to pain and despair and war, that the destiny of humankind is to know God, to know inner peace, to truly join as brothers and sisters on this planet. But there are not enough words.

This can only be told in the language of the heart, and that language is without words. Different traditions and models for expression are all attempting to tell of this in their fashion. At the core, they are all about this very same opening, illumination, awakening, realization, enlightenment.

Those who consider themselves enlightened and yet speak and write about how enlightenment is not the same for everyone, and not everyone who is enlightened shares this knowing in the broad, yet specific, way it has been expressed in the opening paragraph, may have gained new insights, but authentic full-blown awakening enlightenment enfolds this newness, and all who know this know this...

Love.

Nice Job God

When the ego finally gives way, braces for the final scene in absolute surrender and prepares to exit stage left in what feels like certain death...it doesn't die. Oh, it is TKO'd for a while. But when we rise up to meet our Buddhahood, Christing, Samadhi, Realization of our true timeless nature, all manner of mostly indescribable bubbles of new insight float into our conscious awareness.

We recognize that there truly is a "power" greater than our ego, and the identity that we were coerced into believing was all there was to life, was merely a construct of a rational process mostly fashioned from fear

and doubt. Or to put it in a biblical way, fashioned out of our supposed knowledge of good and evil. As soon as we compartmentalized this duality we forgot our essential Self, having put on a mask.

With this persona, this aspect of ego that limited us to a concrete reality, we lived in a secondary or relative consciousness, no longer aware of our beautiful primary or enlightened and transcendent consciousness. When the urge came to scratch the mental itch that felt this inner longing, this sense of something missing, or object discouragement with the way our life had gone, and began to look for the answer that we somehow intuitively knew could be found - ego freaked out.

It freaked out because it had come to believe that it was the only resource available and the only tool that we had to safely and somewhat efficiently (at least some of the time) navigate our way through life. And when we began to look around for another way, it felt to our ensconced ego identity like our very life was threatened. And it prepared for battle. This inner battle is the story of all of scripture.

But, back to the breakthrough and the bubble bath of awakening. The startling rush of new insight is simply irresistible and we willingly jump into the fire that crisps our ego. Well, we actually have no choice at this point. The new insight tosses it in with its arrival.

And then, and then, we rise as a completely new, sparkling clean acknowledged spark of God's own fire. Everything is made brand new. We find delight in our body, our senses, the sky, the trees, the skyscraper, a passing stranger (actually, there are now no more strangers), a bug, a bush, a cup of Blueberry Cobbler coffee. Ego rubs its eyes with gratitude for a new enlightened playmate, and notices that fear and doubt have been replaced with kindness and compassion - along with a complete trust in divine guidance. And we find ourselves glancing heavenward and offering up a most beatific worshipful response to this new life with a...

Nice job, God.

Love.

The Force of Intellect

The force of intellect is a friend and a foe. It earns gold stars, Nobel Peace Prizes, and it put men on the moon. It also bars us from entrance to the interior castle of enlightenment.

When did the force of intellect become the pride of intellect and shut us off from pure intuitive consciousness? Was it when we finally got the potty training thing, or when we successfully tied our first bow knot on our sneakers, or maybe when we saw that gold star or A + on our paper.

When did we abandon the carefree awe and delight in a bug, a breeze and a squeeze in favor of praise for being so smart or such a good boy or girl for sitting in our seat and not getting "out of order."? At some point of social coercion we got in step, and most stayed there.

But for some of us, a persistent tap, tap, tap on the door of curiosity about life and the possibility of there being something missing caused a stir. As it morphed into discontent, then a longing and then a desperate longing, the battle was on.

Intellect was enjoying its tenure as principal of our lives and it was not at all happy about this unruliness. We were reminded that it was intellect that made us successful and, for the most part, kept us out of trouble. Never mind those few dozen smacks and careens off the negative wall. And Principal Intellect ranted on about how it was in charge and all this nonsense about something missing was, well, nonsense. Just get on with life.

But the itch grew unbearable and finally we boarded a ship of rebellion and set sail for an unknown destination. We pirated that old intellect and opted for peg leg and a eye patch. With grave determination

and not a little trepidation, we ordered intellect, ego and the persona we had worn for so many years to walk the plank!

Splash, splash, they were bathed in light, and from the ship's fo'c'sle we suddenly felt all of our fear and doubt, two of the intellect's favorite tools, replaced with kindness and compassion. In a startling rush of insight, we realized that we were Captain of the ship all along, but had been hoodwinked. We then ordered intellect and ego rescued (Sorry persona, but you were never real, just a mask) and re-assigned them as galley slaves, in service to the Captain.

Aye, aye, Captain.

Love.

Three Little Words

The romantic reader will quite naturally resonate with the title and be certain that the reference is to, "I love you." But there are three other little words that have had an incredibly explosive influence on the world, probably only second to the lovely ones.

Those words are from Christian scripture and translated to read in English, "...but by me," reportedly uttered by Jesus when said that no one comes to the Father but by me. That simple little qualifier is the cornerstone of mainstream Christianity and the sword of fundamentalism in the Christian camp.

This sets up the exclusive club mentality that in the extreme, and running through the mainstream, excludes anyone and everyone who has not accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior of humankind from any possibility of entrance into heaven, and even worse, assigns them to hell to be tortured with flames in a lake of fire for all of eternity. Ask many Christians about those innocents who may have been in a culture that never heard of or mentioned the story of this man, Jesus, and they'll just shrug their shoulders and tell you that they have a book that they believe God authored and which they interpret to say, too bad, they all go to hell, too.

As absurd, horrifically cruel and borderline insane as this ridiculously superstitious and blind allegiance to these three words sounds, it has an undeniable bear-trap foothold on the minds of millions. Today, in this "advanced" civilization and technologically mind-boggling time, this prevails. It is being taught to adults and children every Sunday around the world.

I do not know nearly as much about Islam, having grown up in a Christian household and spending time in a Hindu temple, but the very first Muslim I met said to me, immediately following our introduction, "We have the only true religion, you know." Seriously, these were his first words to me. And there's the battle, the overarching genesis of war. Millions who view each other as infidels bound for hell and; therefore, for extremists, it's no big deal to murder these condemned souls in the name of God or Allah.

There is a sprinkling of people around the world who have transcended these mad ideologies and who hold out hope for the future of humankind, and foresee a wholly enlightened population on a loving, peaceful and cooperative earth. Sounds farfetched. But imagine if it were the case now and there was talk about a coming time when millions would face off against each other in the name of their exclusive club of religion. That would sound impossible as well.

May that sprinkling become a pouring rain, and may peace reign one fine day. I'm standing under the sprinkler, hearing that refrain in my head this morning, "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me." And as for those three little words, I believe, as all awakened teachers do, that Jesus said something more like, "but by my understanding," which would be that but by our awakening to our spiritual reality, do we come face to face with the truth of our identity and God-Consciousness, regardless of religious or spiritual or even non-theistic affiliation.

Love.

Waking Up To Love

The well-intentioned suggestions that we be more kind, compassionate and loving as members of a world community, even the legislated and moral imperative that we do no harm to others, do little more than appease the half-awake ego. Yes, good thoughts and good intentions, and certainly some right action by a very small minority who feel the tug on their hearts. But look at the world at large, at war, at civilian killings, at abundance held captive by greed, at pockets of starving people juxtaposed to corporate stuffed turkeys.

People do not want war. Governments do. This is not an appeal for more law enforcement, more legislation, political action or revolution. Well, it is a call for revolution, a change of heart. The more I dig into my gut about this, the more I feel the stir of anarchy.

Gimme a gutsy guru to a tactical politician, any day. The guru says inner peace is possible and that it is only as we come as individuals to our own inner peace can we truly contribute to any hope of world peace. The politician says we can only hope to keep our own country safe by killing people in other countries.

When will the worldwide alarm clock go off? We cannot leave our fate in the hands of religious fanatics and warmongering government wonks. When will we wake up to love?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLgYAHhkPFs&feature=related>

Love.

Moment of Truth

Out of The Blue was the working title of a book I was in the process of writing when my computer went into a tailspin, crashed and burned. The book was an attempt at an autobiography, yet another transparent excuse for telling my story of a potential moment of truth; a moment of awakening to our true identity; a moment that brings profound inner peace and sets us free, a moment that comes out of the blue, a moment that slips us into eternity.

The book's page count was over 700, word count around 200,000. I couldn't seem to wrap it up. When I asked a friend about this evasive ending, he simply said, "It's because you are still alive." He meant, of course, that I wasn't ready to wrap up the story. Obviously, I'm still not.

Inner peace dissolves fear and doubt. And when fear and doubt are tamed, the lions aren't as frightening as they were before. Early on in life, fear and doubt have their assigned tasks of keeping us safe. An adrenaline rush brought on but a baseball rocketing toward our bean causes us to jump back - most of the time, in time. And fear of ruining new sneakers by almost making a leap across a challenging mud puddle creates just enough doubt to keep us from getting in serious trouble with Mom - most of the time.

But as life goes on, the lions' jobs go to their heads (our heads) and they roar at the slightest and often inappropriate provocation. They are self-appointed captains of our fate as long as we listen to them. They live in the ego jungle. If a girl catches our eye across the dance floor and we man up for the journey across the floor, you can bet those lions will start up with, "What if she says no. You'll look like a fool. You think that cutie would want to dance with you?," and shit like that.

Oh, we tame them at times, and certainly have episodes; sometimes lengthy episodes, of confidence and a feeling of being in the flow of life. And there may be some fortunate ones who never let the lions get too strong. But it's probably safe to say that fear and doubt, bumps and scrapes, and a dented self image are part of just about everyone's growing up experience.

And when we add more dents with bad decisions of our own, we can come to feel pretty beat up by life. For some this feeling grows like ugly weeds until any joy we may feel is soon choked out by the weeds, and we slip into quiet desperation, and sometimes nearly unbearable despair.

I've been there, got the dents to prove it. But...out of the blue, in the midst of a quiet meditation on a warm summer day, my engine (heart) was overhauled by the unseen hand of a master mechanic, and my irregular episodes and fear-laden stops and starts smoothed out in a way that was nothing short of miraculous. No words can convey it. It was a moment of truth; a moment of awakening to my true identity; a moment that brought profound inner peace and set me free, a moment that came out of the blue, a moment that slipped me into eternity.

I promised to tell anyone and everyone who would listen or read about this potential for profound inner peace that I am certain is an inherent human potential - the ultimate destiny of humankind. Those who know know, and those who long to know can know by connecting with some one of those who know.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZL4CdHd9ma4>

Love.

Money

One of the cheapest cuts is to accuse a guru of being in it for the money. Of course, there are spiritual and personal development gurus who are superb marketers and promoters and who make a lot of money. But, to a person, I've never met or ever believed that there is even one who was in it for the money.

In thirty five years of teaching, preaching, satsangs; including 7 years as a pastor in an independent Christian church (boy, were they not ready for a mystic), I have never charged or accepted "offerings," taken up collections or allowed any sort of merchandising at the services.

I sell art, books, writing, design and marketing services, offer personal coaching for goal achievement strategies - quitting smoking, losing weight, stress management (I prefer the term joy management) and career goals, present seminars called, "Living@WOW," with wisdom, optimism and wellness and teach meditation classes. And I charge money for these most of the time. I give away more books than I sell.

But when it comes to offering hope for freedom from despair and/or to satisfy that inner longing to find peace of mind, I offer my story (as I have in now over 400 notes) as testimony. I've written that I write and teach to honor a vow that I made when I offered to spend the rest of my life telling others about our inherent potential for a sudden rush of insight (awakening) that brings peace of mind, fulfillment of the inner longing and a joy beyond words, if I were to truly experience what the guru was telling me was possible.

Yes, as I brazenly, boldly, and redundantly write and tell, I was graced with that awakening. And while I do honor the vow, the real reason that I write and speak of it so incessantly is that my heart compels me to share this good news. My 3-part audience includes those who share this grace and know the compelling urge to tell of it, those who have tasted it and want more, and those who seek peace of mind. Of course, in truth, my only audience is God.

Love

Victory or Victim

I spent my first few years with my grandparents. My mother and father divorced shortly after I was born, and for whatever reason it was decided that I would stay with my grandparents after my mother remarried a couple of years later. However, when I was 6 years old, the decision was reversed and I went to live with my mother and her husband.

One evening, after my mother and her husband had downed their Friday night reward of beer for a good week's work, they got into a heated argument. It wasn't the first I had heard, but it was the worst. As the argument escalated into a pushing match, my mother was no match and she ended up toppling out the kitchen back door and down the stairs.

I was couched in the corner of the living room sofa when I heard, "...and take that lily-livered little bastard with you." That was me, and that was my cue to exit kitchen back door. I scurried like a scared rabbit. I don't remember how we got there, but Mom must have driven us to my grandmother's house.

The next morning I asked my grandmother if I could come back and live with her. She said, "No, you don't belong to us." To which I responded with, "Who do I belong to?"

I am convinced that this was the beginning of my spiritual search. Fast forward quite a few years and the answer to my question came like a thunderbolt in a sudden and startling rush of new insight: only God.

The intervening years were not without some halfway-to-China deep depression periods, interrupted by puberty hormones and the preoccupation they bring, along with some drugs and rock'n'roll...and a string of pretty bad decisions two out of three of those can bring. At one point, the despair bordered on rickshaw-readiness. I wanted to die. I asked God to let me die - repeatedly, daily, for several months. I feared for my sanity. I tested for clinical depression.

But a line I had read in the 5th grade in a study on world religions never left me for long. It was about Nirvana, and the description read, "perfect peace of mind and utter tranquility." I finally reached a point where I left open only two options: death or peace of mind - a stint in the Hoo-Hoo Hotel or a stay at Hotel California and a nice surprise, a victim-mentality prisoner of my own device or the victory of peace of mind.

One fine day, I claimed the victory and the sting was gone. But not until I had completely and utterly surrendered.

Not to presume to argue with clinical consensus or chemical imbalance postulations, but something in me feels that awakening changed me right down to my DNA.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrMrZnnfWqk&NR=1>

Love.

New Every Morning

As I begin another free trip around the sun, the day after my birthday, I am reminded that every day is a new day with new opportunities to love, share and enjoy the tremendous blessings in my life...beginning with gratitude for each breath.

My gratitude list is a long one. The condo we live in has a beautiful water view. The lady in red in my profile pic is my wife of 28 years. And, my birthday presents included an oldie but a goodie (like myself) BMW Z3, silver with black top, sports car. It's a 2000 with only 48,000 miles on it, and in pristine

condition (like myself). With all that, there is one outstanding object of gratitude in my life above all the other wonderful ones...

That is the day of grace, the day the heavens opened up and whooshed me into Divine Presence. Now, this may bring a bit of a groan and an eye roll from the frequent reader of my notes (Just kidding. I know you're much too kind for that) because I've written about it so incessantly, but when I posted a status on facebook mentioning my birthday yesterday, I included my "spiritual" birthday as July 21st, 1975 at 9:30am...and someone asked how I knew the exact date and time.

And so, once again, because that life-changing, right-down-to-the-DNA-changing event is shiny and brand new every morning; and has been since that moment, here's my "his story" once again:

At 10 years old I read about Nirvana, described as "perfect peace of mind and utter tranquility." From a rowdy blue collar family life, with a lot of tension in the house, I found this incredibly appealing. It was the beginning of my search for such an estate. I started checking out different church denominations and even went through a baptism ceremony - hoping this might be it. It wasn't.

Frustrated, I took a turn to the eastern traditions in which I had read about Nirvana. In the early '70s I caught the last train to Hippierville. In 1975, I found myself in a Hindu temple with a guru who said he could show us how to have inner peace. After a few months of satsang, service and quiet meditation, I was selected for initiation. This was after prerequisite attendance at satsang, readings and video viewing.

In the ceremony that took place on July 21, 1975, we were shown several meditation techniques. About halfway through, I became disillusioned and decided that this was just another dead-end over-promised trip and planned to leave the temple as soon as the ceremony was over.

But not wanting to disrupt the other 27 people who were part of this initiation session, I settled for just going quiet and enduring the rest of the ceremony. At 9:30 in the morning, I just sat down on my pillow seat, closed my eyes and begin to simply follow the flow of my breath. In about 20 seconds I was thunderstruck with an experience that is ultimately beyond description at its core.

I felt myself go "out of body" and whooshed to what seemed like a mountain. I was walking (drifting) along a path when I saw a glowing figure in a white robe. The glow was so bright that I couldn't see a face, but given my Christian background, the idea of Jesus came to mind. This lightbeing did not speak, but nodded and I knew I was to look further down the path.

The moment I did I was engulfed by a huge blue-white egg-shaped light, and immediately felt as though cradled in the arms of a Love with a capital L that kept flowing and flowing over me to the point that I felt I would drown. All the despair, guilt and degradation I felt from some previous bad decisions in my life were washed away and I "knew" that this Divine Presence and Divine Guidance would be with me for the rest of my life.

I had made a spontaneous offer the previous day, when I was told that I had been selected for initiation, that if I truly experienced this perfect peace of mind and utter tranquility, I would spend the rest of my life telling others - especially those who came in despair, as I had, that this peace of mind was authentically possible.

As that "vow" came to mind...now the words don't work as well, but to give them some frame of reference, I, as I knew myself to be, disappeared, dissolved and what seemed to be Christmas tree lights began to flash and this awareness of the entire cosmos, the universe, and the perfect harmony that keeps it all flowing was "shown" to me.

The next moment, I opened my eyes to discover, to my amazement, that I was "back" in my body. Well, I wasn't. I was gone. But this new identity was the new driver of this bodily vehicle. As I looked around, everything, everything, everything was brand new - right down to the fabric in the carpet and curtains.

And when I looked at the other people in the room, that was even more startling. I saw them through sacred eyes and immediately felt deep compassionate and kind love for them. I "knew" that this God of Love I had just "met" was resident within every heart - but for most had been covered up by the cares of the world. Still happens every day, and the words, "His tender mercies are new every morning," are alive in me.

OK, that's a brief response.

Love.

The Upside Down Spiritual Alarm Clock

This alarm clock doesn't go off to wake us up, it goes off when someone implies or directly declares that they are spiritually awakened. There are Yahoo! discussion groups and facebook felines just waiting to pounce on any such pronouncements and rip them to mousy bloody shreds. And mainstream religions certainly don't want any more Jesuses flipping their money tables over.

There's the old fallback zenview along the lines of, "He who says he is awakened is not." Of course, there's Gautama Siddhartha aka Buddha who openly declared his awakening and the one who so far set off the shrillest alarm clock, Jesus, with his bold declaration. And not to forget Ramana Maharshi, the icon of Advaita (not two or nonduality). Just maybe the Zen line was meant to address the ineffable nature of awakening – the impossibility of communicating full-Monty awakening in words.

And then there's the if-then professorial posturing. If you are awakened then this or that condition, behavior, or model-specific something or other must be in evidence...or not in evidence. When some (or many) doe-eyed fawning disciples fall in love or awelust with a guru and willingly submit to sexual exploits, the alarm clock all but explodes and the discredits roll up. I choose to zip it on this one.

On a less dramatic and socially touchy emoticon level, awakened ones who declare are sure to be met by those who somehow feel qualified to "rate" the authenticity of awakening based on the raters' esoteric knowledge and experience with this issue. There's lineage, language and LOCCs (levels of cosmic consciousness) to be minutely dissected. These are the kids, now full grown with overblown egos, who gladly cut up frogs in bio and chem lab while some of us couldn't look.

I've mentioned this tongue-in-cheek rating chart before, but I'm not about to give up on redundancy at this point: it's the one that list about 35 testing qualifiers for the authenticity of an awakened one. #34 – A true guru's flatulence has the aroma of patchouli. I love that one. It's as valid as any of the popcorn fart philosophies that test and debate endlessly about authenticity.

OK, so what does all this ranting serve other than to give me something to do while enjoying a couple of morning cups of Blueberry Cobbler designer coffee? I guess it's just to say, don't let the frog cutters and popcorn farters discourage you if you are on a spiritual and/or peace of mind quest. There are beautiful and authentic awakened teachers of present day enlightenment around who are not in it for the money or to get laid. They are in it out of compassion, love and a sense of gratitude and humility for being graced with such a gift, and feel compelled to share the potential for awakening and the peace of mind it brings, out of this love and compassion.

Love.

The Big Ticket

A short while ago, as of this writing, I took a job as an Internet Sales Manager with a group of automobile dealerships. More and more people search the internet before walking into a dealership, so I thought it might be fun to exchange emails and inform potential buyers, mainly because as a writer I live with a computer

setting laptop like some people have a cat on their lap most of the day and night, and figured this would be an extension of that...with a paycheck.

It wasn't that much fun. There were autoresponders that were less than forthright that went out with my electronic signature and a few other buggings that got to me, so I quit after 6 weeks. But, due to an ironclad agreement with my wife, I didn't quit before securing another job.

I went with an even bigger ticket item than an automobile and am now comfortably and enthusiastically occupying the VP, Marketing chair at Beggins Beach Properties in St. Pete Beach, Florida. BBP markets homes and commercial enterprises located on the barrier islands of the Gulf Coast.

Now if you're a reader of my notes, or by grace a book has manifested from my year of notewriting daily on facebook, you know that there is an even bigger big ticket item that caught my fancy many years ago and has me completely hooked.

Of course, this is about THE big-ticket item of God-Consciousness, spiritual awakening, or in non-theistic terms, instantaneously (often after years of preparation) learning the language of the heart. I would usually write, "The Mystic Heart," but do not want to exclude those who feel no need for theism (words about God and such).

All I can ever say is that we all have this potential. Some readers are nodding with acknowledgment and some are shaking their heads the other way, and still others are curious about the subject...or are desperate to find peace of mind. To those in the latter groups, I would offer advice to stay childlike in your expectations and open to the potential. Read a couple hundred notes and many other books, and call me or email if you like.

Love.

If...Then Revisited

If you really loved me then...
If you want it bad enough then...
If you're so smart then...

The if...then narrow argument and spurious point of view typically comes from pointy-headed players who are running an emotional manipulation game, attempting to create doubt and fear, and/or are invested in one-upmanship.

The most blatant use of the if...then pitchfork is recorded in the bible, when Satan ran the old if...then by Jesus. If you are the Son of God, then turn these stones into bread. After a few more if...then tries, of which Jesus would have none - game over (for now). Ego gets TKO'd, but wants a rematch later.

In my arena of choice (or choiceless imperative), presenting as an awakened teacher of present day enlightenment who not only incessantly tells his story of awakening, but encourages anyone who no longer wants to suppress their inner longing to know peace of mind to pursue the mystic path, oh boy, do I run into this.

To the pious pilgrim of fundamentalism, if I use vulgar power words like bullshit to make a point, then my purity is impugned and I cannot possibly be "holy" enough to be a spirit-filled preacher.

To the never not nondual neo-Advaitan, budding Buddhist, or haughty Hindu, if any hint of annoyance or, Brahman-forbid, anger should arise...sorry, your disqualified.

And on and on it goes. But there is an unassailable place on my personal property that none of this nonsense touches. (It just occurred to me that I am using a lot of alliteration this morning. I was once told that this is a childish device that an authentically awakened teacher would not use).

It is from this place beyond fear and doubt that I offer my ever-present taste of reality that says if you long for inner peace, it is within your potential to experience a startling sudden rush of insight known as awakening. And there are many models and paths to realization of this potential - none exclusive.

I'm not referring to the pop view of peeling layers and gradual enlightenment. In the relative world, we do mature and evolve and learn life-long, but in the spiritual or realized realm the awakening is an eye-opening instant blink to a whole new perspective on life. If you want to think of it as peeling layers, at least open to the idea that the "final" layer turns on the light - enlightenment.

Now, in the overused mix of relative and absolute language, you will hear that there is no "final" layer and spiritual growth never ends. But in my "school" that's blind politically correct bullshit that would keep us bent over, not quite there, pilgrims for our entire life. I am from the, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free," branch of the enlightenment tree. Not partially free.

If that appeals to you...then come back and see us again and again. Come back and read these notes again and again. Oops, was that an if...then?

Love.

The Famous Final Scene

I've noticed over nearly 30 years of marriage that when my wife, Susan, says, "You ready?", she's not really ready. Whether it's leaving for home after a visit to friends and family, or leaving to go shopping, cruising, or out to dinner, she's about 10 minutes shy of really being ready to leave.

I used to spend those 10 minutes on my feet, near the door. Now I'm more apt to stroll back to the dessert end of the buffet, pour another cup of brew, or finish my casual conversation at the first I'm-ready bell. I also learned along the way that pushing or rushing Susan to leave just because she signaled the readiness will automatically turn the 10 minute wait into a 20 minute wait.

Reminds me of a story about a husband who made the mistake of pushing his wife to hurry one day. The husband shouted from the door as he opened it, "I'll wait in the car," and unfortunately for him, as it would turn out, foolishly added, "Hurry up!"

To his amazement, he had no sooner shut his driver side door to the car when he heard the passenger door open. His broad smile turned upside down in a heartbeat as he looked over at his on-time wife. She was stark naked. Story is he never rushed her again.

Obviously, by now, I'm not ready to leave my daily regimen of writing a note. It's become like brushing my teeth and taking a shower. So, no heavy philosophy today, no enlightenment adventure, nothing more than staying true to my morning routine working my way up to the famous final scene.

Love.

Plain Vanilla

Although I am always true to my favorite Blueberry Cobbler designer coffee in my fashion, this morning's affair is with a newly acquired French maid; that is, French Vanilla coffee. This new taste bud mistress provoked the following flow of thoughts about plain vanilla.

We use the term "plain vanilla," to describe an unadorned basic premise or product, yet vanilla is an exquisite flavor. In 35 years of writing, and more recently 365 days of facebook notes, I have played with my favorite toys - words, in the single-minded hope of sharing my belief in, and experience of, awakening to piece of mind and a life of equanimity as a constant undercurrent, regardless of life's slings and arrows.

Oh, that I could offer up a plain vanilla set of words that would manifest this reality in the life of those who long for such an estate. Maybe my new French Vanilla mistress will inspire me and help sharpen my pointer.

Recently I read a piece of Bill Lindley's poetry in which he expressed a wish to share the consciousness of Love, with, "Oh, that I could hand it to you like a ripened plum." How beautiful is that!

Love.

All In One Bag

It always causes a little internal discordant clang when I read through employment ads that go something like: Sales Manager - Must be highly creative, meticulously detail-oriented, a taskmaster leader, and a real people person who knows how to motivate others.

Ever meet a highly creative person who is meticulous about details or vice versa? It happens, but it's rare. How about a taskmaster with great people skills?

When we look for an employee, business partner or life partner and we are attracted to their confident and driven goal-orientation, we shouldn't be surprised to find that they are not great at picking up their socks. They might be great at demanding precision and nit-picky neatness and attention to detail from others, but they are too busy for these minor details. They got stuff to do! And if they're a little too blunt sometimes, same thing - stuff to do.

If we're attracted to their high creativity, we shouldn't be surprised to find the checkbook out of balance. And if that detailed person misses an appointment or a deadline - well, that's typical. Precision is more important than some arbitrary time or date. Great people skills, ummm, not especially.

OK, I know you got the point, but one more: That sweet young thing at the receptionist desk who always remembers how you have your coffee and reminds you of upcoming appointments...don't bring your impatient demands to her. She values relationships above just about anything. Harshness hurts her. She'll move on - eventually. She doesn't like change, so it won't be abrupt. But one day...poof.

Ever go to the grocery store and buy, oh, say...soap, celery and a pie and watch the bag boy or bag senior citizen who didn't plan for retirement plop them all in one bag. Same thing. Don't put people all in one bag. You'll set yourself up for disappointment, and It could leave a bad taste in your mouth.

If we truly accept that, "it takes all kinds," we will find ourselves more tolerant of different personality types and forgiving of the things that we would never do...like be impatient, miss an appointment or leave dirty socks on the floor.

Love.

Easy Pieces

The truth of enlightenment comes as an awakening, a startling rush of new wisdom. Suddenly everything and everyone is seen in a new light. What we thought was our being, our identity, goes poof. We disappear. The world disappears. Time and space lose their relevance. And then, or concurrently, the rush.

The us and them we saw as reality before truth burst through are now seen as merely players on a holographic stage - a mind trick. A new unassailable "us", our being, our identity, an awareness that we never knew (or had long forgotten) suddenly moves in to replaced the former self with "something" ineffable, indescribable, delicious.

Artists - painters, poets, writers, musicians, actors, singers, dancers...all true artists offer up pieces that point to this truth. The difference between aspiring artists and enlightened artists can be seen in the production of their art - any piece of it.

Just as any "piece" of a holograph contains all of the holograph, any piece of the work of an enlightened artist contains this pointer. A phrase, a line, a graceful move, a brushstroke can cause a resonance in the heart. The easy pieces are an affirmation, a beckoning, a reckoning to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see...or aspire to such grace.

The easy pieces are nothing less than pieces of God breaking through the ego that insists that there is nothing more than a temporary mechanical existence for us. It's a lie. Let the truth shine through. Hug an artist. Embrace their work. Embrace your own reaction. Let loose with "bravo" when you feel it

The mind may not be able to explain why the dance, the song, the poem, the essay, the painting, the composition moved us to a quiet peacefulness, a rush of joy or even tears, but the heart knows.

Love.

The One Step Journey

The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. That's a familiar and well-worn proverbial bit of wisdom, as is the advice we find in the mountains of self-help books and seminars about the value of focus, commitment and determination in our efforts toward the achievement of our life/career goals.

We got personality type assessments, goal setting paradigms, visualization, affirmations, sales systems, weekend success seminars, The Secret, and a ton of other surefire health, wealth and happiness approaches in 3,7,8 and 12-steps from a broad variety of present day business, success and spiritual coaches, authors, celebs and gurus.

But there's a problem. If our first step is just the slightest, tiniest, fraction off course, we won't be headed in the direction of our dreams – at least not for long. The farther we go and the more focus, commitment and determination we apply the more distance we put between our goals and us. And never the twain shall meet.

There's a critical compass setting that most miss; that is, the really, really, really, deep down to-your-own-self-be-true goal. And even then, the self in the *to your own self be true* is most often, with rare exception, the little self, the persona (mask), the false product of social coercion that we have come to identify as our self.

The pure goal has been contaminated by the god of what will other people think, and with close and, as much as we can, objective examination will be seen as what Mom, teachers, siblings, friends and peers see as the way to go (or not go) for us.

So, what's the critical first step? Self-Knowledge. Self with a capital S and knowledge with a capital K. Until we do the inner work to awakening the hero within, and are set free from the early socially fashioned prison of thoughts (an aspect of ego), we will arrive at the doorstep of what we thought were our most cherished hopes and dreams to find ourselves still unfulfilled.

The weight we have lost, the addiction we have overcome, the material success we have achieved, the new job, relationship, car, boat, mansion, celeb status, full head of hair and muscles...will still leave us with, "Is this all there is?"

There is more. There is a God of Love resident in the throne room of our heart waiting to be (re)discovered. If we have discovered this Truth with a capital T, we realize that this was our true goal all the time. The rest is smoke and mirrors, dross, maya, illusion.

To paraphrase one of my favorite teachers from the ancient of days: If we will seek first the experiential knowledge of the inner kingdom and a real understanding of what this means, all that other stuff we worry about will be taken care of for us.

Love.

Never Say Never

This morning I mentioned to my wife that a colleague who is prone to nasty demeaning outbursts had gone a couple of days without resorting to outbursts to make a point said he was "trying" to change. To which she said, "Maybe you *can* teach an old dog new tricks."

This got me thinking about how easily we can slip into acceptance of old tidbits of wisdom that may have lost relevance or may even be based on a false premise from the beginning. Along this line, "Never say never," came to mind.

Of course, this old saw is meant to caution against absolutism. But it reminds me of how nonduality is presented so often in some contemporary "schools" via what has become a pejorative term - neo-advaita, Never say never violates its advice twice by simply stating its advice, and nonduality, by its very term admits to duality...or there would be no need for the non.

One of my favorites of the neo-advaita posturings is known as the advaita shuffle or mind screw, "There is nothing to realize. You just have to realize this." Second would be the signature phrase some use so redundantly, "Never not the case," as in, we are always whole and complete and there is nothing to realize...blah, blah, blah.

Why does this bring out the edgy side of me, even after a couple of cups of French Vanilla coffee? First, because this, "nothing to find...", stuff can be the source of deeper discouragement to those who are desperately seeking relief from pain and guilt, and are in search of peace of mind.

Secondly, we are not well served to follow prescription, but are better served by finding the truth in our own hearts, by direct personal experience. Many religions have been turned upside down by prescribing behavior as though we need a moral code, rather than recognizing that it is through realization and awakening to the inner kingdom that our inherent kindness, compassion and loving nature come through - naturally.

And to those who say that it is all harmonious and we come to it in our own time, my view is that those of us with the compelling urge to speak up about our potential for awakening and finding peace of mind are part of the harmonious chorus. All is well.

Love.

The Silent Partner

Imagine if we had a constant companion who went with us everywhere and this companion intuitively knew exactly the right thing to do in every situation. Talk about good karma (right action)! And imagine if just the presence of this partner caused doors of opportunity to open and attracted the right people into our lives.

If this were so, life could be a dream, sweetheart. We would live moment to moment with positive expectation - well, actually no expectation, just total acceptance, knowing that all is well and every moment is in perfect harmony with the universe. We would have no indecision, no should I or shouldn't I, no fear or doubt, and no complaints whatsoever. Just imagine.

But this is some airy-fairy fantasy, right? It has no basis in reality, right? Well, in this case two rights make a wrong. This is not some airy-fairy fantasy and it is based on experiential reality as reported by awakened teachers from the ancient of days to today.

This companion lives with us, in us, in the realm of pure intuitive consciousness. We knew our silent partner well when we were young and carefree. But we were "disciplined," to abandon our recognition of our friend and get in step with the real world of good and evil, fear and doubt, indecision and depravity. Someone locked up our companion in the dark recess of our minds and threw away the key.

We became solid citizens, rational, realistic, grounded. No more carefree nonsense. Sit in your seat. Raise your hand. Report to authority. Become a drone, worker bee. Punch the time clock. Adopt a blind faith. Subscribe to a superstitious creed. And wait to die, while harboring dark disturbing doubts about religion.

However, some of us refused to settle. Oh, we did for a while. But one fine day, by grace, the chains were broken. The key was found in a long forgotten pocket. The door was opened and our companion came rushing back with a flash of light and a series of sudden and startlingly powerful new insights. The companion was freed, we were freed, and we flew away together, as One, into the cosmos.

In Buddhism, this return of the silent partner is called Awakening - recognition of emptiness that is not nothing. In Christianity, filling of The Holy Spirit (Paraclete - one who walks beside) or being Born Again (in the spirit), and in various traditions in varying degrees of accuracy, beyond the scope of an early morning note and a pot of French Vanilla designer coffee, called; Samadhi, Satori, Enlightenment, Nirvana, and...Sha Boom...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oR_ds7ZF8Xg

Love.

The Ho Hum of How To

In order to be successful in whatever context you can think of or imagine...here's the big HOW TO that a lot of people charge a lot of money to tell you about:

Do the things you know you should do but are not doing, and stop doing the things you know you shouldn't be doing. Oh, they (the super successful at selling super success formulas) will have us break boards, walk on burning coals, jump down spin around, put money in little jars, write out our goals, set goals, visualize, chastise, schedulize and categorize until the cows come home.

But what's new, pussycat? If we've made more than teenage trips around the sun, we've heard it all before and seen it and recognize it even in its new and improved packaging.

So, we can jump on the medical cash cow of "treatment" programs, slip into our victim costume and whine or we can dig deeper and get to the root of the problem. Not the triggering event. Not the dysfunctional family farce. But the real root...feeling of separation from...well, everything, but especially our own inner wisdom - or some might say, God - the core that we have lost touch with if life is seen as anything less than in perfect harmony. Not the orchestration of relative life, but the ever-present experiential awareness of spiritual perfection. Here lies the answer to all of our questions and the solution to all our problems, and the accomplishment of all of our true goals.

Problem here is that as many silly support groups as there are, there are more sanctimonious religious and spiritual sanctums that profess to offer this, but offer little more than blind faith and subscription to superstition that a part of us knows is as farfetched as a night with Lady Gaga or a date with Brad Pitt for most of us.

Find an authentically awakened teacher - in a person, a book, a video, a sunset, a cup of French Vanilla coffee, or a guru...something, anything, that gets you in touch with your inner wisdom. When you've had enough of the superficial you'll look down the mystic path. Or not.

A Buddhist approaches a hot dog stand and asks for one with everything...hands the vendor a \$20 and waits for change. When the vendor doesn't return any change, the Buddhist inquires, "Don't I get any change?" to which the vendor replies, "Change comes from within."

Love.

The Determining Factor

In just about any competition, from sports to business to attracting a mate, we often hear that the victory will go to the one who, "wants it the most." But is that really, really the determining factor?

With all the reality slash talent shows running now, we see people with less than sparkling talent who desperately want to be chosen to compete for a chance to win. In varying degrees they beg, plead, cajole, promise, bawl and squall about how they want it so badly. We often hear, "This means the whole world to me," and such statements.

No doubt, their desire is there. But at least a couple of other determining factors come into play. Talent, or natural ability, is one. If I desperately want to beat Michael Jordan at a one-on-one basketball game, and he is absolutely nonchalant about it, am I going to win because I want it more? How about confidence? If I am confident that I can fake Michael out of his Air Jordans and beat him to the hoop, will that do it? Don't bet on it.

And then there's the work ethic. I may want it more, but if I'm not willing and determined to work and train harder and longer and smarter than my opponent, I could lose the game and the girl. In this case, better natural ability can and sometimes does lose out to the more determined and steadfast and earnest - even if I happen to be more gifted and better looking.

Is it desire, determination or a confident dimpled smile? Probably a perfect combination of these and more subtle goings on. So, how do we get there?

Well, speaking of reality shows, reality (sorry, nondual friends) has to come into play. See basketball challenge above. That aside, where do we find the marketplace that sells determination, drive, commitment, confidence and dimples? Other than Mario, dimples will require more than most are willing to pay, so let's set them aside also and stick with determination, drive, desire, commitment and confidence.

Google and GPS all you want, they come from within. But if someone threw a wet blanket on any or all of them, we have some inner work to do. Gandhi said that believing in a goal, even if we do not have the skills, we will acquire them along the way. Sounds like a good place to start.

But, once again, digging deeper, believing is not objective. So we got to add that to our shopping list.

And now, for those of you with enough determination to have read through this ramble so far, we come to the crux mentioned briefly above: inner work. What's inner work? Shutting down the rambling, chattering mind and entering the silent abode of the heart. It is the wisdom whisper of awakening, without words, from the heart that breaks all the chains, answers all of our questions, solves all of our problems, fine tunes our goals and plunks us smack dab in the garden where we can harvest the desires of our heart.

Love.

Transformation

Sometimes, out of the searing destruction of life as we knew it pops this little green shoot of insight. We then have a choice. Whether the destruction came about of our own doing or misdeeds, the mind-boggling movements of Mother Nature, an unforeseen accident, or the seeming neglect of an absentee creator who allows suffering, disease and death..we can sit in the charred ruins or nurture the new life.

A glance back, an out-of-the-blue synopsis of memory, will come. No doubt. But if we will persist in returning to the little green shoot, a startling and sudden rush of new wisdom may blossom one day, and the beauty of it will take the sting out of the pain. And this new wisdom will finally allow us to forgive ourselves, everybody else, Mother Nature and God.

Love..

Where Is Your Song?

"Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them."
-- Henry David Thoreau

This quote is an edited and updated remake of Thoreau's original insight, but it still makes the point, or at least provokes an interpretation.

Quiet desperation is that empty feeling in the pit of our stomach or the back of our mind that we have not (yet) really gone after what we truly and wholeheartedly wanted at some point in our lives. Maybe it was a childhood fantasy or a later desire of the heart to be involved in life in some special way, or maybe we've forgotten about it, but still have this vague sense of some missing fulfillment in our lives.

We (the "mass of men," in Thoreau's words) settled for the ordinary, the herd mentality, and bought into the idea that life's purpose is about the much-heralded "success" and worldliness that our education attempted to prepare for, or our family imposed on us with their expectations. Being a good boy or good girl, pleasing others, putting others first, was at the core of our socialization. And while those are admirable ethics and values, the problem is that we (our hopes and dreams) may have been lost and/or misshapen in the process.

And so a quiet resignation, a soft depression, a quiet desperation loiters in the stomach/mind. We can ignore it, deny it, suppress it at times - sometimes for long times, maybe years. But every so often we find ourselves mentally bouncing from flights of fancy in which we hear our song and then come back to stark reality with a thud. Hey, we have to pay the bills, right? Right. And then maybe there's the bigger price to pay...quiet desperation.

Thoreau's way out:

"If one advances confidently in the direction of one's dreams, and endeavors to live the life which one has imagined, one will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

But how do we advance confidently? It isn't enough to simply say the words, advance confidently. If we have not been confident, something from deep inside (or high above) has to instill that confidence and overcome the social coercion to conform and thereby sacrifice our dream.

And now we're on my stomping grounds, on The Mystic Path. Something beyond our corrupted or at least diminished rational process - an inspiration, an intuitive leap, a sudden rush of new wisdom and insight, a touch from God is needed. In theistic terms or not, something powerful is needed to shake us out of our fear and doubt and free us to endeavor to live the life imagined.

Meditation techniques and lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, time with like-minded non-toxic people) can, and has, flung open the door to freedom for many people - some who are reading this now and can relate from the other side of freedom. Sitting with (figuratively or literally) awakened teachers - through their writings and teachings can help us along what I call The Mystic Path, and to success on our terms.

Prior to the door opening, the dim ego will remind us of the potential for failure and the horrible consequences of it, the people we will upset and the dire straits we could find ourselves in if we fail. For our consideration is the possibility that we have failed ourselves. Where is our song?

Just a little weekend food for thought.

Love.

Staying Alive

The phrase/declaration that, "scripture came alive," with awakening is one that I've used often in my 35 years of teaching, preaching, satsang. The fact that I would even use the three terms of preaching, teaching, satsang in the same sentence should be a clue that scripture came alive in more than one spiritual or religious model.

In the Hippie era (which has not ended - only a portion of those of us from that era have gone white-collar hippies), the blend of eastern and western tradition seemed to have made quantum leaps. Many recovering Christians; those disillusioned with the pale and twisted teachings of much of the mainstream church, began to look elsewhere for inner peace and a manifestation of make love, not war.

So, what does the phrase scripture came alive mean? Well, having grown up in a Catholic family and having attended a variety of Protestant denominations in my early search for meaning and inner peace, I was somewhat familiar with biblical scripture. When I caught the last train to Hippieville and spent time in my latter day search for meaning and inner peace, I found myself in a Hindu ashram where we were taught comparative studies of the Bible and the Bhagavad Gita. And that's where I found my Self.

What before awakening were words with a promise became beautifully clear and poetic affirmations of what had happened to me with awakening. It's like someone saying that there's a million dollars in the trunk of your car and you think, "Wow, that would be nice," but the words don't really ring true - to then later open the trunk to find the treasure! Now, the wow is alive.

What occurred to me was that when Jesus and his disciples spoke of his returning to life, it is his life (and the life of all awakened ones in all traditions) - the truth, beauty and love of an enlightened life that comes alive in us when we awaken.

Breaking through the veil of separation that has us believing that we are "only" mortal beings and realizing, awakening to, becoming enlightened, is about...coming alive in this life and Staying Alive eternally as spiritual beings.

Love.

The End of Boredom

If you've ever raised children, or been a child yourself, you remember the wail of, "I'm bored." And, of course, that state is not exclusive to children and teens. It seems that the rational process or our thinking self insists on being constantly entertained. If there's no external entertainment, we will quickly take flight in imagination and an internal Q&A session.

We're either reliving the past and toting the emotional baggage of, "if only," that goes with it, or imagining a future with possible consequences and the consequential emotional baggage we may or may not pick up when we get there. And while we're on the mental launching pad, we will internally debate options, with the old, "should I or shouldn't I?," or, "what if?," concerns.

Seems that we would rather be worried and stressed than bored. And the advice we typically get or give as a cure for boredom is to find something to do or learn to relax. But those are both temporary band-aids that soon lose their stickiness, and we're right back to boredom or fear (unmasked worry or stress). Oh, we can always, or certainly most often, find something to do, but learning to relax is another one of those circular how-to merry-go-rounds.

We can learn meditation techniques that will occupy the restless thinking process, and meditation can be a stress relieving haven - and it is a step in the right direction. But we never truly come out of a restlessness and "learn to relax," unless we overcome a major obstacle by crossing a bridge to new insights.

The major obstacle is the superficial concept of a peaceful mind as boring. Being quiet inside, without reflection or projection, without some immediate ambition, is conceptually boring to the vagabond and wandering mind that would rather be in most any state other than living with the dreaded monster, boredom.

So, once again, faithful or newbie reader, we are back to Awakening as the solution to most everything...no, everything. Awakening - yes, Enlightenment, takes us beyond a state of mind and superficial conceptualizing into a realm that the mind cannot conceive. Awakening is capitalized, even in mid-sentence, to distinguish it from our thought process or an ordinary awakened state.

Awakening is to have the social persona (mask) removed. And the mask is not just external. When we are shifted from our childlike lightness and freedom of spirit and coerced into taking on our, "responsible thinker," identity we are entranced and chained to social convention. Our true identity has been masked.

Underlying our boredom is a spark of intuitive recognition that something has gone amiss. We may not put it in those terms early on, but as life goes on, we can feel the stirring. This will either be suppressed and we will remain entranced and feeling a quiet emptiness throughout our entire lives...or we will begin a search, an inquiry, into the lost treasure.

Some will find a guide, a guru, to point them in the direction and path the guru took to find their treasure. Others will search on their own, and still others will find that one day, out of the blue, while watching a sunset, watching children playing, reading a book, or listening to music...a sudden and startling rush of new insights and wisdom will hit them, and the treasure will appear to them. It will be right there where it's always been - inside. It's a lovely sight to behold. Beyond description.

When we are Awake and Aware that we are surrounded by Beauty, Truth, and Love we live in childlike awe of every breath, every bird, every bug, every woman in a red dress (and in my case, one very special woman). And that's the end of boredom.

Love.

The facebook Party

How about a facebook party? I hesitate to call it a political party, but will use this term for the sake of entertaining this notion. The facebook party will have only one item on its political agenda: Awakening. (For those who saw "party" and were thinking of a get together of facebook friends, I'm open to that, as well.)

Imagine what an enormous shift in the entire cultural, political and legislature scene this would create; not only the US but worldwide. It is far beyond the scope of this note or my rational capacity to even begin to imagine the specifics of the effect, but just for fun, a few fantasies about what would happen over time...

Government need no longer be centralized - so those who fear one world government can relax. Only those municipal employees who are in maintenance (roads and such) need stay on. Legislative sessions become primarily satsangs or teachings - and parties. The welfare state becomes a neighborly state, where we are all brothers and sisters and freely give to those who are in need. All debts are forgiven as in the ancient practice of Jubilee, and "financing" as well as "taxing" disappears. All prisons are closed. All health care is free.

Initially, all those jobs lost are replaced in service of working out the logistics of a new distribution of resources and lovingly and non-judgmentally attending to previously "neglected" brothers and sisters. And what we find over time (actually, we already know) is that there are enough world resources to provide abundance for all, once greed disappears.

All the issues and debates that we might imagine coming up would be only wispy clouds of thought that pass by as a compelling love and compassion and yielding nature emerges. There would be no need or interest in posturing, as is now done, that insists, for instance, that Republicans are inherently smarter than Democrats or Tea Partiers and vice versa, vice versa.

But only those already Awakened have a real sense of how this would work, and as a matter of fact all who are authentically awakened see awakening as the destiny of humankind. Of course, there will be some (lots of people) who see all kinds of "problems" with this whole scenario - the favorite pastime of the inflated ego.

Anyway, just a flight of fancy this morning.

Love.

Last Train To Hippierville

It was the early 70s and the Hippie era was well underway, but it had just recently reached the northeastern state of Maine, or at least my corner of that world, when I unexpectedly boarded the last train to Hippierville.

I'm not sure what hit me so powerfully. I had seen a photo of a young woman putting a flower in the barrel of a soldier's rifle and had a conversation about that with someone I had just met earlier that day, but I'm sure there was more to it than that. I remember staring out the window in the early evening, and it was as if my mind had gone completely blank. I felt I needed a few days alone - for no reason that was apparent to me at the time. So, I left my family to go spend a few days in a hotel...and never returned.

As I pulled into a Holiday Inn, a car pulled in beside me. The driver was the woman I had the conversation with earlier that day. She joined me at the bar for a beer...and as an old Rolling Stones song goes, "Then she blew my mind." I was introduced to an entirely new set of values and lifestyles. Details never to follow.

A few years and no haircut later, I joined what was then called Divine Light Mission, a world peace movement that focused first on achieving inner peace. More recently, at Unity, a New Thought Church, we sang a song at the end of each service containing the lyrics, "Let there be peace of earth and let it begin with me."

And now, a huge segment of social media is getting in sync.

So, a photo to go with this long, strange trip. It's still about inner peace. And it's still about...

Love.



Motel Clarity

It's like driving into a huge ball of cotton. Suddenly there's no visibility. All you can see is a white mist. And if you happen to be driving at any appreciable speed you know that you could soon end up playing the accordion - with your car, especially if the guy behind you doesn't appreciate what is impending. Huge car pile-ups can and do happen when a fog bank mysteriously opens for deposits.

When the fog is a little less dense, we can drive through it. And something unique happens to our vision after a few minutes of driving in fog. When we come out, we see everything in HD.

I think that early on, life is in high definition for us. The benevolent world in which we find ourselves is full of adoring looks, oo's and ah's, and awesomely fascinating things like bugs and dirt. But all too soon we are fogged in by social convention (read: coercion) and lose sight of our HD vision. We don't lose it. It's just fogged in.

In every age, from the ancient of days to contemporary times, there are those who for some fortunate reasons beyond our ken, come out of the fog and back into clarity. And they immediately turn on a light and look back for others on the road, hoping to be a beacon back to HD.

If we would take all the wrappings, posturing, shenanigans, marketing ploys, mysticism and emotional manipulation out of the guru game (any religious and spiritual "game") and simply reduce it to it's core...

it's about coming out of the fog and back into HD. Of course, some of us enjoy the "show" and find certain regalia attractive. Some even need a radically different show to help wake us up and bring us out of the fog. That's cool. As long as the manipulation and false piety are not present.

Motel Clarity. We'll leave the light on for you.

Love.

The Disappointed Guru

Disappointment is a unique word. If a guru, teacher, an awakened and enlightened one who has drunk from the cup of living water, happens to give into sputtering some four letter words when he or she spills guacamole on their fresh-from-the-cleaners white pants and sighs with obvious disappointment...are they dis-appointed from their guru status and no longer considered worthy or authentic?

This facetious bit of guided imagery is to make the point that while enlightenment does "permanently implant" an unassailable and unflappable undercurrent of equanimity and inner peace, even awakened teachers have their moments. The good news is that they are just that, "moments" and the emotional loop is measured in seconds, not minutes, hours and days of sputtering.

Yes, there are some who work at giving the impression that they are above all that and perfect equanimity is their permanent estate. But IMO and experience, the affected soft voice and words like, "Dear Ones," as the patented opening to satsang (or channeling - but that's for another mild rant) smacks a bit of soap opera, and are a bit dis-appointing to me. Doesn't necessarily mean that they are not awakened and have not been graced with startling insight and wisdom, it's just that they work a little too hard at impressing the fact.

And it doesn't necessarily mean that they are not great at satsang/teaching, and are not filled with compassion and a compelling imperative to help "seekers" and "inquirers" (a little distinction for the nondual distinctioners) as best they can. It's just that putting those who have received the remarkable and beyond blissful gift of awakening on a pedestal can lead to disappointment.

Anyway, just trying to keep it real. That's all I have to write about that.

Love.

Psssst, Wanna Know a Secret?

There is no secret law of riches and wealth. The closest that the rational mind has come to anything remotely resembling the law of attraction and the secret of riches is demonstrated by those who realized that they can become rich marketing the supposed secrets of "How to make a lot of money and have all the things you want." You can make a lot of money by telling people that you know how they can make a lot of money.

All the affirmations, meditations, concentrations, machinations, charts, lists, budget envelopes, glass bottles, loose change, chest thumping, jump down, spin around "formula" for getting rich; with rare exception, only make the marketer of these games rich. How many books, CDs, tapes, personal coach fees and "free" seminars about getting rich have cost people thousands of dollars? And how many of these books, CDs, tapes and such are now gathering dust - in the mind and on the shelf?

Underneath our desire for riches is the believe that money will bring peace of mind. Yes, money does give us more freedom and make live more enjoyable. But for most, the pursuit of it through some mythical secret is a fool's journey to disappointment and a stint in Heartbreak Hotel, if not the Hoo Hoo hotel.

Likewise, there is no secret formula for turning the dualistic leaden mind into the golden glow of divine light. This one gets a little trickier. Like many of the marketers of how to get rich, the marketers of how to become enlightened may sincerely believe that they are passing on authentic formula. And they may have helped many people improve their lot in life by pointing them in a new direction.

However, like the get-rich marketers, the get-enlightened marketers are often unknowingly flaming the fires of duality, the feelings of polarity, the haves and have nots, and leaving the vast majority of their "followers" in the dark. They both are guilty of way over-promising and overstating their knowledge of "how". And when money is dropped in their jars by fawning disciples in payment for these over-promises and overstatements, we got troubling times and troubled people.

Oh, the times of anticipation and participation in both the get-rich and get-enlightened retreats and seminars are high times, filled with like-minded bonds of fellowship...until the following Tuesday when the dust settles and begins to gather on their quickly fading enthusiasm. Of course, some hang on to the over-promises for years and years, and some never let go.

So, where is this going. Doesn't sound too uplifting, does it? Well, let's go back to the second sentence in the opening paragraph. Notice the reference to the "rational mind." Therein lies the problem. As long as we think we are going to think our way to a big bank account or to our true home, where the true riches will be found, we are deceived. It is worth repeating that many who "teach" in either camp are sincerely hoping to be of service and are not intentionally deceiving anyone.

(Of course, we can inherit money and have made good financial choices and acquired a certain amount of wealth, but we still may not have found the peace of mind we thought it would bring. For those who have found contentment with money and feel no inner stir that creates fear and doubt about what is really important in life, the parallel ends.)

In my opinion and experience, a very small percentage of seekers of wealth or enlightenment achieve their goal. Most settle for knowing about, having faith in, or thinking they know about such elusive "things".

I cannot speak to the attainment of wealth. But I can speak to the attainment of enlightenment. That's what I do incessantly and am compelled to do by a choiceless imperative that was nothing I came up with on my own. And I speak and write in glowing terms of the incredible joy, relief and clarity it brings.

How often we hear words like, "If I only help one person...it will all be worth it." Well, I've never felt that way at all. I want every person who resonates with any words about enlightenment to catch the same train that by some mysterious grace stopped to pick me up. But over the many years around the campfire of enlightenment, I've found only a rare few who were willing to jump into the fire.

Check out the history of many of the big names in the enlightenment game and you'll find a very thin downline of those who were enlightened in the presence of their "master". Now, of course, Jesus and Buddha and Mohammad have huge downlines of followers...but again a thin downline of authentically enlightened.

Some of the nonduality non-teachings say to just accept what is, but there is always a rejoinder (a loop back that bites their logic on the ass) including the words "only" or "just". Like, you just have to see it, or the only difference is realizing it. Well, that clarity comes when we jump into the fire and drop all concepts, empty our mind and willingly trash everything we previously knew.

And that don't come easy. You find that many (most? all?) of those with nondual clarity or enlightenment were former residents of Heartbreak Hotel and/or Hoo Hoo Hotel.

So, you're always welcome around my campfire. Seems that most who come have already been there and have no need for teaching or being toasted like a marshmallow in order to fully understand what compels me to ramble on so much. We just enjoy the company.

This morning, this unusually edgy notes may be a product of my cupboard being bare of coffee this morning. Maybe I'll come back after a cup or two and delete this whole note and start over with nary a discouraging word.

Love.

I Know Nothing!

Yes, it's another bold statement. Claiming to know nothing is pretty audacious. I've always been fascinated by the often quoted (or at least paraphrased) words about awakening and enlightenment to the effect that those who know do not say so.

First of all I don't agree with that perspective on the face of it; this is, how it is typically interpreted. Jesus and Buddha are a couple of exceptions. My take is that this bit of wisdom was meant to convey the truth that there are no words that can describe awakening and enlightenment.

The Buddhist phrase, "Emptiness that is not nothing," or, "Nothingness that is not empty," attempts to convey the mysterious awakening that the rational, linear knowledge ability is incapable of grasping. So, secondly, to know "nothing" is to be have attained Buddhahood (and Christ Consciousness - to use a parallel model that is expressed very differently, but precisely the same at their core).

The last great hurdle to awakening is the incessant inner chatter and persistence of the rational process that we associate with ego or persona. In order to overcome this hurdle and make it through the transit to awakening, we must surrender every concept, quiet every bit of internal chatter, and every bit of knowing that we previously held as our reality. But that don't come easy. We must come to a place where. we know nothing.

Love.

Say What?

Ever notice, here on facebook and in life how a note, essay or comment; especially about things spiritual or philosophical, brings a quote from someone else that is correlative, or a question about whether this or that book has been read - because it offers the same view?

What prompts that? We cannot take what is offered as personal experience or philosophical view on face value from the one right in front of us? Somehow a pop book or movie or comment from a celebrity has more weight?

I once asked Dr. Richard Young, a frequent flyer here on facebook, an author and psychologist who has a fascination with things spiritual and philosophical about this, and his response was that it is because celebrity and obvious inference or direct announcement of awakening and enlightenment creates envy and anger about someone else having "something" we do not have. I thought his answer was plausible. (As a side note, he removed me from his friends' list when I critiqued one of his facebook epistles as having the weight of a, "popcorn fart.")

At the extreme end, stories of what happens to original reporters of direct personal experience of things spiritual or philosophical runs from fawning celebrity at one end to crucifixion on the other. I'm reminded of the story of Buddha meeting a monk shortly after his awakening and proclaiming his awakening to the monk, who continued on his way shaking his head and muttering, "If only it were so."

Given a history of rambling on unabashedly about awakening, and appearance of several Yahoo! discussion groups (and they were loaded with yahoo's), I saw my name on a list of, "Awakened Teachers of Present

Day Enlightenment." Of course, awakened teachers cannot really teach anything. We can report our experience and witness to what we consider the penultimate of human experience, tell our story, read parallel reports and encourage those who share a fascination with things spiritual or philosophical.

We might even suggest certain lifestyles, meditation, diets and such that may or may not have contributed to the awakening. But of how awakening happens...once, again, I know nothing. I do know that upon opening awakened eyes, all we see is...

Love.

On Whose Authority?

Who sets the standards? Who makes the rules? What gives them the insight? What gives them the right? On whose authority do they speak?

The ordered, rational and logical linear thought process associated most often with ego or persona either asks these questions or if threatened and insecure will unquestioningly get in line as expected, and sometimes the reverse is true; that is, the threatened and insecure ego will demand answers and the self-assured have no problem with the rules in place. So, there's an upside and a downside.

In school, the standard is perfection. 100. A. A+. Gold stars for right answers. The upside is that we strive to be the best. The downside is that it causes class distinction, is competitive and sets the stage for cementing our identity in being right and egoistic - at the expense of our true identity.

In the arena of religion and spirituality, the standard is morality and authenticity. In Christianity, Jesus is held as perfect, sinless, and authentically Christ Conscious, one with God. Of course, in his earthly days he was neither considered perfect, sinless nor authentic. "On whose authority do you speak?" was the imposing question that contributed to his physical undoing.

An offshoot of those religion standards are today's list of what qualifies and what standards must be met by one who steps up as an Awakened teacher. The most shaken platform is obviously the morality and "lust of the flesh," standard. That hardly needs any comment.

The other is the authenticity issue. This definitely goes from the ridiculous to the sublime. It's the old, "if...then," argument most often made out of superficial standards and superstitious nonsense. My favorite is a facetious list that has as #34, "An authentic guru's farts will smell like patchouli." But seriously, folks, the idea of setting standards is naive at best.

Here's my naive take: Authentic Awakening will bring a rush of new insight and sense of Oneness, an encounter with Divine Presence, or in non-theistic terms, a newly enhanced sense of what Love is all about, and an unassailable inner peace. Beyond that, the gloves are off and the standards are off. All the smug "if...then," that brings slings and arrows of accusations meant to discredit the authenticity of the awakening enlightenment are bogus and unwarranted. All attachments of the "if...then," variety are virus infected and will not be opened. Awakening, once experienced, is a permanent marker and cannot be erased by accusation.

Awakening stripped of the religion superstitions is about clarity and a return to our authenticity, which can be thought of as tapping into another "dimension" or grasp of reality that replaces the ego as captain and puts the heart in charge. Read my previous 320 or facebook notes in my vain attempt to impart what awakening is about in precise detail. Cannot be done. It is experiential, and as much as this pisses off the ego, it has to be experienced to be known.

Attempts at "teaching" are seen as driven by compassion and therefore resonate in the heart, or are viewed as arrogant and inauthentic ego driven nonsense meant to exploit. Sometimes seen as a little of both. Either there's repulsion or an attraction. Can't touch this.

I got to get some coffee.

Love.

Breathless

Still, after 30 years together and 28 years of marriage, when Susan walks into the room I am stunned by her beauty and grace (even if she just left a minute ago and returned). I look at her first thing in the morning and my heart leaps like a teenager anticipating his first...well, kiss. In the evening, when she falls asleep while I'm giving her a foot rub, I give her foot a tender squeeze and linger over a long adoring gaze at this angel.

She leaves me breathless. And that reminds me of...

A short time after returning from my long ride on the last train to Hippieville, I happened to catch a segment of a show on Near-Death Experiences. I was just walking through the room where the television was on and heard the words, "...then this huge, egg-shaped, blue-white light engulfed me and I was in the presence of God."

It was like someone nailed my shoes to the floor. I stopped and spun around to look at the TV. I had used these precise words in relating my experience in meditation a few weeks before. Now, this show was about four people who had Near-Death Experiences as a result of a traumatic accident in which they temporarily were unconscious and without any signs of life; any pulse or heartbeat, who later "awakened" to tell these incredible stories that paralleled each other's in many specific details.

As I listened, I was absolutely stunned to hear their words. All four spoke of the light, this heavenly experience, of waves of love and forgiveness, a dispelling of fear of any kind - including the fear of death, and a life-changing sense of freedom...virtually all of the content of my parallel experience in meditation.

My mind reeled. How could this be? I hadn't had an accident or been declared dead and then revived to tell this incredible tale. I was sitting in an ashram (temple) quietly meditating, perched on a soft pillow.

Years later, Susan brought home a tape by Swami Kriyananda (J. Donald Walters), an American direct disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda. In this audiotape he spoke of yogis who could go into the breathless state via meditation. OMG! There is was.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSt5spazebw&feature=player_embedded

Love.

Paid in Full - Part One

Usually - practically always, when my fingers hit the keyboard the words flow from a broad premise that comes to mind a few minutes or seconds before I begin to write. Sometimes I just put my fingers in place and it seems that the words flow spontaneously.

I have a premise in mind as I begin today, but find myself strangely struggling to express it. The difficulty lies in the fact that it is so easy to get caught up in concepts and attached to a paradigm or framework that is used to hang the underlying thought on, that at its core is ineffable or inexpressible and must be approached metaphorically, and...

This is the basis for misunderstanding and confusion that leads to disputes, debate and disagreement that in turn cause religious and/or philosophical separation. Attachment to one model or the other can cause us to

regard another's perspective as naive or superficial or even inauthentic if it doesn't fit our model. I suspect that today's note will be no exception.

For instance, in the model that I am most familiar with, the teachings of Jesus, there are parables and beautifully poetic teachings that clearly express, in retrospect, the content and context of my personal experience of awakening.

When I read, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free," my heart glowed and my spirit soared with recognition. And as I read scripture from other traditions, the core truth was also unquestionably evident in them as well.

OK, enough pussyfooting. Here's what is bugging me today:

I think the whole thing about karma, karmic debt and all its offshoots, is totally misconstrued and there's a whole lot of bullshitting being tossed from intellectual ivory towers that is naive, superficial and inauthentic. The same is true with all the differing views of ego and what happens to ego with awakening and post-awakening. But let's save the ego thing for another rant. Back to karma.

The basic premise is that we incur "debt" for misdeeds – not only in this life, but also for past lives (another tab here for a later rant), and we must work to counter them with right living and such. Now this is probably an oversimplification, but it serves to make the point – or counterpoint.

With authentic awakening, karma is paid in full – past, present and future, or it isn't authentic awakening. Awakening is the "birth" of a new being, a timeless and spaceless being, ever-present in eternity and unassailable by karma or any other sort of religiosity and attendant bullshit. I got the receipt, and it reads, "Paid in Full."

Love.

Paid in Full - Part Two

Part One ended with: With authentic awakening, karma is paid in full – past, present and future, or it isn't authentic awakening. Awakening is the "birth" of a new being, a timeless and spaceless being, ever-present in eternity and unassailable by karma or any other sort of religiosity and attendant bullshit. I got the receipt, and it reads, "Paid in Full."

If there is karma to work out, its workings are relative to the relative reality, not the absolute reality. That is to say (write) that the working out of karma has nothing to do with the new identity of an awakened one. If the relative world is "illusion" (maya), and from an awakened perspective it is - although the word illusion doesn't really capture the reality of awakened nondual consciousness, then karma would also be illusory.

Imagine two identical looking birds on a branch. One is eating a worm and the other is watching. We move to the watchtower, the watching bird, with awakening. We exist, materially, within the manifest bird, but our true existence is as the unassailable watcher. And that brings perfect peace of mind, utter tranquility and freedom from any such thing as karma.

OK, I'm karm now.

Love.

Before Blueberry Cobbler Coffee

This morning I opened facebook before breakfast, and before I knew it I was hit with some incredibly beautiful and insightful writing. Robin Harger, a facebook friend, commented on his particular insights into karma and how that whole model works that are intriguing and beyond denial in my personal experience.

Then, a stop at Vicki Woodyard's profile place to find myself laughing at her incredibly creative word play and childlike-giggle-producing imagery (she has an imaginary playmate who throws cookies at people to get their attention), misty from empathy with the pain in her life that she weaves into her lessons, and grateful to be friended by her.

Robin is in New Zealand and writes with the precise and deep insight of a mad scientist. (I had to throw in the mad.) To make a little personal comment, he has a penchant for polishing any perspective that is presented on facebook from other writers that even slightly glosses over or misses a point. That can be a little exasperating for those of us who think we're so smart already.

Vicki has written a book, "Life With A Hole In It." She effortlessly weaves jaw-dropping, awesome and inspiring word tapestries, woven from intense periods of spiritual guidance, awakening(s), and the daily reappearance of the pain of loss. She lost her young daughter and her husband, much too early, to cancer.

Nothing much other than this from me today, only to acknowledge how grateful I am for the connections, encouragement, opportunities and challenges of the whole facebook phenomenon. And to let you know that I got a whole lotta lovin' for you.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7N7CFLuto8>

Love.

Blueberry Hill Revisited

In an earlier post today, I mostly wrote about a whole lotta shakin going on, and a whole lotta loving. I also noticed that I was only allowed a few tags. So, I'm adding some new ones here. Sorry if you got a double. As I've written several (a whole lot - to stay with the theme) times about my affinity for anything blueberry. When I posted the link to Fats Domino's Whole Lotta Loving, I forgot for a moment that he also sang Blueberry Hill. No doubt where I found my thrill. And the thrill goes on. So, here it is again - the post and the song(s):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dl5hknXqXps&feature=player_embedded

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Love.

Whatever Happened to God?

God has become Nondual, That, This, Now, Oneness, What Is. What a sad linguistic affair. Organized religion; mostly due to the convolution of the original awakened teachings, has a gaping hole in it through which the last few generations have exited en masse stage east, leaving the God of Love behind.

Then many of the unfaithful (to Christianity and other organized religions) have taken to the more spiritual and esoteric eastern religions...and proceeded to water them down to nondual, nontheistic "sophistications" from an ivory tower ego full of intellectual pride. Ramana Maharshi, the consensus icon of nonduality, offered the beautiful phrase, "Love is the very form of God." But contemporary nondual adherents often prefer to leave any theism (words about God) out of their pronouncements.

OK, to each his or her own. Including my own. So, once again, I parade out a piece of my story to make a point. In an awakening experience that finds many parallels in NDE (Near Death Experience) reports, I encountered a glowing figure who "sent" me into the very presence and residence of this God of Love. Call "it" what you will. I was nearly overwhelmed with wave after wave of Love and "washed" clean of all the guilt, shame, fear and doubt that I had dragged around like a bag of rocks for so many years.

As a result, scripture came alive for me. The words of awakened teachers (my term of preference), like Jesus, Buddha, Ramana, Prem Rawat, Osho and a host of others, jumped off the pages, clearly containing layer upon layer of meaning - all underscored by the teachings that we can connect by direct personal experience with this God of Love.

Now, before you read into this that I push any idea that my way is the only way and the only valid awakening - I don't. But neither do I ever plan to step up to the watering down trough and leave God out of my story. I just don't know what it would be like to experience nonduality, oneness, this, that, now, isness without the waves of Love that utterly changed me into a "Loving" being. Just doesn't appeal to me.

My "mission" is to tell my story to all and any who resonate with the empowered witnessing that we can be relieved of pain and fear and guilt, and find perfect peace of mind. Not stupefied beatitude or blissed out blandness, but free and productive joy and delight in life. This is the promise of the awakened teachers from the ancient of days to...today.

God is...

Love.

That's Entertainment

There's a bit of scripture that advises us to be kind to strangers, because we may be, "entertaining angels unaware," (that they are angels). This would imply that angels (also?) come in human form. So, without getting into heavenly hierarchy, let's entertain that notion for a bit of entertainment.

Now, if a stranger smashes your car window as you pull up to a traffic light some dark night and demands your money, it is probably a safe bet, but not certain, that this stranger is no angel. Who knows what lessons and confrontations we must face to look heavenward in search of THE answer?

But the stranger on the bus, the new kid in town, that lady in red, the one asleep on a park bench, or the one who caught your eye across a crowded room on some enchanted evening...just might be. How cool is that?

Not being certain what kind of influence angels actually have in the heavenly realm; but using this model, let's say they can successfully appeal to God on our behalf. So we adopt the advice and decide that anyone and everyone we meet for the first time, and maybe those we've known for a long time, just may be angels. What might we say or do or wish for in their presence?

I'm reminded of the time I pulled into a parking space to find that I had no money to feed the meter. I was running late for a meeting and glanced heavenward - to then look back down and see the exact coin I needed laying on the ground beside the meter. I wanted to take back my appeal. Who wants to waste a granted wish on a parking meter payment!?

Anyway, back to the question of entertaining angels. Would we really wish for a quarter, a tin cup bracelet, a jazzy new Z3 sports car, that hottie in red, or...the keys to heaven - Awakening or re-Awakening? And is it possible that an angel could point us in the right direction to the keeper of the key? Or are they keyholders, themselves?

Jesus advised his groupies to seek first the kingdom of heaven and a right understanding of what coming into the very presence and residence of God was authentically about, and told them that then (once they were awakened to this understanding) all the other fashion statements on their wish list would be added unto them.

OK, just some food for thought. I'm going to finish my Blueberry Cobbler designer coffee and then take my lady in red for a spin in my jazzy new Z3 sports car that she got me for my birthday recently. No doubt about this former stranger's (now my wife for 28 years) status. I knew she was angel the moment I saw her across a crowded conference table.

Love.

A Hero Waiting to Happen

My younger brother, Raymond, was 5 and I was 10 at the time. We were picking periwinkles (little snails in shells that cling to the rocks on the edge of the ocean in Maine), walking along the rocks and ledges. As Raymond reached for a periwinkle he leaned just a little too far and toppled into the water.

We were not too far out from the shore, so the water was only about 8 to 10 feet deep. Problem was, Ray was always a little afraid of the water and had not learned to swim. When I saw him go into the water, a funny thing happened. Without any forethought or reasoning I dove into the water.

The reasoning came just a split second too late. I couldn't swim either. And I had no idea how to proceed. I remember grabbing Ray by the waist from underwater and lifting him up so that his head was out of the water. Of course, I was still underwater. This was not a long-term plan.

I pointed us toward the shore and shallower water, and kicked like a shark was about to nibble on my toes. Well, of course, we made it. But we lost our buckets and all of our periwinkles. In a few seconds we were on the beach laughing about the whole episode.

It occurs to me that many people who have immediately moved to right action and rescued people in a life-threatening situation, and who have later been duped "heroes," don't feel like heroes at all. A part of them recognizes that it was not their rational and logical choice, that there was no weighing of the risks or should I or shouldn't I thinking. They just moved. Boom!

This leads me to believe that there is a hero waiting to happen in each of us. And that hero resides in the inner kingdom, in the throne room of our heart, and knows of no separation between us, knows that all of life is interconnected and that we truly are One.

In spiritual awakening, it is this hero with whom we come in contact - in a startling way - without any thought. Boom! Maybe the circumstance has to just right. Maybe our hunger and thirst to satisfy an inner longing has to reach a peak where we abandon any reasoning and dive in. But the hero is there, in everyone.

In an old cartoon, Pogo famously says, "We have found the enemy and it is us."

Well, in this note, the theme is, "We have found the hero and it is us."

Love.

Soft Affirmations

While I'm not a big fan of affirmations that are merely self-talk of some future wish which the debate-ready ego can scoff at as unreal, I'm not totally against them. One morning several years ago a series of 15 or so mind games somewhat in the manner of affirmations came flowing into my mind and onto my computer.

What was created that day were a little pocket journals with these brief inspirational thoughts as part of goal achievement strategies such as stress management (joy management) and relaxation, weight loss, habit-breaking; especially smoking, and sports performance improvement.

It just took minor words changes to make these pocket journals interchangeably specific to the goal. Each one has the brief affirmation on the left page and the facing page is blank for notes to be made each time a particular page is read. See the cover of the weight loss journal below. Here's a sample of the introduction and one or two of the pages:

Good For You! Welcome to From Overweight to WOW!

Just spend a few minutes each day reading this little affirmation booklet .
Make notes about what you ate and how you feel each day on the "Daily Journal" pages.
There's only one rule. All of your journal notes must be positive.
No harsh comments allowed, either about the program or about yourself.
Use the journal for 14 days, then keep it in your pocket and read the affirmations as often as you like!

Be A Child For a While!

Every time I even think about food...I'll take a minute to be a child again.
I'll run, jump and spin. If I can't do it physically, I'll do it mentally.
I'll send a message to my brain that I'm alive and vibrant.
It will be like drinking a magic healthy elixir.
This simple exercise will begin to change my thoughts about what and how much I eat.

Define Success!

Success is the same for everyone! I may think that because my list of goals and aspirations is my own personal list, that success is different for everyone, according to particular tastes and lifestyle choices. But on each of our lists are those things that we believe will make us happy and content. Happiness and contentment are the only true measures of success. I am happier and more content, knowing that I am taking action to achieve my ideal weight!

So, that's a look at how they go. Underlying each of them is, of course, a gentle nudge toward self inquiry and the potential for a sudden rush of life-changing startling insight known as awakening.

They were all created with...

Love.



The Unhip Guru

Mention the most obscure guru tucked away in a wet sheet under a snow bank in Tibet, Swami Freezenmyhinihoff, and you immediately have an audience. But the most unhip thing that a western teacher of present day enlightenment can do is mention...Jesus. And that is because of the train wreck that the vast majority of the church has made of this man's teachings. Recovering Christians recoil at the mention. What a shame. What a shame.

I once wrote an article that was published in Tampa Bay Wellness magazine that was titled, "How I found Jesus in a Hindu temple." A few days following the thunderbolt that struck me, I opened a bible to discover that the words attributed to Jesus came alive with meaning. He was talking about Christ Consciousness, Awakening in Buddhist terms, Enlightenment, Samadhi, Satori, Nondual Realization...all of it. Especially...

Love.

Illusion?

There has to be a better word. Some nuances must have been lost in the translation. Or maybe there's not a better word.

When Advaita (Nonduality) and Buddhism refer to this physical, sensory and emotional life we are now experiencing as "illusory" and the parroting proponents of nonduality tumble down the rabbit hole of "no me" they leave more than Elmer Fudd befuddled.

Illusion brings to mind some wispy shadowy paranormal figure zipping past me as I'm watching television or reading a book. Usually turns out to be a reflection off my glasses or a speck in my eye. To put the blood, sweat and tears, as well as the joy, bliss of blueberry cobbler coffee and boombox boogieing in the category of illusion just doesn't cut it. That just isn't realistic. It sounds illogical and nonsensical. It is, but nevertheless beyond logic and "common sense" is where this is going.

It is understood that the use of the word illusion is used in an attempt to break through the idea that who we are, and all we are, is this physical, sensory, emotional, rational being, separate from everyone and everything else. The key phrase here is, "all we are." This is where it gets tricky. And in the attempt to open the door to a new realization, an awakening to the truth that there is more to "us," words can get in the way.

Early on in life we are trained to be logical. Logic is introduced as our primary navigational tool, and we become associated with it, bound to it and ultimately chained to it. Spontaneity is suppressed, and even punished. Stay in your seat. Raise your hand and get permission if you have to go pee.

Later in life, if we happen to find ourselves wondering if this is all there is, our logical identity clears its throat and admonishes us to forget any nonsense like that. If we press on, we alienate other people. If we really press on, we just might find ourselves on the mystic path and listening to and/or reading about something called awakening, enlightenment, filled with a holy spirit that the world cannot see, or other terms for a new realization about who we are - depending on our cultural tradition or our possible abandonment of one model for another; that is, walking away from Christianity, for instance, and looking at eastern esoteric model. We might even bump into a guru.

And it is along this mystic path that we are apt to here about illusion. It is a way of saying that there is extant what Carlos Castenada called, "A Separate Reality," and Shankara broke down to relative and absolute reality.

In the relative reality, we learn by comparison and relativity. Is this cup big? Compared to what? A smaller cup or a bigger cup. In absolute reality we realize that the awareness of relative reality - what is behind the logic and the sensory apparatus is an "us," who has no physical attributes, but simply an awareness, a pristine awareness of the world, and we find ourselves still in the world we formerly knew, but now no longer "of the world".

We realize that logical process and our identity with it (ego is typically the word used here) is a secondary identity and that our primary identity is absolute awareness. This realization is like breaking chains that we had forgotten about, and we suddenly have this startling rush of new insight that is beyond anything we had previously thought or imagined. We can fly through the universe. We are a timeless awareness of all this is. We are, in a way, connected to everything and everyone. We are one big happy heart. Our "human being," is merely a convenient vehicle for our short trip on earth. And this where the idea of calling the physical world and our sense of separate identity, "illusory," comes from.

So, for me, "secondary" works better than the word illusory. Primary is our awakened consciousness, and secondary is our ego, or rational, logical, thinking consciousness, as well as is the manifest world. People are viewed as more than physical entities. They are seen at their heart level, as love containers.

Getting the idea that ego (as commonly used) is all there is out of the way is no cake walk. In order for the rush of new insight to come in, ego must be knocked out - TKO'd. (Realizing that most readers of my notes are not here for instruction as much as they are for entertainment and affirming nods, the following is for the new or occasional reader/seeker): Reading my previous 320 or so facebook notes may give you some idea of how to go about that...unless you consider them all illusory.

Love.

What's Your Preference?

Over a period of 20 years or so I developed a personality type and communication style indicator called PQ Success Assessment. Primarily intended for pre-hire screening, it consists of 40 multiple-choice questions. The answers indicate a preferred life strategy.

As with just about every other "test" of this sort, it rates four major types and the mindset that seems to coincide with the preferred type. The premise is that early on we make certain decisions about how we feel we are going to navigate our way through this world in which we found ourselves. Our choice will be the personality type we present to the world at large. Of course, subsets or traits from other types will come into play, but typically we have a dominant "style".

Briefly, the four types are A. Quick/Goal-Oriented. B. Quick/People-Oriented. C. Careful/People-Oriented. D. Careful/Goal-Oriented. A is the leader, competitive, likes to run the show. Often a CEO, good athlete, likes the best of everything. B Is the image conscious, good dresser, great at sales because they genuinely like people. C values relationships above all, is detailed (often picking up after the A and B types). D. is the quality conscious, detailed, scientific, often computer geek. They think they are smarter than anyone else and can be critical and corrective. "No," is frequently the first words they say in response to just about anything - because they have a better perspective to offer. D's gave rise to this recent word play:

Arguring is the dialogue between those who present as awakened and enlightened, in which one attempts to polish or correct the other's perspective in order to demonstrate their superior clarity.

Love.

Gold Rush

Time spent trying to figure out how to change our life is time poorly spent. If we seek change, there is something we do not know. Our figuring out aspect of being has a broken compass. It got on the wrong bus early on in life. Something is amiss. Get off the brain bus and catch another ride.

We have been searching in the soft pillow called a brain, when our time would be more wisely spent searching in the heart. But searching the heart is a subtle skill. Words are not allowed. Only utter and absolute silence will allow an approach. This thought boggles the brain, because we have been repetitiously taught that figuring out is the only compass we have and the thought bus is our only means of transport.

It much like being blindfolded and sent out into the woods. Unless we have a guide we will soon become almost hopelessly lost and most likely bruised a bit bumping into trees and falling over rocks and bushes.or less metaphorically, in a job we don't like, financially strapped, depressed, dis-eased, and in toxic relationships - any and all of the above.

So, we ask ourselves how we got here and what we need to do to change some or all of it. And the answer we get from the brain that brought on the bruising is think, think, think. Oh, of course, there is religion and bawling and squalling to God for help, which nails us to victim mentality.

But there is a more excellent way, and incidentally, the only way a communication link to God goes through. The way demands trust, faith, belief...BUT WAIT! Don't stop there. That's the bear trap of religiosity. Those are only stepping stones. If we spend our lives on stepping stones we never cross the river to discover the more excellent way. I got too many metaphors going here...

Find someone who made it across, who can witness to the excellence and excellent outcome of listening for the wisdom whisper from the heart. Find them in person, in a book, in a sunset. Many "things" can point to and build your expectation (that's what trust, faith and belief are for - building expectation). Yet, the wisdom whisper will be nothing like you expect.

The wisdom whisper doesn't come as words as we know them, it comes as a sudden and startling rush of new insight...and its matrix is Love. Quiet the brain that wants to explain for a minute or risk missing the point. This is not a love we conjure up, or lust that rationalizes it drooling by calling it love. This is Love with a capital L - a Love that comes and gets us off the misdirected bus, fixes our compass and puts a gold nugget in our pocket - riches beyond compare. Not material riches. Better than that. A gold rush.

This is the God connection. God Consciousness. As Ramana Maharshi said, "The very form of God is Love." And with this, we realize that there is nothing to figure out. We have stepped into perfection, paradoxically without anything at all having changed in our manifest life. What has changed is us. And the changes that will surely come will come effortlessly and naturally, spontaneously, intuitively and as revelation knowledge. No should I or shouldn't I, just effortless right action. This is the meaning of good karma - effortless right action. Unassailable by emotional manipulation. Recognition that God is our only audience (thank you, Rumi).

I'm going to let this note exist as a flower. No tags. The right bees looking for nectar will find it. Or not.

Love.

Not Me, Love.

One morning on the way to the studio as I came around a section of a traffic circle I spotted a scruffy man sitting on the edge of the rotary. My turn-off came before I passed him, but I caught a glimpse of the sign he was holding just before I exited the rotary. I couldn't read the words, but I knew the intent. He was looking for money to help him eat or drink, or buy drugs or alcohol, like so many we see in the cities.

My wife won't give them money, but she will offer to take them to buy food. Following her example one time, I offered advice to a young man who asked me for money to please buy some food with it as I handed him a bill. He threw it back to me with several comments. The gist, expletives deleted, was, "Keep your money!" Now I silently hand them money and move on.

Anyway, back to the rotary. Because it would have been out of my way and inconvenient to come all the way around the rotary to the scruffy guy needing help, I didn't stop. I continued on my way for maybe a quarter mile, but then decided to turn around and go back around the rotary so I could hand the guy a couple of bucks.

So I turned around and did just that. No big deal. However, as I came back to precisely where I had turned around to go back I felt tears well up. For a split second the tears startled me because I had no conscious emotional provocation for the tears. Then it hit me.

It was not me who turned around. It was the God of Love who had made Divine Presence known in my heart a few years earlier. I offered a heavenward glance and thanked God for giving me a new heart. As one of the most beautiful teachers to ever grace the planet told us, God is able to replace a hard heart with new one. I am a witness to the truth of that teaching.

It was not me who turned around. It was... Love.

The Empty Seat

Welcome to the theater of the mind. Take a seat. It's a sold out performance, but we have one seat reserved for you right at front and center. Now, the mind is a wonderful thing. It experiences, realizes and interprets of all the events and sensory input of our entire lives.

Early on, the mind is primarily occupied with discovery. We find our toes. We instinctively put everything in our mouths. We find delight in adoring faces and learn to smile and laugh. Lady bugs and grasshoppers and spiders are objects of wonder. A breeze makes us giggle. What an awesome show. What a show.

Soon we discover that there are limits, boundaries, expectations, rules, regulations and requirements of us to fit in with the social behavioral consensus. But we adjust without too much trouble. Some more or less than others. And life goes on.

Along the way we may or may not have been introduced to religion and/or spirituality. And often this raises more questions than it answers. We find ourselves at some point wondering about death and God and such. Some more or less than others. But for the vast majority the whole issue of God, Source, Omnipotent Power or Divine Presence is merely conceptual.

We may choose certain religious conventions, creeds and dogma to subscribe to, based on the belief in what others have to say about some, any or all of the elements of the particular model that our culture presented to us. Some see their shared interest as a social club and not (really) much more. Others find real comfort in faith, and still others clutch the fundamentals of their religious model with a death grip and will kill to defend their exclusive "truths". And life goes on.

But for some people, many most probably, all possibly, there comes a point at which an inner longing must be acknowledged. There's an empty seat in the theatre. (Theater is the performance. Theatre is the building. Or so I'm told.) Something is missing. Someone is missing. Life has become a mystery theater.

There is tacit agreement across all religion, spiritual tradition and even nondual philosophy about this longing. Ultimately they all agree, as well, that there is nothing really missing - it's just part of the show to feel as though something is missing. Where the disagreements come in is about how this issue is resolved and who or what it is that sits in the seemingly empty seat.

Interestingly, there is agreement across all lines among those for whom the issue has been resolved - at the core of the resolution. But the costuming of the awakened truth they share can be very different and can cause "arguring" in which an awakened one (guru - to define the recently coined term, arguring) implicitly presumes their greater degree of clarity. This is my case for ego not being annihilated but only TKO'd in the awakening.

For me, the empty seat belonged to Divine Presence, God. And when the scales dropped from my eyes; to use drama theistic language, this was seen with pristine clarity. How this happened for me began with a response to the longing that became too intense to leave on the back burner. I sought out a guru. Some translate this word guru as gu meaning darkness and ru meaning remover, and that was just what I was looking for - release from the darkness of despair and guilt, and entrance into the light of peace of mind.

When we come into the light of pristine clarity about the empty seat, we have been graced with the discovery of our inner guru. Once this happens, the torch is handed to us. We find that we have been recruited as an outer guru (though we may or may not ever use that term because it brings up arguments and suspicion) for those who resonate with our truth - what we have to say about the empty seat.

It's not empty, but we have to empty our mind in order to awaken to this realization. Most of the readers already know this. For those who are on the path to fulfilling that longing, my advice is to find a guide, a

guru, a meditation group, read inspirational books and/or read the previous 300 or so notes. I'd skip the comments, for the most part.

Just don't settle for taking someone else's word(s) for it and living with an empty concept. Press on to the awakening and enlightened realization the brings pristine clarity about who you are and who sits in the empty seat. Sit back and enjoy the show. It might surprise you to see who shows up.

Love.

In Your Easter Bonnet

What can be written about the Christian celebration of Easter that hasn't been written? Probably nothing, but that's not going to stop me from putting my 2¢ writing tithe in the Easter Basket this morning.

Whether it is fictional, literal or a combination of both, the historical account is about a grim tale with a happy ending. Metaphorically it is about the death of ego identity (exclusively) after an arduous journey and the coming back to life with a startling insight into our true spiritual identity - Christ Conscious.

Being Christ Conscious does not mean being aware of the story of Jesus Christ, it means being aware that we are truly the same as Jesus, the single most impactful teacher of what Christ Consciousness is about at its core: being consciously aware that we truly are One with God, within God. Coming (back) to this realization returns us to the Garden of Eden, Paradise on earth and communion with God, once again.

In retrospect, we realize that life's journey was about time spent in the wilderness without the conscious awareness of being within God, feeling separate, alone and lost. At Easter, we are reminded that putting on our Easter Bonnet enhances our consciousness by beaming us up to the glorious heavenly realm, revealing the beauty beyond words that comes with the putting on of the Mind of Christ.

Consciously, we can enjoy our resurrected, re-perfected life in the ecstatic realm of Eden and dangle our feet in the pristine stream of Awakened Consciousness. Awakening (Resurrection) brings realization that this pristine clear stream runs as a constant and eternal undercurrent of our lives at every moment.

Of course, we still live in the manifest world of duality and are housed in a physical body as part of this short time we spend as earthly beings. The imperfections, foibles (that's just a funny word to write and say) and lifelong learning about how to best navigate through this journey are still there, even after putting on our Easter Bonnet. But in a way that is impossible to explain, we have stepped into perfection and taken up residence in a new home. Not that we become perfect as physical human beings, but rather that we now have uncovered sacred eyes that are able to see the perfect harmony of all that is.

The ego, as we commonly use the term, does not die. It just doesn't run the show or claim to be the only tool in our internal toolbox anymore. It still is valuable and useful. The ego and its rational linear process which was our exclusive identity did have to face death and annihilation in order for Christ Consciousness to arise in us. This is the point where the disciples/students of the teacher, Jesus, abandoned him. And this is where many contemporary students of spiritual awakening turn back and abandon their efforts.

Easter is the time-standing-still claim of the authentically Awakened teachers, those with Christ Consciousness, that we will not die literally, but *will* have to surrender our every thought, not turn back or abandon our heart's desire to return to communion with God, and enter a potentially terrifying void in order to experience resurrection. It's the same in all mystic traditions.

We search for hidden Easter Eggs, our hidden Christ Consciousness. And finally, spending my whole 2¢ worth, within our filled Easter Basket may we find Unity Consciousness that recognizes the mystic traditions of all religions, non-theistic philosophies and spiritual paths coming together, as they do at their loving core. Now that will make for a real Happy Easter.

Happy Easter.

Love.

The Halfway House Church

The Christian culture has been built up around a halfway house church based on impotent teachings, superstitious fundamentalist dogma, gang-mentality creeds, puritan pilgrim ethics and morality, and dark control mechanisms. And they wonder why they've been losing members and potential members to esoteric philosophies, gurus, and eastern religions for the past fifty years.

Halfway houses because rarely, if ever, do they deliver on the truth that sets us free. They will only be served by keeping the flock thinking of themselves as sinners and bent-over pilgrims who can only look forward to one fine day - when they die and go to heaven, if they pass the test. And it isn't necessarily greed or malevolent intent, it is blindness and lack of genuine "born again," experience that would equip and empower leadership to lead wholesale change in the church.

But the church and its leadership are filled with Nicodemuses. In case you are not familiar with Nicodemus, he was a high-office religious official in Jesus' day who couldn't fathom Jesus words that we must be born once of the flesh and once of the spirit; that is, we come into this world in human form with an inherent capacity to know of our spiritual identity and "know" God. This is the truth that sets us free.

And so they offer impotent teachings and serve pineapple-upside-down-cake advice. Instead of seeking enlightenment and God-Consciousness that creates understanding and implants a new heart of love, kindness, compassion, Christians are told that they must live up to commandments and try their best to please God or risk going to eternal fiery damnation and unspeakable torture for all of eternity. And they are told that unless they buy into blind superstitions and parrot certain words it is impossible to please God.

But fear and doubt creep into the most starched and pious of Christians and Christian leadership. Who deep down really unshakably believes and never for even a nanosecond wonders about the veracity of the claims of a virgin birth, a supernatural man who was God in disguise and who with all his omnipotent power made his appearance through the birth canal of his created being as a helpless infant, or even a heaven "up there," let alone the transfiguration, resurrection, and 40-day reprieve before disappearing in a cloud?

Now I know this is going to cause some seat belt rattling of "committed" Christians. I love the teachings of Jesus. They are powerful, poetic, and awe-inspiring - especially in retrospect after experiencing the marvelous light of gnosis that he clearly taught about. It's that the church has made a train wreck out of his teachings, and unless wholesale change via enlightened and truly born again leadership comes, Christianity as we know it will eventually crumble.

Gang-mentality because of the staunch exclusive club mentality that will kill to defend their beliefs and creeds. Jesus never intended for an exclusive club. He was universally inclusive in his caring kindness, compassion and revelation of the character of a God of Love. But he was not an exception, he was an example of our potential for hooking up with and merging into the identity of God and also revealing God's character as enlightened and empowered witnesses to the truth at the core of all mystic traditions.

Those who came to my church, which we preferred to call a fellowship, had their Christian cages rattled with the views here. But breaking through the pop-cultural embedded "teachings" is one tough nut to crack. Although, I haven't given up and I'm hanging out with a facebook fellowship wondering if I want to give a storefront church interfaith fellowship another shot.

When I make it to 365 notes (I'm close) I'm going to publish a book of the collection and hope that it speaks to me in that regard. The tentative title is "The Window," based on a line from one or more of the notes that

reads, "There is a window through which life can be seen with pristine clarity." Maybe I'll add, "...and it's not stained glass."

Love.

Friends, Roamings and Contradictions

Friends come and go, especially here on facebook. We embrace each others' views...up to a point, but then may move on as more and more of what a relatively new friend is about comes into light. A sweet and gentle note or status thought one day may be followed by a harsh bit of hubris that rattles our cage of complacency the next. Not that I ever do that or intentionally provoke arguruments. Was that a lightening bolt?!

Divine Presence, by whatever name and hung on whatever paradigm, theistic or not, once attuned to never leaves. It may cause a glow one day that brightens everything, everyone and every thought, and the next day run as a sweet and gentle undercurrent. But it's presence and reality in our lives is never at the mercy of argurument.

Once having drunk from the Silver Cup, no amount of attempts at deconstruction, contradiction, or finding the flaw in our enthusiasm for giving the experience rave reviews can ever remove the sweet taste. No arbitrary list of attributes or behavior or supposed indicator of what a "real" awakened teacher, guru, or enlightened one must do, be or say to be authentic will have anything more than the impact of a mosquito buzz.

The amazing attunement, the exquisite taste, the chance meeting of Divine Presence trumps any egoic attempt at negation and is permanently unassailable, unshakable, and unflappable. Oh, an awakened one may flap and flutter, engage and upbraid, those who insist that they have a more polished perspective or offer some flimsy attempt of negation or parrot some neo nondual nonsense, but the undercurrent remains undisturbed and the whole flap causes nary a ripple.

So, my faithful friends, having that out of the way, we are back to the peaceful mirror lake. Imagine a lake of pristine beauty and a perfectly reflective surface. Look out for a moment. Let any thoughts drift away like wispy clouds and just gaze at the still water. When we can allow our mind to go this still, a Buddha-like calm can come to us. And what potentially may present itself and make itself known to us in this period of calm is nothing short of Divine Presence.

I hesitate to draw this comparison, but for the sake of transparency I'll risk the gasps. One summer day way back in the day, at an age on the edge of puberty, I was drifting on a lake in an inner tube. There was a warm sun overhead and the gentlest of breezes blowing that caused the inner tube to rock ever so slightly. Suddenly, out of the blue, came this surprising physical sensation that was beyond anything I had ever thought or imagined before as part of the human experience.

Awakening is like that. It's awesome, startling, a wonderful rush of new insights and bliss beyond words. We are incapable of preconception of it and we cannot explain it. It forever changes us and adds a new layer to life. It must be directly and personally and intimately experienced to understand it on any level. And, as pointed out in the opening statements for the defense of its authenticity, no one can take it away by attempting to convince us that it is not "real" or that it was imagined. If you know, you need no explanation. If you are lonely and longing...this is for all the lonely people.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXTy5ZuRhkE&feature=player_embedded#at=60

So, that's it for my morning reverie, reminder, and affirmative pointer.

Love.

I Get By

With a little help from my friends, over \$1,000 came in yesterday. I offered a free signed copy of my upcoming book, "The Window," with an order of the introductory booklet for \$15. The offer still stands today. One person objected to me marketing for money, and I had to remind him that in 35 years I've never charged for satsang/preaching. In my 7 years as a pastor I never took donations or allowed any type of collection. I worked in a j.o.b. including the selling of my books and paintings. Welcome to the free enterprise system.

Thanks, friends. Once again, THE friend inspires a resourceful way to outdistance the revenueers (that's all those streams of outgo to bills and such). There's a proverbial bit of advice that I find myself returning to whenever I start to fret over money. It says that there's a better way than trying to figure it out. In the Judeo-Christian scripture it reads, "Lean not upon your own understanding. Acknowledge me in all your ways and I will direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5

I'm sure that correlative passages can be found in scripture and philosophy from other schools of thought and spiritual traditions. And just in case you are a new or an occasional reader - I do not believe that any awakened teacher, including the really big names like Jesus, intended for their downline to create an exclusive club. In that regard, I once had an article published entitled, "How I Found Jesus in a Hindu Temple."

So back to gratitude and a glance toward Source. As i've written a kazillion times or more, I was zapped with a startling rush of new insight about life, Love and the Source of it all quite a few years ago. Absolutely roto-routed me right down to DNA. A stream of pristine crystal clear living water has run as an undercurrent every moment of my life ever since. I am never without this friend. For me, it is Divine Presence.

But the cares of the world can cloud the water on occasion, and these are the times that the old fretful ego can jump up and offer assistance. Problem is, ego, for all its value in logic and attunement to sensory input, is prone to coming up with lousy solutions to problems (at least my history of listening to ego solutions is fraught with painful slams into metaphorical brick walls). It's job is to keep us safe. It doesn't care about happy. It doesn't know about happy, let alone jump-down-spin-around bliss.

So, when by grace I remember to send ego to its room in the back of the house and keep Proverbs 3:5 in front of mind awareness, the flowers bloom, solutions present themselves, and the field of joy with that stream running through it comes into view. Whew!

As Ramana Maharshi once said, "Aspirants meditate to attain. Awakened meditate to maintain." I still have to pinch myself to maintain the ongoing awareness that the grace that visited me was real - more real than the physical manifestation and above the circumstances of life. With those occasional pinches I shake my head and wonder how I could have drifted for even a nanosecond. And I'm back. Considering a book signing/satsang tour. HmMMMM.

Life is good.

Love.

Half-Full or Half-Empty?

There's a classic quick determinate of a pessimistic or optimistic mindset. Do we see the glass of water half-full or half-empty? If you need a little tutorial: half-full is optimistic, half-empty is pessimistic. One sees the glass of water soon to be full and the other sees it as soon to be empty. Wow! is me or woe is me.

There's a poignant (a fun word to say) story along the same lines that comes to mind. It's about a study of the same P/O mindset. In this story a group of psychologists find a young boy who is loaded with optimism and a young girl who is perpetually pessimistic.

They construct an experiment to see if they can change their respective outlooks by creating two settings in two separate small houses. The girl's house is beautiful and cheery. The fridge is loaded with ice cream and goodies, there's a buffet table, dolls and toys and video games of every description, and a stand-by butler to get the girl anything she wants. In the other house, there's no fridge, no buffet, no TV or video games. And in one room; yuck, there's a pile of horse manure.

The study group leaves the girl and boy for several hours in their assigned settings. First, they visit the girl's house. She is sitting on the floor, glum and silent. She didn't like anything on the buffet, the ice cream was too cold, the dolls dumb, the video games too hard, and the butler stupid. Oh, boy. They rushed to rescue the boy.

When they came to the boy's house they found him covered with horse manure, stinking to high heaven...with an excited smile on this face. They were dumbfounded. How could he be optimistic in this disgusting setting? When they asked the boy what was going on, this was his reply:

"With all this horseshit, there's has to be a pony in here somewhere!"

So, how do we change our outlook? Napoleon Hill said, "A primary method for gaining a mind full of peace is to practice emptying the mind." And we're back to my favorite critical first step recommendation for making any effective long-term significant change in our lives: meditation.

The ego that has been molded by social convention which is all "dysfunctional," has a tight grip on our outlook and resists any sort of change. It wants to keep us on the tried (not necessarily true) path in order to keep us safe. If we truly have the courage and chutzpah to go after significant change, it has to start with a change of heart first, foremost and for real.

And we don't change our heart by using our critical factors and weighing pros and cons. We enter the silence of emptiness and wait patiently. Patience is virtue. (BTW, this is often misquoted as, "Patience is a virtue." A subtle but significant distinction.) Just ask Buddha, Jesus, Lao Tsu, Napoleon Hill and few hundred other awakened teachers from the ancient of days to contemporary times.

OK, my coffee cup is half-full. Time for a refresher.

Love.

Jesus, Am I I'm Getting Old?

When I turned 30, I let my hair grow long. I caught the last train to Hippieville and so was a little late catching up with this fashion, but I'm on a slow maturation train. I had grown a closely trimmed beard a few years earlier, so I kept it. Occasionally I would hear the, "You look like Jesus," comment, and then one day while in a shopping mall, a woman stopped me and touched me gently on the arm and held on. With a very earnest look on her face she said, "You look like our Lord. Would you tell me if you are him?" OK, that was a little much. I got my hair cut the next day.

In my late 40s I took a shot at my long-held romantic view of living as an artist. Without my wife, Susan, supporting the family while I painted we would have starved. In the solitary freedom of my studio, I indulged in a few more dances with Mary Jane for creative inspiration, but abandoned that for good when the paintings went weird, and let my hair grow again. In my early 50s, with hair that by now had been allowed to grow without cutting for 5 years and some white appearing in my beard, someone said to me, "You look like Moses." OK, that's funny. I'm OK with it.

With my beard now pretty much completely white, coming up on 70 in a few days, I thought of growing it out again and recently went a few months. But it was a pain and I gave up on it a few weeks ago. Maybe when the hair on my head is all white, I'll try again. Hey, the next time, I will have gone from the Jesus look to the Moses look to...the you-know-Who look. Ever wonder why our image of a timeless God is that of a man with long white hair and a long white beard?

I am that I am.

Love.

Afraid of Heights

My in-laws came to visit us and loved the condo community in which we live year-round. They've been wintering in Florida for a few years and asked if we would find a condo to rent for them in our building for the 5 months they come down from Massachusetts. We found a nice two-bedroom on the 6th floor with a great few of the water.

When my father-in-law stepped off the elevator on the 6th floor; however, he could not handle the walk along the open-air walkway to the entrance to their condo. One step and he said, "I'm not going." He hugged the wall and inched back into the elevator. He cannot drive over bridges of any appreciable height, and we might have anticipated this, but we didn't. Oh, boy.

So, at our insistence, we swapped. Our in-laws moved into our 3rd floor condo and we moved to the 6th floor for the 5 months. They just left yesterday and we're back to our place.

This fear of height...I guess it's really fear of falling, or bottom line, it's fear of the pain that will result at the completion of the fall, is what causes many an ardent seeker; those who have responded to an inner stirrings, a longing for that ineffable something that awakened teachers try so hard to "eff", to turn back.

OK, I can't resist...Of course, it's effing impossible. It has to be directly experienced to be known.

As we approach the precipice on the edge of awakening, our guardian ego steps up to do battle with the guardian angel who has prompted our adventure. As the battle rages, the ego says, "You could die." And unless we have faith of a mustard orchid in full bloom at this point; that is, faith in the satguru, preacher/teacher or whatever or whomever encouraged us in the relative realm to reach this height...we won't jump and make the requisite leap.

We'll inch back along the wall and take the elevator back down. We may find refuge in sour grapes and guru bashing, neo nondual nonsense, sooner or later muster up the strength the scale the heights again, or the compelling attraction will be so great that we will on day risk it all in absolute surrender. That's the ticket.

It's like that.

Love.

Not The Answer We Were Looking For

Yes, the title should read, "...For Which We Were Looking," rather than leave the dangling participle. But, once again, my writing style leans toward the way; split infinitives and dangling participles and all, we speak. Besides which (I don't really use this, but it always strikes a funny bone when I have an occasion to use it), aren't the theme and the content more important? Some say yes, some say tomato.

However you answered the question; if you choose to read on, this note is about answers. I love the story of the young boy who, prior to any religious or spiritual indoctrination, looking out at a mountain range, asked him Mom, "Who made this?" Personally, a young boy whom (see I can be a little pc and gc) I had the privilege of being with for the first few years of his life, asked me, "Who made me?"

This was quite a few years ago. When I started to answer in biological terms, he interrupted me to point to the TV show he was watching as he said, "No, who made my arms and...." He was watching The Six Million Dollar Man. If you remember it or have seen reruns, it was about a man who was bionically reconstructed. Sean also used to say, when he had a tummy ache, that his, "stomach was broke."

So, the answers we get sometimes are not in the context we expected. When it comes to the answers we bring into our mystic adventure, or our response to that inner stirring and longing, or the big questions about our purpose in life and death and such, the same holds true.

As we settle in quiet meditation the questions remain, but either due to intuitive anticipation of a forthcoming answer or a relaxed view that finds us less concerned, we don't find them so imperative. And with the grace of awakening, a funny thing happens. The questions are not exactly answered per se. They disappear. As we broach the entrance to our true home and our (re)discovery of our essence, the questions on the temporal level lose their relevance.

As timeless beings of conscious awareness, we now realize that the thought of death has no sting, and the purpose of our life and life in general is seen through a window of pristine clarity. This is perfect peace of mind, equanimity, and freedom of the highest order. With realization of, "the truth that sets us free," life takes on a whole new meaning. Who we are takes on a whole new meaning. Every day is whole new day. And Love with a capital L is the order of the day. Everyday.

Life is good.

Love.

The EPIC Journey

We are of two minds – two levels of consciousness with subsets of each. For the purpose of this brief journey, we'll stick with the two and eventually focus on one of these two.

We are of a rational linear mind that becomes the internal captain of our physical "ship", our body, as soon as we mature to the point of self-consciousness. We rely on this rational thought process as the primary tool for helping us safely, thoughtfully and successfully navigate our way through life.

Captain Ego, or what we typically think of as our persona, our identity, our "I", our personality and processor of information and stimuli from the outside world, serves us well...for the most part.

However, if one day we find ourselves wondering about life mysteries, ego won't be of much help. Ego doesn't have the tools or the capacity to unlock those boxes. But paradoxically, it is of course ego that is wondering. And there might even be a case for the idea that it is ego that is pointing at and pushing us toward those doors.

This will start to get us into subsets and so we will leave it at that in favor a look behind the doors of mystery. Well, we cannot look behind the doors by simply hearing or reading about what is there. We can only hear or read of what is there in metaphorical language, because it is only the language of the heart or pure intuitive consciousness that comprehends what happens when we go on The EPIC Journey into the mystic. It is here that an understanding of a new "language" and a new way of being reveals itself to us.

EPIC is an acronym for Experience of Pure Intuitive Consciousness. For the model of "two minds" or levels of consciousness being used here, this is door number two. Ego being door number one. (Later, we'll switch the numbers on the doors).

So, one day we find ourselves wondering about life...and death, why we are here and what our purpose for being here is about, if anything. We spend occasional time working on these mysteries without any clues. But for the most part, life goes on.

If, however, a certain discontent or quiet desperation begins to take hold of us, we step up the "search" for answers. And if we press on we will find ourselves progressively in the midst of philosophy, then religion, and then spirituality – unless we stop and get off the magical mystery tour at philosophy or religion.

Those who have made the EPIC Journey will most often use spiritual language. EPIC will have opened the door for them and introduced them to what they will call Divine Presence, or some similar descriptive theistic term. Philosophy or religion will tend to confine our findings into an "exclusive" club in which the model of choice will be considered the only valid expression. (This is the genesis of war - but that's for another whole story).

Ego typically freaks out as we reach for the door -may even scream to high heaven for us to stop and abandon the search. Ego is assigned the role of crossing guard and it wants to keep us on safe streets. But if we go ahead anyway and open the door (actually the door is opened for us and we find that we were already inside. Another paradox), ego is delighted with the sudden and startling rush of new insights about life and love, who we are and what our purpose for being here is all about. Ego gives up the captain role, moves into second position, changes the numbers on the door and falls in love with the new number One.

From then on, it's up to us which mind we use when. That can be a little tricky. But that's a whole other adventure and we'll pick this issue up next time.

Love.

Right, Left, Right, Left?

We take a step out onto a street crosswalk and see a truck bearing down on us going much too fast to stop in time to avoid squashing us like a bug. So, we jump back, Jack. Maybe mutter a few words of advice to the driver, and thank our rational processing, linear mind, our guardian ego for prompting a good decision.

While we're using traffic metaphor...We're driving along behind a slowpoke on the highway and we decide to pull out and pass them. We look in the mirror and see the way is clear, but then just a nanosecond before we hit the gas and pull out, we glance back over our left shoulder to see a car passing us that apparently was in the blind spot in our mirror. This time we take another glance heavenward and thank God or our guardian angel. That intuitive instinct; let's call it, didn't have anything to do with our rational process.

So, there we have the bicameral brain - the model we use to describe rational and intuitive sides of the brain and the subsets of each. The rational weighs detail and decides. The intuitive move without the should I or shouldn't I exercise.

Then there's the reckless troublemaker who prompts us to go ahead, even though we doubt the decision we are about to make. And there's the gentle intuitive and spontaneous flash that; in retrospect, keeps us out of

what would have been a bad situation. If you cannot relate, you probably have not made very many trips around the sun yet.

And what about those times when we pull into the driveway at home and with a sudden blink realize that the last thing we remember is walking out of the store before driving home? Who, or which consciousness drove us home safely and made all the right decisions? Seems like intuitive took over while we obviously made informed twists and turns to make it home. Maybe the two were working together.

Earlier I mentioned that we are of two minds and that which to rely on can be tricky. Here's where it gets tricky:

Do we trust our rational process or trust our gut? When we're faced with potential life-changing decisions, do we trust our own perspective or do we turn it over to God (and maybe God's admin assistant some think of as a guardian angel)? There's some proverbial advice (Proverbs 3:5) that says, "Lean not upon your own understanding. Trust God in all your ways and God will direct your paths."

That auto-pilot approach to life comes "naturally," when we are Awakened. With Awakening, Divine Guidance is unquestionably present. "Should I or shouldn't I," questions disappear and we seem spontaneously (intuitively) moved to right action (good karma). Doesn't mean that even Awakened do not find themselves down the road away goaded by the lurking troublemaker on occasion before straightening up and not leaning. It's just that they have a consciousness awareness of a place of refuge and instantaneous re-certification (written on the tablet of their heart).

More later.

Love.

Thinking About God

It's like the summer tourist asking an old Maine farmer for directions, to which he offers a wry reply, "Cain't get they ah from he ah," translated: can't get there from here. There's no thinking about God. We can experience Divine Presence - a code word for God, but even then we have no words to relate the content of the experience. And if we try we are almost certain to run into a buzzsaw of debate and perspectives from a different paradigm.

Oh, sure, we can form a conceptual framework. How about George Carlin's take that goes something like...We have this concept of God as an old man with long hair and a long white beard who sits on a cloud and watches our every move and knows our every thought. And if we mess up, he sends us to a fiery hell to be burned and tortured for all of eternity...and he loves us.

The more I think about it, the more I realize that I have nowhere to go but into a scriptural and philosophical ping pong match with this note. Any concept of God will be far removed from the experience of God-Consciousness, and this level of consciousness has to be directly and personally experienced to go beyond concept. And, as mentioned above, any attempt to relate the experience and its content will meet with everything from denial to different views and expressions.

The only hope of meaningful dialogue is from birds of a feather. Of course, we're all birds, just with different feathers and flight plans, but a conversation with God, or about God, can only be authentic among those who have been graced with the meeting.

My two-pronged point is that thinking about God and entertaining concepts about God are only superficially satisfying and sometimes deeply terrifying. If you've glanced toward heaven in quiet desperation and acknowledge an inner longing to find a missing peace and piece of your true identity, then the second point comes into play. That is, don't buy into concepts. Go for the streets of gold. Seek, ask, knock and the door will be opened.

Whether you prefer the model of shakti pat or power of a true guru to point to how to open the door or subscribe to the words of Jesus, who said, "I will show you plainly of the Father," or some other model...the mystic path has brought many, many people to God meeting. Find an authentic witness. Some may pop up here in the comments.

Think about it.

Love.

Did He Say, "Me" or "These"?

During this past week I met two men. Early in our conversations the subject of religion came up. With one, the context that included the mention of religion was about his past addictions and recovery. The other came about in a more oblique way.

With the first one, the religious or spiritual aspect of AA brought up the subject and more specifically the name of Jesus. When I mentioned my past as a pastor, the game was on. There was a handshake and sprinkling of, "Praise God's and Amen's," and an immediate, but unfortunately short-lived, affinity.

After a brief period of relating personal stories and enjoying scriptural ping-pong, the whole encounter took an abrupt turn. When I offered a view that Jesus never intended to have an exclusive club built up around his name, my new friend's ping-pong paddle morphed into the old fundamentalist's hammer.

"I am the way, the truth and light. No man comes to the Father but by me," he intoned - followed by the statement that unless I subscribed to this view, "right out of scripture," I was not a Christian. My response was that I was a Christian Buddhist Hindu Sufi Kabbalist Zen Master New Thought Nondual Shaman Guru Mystic Awakened Teacher of Present Day Enlightenment. He stepped back as if concerned that I just might have some wizard stick that could change him into a frog.

When I offered a peace pipe by acknowledging that, in spite of differences, we both honored the commandment to love one another, he said, "Right, right, right..." in rapid succession, but the chill was in the air.

In the other instance, the subject of writing came up. When I mentioned my choiceless imperative to write daily based on a transforming experience of a spiritual nature, my new friend's eyes lit up. He said he was looking for a scriptwriter for a screenplay concept based on the very same idea.

Well, he might as well have put a blueberry muffin and a pot of designer coffee in front of me. I eagerly offered that I had written several screenplays (though had never sold one) and would be happy to work with him on the format and structure and such.

When he began to talk about how a powerful transformation can change us right down to our DNA, the muffin and coffee immediately blossomed into a banquet table. And, as anyone who has read more than a smattering of my writing could guess, I launched into my story that affirmed the DNA restructure idea - based on my experience in a Hindu temple of being thunderstruck, meeting a lightbeing whom I felt was Jesus (and later came to the view as all lightbeings on the astral level as One), and being taken into the Holy of Holies to meet and be embraced by God, overwhelmed with Love and completely and utterly forgiven, as well as being assured of Divine Presence and Divine Guidance for the rest my life.

But then, like some cartoon animation, out came *his* Christian fundamentalists' hammer and the big chill. My reaction, in a word, was, "shit!" What a shame that in the midst of all the beautiful teachings of one of the greatest masters to walk the planet, there are so many separatists who, "swallow a camel and choke on a gnat," with this one bit of scripture.

What if Jesus actually said, "I am the way, the truth and the light. No man comes to the Father but by these."? This would make him an example and not some supernatural exception that has spawned so many divergent doctrinal creeds and pagan-like superstitions, not to mention crusades and wars. And it would melt the fundamentalists' hammer into stainless steel dinnerware.

Lots of luck selling this to pop Christianity. But I like the idea, and in my heart of hearts and from the bottom of my restructured DNA I am convinced that at the core of all religions is the mystical way to understanding the truth and the light that, as Ramana Maharshi so beautifully put it, "The very form of God is Love."

Love.

Editorial comment: All authentically awakened teachers see meeting on The Mystic Path as the destiny of humankind.

Showing Up Naked

There's a story of a man who was always in a hurry and obsessive compulsive about showing up on time for appointments of any type, from business meetings to casual dinner engagements with friends. However, his wife suffered from no such OCD. She was often late - much to her partner's consternation.

On one storied occasion, in the usual rush to be on time juxtaposed to the dawdling, the man announced impatiently that he would wait in car, and most probably punctuated it with something akin to, "hurry up!" As he sat in the car, undoubtedly tapping the steering wheel, he was surprised to hear the passenger door open soon after he sat down behind the wheel.

His pleasantly surprised smile turned to bug-eyed disbelief as he looked over to see his companion sitting placidly...and stark naked. The happily-ever-after story ends with the believable line, "He never rushed her again."

Now, how is he going to segway to a spiritual note with this one, you may be thinking. Ha! Easy. There's even two sides to the showing up naked storyline.

On the downside, showing up naked has social consequences depending on our degree of prudishness, but also has a downside when it comes to spiritual growth or seeking. If a meditation teacher (guru or not) offers (naked) techniques without the proper grounding and seeding of expectations, the harvest will be sparse.

On the upside, unless we show up completely naked, without guile or even concepts, and utterly surrender our ego at some point on The Mystic Path, we cannot be clothed in the glowing white raiments of Awakening.

Love.

The Substitute Teacher

When and to whatever degree it hits us that something is missing in our lives, we begin to look for clues and satisfying answers. And the more the answers elude us the more susceptible we are to accepting substitutes for the real thing. To shake off the nagging intuitive stirring that there is something more to the life experience than we have discovered or attuned to, something that is keeping us from being deeply rather than superficially happy, we often turn to the infamous big three.

We do a little dance, make a little love, get down tonight...sex, drugs and rock and roll. Hey, for substitutes, these ain't bad. But they are substitutes, and as wonderful as they can be, separately, and in combination, they eventually leave us still feeling somehow empty.

We may hope to satisfy the stirring with a new lover, a new car, a new job, another high, another hot fudge sundae...and another. But the lingering nagging feeling pops up.

Some never get past the big three, and life goes on. You'll see them with glazed eyes and glazed-donut hips smiling large and shouting, "It's a wonderful party and we're having a great time." There was a beer commercial campaign a few years ago with the slogan, "It doesn't get any better than this."

But then there are those who head for the last chance workout and find a guru to show them a better way. When they make their move while pretty young, they make a show of it and leave family and friends shaking their heads in wonder. A little older, we do it with less fanfare and maybe slip into a yoga or meditation class. But, aha! - those are guru tools in transparent commercial disguise, and one of the keys to opening the door to the final answer, for those who hear the words and feel the beckoning energy.

By any other words, theistic or flat words like my least favorite and least creative of all references to the subject matter at hand - nondual, the search is for authenticity, or real Self, our spiritual connection, our Christ Consciousness, Krishna Consciousness, Buddhahood, Nirvana. Whatever.

We can brush off our power suit, brush by that cute admin assistant and fire up some old time rock and roll in the privacy of our ride home, pour a malt beverage or two, attend our social club church, temple or mosque, and ignore the longing for a lifetime.

Or we can accept no substitutes and go for the real thing. A hint: it's not Coke.

Love.

The Dis-Eased Ego

Ego gets a bad rap. It shouldn't.

Problem is, in part, that we use the term ego as a blanket term for our self awareness and our sense/perception, as well as our rational thought process...adding up to our "I" identity, when what we are really indoctrinated to identify with is our dis-eased, socially molded, persona. Well, persona is a term for "mask". So, what we are calling us or ego is the false sense of self, or false ego.

Ego, once the socially coerced mold is broken and the mask removed, is powerful, useful, and delighted to come forth in its true colors as servant of our authentic Self while we are in this relative world of manifest reality.

Some may prefer to think of the manifest reality or relative reality as "illusion", but if an illusory truck smacks into our illusory body, the illusion of pain can seem very real. Ego, with its tool of sense perception and an assignment to keep us safe in this relative world of duality has us effortlessly jump out of the way. It is the false ego that harps on fear and doubt like some hysterical baboon.

Ego shares in the joy of the Awakened Self - our primary identity that has no need for ego in the absolute realm of reality. In this relative realm we are a sense perceiving field of joy and delight. Yes, also a field of sorrow and pain. With Awakening, the sorrow and pain still play a role, but there is an undercurrent of peace that passes understanding that comes from our authentic Self.

So, as we approach the reward of the mystic walk, the search for authenticity and peace of mind, it is the false ego that fears annihilation just before the reward is granted. It is the false ego that must be brought to absolute surrender or surrender to the absolute in order to recognize and re-discover our authentic Self. It is

the remnant of the authentic ego that peeks through to urge us on in our search for authenticity - where peace of mind and equanimity are found.

I will resist the urge to ramble on, and leave it at that this morning.

Love.

What Time is Your Appointment?

There's a school of thought; and it's a pretty big school, that says everything is as it is and just accepting that is the best we can do. It's thought cousin is that we are like flowers and will blossom at our "appointed" time...or not. And that searching or teaching only serve to interfere with the process.

That school and its alum are a thoughtful lot and the case can be made that they are correct in their assessment...except for a couple of points: Those who are feeling an intense inner longing and intuitive stir that something is missing in their lives; especially those who carry guilt and are in despair, are further discouraged by the school's view that acceptance is the only answer.

The second point of exception is that If it all flows as it should and events such as realization, awakening and enlightenment fall into place with precise synchronicity at their appointed time, then searching and the teaching would also be in the play book, and necessarily be essential ingredients in the mix, n'est pas.

This sort of predestination thinking reminds of a friend who used to say often that nothing is perfect, and when pressed on the point would adamantly insist that there were no exceptions and that absolutely nothing was perfect. We had a discussion one day in which it was pointed out that if this were an absolute reality...that would be an example of perfection. Anyway...

It is my experience that life can turn on a spoken phrase or a book passage that suddenly hits us with a new layer of meaning which comes as a startling rush of new insight (wisdom). The inner longing, the search and the teaching, preaching, satsang are not an interference. They are preparatory steps. Prep school. They are the fertilizer, the rain and the sunshine.

The blossoming of awakening is what allows for total acceptance with equanimity, because awakening brings with it the realization of a new dimension, a new perspective on life that sees both the relative flow of duality and enjoys the pristine clarity and perfect peace of an awakened mind...that is above circumstances. But acceptance before awakening is mere resignation and its dangerous side effects include neo-advaita speak, religious fundamentalism and a tendency to use the language of an exclusive club.

For those who have blossomed, this needs no explanation - although reminders are like sunshine and water spray on the flower of realization, but for those who are searching for peace of mind, the use of post awakening language may be appealing, but until the teaching and preaching and satsang and whatever else are part of the essential ingredients that will lead to their awakening at the appointed time, the fullness of the words is not recognized and their meaning are only maps and pointers to the garden.

So, for those who are on a treasure hunt or those have found the treasure, my consistent, incessant ramblings have been about the reality of the treasure and the potential for finding the treasure. The fact that the treasure is already within does not necessarily mean we are already awakened and enlightened. There are those who will say that they are satisfied with simply having faith that we have an inner treasure, but I believe that deep down they long to "know."

If we are searching for peace of mind, there are many empowered witnesses to the truth there is a discovery to be made, a marvelous light to be turned on, a field of delightful sight, sound and fragrance to be enjoyed in ways that are beyond description. Seek them out. Knock on their door. Ask them about it.

Love.

Quiet. Productivity in Progress.

Consciousness grounded in relative dualistic reality; our persona (mask) or personal identity which is commonly referred to as ego, doesn't like quiet. It likes chatter, inner dialogue, debate. It's identity has been built on contrast and comparison. It is the original muncher of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, right or wrong, or big and small, hot and cold, subject and object, shouldn't I or shouldn't I? and such.

It (Ego) claims dominion over our entire lives and insists that its use of the logical, rational process - the ability to distinguish and decided, is the only tool available to us in the, "I think therefore I am," school. But I suspect that deep in the shadows of ego identity it knows the awesome power of quiet and; therefore, fears it - because of the threat it presents to unseat the falsely claimed throne the ego tenuously occupies.

Ego throws up the spurious argument that peace of mind and inner quiet is simply boring. It equates meditation with a state of stupefied beatitude in which we simply sit like a proverbial (clichéd) bump on a log.

But The Quiet Mind sits more like a patient fisher, looking out over a mirrored placid lake. It's awareness is effortlessly focused and undisturbed by inner chatter. The Quiet Mind; therefore, immediately see the slightest ripple, the tiniest fish jump, the creative solution, the right action (good karma) in any situation.

And unencumbered by, "should I or shouldn't I?" it moves to right action. The Quiet Mind trusts its intuitive non-verbal capacity and trusts its judgment. The results are often high productivity and efficiency, and the accomplishment of tasks in an amazingly short period of time.

These are some of the early benefits of a meditation practice. Deeper into the practice the benefits are beyond description, beyond words, beyond anything we could ever think or imagine. Some of the words used to at least point to these benefits include: inner peace, joy, bliss, ecstasy, fearlessness, Love with a capital L, and a startling rush of new insight so profoundly life-changing that those who experience it at its height are compelled to use words like...God.

God I love to write about this...

Love.

Is This OK?

A long-time friend who is very successful in the speaking business will occasionally tell his audience that it took him a while to get comfortable speaking before large groups, and he will then assure them that he is much more secure in that role than he used to be.

He immediately follows that assurance up with the question to his audience, "Aren't I?"

The incongruence of the vulnerable question is always good for a laugh. It's a pretty safe bet that we've all had times of insecurity and vulnerability in our lives. That's another one of the mind's games to keep us safe and within our boundaries. The mind, or what we often refer to as ego, is intent on keeping us safe. Happy...it doesn't care about that.

As long as, and as often as, we are identified with our rational mind and linear process as "us", and us; therefore, as the doer of the actions of our lives, we are subject to insecurity and feeling vulnerable. Obviously, some are much better than others at hiding this or over-compensating for it with bravado. And

there are some who have made enough good decisions to feel pretty secure with themselves - most of the time.

It may occur to us that, of course, we are the doers and deciders of our lives' course. And that is true from the relative perspective of feeling separate and feeling that we only have our rational mind to rely on. However, there is a doorway to a new perspective that changes all of this.

It's called awakening, or recovery of a sense of Self that is unself-conscious. It comes as an often startling new insight and realization that we are, yes, individuals in the physical sense, but are part and parcel of something much bigger in which a sense of unification with everything and everyone becomes clearly cognized and recognized.

With this awakening we no longer feel like the "doer," but rather like we are watching the actions of the doer from a "higher" perspective, and have no attachment to the outcome of decisions and actions. However, somewhat paradoxically, we have this implicit trust in our own judgment and trust that we will take right and appropriate action in every situation that presents itself to us or confronts us.

Fear and doubt, especially fear of what will other people think and doubt about our own identity and self-worth, are gone. We look at life with equanimity and have this sense of delightful joy in the journey. And when we hit those inevitable bumps in the road on the journey, they are just that. We feel the jolt and in the next nanosecond we return to peaceful equanimity.

We never ask, "Is this OK?" We know it is.

Love.

Is That You, Dudley?

I won a prize in a cartooning contest when I was 11. I've loved cartoons and animation since I was a kid, and I've never grown up...I mean, never grown out of my fascination with them. Mel Blanc, who did the voices of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Sylvester, Tweetie Bird and a host of others, was a hero. Still is.

I worked on copying the cartoons and imitating those voices for hours on end. I eventually shifted to painting - at first, tight realism and then the colors took over and I just let them fly on their own. My wife gave me a gift of medium viscosity acrylics 20 years ago and as soon as I hit the canvas with one of the colors and felt the smooth flow of this paint I became abstract and free.

The voices? Oh, kids still ask me to spray out Daffy Duck's (and I think Sylvester, too), "Suffering Succotash," and I never use the word "moron." Instead, I say (usually self-talk about something goofy I've done), "What a maroon." That's one of Bugs Bunny's lines.

What I began to notice as the years went by is that many of the cartoons; especially those that used to run on the Rocky and Bullwinkle Show, have a layer of adult humor and sophistication that is not only for kids. And they often offer wonderful life perspective and philosophies within the context of the cartoon clip.

If you're not familiar with some of these names mentioned above and soon to be mentioned below from my cartoon vault, have no fear, I will come to a point here soon using one of my favorites:

Dudley Do-Right is a Royal Canadian Mounted Police whose name, as they say in advertising, says it all. He is the hero, the rescuer, the wearer of the white hat. His counterpart is the black clad and cad, Snidely Whiplash. And the catalyst for their battles between good and evil deeds is Nell Fenwick.

This morning I received a note from someone who thanked me for my "wisdom, courage and heart," and how much of a positive impact it has had and will have on shaping the course of their life. Wow! Pretty

heady stuff. What occurred to me is that I do not personally own any of the aforementioned wisdom, courage and heart. They were pure gifts.

I came to fall on the ground in utter despair and disgrace for the Snidely Whiplash I had been, and by grace opened my eyes to find myself on Horse (the name of Dudley Do-Right's horse) and found courage and heart in my saddlebags. This was a startling surprise. So, I have never felt that I personally own any of the so-called wisdom, courage and heart. I do acknowledge their presence and I thank God for the gifts. And I thank my wife for the new paint set.

I'm just sayin...

Love.

Never Settle

In a recent move to exercise a bit of fiscal responsibility and frugality, I opted for a generic bag of coffee - at a savings of \$4 from my usual decadent choice of designer Blueberry Cobbler coffee. It wasn't so much the pennies as it was the principle. My cash flow had turned to caramel drizzle and I felt the need to impose some restraint on my spending. (This was before my recent shameless self-promotion and resultant book and painting orders that restored the flow to sparkling spring water. Thank you, kind readers and patrons).

Yesterday was the last drop of the generic non-brand and today...ahh...the house is filled with the sweet aroma of Blueberry Cobbler coffee and I am (pardon me) sipping away in my indulgent decadence. Life is good.

So, if some of my notes this past couple of weeks have been a little edgy, I beg your pardon. I was feeling deprived and that can lead to depraved grouchiness. (Wow. I expected that word to provoke a squiggly red line indicating misspelling. No line. Cool.)

The lesson: never settle for second best. The segway? Never settle for intellectual assent to someone's ivory-tower philosophies. That includes religious dogma. Because those adoptions can lead to neo-advaita speak and parroting as those we owned the words coming from the particleboard pulpit.

Never settle for rational and dispassionate logic in the realm of consciousness. Life will go gray and we are in danger of going cold and gray ourselves.

Life offers a level of consciousness that puts us right back the garden of delight as directly and personally experienced. Don't settle for anything less. Find those blueberries. And BTW, those blueberries don't care about your past, only your hunger.

Love.

Practical Enlightenment

The ultimately most practical and logical mission for one who feels an inner longing - as if something is missing their lives, imagines how wonderful it would be to have peace of mind, and/or are desperately feels ashamed, guilty, troubled or just lost...is to seek enlightenment.

Buddha did it. Jesus recommended it. Awakened Teachers through the ages have offered various practices of meditation techniques and lifestyles as preparation for it's potential. As a short aside here: no one can "teach" another enlightenment, but those who are enlightened can "point" to it and witness to the incredible inner work it accomplishes.

And that brings us to the practical and logical part. But first, a few editorial notes: many teachers, including some the big names, have taught that reason and determined effort to be a healthy socialized person is the only "enlightenment" and have put awakening under the umbrella of psychology. If that works for you, fine. Just don't insist to me that there's all there is, because there is more, and I am an empowered witness.

I camp out with those who experienced, or are attracted by the stories of, what I experienced, and that was a fireworks kaboom! light show that preceded a startling rush of new insight about life, far beyond anything I had thought or imagined - and nothing that my reasoned efforts could have produced. And, furthermore, it was in the midst of being nearly overwhelmed by Love from what was unmistakably Divine Presence.

Even though followers of Buddha, Jesus and other really big names put together a to do list purportedly prerequisite to enlightenment or awakening as taught by their founders, it is the awakening that brings about the consciousness that naturally lives according to the 8-fold path and commandments - not the other way around. We are rendered inadequate to live free and easy by the social coercion that was imposed on us beginning shortly after our first squawk.

OK, OK, the practical part: With awakening we are freed from the chains of social coercion and fear and doubt. We no longer spend the majority of time listening to worrisome internal chatter about, "What if...", or "If only..." or "Should I or shouldn't I?" We trust who we are and we trust our own judgment. And, in addition, awakening universally through all the mystic traditions comes with a side order of enhanced Peace, Love, Joy, Kindness, Compassion, Patience, Tolerance and such.

We are more efficient, more alert, more attuned to right action in any situation. We are not encumbered with childish, soap opera sentimentality, but rather a genuine empathy, love for and interest in being of service to our neighbor (and everyone is a neighbor). I recently read a comment from someone who said that a friend would not help them, "because they were too spiritual." That's not authentic spirituality. That's all this neo and pseudo-spirituality, dry, philosophical, ivory tower intellectualism that sneers its perspective, that shows up with its ego in a U-Haul. When we are troubled, being advised to just accept what is and get on with our life is lame advice from a lame philosopher.

So, for practical purposes, enjoy your awakening or the pursuit of awakening and the clarity, efficiency and freedom it brings. If you are attracted to trailers about it, pursue it. Just don't settle for the dry bones of "This" is all there is, out of context. It takes the critical first step of an awakened consciousness to understand This in a new light. In Buddhist terms, entering the void fills the void. In Christian terms there is an awakened guide available - on who walks beside us.

Be practical and logical. Follow your heart, let it open and offer you its wisdom whisper. It knows things the brain never imagined.

Love.

Did You Miss Me?

Busy schedule, forgot my morning "obligation". Kind of like when we forget early on who we really are and where our true home is to be found (again). Something is missing. We've forgotten something. When we feel like we are not at "home" or there is something that we are supposed to do or be doing, but cannot quite put our finger on it, that is the first marker on the Mystic Path.

As we continue, love begins to bubble. We call old friends. Give Mom or children an adoring look. Another marker. The sky is bluer, the tree's greener, and we wonder what is truly behind this magnificence. Another marker.

The longing intensifies and moves up the priority ladder with an urgency to be fulfilled. When it becomes priority we are knocking on the door...and then comes the hard part.

We cannot open the door, and no one can open it for us. Only our heart can open the door. The funny thing is, when it opens we suddenly realize that we were already on the inside...

The Kingdom of Heaven is within, just waiting for us to notice (again).

Love.

The Bird in The Mirror

Every day that I've walked to this spot, in the nearly three years we have lived here, one of the strangely beautiful birds native to Florida lands outside a glass-walled entrance to the community clubhouse of the condominium complex.

And every such day, for all day according to some who have watched, this long-red-billed bird repeatedly either runs or flies into the glass wall - over and over and over. Today I watched while enjoying lunch and reading, outside the entrance on the patio for about an hour.

This bird in flight boinked off the glass, dropped to the ground, strutted maybe 5 or 6 feet with his back to the glass wall as if nonchalantly giving up, only to suddenly turn and run smack into the glass wall again, and again, and again - sometimes flying, sometimes running.

This bird...well, let's give the bird a name: Beaker. As you might have surmised, Beaker can see his or her reflection in the glass and the strutting away is only a fake-out move to see if he can catch his rival (or potential mate) off guard. But it never works. Still, he persists. I'd say Beaker's probably a him, because of the persistent pursuit. I'd even go so far as to say Beaker is probably a stubborn Taurus. Anyway...

In human terms this would be, of course, insane behavior. In Beaker's world; however, there is no comprehension of reflective glass...or glass for that matter. So, he just cannot for the life of him figure out what in blazes is going on. He knows that other bird is there. He can see him plain as day. Every time Becker challenges him, the other bird challenges back. And every time it's a draw.

Somehow this made me think of recurring problems that we face in life - in finances, relationships and an assortment of other life experiences, such as cars breaking down, running out of gas, always being late... If this resonates, read on.

In my case, it's recurring financial issues. I've complained to God about the total goof ball angels who must be assigned to watch over my finances. I wonder if there are any psychedelics in heaven? It's kind of like that one thorn in the side of an incredibly blessed life for which I am incredibly grateful. But, still those goof ball, financially inept angels (which, of course, is me trying to blame God, angels, anyone but me for the recurring issue - knowing it's me). So, what I end up doing is eventually living by Proverbs 3:5 about leaving it up to God...and every time God comes through. Often at the last possible moment, but always.

Going back to a comparative study of Beaker's dilemma and mine, it seems an easy conclusion to draw that we are not comprehending...something. There's a glass wall that for the life of me I cannot see and I keep banging into the same issue - a lot! What's it all about? And where will it end? I don't know. Kind of like this post...

Will Beaker ever come to the cold truth of logic, give up this insanity and make a new plan? Can Beaker find a spiritual coach, a guru or take up TM and finally transcend into a new level of consciousness that suddenly graces him with the comprehension that it is him in the mirror, and solve his issue, so he get on with life like other "normal" birds of a feather? Probably not.

Can we?

Love.

You're A Nobody, Buddy!

I know you think you're somebody. You wear a size double E shoe, a 42 long jacket and/or a size 8 dress (bad news is that 12 is the new 8 if you haven't noticed the "fabric"ated marketing ploy over the past few years), so obviously you think you are a body. Think, again. Wait. There's no one who thinks. But here's more bad news:

It's all an illusion: the shoes, the dress, the marketing ploy, and your body. Doesn't exist. Mud on your shoes? Ketchup on your dress? What a mess. Doesn't exist. It's all smoke and mirrors...except they don't exit either. No God. No bubble gum. No bubble gum music either. No space probe. No space. No sex. No orgasm. No organism.

There's only This, without the This. Because there's no time or space for This to exist in.

Are you with me so far? Aha! Trick question. How can you be with me, if there's no me and no you!? Ha.

OK, enough. This is me parading in my Advaita costume. This is the "Yoga of Knowledge" that appeals to the personality type you may recognize: They are convinced that they are smarter than anyone else. Their consistent response to almost any statement made in their presence begins with, "No...," followed by how the statement they heard made was not as precisely keen as their more exact perception and so requires their more explicit elucidation.

Here's an excerpt from an Advaita Academy interview recently posted as a link (to, of course, make the point keener), "...being asleep and being awake are the same thing. There's no difference, except that in being awake it's seen that there is no difference, whereas in being asleep it's believed that there is a difference."

No difference. See? This speaker, like so many advaita-speaks, has a history of 30 years of following gurus and meditation practices, but says these are irrelevant to nondual seeing. And he is right, in a way. But the coincidence runs high. Inquire into the background of many nondual seers, and you'll find a guru in their closet.

What is maddening (my pet-store bred peeve) is that the statements are true from the seeing side, but until nonduality is seen (see above quote) the language is trippy - often intentionally in my admittedly jaded view. And their truth is costumed in imprecise language (the bane of the personality type mentioned).

Illusion is a lousy interpretation of the word "maya" and the non-existence patter is in absolute terms, spoken to the masses who are trapped in relative terms and perceptions. Yes, conceptualization, any form of rational understanding has nothing to do with nothingness - nonduality. Yes, we have accepted a masked identity as "us" and it is not us. Yes, we are cosmic awareness, divine presence, and that is the absolute reality.

Blessings to those who slipped into nondual realization while on the illusory escalator at a make-believe Macy's or while watching a non-existent mud wrestling contest and who themselves no longer exist (see what I mean about trippy language)... but for most there is a bridge over troubled waters that prevent nondual seeing, and there are "teachers" standing in the gap.

OK, my nondual nit-picker buddies, get you knitting needles out.

Love.

Rip It Up

Life's a delightful field of sensory pleasures; from the smell of fresh designer coffee - Blueberry Cobbler, Vanilla Biscotti, Caramel Drizzle, ummm ummm, to the sound of a child's totally free giggle, to music that gets the hips to wiggle (I love to dance, rip it up, tear it up. Give me that old time rock 'n' roll or a country tune with a stomping beat and I'm on my feet), a good looking woman in a flowing red dress, a sunrise, a sunset, a balmy breeze...me and you in a little red sports car; the list goes on and on and on.

Somewhere down the line some old time religion from some tight-ass old farts decided these gifts were not from God, but from the devil. They thought grumpy and miserable was somehow more pleasing to God. No more laughing, no more fun. If you show your teeth or tongue, you have to pay a forfeit...like your soul, and a trip to the fiery furnace forever. Twist and shout hallelujah, but don't dance. Reminds me of a funny but somewhat risqué joke about why Baptists don't have sex standing up ... They're afraid it will lead to dancing.

Where fun got a bad rap is probably a result of the similar neo-nutso water spider "teachings" that are perpetuated today by contemporary tight asses and ivory tower intellectuals. Instead of knowing by direct personal experience that spiritual awakening and realization is more delightful and valuable than any and all of the earthly pleasures, but/and that this realization actually enhances all of them, the pseudo-teachings were and are that the earthly pleasures are opposed to spiritual realization. Hello, piety. Good-bye, partying. A total misread.

Jesus used the (translated) phrase, "That your joy may be full." Of course, he was talking about the joy of awakening (being filled with the Holy Spirit), but It doesn't take a lot of reading between the piety to see Jesus as party person. He reportedly turned four huge containers of water into wine at a wedding. Don't tell me he did know how to party. I bet he gave the dances of his day a new twist, especially on the Holy Sabbath - Saturday!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_w9E0snp9g

Love.

Nothing More To Say. No Way.

It's been 35 years. Seems like yesterday. Well, actually, it feels like today. Some say the story is irrelevant because it is about an "event" that happened so long ago. But that event was a step into timelessness. And just before stepping into that perfect peace of mind that timelessness brings, a promise was made to tell others about this quantum step - most especially those who were in some way troubled and seeking, yearning for, praying for, desperate for, peace of mind.

So, virtually every day, for the past 35 years plus, I find something to say about this remarkable event. I guess remarkable means that something is worthy of remarks about it. However, you would think that after all this time and all these words (a while ago I accidentally dumped over 700 pages and 200,000 words out of my computer without a backup file), one would run out of things to say.

Maybe one day I will wake up in the morning and find that I have nothing more to say about the subject. Ha! Even now, while I am stalling in wait for the flow, I know that I have drunk from the cup that was dipped in the living water that flows eternally, and as promised in scripture and in my experience, I have never thirsted again. And that's all it takes is an exhilarating mind flash to feel the gratitude and bubbling

joy that sets the fingers flying around the keyboard to compose another note. (I type at around 90 words a minute...if you don't count typos.)

So, let's call this drink a drink of Sparkling Water. Not carbonated, but sparkling with the precious gems of insight it magically brings with one drink. At a point in life when we are incredibly thirsty, the value of a drink of cool clear water is immeasurable. At a point in life when we are feeling empty and lost, or just feel an intuitive sense of something not quite right or something missing, an infusion of sparkling insight that fills the void, answers all of our "big" questions and brings perfect peace of mind is beyond priceless.

Having walked that road and being able to authentically tell of the Sparkling Water, and having drunk it, is one thing. Pointing in the direction of the "well" is another - there seems to be many maps to precisely the same location found in a broad spectrum of religious, spiritual and philosophical models. But telling how this Sparkling Water is served and the precise nature of the thirst-quenching it brings...is impossible in other than what seem vague or general terms.

A sense of Oneness is easy to conceptualize, but the experience has layers that cannot be put in words. Peace of mind can easily be fancied, but the experience of a profound peace of mind in which a perfect harmony and an unmistakable Divine Presence is perceived, is beyond the capacity of the rational process. It is a heartfelt experience, and as mentioned earlier, it is a transport to a "place" that is timeless. And to mention that there is a dissolution of the personal identity in favor of a primary or absolute identity can be rational-mind boggling.

So, either we resonate with the words and respond to their appeal, or our heart resonates because we know of what is being alluded to by our own direct personal experience, or neither. But the writing and speaking and rambling and occasional ranting is irrepressible, regardless of whether there is an audience of one or one million.

As Rumi said when he first began to write his ecstatic poetry, he thought the whole world was his audience, but then realized that God was his only audience.

Love.

Yessing and Knowing

When we awaken to our spiritual essence, an unmistakable "yes, this is it!" comes to us. Absolute clarity with no questions ping ponging around our mind, no what if or if only, not worrying at all. Just imagine. No questions. No big questions. No little questions. Just satchitananda (truth-consciousness-bliss).

It seems a fanciful dream. Nice to imagine, but not "realistic". Yet, those who have awakened insist that not only does this sense of perfect harmony and quiet equanimity become the undercurrent of our lives, we also have this unique trust in our own judgment. And not only in our judgment and sense of right action to take at any moment but something even more settling. We trust that we will know what we need to know whenever anything or whatever thing comes our way, in the moment.

This is incredible freedom from stress and tension and apprehension. Life is effortless. We are in the flow. It is like we have tapped into a creative and inspired source that is greater than we are as an individual - One we can trust completely and explicitly, always, always, always.

Those who step into (are called into?) a teacher or guru role have an abiding sense of this and it has become priority in their lives to speak of and guide others who express a deep interest in such an "event".

And they speak and write of it incessantly, propelled by just One thing...

Love.

Communication Central

Typically, these notes stay away from anything political and focus on inner peace as the ultimate solution to anything political. However, at a time when innovations like facebook are facilitating worldwide networks, a call for; make that a push for, the "voice" of the people to be heard worldwide is growing louder and clearer.

A poll of the people on this planet would undoubtedly show that the vast majority of people, with few fanatical fringes, want peace, harmony and a cooperative sharing of resources worldwide. So why is it that "governments" can declare war, subscript warriors to kill other people, and allow (ignore) untold suffering in a world that has sufficient resources to feed, clothe, house and offer healthcare to virtually everyone?

Just imagine a world of peace. No impoverished people, no child (or adult) going to bed hungry, no devastating destruction...a world of harmony, peace on earth, goodwill toward all. The time when this was considered a fanciful impossibility just may be passing.

Of course, there is one other roadblock...religion, especially fear-based religion. Scriptural thumpers point out passages that warn of one world government with the "devil" smacking his lips, the exclusive-club mentality, and dogmatic differences that allow some religions to kill other "infidels". The insanity of these position has to become more and more obvious as the world at large has access to communication central.

Now, a little caution here as the anarchist perspective begins to emerge. Wait a minute. How about throwing caution to the wind and begin to acknowledge that as more and more of the world populace is able to communicate directly, regardless of global distance, an awakened stateless society just may emerge.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xB4dbdNSXY&feature=player_embedded

(An editorial note about John Lennon's Imagine: IMO, his "no heaven, no hell" is about internalizing these concepts and is aimed at breaking down religious differences, rather than dismissing religion entirely.)

Love.

The Real Communication Central

Let's have a heart to heart talk. As powerful a communication tool as the internet and social media has become, the real connecting point is still the personal heart, or the personal spirit, if you will. In an earlier note, the mention of a stateless society - a world without government, brought responses that included a concern that without government we would have mob rule, that violence would have no repercussion, and that people need a structural leadership.

Those few responses reminded me why the political platform is so shaky and to be avoided by me, and the brief responses catapulted me back to my primary assignment...addressing the inner life as the starting point in any problem solving or goal achievement strategy.

There is a reference in scripture of several traditions to a coming time of goodwill, an Awakening of all people to the absolute reality known by theists as God-Consciousness. In the Judeo-Christian-Muslim holy writings there are reference to a "new covenant," a time when God will change the heart of all inhabitants of the world, and there will be no need for one person to teach another about the presence of God because "all will know" and we will have universal (worldwide) awareness that we are one people. In the Hindu and it's offshoot, Buddhism, traditions there is an Awakening to, "utter tranquility and perfect peace of mind."

In the writing and talks of Awakened Teachers of Present Day Enlightenment, there is a shared awareness or sure sense that the destiny of humankind is for all to Awaken. None of these "teachers," including the big names and the really big name, even Jesus, claimed to know the timing of this. But virtually all authentically Awakened have spoken and written about this sense of destiny for all of humankind.

And so, while talk of anarchy (which is laden with negative connotation that is not part of its original meaning) in light of today's world conditions and social conditioning brings understandable trepidation, that would or will not be a concern in a world that is universally Awakened.

Awakening has side effects, along the lines of the litany of side effects we hear of when watching and listening to pharmaceutical advertising, that completely negate the need for mob and violence control. Awakening enhances kindness, compassion, tolerance, and brings an astute awareness of the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humankind ... along with the blissful joy and peace of mind in imbues.

So, its back to satsang (preaching, teaching) as the most sensible solution to social ills and a troubled world in which greed, oppression and exploitation of the weak and poor are so obvious. As the Unity songs goes, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me."

Satsang's objective is to communicate that there truly is a "place" inside of each of us, a truth, that can be known by direct personal experience - and the experience of this truth brings perfect peace of mind...by any name, regardless of the model or tradition on which it is hung.

For those who have been graced with the knowledge and insight of Awakening, and those who are "on the path" of inquiry about this beautifully freeing Awakening, we are destined to meet in a world of true freedom, a world of...

Love.

Fig Leaves and Other Fashion Statements

In the allegorical story of Adam and Eve, once they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they became self-conscious and aware of their nakedness. They decided on matching fig leaves as a fashion statement, and as soon as God saw their new look, the jig was up.

We can remember back to a time, as very young children, when we did not concern ourselves with hiding parts of our body or getting dirty...or worry about much of anything at all. The world seemed benevolent, bugs were fun, our every need was met without any effort on our part - other than an occasional squawk to draw attention to our needs. The good news is that we can return to a time such as that - life as carefree and effortless play.

We just have to give up our self-consciousness, and return to a childlike lightness of spirit. Of course, social convention and the weather make clothes a good idea, but giving up our self-consciousness and returning to a childlike lightness of spirit is simple, easy and natural. And it can happen in the twinkling of an eye.

Unfortunately, that earlier mentioned social convention, which has been heavily burdened with religion, makes it seem fanciful at best and impossible at worst; that is, before we die and go to heaven (if we've lived a perfect life, which we're told is impossible). As young children at play we didn't conceive of a creator or devil, or heaven or hell, or enlightenment or nonduality, or the need to adhere to any creed or dogma, or take part in any ritual.

Ironically, religions were built up around those fortunate ones who did discover that it is possible to give up self-consciousness and enjoy a carefree lightness of spirit. However, the later organizers of religion, in great part, squeezed the life out of the original teachings in favor of control and money.

So, leaving religious models out of the picture and returning to a simpler way...

We all experience times when we are lost in thought, like when driving somewhere and arriving at the destination, or going through parts of the journey, without any conscious memory of having driven for all or a segment of the trip. We're not self-conscious during these times. And at times when we are lost in love, or in awe of a sunrise, we lose our self-consciousness for a time.

Meditation, even a brief few seconds of meditation, can do this. Letting our mind go quiet and totally yielding to the moment without any thought can give us a taste of how relaxing and pleasant it is to lose concern with every little thing and not be constantly mulling over contingent possibilities.

This "yielding" to a quiet mind can bring up a startling and totally unexpected shift in awareness that locks in this quiet peace of mind as an undercurrent of our lives from that moment on. Some call it Awakening. It can be as simple as that. This shift in awareness comes with a broad selection of beautiful designer accessories, some so incredible that they are beyond description. One of them is a brand new appreciation of...

Love.

The Guru As Interior Decorator

We live in this awesome mobile home called a body. And while this body is recognized as us and presents our style and our lifestyle to the world, we do not consider the body to be who we are as a person. We have an interior life, a consciousness and an inner dialogue that we alone know as our self-identification.

Friends, parents, spouses, colleagues, bosses, and therapist may have different degrees of access to our inner life, but no one has complete access to this inner life but ourselves. When we find life as less than fulfilling and joyful, it is often because we have hung dark curtains up in different "rooms" of our personal house to keep people (sometimes including ourselves) in the dark about certain aspects of our inner life.

The reason for the curtains, and the very fabric of which they are made is typically guilt, shame, anger, resentment, fear and doubt about what has happened, is happening, and might happen in our lives. As these dark curtains are hung, and to the degree that we hang them, we feel a quiet sense of emptiness, sadness and desperation - no matter how good the outer circumstances of our lives may be or appear to be.

Of course, when we block access to others, our view outwardly is also blocked. And we are left alone to dwell on the dark thoughts that fabricated the curtains. When we block incoming love, at the same time we block outgoing love. A person who has shut themselves off from accepting love does so at the cost of allowing themselves to feel love. And the interior life becomes dark and dreary.

Now, when we hear someone talk about, or we read about, a window through which life can be seen with pristine clarity, it just may catch our ear and eyes - especially when we hear that this view is breathtakingly beautiful and 100% restorative to a life of peace and love and joy.

As interest grows, we begin to think about how wonderful it would be to be able to look out of this window. The problem is, we cannot find this window because our windows are covered with dark protective curtains. Either we continue on, in the dark, or we reach a point where we decide to give our interior life a good housekeeping and redecorate.

Enter the guru, with a flourish. As a reminder, or a bit of information for those who have not heard this, the word guru means darkness remover (gu: darkness, ru: remover). Now, the guru does not operate the way of the traditional therapist. We are not required to sit in a dark room, alone with the guru, or as part of a group and endlessly explore the reasons why, why, why, we put the curtains up. The why doesn't matter to the guru. They want to help us take the curtains down.

We are there, alone or with a group, and we are there because of some darkness in our life. Taking the curtains down will let in the light. The light doesn't care why the curtains were up or how long they've been there. As soon as they come down, kaboom! light comes in indiscriminately. Doesn't matter what we've done or what has been done to us. As soon as the curtains come down, a pristine clarity comes shining through and we are free, awakened, transparent, and brand new.

The tough part is allowing the guru autonomy to do the decorating. We want to think over what was said, and maybe restate it either internally or out loud to show that we understand and/or to show that we can say what the guru said...only we can say it better.

Big trap. Ego trap. Better to shut your trap. As a matter of fact, shutting down the internal dialogue utterly and completely is absolutely necessary. But we will not and cannot do it until we reach the point of trust in the guru's authenticity; which will come as the words resonate within and stir our hearts, and the darkness is so oppressive that we totally surrender in silence. It don't come easy.

Love does, though.

Love.

Somebody Pinch Me

Many years ago, at a time in my life when I was carrying a lot of guilt over some bad relationship decisions (and other bad decisions), and how they had hurt so many people - especially the people in my family, I met a young couple who had pendants around their necks, with a little picture of a young man in them. When I asked about these pendants, they told me that they had been to India and met this guru who showed them how to know inner peace, and that it came with a joy that they called, "bliss". Their faces all but glowed when they talked about it.

I wanted to hear more. So they took me to something called a "satsang". It was a new word for me, and they explained that it meant something like being in the company of truth, or a discourse on truth. So, this young guy started talking about how we can come to know something that is already inside of us - something that his guru had shown him. And he talked about how just about everyone has this longing, this sense of something missing in their lives, and how his guru has shown him how to access this inner knowing...and that's not all...

He said that this knowing would bring incredible new insights about life, about who we truly are, and when we received this knowledge; this sudden rush of new wisdom, we would feel a peace of mind and inner joy that is indescribably delicious. That was enough for me. I never went back home.

Fast forward a few months later, and I'm in an ashram (Hindu temple) being shown meditation techniques. In the midst of a quiet meditation, everything that I had been told came rushing in - and it was a startling rush of insight that can only be described...well, it can't be described. But that hasn't stopped me from writing and talking about it incessantly ever since.

Still, after all these years, it feels like a dream. This is especially true, since the evening before the "ceremony" in which I was to be shown these meditation techniques I had offered up a spontaneous prayer - or something more like offering God a deal. Even though I was fascinated by the prospects of knowing inner peace - and I was desperate for it, I still considered the whole thing pretty fanciful. So, I said in this prayer/deal that if this were truth and that I could be relieved of this guilt and despair and really know peace of mind, I would spend the rest of life telling others about this possibility.

Apparently that sealed the deal, because I was zapped. I left the temple the next day, knowing that I was going to tell anyone who was interested, especially those in pain, guilt, despair and such as I had been, that peace of mind, regardless of their history, was possible. It had happened to me.

And even though I am eternally grateful to Maharaji (now known as Prem Rawat) for his teachings, and I have his picture on my wall to this day, and you'll have to pardon the brashness, I knew that the guru had given me everything that he had, and I had been "assigned" a duty to teach, as well. You can't pass on half a light.

I have been writing, teaching, preaching, offering meditation classes and satsang about this ever since - virtually every day. It's at the core of everything I do. I have found that this access to inner peace is also at the core of every religion - especially clear in the mystic "branches" of religion. It is the truth that Masters and Awakened Teachers have been talking about since the ancient of days.

But still, I wake up or sometimes stop in the middle of the day and just sit and wonder. How did I get this most wonderful of gifts? How do I have the audacity to tell others about it and encourage them to pursue any and all paths that they find themselves drawn to in search of peace of mind (just don't get hung up on any one model)? Did this really happen? I know it did, but I still ask.

Somebody pinch me.

Love.

Got A Light?

Come with me, if you like, on an imaginary trip. We walk into a dark room and you hit the light switch. To our utter amazement, only a portion of the room lights up. This is not because of a weak or diffused light; rather, it is as if there is an invisible partition about half way into the room. Half of the room is brightly lit, but the other half remains completely dark.

Of course, there are rheostat light switches that are designed to gradually bring the light up from dim to bright. But let's first consider the light that only lights up half the room, and we'll come back to the gradual light.

Yes, this is about Enlightenment. Specifically, it is about the "non-process" of Enlightenment. And obviously these are my views.

Staying with the metaphor of a light switch ... If we're looking for a light switch - what it is that turns on the peace of mind and joyful childlike lightness of spirit that Enlightenment allegedly brings, we would, of course, ask someone who knows how to find the switch, or at least read a written set of directions. These would naturally have to have been created by someone who also found the switch; otherwise, neither the person we asked nor the directions we read would be authentic.

So, what's the half a light thing all about? It about how improbable (impossible) it would be for teachers of Enlightenment to give their student/seeker half of the light with which they have been graced. Enlightenment comes full-blown, full wattage, revealing everything, every no-thing, the teachers of Enlightenment know - or it is not Enlightenment. We can not pass on half a light.

And the gradual Enlightenment thing ... this is a trap of the ego. It's the rational process, the linear thinking processing of information, trying to grab the spotlight while keeping us in limbo. Enlightenment does not come gradually. Learning about life, yes. Enlightenment, no rheostat. It's a sudden rush of light. Blam. Clarity. Often, years and years of preparation, but the switch of consciousness is sudden.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of those who have found a "guru" are taught early meditation techniques and have been told to meditate and grow in understanding. Those who have gone through the various stylized "initiations" are also told to continue to use the techniques they were taught.

Here, there are two roads. If the student/seeker did not light up at initiation, or only got a quick flash, continuing to meditate is going to be an endless loop of disappointment - other than the socialized aspect of

being part of the group, and some nice relaxation techniques. They were not ready and/or not properly prepared for initiation, and should continue to prepare for initiation again at a later date - openly admitting that they did not light up. Or move on to another show that is more their style.

The other road is the one less traveled. If in the initiation, the seeker was graced with the brilliant light of Enlightenment, they have found the inner guru, and are now guru in their own right and light. They may, and many do, continue to honor the guru who guided them along the way. But if they are authentic, they will honor the choiceless obligation and assignment they have received to tell others the good news.

As long as we hold out any guru as an exception rather than an example, God's multi-level marketing program will not reach its full potential. Instead, we will have devotees/followers and such who are exploited to serve their "master" and bring gifts to them or their organization while never fully receiving the gift from the guru. The whole thing about attaching to one model as the only "true" model is another stumbling block.

OK, that should upset a few apple carts.

Love.

Hunger and Thirst

When we are hungry and thirsty, we look for food and drink. No news flash there. When we are desperate and go so far as to raid someone else's refrigerator, we are apt to feel guilty about it and later confess and/or replace the goodies. And even if we did neither, it might cause a wince down the road when we remember that time, but I doubt that we would fall down, bawl and squall, begging God for forgiveness and fearing that hellfire and brimstone awaits us in the afterlife.

Whatever we have done what is considered wrong; whatever, at its essence is in response to a hunger and thirst we felt, and if we missed the mark of good behavior in finding a solution, we are responsible for those choices, certainly, but to let them weigh on us like pressing stones is to unnecessarily punish ourselves.

When those choices take us far beyond raiding a fridge and into really bad and irresponsible acts, they just might cause us to fall down, bawl and squall, begging God for forgiveness - and for those warped with religious superstition - fearing that hellfire and brimstone awaits us in the afterlife.

Without any theistic framework, we might be searching desperately for peace of mind, and for a way to forgive ourselves. The good news is that the very idea of this necessity puts us on the road to discovery of just what we are looking for, even if we harbor a fear that it is impossible.

All we have to do is die to the former self, and let a brand new being emerge.

Awakened teachers, gurus, ascended masters, perfect masters and spiritual coaches (by all sorts of names) specialize in this assisted ego-suicide. And they always have food and drink. Some even keep a supply of designer coffee on hand - Blueberry Cobbler, Vanilla Biscotti, Chocolate Truffle, to name a few, and all the ingredients to whip up a batch of muffins - banana, blueberry, apple. Hungry and thirsty yet?

Love.

Need A Guru Do You?

It's interesting that the designation "guru" has moved into the common western vernacular as a word for expert or visionary with certain valuable insights in some field - someone who really knows their stuff. In Sanskrit, in a spiritual context, it means darkness (gu) remover (ru) or teacher.

That works. If we're in the dark about how to make, say, blueberry muffins, then we would want a Blueberry Muffin Guru. Of course we could look up a recipe and make them on our own. But if we want an out-of-this-world Cosmic Blueberry Muffin, we might want to find the BMG.

Now, if the BMG happened to be a true guru, a satguru...one bite and we would be enlightened!

Too bad it doesn't work that way. Or doesn't it? I've read of someone who went to a guru and after careful preparation of the "ingredients," went catapulting into the astral plane, onto the causal plane and into a breathtaking merger with Divine Presence at their very first bite of a simple breath meditation.

Before we rush to the local muffin shop, a quick disclaimer: these results are not typical and your results may vary. I have also read of many who have spent years following a guru, meditating for countless hours, eating only veggies, being of service, and either abstaining from or fully engaging in certain sensory pleasure...only to walk away disappointed or jaded about the whole guru thing, never to have tasted the Cosmic Blueberry Muffin.

So, the debate rages. Need a guru do you? Or not! There are plenty of reports of guru abuse and abusive gurus, phony gurus, and goofy gurus. There's a website and discussion group that "rates" gurus and pretty much discredits almost all of them that the raters have bumped into in one way or another. And then there's the view that we are all already enlightened. And still another that the guru is in our own heart.

Some more liberal and less jaded among those who even bother with the whole guru thing allow that we might need some guidance to realize that we are already enlightened (I guess that's like having a million dollars under our mattress that we forgot and we need someone to come in and point to the mattress) or a living guru to help us hear the wisdom whisper from the heart that will turn on the light.

When it comes down to it, if we intuit that just maybe a guru has something for us, and we don't feel like a million bucks, maybe we should keep an open mind and be on the lookout for a book, a look, or a talk that sets off our heart like middle C responding to a tuning fork.

OK, stick a fork in this note. It's done.

Love.

The Surviving Ego

Live Free or Die is a New Hampshire motto. Thing is, it's not an either/or. The ego must die in order for one to live free. For a little clarification: The ego must face the firing squad, be willing to shut its eyes tight and hear the gunshots. But the shots are blanks. The ego survives, but is now so grateful that it is humbled back into its intended servant role.

Along the way to liberation, the ego as typically thought of as our personality and our linear rational process, insists that we can come up with an explanation and satisfying conceptualization of all this spiritual talk that has mysteriously attracted us. We'll hear inner chatter along the lines of it's nothing more than or like this or that.

But as we move along and our search becomes more insistent, we find that not only do the ego's attempts leave us unsatisfied, but the words that we read or hear about awakening, enlightenment, satisfying this

longing and finding peace of mind are still heard by us as vague and frustrating. We find ourselves wishing that we could just hear clearly and definitively what this strange magic is all about.

So we push our chair up a little closer to the teacher, watch more videos, read more books, engage others who are on the search...but still, nothing satisfying. The problem is that the ego, the self we have accepted as us, doesn't have a clue. And any and all searching by the ego is hopeless. The ego will not find authentic peace of mind. Oh, it will offer countless substitutes: new job, new lover, new car, blind faith and such.

Just because the ego cannot have its way does not mean that all is lost, it's just that the ego cannot help in the search...because it's not a search at all. It's a surrender. This where the ego freaks out. The ego has been running our lives all along, or least as long as we were socially coerced into accepting this false identity as "us". And when we turn and consider Pogo's words of wisdom, "We have founded the enemy, and it is us," (the us being the ego-identity) the ego fears death and steps up its insistence that we could die if we don't stop thinking this way.

However, this is the pointing to what must precede awakening to our true identity. We must risk death of our old identity. And it is here that many turn back and go on to live lives of quiet desperation. Only the most curious and/or desperate press on and enter the void of surrender.

So, to wrap up with a repeat: The ego must face the firing squad, be willing to shut its eyes tight and hear the gunshots. But the shots are blanks. The ego survives, but is now so grateful that it is humbled back into its intended servant role. And we realize that the ego was a secondary identity all along, and that who we are in our primary identity is pure awareness, within God, free and easy, loving life, going with the flow, rowing our boat in this lovely dream, and in our essence, unassailable.

Love.

The Guru and A Grain of Salt

You have to do a full body scan carefully to find a serious bone in my body, so everything posted in these notes needs to be salted and seasoned to taste. Am I serious about being a guru? Uummmmm, in a way. And there is no intention to back off the term. But, am I really serious about being a guru? Ahhhh. not really. Awakened teacher? Absolutely. A mystic? Love Rumi, resonate with every line of his mind-blowing poetry. Enlightened? Can't touch this. July 21, 1975, 9:30am. Old me, gone. New me that's not the personal me anymore, hello.

Spiritual coach is a much more comfortable term for me. I have a story to tell (and tell and tell and tell) and a heartfelt interest in sharing it with one goal in mind: hope. However, there's a little more to it. I'm beginning to sense that this note is going to be a bit of a seesaw ride...

A brief recap to make a point: (Remember, patience is virtue) My interest in things spiritual and transcendent began at age 10, when I first read of Nirvana that was described as, "utter tranquility and perfect peace of mind." Fast forward through Christianity to a Hindu temple and shazam, whoop, there it is. Back to Christianity to find that pop cultural Christianity is not ready for a mystic.

So, back to where the thunderbolt of insight struck - in a Hindu temple and use of terms like guru and satsang (a discourse in the company of truth), and mix it with the core truth found in all religions, some philosophy (words of wisdom) and all spiritual traditions, and most especially evident in the mystic branches of mainstream religions. So, I'm a Christian Mystic, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Sufi, Kabbalist and stuff like that.

Special powers? Now we're on a shaky ladder. Brazen enough to offer healing hands and coincidentally see results? Yes. But I believe anyone can do that in the right setting. Transmission? Now this is one that makes some people crazy with their conviction that this is sheer nonsense. Me? Not so fast to dismiss it. Do I have a story about that? Can Geico save you 15% on car insurance? Of course, I do...

Transmission or Shaktipat, the transfer of spiritual energy that awakens a student, is the coup de grace of any Sat Guru worth their sandals. It can be accomplished with a thought, a look, or often a touch on the forehead at the "third eye" or Christ Consciousness chakra (an energy point on the body in the Kundalini model).

When I'm not giving satsang or writing, I use some applied metaphysics along with meditation and relaxation techniques to help people with goal achievement strategies, including weight loss, smoking cessation, stress management (I prefer the term joy management), and sports performance improvement.

One day, while waiting for a weight loss client, I picked up a book I had recently bought on the Yantra, a geometric design that is focused on as a meditation tool - think mantra, only visual. I focused for a few minutes on a particular yantra with red, green and gold colors. Oops, close the book, client just came in...

"Hello, I'd like you to close your eyes and imagine a flower. Just as soon as one pops into your mind's visual imagery, open your eyes and describe the flower to me."

"Well, it was a strange flower. It was red, green and gold."

This woman went on to describe in precise detail the yantra I had focused on before she came in. Freaked me out a bit. By way of explanation about the flower thing, I use this as a "key" that will pop into mind whenever the thought of popping a bag of Oreos open comes to mind - with a "tsk, tsk," that will have the client choose an apple instead. Like that.

Anyway, a few days later, same few minutes with the yantra book, and a man came in to quit smoking. Same thing, again. He described the flower as the yantra I had been focused on just before he came in. I never did it again; studied a yantra, before a client came in.

So, was it transmission?

Love.

Love Love

Been playing a lot of tennis lately, and preparing for a local tournament (strictly amateur, with mostly slightly old guys, so don't be too impressed) and so have been saying "love" a lot more. That's a tennis score for zero or 0. How it came to be called love is not certain. But "love" is the central point of life...and some would say, the central point of all that is. Tennis anyone? Love anyone? Love anyone.

Even the symbol 0 is used to designate the still point where awakening occurs and where Love with a capital L resides. Ramana Maharshi's words, "The very form of God is Love," certainly makes it all about Love.

When we feel less than whole and complete, less than aware that we are, in the living experience, the field of joy and the very vibration of love, we tend to look up and/or within and ask, "Is this all there is to life - this undercurrent of longing, this quiet desperation to "know"?"

It may be that we have fallen out of love with ourselves. Certainly, we are our harshest critics and the last (if ever) to forgive ourselves for our perceived misdeeds.

So, how do we fall back in love with ourselves and our life? We don't do it by logic, by a rational, linear process of figuring out what went wrong and identifying some triggering event; that is, unless we want to settle down for years in a victim mentality. Oh, my mother left me on the potty too long and I suffer from abandonment and separation anxiety. Please. Get off the potty. Get over it.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmU_K39axA8&playnext=1&list=PLC20FABC2F3B79F1E

Start looking within (heavenward if you prefer) and enter a quiet place where a wisdom whisper from the heart can and will restore the love in full blossom. And when you're not in the quiet place of meditation and listening, put a few love logs on the inner fire by looking through sacred eyes - looking at others with a conscious choice to love them deeply - unconditionally. And that love will come back to you in a way that is beyond words. Just as anger and resentment will.

I put before you life (love) and death (anger, resentment, victim mentality). Choose life. Choose love.
Deuteronomy 30:19

Love.

Love At First Flight

A recent video ended with the words, "I love you." Later the question was asked how that could be said to everyone who happened to watch the video - including people I had never met, with any degree of sincerity.

By way of response, we are once again going to revisit a time from long, long ago - if you care to continue reading. I was not seeking enlightenment, awakening or any such thing. I had no knowledge of any such things. What I was seeking was relief from despair and hoping to find some peace of mind. I was so absorbed in my own drama that I had little room for feeling much of anything toward anyone else.

I wasn't seeking to go blasting off onto some light-infused astral plane with a glowing figure directing toward a huge blue-white egg shape that instantly swept me up and absorbed me into the causal plane. I had no idea that I would be enveloped in this nearly overwhelming wave after wave of love, a love that I somehow knew was coming from a divine presence - a divine presence that knew me personally, and knew everything about me...yet loved me unconditionally.

I never conceived of any such thing as the startling insights that are impossible to put in words, and certainly never dreamed of what came next; a stripping of all sense of time and space, and a reset of my life to zero. I never had a clue that I could be made brand new as a personal identity and then immediately zapped out of this pristine personal identity, and made to understand with such clarity that the identity I had accepted as me, the persona of me, was not the true me.

There was no seeking to feel my very identity dissolve into this divine presence and disappear, only to suddenly re-emerge as awareness of a perfect cosmic harmony. And finally, I didn't expect to blink and suddenly find my new pristine personal identity Self separate from and yet at the same time occupying the same body as a few minutes before.

At first I was startled and in awe of my own hands and tested my finger movements like a new baby, then was stunned by the beauty of the fabric covering the pillow I was sitting on, the carpet design, the colors, the texture...and then came the most startling and awe-filling, jaw-dropping, surprise of all.

When I looked at other people, all I could see was their beauty - and I "knew" that they, too, were part of this divine presence I had merged with a few seconds before. They were part of me and I was part of them. I could 'feel' their inner beauty and their heart. I fell in love instantly with everyone I met. A new loving kindness, compassion and gentleness that I had never clearly known was natural for this new me.

Those few moments became frozen in what we think of as time, and nearly 35 years later, I still am in awe of my hands...and I still instantly fall in love with everyone I meet - and I suspect everyone I will ever meet, and everyone, whether I ever meet them or not. My life is devoted to expressing this love.

That's how I can say I love you into a video camera, not knowing who will see and hear those words.

Love.

Acknowledgment

According to those in the headhunter business (executive recruiting), the number one reason that people move from one job to another is not money, but rather what they feel is a lack of appreciation or acknowledgment. I cannot help but wonder if that is not the number one reason why people leave relationships, as well. And then there's another lack of acknowledgment that really causes dis-ease. More on that coming up.

There are, of course, a lot of ways we can acknowledge someone and show appreciation. Sometimes that acknowledgment and show of appreciation can be a simple "Thank you." A raise, a promotion or a surprise vacation are also pretty reliable morale boosters. A big ribbon around a new sports car...OK, I'm pushing it.

We are so programmed; socially fashioned as part of growing up, to rely totally on our logic and process thinking through any issue or problem that comes up that many of us have shut off the power of intuition in great part and often fail to call upon or even acknowledge our inner strength and wisdom.

When we think, think, think and pound our fist on the table or a pillow in frustration, we rarely find solution in this emotional storm. It is when we are quietly distracted, like when we are taking a nice warm (some like it hot) shower that solutions and new creative ideas come up.

Same with calling upon our inner strength and wisdom. If we are going to listen for a "still, small voice," which is how the Old Testament says God speaks, we would be well advised to take some quiet time, especially in the midst of the storm - even though it's hard, and meditate.

And because we are on the subject of acknowledgment, we might meditate on another bit of advice from Proverbs (The Book of Wisdom).

"Lean not upon your own understanding. Acknowledge me (God) in all your ways and I will direct your path."

Even God wants to be acknowledged. Holy Cow. Holy Everything.

Just imagine if it were true that by simply quietly meditating and listening for a still, small voice - a wisdom whisper from the heart and acknowledging the real possibility of the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven within, we would be given divine guidance. Then we would naturally and effortlessly heed Mr. McFerrin's advice....

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bNE-5TVAmg&feature=player_embedded

Just imagine.

Love

The Automatic Life Strategy

When we were learning to; for instance, ride a bike, swim, or drive a car we were taught (or learned on our own through a series of bumps, bruises, near drowning, lurches and crashes) a series of coordinated moves

and strategies for success. Depending on our coordination and ADD level we eventually learned how to balance the various moves.

At first, we paid careful attention to each component. Over time, we turned the whole process over to our subconscious mind or automatic pilot and we didn't have to think about pedaling, kicking our feet while moving our arms, or shifting gears at all. Ever pull into the driveway at home after driving a distance and have absolutely no recall of a portion of the trip? Our conscious mind was "somewhere else" yet we navigated the trip perfectly as far as we know, evidenced by the lack of blue lights flashing in our rear view mirror.

We also developed certain life strategies that we decided would best get us through life successfully, or personality types. We became a forceful, competitive, leader type, or a precise, analytical, quality-first type, or an outgoing, friendly, engaging type, or a real people person who prizes good relationships...or some combination of these four types. (If you're interested in an assessment of your "type", check out <http://www.livingatwow.com/PQSuccess.html> and send me your completed PQ Success Assessment.)

Now imagine that, without giving up our chosen personality type, we could put our entire life on automatic pilot - and not concern ourselves with process or outcomes at all. The first stage of this shift would be to feel as though we are witnessing our own lives as though it were a movie. We would still feel emotional stirrings at the action scenes but a part of us would remain detached, sure and comfortable with the fact that we, the moviegoer, were never in any real danger. After all, for the sake of this imagination journey, It (life) is just a movie. The second stage of this imaginary journey would be to be fully present in the movie, as one of the actors, but still safe and comfortable with, "it's just a movie."

Staying with this movie model, imagine that we would take our mark automatically and all our lines would come to us at the precise moment they were called for in the "script". We would not have to rehearse, anticipate or worry at all, and we would spend no time at all in the, "if only...what if," internal chatter. We would just enjoy the movie and our role in it - whatever course the movie might take.

There are many more aspects to it, but this is what life becomes like when we (re)awaken to our true identity and (re)discover our true home. One aspect worth mentioning is that while we are enjoying the movie and our part in it, we feel a sense of divine guidance and protection - a peace of mind that passes understanding; that is, it is beyond words to describe.

What is tough for the rational mind to grasp...well, impossible for the rational mind to grasp, is that while we are enjoying the movie and our role in it, we never feel like we are doing anything at all - other than being aware of the ongoing movie, and in the words of Maxwell Smart, "loving it."

Love.

Moment-to-Moment Meditation

For many practitioners of meditation, it begins and ends with a time set aside for using one or more techniques for quieting and focusing the mind; a mantra, a candle, a wall, the breath, the third eye and such. It's a peaceful and relaxing time when we sit in certain positions and hold our hands in different ways, depending on the techniques we have been taught. And then it's back to the "real" world and life goes on until our next meditation time.

According to some meditation teachers, most come to meditation for stress relief; although, a certain percentage practice meditation as part of a spiritual discipline - either aspiring to attain Enlightenment or as a continuing practice and discipline as part of their maintenance program, once Enlightened.

At some point, meditation can become ongoing, as a constant undercurrent of our lives, moment-to-moment with rare exception. The peaceful, relaxed state of mind becomes the default setting of our waking

consciousness. It's as if we are watching our lives' activities with quiet dispassion, and realizing that we are the watching, the watched and the watcher...all in One.

With this quiet undercurrent flowing, when our inner chatter is not yakking at us with concerns about this and that, we are especially discerning and aware. Life presents itself to us, and we accept it with equanimity - no resistance, no urge to control, just spontaneously aware of the right action to take or not take at any given moment. From this perspective, life becomes effortless. We are in the flow.

For those whose lives were especially troubling before going with the flow, the transition can come as a thunderbolt, a sudden rush of insight that changes their lives completely. Depending on the setting and the circumstances of the shift in consciousness, in this instance, the language relating the shift can take on powerful spiritual overtones, sprinkled with words like Enlightenment and God-Consciousness.

For others, this is more simply a return to a natural state of being and a complete acceptance of what is, as it is, no big deal. As might be expected, these two divergent camps can have some difficulty communicating with each other. This is especially true if the passionate Enlightened use religious models to express their shift in consciousness and new insights when talking to a non-theist.

What they share, though, is an enhanced feeling of love, kindness, compassion and tolerance, as well as a sense of Oneness or connectedness with everyone and everything. Given this, it would seem that the only way difficulty would arise in communication is if one camp firmly, fundamentally and fanatically held the position that their "way" was the only valid way.

For me, this is a big red flag that they (the firm fundamentalist) have not genuinely slipped into the flow, or they did but their control-freak ego jumped right back in the fray and boxed them in the protective thought that the context in which they experienced their shift was the only way - and they were immediately robbed of the benefit package.

Just a little flow of thoughts this morning.

Love.

The Audience

Who is the audience for these notes that incessantly retell "his story," and go on about our potential for Awakening and thereafter enjoying an exquisite and perfect peace of mind? The question, which is rhetorical and which I intend to answer, brings to mind Rumi's words about believing when he Awakened that the whole world was his audience, and later coming to realize that God was his only audience.

The "deal" I proposed to God was that if I could be graced with peace of mind, in the midst of the despair and degradation I was feeling at the time, I would spend the rest of my life telling other who came along the same path of despair and degradation of this possibility and real potential. An addendum was even tossed in, asking that I not be allowed to forget the depths of despair, so that I would remain empathetic and compassionate. Sometimes I wonder about the wisdom of that addendum. In any event...

So, honoring this vow is my mission...and that would make God my only audience. However, those in despair (even those in quiet despair) are the primary participants in the show. They have the front row seats. And they are the ones called up on the stage. Some come up. Many don't, for many reasons. (See the other 200 or so notes posted here on facebook).

Also in the audience are those who are curious, those who enjoy reading about this stuff for a variety of reasons, those who feel an intuitive stirring and/or a sense of longing for an indescribable something that they feel is missing in their lives, those who have seen the show before and have either been up on the stage (some of whom also have their own show) or are inching toward the front row. And, of course, as with any

show, we have the critics who come to find the flaw. Fair enough. There may be other categories that didn't come to mind with my first cup of Vanilla Biscotti coffee. The store was out of my favorite, Blueberry Cobbler.

For those who have written to suggest that attending to real world issues of hunger, abuse and neglect would be more important than spending all this time writing about this esoteric Awakening and Enlightenment. The response is that Awakened people are the very people who make up the initiating core of those who serve humanity, not those who are troubled, desperate and/or longing for peace of mind themselves. Awakening brings up and enhances kindness and compassion and a deep love of humanity; therefore, addressing Awakening is a critical first step to addressing real world issues. And telling about the potential for Awakening is my nearly mission-impossible assignment.

And so, here we are, back to the main topic. Awakening is about breaking free of the despair, fulfilling that inner longing, and coming to enjoy a new found (or rediscovered) joy, freedom, and the blessed relief of peace of mind. It is a sudden rush of wisdom and insight about what life is truly all about.

The tough part is that, typically, only those who come to the point of wanting this peace of mind or wanting to satisfy this inner longing so desperately that they are willing to battle the inner voice of the ego that is filled with fear and doubt about the wisdom of pursuing this mystical path. Particularly strong egos will even hear that they are flirting with an impending death - a literal physical death. So, you have to be pretty desperate or cat curious to take another step that risks this possibility.

Of course, the only impending death is the death of the ego's role in running our lives with fear and doubt, and it is the fear of giving up this seat that rears its ugly head. But what happens is that the ego is only TKO'd - temporarily knocked out, personal identity is diffused, and just when it looks like the end is near...

Along comes Dudley Dought, Mighty Mouse, Underdog, Captain Marvel, Superman, Superwoman...name your hero - they are all stand-ins for what us theists call God...to save the day. And we Awaken from this surrender as an entirely new being. Some believe that we change, right down to our DNA. Yet we are in the same body. But that's about it. Nothing else remains the same. Ego is demoted to servant (and is delighted to have survived at all), and a peace of mind beyond words become the undercurrent of moment-to-moment awareness.

It's possible. I'm a witness. Thank you, Dudley.

Love,

Standing At The Well

Every morning I go to the word well. Many years ago it was in the form of a yellow legal pad, then a manual typewriter, then an electric one, then a word processor, then a desktop computer, and now a laptop. It all started when I read a book about writing that suggested that it be done everyday without exception.

For a time there was concern about the well running dry, but it hasn't...ever...yet. Going to the word well is part of a daily routine that includes getting up, anywhere from 2:30 to 5:30am, and a rare 6:00am if I sleep in, turning on the computer, putting coffee on, taking a shower (most mornings), pouring a cup of coffee and plopping down on the couch with my laptop.

Facebook has become my writing venue of the season for the past few months. So here I am, once again, at the word well. As mentioned this well never has run dry, and what is particularly strange, in addition to my immunity to the dreaded writers' block, it that my exclusive subject matter, at its core, cannot be expressed in words.

It seems that my writing muse is a workaholic. I just have to show up at the well and take a drink of the living water. And just like what happened in the famous bible scene, with an infamous woman standing at the well, the Christ of Divine Presence shows up. I would continue with the less dramatic and non-theistic term "muse," but, this particular muse always wants to talk about Awakening and re-connecting with God (Source, OK?!).

Yes, it's an old story. It's been told from long, long before I showed up at the well. But because it is about living water, a well that taps into a flowing undercurrent of Divine Presence, it is new, sparkling, fresh and refreshing every morning.

Those who have tasted this water know this. Those who are thirsty are open to the truth of it. Ever notice that if you eat the same food, say raspberry cheesecake for dessert a few days in a row, that the idea of another slice becomes less appealing over time and we come to a point where we don't want to even look at another piece for some time?

That never happens with water. Every day a cool drink of water (even room temperature for the fanatically health conscious) is refreshing and satisfying. And its health benefits are incredible, life affirming, life changing and simply blissful when finally drunk by the really, really thirsty.

So what makes it "living" water. Well, here we are obviously mixing literal truth with metaphorical truth. The literal thirst is a thirst for the refreshing water that our body needs, and the other equally real thirst is the thirst to satisfy an inner longing or intuitive stirring about something missing in our lives and/or to find peace of mind and end the quiet, or sometimes not so quiet, despair we feel.

The metaphorical water is a "living" water because it comes in a torrent, a sudden rush of new insight that completely satisfies the thirst for peace of mind in a way that the rational mind and physical body thoroughly enjoys, but cannot grasp until after the torrent. That is why it cannot be expressed in advance.

It is pretty much agreed that often, when our thirst reaches fever pitch, we will come across a well. Some people say that they found the well on their own and took a drink. Others were guided to the well by someone who had found it themselves. And for some, someone at the well turned to offer the weary traveler a cup of this magic love potion.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rXhXLsNJL8>

Love.

The Takeover

When cash flow runs like molasses, I occasionally temporarily leave my colorful, carefree world of satsang/preaching, painting and writing and start to send out resumes, look for creative projects in the corporate world, and as a last resort take a walk-in job as a telemarketer. It's a walk-in job because here in Florida; with so many telemarketing companies, if you can walk in you got a job. (I hope we can still be friends now that you've found out that it is occasionally me on the other end of that annoying telemarketing call.)

Because my "Guru/Spiritual Coach" status mandates that everything must be taken with equanimity and unassailable peace of mind, the temporary telemarketing job is viewed as a new show to watch, and it is only a matter of time before even these circumstances yield a metaphor - the primary "teaching" tool of a Spiritual Coach.

One of the standard protocols in every telemarketing room is that when we're on the phone and run into a snag of any kind with a potential customer, we raise a flag, ring a bell, stand up and yell...whatever it takes to have an experienced manager T.O. the call. Calling for a takeover is not considered weak in

telemarketing, it is considered discernment and wise judgment. And in virtually all the telemarketing jobs, the newbie still gets the commission.

So, what's the metaphor here? When we run into a snag in life; of any sort, that robs our peace of mind, the best move is to call for a T.O. Who you gonna call? God! However, as it says in the I Ching, the Chinese Book of Changes, "...success is in the approach." And here's where most of us have a real problem.

Our ego, persona (mask that we present to the world), personal pride and religious indoctrination; not to mention the social coercion we all endured as a child being "disciplined" to fit in, get in the way. We have been sold a work ethic, a nose to the grindstone, fierce independence, tough it out, you figure it out, bill of goods. Call for T.O.? I don't think so!

Well, of course, prayer is considered OK. Just ask God to help you figure it out. But the problem with that is that this manner of give-me-something prayer is not a T.O., it's a trap of prideful ego. It's not a letting go and letting God, it's a God, make me look good prayer. And when we are more concerned with looking good and not disappointing partners, family, friends, bosses, co-workers, kids, creditors ... than our own peace of mind, we have been snared by ego.

At a certain point, often a desperate point, there comes a time to go beyond prayer, or beyond what we would consider answered prayer, and come to the next step - one step closer to the T.O. When we can admit to ourselves that we cannot figure it out, and quiet the ego insistence that we have no other option, by truly surrendering it all, we have genuinely called for the T.O. It's not easy, that's why we usually only come to this when despair has brought us to the point where we are willing to risk it all.

If we dismiss the previous paragraph contents lightly, we will miss the point. If we continue with our earlier stage strategy of repeating, "Please, please, please...God," we have not surrendered totally and our ego/pride is still trying to emotionally manipulate God into helping us get the outcome our ego needs. The ego will argue that calling for the T.O. is giving up, and things will just get worse. Our ego sees stupefied inactivity as the only alternative.

But T.O. ing is not giving up or going into a stupor. It is doing one of the toughest things in the world for the ego - admitting that there just might be something we don't know and; here's the really tough part, that there just might be a "power" greater than we are as a fiercely independent separate being.

When we genuinely and thorough surrender, we open the door to the possibility of a sudden rush of new insight, a wisdom whisper from the heart, and a totally unexpected, inconceivable, "solution". Nothing may change in our outer world, or everything may change, but regardless, the sudden rush brings peace of mind beyond anything we could have thought or imagined. Our energy spikes and we move into right action. No explanation is possible. The wisdom of the ultimate T.O. is only known by direct personal experience.

Gurus/Spiritual Coaches/Awakened Teachers have run this gauntlet, and have grasped the subtle rock bottom layers of meaning in the advice to utterly surrender our own ideas and risk everything, including life itself...and they were hit with the thunderbolt Realization, through direct personal experience, that God does come to our rescue when we raise the T.O. flag. And they witness to the beyond-words joy this brings.

Love.

Brain Change

While I'm not a big fan of Darwin's work, I will borrow a little evolutionary fancy for the purposes of this note.

Imagine a coming moment when a startling rush of new wisdom flashes across the planet and awakens the entire world to our Oneness. It will be like a worldwide brain change, it which we universally - every person, evolves into a beautiful, peaceful, loving, kind, compassionate and generous person - in a flash. In a word: Enlightened. Then imagine from that day forward every new child born never losing the sure sense that they have been born into a benevolent world of peace, and that none ever lose their childlike lightness of spirit.

Before dismissing this as unrealistic and tagging it with the "Utopian" label, consider a couple of items:

There are scriptural references to such an "event" in the Judeo-Christian-Muslim text called, "The New Covenant," in which God's promise is a coming day when a new understanding will come to our hearts and minds and we will all know God. It goes on to say that no one will have to teach anyone else about God, because everyone will know God. (Jeremiah 31:31 in the OT)

Every person who has written and spoken authentically about their transcendence senses this universal (worldwide) awakening as the destiny of humankind. None of us are privy to Mother Nature's timetable in this regard, but this foreshadow does seem to come with every Awakening.

If you really want to risk a brain cramp go to this site and spend almost three hours with The Zeitgeist Movement movie. <http://www.zeitgeistmovingforward.com/> I watched it in awe of the thoughtfulness that went into it, and the intellectual courage of those who spoke...

But I kept waiting for the critical first step to be mentioned: The Brain Change. Without it, egos with better ideas will debate until it's too late.

Love.

PS: The name of the interfaith church I pastored for several years was legally named, "Servants of The New Covenant." We called it The Fellowship. As a matter of note, we brought in so much food for this every weekend event that we lightheartedly and full-belliedly called it, The Pancake and Waffle Fellowship.

Love.

Standing Still

Way back in the days of suits and ties and razor cut hair, I had a framed poster in my office. It was a picture of a serene lake with a sailboat perched quietly on the water. The caption read, "If You're Not Rocking The Boat, You're Standing Still."

At the time, I was unaware of the real value of standing still and saw this personal branding statement as a testament to my ambition, innovation and restlessness with the status quo. However, I was relatively young, seriously immature and naive about how this would be received where I worked.

To me, this was a positive position. To the head of my department in this conservative New England bank, it was not. A few days after he first visited my office, I received a call from the corporate shrink (organizational psychologist). He didn't tell me to take the poster down, but did tell me that it had upset a few people in the bank and that it could negatively affect my future with the bank.

I didn't take the poster down, and I didn't stay at the bank much longer. I quit. In retrospect, this was an early sign that I was headed for the counter-cultural side of town: Hippieville. Leaving out chunks of detail, I soon traded my beige sedan for an orange sports car, let my hair grow as long as I could grow it (5 years without a cut) and found a guru to show me a better way. (There are a few song lyrics from that era in this note.)

Neither the poster nor the philosophy are in my possession any longer. Oh, I still rock the boat, but in a different way, and the thing about standing still is seen in an entirely new context. The value of standing still and allowing ourselves to quiet the mind came through early on in meditation practice.

Today, the caption might read, "If You're Not Standing Still, Your Boat is Rocking." When life is rocky and we feel at risk, we often kick up the mental rush in attempts to come up with solution. Think, think, think! This is something we have been trained to do, and we see it as a reasonable strategy. When we are stressed, our thinking is neither clear nor inclusive. We miss opportunities to solve problems, because they lie just beneath the rushing surface thoughts.

There is another way, but because we have been schooled to live exclusively in the rational world, this other way is seen as counter-intuitive. But it is the opposite. It is purely intuitive. When I first started teaching meditation, the classes were called EPIC, for an Experience of Pure Intuitive Consciousness. When we quiet the mind, we allow an inner wisdom to present solutions that the busy rational mind may have missed.

Originally, EPIC was fashioned to take the practitioner of meditation beyond mere stress management, problem solving, and use as part of a goal achievement strategy. In its inception it was exclusively about Awakening and epic Self-Realization - the thunderbolt of God-Consciousness.

But along the way, people who have come to classes have used meditation as an applied metaphysics; that is, they have found it valuable as a stress management, problem solving, part of a goal achievement strategy. People have lost weight, quit smoking, learned to handle stress better, and even improved their golf game. You can read more about this at <http://www.livingatwow.com/>

Learning to meditate is recommended for these real world issues. And for the spiritually bent, meditation can rock your world and introduce you to an experience of pure intuitive consciousness that you have to experience for yourself to truly appreciate. EPIC is the problem solver. Well, it doesn't solve all of our problems, it just takes the disturbance out of them and allows us to remain peacefully "Standing Still," through all of them.

Love.

The Big Three

Research says that the three biggest ideas that we entertain (or that entertain us) are sex, money and God - in that order. Here's an entertaining link to that research in a 20-minute video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z9WVZddH9w&feature=player_embedded

Once we have reached puberty, the first one needs no further comment. Money is a huge idea, and the whole concept, use and power of money has caused, and does cause, extremes from carefree freedom and enjoyment of the high life on one end to the pits of depression and misery on the other. God is another story.

Whether we think of God as a product of neural transmission, a chemical reaction in the brain and ourselves as captives of chemistry, or we think of God as a benevolent Father/Mother figure, Source, Awareness, or we cringe in total disbelief at any mention of God, we think about God a lot.

And we probably talk to God a lot about sex and money. (Did you just clear your throat?) Realizing that sex and money are touchy subjects, this note will just touch on them briefly, because they, as well as our thoughts about God, are interrelated in many ways, and then return to core subject of virtually all these notes: God.

The first two are easy to measure. We have access to them or we do not. And, for the most part, the more the merrier. As a matter of fact, we are taught that success in any endeavor and the money that goes with it

(and often the sex accessibility that goes with having a lot of money) pretty much assures our happiness and merriment. But that's not always the case.

Material success and its trappings often leave the benefactors still feeling empty. A few years ago I heard an interview with Tom Brady, a super successful athlete who is now married to a super model, say that he still asks, "Is this all there is?" Which brings us back to God.

God cannot be neatly measured and packaged like a stack of money or a provocative fashion statement. But according to a huge body of historical cannon, and according to today's gurus - now known in some circles by the less emotionally charged title of spiritual coach, God is accessible to us.

And the experience of God-Consciousness, Divine Presence, Awakening, Enlightenment, Source and such thoroughly, completely, absolutely and permanently answers Tom Brady's question, and brings an inner joy and peace of mind that no amount of money or high-fashion couture even comes close to bringing. Going way over the top, it is reportedly even better than...you know.

If you've been there, have the God-autographed T-Shirt, you know the truth of what the spiritual coaches profess. If you have a spiritual coach, then you are obviously in the process of checking out the veracity of their claims for whatever reasons you may have. If you're all set just where you are and no interest in this God thing, good for you. Have a good life.

If you're curious about the accessibility of God and/or have this indefinable inner longing or intuitive stirring, find a spiritual coach...or wait until one finds you. Or go it alone and maybe you will be awestruck and enlightened by a miraculous sunrise one morning, or a child's innocent smile, or a lady in red.

Love.

Open the window to your creative genius

We all have a creative genius hanging out in the recesses of our inner lounge, waiting for us to open a window and let the light of conscious awareness shine on this inherent creative genius. Some people have found the window and can open it at will. Some rare individuals leave the window open and the light on virtually all the time. We may be one of these so blessed (some would say bent). And/or we most probably know someone or several ones who come to mind as especially gifted creatives - if not personally, by reputation or media presence.

First, know that there's a burly and sometimes surly guard at the door who goes by the name of Ego Blockhead. Ego was taught early on that rational and reasonable thinking are the most critical tools we have for survival, and in concert with our sensory apparatus, make up the total human being. Of course, that's a big fat lie, but arguing with EB just makes things worse.

We were taught early on that Imaginary friends, mud pies and riding a broom horse are flights of nonsense that have to eventually be grounded in concrete linear thought. Right answers from the left brain earn gold stars. Nonsense from the imaginative and intuitive right brain earn admonishments to "get serious and pay attention." Sometimes they even earn a whack on the side of the head.

"A Whack on The Side of The Head," was the title of a book years ago that was based on a proposed theme that essentially held that the difference between creative people and those who think they are not creative is that creative people believe they are creative and people who believe they are not created are right, as well. He proposed a figurative whack on the side of the head - a shift in belief as a way to access more creativity. That's the essence of what I remember. If you check it out and find more, let me know.

Three of the tools that I recommend and will write about more in the book are meditation, personality assessments and showers.

Meditation and especially visualization within meditation both quiet the mind and open brain windows to light up and stir up the creative genius.

In the book will also be is a 40-question PQ - Preference Quotient assessment that helps us define the communication style that we have developed as a life strategy. This insight will help us find the corner of the lounge in which our creative genius prefers to hang out, and it will give us clues as to how our creative genius might best express itself in the world.

Showers as a tool for accessing our creative genius might have caused a little mental clank. Yes, "Cleanliness is Next to Godliness," but we're not going there. It's not about personal hygiene (some high creatives have a bit of an issue with this, but that's inconsequential here). One of the real blocks to creativity and problem solving, or even remembering a name or a detail, is the inner chatter that keeps our mind busy and the burly surly Ego Blockhead who tries to limit our entrance to the creative lounge with put downs and such.

And one of the major attention seekers in our inner chatter is the, "if only..." of the past, and the "what if..." of the possible future. Add to that our restlessness and ambition to get something over with so we can get to something else, constantly in a state of flux, eager to change the present moment and get on with life. Meditation helps quiet this down, but showers have a unique quality to them, and it is this unique quality found in few if any other circumstance that can open the window to our creative genius in a flash of insight.

Why? What is this unique quality? Well, when we are basking in the flow of warm soapy water, giving ourselves a gentle massage, we are rarely thinking about change or wanting to be somewhere else. This is our personal, private, intimate time. We hum. We sing songs. We lavish attention on ourselves.

And in the midst of this ... Oh, that name you couldn't remember? it pops up on our mind screen. That knotty problem you've been wrestling with for a few days, weeks, or forever? While we're enjoying the tickle of an underarm scrub, the solution pops up in a thought bubble.

So, that's the synopsis. I'm off to take a shower.

Love.

The Look of Love

There are times when we look at a child (or sunrise) with incredibly heightened appreciation, tenderness and sweet, sweet love - so much so that we are lost in love; that is, our sense of separate self disappears in the moment. And when the heart is touched in this way, it is possible for the door to enlightenment to open - catapulting us into realizing the truth that is effortlessly present at all times - God is Love.

These moments of in-depth love, gratitude, appreciate seem to come spontaneously, without any precipitating thought. At the same time, it is possible to consciously choose to call up these tender, appreciative, loving moments. There are scriptural teachings that tell us we have before us life and death, and that we can choose which to dwell on. And just in case the reader might possibly miss the point, the clear suggestion that follows is, "choose life."

When we are caught up in negative thoughts, dwelling on those events, circumstances and choices that have caused us (or others) pain in the past, or may in the future, we can lose touch with the tender side of life. We may feel abandoned by this God of Love, or doubt the very existence of any such concept as God, or at least that any such truth has relevance to "real" life - certainly not our life, at the time.

From here we can tread this muddy water, living a life of quiet desperation, or spiral into deep despair until we finally give up completely and surrender our very existence. Total surrender is a route that is reported by many who have been catapulted into enlightenment.

The flip side, of course, is to be caught up in love and choose to dwell on the positive, silver lining of life. Sometimes the tug of war with the chattering mind that wants to control us by trapping us in negativity can become pretty intense, but loving thoughts can prevail if we persist, and persist, and persist. The words of Ramana Maharshi, "The very form of God is Love," have long been a favorite of mine.

Thinking of intensity, and these polar opposites, there is a bit of advice in one of the most intense of Christian scripture, The Book of Revelations. It reads, as if presented by Jesus to John in a vision, "I would not have you lukewarm. Be hot or cold." It could be interpreted to mean, either get hot about love or let go and go to the cold, dark depths of despair.

Seems like there are two distinct roads to God-Consciousness, Awakening, Enlightenment.

Surrender or be tender.

Love.

No Room At The Inn

The most well known "No Vacancy" story in the world, to anyone who has come within earshot of Christianity, is the story of a baby born in a stable because there were no more vacant rooms when his ready-to-deliver Mom arrived at the inn.

Taken as a story of Awakening, the "arrival" of Christ Consciousness took place outside of the well-reasoned rooms of the mind. It came by intuition and revelation, not by being logically approached and intellectually discerned in the cozy and comfortable bedroom of the established inn - the ego.

In this context, it doesn't make the ego a bad thing, or something to be burned down and annihilated. It just makes it the wrong place to look for the arrival of Christ Consciousness, the insightful shift of consciousness that births a new perspective on life and a new awareness of the purpose of our lives. Love.

Of course, we do not have an interest in any such thing unless we are pregnant with desire; have a longing to satisfy an inner stirring, feel as though something is missing in our lives, or are desperately seeking peace of mind - or possibly an escape from pain, guilt and/or shame.

If we have been searching and seeking for a long time, and have badgered the desk clerk of linear thinking to find us a room to no avail, at some point we may accede to the possibility that we will have to look elsewhere. At this point, we can ask someone who made the journey before us and tells of finding such a place, or we can go it alone...

Or we can read notes left by someone who made the journey that attest to the possibility of this despair-relieving, longing-satisfying, thirst-quenching shift of consciousness, this birth of new insight that makes the moment-to-moment undercurrent of life one of peaceful quiet joy sprinkled with times of ecstatic, thank you God, you gotta get up and dance, you have to tell others, gratitude.

Some readers have experienced the new birth of insight, known by a variety of names according to culture, and simply enjoy the reminders of how wonderful is this most blessed of human events. Other may have a curious interest only, and still others have not quite set out on the journey, but they might be shopping for a pregnancy test.

Are you expecting?

Love.

What Really Happened In The Upper Room

A little Bible 101 for those who may not be familiar with a story in what is known as the New Testament of the bible: In the Book of Acts, the story goes that about 120 people were gathered together in an upper room when they were mystically transformed by a blast of energy known as the Holy Spirit.

This event reportedly enlightened everyone in the room to the truth of what Jesus had spoken of before his death a month or so earlier; essentially, that we can know by direct personal experience that we are One with God, that the Kingdom of Heaven truly is within, and that we can share Christ-Consciousness with Jesus.

And they came running out of the upper room so blissed out that people thought they were drunk.

So what really happened in that upper room? First, just a bit more of B101: Earlier in the bible, there is a recorded conversation that Jesus had with one of the people who were fascinated with him, named Peter. Jesus repeats to Peter three times, "Feed my sheep." Think seeker (inquirer if you prefer) for sheep.

OK, Peter was in the upper room. So was I. And here's what was edited out of the bible report: Earlier, when Jesus repeatedly asked Peter to help the seeker, Jesus gave him explicit instructions on just how to do that. He also initiated Peter into Christ Consciousness at this time. So, when Peter went to the upper room that morning, he was already an empowered witness of Jesus' teachings. He was already an Awakened Teacher, himself.

Jesus told Peter that when a group of people who had heard directly or by report about the teachings of Jesus as mentioned above, come together, he should tell them of his own Awakening and witness to the veracity of the teachings, and then teach them to quietly meditate and listen for a wisdom whisper from their hearts.

Peter, giving his first report (known as satsang to those familiar with eastern traditions) after Awakening, was so passionate, enthusiastic and filled with such an incredible joy that came from the depths of his heart, that he lit the place up, and this Awakened the entire group. Then, they came running to tell others.

This was the core concept of the early "church," this knowing (gnosis) by direct personal experience. But it was eventually co-opted by the organized church and held out as only accessible to a select priesthood. And Jesus was cast into superhuman light, and made an exception rather than an example - putting his teachings even farther out of reach.

So began the train of thought on the wrong track that has led to the train wreck that much of mainstream Christianity has made of the teachings of Jesus. And this is why so many recovering "Christians" don't even like to hear the name of one of the most beautiful and courageous Awakened Teachers to ever walk the earth.

Love.

The Hereafter

While I am out on this late morning limb, taking the mainstream Christian crowd to task with the audacity of biblical addenda in previous notes, a couple of quotes come to mind:

It is said that the older we get, the more time we spend in the hereafter. We walk into a room, stop and then ask ourselves, "What am I here after?" The other anonymous quote is, "Be outrageous. It's the only place that isn't crowded."

Having taken the less traveled road of audacity and being outrageous, here's another wrinkle to add to the furrowed brow.

Jesus told his disciples that his return would be accomplished, "Before this generation passes away." Now, unless there are some 2,000 year old's kicking around, who were part of the Jesus generation, something is amiss. Billboards still announce that Jesus is, "Coming Soon." Yes, patience is virtue...but. come on!

Jesus told his disciples that after he went to the hereafter, he would send the Holy Spirit - the very same consciousness that he had merged with while on earth in physical manifestation. He said that it would come in a way that the world would not see or understand, and that this infusion of Holy Spirit would bring clear understanding of all that he taught.

He had also said that this life-changing, Holy Spirit filling event would empower them to witness to the truth he taught. And at another time, as an additional note before the newsflash, Jesus had reportedly said that, "...the student becomes as the teacher."

As mentioned in an earlier note of remedial bible, a month or so after Jesus died, an event unfolded that had about 120 people flip out. They received a blast of this Holy Spirit energy, along with the clarity and understanding of Jesus' teachings, just as he had told them would happen.

Now, wait a minute...or a millennium or two. This happened to those of Jesus' generation. They became as The Christ, and set out on God's multi-level marketing plan. And so the rhetorical question is...

Did Jesus "return" at Pentecost? Is this what he meant? And has the organized church postponed the plan by 2,000 years so far?

Just a little luncheon buffet of food for thought...or not.

Love.

The Day I Was Born

I had been asking God to let me be born for the previous 24 years. Finally, my request was granted. The date was July 21, 1975 at about 9:30 in the morning. When I first opened my eyes, I knew I was in a benevolent sensory world of sheer delight, and I was now a living, breathing field of joy.

The fabric that first touched my skin was wonderfully sensuous. I kept rubbing it, enormously enjoying the tactile sensations. I was intrigued by the fabric's texture, its intricate patterns and breathtaking colors. When I discover that I had hands, I opened them wide and then kept touching my index fingers to my thumbs. Opposable thumbs! What a handy idea. And when I fist pumped the soft pillow beside me, its poof response as it gave way made me giggle out loud.

Then I looked at the other people in the room...and fell in deep love with each of them as soon as I saw them. I knew, with absolutely no room in my mind for doubt, that each person was a unique vessel with a beautiful heart and I knew that they, too, were filled with the God of Love who had granted my wish to be born. This God was within them. They were in me and I was in them - in a very real way that is impossible to put into words that would make any sense.

When I stood up and walked to the window, I was stunned at the beauty of God's physical creation. Oh, yeah. I forgot to mention; I could walk, run, skip and jump on the very first day I was born. When I got to the window, I was treated to the most subtle shades of blue in the sky, watched cotton clouds drift lazily,

overlooked large fields with majestic trees in incredible ranges of green hue proudly standing on the fashion forest runway, caught sight of birds flying by with black bodies and red wings, red birds with crowns on their heads, and saw flowers of all possible colors boogieing in rhythm to the swirl of the wind. My first words were, "Nice job, God."

And every day ever since begins in very much the same way, as it did on the day of my Awakening. This is the view from my window today:

Love.

Traveling Light

On July 21, 1975 I was thunderstruck with a bolt of light that ended my life as I knew it. The next day, I left the temple and hitchhiked home. It was pouring warm summer rain as I stood on the side of the road, striking the hitchhiker's pose.

As cars whizzed by, the spray washed over me and I would spin with the joy of a child running through the sprinkler. I remember being distracted by the wonder of the pitted rust on a road sign, and running my curious fingers along the ridges, until I heard the beep from a yellow VW that had pulled up. I ran to jump in.

"Where you headed?"

"Maine."

"Me, too."

"Cool!"

As I looked around the interior of the VW and rubbed the chrome section of the dash, the driver said, "What are you all about?" He laughed as he said it, and before I could come up with an answer, he said, "You are all but glowing." I laughed, which made him laugh. And that was the end of our conversation.

When we crossed the border from New Hampshire into Maine, the VW driver let me off near the entrance to the Maine Turnpike. And I resumed by pose. The first car to pull up was a State Police car. I ran and jumped in.

"You're not supposed to be hitchhiking here."

"Oh." Pause, while the officer looked at me strangely.

"Let me take to where you have a better chance of getting a ride."

"Thanks."

When I made it near to where we were living in Maine, and was walking down the dirt road, I saw the owner of the cottage we were renting for the summer walking up the road toward me.

"Oh, Jeff. I've been looking for you. I was wondering if you would like to put some of your paintings in the model condo of the condominiums I own in Boothbay Harbor, and use it as a studio. That way, when people came in you could give them a tour and the literature...and that would cover the rent on your cottage. OK?"

"OK,."

And life has been like that ever since that day in July of 1975, when Jefferson Airplane sang, "In the summer of '75, all the world's going to come alive." And I did. Now, I have to be careful what I wish for, because life presents not only what is necessary at the time; like miraculously covering my rent that I had no way of paying the day before, but as well, beautiful bonus prizes, the top one being the precious ruby lady in red by my side in my profile photo.

I never say just accept life as it is, I say expect a life-changing, DNA altering, thunderbolt that can catapult us out of despair and into a life of breezy effortlessnes. Happened to me, and I've been traveling light ever since. The photo will give you an idea of what I looked like on the road. Would you have stopped to pick me up? You have now.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgiB6y70ew&feature=player_embedded

Love.

A Bump On The Head

For many people, one of the most frustrating and mind-boggling of "teachings" begins with, "There is no me." Right away, the inner mind clangity clang goes off, because that's an irrational, illogical and simply silly statement to make. If there were no me, there would be no one to make such a statement.

The next step up this already shaky ladder admits to there "appearing" to be a you and a me, but tells us it is all illusion, and if we do not understand this, we are trapped in the illusion - the duality of the world.

Hanging on, we climb one rung higher on this nondual ladder to hear that all we have to do is drop the illusion, be in the moment, be here now, accept the truth that we are already perfect just as we are, and that life is perfect, just as it is - and accepting all this will burst the bubble of illusion and we will then know who we really are...no one. The trick, we hear, it to not put our hope on any expectant future event. It's now or never. Even trying to understand what sounds like gobbledygook negates the nondual realization.

But what if we just fell ass over tea-kettle, scraped our knee, banged our head and feel painfully foolish? How can that be perfect? What if we recently totaled our car and a truck ran into the car we borrowed from a friend? Or if we lost a big account, bounced a few checks and the phone was shut off? Come on! This isn't a time to hear that it's all an illusion, and that we just need to see past the circumstances to see the perfection - especially from someone with a smirky smile and an affected soft voice.

At this point we're apt to dismiss the whole premise and just get on with our lives as best we can. Or, we say to ourselves, "Well, WTF, might as well risk another step up the ladder. Things couldn't get much worse." Of course, it's never a good idea to challenge the illusion. That just might invite more "illusory" trouble. But, moving on up...

We now come to a cloudy height. It's silent here. No words. No sounds. In the distance there's a shimmering light. We hear what sounds like a whisper. "Come in." As we turn our head ever so slightly in the direction of the whisper, the light envelopes us...

And we disappear. Our personal identity dissolves. All we see and feel is harmony and connectedness, and we love what we see and feel as this new awareness, and we know that we have been lost in love. Then in a flash we realize that we have fallen off the ladder, ass over tea kettle, and banged our head. We're back to earth, back in our body. But now we're laughing.

OMG, it's all true. The me I thought was me, is not me. There is no me. The bump on the head, the bump on the fender, the bank balance...doesn't matter, doesn't matter, doesn't matter. The personal insults, the attempts at emotional manipulation, the guilt trips, all have lost their sting. They are directed at that illusory

self who dissolved. They're not about me. They're about this illusory secondary self. The primary self who is now pure awareness and no longer personal is unassailable, unflappable, and free as bird, now.

However, the non-personal Self finds itself in this convenient vehicle known as a body/mind/spirit complex...and that is cool. And, paradoxically, because the passenger, the nondual realized identity, doesn't take anything personally and accepts all that happens as a passing parade and is unattached to the outcome of any event...the vehicle and its sensory apparatus and rational component step up and resolve all the "earthly" issues.

It is unencumbered by concern with what will other people think, doesn't dwell on the past "if only's" or the future, "what if's". It trusts its own judgment explicitly and moves with right action, effortlessly, to deal with life and life's issues - all the while knowing that it is illusory. And loving it.

One final note to this: It seems that some people forgot about the frustration, the ladder and bumping their head, and turn around and start in the middle or the end of the story with...

There is no me. Ask them to start at the beginning. If they will not or cannot, you might suspect that they never climbed the ladder and are just parroting the patter. But that's OK, there is no them, there is no you, there is no me, there is...

Only Love.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lygI3BZxdCY&feature=player_embedded

Dream, Dream, Dream

The poets, songwriters and singers have lot to say and sing about dreams. Both sleeping dreams and waking dreams or daydreaming have a magic quality about them. They are reprieves from the "real" world.

Our positive daydreams find us in a world of delight, basking on the beach, meeting our dream lover, winning the lottery, and enjoying other wonderful flights of fancy. At night, we might dream of running at great speed, flying to great heights, and enjoying dream escapades that we don't talk about.

I'm not a big fan of dream interpretation, but it does have a fascinating quality about it. Jung and Fritz Perls were into dreams as "messages" that could be of immense value in dealing with the flow of life. Fritz suggested turning the content of the dream over and over in our mind until some special significance presented itself. Of course, ego, imagination and self-interest are going to jump on that train. I'm more of the sock stuck to a towel when you take them out of the clothes dryer theory; that is, dreams as random thoughts that get stuck together in sleeping brain activity.

And then...

There's another kind of "dream". The dream of finding peace of mind, relief from stress, guilt or despair. And this is where I knock on the door of consciousness day after day after day. I have no set formula; a few suggestions that seem relevant, but no dogma. I have no interest in followers or fawning disciplines. I simply have a gift of good news that I have a choiceless imperative to share.

It's kind of like winning the lottery and finding your dream lover on the same day...only better. You want to shout it from the rooftops! Simply stated, it is that peace of mind is possible. That inner longing can be fulfilled. That intuitive stirring that something is missing can be satisfied. Despair can disappear in seemingly impossible circumstances.

It's about a shift in consciousness, an awakening, a realization, that bursts the bubble we have been squeezed into by consensus social coercion; the mistaken idea that our "real" world of sensory awareness is the complete package. It's a dream!

Now, if your life is fine the way it is, enjoy the dream. However, if something beckons you to inquire more deeply, you are on what is called in the jargon I've picked up along the way, The Mystic Path. Life as mystery theater with plenty of clues, and the solution, awakening.

How? Well, if you're looking for a place that you haven't found, you might find someone to give you some information or directions - even if the direction is to look inside and discover your own GPS with peace of mind as the destination. How to look inside? Meditation seems a good place to start or continue. Pick a technique that you like. Read reports from those who have found the truth that set them free. Find a guru if that's a style you might want to put on.

And if you like, dream a little dream with me. Tune into these daily notes and/or past notes - there are a couple hundred by now. You just might find that the incessant reference to the possibility of awakening to inner peace begins to cause a resonance and receptivity, and a light will come on that takes you where you need to go. Or if you read these notes for entertainment and affirmation, you might enjoy a satisfying nod of recognition. It's all about...

Love.

Painting A Dream

There are well-know quotes about how our eyes are the window to the soul, and that by looking with sacred eyes we fill our body with light.

Picasso once said in an interview that the true artist's ambition is, "to paint God." Wow! Imagine if just looking at a painting in the right way (more on that later) could fill our body with light and transport us to the heavenly realm of the soul. The same might be said about inspirational writing and songs - the writer's ambition being to paint God in words with the same effect.

Thinking of Picasso reminds me of a story in which a woman sees him at his easel, working on a painting. She approaches him with great deference and asks ever so sweetly if there is any possibility of him doing a quick sketch of her, which she promises to treasure forever.

The story goes that Picasso picked up a sketch pad, quickly drew a picture of the woman and handed it to her. She insisted on paying him and asked the price. When he told her some huge number like 5,000 francs, she said, in amazement, "But this only took you 2 minutes!"

Picasso's reply..."Madam, that took me my whole life."

OK, so much for an art appreciation lesson. Back to Painting A Dream...

If you're up for it, try dreaming a little dream with me. Just take a casual look at the painting below, and let your mind go quiet. Let the painting speak to you; that is, see what pops into your mind or where it takes you. Don't worry. I doubt that you will dematerialize and be beamed up to some astral plane. But...if Shakespeare, Jesus and Picasso (among others) are right...you just might. If not right now, maybe tonight, in your dreams.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1wnJoFAI4&feature=related>

Love.

Golfing with God

So, Jesus and a friend are out golfing. Jesus steps up to the tee first, hits the ball straight down the fairway, and steps back. The second golfer steps up and hits a huge slice into the woods.

But the ball careens off a big tree and bounces back out on the fairway. Just then a groundhog runs out of the woods and onto the fairway, picks up the ball, runs to the green and drops the ball in the cup! Hole in one.

Jesus turns and says, "Are you going to play golf or screw around...Dad?"

This note is about golfing with God in a slightly different way. By way of introduction I have to reference an often repeated history...I promise to keep it short.

I started out on a spiritual search to find peace of mind and relief from despair that had been brought on by a series of bad choices. I didn't see any way of reparation or undoing the harm and hurt I had caused. God was my last hope. I bounced from church to church before checking out some eastern religions, spent some time with a few esoteric spiritual groups and finally ended up for a time in a Hindu temple with a guru who said he could help me find inner peace and teach me some meditation techniques...and a lot more, but I promised to keep this intro short.

By grace, on one incredible morning (a morning that replays on an endless loop every morning as soon as I open my eyes) I was granted peace of mind through a startling rush of insight and blessed relief. My conscience was reset to 000000, my heart opened and my mind cleared. In effect, I died to an old self and a new improved version emerged. I left the temple the next day, knowing I would tell others about this incredible life-changing "event".

I didn't know that every facet of my life would change...including my golf game. To my surprise, the grace that I received extended to a new physical grace. After a few months of daily meditation and basking in this new unassailable inner peace, I stepped up to play golf. There was none of the usual tension, the embarrassed concern about the possibility of hitting a bad shot, or the too-quick swing.

On that very first golf game after my "Awakening" to a new self, I scored 20 points better than ever before. That's when it first occurred to me that meditation and its benefits could be applied to life in a practical sense - an applied metaphysics. This inner peace and sense of connection to God was the penultimate, but along the way or as a side effect, our game of life, including our career, relationships, stress management (I prefer the term joy management), weight loss, quitting smoking, even our dance steps and golf game could be improved! Not to mention the enhanced compassion, kindness, tolerance, and love of life it brings.

Since that time, I've worked with literally hundreds of people on goal achievement strategies; specifically those mentioned above, and came to call my programs, "Living@WOW!" www.livingatwow.com

I've worked with golf clients and several teaching pros, teaching "Play Better Golf, The Mind Game." And I've been golfing with God ever since. And loving it.

Love.

The Unkind Guru

OK, this is bold tuff stuff. It may turn us off, turn us around or bring us to our knees. But it just might be exactly what we need. Recognizing that or admitting to it is another story.

When I was a preacher in an interfaith fellowship, I often opened the weekend gatherings with a few disclaimers. One was, "Leave your guns and denominations at the door," and another was, "I don't preach no sissy Jesus, so don't expect no hands-folded, tight-ass, false piety here. Jesus was one bad-ass dude, and if you think he was some proper milquetoast poet, you ain't gonna be real comfortable here with my particular stylings." The colloquial bad grammar and the long hair (see photo below) were for effect. Occasionally some people headed for the door before the disclaimers were entirely finished.

A couple of my favorite rants were about the train wreck that pop cultural Christianity has made of the beautiful teachings of one of the most courageous and astounding teachers to ever walk the planet, and how he had warned of false prophets. Here's a recap and update of what the latter was about:

They've danced close to the fire, but have never been burned to a crisp. Unable to commit or admit, they strut their stuff, but run from the offending guru who threatens to expose their game of brushing up against naivety for an ego massage, working a popcorn fart philosophy or hiding behind the neo-advaitan curtain.

Quick to post their affirmations, applauding the wisdom, dropping "brilliant" compliments, but all the time they're dining on and regurgitating empty calories and powerless energy. Fawning pseudo-disciples fall for it. Genuine seekers are led down a garden path; in their innocent naivety, never suspecting that it is one big painted-on façade. And many walk away further discouraged and disappointed. Some are even jaded badly.

A distant cousin to the contemporary false prophet is the less than committed timid "seeker". They have either picked up the paper maché mantel and puffery of their cousin, or they cling to a victim mentality that is easily offended by any attempts to extricate them from their self-absorbed prison. They come in looking for the flaw and pounce on the first opportunity to be offended about anything that they consider not pc.

So, my pre-coffee rant's point is that meeting an unkind guru may be just the guru that we need to tune into when we are less than satisfied with life as it is at this stage. Some cobwebs and clinging may need to be cleared. And that can take some tough love.

Love.

The Impatient Meditator

MacDonald's is to blame. They set the fast food pace that turned on the impatient gene. Now we don't like to wait for more than a nanosecond for anything. Where's that waiter? How long does it take to make a salad? What was that about going out for a nice relaxing dinner?

Bouncing knees and tapping fingers signal an impending storm of rage. In Florida, the second car in line at a traffic light has an obligation to blast the horn immediately to let the lead car know the light has turned green. And they have a follow-up signal you can catch in your rear view mirror if you don't step on it.

So, what happens when a friend takes you to your friendly neighborhood guru who offers meditation classes and talks about the many healthful benefits to body, mind and spirit. We ask, "How long will it take?" Or if not, we silently wonder, and hope we still have time to pick up the laundry after class.

But maybe we did hear a couple of things that caught our attention; like, how meditating helps quiet the mind and how we can handle stress better. After three classes or more, we're apt to hear someone (maybe ourselves) say, "I've been meditating for a long time now. I thought this was supposed to help. Nothing's happening." Or my personal favorite response of all time from a prospective student, "Meditating makes me nervous." Wave bye, bye.

So, let's say the teacher has a calming influence (and what guru worth their ru wouldn't?) and after introducing a breathing technique, students settle in much more; well a little more, patiently. Just listen

quietly, the teacher offers. So we listen, focused on the flow of our breath, noticing the inhale and noticing the exhale. Ahhhhh.

And what do we hear? "This is a waste of time. I don't feel anything. I hope I have time to pick up the laundry. That sweetie is accounting...(censored)..." Our mind is all over the place.

Now, depending on the depth of or interest, curiosity or intuitive stirring that there just might be something more to this mediating thing, we persist. And we have to admit that it does become easier to meditate after a while, and we are noticing a more relaxed attitude...at least, at times.

But this perfect peace of mind, this new insight that the guru talks about incessantly ain't happening. Patience, grasshopper. Patience.

Love.

Enlightenment: Vanilla or Cadillac

When we want to convey plainness, the word vanilla is often used. Vanilla is your basic, unadorned, ice cream and so the comparison is understandable. But vanilla is an extraordinary, exquisite and delicious flavor. The aroma also is therapeutic.

When Jeff Foster, Eckhart Tolle and Tony Parsons, the current pop cultural magi of nonduality, and many others who find the nondual speak satisfying, refer to enlightenment as nothing special, ordinary, just being as we are, now, they seem to present it as unadorned by any theistic, histrionic or melodramatic staging - a vanilla enlightenment. Works for them.

Listening closely to authentic nondual realizers (a reference in which I include the aforementioned magi) and you'll hear droplets like, "lost in love...disappearance of the personal I...a moment of realization," slipped in fill that are tossed aside in their apparent overriding interest in keeping awakening in their nothing special, just being here now, nothing to achieve framing.

Of course, early in their his-stories there are recorded depressions and despair, and the subsequent vaporizing of the ego, the personal I, that were precedent to their now, ordinary, nothing-special nondual realization. So, their vanilla enlightenment must be of the subtle, exquisite and delicious flavor. And that would resolve my issue with their presentations (somewhat).

My his-story also includes depression and despair, but when enlightenment came along, someone pimped my ride. It was no ordinary anything. It was a Cadillac ride to El Dorado. It came with flashing lights, roaring sounds of train, thunderbolts and a transport to an astral plane inhabited by a lightbeing who ushered me into a huge blue-white egg and the very residence and Presence of Divinity - God - followed by more lights, a dissolution of the personal I and all the guilt and shame that went with it.

Before being dropped back to earth, the famous final scene was comparable to the finale of an Independence Day fireworks display - with a side effect of being shown the entire cosmos and being infused with a sense of knowledge of how every works in this perfectly balanced and harmonious universe. It was no ordinary ride, ordinary consciousness or ordinary anything. Nothing remained the same. But to all appearances nothing changed. Hard to explain. But vanilla sure ain't a word that came to mind.

Oh, I still chopped wood and carried water - but the wood grain was suddenly divinely inspired magic and the knots in the wood were as fascinating as a ladybug. And splashing of water from the bucket was like being washed in an ocean of love. If you've ever carried a pail of water, you know that you can flip the full bucket 360 degrees without spilling a drop - if you're in the zone and a smooth flipper.

So, if your tastes run more to the subtly of vanilla, nonduality teachings (well, nonteachings because there's nothing to know and nothing to learn in nondual land; remember, it's just ordinary, now, just you being you) may be for you.

But if a snappy dresser with a feather in his hat pulls up in a Cadillac El Dorado and offers you a ride while your enjoying your vanilla biscotti coffee, don't be surprised. Well, you will be surprised, but you might remember having read about it somewhere...over the rainbow.

Love.

Today A Peacock, Tomorrow A Feather Duster

Ever notice how those with lawyer-like egos like to stroll into these notes with a slightly different take, and tuning into only part of the Cadillac ride into El Dorado, peacock strut with words of their perspective that imply, "You're wrong," but are really saying, "I can say what you said, only better."

Those hitchhikers who got dropped off early might take their early dazzling experience as enlightenment, and these are the caution lights that many well-meaning nondual rappers rap about. The dazzle is phenomenal, but it is not enlightenment. We agree.

OK, but for those who stay with the ride, dissolve as personal identities and go beyond mere temporal experience - their life and their perspective are forever after changed. They have recognized their Oneness with all that is and no longer feel the separation that plagues the mass of men and women. They are Self or nondual realized.

Still, this is not the final destination. Those who by grace go all the way to the full liberation of El Dorado enter the emptiness that is not nothing, the timeless and spaceless place of eternity - that many who have entered term Divine Presence, and not only dissolve as a personal I but realize that their primary identity is pure intuitive consciousness without form (or some other imprecise attempt at describing the ineffable). They are also "shown" the balance and harmony of a pristine and impeccably precise universe and a sense of an equally indescribable "knowing" of how everything works.

Their "return" to temporal existence and the convenient use of a vehicle - the body/mind complex with enlightened and liberated spiritual awareness, is one of startling delight and they feel an imperative to pick up hitchhikers on the mystic path.

And some want to say that this is not an experience; that it is only the falling away of illusion and realization of our Self without all the hoopla and fanfare reported by ecstatic mystics? Pardon me, but what a fucking pseudo-intellectual ivory-tower yawn. Give me a banana split and a Cadillac El Dorado ride any day.

Love.

I Got Nothing

When so-called writer's block tries to muscle in, a writer can always write about writer's block. There are days when a point of view presents itself and the words just roll off the fingertips...and days when...the mindslate remains blank. Maybe it's all these comments about ego.

Love.

Feather Dusting

There is probably a relatively small audience for the message of this note, but it is worth addressing. The ego is, in part, the guard at the door of enlightened consciousness without knowing what is behind the door. Sometimes those who have made it past the guards to awakening think that they are done with the journey, but...

The ego is sneaky, sneaky, sneaky. Unless, in the rarest of instances, an awakening or Self-Realization completely obliterated the ego, there is a possibility that some time after the initial glow; which can last for years, the ego will seize an opening to regain a measure of control.

Two of the tactics that ego attempts are blatant clues that it is running its game. They are: 1. We take a negative connotation and a personal affront at something said or done to us. Oops. 2. A haunting voice occasionally nudges us with the notion that we have lost our Self-Realization.

Both are blatant ego invasions and need to be resisted as old shoots that have been cut trying to take root. This is when the presence and guidance of a satguru can be of inestimable value. They have cut the bitter roots of ego out entirely and know of these attempts from ego to regain a foothold in those who have not entirely completed the journey to full liberation.

Now, the ego of those who have achieved a measure of enlightenment and unity consciousness, can have a real problem with this because it potentially robs them of their certain enlightened status. But it does not. It is merely a feather dusting of the ego's "dust" residual that the satguru knows how to deal with in these situations.

Time for a dusting?

Love.

Family Time

Family from Maine visiting for a few days. Precious time. Our 3-year-old granddaughter, Mya, jumps from the bath and streaks through the house naked in complete freedom of expression, says, "Excuse me, I farted," without a tinge of self-consciousness or embarrassment in either case. She hasn't been taught to be politically correct or been socially coerced into serving the god of what-will-other-people think. In the store with her Mom, who is expecting a second child in a few months, Mya sees a slightly plumb woman (see, I've been taught to be pc) and asks, "Is she pregnant, Mom?" Precious times.

About 3 years ago we moved into a gated community of about 700 families; condominiums for the 55-plus crowd. (I have to sneak my wife, Susan, in at night because she's not 55 yet - just kidding...about the sneaking.) Because of all the group activities; from card games like Texas Hold 'em that attracts 40 or more people twice a week, golf leagues, tennis mixers, cruises and such, we've come to know a lot of people by name and familiarity...a growing family.

Here on facebook, friends known personally exchange comments, and friends of friends of philosophical sway and/or spiritual interests like birds of a feather, flock together. A big family. With just a quick glance at the political arena; a place usually assiduously avoided, cannot help but wonder if social media played a role in the Egyptian power-to-the-people gathering.

It wouldn't be me without coming back to the spiritual nest. All awakened teachers (guru, enlightened ones, Buddha...) seem to sense a common coming together as One, as the destiny of humankind. New thought "churches"; such as Unity speak to the interfaith blending of unity consciousness, worldwide. Just imagine. One really big family. With one thing in common, unconditional, totally accepting...Love.

The Civil War

Noticed the friends count when facebook was opened this morning at 1863 and as I recall, this is the year date around the time of what was called The Civil War, or War Between The States, or in some circles, The War of Northern Aggression. For most people, other than the politics and history buffs who look a little deeper, The Civil War was primarily about emancipation of the people who were forcibly used as slaves.

The term, "civil war," is an odd term, when we think of civil as socially proper or civilized. And this brings to mind the internal civil war between the free spirit we were born to be and the enslaved, civilized, socially-proper product we've been fashioed to become. This arbitrarily contrived "being" we were coerced into becoming as children, the persona (mask) we were pressured into wearing, is what is commonly called ego.

Of course, this fashioned identity - the ego is not inherently "bad". It has value in its use of logic and practical application of sensory input. But this is really use of the rational, linear product that is apart from the ego. Ego jumps in when it fulfills its role as protector, using its favorite tools of fear and doubt.

Anyway, I can feel a tangled ball of yarn forming, trying to separate ego, rational process and the free spirit that lives by intuition and revelation. But most can recognize an inner uneasiness or intuitive stirring that somehow our personal human resource department didn't do all that well with job descriptions and assignment of roles. Ego has assumed way too much power and essentially has enslaved our once free spirit.

Those who cannot or will not suppress their uneasiness often set out on a "search" or deeper and deeper inner inquiry about their "real" identity. Those who have recaptured their childlike lightness of spirit report an incredible sense of freedom and a renewed trust in an underlying benevolence that, in a way, guides and protects us. And the more intense the shift in consciousness, the more we tend to want to share this good news - the possibility of dethroning ego.

There are many models, paradigms, and many teachers of ways to go about recapturing or reawakening to our primary identity as a joyful, childlike free spirit - with all the benefits of the rational, linear process and none of the fear and doubt of the ego.

Meditation shows up as an aspect of virtually all of these. And that meditation can lead to the one factor that can end the civil war...

Love.

Duality Nonduality and Tri-reality

Well aware that strolling through the mine field (mind field) of micro-philosophizing often brings up more questions than it answers, especially when it comes to that little word "ego," I'm out on an ego stroll.

Ego is typically considered our personal identity, our separate "I" who necessarily deals with others and is the thinker of thoughts and the doer of action we take. Ego is the operations officer in charge of assessing and advising reasonable action to take in coping with everyday life in the duality of the world.

In the realm known as nonduality, the separate "I" is seen as an illusion, a false identity that we mistakenly took on as "us". This is experienced as recognition of the oneness of all, or an unlearning of the false identity, and for the theists, everything within God. For the nondual realizers, there is no "reality" attached to our physical being and even our thoughts; therefore, no doer of any action exists. Life happens. Writing happens. Reading happens.

While some nondualists insist on the strict line of, "no me", some nondualists allow for the relative reality, in which we obviously exist as separate physical beings, and the absolute reality of oneness in which we

exist as pure awareness, independent of any temporal time and space. Beyond the oneness of nonduality is full liberation, but that is beyond the scope of this stroll.

When ego is considered a false identity and something that is fashioned by socialization, then the teachings that talk of annihilating the ego in favor of reawakening to our primary identity, hold up. But what we tend to do is lump linear, rational, thought process as well as passion, feelings and sensory impulse with ego. Some of these are valuable and seemingly necessary to navigating life's maze, and some are uncomfortable and distressing to varying degrees.

And so we have ego, as pop culturally used, showing up in the duality of the world and in the nondual or oneness realization. The advantage of the nondual realization is that it attaches no emotional content to the good or the bad. It ideally lives with peaceful equanimity as the undercurrent of everyday life.

So life becomes a tri-reality. We live in the world and its duality, realize nonduality and use the ego when needed; that is, unless we are fully liberated and live purely by intuition and revelation.

Interestingly, as I wrote in the Nonduality Salon a few years ago: Jesus was unique in his ability to teach from a dual perspective by offering prayer and worship to God as a separate identity, moving to the middle ground between duality and non-duality with his reference to himself as "Son of God", and finally into non-duality with, "The Father and I are One." A obvious and easy step is into all within God: Oneness.

Love.

Songs from God

With just a little opening of perspective almost all love songs can be heard as Songs from God to his precious creation..me...oh, and of course, you. Even love songs that are about unrequited love; such as, [Unchain My Heart](#) (link below), are from the heart of our true being within God to the ego, our fashioned identity, imploring ego to let go and let God take over our lives - as was the "original" intent in the genesis of all spiritual and religious tradition.

A relevant piece of scripture is from Proverbs, in the Christian Old Testament: Lean not upon your own understanding. Acknowledge me in all your ways and I will direct your paths." Those who have heeded that advice offer up glorious reports of how wonderful, joyful and peaceful it is to truly come from the heart of our being - to allow a "power" greater than ego to direct our paths. We simply acknowledge and God takes care of the details. Or we can stay with ego in the captain's chair.

So, here we are back to dealing with ego. A short remedial definition in the context of this note: Ego is the identity that we were convinced early on would best serve us in this life. It was fashioned by social coercion to fit in and join the flock of sheep, rather than allow the childlike lightness of spirit we came into the world with to run our lives. We were told that we had to "grow up and be responsible," and the only way to do that was to rely on our rational thinking process to advise and consent to our choices in life.

OK, so how's that working out for us? If we've been fortunate enough to live a carefree life and have enjoyed the fruits of our ego-directed efforts, we are all set. However, the poets, artists and songwriters typically come from a very different perspective. They write from an inner longing to know or return a time of loving embrace from life and a release from pain and despair - to those who can relate.

[Unchain My Heart](#) asks for the freedom to live from the heart. Ego has chained the heart and kept us captive and in ignorance of a more excellent way.

Love.

The Common Thread

Recently, or rather currently, involvement in an esoteric discussion about karmic burden and the reincarnation that karma necessarily implies, reinforces the recognition of a common thread that runs through the core of all spiritual models.

While still intending to limit these notes to direct personal experience and remain authentic; that is, not stating speculative concepts as something "known", it is sometimes fun to enter these types of discussions. What often emerges and becomes obvious is that the mystic path (itself an esoteric term) is known by virtually all spiritual traditions and cultures, and that this mystic path, while called various names and hung on different models, leads to the same "place" or culminating level of consciousness that is also known by different names: God-Consciousness, Nirvana, Buddhahood, Nondual Realization +, Self-Realization, Enlightenment, Awakening, and other terms.

Those who have been graced with this awakening know that it transcends all the religious walls and fundamentalist dogma of exclusivity, and clearly see this common thread. A shared sense of all who have awakened is that one day the common thread will be finely woven into a beautiful fabric that will cover the earth and bind us all together in...

Love.

Leave The Light On

The term, "childlike lightness of spirit," is one used frequently in an attempt to somewhat capture the feeling of freedom that awakening to the truth of our spiritual essence brings. With the realization or re-awakening to the truth that who we are, in essence, is not confined to skin and bones that think, comes a blissful breakout into an indescribable joy. A return to a childlike lightness of spirit, without anticipatory fear or reflective regret, living intuitively and entirely free of self-consciousness is a pretty good way to convey what this shift in consciousness brings.

I have a 3-year-old granddaughter, Mya, who recently came with her mother and father to spend a few days with us in Florida. They live in Maine. As Mya came running past me in the living room, I tossed a paper towel that had been rolled up in a ball at her. The delighted giggles and effervescent sparkle in her eyes that immediately followed the boink of the paper towel ball off her noggin filled the room with this indescribable joy. We spent the next few minutes in a ROTFLMAO (just to show the text generation that grandfathers can still be hip, cool, with it, whatever) paper towel ball fight.

Over the next few upcoming years Mya will be socialized to fit in, be introduced to the god of what will other people think and taught the necessity of her meeting other people's expectation...among other proper social "graces". The delighted giggles and effervescent sparkle in her eyes will give way to self-consciousness, and a moist paper towel ball tossed at her will have lost all its magic. It will have become ikky.

Imagine a world in which we taught our children that the most important thing in life, above all, is to never lose the childlike lightness of spirit, and that the delighted giggles and effervescent sparkle in their eyes are meant to last a lifetime. I think the more likely possibility is that children will teach the adults this one day. The Indigo Children (of all ages) may be a hint of what is to come.

Just fun to think about while enjoying my morning Vanilla Biscotti coffee and drying my hands on a paper towel. I'm keeping it on hand for when my wife, Susan, gets up and strolls into the living room. She is one of the incredibly rare adults who can still break out in delighted giggles and still has that effervescent sparkle in her eyes.

Love.

Silence is Sheer Genius

She came through the door like a wet hen; flapping, flailing, spinning and sputtering. First thing I heard was the kitchen door slamming and then a string of nearly incomprehensible sounds that seemed to contain most if not all of George Carlin's seven words you cannot say on television. This list was compiled before cable.

Her boss at work had picked her up on a very petty issue and made a big deal of it. And she was beside herself frustrated and fed up with corporate _____. Fill in one of the seven words.

My immediate reaction would normally have been to offer some sage advice to help calm her down. But just seconds before the startling rush of my wife, Susan's, entrance I had shut off an audio tape by John Gray, author of *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. In real time, the click of the tape player preceded the slamming of the door by a nanosecond.

Dr. Gray had offered his view that men are too quick to want to offer sage advice or what they would consider a solution to a problem that a woman presents. His premise was that women sometimes just want to vent by verbalizing their frustration...and what adds to their frustration are men who want to ride in on their trusty white stallion and solve the problem for them - immediately. They just want to be heard.

His suggestion was that the next time a woman needs to vent, that any male present just zip it and not offer any advice." Just listen," were the last words I heard before the door hinges were tested. So that's what I did. Susan went on for a few minutes, while I nodded and looked empathic and understanding, but kept it zipped. I did not say one word. An occasional "ummmm" was the only sound I made. As Susan ran out of steam, I gave her a hug and began to prepare dinner.

Later that evening, a few hours after she had come home, I glanced over to see Susan looking at me with the most adoring expression through misty eyes. When she caught my glance, she ever-so-sweetly said, "I love how we can talk."

I've told this story before, but it's one of my favorite real life episodes. I'm sure I mentioned that I moved John Gray's books and tapes up to the genius shelf in my bookcase. And the story is a great segway into the core of all my writing - about The Mystic Path and the value of silence.

The priority or beginning goal of meditation is silence, a method for quieting the incessant inner chatter that underlies most stress in our lives. But that is not an end in itself. The penultimate goal of meditation and yoga (meditation is a form of yoga) is to make a God connection or reconciliation with our higher Self.

It is in the absolute silence and surrender of all concepts - no seeking, no mystic path, no guru, not even an us, no thing - that the muse, the inner genius, makes this connection. The previous sentence bears re-reading and a little clarification about timing: It is only at this Diamond Point of Stillness that all concepts and models that pointed the way must be dropped.

The authentic teachings of spiritual and philosophical traditions; especially the mystic traditions, are what created the fertile ground, the soil, in which the absolute silence and surrender of all concepts may yield its wisdom. Those who wish to use meditation as a stress management tool only can jump right into meditation methods and enjoy almost immediate benefit, but...

For those who are responding to an inner stirring, a longing, and especially those with a desperate longing for relief from despair, jumping right into meditation techniques IMO is a big mistake and will often lead to more frustration and disappointment. See preceding paragraph.

So, the next time we approach meditation...zip it. And the still small voice of God may make Divine Presence known with a loving wisdom whisper that says, "I love how we can talk."

Love.

Enlightenment is...

Imagine a day when you went to the store and picked up a blueberry muffin and a fresh bag of Caramel Drizzle designer coffee beans, came home and ground the beans, made a fresh pot, poured yourself a cup or two to go with your muffin, enjoyed your quiet continental breakfast and then went off to hear a morning speaker at a local coffee shop.

You found a seat and ordered a juice (you'd had enough coffee). The speaker was seated on a small platform. He looked like a very pleasant person, and in a very relaxed manner, spoke with what you detected was a bit of an affected soft voice. Here's an excerpt of the talk you heard:

You'll hear stories from some people about how they actually found Caramel Drizzle coffee beans. They'll go on to tell how wonderful Caramel Drizzle coffee tastes, how satisfying it is, and they'll go on and on about the blissful after-glow. And they will tell you that if you'll just follow their directions to the place where these supposed coffee beans can be found, and listen to them about how to prepare a cup of this special coffee, you, too, can enjoy the delights of Caramel Drizzle coffee.

But the truth is, there is no such thing as Caramel Drizzle coffee, and there's no path to find it. Don't listen to those people who think they are special and have something we don't have. They are just arrogant or deluded. We know that coffee is coffee, and we already have coffee. We're in a coffee shop, for heaven's sake. (laughter) Just stop any seeking and accept life as it is. There is no Caramel Drizzle coffee experience. There is just an unlearning of all this nonsense. This is it. Just realize this. Be here now. (applause)

So, how do you imagine you would feel, hearing this? Could this talk persuade you, convince you that you're deluded? Would you just smile and walk away? Would you mention the content of your earlier breakfast? Welcome to the world of what anyone with the brashness to speak of enlightenment and there own awakening experience deals with on occasion. (laughter)

Experience is never at the mercy of argument. Just a little coffee and muffin for thought.

Love.

The Easy Button

Top notch advertising agencies know how to create ads that push our emotional and psychological buttons. From evoking childhood memories of a fantasy-filled carefree life, the promise of financial or prestigious success, to improved health and vigor, an easier and more efficient life, and especially about the number one button that sells, they know.

Now, this doesn't make advertising inherently evil or manipulative. Well, it is manipulative. However, advertising is an information source that makes products and services, and in many cases an improved lifestyle, available for a broader market and; therefore, at reduced prices (in many cases).

According to university studies presented on a recent TED video, the top three chairs in the mind's hierarchy of things we think about are sex, money and God...in that order. You're on your own or at least without me giving advice on the first two. Now, about God...

Top notch gurus know how to create images that push our emotional and psychological buttons. From evoking childhood memories of a fantasy-filled carefree life, the promise of peace of mind, improved health and vigor, an easier and more efficient life, and especially about the blissful joy of an encounter of the heavenly kind, they know.

And there are probably as many disappointed guru customers as there are disappointed customers of products and services that did not live up to the promise of the ads. My number one complaint about gurus and advertising is that they often over-promise.

Now, this doesn't make authentic gurus inherently evil or manipulative. Well, they are manipulative. But if they are authentic their motives are pure. It is their eagerness and strongly felt imperative to share the good news with those who are interested (seekers, inquirers, mystically curious) of our potential for gnosis - knowing God, that leads to their over-promising.

Gurus necessarily draw upon their own experiences to speak about the "path" to God-Realization. And because they were hit with a sudden rush of startling wisdom (God-Consciousness), they "know" that it is possible for seekers to find, for inquirers to receive an answer to "Who Am I?" and for the mystically curious to come into the very presence and residence of God.

However, the parameters and setting for this penultimate of human experiences seem to be unique to the individual. And while the old, "When the student is ready, the teacher appears," axiom may be true, it is the readiness of the student that is the critical factor.

Some come quietly, some come bawling and squalling, but neither assures readiness. No matter how reticent or desperate, unless the student is ready to give up everything, risk their life, find a way to let their mind go utterly blank and surrender every concept - no matter how precious or erudite, they are not ready. And given this, not many are ready.

For the few who are ready, there is The Easy Button. But it only works when we're really, really ready to rock'n'roll.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFd4p5Hx-Xo>

Love.

Living@WOW!™

Living@WOW! is about living fully. The WOW! is an acronym for Wisdom, Optimism and Wellness. Now, this note may sound like an infomercial, and in a way it is...but the intent is to offer a view of a way to reach goals successfully and re-discover a richness in life that may have been forgotten or in some current life circumstances may be somewhat less than evident.

We are so accustomed to writing our goals down, outlining a plan, developing a strategy and "putting our shoulder to the grindstone," to press on toward achievement of these goals, that we can and do miss a critical first step. That critical first step, in a word, is wisdom. The immediate hurdle is to understand what wisdom is really all about. What makes the hurdle especially challenging is that wisdom is almost impossible to explain before the fact.

To illustrate how challenging it is to explain wisdom; I've been writing and speaking about it for over 30 years, and the word count must be in the kazillions (that's a whole lot), but I never seem to run out of words in the attempt...and yet I have never fully explained it. It's kind of like trying to explain what a blueberry muffin tastes like to someone who has never had a blueberry or a muffin. Anyway, moving right along undaunted on this applied metaphysics journey...

Wisdom comes as a startling rush of insight. It's a WOW!, I never knew that. Yet something in the misty recesses of the mind feels like we did know it, but never really owned it. We didn't know it, know it. It's an Aha!, a Eureka, an I-could-of-had-a-V8, that precedes great inventions and innovative ideas. It's a brand new clarity, with a hint of familiarity. In a very real way, it brings comfort and joy, and an ease where there was uneasiness. Some might even call it awakening or enlightenment.

Here's a question: Do we really believe that grim shoulder to the grindstone outperforms joyful activity that seems effortless? The way most of us approach goals would seem to point to the former. The Living@WOW! way says that seeking wisdom is the critical first step, and that with wisdom comes optimism and those two add up to wellness.

So, how do we call upon this wisdom? You guessed it: meditation. Set a goal and forget it. Set it and forget it. Then quietly meditate. Resist the inner chatter that wants to offer solutions. Wait for the wisdom whisper from the heart, and you will know the wise way to go. That's a start in the right direction. More later.

Love.

This Ain't MacDonald's Mac

MacDonald's has contributed to the one-minute mentality that wants and now needs one-minute solutions to everything from cheeseburgers to cosmic consciousness. OK, cheeseburgers, no problem. With fries, supersized, in one minute.

But when it comes to the mystic path and the pursuit of heightened awareness, this ain't no MacDonald's, Mac. It will take more than a quickie to quiet the mind and awaken the heart.

Tom Thompson, The Awakened Heart Center for Conscious Living, posted this meditative-state inducing bit of magic recently. May not be everybody's cup of java. But can you hang on for 10-minutes?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLDalZ4-53g&feature=player_embedded

Love.

A Lively Hope

When we gain insight into what the master's know, we catch hold of a lively hope. But here's the catch...

A lively hope has no content, no plan of action. To live with a lively hope is to not rely on hope. It is to live by inspiration and revelation. Abandon all hope! Now the rational mind, commonly referred to as ego, goes clang at this seemingly discouraging thought. But hang on Sloopy, there's more to the story. It's not an easy story to follow. The ego will turn up the clang volume and distract most readers. This happens whenever a deep secret or a high teaching is presented. Did ego react to the previous sentence with a little suspicious or disdainful clang? I'm just saying...

The ego's job; the job for which it was assiduously trained, is to keep us safe. Not happy. Safe. The whip and the chair that the ego uses to keep us safe and obedient to social consensus thinking is fear and doubt. To catch hold of a lively hope is to totally tame the lions of fear and doubt, and assign ego to its role as linear processor of thought, record keeper and reactor to sensory input in the relative world of street crossings and mud puddles. We know to wait to cross if a truck is coming, and we know to walk around when a big mud puddle tempts us to jump and ruin our new sneakers.

As long as we fight disappointment, wish we had a better life, or wrestle with financial, relationship and poor self-image issues, we give them life. The conventional and psychobabble way of dealing with these

issues is to examine the content, look for and understand the triggering event(s), and design a new plan to overcome.

Here's the problem: When we heave with a big sigh over life's slings and arrows, we tell the ego where we are emotionally. And unless we're hanging from a cliff, ego records the emotion and labels it "Safe." And it keeps us there. And the more we sigh and replay discouragement and doubtful wishing (wishing for a better life is acknowledgment of a less than satisfying life) the fatter our file gets and the more convinced the ego is: subconsciously, that this a place to keeps us...because the label reads, "Safe." As a quick aside - I don't know what finding the trigger event does for us other than cement the victim mentality. Sorry, Sigmund.

Here's the solution: A lively hope. First of all, drop any idea of what a lively hope is all about for the sake of staying open to really understanding the solution. When the idea of abandoning all hope was introduced in an earlier paragraph, it is quite certain that most of us interpreted that as giving up and falling into depression. Nope. That's not it at all. Stay tuned.

To abandon all hope is to also abandon all discouragement and despair...and to enter the "Quiet Zone." In the Quiet Zone, the mind is still. Absolutely still. Animal stealthy still. No desire. No wishes. Just still. Still. And when we are able to remain still, an amazing thing happens. We disappear. We merge into what IS. And what IS Love. And Love has no content, no plan of action. Love is a lively hope - a sure sense of well-being in which subject and object disappear, and in which a most exquisite Oneness envelopes and absorbs us in an embrace from the God of Love. And when we feel loved, guided, protected, we are in Love and live with a lively hope. And we in turn become the lover, guider, protector.

Meditation is the door opener to stillness, but meditation is not just something we do. We begin by doing it, but in time; and with proper foundation, we become the meditation; that is, meditation, being in the quiet zone, runs as an undercurrent of our moment-to-moment lives. And it is here that a lively hope sustains our lives in Love, and new doors open.

If we continue to bang against doors that we feel are closed to us, ego will keep us banging and banging - because we are on safe and familiar ground. If we allow our lives to be taken over with a lively hope, we can come to realize that we are banging from the inside, and all we have to do is turn around...our thinking. Let life present itself. The lively hope will take right action. That's good karma.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_fHGqNJYDQ

Love.

The Apple of My I

According to Genesis, the beginning book in the bible, God's very first instruction to the human beings he fashioned was for them to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Before some snake convinced Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and she shared it with Adam, they were naked and lived in Paradise, with a childlike lightness of spirit and absolutely no self-consciousness. Post bite they felt the need to cover their now "private parts" with fig leaves. How come?

Well, because they now had an ego, a rational process with an assignment to sort good and bad. And, so, with no one else around to see them except God, and no social guidelines to live by, they decided that exposure of certain parts of their bodies was "bad". Really? You got to wonder how much editorializing the Elizabethan English translators imposed and exposed of their up-tight views of sexuality. Anyway, before getting too far afield...

The Apple enlivened the personal I, the self-conscious and separate individual, and Adam and Eve suddenly felt embarrassment, fear and doubt. When God saw what happened, they were booted out of Paradise - Adam to sweat and toil, and Eve to bring new beings into the world the hard way. And they were

warned about snakes. It all seems pretty harsh for eating an apple. And it gets worse. A hell of a lot worse. Welcome to the fundamentals of the Christian Club. Today we don't have the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, instead we have...

Strict parents, teacher posers and parroting preachers, who were socially coerced themselves to introduce bad and good early on. Bad girl! No! Soon what was once a world of adoring looks and tender hugs became alternatively angry voices and smacks on the buns. And it gets worse. Many kids in the Christian culture put on their Sunday best to go and hear about how if they don't behave they risk being tossed into a fire and tortured...forever, by a God who, by the way, loves them. And we wonder why we have so many recovering Christians.

So, how do we stop the world and get a better grip? Awaken to the fact that the whole hellfire and brimstone story was created by control freaks in a totally different time and social awareness. Jesus tried to unveil the truth of this, and of all people to ever speak out has had the greatest impact. But his story got twisted as well. Jesus didn't hold himself out as an exception; some superhuman. He said others could do what he had done and even said that they could do even more than he had done. Can you imagine God saying something like that? Jesus said that he and God were One, but he said that from a human platform of relative reality.

When Jesus was "Christed," he didn't set out to form some exclusive club and consign all non-members to burn in hell for eternity. He, as do all awakened teachers, went out to tell the good news of our inherent capacity to "know" God (Source, Energy Field, Divine Presence) as he did personally and intimately, while still in the blood, sweat and tears of mortal life. That's what Christing is - God-Consciousness. And when Jesus said that no one comes to God but by him, he said that from a Christed platform of absolute reality. We come to God through the Christing - the awakening to our true Self. Call it what you will, but...

All the semantic shuffling, pc non this and non that, non-theistic cardboard apples and watering down of holy drinks doesn't change the real thing. That's the view from this window. So much for a silent day. Another writer provoked this passion by calling for a non watered-down view. Thank Vicki. Thanks, Vicki.

Love.

Empowerment

Change your heart to a little white dove. That's a line from the song, "The Power of Love."

You won't feel nothing until you feel. That's another powerful, powerful line. Excuse the unintentional double negative, and it's a poignant teaching. It rips the covers off the neo-advaitan cover tunes and the exclusive-club mentality of fundamentalism. It also upsets some of the sweet loving souls who parade their folded-hand piety and water-spider philosophy, but feel nothing, genuinely.

For those who may not be familiar with my rantings, I come from a Christian background, and take great exception to the exclusive claims of fundamentalists of any religion - especially Christianity. Jesus was a beautiful teacher whose teachings typically got tossed out with the bathwater when organized religion took over from the Gnostics - those who were thunderstruck with knowing right down to their bones what Jesus was teaching.

One of the most telling pieces of scripture is when Jesus said to his disciples (I paraphrase), "When what I have been talking about sinks right down to your bones, you will be empowered to witness of me." Earlier, Jesus had also said that the student (disciples) would become as the teacher, and that they would be empowered to do the works he had done, and even more! Empowered is the word.

And we don't get empowered until we get empowered. Degrees don't do it. Seminaries and temples and ashrams don't do it. Teachers, even awakened teachers, don't do it. It comes by grace, by Divine Presence. Zap. And those who speak out without it, wear the emperor's clothes. But only those who have been

empowered and returned to a childlike lightness of spirit can see that. That's the power of love. Change your heart to a little white dove.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NMph943tsw>

Love.

000000.0

One of the side effects of awakening that not much is written about is a re-setting of conscience; that is, about how all the despair, shame, guilt and degradation brought on by bad decisions and bad acts of the past - all our misdeeds that caused others pain and suffering, are dissolved. In a flash of overwhelming Love from Divine Presence our conscience is cleared; reset to 000000.0 on the mileage meter.

In the midst of wave after wave of this feeling of being known personally and intimately by Divine Presence, and the stunning realization that the essence of Divine Presence (God, Source, Divine Energy) is pure Love- a guiding, protecting and ever-present Love, comes this total acceptance and reset. It is as if the person who came into Divine Presence dissolves and is reformed into a new person without any past at all. Gives an expanded meaning to "reform".

Now some pure and loving souls reading this may not relate to this at all. They are not dragging around a heavy burden of guilt and such, and have no reason to find this resetting of conscience to 000000.0 appealing. But for those of us who do...

Imagine a legal system that focused on reformation as mentioned above. Just as an aside and for the sake of clarity, it may be a good idea to mention that along with the 000000.0 comes an infusion of renewed love, caring, forgiving, patience, tolerance, kindness and compassion toward others - not to mention an abiding gratitude. And, also, the sins of the past are not forgotten - it's just that the reformed person knows that they are brand new, and while still responsible for what happened, are truly no longer that person.

So, say someone stole money from their grandmother's pocketbook, later graduated to boosting a six-pack from a convenience store, and along the way took part in bullying, beating, and abandoning friends and even family. That would make them a bad apple, no doubt about it. Now let's say that the convenience store heist was caught on tape and they were caught in a matter of hours, and tossed in jail.

Guilty as sin! The sentence: satsang. Of course, you don't see much recruitment of gurus or authentically awakened teachers for work in prisons, and those who "find Jesus" while in jail are highly suspect. But for the sake of imagining this fanciful approach to dealing with crime (at least in part), imagine this young man, the former bad apple, coming back into society truly reformed, reborn, reset with 000000.0.

Love.

Inspiration, Creativity and Power

We have an inner spirit being, silently residing in the throne room of our heart. During the adjustment to entering the physical world way too immature to care for ourselves, we relied on those who came before us to care for us completely for years, until we developed enough physical, socially and emotional to care for ourselves, and in turn care for others.

So far so good; except in the process of being socialized we forgot about our inner spirit being, silently residing in the throne room of our heart. Having become independently able to care for ourselves and navigate our way through life's ups and downs, we came to rely entirely on our own devices - primarily the reasonable, logical, rational processor in our brain.

Secondarily, and concurrently, we developed a "heart" for our companions on this earth. Those who are especially kind and compassionate are not said to have a good brain - they are said to have a good heart. So, while we may have forgotten about our inner spirit and heart, we remain connected and somewhat subject to its influence.

Some people seem to find a nice balance and life is good for them. They're successful, have good relationships and good health. Others find themselves feeling somewhat lost and occasionally have the quietly disturbing feeling that maybe they are on the wrong planet or something like that. In both groups, there are those who feel an inner longing, an intuitive stirring that something is missing in their lives.

Some suppress those feelings and stirrings as imaginary nonsense, and others just can't shake them. In the latter group are those who often set out on an inner inquiry in depth and/or a mystical path. And the reports of this inner journey are either of dismissive disappointment or glowing reports of rediscovery of the inner spirit being, quietly residing in the throne room of the heart.

This startling discovery changes lives dramatically. A door opens to shifting primary identity from rational process and thinking being to spirit being as primary being, and the thinking, sensory being as a secondary identity - more of a convenient vessel through which now freely flows inspiration, creativity and power.

If you've responded to an inner stirring, you have your antenna up and it's a matter of attuning to the right show, group, teacher, or framework that will appeal to you and aid in your discovery. Ultimately, it is your desire, passion, persistence and/or desperation that will push you on. Or not. My notes are an incessant cheerlead to not give up your "search" and to attest to real potential for rediscovery, awakening, and the beauty, freedom, joy and sheer delight of it.

If you've responded to an inner stirring and rediscovered your primary identity, you're simply smiling as you read this far. If you're passionate about the paradigm or model - the framework that aided your rediscovery, you may feel the need to correct some of my syntax or add to it. Help yourself to the comment bar.

Love.

(hidden) (hidden)

What Would (Your name here) Do?

There is a ad agency-like campaign that has been around for quiet awhile. Before writing it, the following disclaimer is necessary: No exclusions apply, there is no expiration date on this offering, and while the icon of Christianity is referenced in this campaign there is no intention; implied or otherwise, to suggest an exclusivity or infer that this is the only valid offer on the market. Other spiritual, religious, cultural and philosophical models apply as well and may be considered as equally valid.

WWJD? What would Jesus do? That's the campaign that asks us to consider any situation we may be confronted with, and model our response to it and our action after what we believe Jesus would do. That's very cool...as long as we understand and keep in mind a couple of things.

Jesus; as reported in Christian scripture, seems to be a mixture of Polly Pureheart and Snidely Whiplash. Now, of course, he did not have Snidely's evil or salacious intent, but he did have a temper. He called a woman a "dog" - which was most certainly a slur in his culture, called Peter, one of his disciples, Satan and referred to the ruling religious class as a basket of snakes. He was also known to have fashioned a whip and flipped tables over in a rage. So, getting rid of the image of a pure and peaceful, hands folded and striking a pious pose, man is one of those things important to understand and keep in mind.

The other is that to simply model behavior after what we believe Jesus would do, unless it comes purely from the heart, would be less than genuine. If we passively allow an obvious injustice (turn the other cheek) or help someone out of a tough situation, and then proceed to grumble and lecture about it...well, that

doesn't count. In order to be authentically true to the underlying wisdom of the suggestion that we consider WWJD?, we would have to be or become as Jesus was (and is as the eternal Christ). And that is very cool.

If we have already owned the fact that we are or have become as Jesus was, then we can skip to the outro: Love. If not, then we cannot really know the heart of Jesus other than intellectually - which "knowing" is incredibly incomplete without us having transcended into the realm of understanding and insight that was basis of all of Jesus' teachings. BTW, in keeping with the spirit of the disclaimer, they are also the teachings of Buddha, Krishna, Mohammad, Ramana, Prem Rawat, Jeff Foster, Robin Hagar (to name just a few) and all awakened teachers (by any other name), at their core.

We live in a relative world of duality. In this world in which we live, move and have our physical being, we learn by comparison and contrast and are guided by reason and the roller coaster ride of feelings and emotions and passions. In the transcendent world of the absolute there is no relativity, no time, no space, no questions. Pristine clarity is the order of the day, everyday, eternally. This is Bliss. Some may call it simply THIS, or THAT, or what IS, but without having experienced transcendence of the world of duality, those words can come across as flatline boredom, and in most cases discouraging. But I've mentioned that in other notes.

So, in keeping with the model on which WWJD? is based, a reminder and guidepost is offered in the paraphrased words of Jesus. "Seek first the kingdom of God and an understanding of what this inner kingdom is all about, and you will naturally do what all who have been graced with Divine Presence do, with kindness, compassion and enlightened love."

Love.

You May Step Down From The Witness Stand

To experience the disassociate witness consciousness is quite an experience. To stay at that level is to be stuck. We may become empowered witnesses of the truth of the masters and our own truth as more than our rational process and internal chatter, tossed around by every windbag of philosophy.

But there comes a time to step down from the witness stand and participate fully in both worlds. This is liberation from ego games and mental shenanigans that would have us get off the train before arriving at the final destination. In this physical manifestation we live in a world of relative values and duplicity. As a stepped-down witness we accept this with equanimity and unassailable perfect peace of mind, while basking in the glow of being, at the same time, divine presence in a world that pretty much doesn't recognize us.

For those who do not know of this, no explanation will satisfy. For those who do know of this, no explanation is necessary.

Love.

Who's Asking?

When those of us who pray offer up a prayer, who is asking and who is receiving that prayer? If it's from our ego and ego has no real substance, but is rather a secondary false ID, a persona, a mask that we were socially coerced into wearing, it would follow that an ego-driven prayer has no real source and; therefore, no real substance.

If we pray from our authentic Self that is One with God, that would kind of be like praying to our Self, wouldn't it? But we have become accustomed to thinking (ego) of God as outside of us and in some heavenly realm - a God who grants wishes...or not. With a little reflection it might be seen that we who pray do both. We pray to a heavenly God at times and we pray for our own change of heart or movement to

right action. That latter form of prayer, at its core, is for a clear experiential realization that we; in fact, are One with God.

From a Buddhist perspective; and this is why many believe that Buddhist do not believe in God, prayer would infer desire and any desire causes us to suffer and; therefore, accepting life with equanimity, as in everything being already perfect as it is, will relieve our suffering. (Gautama Siddhartha sat under a tree until he awakened as Buddha, and then an 8-fold blueprint was developed to approach what he realized. Much like the Christian organized doctrine, the suggestions are to live the way we would naturally live post-awakened. Seems upside down to me. The first move would be to awaken and live by the 8-fold and 10 commandments and such naturally, without need for lists and graphs and charts, but, moving along this morning...)

For those familiar enough with Christian scripture, Hebrews 6 offers much the same view. The reader is asked to go beyond the basic teachings to the advanced teachings and "step into perfection." Stepping out onto a limb here, Hebrews contradicts much of what is in other books of the new testament and it contradicts a heck of lot of what is practiced in the mainstream church. This stepping into perfection being one example, having "no more consciousness of sin," another. And for one more, Hebrews invites us to come boldly into Divine Presence (the throne room of God), not bawling, squalling and feeling an unworthy sinner. IMHO, Paul did not write this book. If he did, he suffered a flashback to his Pharisee days when he started bringing order and gender discrimination into the picture.

OK, so the preacher in me showed up for a while. What was I writing about? Oh, yeah. Prayer. Well, Jesus prayed to a heavenly "Father," and also said that he was One with the Father. So I guess he's not a bad example to follow. We are in this relative reality and it can be comforting to think that a Parent-like God watches over us and guides us.

A suggestion might be to include in our prayer to this Holy Comforter, either as a reminder that we already have or that we come to the same realization as Jesus did - that we are One with Divine Presence. This realization not only brings us comfort, it empowers us to bring comfort to others, and at times, even to be the answer to their prayers. it seems I'm still responding to a recent challenge for us to claim our power.

Love.

Meditation Time With A Satguru

Satguru is a prefix enhancement of the word guru, meaning "true" guru or teacher. A Satguru or authentic Awakened Teacher is one who serves those seeking enlightenment or awakening. Often what the student is seeking is not enlightenment, but rather relief from suffering and the great relief of peace of mind. If enlightenment cannot be defined, and it cannot, and we cannot truly comprehend enlightenment before it is directly experienced, we cannot seek it per se. What is sought are the reported side effects, primarily the peace of mind, tranquility, freedom and exquisite joy it reportedly brings.

For the sake of this note, the term Satguru will be used. Different traditions use different terms, so think Awakened Teacher or Spiritual Guide or whatever comfortable term fits your chosen expression of model.

A Satguru will offer satsang, a discourse on truth based on their direct experiential knowledge of the truth of our potential for awakening and enjoying the fruits of awakening. Along the way, when Satguru feels that the student is ready, some form of meditation and other lifestyle guidelines will be introduced. This is a critical juncture point on the journey. And timing is everything. There must be perfect balance in the student's readiness and the Satguru perception of their readiness.

It is not the length of time spent in meditation that perfects it. It is proper preparation to be a receiver of the cosmic force. Some spend years in meditation to no avail. Others are catapulted through the astral plane into Divine Presence on the causal plane in their very first meditation.

Being taught meditation techniques without proper preparation is to set the student up for failure and abject disappointment. Choose your Satguru wisely. There are Satgurus who are soft and sweet, others who all but breath fire and will pick us up on any stray comment or ego strutting, and most Satgurus will display some of both of these styles, depending on the student. Those who are not ready may end up running like frightened rabbits when their ego is threatened and others will be highly offended and go off in a huff.

It may be a missed opportunity to run off or huff off, and it may be a mistake to stay under a Satguru who is not right for us. If we go away mad, but find ourselves peeking in on the teachings, that might be a good indicator that this offensive fire-breathing Satguru is just what we need.

Some have said that in any and all cases, "When the student is ready, the teacher appears." We all have to work out our own devices and dynamics of that, and it may be the best bit of wisdom going.

Love.

Wave Bye-Bye

Brain wave studies have been going on for a long time. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's TM introduction and Dr. Herbert Benson's book, *The Relaxation Response*, prompted a lot of interest in this phenomenon in the late 60s and early 70s. As a brief recap, brain wave measurements record speed of neural impulses and the intensity of the impulses. The typical adult's brain wave activity is at Beta when awake and alert, Alpha when relaxed, and slows to Delta and Theta, typically when asleep. For a little more in-depth review go to: <http://www.psych.westminster.edu/psybio/BN/Labs/Brainwaves.htm>

Dr. Bruce Lipton, a former stem cell biologist who left the Newtonian Physics-based view in favor of Quantum Physics (and definitely google worthy for those not familiar with him and his views) mentions studies showing that until we are around six years old, we are in Theta. Obviously, we spend a lot less time listening to troubling active inner chatter before age six. An intriguing side note comes to mind: Jesus is reported to have said that only as a child do we enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Meditation's first "benefit" is to slow brain wave activity, by focusing and quieting the mind. Typically, in meditation brain activity slows from Beta to Alpha, and for deep meditators can slow to Theta, which is typically associated with sleep (other than dream time) and even to Delta. It is in these deeper states that experienced meditators can slow their heart rate and voluntarily control some functions considered involuntary.

More importantly, or least of more interest to me, is that spiritual experiences from flashes to life-changing opening of the doors of new and startling perceptions are reported by those who enter the slower rates of activity. And now, once again, for the infinitely patient frequent reader of my notes is another excerpt from my experience:

After an experience in meditation in which the doors blew off the hinges (and in some friend's and family's opinion, I became unhinged), I happened to walk by a TV that was broadcasting a show in which several Near-Death Experiencers were reporting what had happened to them. Each of them had a traumatic event in which they were temporarily "dead" and later revived.

I happened to catch a phrase along the lines of going into a huge blue-white line and into Divine Presence, in which all fear and doubt dissolved. That stopped me in my tracks. As I listened to the other 3 or 4 people speak of their similar experience, I heard descriptions that paralleled my meditation experience.

But, I didn't fall off a building or get smacked by a truck. I didn't die...or did I? I have often said that the person who sat down to meditate never came back, and prior to moving out of Heartbreak Hotel and coming to a Hindu ashram - as a last resort in desperate search of peace of mind, I had asked God to let me die many times. But still I couldn't resolve quietly sitting on a pillow up against a mortal, or near-mortal wound. Until...

One day my wife, Susan, brought home an audio tape in which Swami Kriyananda (disciple of Yogananda) talked about meditators who could go into a breathless state and experience samadhi. Aha!

Love.

Now You See Her, Now You Don't

Imagine that you had a friend or a family member you've known since you were kids. You went through the usual fun, fantasy and squabbles that long-term relationships bring. Let's say this friend came from a pretty volatile family life. When you visited her home or stayed over, you often heard arguments at pretty high volume and intensity. As time went on, your friend began to join in these high volume affairs and would even flair up at you at times. And then one day she moved away.

Now imagine unexpectedly bumping into this friend at a shopping mall. After you exchange greetings, she asks you if you remember the blue sweater that were so upset about losing. She then goes on to confess that she took it just before she moved away, and never told you. You laugh it off. It was a long time ago. But listen to her story...

"I always felt so guilty about that. It haunted me for years; seriously. You don't know how many times I wanted to call you or mail it back, but I couldn't bring myself to face the guilt. That wasn't the only thing, but it was part of so many bad decisions in my life. Anyway, one day I met a young man who was wearing a small pendant with a picture in it. He said it was his guru. When I asked about it, he said the guru has taught him about a deeper kind of love and helped him find peace of mind.

"Wow! Those words, "peace of mind," just struck me so hard. I started going to listen to his guru, and, well...

"Hey, do you have a few minutes? Come shopping with me. I want to show you something at Macy's."

Now imagine that your friend takes you to Macy's and insists on buying you a beautiful new blue sweater. Not only that she also treats you to lunch, and gives you a tight squeeze as she leaves. You cannot help but notice that something is very different about your friend. Her eyes are softer and her manner is more gentle. And you go back home kind of dazed about what happened.

The friend you recognized? Well, that wasn't really her at all. The friend you once knew dissolved into thin air like mist rising from a lake on a cool fall morning. The mist later returned as rain into the lake, and the physical appearance of your friend was the same as before, but she was not.

When we feel an inner longing or sense of something missing in our lives, and especially when guilt, shame and despair over what we have done and/or what has been done to us has us begin to question the course of our lives and our understanding of life, we seek to find that deeper kind of love and peace of mind.

Your friend found it.

Love.

Flatbread

Advice to be this or that, no matter how sweet and enlightened it sounds, accomplishes nothing without the accompanying yeast that causes a new being to rise from the old. There's a lot of flatbread on facebook, in self help book, seminars, informercials, and from the pulpit.

When a book, an article, a note or a post includes the words, "How to...", the advice is typically a yawn, flatbread without any yeast. There's rarely any enlightening advice. It is almost always stuff we know already that would be good to do. We know it. We just don't do it.

And when the advice is to be more loving, be smarter, or even be here now...any action we take, if these apply to a need we have, is going to be less than loving, less than smart, and not in the mental moment.

It's not enough to tell someone to just relax as a way to manage stress, or eat less as a way to lose weight, or save money and invest wisely to retire comfortably. All the rah rah and affirmations fade overnight. How many seminars have pumped us up to rush out and fatten our wallet, trim our waist, and beat the clock; then sold us CD, DVDs, books and bottled vigor, that are soon gathering dust in the back of the closet?

A resolution to change behavior and attitude quickly turns to dust without first a change of heart. Sometimes a startling sunrise or an innocent giggle from a child can do that. Sometimes we need a new love who can be the change agent we need. Sometimes we need a guru.

And even if we've been fortunate and disciplined to follow the advice, and have been successful, why is it that so often even the new car, new job, new love, and new waistline still leave us feeling hollow and quietly wondering if this is all there is to life? Because the new stuff doesn't include a new heart. We've put new wine into old wineskins, to use a scriptural parable. To repeat...

A resolution to change behavior and attitude quickly turns to dust without first a change of heart. Sometimes a startling sunrise or an innocent giggle from a child can do that. Sometimes we need a new love who can be the change agent we need. Sometimes we need a guru to show us a better way.

Love.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ux3-a9RE1Q>