

Welcoming Peace

Letting Go of Fear

The bullet or the bridge, which is it going to be?

I sat alone in the kitchen of my home in Stow, MA, contemplating which would be the most agreeable way to end my miserable excuse for a life. I could make an instantaneous transition to somewhere else by eating a bullet, but I did not own a gun, and I didn't know how to use one. The other choice was to begin drinking again, a choice that would most assuredly end in a very ugly death behind the wheel of my car. One way was relatively quick, easy and painless, while the other could take time, requiring some level of suffering and awareness, but at least I would be drinking again.

Each choice was perfectly agreeable to me. The only thing left was to make a decision as to which method I would employ.

This is where fear brought me.

Fortunately, a third option in the form of God's Voice was able to cut through the tsunami of noise that was shattering my interior, and send me off on a different path. How grateful I am.

Since then (about 20 years ago at the time of this writing) I have learned that there are only two emotions, love and fear. A Course In Miracles has taught me that everything is either an expression of love or a call for love. It took me a long time to wrap my brain around that one, and I looked at it from as many angles as humanly possible. If there is a loophole in something, I will find it. But today I know it as the absolute truth.



The Basic Problem

Every single misunderstanding, conflict, argument or war; every feeling of isolation, desperation, anger and frustration; and every single act of violence, hatred, vengeance or despotism has emanated from the exact same source. They are all aspects of the same vast misperception, the erroneous and unquestioned belief that we are separate from God. It is this mistaken assumption and belief that is the source of every “negative” aspect of human existence. It is the root of fear.

I know this may sound a good deal far fetched to you. . But, if you read on, it may end up making sense, thereby adding something very special to your life. The fact is that we are as much a part of God as a drop of water is of the ocean. There is no place where one begins and one ends. There are no boundaries and there is no separation. We are magnificent creations of a loving God. The only problem we have, individually and collectively, is that we have forgotten this to be true. Therefore, the only real job we have is to remember our forever unbroken connection to our Loving Creator.

A creation is first and foremost an idea, and an idea leaves not its source. Each and every person on the face of the planet is as much a part of God as God is a part of God. This also means that we are also part of each other, inextricably connected, whether we know it or not, and whether we like it or not. There isn't anything any one of us can do to change this one incontrovertible fact. Therefore, the only thing we can do is accept it and live immeasurably better lives as a result.

The assumption that we are somehow separate from God lies at almost every level of our conscious existence. It is everywhere in our thought, language and culture. We pray to a God that is somewhere “out there”. God is above us somewhere. Heaven is above us somewhere. Hell is below us, down there somewhere. And didn't God ban Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden? This was probably the first mythological manifestation of the concept of a punishing God. I believe it was Voltaire who said: “God made man in His image and likeness, then man returned the favor.”

I went to a Catholic school from grade one to eight and was taught my catechism by the Sisters of Charity of Halifax. I do not recall once being taught that God is inside me and everyone else, that every human being on the planet is totally connected to everyone else, and that, therefore, everybody is entirely equal and innocent in the eyes of God.

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The assumption of separation from God is something that we usually do not get around to questioning because there is no need to do so. We go through our lives, from one event to another, continuously adjusting our sails to take advantage of a favorable wind or to negate the impact of an inadvertent hurricane. We seek to maintain some semblance of normalcy, whatever that is, and to keep things inside a relatively small zone of comfort, because to venture outside this zone is just too stressful and full of danger. We could get hurt, or we could die.

Think about it. What if you knew, with every fiber of your being, that your entire reality is that of being a loving extension of God Himself, with all the implications such an extension engenders. What if you knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you were as indestructible as is God? What if you knew that you could never be harmed, touched, insulted, angered, or hurt, without your permission? The result is that you would have nothing to fear. Wouldn't that be a much better, more efficient and fun way to experience life? Even if this was an illusion, it would be a better illusion than the illusions we are mostly occupied with.

The Ego is The Culprit

The ego is our small self. It came into existence at the very moment we accepted the tiny mad idea that we could be separate from God, from our source, from our creator, from love, and therefore from each other. The ego thrives on the notion of separation and will work to perpetuate this lie at any cost. The language of the ego is fear. Because of the ego, we see ourselves (even though we never give this any conscious consideration) as isolated, alone, unconnected and vulnerable. We see everyone else as "other", and we generally categorize them according to some sort of physical attribute.

That person is fat or ugly - pretty, hot or dumb. That one is sexy, black or Asian - infidel, Arab, Muslim, or Jew. This one is uneducated, manipulative or controlling. Labeling of other people helps us to maintain the illusion of unquestioned separation. We unwittingly become slaves to our labels. The idea of separation gives rise to fear and it is the fear that blocks the connection of your heart and soul with the hearts and souls of all other human beings, which is the connection we all have to the eternal Spirit of God.

What we have created is essentially a saddle bag full of judgments that we carry around with us all day, every day. This saddlebag did not exist the day we crawled out of the womb and took our first breath. We have been unwittingly adding to this backlog of judgments and expectations of other people ever since. It is these judgments, opinions, perceptions, projections, expectations

and “disciplines” that we are chained to, that keep our vision limited and small, that keep us prisoners, and literally seeing only what we project.

If there are those that we can define as “other” it helps us to more clearly define who we are, and it is this definition that we have been looking for ever since the tiny mad idea of separation came to be. Seek but never find is the mantra of the ego.

Remember, the basic reason fear exists is because of the erroneous notion and belief that we can somehow be separate from God, and therefore from each other. Fear isolates, immobilizes, dominates and colors every thought, word and action we have, whether we know it or not. The only time that fear is not present is when we are acting, thinking, speaking and relating out of love.

Fear becomes such a part of life that it is like wallpaper, it is always there, but you are so accustomed to its presence that you do not even see it. The greatest fear, of course, is the Big Kahuna, the one that all of the smaller fears bow down to. The Big Kahuna is the fear of death. This is because, without really knowing it, we see ourselves as alone and isolated. As such, underneath everything is the all-encompassing fear that if we die, everything ends. We are no more. We cease to exist forever. This is understandable in terms of an ego that sees the body as the essence of life itself, rather than merely a vehicle for communication and the extension of the love of our spiritual Selves.

In terms of the ego, we are our bodies. We define ourselves and others accordingly, without even knowing it. Bodies are vulnerable, can be injured, get sick and die. Our bodies are the ultimate expression of separation. They are the boundaries between us and others. As soon as we begin to see our bodies as instruments to create connections with other people, the ego will begin to fade, but not without a fight.

The Ego is an Illusion

However, the ego is, and always has been, an illusion. It is not real, although we certainly ascribe reality to it, and its insane notions, without really knowing it. The ego can die to us because it never really existed. But we cannot die because God cannot die, and we are as eternal as God. When we begin the process of living a life of peace, of connecting to the eternal reality of who we really are, the ego’s demise is inevitable and the life you always wanted will become manifest.

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Because the ego dictates that we are separate from each other and from God, we need to protect ourselves. We build walls around ourselves much like the castles of medieval Europe, complete with moats and catapults. We do not let other people in and we do not let our real selves out. But, the interesting part is that we are really only projecting our small, ego-centric selves and thoughts onto the world outside. Everything we see is really a reflection of that which is occurring on the inside. We saw this phenomenon in the examples of the car accident, the game of “telephone”, and the viewing of the Mona Lisa that are discussed on the Change Your Perception Page of this website. In that we are only projecting our own thoughts and feelings onto others, we really need to protect ourselves from ourselves. We are truly our own worst enemies.

We begin protecting ourselves by going beyond our fear and allowing ourselves to let God lead the way. We find the courage to make a decision for inner peace and do whatever it takes to go there. We connect ourselves more and more to the never ending love of our Creator and actively look for the God in other people, rather than seeking to remain imprisoned in our illusion of separation and judgment.

So, how do we go about eliminating this weight of fear if we don't even know it is there? Fear isn't always all that obvious. It is not likely that you walk around in a panic all the time. Clearly, you need to be able to identify it in order to eliminate it. So, how do you do it?

Identifying Fear

The first thing you need to do is open your mind to the possibility that it is always there in one form or another. If you can begin to identify the thoughts that run through your head, the thoughts that tend to keep you isolated and separated from other people, this would be a good place to start. Everyone has had the experience of going to meet with someone and having a fight in your head with the person long before you get there. Everybody has grievances and resentments they hold with other people, which is one of the ego's tactics for maintaining separation. Notice these thoughts and you can follow them to the fear that created them. You will then be able to forgive yourself and everyone else, and move on with your life, unencumbered by the weight of fear.

Sometimes we need to find our fears in our reactions to others and ourselves - reactions such as anger, suspicion, hatred, and frustration. Any emotion that is not love is driven by fear. It is never anger, because fear is the monster that lives below the surface and drives the anger. If you will be completely honest with yourself and seriously examine yourself whenever you become angry,

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if you sincerely ask yourself what is driving the anger, if you are willing to dig deep and find the roots of the anger, you will always come face to face with fear. Fear is the culprit, not the anger.

If you focus on eliminating the anger, it is like trying to get rid of a fever with Tylenol and Motrin. You will mask the symptoms but you will not get to the root cause of the problem with that remedy. You may feel better in the short term, but nothing has really changed and you will be doomed to repeat the process until you find the fear and call it for what it is.

Fear also manifests itself in controlling behavior. The people that try harder to control the circumstances of their lives, and the lives of the people around them, are the people who are the most afraid. (For a more in depth explanation of this phenomenon, you may want to pick up a copy of *How to Enjoy Peace In Your Life Everyday*) They are striving to make everything and everyone they encounter line up with their own internal sense of how things are supposed to be. They are afraid of anything that is not in accord with their own internal script. More often than not they do not know they are doing this, and they don't know that they don't know.

It is not just the "control freaks" that have an internal script as to exactly how the world should run. The script is the combination of everything that has happened in our lives up to the present moment. It is our interpretation of reality, although "interpretation" is somewhat inaccurate because there is often no conscious thought attached to the internal script. The more out of control things are internally, the harder we try to control things externally in order to maintain some sort of equilibrium. Controlling outside circumstances is, however, doomed to failure, which is why most "control freaks" are very unhappy people. I know this because I have been there, done that. By deciding to live a life of peace and confront the demons that I created inside myself that kept me from realizing that goal, I have been able to release the world from my grasp. And the world is a much better place for it. Thank God!

Intolerance is another manifestation of fear. Intolerance is based on judgment, which is just a manifestation of the wish to be separate from our brothers and sisters. It is simply seeking to place our own template, our own stamp of approval, on someone else's reality. It gives us ample opportunity to withdraw our magnanimity whenever things do not measure up to exactly what we think are the proper standards. There is also an element of arrogance in intolerance. Arrogance is also a manifestation of fear, and a projection of our own erroneous and totally unfounded feelings of "less than".

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So there is either love or there is fear. These are the only two options. According to A Course In Miracles, we are either acting out of love or a call for love, which is fear. Fear is the illusion that blocks us from the experience of love in our lives. Love is the experience of our connection to God and our understanding and acceptance of that connection.

So how do you know you are afraid, or acting out of fear? A good rule of thumb could be that unless it is love, it is fear, they are the only possibilities. We are either acting out of love or acting from our ego, which is the same as acting out of fear. We are either thinking from our higher selves or thinking from the prison of the ego. If you are thinking from your higher self, everything fits, everything feels good. Even if your brain does not think it is the right thing, and your emotional system does, go with the heart - the brain will generally come along.

Another good habit to get into is to simply ask God for help. Ask Him where to go, what to do, what to say, and to whom. Maintain openness and a willingness to hear the answer, because the answers will come.

Peace,
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