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- *Judging others*

God joins your souls together in one unit, for when you pray together you really are a single soul force. You are a single beacon of light. Even when there may be differences of opinion, differences of perspective, differences of goals, you are still one light. The source of your light is unified.

When we are with you as a group, we see your light as we have described in the past. Each of you contributes to that light and each of you is illuminated by it. The illumination that your souls experience brings warmth to each soul and increases the diversity and strength of your lights.

So it is with a larger group: there is diversity of opinion, perspective and goals. Nevertheless, you benefit by that diversity. The decisions with which you have concerned yourselves are difficult, frustrating, and require enormous patience and understanding. You pointed out the value of being more concerned with how you as an individual approach an issue rather than taking the responsibility for how the whole group responds to a challenge. This is good advice, for your souls, although united when you are gathered in groups of whatever size, are still responding to life as you are equipped from prior experience.

Your souls respond as a result of human experience and spiritual experience. The spiritual experience may include prior lives or life within the spiritual realm. Whatever that experience may be, the response of your soul is by necessity unique.

You cannot get into the soul of another. You cannot change the nature of another's spirit. You can be influenced by another and you can reach out to another, but you cannot change another. When you are faced with momentous decisions on any subject, it is most beneficial if you take off the mantle of responsibility for the group and remain with a response based on the perceptions guided by your own soul. That is not to say you do not listen to the advice of others, but you must focus on the reality that the decisions that you make are your decisions. They are not everyone's.

The issue of judgment in dealing with others is one of great concern to all. One goes through phases of being concerned by it and of being consumed by it. As your soul develops and helps to shape your human lives, your understanding of the meaning and implication of judgment becomes clearer. You are never asked to judge someone's worth, for that is not to be judged. All who are alive are alive because their souls have work to do, because their souls are in different places along the spectrum of spiritual development. You cannot judge, therefore, for what is there to judge? As life is not a race, there are no winners and losers; there is not one who is better than another. Is one's divine spark more valuable than another's? You cannot judge, therefore, the value of another human being because you are all equal. Judging supposes superiority,

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supposes rightness. There are no superior souls. There are souls who have developed further, but they are never superior.

It is, however, another issue to judge behavior. There is certain behavior which is appropriate and certain behavior which is inappropriate. What is appropriate in one setting may be inappropriate in another and vice versa. It is the appropriateness which is the real issue in evaluating the actions of others. If the actions which others engage in are unimportant to the appropriateness of an issue being considered, there are no grounds for judgment. Only when the two coincide is there justification for such judgment.

People who are asked to be leaders, be it political or spiritual, can be judged on the basis of their appropriateness for that leadership. If there are issues of concern which are not part of the function of that leadership, then they have no use in the judgment at hand. The issue, therefore, is distinguishing what is essential to the issue being judged and what is not essential.

If you are choosing political leaders, it would be silly to judge the color shoes they wear. On the other hand, in viewing the merits of political leaders, one would want to know their stand on issues that have a direct impact upon their constituency. If one is choosing spiritual leaders, one can judge those issues which relate directly to spiritual leadership. It is true that leaders are who they are. By that we mean leaders lead directly, but they bring to their leadership qualities which are not immediately apparent to those whom they lead.

Since the concerns which have been expressed by one of you relate to a spiritual leader, it becomes important to learn the spiritual qualities which are part of the individual. If a person is a spiritual leader, that individual is concerned about the reflection of godlike qualities in others, and therefore you should be concerned about the godlike qualities of the leader. The essential message of God is one of love and compassion. Everything else is secondary. If the character of the one being considered reflects love and compassion, what more can one ask for? If one seeks a role model to clarify the meaning of God, one seeks a godlike model, just the same as if one seeks a role model in sports, one finds a person who excels in sports.

What religious or spiritual leaders bring to the position that enhances their demonstration of love and compassion is relevant. What candidates may bring which is contrary to love and compassion is also important to know. If individuals engage in activities which are unrelated to love and compassion and are not detrimental to love and compassion, they are not appropriate for judgment. Teachers are hired for their ability to teach. If they happen to play chess on their own time, that does not necessarily impact on their teaching. If they prefer one diet of food over another, that may have no impact on their teaching and should not be considered in judging their ability to teach.

The dilemma that is being experienced by a local church is created in part because it is unclear to some what is relevant to being a spiritual leader and what is

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irrelevant for such a calling. When all is known that is possible to be known about an individual, one must ultimately decide what is relevant. Judgment on relevant behavior, relevant activities, relevant traits, is certainly acceptable. When you choose your friends to play tennis with, it is not so important what kind of drivers they are. It may tell you something about a tennis partner, but it has nothing to do with the game of tennis. You cannot learn all that is possible to know about anyone. If you knew everything about everyone, you would each be disturbed and find something about which to be critical, and you would find yourselves judging one another's value as human beings rather than one's appropriateness for a particular calling in life.

Judgment of behavior and all that is related directly to it is natural and important. Appropriateness is the central issue, not perfection by whatever yardstick you may wish to measure it. You are each souls occupying bodies on a particular path toward God. You are on Earth, you are engaged in human life because it is a worthy direction for the development of your souls. Because you are all engaged in human life-form, you are each therefore equally important. Even the most violent transgressor is experiencing life for a worthwhile objective, the development of a soul. Each of you is here for development. There is no development that is more valid or more important than another. As a result, again, there are no grounds for judgment of value.

The challenges you face in judging others must be centered, as we have said, on appropriateness. This is not an unusual challenge although it is at times intense. The decisions that one makes in judging who one's colleagues are, who one's leaders are, one's associates, cross many boundaries, and they are experienced constantly throughout life. You should neither be judgmental of others nor shy away from the opportunity to view others in a light that sheds knowledge on their function within a particular sector of life. This is not meant to be directed only toward one or two of you, for it is to be applied on a daily basis in all of your activities.

Your souls shine brightly and you are all blessed by your guides, the light they reflect, and the light they transmit from God. Rejoice in the light and in God's love!

Amen.