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- *Detecting God's presence*
- *Moving from self to we*

God speaks to each of you in ways that only you can fully hear. God speaks to you, not through words, for words are only a manifestation of love and guidance and illumination. God speaks through a peaceful and personal presence of which you are individually capable of being aware. You hear God's voice, a term we often say, but that voice is often heard most clearly in the presence of nature. The whisper that is God's voice is in the wind, is in the rain. The voice is heard through the beauty of creation. Each of you has heard that voice, often times when you are alone and outdoors and residing only with your thoughts and your appreciation of beauty.

There is a peace that belongs to beauty. Life *can* be beautiful for everyone. You do not have to be on the shore or on the peak of a mountain to recognize the beauty of which we speak. It is often easier to recognize beauty and the peace that comes from beauty when you are outdoors and observing what God has created. But it is also possible to hear God's voice in the beauty of being present with another, even when the physical surroundings are filled with desperation, with destruction, with fear, with anger, with anxiety.

You all know of moments in your lives when you have felt, even briefly, the firm conviction of God's presence being expressed. Sometimes that beauty is merely in the eyes of someone you observe. It may be the expression on someone's face. It may be the smile of a complete stranger whose path you cross on a busy sidewalk. Even the most desolate terrain experiences the glories of a sunrise and a sunset. Even the most wretched examples of suffering can see a rainbow. All nations, all individuals have within them the ability to see beauty. Those who have no physical eyesight see beauty through touch, through the sound of someone's voice. There is no human being, no matter what condition he or she may be living in, who is shielded from a view of beauty. It is that beauty that is such an important evidence of God among each of you. It is the beauty, the peace which comes from that beauty, that reconciles fear, anger, hatred, jealousy and an unlimited number of negative experiences and emotions.

You engaged at this moment in a heartfelt discussion of the primacy of fear or anger. Which comes first? Which is central? Which generates which? You are, in a sense, becoming obsessed with issues that are essentially semantic rather than doctrinal. Where there is fear, there is often anger; where there is anger, there is often fear. Both feed upon one another. Anger can be the expression of fear; fear can be the expression of anger, especially when that anger is directed inward.

You're human beings, and part of being human is being selfish. By selfish, we mean your core concerns emanate from the self. That is completely contrary to our experience as pure spirit. For us, there is no self. We have shed the self when we

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became what we now are. There is no more self. There is only *we*. There is only the totality of creation. There is no identity of self that has any meaning for us. But for you, you are a collection of selves. Your soul is not completely individual. It is part of the totality of God's Spirit, but it is associated during human life with self. All emotions, all objectives in life emanate from self. At some moments in your lives, the self is characterized by basic fear. At other moments, self is characterized by anger. But these two characterizations describe the same entity—the self.

Our teachings are ultimately directed toward helping each of you move from *self* to *we*. You will not fully reach the condition of *we* until you share our life form, but human life is a progression from self to *we*. You see this progression even among the relationships that are established between individuals who become families, communities that ultimately become nations, and you see nations of the world steadily and ultimately moving toward a concept of *world*. The progression from nation to world is slow, but *it only moves in one direction and that is forward*. The world, despite appearances, is not moving away toward *nation*. It is continuing to evolve into a kind of world consciousness. You must have faith in this evolution, for indeed you are each a part of that growth. As you formulate your lives in the direction of *we*, you are serving to move the world collectively toward a sense of unity and it is that unity, that awareness of *we*, that ultimately establishes peace.

What is unconditional love other than an expression that takes an individual from a position of self to the condition of *we*? Compassion is moving from self to *we*. When you listen to another, your consciousness is not directed toward self, but rather is directed outward and is an acknowledgment of *we*. When you experience compassion and express that to another, you are on the road toward that state of ultimate compassion, the life that we experience.

We are concerned for your growth because you are a part of the *we* that is referred to. It is not a part of our experience as spiritual entities to ignore you. Because we are spiritual, we resonate with *all* that is spiritual. And because each of you and all human beings share that spiritual content—the soul as you call it—it is a natural expression of our compassionate, nonjudgmental love that we reach out and embrace you and wish to help and wish to guide. It is a natural occurrence. It is what we do. It is not a responsibility, it is not a duty, it is not a command. We do this because that is the nature of our lives.

We recognize the unity of all that exists. You are in the process of developing that recognition. When you are overcome by despair, by discouragement, by a sense of futility, you must respond to those experiences as belonging to the entity of God's Spirit in the universe. You are a part of that Spirit and you must recognize that all who suffer, all who feel forgotten, abandoned, mistreated are part of that same universe of *we*. You cannot retain your vision focused only on the desolation and desperation. You must, each of you, look to the sunrise. It is in the sunrise, figuratively or literally, that you find

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reassurance that God is in your lives and in the lives of everyone. It is your assurance that the desperation, the desolation is only temporary. You cannot look at the suffering of others and feel that if you cannot eradicate it in the span of your own lives, that the situation is somehow hopeless.

You live lives that are characterized by elements that you see on a day to day basis, and you feel you are blessed. You must acknowledge that the lives you experience are the cumulative lives that have evolved over the efforts of countless others. You are not living this life alone, placed into a situation by chance. You are part of this continuum leading from self to *we*. That continuum is not the same appearance as the continuum of others, but there are many ways of achieving *we-ness*. Part of that achievement may be social, political, economical. Another part of that continuum is personal. Two of you experienced many examples of great human warmth and love and genuineness, to a degree not commonly found in your own society [refers to recent trip to Palestine]. That is part of the continuum of growing from self to *we*.

Your society has grown in other ways. Ultimately, all societies will grow through the paths of love and compassion for one another. There are many directions from which humankind evolves, but the goal, the endpoint for all is the same.

Yes, your lives are significantly blessed, but the lives of those who live in fear, those who have suffered greatly are also equally blessed. As you grow in your awareness of their suffering, you will view your own lives differently. Compassion, unconditional love do not exist by themselves. To grow in compassion, you must experience lives that require compassion. To grow in nonjudgmental love, unconditional love, you must be placed in a situation in which the only possible love is nonjudgmental, is unconditional.

It is easy to feel love toward another who shares your same ideal, desires, interests, objectives. That is not unconditional love. You can only evolve in your ability to love nonjudgmentally when it would seem only judgment, only condition is appropriate. You discard that judgment, you discard those conditions and you then understand what it means to be so loving.

Your experiences in life that create fear, discontent are opportunities for each of you to learn what it means to have faith, to have love, to be compassionate, to reach out. Those conditions are not created by God. They are created by humankind, but the potential that exists in your response to those conditions is a gift to all from God.

Count your blessings, certainly, but count the blessings of others. Acknowledge those blessings and recognize that all are equally blessed.

Fear, anger—they all come from self.

You are evolving, each of you, as you should. You are where you need to be. You are moving away from self toward the celebration of *we*. You are blessed by God as we are blessed by God. You are the recipient of God's illumination in your lives as

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we are in our lives. In the most profound sense, there is not *you* or *us*, but *we*. **We** are blessed.

Amen.