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- *Experiences that confirm spiritual life*
- *The difference between faith and hope*

The legion of guides that nurture your lives and help to direct them, indeed all who help to direct the souls of each one for whom you pray, all of these are joined with you at this time.

Your sharing this evening was especially important, for each brought a sense of their experience, of their perception of themselves to the group. There was and continues to be a sense of receptivity, one of listening to the sharing that is given outward.

Much of what was shared relates to the spiritual experience at one particular level or another. The experiences of your guest are by no means unusual, and yet those experiences are not shared by any of you. In such sharing you must realize that being sensitized to the spiritual life that surrounds you can take many characteristics which in themselves are remarkable, but taken in totality reinforce the conviction that spiritual life is a reality and not just a concept. There are those who see, there are those who write, those who hear, those who speak, those who feel, those who act—there are many ways of participating while living human lives in the greater realm of spiritual development.

You talk about the need to grow spiritually, and that is of course essential, but equally important for you is to allow yourselves to step back for a moment and reflect on your experiences that confirm spiritual life. For unless you have that confirmation, unless you truly recognize the reality of spiritual growth and the necessity of it, you cannot fully participate in the evolution. It is, in its way, the same as acquiring a clear view of the objective while still on the journey. Such a view keeps you directed, but also serves to motivate you and to give you reason to continue. If you consider all that has been given to you by way of your guides, without some personal experience that confirms the reality of the spirit, all of the knowledge, all of the information that has been given is ultimately of no importance, no significance and provides no light for your travels. For you to benefit from the light, your vision must be clear. Light to one who is blind has no meaning and is of no help. If you see the light, you then believe in the journey.

All human beings are asked to live by faith, but in living by faith alone with no evidence, one soon tires of the journey, one soon loses a commitment to any stated goals. You must be convinced that that which you seek indeed exists. The faith comes not in recognition of the goal, but rather in the means of achieving that goal. You are called upon to live in faith, but that means that each of you is asked to live knowing your objective and believing in your ability to move toward it. Without the

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acknowledged objective, a faithful life is meaningless. Faith in God, therefore, is not a blind faith. It is rather a faith with vision, vision of the goal.

Your relationships with one another are essential to the acquisition of that faith, because it is through your relationships that you witness the benefits to be experienced through the exercise of compassion and love. It is important to *be*—to be present, to be there wherever that may be in as much as it benefits another. Without the ultimate benefit, being present has no meaning. Your relationships with others, therefore, provide a view of the goal, a sense of the benefit of compassion, the benefit of listening, the benefit of the expression of love. There is no other way that you can view the goals of life than through these relationships with others. If you live a life dedicated to living alone and devoted entirely to meditation, you lose real site of the goal. As a result you live with a sense of hope but not a commitment through faith.

There is a big difference between hope and faith. When you take a trip, you know where you are going and you have faith that the means by which you arrive at that destination are appropriate. If you live only by hope, you are traveling in the hope that you may be going toward a worthy goal. You are living not in knowledge; you are living not in faith. You are merely existing surrounded by hope. Hope of course is not wrong. It is not totally pointless. It does have purpose in life, but it is faith that provides for your growth. Your soul evolves and strengthens, becomes brighter because it is nurtured by faith, by the commitment to the goal, by a recognition that that goal exists. It is not merely something hoped for. It is something you know is there, and that drives you forward. Hope does not imply control. Faith does, for when you live in faith you are controlling and being controlled by your awareness of the goal. Hope is merely an effort with the expectation of a possible goal. We do not belabor this point. It is merely important to recognize that faith and hope are indeed different. Faith is not blind; hope is.

Our responsibilities to each of you are to provide you with a vision so that you are able to live in faith. Those who have no understanding of spiritual life, who do not recognize its reality, its relevance, are guided merely by their hopes. We want you to live in faith and it is for us to help give you vision. It is why that vision is so essential. Everyone has the capacity to have the vision that provides the foundation for faith. Few exercise that capacity, but it is available to all.

You do not have to experience spiritual reality through one kind of activity as opposed to another. For many, an acknowledgment of spiritual life can be experienced as they become aware of unconditional love being offered them by another. Such unselfish giving provides evidence that indeed there is more to life than they are aware of. It is interpersonal relationships that provide that evidence of spiritual strength and spiritual presence. You live lives that are directed toward the spirit when you reach out with love, with compassion, with patience, giving, listening, being there, being present. That is the nature of the godly life. That is the exercise of love.

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There is much in the world today that gives cause for concern, worry, frustration, anger, bitterness. If you are consumed by these feelings, it can only be because there is no real vision of a goal, a goal of peace and harmony and understanding, tolerance. If you fully believe that such a goal can happen, that such a goal is indeed realistic, and you take away from your awareness the urgency of time as we have mentioned, you will be governed by compassion and perseverance and no longer by the bitterness and frustration and anger that are so common.

It is our prayer that each of you be given the vision to bring direction to your faith. We pray for that vision. We devote our energies to your achieving these visions. Your sense of heightened awareness of reality, spiritual reality, can continue to provide meaning and guidance to your lives. There's no longer a sense of hopelessness. There's no longer a sense of futility, of resignation. All has been replaced by faith, conviction, that the goal is reachable. So our prayers are for that vision, for that faith.

Be open to events around you that point to the reality of that vision. If you seek peace, recognize when peace is present and be willing to acknowledge it. Having acknowledged that peace is present, you are given the faith to make that more permanent. It is no longer an abstract hope—it is a reality that you see. Find those moments in your lives when you can truly observe that for which you pray.

God's love *is* our love, and indeed it is shared by each of you. We rejoice when we observe your expression of love to one another, and we rejoice when that love expands outward and involves all for whom you pray. God's light is our light and it is also your light. It is God's light that illuminates our spiritual journey as well as yours. It is God's light that connects our spiritual presence with yours. It is God's light that provides the vision for which we all pray. God's love is yours. God's light is yours. Rejoice in the love and bask in its light!

Amen.