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- *Looking inward and outward for God*
- *You are what you seek*
- *You, individually and collectively, are God*

God, who is your father, your mother, your son, your daughter, your extended family—Indeed all whom you know—joins with you as you turn your eyes inward and outward in your desires to grow, to learn, to love. Indeed, when you pray you are looking outward and inward, for in truth there is little difference between what lies within that you cannot see and what lies beyond your eyes that you can see.

You speak often of the senses that are given to you for the purpose of having an exchange, having contact with life that surrounds you in a physical sense. But far too seldom is there discussion, attention given regarding the most important sense that human beings possess—that being an acknowledgement that there is a creative force, a spiritual presence, that is beyond your normal senses. Of all the life-forms on earth, humans are the only examples of life that can contemplate the reality of God's presence. But that contemplation is not directed solely within or out beyond your reach. The contemplation of God must embrace both conditions, both dimensions.

You may acknowledge that God creates the world, that God creates all, that God creates your known universe, that God creates many universes beyond your conception. God is best, most intimately perceived precisely in the realm of what cannot be touched or smelled or felt or seen, heard, tasted. God exists through your gifts of a sense of what lies within. Sometimes it is easier to perceive of God within by recognizing the God outside, perceived by the senses.

If we think of that bridge analogy, your senses provide evidence of some kind of bridge, and in that recognition you gain confidence in your desire to contemplate what cannot be perceived by your recognized senses. But as you journey inward to consider God within, you acquire a framework that allows you to see the God beyond you, to see evidence of God visually, to hear evidence of God, to touch evidence of God, taste evidence of God, to smell evidence of God. The context for understanding what you see ultimately comes from your ability to sense God within. Society is quick to recognize nature as evidence of God and yet is slow to affirm the nature of God that is unseen—the God within, the Spirit within.

You are given spirit so that you may know Spirit. You are given love so that you may know what it means to be loved and therefore what it means to be loving. The true gift of spirit is the gift of acceptance of who you are and then acceptance of All That Is. Your view of the world is given meaning by the view of what lies within.

When you are gathered in such a community of seeking, you are learning about God's inner presence. You are learning about what it means to be truly spiritual. You are learning of the nature of peace and its possibility, its reality. Peace is not a dream.

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Peace is not something specifically limited to being hoped for as a condition somewhere else. Peace is a capability that all human beings have to create a condition within, that is clearly peaceful, full of peace.

You must dedicate your lives to becoming precisely what it is you pray for. If you wish communication with your environment, then you must become the means for that communication. If you pray for peace in the world, however that may be defined, you must become that peace as it is defined for you. If that peace is defined as mutual respect, then you must be respectful of yourself. You cannot expect to be loving, to be supportive and affirming to others if you cannot be so to yourself. You cannot be expected to provide the energies necessary to achieve the character of life that you wish for others unless you find ways of accumulating that energy for your own life.

In the end you are what you seek, not what you say you seek, but what you seek. If you seek power and influence, then you are committed to your own personal power and influence, and extend that power and influence over others. If you seek mutual understanding between others, you must be dedicated to understanding between yourself and someone else. If you pray for peace that is achieved by many gathering together in prayer for peace, then you must gather in prayer with others for the same purposes.

All that you seek in life, you can also devote your energies to directing your own relationships in life. Harmony, living in accord with other beliefs, begins with understanding your own beliefs and living with them. Yes, seeing God in others means seeing God in yourself. You are an extension of God just as all that you are aware of around you can be considered an extension of God. There's truly no meaningful distinction between what you see and who you are.

If you seek change in the world, then seek change in yourself. If you are upset by conflicts of politics, then you must eliminate your own conflicts of perspective. Your nation approaches major steps to be taken that influence many lives, but those steps of the nation are a combination of the steps of many individuals. You are a part of the steps that are taken.

Be honest with one another, be honest with yourselves: what is it that you believe? What is it that affirms your faith? What is it that affirms your conviction of the reality that is God? What is it that gives you centeredness? The answers then give you a direction for all that you pray for.

You cannot pray in a vacuum. You can only pray through commitment. You pray because you believe, not because you know. You pray because you have faith, not because you have security. You pray because you believe there is purpose in prayer. Whether that purpose is directed outward or directed within, there is no difference. But the foundation for your prayerful concerns of the world is actually your own spirit center, your understanding of self. It is the context of self that provides for the rich interactions with others.

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How does this happen? How do you develop a clearer sense of self, a centeredness, a sense of belonging? It can only be achieved through your own reflective thoughts. We see you pursuing what you believe to be important, and yet we also see you spending relatively little effort in reflective thought about yourself. There is much you want to change, there is much you want to effect, but those are changes that you may wish for others.

Allow yourself the opportunity to find quiet, to find moments when you are disengaged from so many activities. Use that reflective time to contemplate who you are, to contemplate why you are. It is not necessary in such reflection to offer prayers to God to intervene or to step in, to rescue, to save, to make right. If you allow yourself the condition of quiet reflection, then you will step up and intercede and become the presence of God that you seek, for God works not as a mysterious force, difficult to understand but somehow always present. God's force is *your* force. God's presence is *your* presence. God's response to injustice is *your* response to injustice. God's response to healing is *your* response to healing.

There is no differentiation made between God's response and you. There is no division of labor. There is no saying, "Okay God, we leave this entirely up to you," and then walk away. There is only, "Help me, God, to understand my spirit, and let my spirit be the response." That reflection is the means of seeing within, of knowing within, of feeling within, of hearing within, and that provides all that is needed to respond to your concerns, your prayers.

So when you ask God to respond to another's needs, what you are truly doing is asking God for a vision of how you respond. When we refer to *you*, we refer to a collective you, for no individual has the capacity to respond in all directions, for all people, to respond to all needs. It cannot be done, but you as individuals can respond as you can respond. You can respond by being present and listening. You can respond by being much more physically present. You can respond through a knowing touch, a loving hand, a compassionate look, an open heart. Every individual possesses a means of response, and together those responses are the response of God.

It is not to say that God does not exist, but rather to affirm that all of you are a part of what God is. You are not merely something created by God. You are an integral part of the response of God that you pray for. By understanding who you are, by seeing from within, you then are clearer to understand how your response is part of the totality of God's response.

Faith is important. Faith is crucial to all that you do, but faith comes from that view of what lies within that no one sees with their normal senses, and yet all have the capacity nevertheless to see.

Make every effort to connect to what is sacred within. Make every effort to see your relationship to all the characteristics that you believe to be a part of God, and accept the reality that you, individually and collectively, are God. When you wish many

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to join together to seek a common good, commit yourself to seeking the common good with one other person or two others or three or four. It is your sharing of commitment that is the start of a collective voice of God's presence and a collective hand of God's deeds. The view of God is beyond you and is within you. Some of God you see with a small "s." Some of God you See with a capital "S", for that is the true vision and the vision that brings God's presence to all that you pray for.

Be patient with yourself, and you can be patient with others. Accept that you are growing in your ability to See, and accept the reality that all others are growing in their ability to See. In so doing, God's presence will be evident. God's influence will be present in ways that are experienced and appreciated, acknowledged by all.

As you go forward from this gathering, go forward with a sense of love—love for who you are, love for that part of you that you do know, and love for the commitment that you have to continue the search to know the true sense of spirit.

We guide you in that seeking. We guide you in your vision, and we guide you in the ways you express your own understanding of self to the world beyond self, and in the process become the very essence of all for which you pray.

Amen.