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- *The value of collective commitment to discover Truth*

God is joined by all of your guides into a kind of spiritual collective that works in consonance toward common objectives. These objectives of your guides, of *all* guides, are characterized first of all by a loving and total acceptance of who you are. It is this collective commitment and its function with the spirit that we would like to focus upon in these moments with you.

Collective commitment implies a kind of agreement of what is important, what direction is shared, where the common points are in your many pathways. Your being together in a way is a kind of collective commitment, for although you come to this group as very different people, there is a thread that weaves through each of you that is shared in a very special way.

We find so often that collective commitment in the form of joint worship is interpreted as THE WAY to express your yearnings for faith and spiritual development. Entire religions have been predicated on a perception of this collective commitment as being an essential requirement for growth. From our perspective, as we observe your lights and the lights of all human beings, such an approach to commitment as done as a group is in itself not so helpful to many, and yet there is a strength in exploring God as a group. The difficulty arises when the practice, the doctrine, becomes of primary importance, for it is ultimately not doctrine, it is not practice, it is not tradition that provides the nourishment for spiritual growth, but it is a shared belief in the need for spiritual growth that must be the energy that guides such collective commitment.

You meet as a group because you share in the search. It is not for the purpose of sharing doctrine or specific acts as symbols of spiritual growth. This collective commitment that we speak of and that we wish to focus on is an activity that has as its central purpose discovery. Being committed to discovery means being committed to those shutters that we speak of so frequently being always open. When you are together and you are dedicated to discovering, your growth is always assured, for the commitment to discovery is the acknowledgment that you do not know all of the facts. You are not the storage depot of wisdom, but you are acknowledging a journey, for what is discovery if it is not a journey? What is discovery if it is not a process? What is discovery without openness and the willingness to observe, the willingness to see, the willingness to be led?

Discovery is not about saying what the truth is but rather seeking the truth. In seeking, in the act of discovery, you'll never achieve complete knowledge, but in the seeking, you grow. In accepting what seems unacceptable, you grow. Collective commitment, therefore, is a sharing of the common belief in the value of discovery.

A true church is a body of seekers, is a collection of those dedicated to wanting to learn, not necessarily to dispensing knowledge, for you do not truly dispense your

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knowledge of the spirit. You dispense your experience of the search. When you find others who share in the joy of searching, you are then accompanied by enormous light on your path.

The paths that you experience are not paths of certain knowledge but paths characterized by your commitment to seeking, your commitment to exploring, your commitment to learning, your commitment to growing, your commitment to loving. That commitment to love is not directed toward self. Although you must love and accept yourselves, the active commitment to the expression of that love through your openness is what nourishes. It nourishes your own soul and it nourishes the spirits of others.

There is great value to sharing the search, to sharing the exploration. The search, the exploration, is always towards an understanding of the spirit, but sharing in that search means that you are illuminated by the presence of others as they are illuminated by your own presence.

There are, of course, many who feel the commitment to discovery is to be pursued in a solitary fashion, and for those spirits, that commitment can be most valuable, for the truth is that what you learn in human life is not all that is to be learned, and it is not all that your soul has learned. It is merely a step along the path, and if one individual feels the commitment to exercise that step in a sense of isolation, then that is what is appropriate for that spirit for that moment in the entirety of the spirit's life. But commitment to the search in congregation with others of like commitment strengthens each participant in ways that cannot be experienced in other expressions.

You meet as a group, not only to be aware of your guides but to be open to one another, for what is your group other than a microcosm of what can be in the wider world? You come from different places. Each of you has your own perspectives. Each of you has your own life experiences. Each of you has your own feelings of joy, your own feelings of worry and concern, your own health issues. There are so many differences, but those are insignificant when they are viewed within the larger perspective of the common collective search for understanding.

You seek an understanding of the value of life. You seek an understanding of how you can most effectively interact with those around you. How do you respond to the needs of others when the numbers are countless and the physical distances are immeasurable? Your sense of growth, the sense of purpose can only be enhanced through your shared journeys in this way. Of course when you are not gathered together, there is still much opportunity for growth, for a deepening understanding. But seeking together, you are actually nourishing one another.

This nourishment of the spirit through your shared lights is not always recognized. You may acknowledge it in principle, but how often do you depart from any collective consideration of God, saying to yourself, "I'm so glad we do this as a group"? You may enjoy the group, you may enjoy worship with others, but you may not

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necessarily be fully cognizant of the benefits you have really received as a result of your collective commitment.

You can easily talk about love, but you can never described it. You can say what it is but really miss what *it is*. You can say there is value in the consideration of God collectively and not really understand what that benefit is. To consider God collectively, it is not necessary to always meet. You can consider collectively through your thoughts. You can consider collectively through your prayers. When you are aware of the needs of another, and you pray on behalf of the other, your light is joining the light of the other, and that union is indeed a collection.

Committed to the search means sharing that search. It means seeking God, not only from your own perspective but from the perspective of someone else. If you see another who is suffering, and you reach out through your presence, just being there, that is a kind of collective commitment. If you know of another who is suffering, and you are physically alone and yet turn your loving prayers toward another, you are opening the window of another, and when that occurs, you are joining that spirit. So the sense of being with another does not necessarily require physical presence with another, but rather, and at times even more importantly, you are exercising your own powers to open the soul of someone else so the light can shine in. That is a kind of collective commitment to God. It is not physical; it is prayerful.

You exercise your growth, of course, most naturally from your own perspective, but the greatest exercise to enhance the growth of spirit is when what you seek, what you discover is really the light that comes from someone else. If you perceive of God only from your own viewpoint, of course you grow because you are acknowledging God, but you are only acknowledging a portion of God. But if you seek God from your own perspective, and that perspective includes all that you are aware of belonging to the creation of God, then you have entered into a collective commitment in search of God. The tree is not searching for God, but the tree is every bit a part of God, just as each of you is a part of God, and acknowledging what is best for the tree is acknowledging what is best for one manifestation of God. The fact that you are reaching out to that tree defines a kind of collective commitment that sees a relationship between you and the tree and God.

Our view of collective commitment, therefore, goes beyond only a physical gathering such as yours and encompasses, rather, an embrace of all that is, for in that embrace, you are embracing God. You are embracing precisely what it is you seek to discover, and that discovery is then leading to true insight and to a true expression of the love that is God, the love that is all of creation.

Seek, therefore, in your own commitments ways to connect with other human beings, ways to connect with all that is not human, ways to connect that don't associate with the past versus the present versus the future, but rather that associate with all. For

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as we have often asserted, the past, the present, the future all belong to the now. The now is all that is. The now is all that exists. Everything, in the now.

In your search, in your efforts to discover more about God, allow the now to be the context that helps you to connect collectively to the search of the spirit. You search through the spirit. You don't search for the spirit. You are the spirit, and it is through acknowledging who you are that the search is illuminated, because in acknowledging who you are truly, you are acknowledging all that lies along your path, and that inclusive, collective commitment becomes the ultimate nourishment of your souls.

Find opportunities to connect, either physically with others, emotionally with others, prayerfully with others, mindfully of others, and your growth and the richness that you experience in your daily lives will be enhanced, illuminated, and blessed.

Amen.