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- *Knowledge is necessary in difficult relationships*
- *Reach out in conflict situations*

God is indeed with all of you.

There is so much that you have shared, both now and in previous meetings, about your experiences with other countries, with neighbors, with associates. Running as a kind of thread through the difficulties that you experience with others is the recognition that there is more need for mutual knowledge. It is from this knowledge that respect and love and action evolve.

We speak so often about the importance of love, but love does not exist in an abstract environment separated from others, devoid of action. Love requires knowledge. As a child you are taught to love God, and as a child your love is a kind of approach that is exercised almost out of obedience to what you believe is expected of you. But as you travel through your road of life, you learn more about God's presence, and the concept of loving God takes on different meanings. You cannot truly love God without some knowledge. Likewise, you cannot truly love others without some knowledge of them. You may be aware of the importance of loving another, but until you know them, you cannot truly love them. You can respect their existence, you can respect them as individuals and as creations of God, but the relationship characterized by love is only achieved through knowledge.

When there are great barriers separating people, communities, nations, or cultures, those barriers are caused because of a failure in knowledge. You cannot really hate someone you know well. That is not a natural reaction for humans. You can dislike someone's behavior, you can disapprove of what they do, but you cannot really hate them. In the end, you can develop a love for those individuals whose activities are in direct opposition to your own objectives, for love, as you know, does not require approval. You can love a spouse, a neighbor, child, or a parent, and not necessarily approve of everything that the other does. Despite the differences, you love what it is that unites the two of you, and you become aware of that union as you learn more about the other.

There is therefore a basis for love. Love goes beyond respecting. Love goes beyond tolerating or putting up with something. Love affirms the absolute value of another. That value is far beyond what one does or says or even thinks. But such a love that transcends any differences is the result of mutual knowledge.

If you seek peace in your relationship toward another, you must get to know another. If you seek peace with a contrasting philosophy, you must get to know those who espouse that philosophy. The same can be said of your desires for peace between nations and cultures. You cannot seek the demise of someone you really know. Knowledge, therefore, is the essential ingredient in developing an atmosphere

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conducive to the growth of love. It is of course always beneficial to pray for peace, to pray for love. But the gains from such a prayer are minuscule in comparison to the benefits achieved when you learn to know that for which you pray.

So often we have said that your lives are characterized by relationships, that you do not live on an island. It is important to emphasize this truth. That is why your souls have been given human lives to experience. For in reaching out and getting to know another, there is considerable effort and investment of commitment required. It is not an automatic process. It is this commitment, this effort to reach out, which is so important to your spiritual development. If all that were needed was the recognition that prayer for peace, prayer for love was the only thing necessary, then all life could remain on a strictly spiritual plane, for we can pray for another soul, and we do. We can pray that another soul will continue to grow and deepen and be more sensitized, and that soul will grow and deepen and become more sensitized.

But such growth is not enough. There is a personal, physical commitment which is necessary for that prayer to find complete fulfillment. That is where human life comes into the equation and is so necessary, for it is only in human life that you can exercise the will to do something, to benefit another, not merely to pray for another's benefit, but to do something which enhances another. That belongs only to the human form of life. And it is that experience which enhances the development of the soul far beyond the mere prayer.

As was mentioned previously, this is not to negate prayer but to emphasize action. You can take action; we cannot. You can do things which directly impact the life of another; we cannot. We can help open the soul of another to be receptive to what you do, we serve to create the atmosphere necessary for growth to take place, but it is you who do the growing, it is you who do the giving, it is you who do the working, it is you who exercise compassion. We have love, but we do not exercise compassion.

Each level or sphere of your spiritual growth has certain characteristics that are unique in terms of opportunities. These opportunities that we have listed are such unique experiences which you can all benefit from through your active participation. Love is indeed an active involvement. It is not passive. Working for peace is an expression of love, but it, too, must be an active expression. It is not achieved solely through prayer.

Prayer is essential obviously. Prayer keeps your actions focused where they are best directed. Prayer keeps your views on the goals that are closest to God. Prayer helps you keep a sense of perspective, learning what is important and what is superficial. Prayer presents you with the options toward which you direct your efforts. You make the choices, but prayer provides those choices. Prayers make you more receptive. Human life requires that receptivity to be transferred into personal commitment. Yes, "love one another," but along with loving one another comes the parallel "know one another." It is through knowledge that love is attained.

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Your search for knowledge must be a patient one, for patience provides some distance which is necessary to understand where you are to move, what you are to do, how you are to express your love, your compassion, your desires for peace—at home, in the community, around the world. You cannot be blown off track or pushed off course by the occasional unexpected gusts which must invariably come your way. You must allow yourself the time for those gusts to dissipate. Only then are you able to set a steady course and see your efforts to completion.

We challenge you to make a point of getting to know another with whom you are in conflict. You will never walk fully in another's shoes, but you will learn how another walks. You will learn what another feels—their fears, their frustrations—and you will learn what gives them great joy and satisfaction and a sense of self-worth. If you can reach out in such a manner to another, you will have done much to encourage peace, and you will feel that peace in your own personal experience, for you will become more heightened in your sensitivity to the common traits that you share.

There is indeed a unity to all of humanity, indeed to all of creation, but it is easier for you to feel a sense of unity toward another human being than to some inanimate object. Accept that challenge, and you will find that your relationships with the other individual will be much smoother. You may have disagreements—strong ones—but you will more fully comprehend what is behind the actions of another and thereby be less willing to criticize, to judge, and ultimately to dismiss.

Spend time contemplating your knowledge of God. What do you know about God? How have you seen God's presence expressed in your life by those around you or by yourself? Find events in your memory that point clearly to God's presence in your own life. Focusing on those, you will be much clearer and more direct in your experience of loving God.

Turn your attention, then, to yourselves. What do you really know about yourself? Live with yourself. You will be less self-critical. If you are less self-critical, you will be less critical of others, and you will be on your way to knowing another and loving another.

We love you. We love you because we know who you are. It is easier for us to love you than for many guides to love others because you welcome us into your lives. You bring us closer so that we can know you. When you meet in this group, you're inviting us into your lives, allowing that knowledge to expand and deepen. But you are also learning to know more about God and learning to know more about us, your guides. The relationship you have to God is closely bound to your receptivity of allowing us to become more a part of your lives.

It is we who feel blessed by your openness. It is we who feel blessed by your welcome. For that we give you thanks and offer God's blessings upon each of you.

Amen.