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- *Peace, unity, and awareness of God*
- *Self-awareness and service to others*
- *The art of listening*

God joins in forming the unity of all of your souls, one with another at this gathering. There is indeed much that you do not know about one another, but most importantly, you are aware of what binds all into a single unit. The awareness of that unity is precisely what is needed ultimately to experience the peace, the harmony that all of you seek, whether that peace or harmony is on a broad stage of the world or within your own individual lives. The principles of harmony are the same, whatever scale or breadth being viewed.

There is peace when there is an awareness of unity. Looked at individually, you feel peace within when you are aware of the unity of yourselves with your surroundings. Those surroundings may be interpersonal, they may be external, environmental, they may be emotional. Your lives exist on many different planes simultaneously. You wear, as it were, many different hats. Your response to life, therefore, has many dimensions. You're not merely one individual responding to one situation. You're one individual responding to many situations, each of which carries diverse meanings and importance.

If you sense a unity of yourself, a cohesiveness, a sense of relatedness if you wish to call it that, then you are able to manage the demands and requirements that are placed upon you with confidence, with faith as we have described it in your previous gathering. Your exercise of that faith is accomplished and directed through your unity with that which you seek. That unity, that faith in the process, the belief, the conviction in the end result provide peace.

Viewed within a wider arena, that being a community or region or country, there must be a sense of personal identity. There must be a sense of who you really are and what is important for you, not necessarily what you want, but what is important, what is needed, what is consequential, what leads to the highest good. With such an awareness, peace can prevail. When there is a lack of identity, when there is disagreement about who you are or what you seek or what is important, there can be no peace, there can be no sense of being connected, and one is overwhelmed by a feeling of conflict.

The exercise of love toward another or toward others is the direct result of a sense of personal awareness within the framework of a God-directed action. Your perceptions, of course, will differ from another, for no two individuals view life the same way. Therefore no two individuals proceed along the same path to achieve given and even common goals. Your vision is influenced by your experience, and your actions, therefore, will be so influenced. Two individuals approaching the same problem from a different perspective can still be acting in unity and in peace with one another if the goal

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that is sought after reflects the reality of God's presence, for in truth, such a goal by definition unifies all.

If one seeks personal recognition and another seeks peace among people, these two goals are not reflective of God's presence, for the goal of personal recognition is suited to the enhancement of the individual rather than the advancement of the whole. If you wish to truly recognize whether your goals in life are reflective of God, ask yourself who benefits by those goals. If those benefits are identified as focused on an individual or a select group of individuals at the expense of others, then those goals do not reflect the reality of God's presence. Those goals that do reflect God enhance and affirm the value of all, and affirm the value of everything that has been created.

Certainly you do not go through your daily lives questioning whether an action you contemplate will benefit the world, and we do not suggest that this be the criteria, but if it is a goal that indeed affirms life, affirms what is really important—that which has been created by God—then you are assured of its validity. Recognizing that validity, you could proceed with conviction, with peace, with a recognition that you are indeed doing what needs to be done.

Each of you brings different gifts to the table. What is important to acknowledge is not the difference in those gifts, but rather that they are gifts, they are a part of you which is offered outward. It is not a gift if you as an individual are the one for whom it is meant. Such is not reflective of an awareness of God. Inner peace is action directed outward with the vision of God as partner in that action. Of course, each of you experiences discouragement, set-backs of whatever dimension—that is a part of what it means to live in a human body—but those set-backs do not imply a lack of connection to God. They provide the impetus, the stimulation, the challenge to look outward beyond yourself.

Living a life in the knowledge of God is living a life that looks outward. It is not a life consumed with self. Certainly the self is important, for a strong sense of who you are provides the strength and confidence to look outward. There are too many who experience such a diminished view of themselves that there is no confidence, no strength to look beyond themselves, and they are consumed by a sense of being diminished. That is not a godly life. Part of your ability to reach out, therefore, depends upon a realistic view and understanding of who you are. Such an understanding does not imply that you are important, but only that you are the giver. Viewed in such a manner, a life centered on a strong sense of self can and must become a life directed outward.

Part of our responsibilities and activities as your guides is to gradually establish your sense of who you are with the recognition that that becomes a source for your wider involvement outside of self. We provide a vision of that outer dimension. It is our goal to allow you the capacity, the strength, the understanding to enhance life beyond your own immediate circumstances. A life that is rich is a life full of self-awareness and

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service. Service without awareness of self too often degenerates into service for the sake of service rather than service as a result of self. Such service lacks the witness to one's faith and belief.

You must devote more effort to an examination of what your true beliefs really are. Those beliefs change, as well they should, for you are evolving. But within that evolution there must be an awareness of where you stand. It is through the exercise of that awareness that your spiritual selves are strengthened and those of others also find illumination.

Love really is the exercise of self directed outward, reflecting God's light. Such a life of love is a life of peace. It is a life full of meaningful purpose, devoid of time, as we have mentioned. It is a life devoted to the enhancement of others through the generation of one's personal contact with God.

When you are impatient, you are placing your own needs above all that surrounds you. That places self above environment, above society. When you exercise compassion, you're acting from strength, placing another above yourselves, and that is an act of God. Compassion, sensitivity, listening are all acts of God. Being a good listener places another above yourself. You affirm another when you listen. You strengthen another when you listen. By listening you are creating an environment of peace, for you are signaling acceptance of another. Listening, therefore, is an action dictated by the presence of God.

You may at first think of listening as being passive and of less importance than visual action, but for many the act of listening affirms another more profoundly, more loudly than all the words one could muster. If you tell another that he or she is important, is vital, is necessary, that can be interpreted in ways that are less than realistic of the true nature of those words. But if you listen intently, provide another with an opportunity to express themselves, you do more to affirm that other person than you could imagine. Listening, therefore, becomes a very active way of reaching out.

Have you ever felt put down, belittled, trivialized, marginalized by someone who was listening intently to what you had to say? To listen carefully and thoughtfully, you must be willing to relinquish your sense of importance, you must allow yourselves to be comfortable with who you are. It is not you who are important in this equation; it is the person with whom you are engaged in conversation or with whom you are merely being present. Visiting someone who is ill and cannot speak, just being with them is listening, even if no words are communicated. You are there. The fact that you are present communicates more than words could possibly express.

Be a part of those around you by being willing to let others be elevated. Be willing to let others be supported. Seek out those opportunities when you are not the most important side of the equation. Affirm others in every way possible, even those with whom you are in considerable disagreement, for you may disagree with what they

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say or what they espouse, but you are affirming most essentially who they are as human beings, as those worthy of the feelings that they have.

We urge you to be present in the lives of others through listening, through being there, not necessarily asserting your own opinions. In so doing, you are reflecting the quiet confidence that is God. There is a strength in peace that is beyond the understanding of many, for strength does not imply rattling a saber. Such actions are signs of weakness. Be a source of strength to those around you, and you will indeed have an impact on the peace that you all seek. You will reflect precisely that for which you pray, whether it is peace or healing or understanding—all will come about as you reflect God's presence.

We listen to you when you pray. God knows your agonies as well as your ecstasies. Your guides are a part of that listening process. It is our way of expressing love and support. Carry that on to your own life's experiences, and your souls will grow and become more brilliant in God's creation.

We bless you with that brilliance that we see. We bless you with the peace that you seek. We bless you with the love that you offer and are given. We bless you with the faith that directs your lives and our work.

Amen.