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- *Choose love at life's intersections*
- *Sticks and boulders in the river of life*

God, the Lord, the Creator, the Spirit Center, embraces each of you as you pursue your own paths of understanding. Your lives are paths. We speak of these paths often, but you experience your own path constantly. You cannot in any complete sense experience a path pursued by another. Of course, your paths intersect. They coincide momentarily and proceed in their own directions. At those points of intersection, you are presented with opportunities to express love and to receive love that are not otherwise so apparent.

So often you are aware when your paths diverge from shared experiences. You have friendships which turn sour or bitter. You have relationships that are torn apart. You have experiences in your own lives that pull you away from your view of God. We would like to speak more about that experiencing of paths seemingly moving away from one another.

When those instances occur and you find yourselves being drawn apart from others, you tend to dwell upon what seem to be increasing differences. The reality however is much different than your perception. When your relationships with friends, colleagues, family members, other nations, other cultures seem to be moving apart, you are in fact not separating from those whose directions appear to be different. It is too easy to focus on the differences you perceive and neglect to recognize how all of you are bound together. The reality of politics often portrays nations and individuals as moving apart, but they are not moving apart, for what is happening that is central between people and nations is that you continue on your paths that are actually heading in the same direction, that are heading toward the same goal.

There are many ways of finding the Spirit Center. There are many solutions to the maze, but all paths, regardless of appearance, lead to God. All paths ultimately arrive at Love. There is no path that heads toward spiritual oblivion.

When you have disagreements with individuals, with nations and cultures, those disagreements are superficial, regardless of your perception of that. An astronaut views Earth as an entity—no borders, all share the same space. That is the view we see of all human beings. There are no differences. There are no borders that separate one person from another. Yes, there are differences, but those differences are unimportant.

There are differences with each soul. Your soul has within it a different personality, you could say, than the soul of someone next to you, but you're actually sharing a part of the reality of God equally. Therefore, however you perceive another, you must recognize that those perceptions are only at the surface. You are no different from another in a fundamental way.

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Each of you reflects and absorbs the same energy at different rates. When your paths cross, that implies coming together, being together, and moving in seemingly separate directions afterward. But if you look at two paths as if they were two sticks in a flowing river, the sticks come together, the sticks diverge, but both sticks are traveling along the same river, in the same direction. One stick is not moving downstream and another stick moving in the opposite direction. There can be boulders that pull the sticks apart and momentarily appear to prevent the sticks from rejoining. But those boulders are temporary. The river flows. The sticks eventually find themselves back in the river flowing in the same direction.

So it is with your personal lives. There are boulders in all lives, be they personal, be they physical, be they emotional, be they pain inflicted by another, be they the pain of illness or the pain of jealousy, anger. These are merely rocks in the river. They are not the river. The river continues and all that is in the river moves with the river and moves because of the river. The river brings the sticks to the boulders, but the river also frees them from those obstacles.

The river is God's presence, God's energy, God's love. There is nothing you can do that will take you out of the flow of the river. Regardless of the obstructions, it is the flow of the river that brings you to the obstruction, and it is that flow that frees you. Obstructions belong to the river just as the sticks. The difficulties, the challenges that seem to separate you from one another at times, are part of the flow of God's love. Just as the river does not aim the stick toward the boulder, God does not direct you toward some calamity or suffering event, but because of God, you are both brought to the obstruction and freed from the obstruction.

These boulders are often most personally experienced in your relationships with others. You have those relationships because your paths are intersecting. If your lives were so different from one another, you would not be given this interchange of life, but you have this experience—you are brought to it, you are brought through it. Nothing in your life stops that flow of energy toward God.

What is our function in the river? We are in fact the observers, the observers who recognize that the river is not the obstruction. The river exists prior to, during, and after the obstruction. We see the flow as a flow. We do not see your lives as a moment frozen, but rather an energy that flows, an energy that is constantly in motion. We see your spirits as those sticks in the river, and it is our loving duty always to assure you that you continue to move through the spiritual flow that is God's presence.

You have life in order to experience that flow. You are given the gift of conscious existence so that you may learn from that existence, so that you may find purpose to your lives. Your lives are not accidents. Your lives are not merely biological coincidence. They exist because the river exists. The river has within it all that exists—all stones, all pebbles, all boulders, sticks, logs, trees—all are moved by the river. The river gets its character by what it contains.

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God's presence has a character. God's presence has an identity. That identity is defined by each human being. That identity is defined by all that has been created. And because you all flow in God's loving river, you are all equally important, for the small stick, the large branch are moving as they are meant to move along the river.

If the river had no boulders, if the river had no waterfalls, and it was just a flowing tract of liquid, there would be little value. When you see a scene that is pleasing to you, that scene is filled with contrasts. You look to the sky: there is beauty in a cloudless sky, but there is another kind of beauty because of the mixture of clouds and sky. There is beauty to a change in weather. If you lived in an environment where there was no darkness or no light or only cloudy skies or only sunny skies, that life, that environment would begin to have less significance for you. But when you have cloudy skies, the days of sunshine take on greater significance. If you live in a desert with seemingly endless sunshine, the presence of rain is considered a gift. After a day of sunlight, the rest that comes at night is welcomed, and for those who work at night, the day is welcomed relief.

Your lives require this contrast for its character, for its depth, for its personality. For that to happen, your lives must be filled with contrasts—contrasts of a visual nature, contrasts of a personal nature, contrasts of a spiritual nature. Some go through life praising God and then will proceed to criticize that Spirit Center. That has its purpose for that life. That contrast is part of what shapes that life, and the experiencing of that contrast gives that life perspective and meaning.

It is of course important to acknowledge when you are in concert with others, when you clearly can float down the river arm in arm. But you must also realize and accept that there are always obstructions in life that seemingly pull you away. Yet despite that, you continue your journey toward the loving Spirit Center you refer to as God.

Every life, all entities, are part of that river. There is nothing that escapes the direction of spirit, the direction of all creation toward the Center, toward God. Even the stones which form their obstructions are worn away by the flow and become a part of the flow. The most intense challenges that you can face ultimately are part of that flow. They not only obstruct, but they also become. Nations, cultures, individuals that live in conflict are also in their way moving forward in that flow of God's loving energy. If you acknowledge that all are on that same journey, then you must accept that when there is conflict, when there is seeming separation of objectives, of lifestyles, of philosophies, you are really on the same journey. You are together. You are not moving in separate directions.

Those directions may seem so from a relative standpoint, but we, as observers, see the motion of all on the river, and it is we who can assure you that regardless of your challenges, you are moving toward God. That is why we can say to you, "You are where you need to be." No one is lost. You will be tomorrow where you need to be. You

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will be in two days where you need to be. You may see where you are today and tomorrow and two days from now as being somehow very different, but your motion is still appropriate—you are in the flow. You are in the loving hands of God.

The suffering brought among people from disasters of war, disasters of nature, disasters of personal violence are still part of this flow of energy, this presence of God. No individual is moving upstream. There may be an obstruction that appears to push another upstream, but that is part of the overall path and therefore belongs to the path. The personal challenges, the emotional challenges, the political, environmental, philosophical, economic challenges that are a part of life belong to life.

Accept those challenges. Accept those opportunities to view all as part of God's presence. In so doing, you are able to accept your own lives with more peace. You are able to accept the lives of others with more equanimity. You are able to accept the strife that is experienced by many as part of the total journey of all of creation.

Every entity that has been created exists because it is meant to exist, because it has a purpose. The stone, the grasshopper, the human being all have a purpose, all contribute, all are part of this flow of God's love. Therefore, eschew judgment, accept others, rejoice when you are arm in arm, and accept when you are not, realizing that all belong to God's presence.

Your prayers, though at times offered in fear or sadness or anxiety, are ultimately prayers of acknowledgment—acknowledgment that you encounter what you encounter, and an acknowledgment that somehow God is a part of your lives. Both acknowledgments are important. The challenges you face—feel that you can accept them with gratitude, for those challenges provide the growth that is so necessary for your spiritual journey.

Life is beautiful—beautiful in its trials, beautiful in its suffering, beautiful in its great joy. The river is beautiful in the sunlight. The river is beautiful in the shade. The river is beautiful at night. Nothing changes the river, only your perception of it.

Accept the beauty of God's presence. Accept the necessity of the sunlight. Accept the necessity of the clouds. Accept the necessity of the night. And in so doing, you affirm the strength, the beauty, and the rightness of the river.

We bless you as you seek to accept. We bless you in your view of the river.

Amen.