

August 5, 1997

- *Spiritual growth within spiritual unity*
- *In seeking peace, seek unity*

God joins all souls together into one being. You really are a single unit. There is in essence nothing that separates you from another. You have your own objectives, your own issues, your own personality, but they are really part of the same entity. We speak so often about your spiritual development that it is easy to believe that such development is measured individually. In truth, however, there is no such thing as individual spiritual growth.

The presence of the spirit, the presence of God's light, is a single presence. Everyone is a part of that single presence. You do not discuss your hands as being a separate reality from the rest of your body. It is a part of who you are. With the same reasoning, all are a part of what God is.

Often, we refer to a spiritual unity that binds all creation, but it is particularly important that you become more personally aware of the relatedness between all human beings. Sometimes you are aware of the unity among close friends, but rarely do you sense that singleness of existence between people who have vastly different cultures, expectations, values, styles of worship. You are too often aware of differences and too seldom aware of unity.

We would like to speak to you more about this unity, for it is in reality the character of God that we are trying to convey to you. Your spiritual growth is ultimately achieved through the growth of others. It is not achieved alone. It is not achieved in isolation. It is not measurable through an individual. It can only be measured collectively. When a community is sensitized to the spirit, there is an identity that is evident to others. There is a strength that comes forth which reflects a common understanding, a common commitment. You measure your own growth through the evolution of spiritual strengthening of others.

In a meaningful and profound relationship between two people, the union cannot develop into real strength unless you both develop such strength. One cannot be deep in understanding and the other left without a clue to what reality is. There is no relationship there. If that is true between two people, it is even more true in a community. The community is not moved forward in ways that are following a perception of God unless everyone moves forward. If an entire community achieves a sense of purpose, the strength of that community is beyond comprehension.

Consider a collection of individuals in your recollection who demonstrated enormous depth, who seemed to understand one another profoundly. It may be part of a family or assembly of people not related to one another except through their beliefs. Reflect upon your recollection of this group, thinking of those qualities that you emulate. You will see the strength emanating from those individuals as powerful, God-like,

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invincible in their sense of purpose and focus. Such a group, whether it is three or three hundred, cannot be ignored. There is such a sense of inevitability in what is done. There is a recognition immediately of the rightness of their paths.

When you observe such a group, you really are observing God within your community. This presence of God becomes a real force when there is that common understanding among many. Individually, they are not nearly as effective in reflecting God's love and peace and light. Your development spiritually, therefore, is thoroughly and completely connected to the development of those around you.

What does this mean for your own lives as individuals? Most importantly it means that you live in community, whether that is two people or two hundred. You are indelibly connected to a life outside of your own. There are far too many examples of lives lived in total isolation that evolve to such an extreme point that there is no connection between that life and life around that individual.

We are emphasizing the importance of your sense of total oneness with all of humanity. This is a difficult concept to put into practice, for while you are united with all, you cannot be responsible for all. That would be an unrealistic expectation to place on anyone's shoulders. When there is a great weight to be lifted and moved elsewhere, it can only be done when there is combined effort focused in one direction. If everyone is working independently in a particular group or direction, the object is not moved.

Consider the object in this case to be God's presence in the world. For that presence to be fully realized requires a combined effort, one of common understanding and agreement. The tensions of the world are caused in great part by independence of action, by a belief in superiority of a particular point of view rather than superiority of the group. We are not suggesting that the individual should not exist. We are suggesting rather that an individual's responsibility should be the enhancement of others. The individuals bring to that effort their own energies, their own gifts, their own strengths and interests. But all of those are focused on the common good, not personal gain.

The implications of this set of beliefs are indeed world-changing. It is not a new belief, but it is one which gets lost in the individual efforts of self-improvement. Your souls are indeed connected completely to one another. For the body to move forward, the hands and feet must join the motion. They cannot go another direction. When they join the motion, progress is made along the path.

As you search for peace in the world, begin by seeking the common grounds that everyone shares. Build upon those common grounds. Accept the differences, but capitalize on the shared concerns, the shared commitments. In so doing, you become more sensitized to the real spiritual community that connects everyone together. It is not just a philosophical construct to say everyone is part of the same entity. It has a very practical application. You must become more aware of what joins you together.

Your concerns about peace in the Middle East are actually shared by everyone. There is no one who is opposed to peace. The only opposition is the terms of that

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peace. No one likes war. No one seeks pain. No one seeks to live a life whose purpose is to inflict pain. The presence of pain, the presence of conflict are merely means of achieving individual objectives. As long as the focus is on the individual, whether that refers to people, communities, or nations, there can be no peace. Only by exploring and bringing out those points of agreement, those points of community, can any significant progress be made.

You pray for your own personal peace, and that is a sense of the emotional well-being with the world around you. You pray for world peace, and that is the lack of conflict and a sense of comfort worldwide. Personal peace and world peace are only achieved through the recognition of shared grounds, shared beliefs, and shared needs. When you are at peace as an individual within a larger group, it is because you are comfortable with that group. Your comfort with that group is a result of your understanding of common interests, common beliefs, common goals and objectives. Regardless, there is a feeling of sharing, and it is that sharing that is such a crucial issue in achieving a wider sense of spiritual union, unity between all people.

When you oppose the actions of another individual, another group of people, or another nation, you can clearly disagree with the manifestation of their viewpoints, but you cannot disagree with the humanness of the feelings that are demonstrated by those actions. To feel unity with this other individual or group, focus not on the actions which cause you displeasure or disagreement but on the humanness which gives rise to those actions. Doing this, you can establish your sense of unity with another individual or group where there is little in common in terms of actions which are taken. You then can be more willing to accept the validity of an individual or group, not sharing the manifestation of their beliefs but validating who they are as human beings. You are then on your way to establishing a stronger spiritual union with others, and in doing this, your growth spiritually is greatly enhanced because there is that sense of commonality that is being supported, reinforced, and affirmed.

Your spiritual growth is intricately connected to the growth of all. Foster the growth of others. Seek unity. Be willing to stand up for your beliefs, your perceptions of God, while simultaneously accepting and affirming the humanness of other beliefs that may differ from your own. Your growth is everyone's growth. Your growth requires everyone's growth. Welcome that opportunity to interact with all souls. Welcome the opportunity to be exposed to vastly different perspectives, and you will indeed have a clearer vision of God's presence in your life.

We bless you now with a greater vision of God in the world. We bless you with the courage of your own beliefs, and we bless you with a greater capacity to accept and affirm.

Amen.