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- *Human relationships offer unique opportunities*
- *Growth through challenges*
- *All prayers are about opening to God*

God is with you and we are all joined together as we share your life's concerns, your life's trials, and your life's joys. There was much that was expressed this evening which relates to the issue of relationships among family members and those beyond the family, the influence of God and your part of it throughout the wider world, your concerns about how to deal with such tremendous pressures within the family group. All of the issues come down to one word: relationships. You relate to others on many different levels. Some are rather objective, dispassionate, academic. Others are much more personal, more private, more spiritual.

The range of relationships belonging to the human experience is actually much broader than the relationships that we experience on our side. Our relationships to one another are spiritual, they are deep and of course there is a breadth, but they do not run the gamut of jealousy or frustration, anger, hurt, vengefulness, competition, pride, shame. The list could be nearly endless of adjectives describing human relationships. You are given human life in large part because of the need to develop your abilities to relate to one another. You do not have this opportunity in the spiritual plane, either before your human life or after it. It is a unique challenge which is solely devoted to human existence. For you to enter into a relationship at a level that we experience in purely spiritual form, you must have experienced on your own the challenges and difficulty as well as the joys and successes of relationships that have been carved out and defined within the human experience. You are given life so that you could relate. It is your exercise of relationships which clarifies to each of you the real existence, meaning, importance, and impact of God, by whatever name you may wish to identify God.

You are given life to relate. Those relationships can be positive, they can be negative, they can be on a grand scale, and they can be limited. But each of you finds that every individual with whom you are in contact differs from one another, and the means with which you connect to each individual will also be different. You are, in a sense, in a class whose primary objective is a strengthening in your abilities to relate to all people. When you are fully successful in this challenge, you will not only recognize the uniqueness of all individuals, but you will be fully cognizant of the unity of all people, and it is this final awareness of oneness which you bring with you into a meaningful experience on the spiritual plane.

Those who relive their human experiences again are souls who need more opportunities for sorting out the breadth of experience that faces relationships. Your work in human life is complete when your relationships are totally harmonious and you

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are consumed by an awareness of the unity of all people. That achievement is not reached easily or in a short amount of time. Part of that development can be achieved in a spiritual form, but only the early stages. To reach the highest level, these skills, these awarenesses can only be strengthened and burnished through the experience of human life.

When we speak of your understanding and reflecting of God, we always refer to these issues in terms of your relationships with others. You do not live alone. Your relationships can only be developed with others. To remove yourself totally from another and to try and exist completely alone in solitude reduces your experiences, thus hindering your development in the area of relationships.

Human life is to be shared and enjoyed and embraced. It is not to be endured alone. All of you, not just those in the room, but all humanity are essentially social beings. Some are more sociable than others, but the need that each of you possesses for the presence of other people is undeniable, and it is through your response to that need that you grow toward the final awareness of the unity of all.

It may seem a contradiction to consider that human life is required to become aware of differences in order to recognize the oneness of existence, but it is absolutely essential, for the unity of life is far greater than the scope of any one person. You understand a community, you learn the potential of that community, when you become aware of the community's activities. If you are aware of only one activity, you are not really aware of the community. If you are aware of only one kind of society, you never become aware of what humanity is about. If you are surrounded by individuals of similar personality, you never become aware of the richness of diversity in personality. Variety is essential; diversity of experience is absolutely necessary. As you learn to accept that diversity of experience, as you learn to accept the diversity of individuals, you ultimately learn to accept all of what humanity really is.

The issue of relationships that belong to your lives is not quickly resolved or fully clarified. It is always evolving. Your relationships with another individual must constantly evolve. You yourselves change over a period of time. Denying the changes as they take place denies the evolution which is so necessary. The challenges which you face are necessary and should be welcomed. They are not easy but they are essential for your ultimate growth.

The difficulties, for example, that your friend and her family deal with daily are enormously taxing, but within that effort is found the center of a broadened awareness of who they as individuals are and what it means to be loving, compassionate. They gain much through what they endure, and therefore the difficulties should be accepted, not only with a natural discouragement and occasional fear, but with the absolute confidence that coming through this ordeal they will be enriched in their spiritual life, not only the life in the next plane but the spiritual life that they experience in human form.

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That is true for each of you. You all have hurdles that you are trying to surmount, but they provide strength and stability ultimately, and for that reason alone they should be welcomed. An individual who is not challenged in life experiences little growth. The growth which is missing must still somehow be achieved. Experiences to bring about that growth must at sometime be a part of that life. We have said countless times that you are not in a race against time for perfection, for unity with God. There is no limit applied to any of you which dictates when certain tasks must be done. It is only important that each task be experienced and ultimately accomplished.

You grow as you grow. When you face periods of difficulty, your growth is more rapid. When you face periods of calm, your growth may be somewhat slowed, but you have the opportunity of helping others in their growth, and so that time is not lost. Certainly you do not seek out challenges that are threatening and devastating. There are enough available to each of you in a lifetime. Just as you should not be defeated by challenges, you should not feel in some way privileged when you have fewer challenges, for the paths that you live are never straight. There are times when you are pressed and there are times when you are not. It is a cycle, and each of you experiences all of these waves, these mountains and valleys. When you are being challenged, remember those times when life was easier to live and know that those times will return. And when your life is relatively smooth, remember the times when you have been challenged, be grateful for the respite but allow yourself to be strengthened for the challenge that will surely come.

Personal relationships are the fields that provide the potential for growth of the seed. Without the field, there are no crops. All must grow from the seed. All seeds must grow in a fertile environment, and for your souls that fertile environment is the realm of personal relationships. Don't shy away from these challenges. Don't worry that you are unable to measure up when you are tested, for each of you has been given the strength to endure. It is only up to you to use that strength and to turn that strength into a reflection of God who gave you that power.

Be open to God through your prayers. Prayers, as we have indicated on earlier occasions, are not a command to action on the part of God. They are an acknowledgment of your openness to God's presence in whatever form it may be felt. When you pray, regardless of the subject matter, you are really in effect saying, "I am open to God." There is little more that needs to be said about prayer at this point. When you pray for the benefit of another, you are strengthening the soul of another so that person may say, "I am open to God." You are facilitating that individual's perception of God's loving presence.

Your prayers do have a direct effect on those for whom you pray. There is no doubt about this. Our reference to praying for another nation merely implies that idle prayers offered with little sense of commitment on your own part do not in themselves change much. It is rather that when you pray for the benefit of others, you are fully

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committed in your actions to the importance of what it is for which you pray. If you pray for peace somewhere in the world, be committed in your actions to the value of peace. You cannot change every corner in the world on your own, but you can live your life in such a manner that that for which you pray reflects the values by which you live. That is the connection between prayer and the impact on other lands, other cultures, other societies, other people around you.

Live your life as a reflection of that for which you pray. When you pray that another may grow in faith, live your life reflecting your own growth in faith. Your prayers will be answered. When you ask for another to be given the ability to be open to God, that person is given the ability, the potential, the capacity to be open to God. The soul of that individual is strengthened by your prayers. You should never interpret what we say to imply that prayers have no value or only limited value. They are the most important tool you have at your disposal that may be used to strengthen another's life as well as your own.

We pray for your openness. That is the most important thing we can do. It is up to you to be open. We pray for that and your souls are made stronger in their capacity for openness because of our prayer. But it is you through the urging of your souls who ultimately must open. We pray for your peace. We pray for your capacity to experience peace. We pray for your ability to recognize the reality of peace, and then you will be able to be open to peace. Our prayers for you are to be a reflection of God who warms all of our souls through God's radiant light. You are each blessed by God's presence and we rejoice in your acknowledgment.

Amen.