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God in Heaven embraces you all with God's loving spirit. We, who are beside you constantly, rejoice that you are again together in search of a greater understanding of the nature of the presence of the omnipotent God.

This is an important time of the year for you individually and in terms of the celebration of your church. It is a time of hope, yes; of anticipation, yes; but for many it is a time of longing, of emptiness and depression. Each of you is aware of this and each may choose a response which is appropriate to your capacity. The church provides strength and hope and optimism, but these are the end results. The energy or impetus which leads toward this direction can only grow out of searching.

When you become aware of another's needs, you are aware of that person's searching. Those needs may be expressed through dejection or loneliness or even anger. Those who experience such feelings are no different from you, for you all have needs, but their urgency and expression differ from one person to another. If you rejoice in the hope of a brighter future as embodied in the life of Jesus, consider those who do not share in that rejoicing to be really an extension of yourselves. In reaching out to touch others, you will be reaching inward to touch yourselves and thereby to see God more plainly.

We don't suggest that you proceed through this time of celebration accompanied by a nagging sense of an indiscernible burden, for God wishes you to rejoice. It is the nature of the soul to rejoice. Remember, "Rejoice in the Lord, oh my soul." But in your rejoicing, be aware of others who can benefit from your light. In doing so, you are confirming the progression which leads from searching to discovery. One does not discover and then forget the search. The joy in the discovery is heightened through an appreciation of the search. The joy which you experience can be heightened through an appreciation of the search by others as well as yourselves.

Approach this season, therefore, in recognition of what it truly means as a Christian to be a follower of Jesus. Amid the scurry of the coming weeks, seek moments for remembering the true cause for celebration, and let that in turn influence the nature of your involvement in the many activities which surround you.

The feelings of questioning and doubt which some of you experience as you begin to receive messages is understandable, perfectly natural, and should not be put down. Your experience in communion is at a very beginning phase, for you, as we, improve the necessary skills as the skills are used. James finds it considerably easier to receive God's guidance at this point in his life than a few years ago. It is a gift. It is

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evidence of God's grace. It is freely given but not fully developed. That is your responsibility. God grants each of us blessings, but they are always accompanied by attendant responsibilities. You can choose to accept them, postpone them, or reject them. That is part of the mortal condition.

If those who are in the early stages of receiving messages choose to develop the gift which they are given, they will become more convinced of its authenticity and thereby its value. It is their decision—it is the decision each of you should make. Although theirs were first steps, they were very much real steps, and this fact can be accepted completely. During such a preliminary stage in their development, it is easy to become critical or feel that the content is inconsequential.

Remember James' first message. It was very brief. Its content: *Education opens your mind, but we, through God, open your soul.* Such a statement is obvious and its content can be taken lightly, but in truth the reality of that content is the most critical understanding one can have in coming to an acceptance of communions.

You expressed interest and, to a degree, concern about how we spend our time. What do we do? What is life really like? To gain a complete understanding will require many messages, but it is a worthy question and one which God chooses as fitting in the development of your spiritual growth. There is only one caution, and that is you must not become so concerned about the future that you lose touch with the humanness of your life, for that very humanity is essential for the nurturing of your soul.

Time for us, as you perceive it, is virtually nonexistent. Your sense of time has been developed as humankind has developed through the observation of heavenly bodies and earthly changes. Everything you do is related to those observations and gives a sense of time. Our perception of time, as you perceive it, is nonexistent because we are time. Our existence proceeds through the same dimension as your perception of time, but we are totally unaware of the division of that time. Perhaps it is best to consider our perception of time as an awareness of life or an awareness of being, of existence. What seems to you as a long period of time does not necessarily to us appear as a moment, for a moment itself implies a division of time. Your perception of a long time is seen by us as a transmission of events. It is the succession of events. It is the perception of being and that which transpires in being which we see.

For this reason we find it difficult in communicating with you to predict a particular event within a given time. We can see an event occurring, but its placement in your time is not clear. All we know is that that event exists. We understand if it exists in your future, in your present, or in your past, but the details of that placement are not clear. Without a concept of time, only of being, the spirit becomes involved solely in the events which occur and not how long it takes or how quickly it is accomplished.

We who guide you are given the responsibility of directing one person. Frequently there is a reference made to we rather than *I*. This is because, as you are

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gathered in a group turning your souls to God, your individual guides are turned toward you, and we can therefore refer to ourselves collectively as *we*.

Our responsibilities to one individual differ in length. In the course of your life you may be given scores of guides; you may be given a handful. That is God's decision. Regardless of the number, the truth remains that guides do change. We are not active one hundred percent of the time in communicating or attempting to communicate with you, but we are with you at all times during our assignment. We are with you wherever you are, whatever your activities.

We are also concerned about our own development, and much effort is given to achieving greater insight into God's presence in our lives, too. How do we achieve this? In much the same way you do: through prayer, through thought or meditation, study. Yes, we study—not books, but we study the insight from spirits who have reached a higher level of development.

We don't speak, but we communicate. We are not speaking to you, but we are communicating. You learn from us not because we speak, but because we communicate. We learn from others because they communicate to us. Communication between spirits does not differ, whether between your earthly existence and our spiritual existence or between our spiritual existence and another sharing the same nature of life.

There is much for us to learn. There is much for us to transmit. In a way, it is a continuum of information, of communication. It begins with God and it reaches you, but there are many steps between those two. All of us seek what you seek, but we don't search out the truth within the concept of time. We just search and listen and know and teach. That is our activity. It sounds very simple but the process is very complex. Much energy is used and we become tired, just as you, and we need rest, just as you, but it is a spiritual rest. It is not a time for idleness. Our rest is a time for refreshment, for absorbing more strength so that we may give to you and receive from others.

The nature of our existence is very involved. Some of it is beyond your comprehension, but as you become closer to one another in your search for God's truth, you will achieve a kind of group sensitivity which enables you to more fully comprehend that which we are empowered to give.

Rejoice in your love! Transmit that love to others. Remember to reach outward and in so doing, find yourselves. We bless you with God's strength and calmness and love.

Amen.