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- *Predestination*
- *Suffering is essential for spiritual growth*
- *Karma*
- *Past lives*
- *Live to give*

God surrounds each of you with an incredibly bright light whose radiance provides peace and love. Your discussion this evening demonstrated such a variety of opinions on the choice of life provided a soul, in the place of randomness, perhaps lack of control within the structures of each of your lives. The relationship between the influences of your spiritual selves and the influences of your physical selves is never very clear. There are events in your life which occur seemingly by accident but in truth are the result of what you make of your lives and others make of their lives.

Although nothing is completely predetermined, the shape of an individual's life in general form is visible to us in its entirety. When you relate a story, you know the major facts and you know its general outcome, but how you describe those facts varies from occasion to occasion in your relating of that story. The details themselves are not always specifically laid out, but the general pillars of its development are already in place. We view your lives from before your infancy, for we know the nature of the soul prior to its human attachment.

The general direction that your lives proceed along is controlled to a relatively high degree by the spiritual position of your soul's development. It is much like a vacuum. When a vacuum is present, another object is drawn toward it. When there are specific needs in the development of your souls, your lives are drawn toward a goal which serves as a fulfillment of those needs. Your lives, then, can be described as a progression which leads to the fulfillment of the individual needs of each of your souls. This progression, this development along the road of life, is thereby controlled or directed substantially by the individual needs of the soul. For this reason, no two lives are alike for no two souls have the same identical needs. Those needs provide impact on the life which is similar to the influences of a magnet to iron filings—patterns develop, motion is induced within specified directions.

But your lives are not entirely devoted to progress in a straight line. The actions of others can have negative as well as positive influences on your own development. If you are attacked by a criminal, no matter what the direction intended for your life, you must deal with the encounter at hand. It may not be interpreted that that criminal, whether it be in physical presence or as an illness, was willed by God to cross your path at that moment, for that encounter you cannot necessarily predict. But how you handle that encounter, what you make of it, how you get beyond it is definitely controlled by the spirit, by the soul. You may choose to be defeated by a setback or encounter, or you may choose to provide your lives with the continuation of progress. The natural tendency is to continue, and yet it is surprising

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how many choose to reject that progress and rather become entwined in the complications of the moment.

The specifics of your lives are not predetermined, but the potential for the development of your human existence is. There are acts of nature having impact on your lives which in themselves are not predetermined, and yet if you are the victim of a natural disaster, your lives brought you to the position wherein the disaster had an effect, had an encounter with you. Your guides and God do not cause misfortune to cross your lives, but they lead your lives in directions which may lead to such adversity. You are not prevented from such encounters, for it is in experiencing them that you grow. Much already has been said about this. It is most important simply to recognize that your lives and the direction your lives take are the direct result of the spirituality of your existence.

We have spoken before of randomness and acknowledged its existence. There are events which happen by chance, and yet life is not to be considered an endless series of random events. Randomness is a part of life as seasoning is a part of cooking—it helps in adding character, but it is not the main purpose. You should not be overly concerned about the randomness in life except that it exists, but do not dwell on its importance for it is ultimately unimportant. What matters is how you live your lives. It is not what happens by chance to your lives.

There is little that can be fully understood relating to suffering, to illnesses of others, illnesses of your own, but it is important that you recognize that such suffering is essential to your growth. It does not merely provide an opportunity...it is essential. There are those who live lives seemingly devoid of suffering, but who are you to know what lies within another's life? What does another feel? What emotions, what thoughts, what concerns does another experience? What you observe on the surface is not the whole story. There is no one who goes through life untouched by issues of suffering or agony of the spirit. That is a part of the human condition for all people. There are those who seem to suffer disproportionately to those around them, but you cannot equate one's suffering as being greater than another. You cannot judge that someone is having a harder time of life than another, particularly when you recognize that many souls are given several lives. You do not know what has come before and you have no idea what lies in the future. All you can see is an instant. Such a brief view of life is hardly grounds for judging whether one has a more difficult time of life or an easier time of life.

Life is a continuum. It is a series of many, many events. One event does not make a life. One event cannot characterize that life. Life as you see it around you could be considered an event of a moment's duration. If you feel you suffer disproportionately, consider that it is only a moment. It is not a whole life. If you feel in some way guilty in not experiencing the hardships that many must endure, you cannot fully know what you have experienced in a prior life or what events await you in the future. It serves no purpose to make such measurements. One can merely recognize the fact that one is alive, one is

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growing spiritually, and that growth is exercised and nurtured through relationships with others.

There are many who take great fancy in discovering details of previous lives, but that has no more meaning in life than a mere parlor game, for it has no significance in your current life. If one accepts the principle of karma, it may be momentarily helpful to recognize the difficulty one is currently experiencing to be a result of certain events in a prior life or prior lives. And yet there is no real meaning to what one currently experiences unless one recognizes that it is indeed a potential for growth, an opportunity for development of the soul—that's what's important. You may find reason through such understanding of past lives explaining why you experience what you experience, but such knowledge is not particularly beneficial. It is only beneficial when you relate your experiences to your spiritual development currently.

In the same vein, one can be concerned about whether one is to return to human existence because of failings in the present. Such concerns place too much emphasis on what may be rather than what is. You are living your lives because of what your lives provide you at this time frame, within the continuum of your spiritual life. Put your attention on how you live now. Don't dwell on your life in the past. Similarly, don't worry about mistakes you have made or be concerned about errors in the future. Focus your energies on the here and now.

What can you do now for another person? What can you do now to reflect God's love? What can you do now to reflect peace? Such focus provides meaning in life rather than concerns of the past and the future. If you live in this manner you are freed from guilt of the past and anxiety about the future.

A guiltless and anxiety-free life is a life of grace, for it provides the freedom to reach out, to give and love without concern for judgment of others. You live to give, and you give by loving. That is what must motivate your lives.

Our purpose in your lives collectively is to lead you in the direction of a life of selfless giving. That life reflects most purely God's presence. When you are faced by dilemmas—"What shall I do?"—ask yourself rather, "Which would enable me to benefit another more effectively?" And the choice will be made known to you. Don't make decisions on what benefits you, for such decisions are based on selfishness, defensiveness, guilt, anxiety over the future, and are not a reflection of God working through you. Live unselfishly, give unselfishly, cast away guilt of the past and anxiety of the future, rid your lives of worry and allow God's inner peace to wash through your souls and provide direction for your lives.

We bless you with the grace of God's presence.

Amen.