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- *Unity of all souls*
- *Predestination*
- *Glimpses of God*
- *Adversity is a catalyst for developing grace and character*

God is of course with every soul in this assembly of souls. That you already know. But what you do not necessarily always remember is that you are a part of the assembly of all souls. You are not islands. You are not separated from anyone else. There may be physical distance. There may be differences in perceptions, commitments, talents, or concerns, but you are really completely united. You are united with the homeless and you are united with those of the most lofty offices. It is a continuum to which you belong, and it is a continuum to which you will always forever belong.

You are associated with one another in this group because you have been united together at other times. It is not that you have been together only with each other, but it is important that you recognize that there is a history to your blessed assembly. You are of course a part of the continuity of all spiritual creation, but there is a bond that brings you together from lives whose activities are greatly varied.

There is no coincidence, there is no chance meeting, and there is no occurrence between human beings that is without basis, without cause. Life is not totally predetermined, but you enter life with preconditions. We can say you enter life with a pre-awareness of one another. There will be others whom you may encounter who share that same common pre-awareness. You are brought together for a purpose, and that purpose is quite clearly the growth, the propagation of love, of an unconditional acceptance in valuing of another. That is quite frankly what life is about.

You are given life to be loving. You are given life to learn to be accepting, to be supportive and uplifting. That you already know, but it is important that you also recognize that your connection with one another is not by chance. It is part of God's design to bring together souls who, in their commitment to one another, become more powerful in spreading the spirit of nonjudgmental love and a commitment to what it means to live in peace. Your lives are governed ultimately by this desire for peace. If you consider for a moment each of your endeavors, every one of you is oriented in some form or another to the engagement of peace, be that personal peace, spiritual peace, emotional peace, the resolution of conflict, the enhancement of life through beauty—you are all engaged in the pursuit of peace.

The question was discussed related to obtaining more glimpses of God in your lives. God can always be seen in the efforts of others to achieve peace of all kinds. When you seek beauty in the relationships of people to one another, when you seek beauty in the experience of life, when you see individuals concerned about the

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resolution of misunderstanding, the alleviation of hatred, you are experiencing a glimpse of God. Because there are always people looking for peace, there is always a place to capture that glimpse, and when captured successfully—one individual, one event, one sense of commitment at a time—that glimpse becomes a vision of the broadest field of perspective.

You need to seek glimpses. Without the desire to see, there is no reason to open your eyes. Without the desire for a glimpse, there is no motivation to seek. Without seeking, there is no vision. Without vision, there is no understanding. And without understanding, there is no open expression of compassionate and supportive love. That chain is actually unbroken. Each link is essential. Each link must be sought after.

Where is the glimpse of God? It is in the eyes of one who is patient but who has nothing otherwise. You may see God in the poorest individual, in an individual who seems to have lost almost everything. You see God in the touch of another, in an embrace, in the eyes of someone else. You see God in the intonation of someone who is speaking. You see God in the actions of people. God is in fact everywhere visible—not as a form, not as some sort of humanlike creature in a form that may be represented in art through the ages. That is not God.

God is in the person sitting next to you. God is in the person behind you and in front of you. You see God in those who are supportive of you. You see God in those who are in some way in conflict with you. You certainly see God in nature, in the animal world and plant world. But you see God most clearly through another human being, for that human being is godly because of the presence of spirit. God is everywhere, but God can be experienced so personally through another individual. Certainly it is easy to see God in the ocean, to see God in a sunset, to see God from a mountaintop, but the strongest view is through another human being.

It is true you must seek a vision of God, for such a vision is not imposed upon you. You are welcomed by it, but you must first seek it out. God is a force of love, healing, and patience, strength and vulnerability. God is all these things. But God is also that silent voice that speaks to each of you from within.

How can you hear God? How can you listen to know that God is there? You know God and you hear God, as we have said, when you are not consumed by the need to listen only to self. The way to a vision of God is not through self-absorption, and yet being absorbed by needs of self is very much a part of human life. Of course, each of you has needs. That is readily acknowledged. But those needs may be acknowledged personally as being present without controlling you, driving you in directions away from the person next to you.

For many, life can be a rat race, activity that is easily viewed ultimately as activity for its own sake. You may be guided by trying to meet the objectives of others. You may be guided by the expectations of others. You may be guided by a fear of what others

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may believe, or what others may think of you. That is not a productive design for increasing those glimpses in your move toward a fuller view of God.

Your lives are given purpose, they are directed, they are given meaning and impact because of whoever is next to you. We speak of whoever is next to you in a figurative way. That person may be an associate, spouse, close friend, any family member, but that person may also be a complete stranger, one whom you have never met but whose life interfaces with yours at this very moment. There is the face of God! There is the vision of how you may design your lives to be fulfilling spiritually.

Your lives are much like the flickering fire that gives you warmth. The fire is filled with light, with energy. Its warmth always moves outwards. It is never totally contained. It has the potential to expand and provide greater warmth. Your lives therefore also share in that potential for expansion.

You live your lives to provide warmth to others. You live your lives to allow that potential to expand. You live your lives to rejoice when you experience a relief of anxiety or worry. Those moments when you feel fully whole are not empty. They serve a great purpose, for in your rejoicing you are acknowledging an appreciation for what it is to go through life not in such a state of wellbeing. By recognizing what it feels like not to be in perfect health, you are given the skills and strength of compassion to be exercised toward those who in some manner or another experience the anxieties and fears that you have experienced in the past.

Being freed of a burden means you are freed in order to serve. When you experience the joy of being unburdened, you are given the strength to unburden another. You cannot fully understand what another endures unless you, too, have endured similar concerns. One is therefore blessed to be able to live from the perspective of an understanding of the afflictions of others.

You are given strength to respond. You are given compassion to lead. You are given an ability to listen—to listen to what others say, to listen to what others wish to express of their own anxieties and fears. You are therefore strengthened by the experiences that you actually endure.

Life is given grace by the growth that takes place through adversity, but it is given character by how you express that growth to another. Each of you knows what it means to feel lost. Each of you has experienced anxiety, worry, and concerns. Who better to express compassionate love than one who has experienced the need for compassionate love? Nonjudgmental love can only be active when it is expressed by those who have experienced it. When you experience anxiety and frustration or depression or fear, your vulnerability also allows you to welcome the compassionate expression of love offered genuinely and freely by another. What an absolutely clear glimpse of God that becomes!

Your lives are filled with opportunities for these glimpses. Your lives are filled with opportunities to serve and to bring dignity to another. For all such opportunities you

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should be grateful, for you are given the capacity to grow. You are given the warmth and light that can nurture and reflect a glimpse of God to another human being. You become, as it were, precisely that which you seek, and the circle is complete and the grace of love is continued.

You are blessed in that circle. You are blessed in your recognition of it, your valuing of it, and in your commitment to strengthen it and broaden it so that it may encircle all of humankind. This is not merely a lofty goal. It is a beacon that can serve to direct your lives with meaning and purpose, joy and fulfillment, and it will bring you peace at last.

God's peace is yours at this moment. Feel it. Remember it. Become it!

Amen.