

Wisdoms from the Journey

(Volume IV ... Nov 11 thru May 12)



*...a few of the in-Sight-full sayings
& inspirational images that
I have been blessed to gently gather
while wandering along my Way*

via Scaughdt
an (i)am publication

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*“You do not write your life with words...
You write it with actions. What you think is not important.
It is only important what you do.” ~ Patrick Ness*



*"Wisdom is knowing what to do next;
Virtue is doing it." ~ David Starr Jordan*

*"There is no wisdom without Love."
~ Nilakanta Sri Ram*

An Introduction to what Follows

Everyone ends up collecting something as they journey through Life ... For me, I simply ended up being drawn – while searching for “the truth” – to collect Truths.

Now, ideological “truth” is a funny thing; slippery according to circumstance and very hard to pin down once captured ... As such, it is very unlike Wisdom, which is constant -- obvious and tangible and plain and unchanging.

Indeed (in-deed), even though we have been taught that Truth and Wisdom are “kissing cousins”, in actuality they couldn’t be more different. “Truth” is conceptual, while Wisdom is verifiable ... “Truth” is knowledge – a noun, while Wisdom is the setting that knowledge into harmonious motion – a verb ... “Truth” ponders & theorizes & hypothesizes, while Wisdom simply identifies what functions ... “Truth” might delineate our choices, and yet it is Wisdom that guides us towards making good ones ... “Truth” is intellectual; accumulating information and defining meanings. Wisdom is practical; making “facts” (and therefore Life itself) Meaning-full ... “Truth” changes over time – contracting as old information is found lacking & expanding as new information is found to bear “Good Fruit”, while Wisdom remains the constant bellwether through which those evolutions ensue ... “Truth” is a powerful tool – one that is utterly useless (and even drastically dangerous) unless skillfully used in harmony with acquired Wisdom ... In essence, as one scholar once put it: “Truth is knowing that a tomato is a fruit; Wisdom is knowing not to put tomatoes into fruit salad.”

As such, it is the former – “Truth” – that I have gently abandoned as “false”, and it is the latter – “Wisdom” – that I have repeatedly rediscovered to be True. And so it is that while I do most humbly and most publicly now declare that I most certainly do *not* have access to anything resembling “*the Truth*”, I most certainly *do* have access to a set of principles & values that – to the degree that they are courageously applied & enlivened – always prove to be Wise. And it is these same principles & values that are represented by the words & images contained in the pages that follow ...

May you each receive much Peace while reading them &/or gazing upon them, and may at least a few of them inspire you to go forth and know the Bliss that only comes to those who choose to put their Goodness into motion.

Amen ... Let it be so.

Scaughdt

December 8, 2014



“The art of being wise is knowing what to overlook.”
~ William James

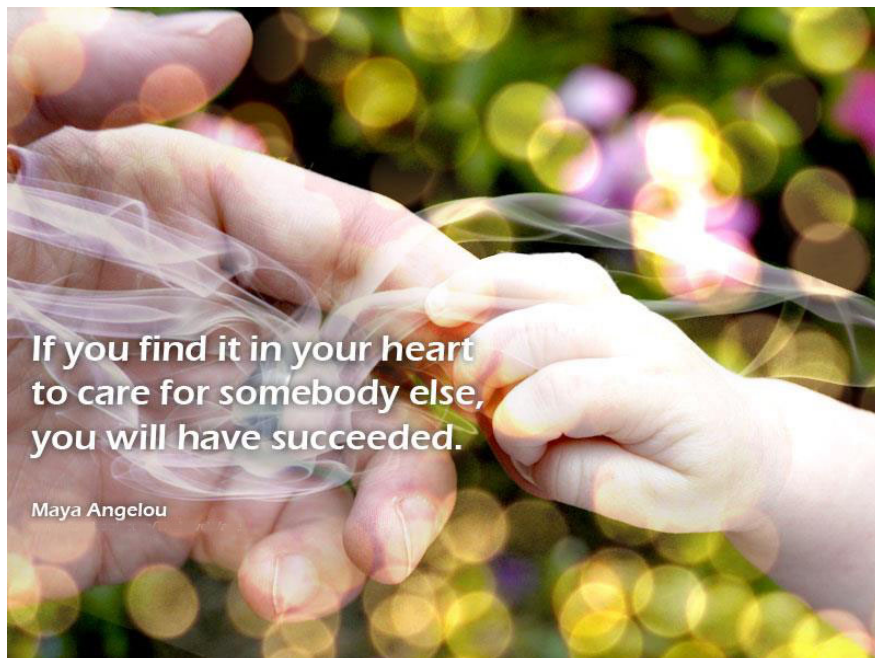
Not giving up ...
(11/01/2011)

“It doesn’t interest me to know where you live or how much you have. I want to know if you can get up, after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done to feed the children ... I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.” ~ Oraiah Mountain Dreamer

I know there are days when life seems “bad” — when your... heart feels like its been torn to pieces, or when you feel abandoned & alone, or when you are in so much physical pain that you have trouble just getting out of bed. And on such days, the ego can be extra insidious ... It will tell you that you are too sad or tired or in too much pain to make a difference. It will tell you that you don’t make a difference, period.

Well, I have some good news ... On the very days when all seems especially hopeless, there is indeed hope. For on those days it is no longer necessary for you to do anything “big” to make a difference. On those days you make a difference just by having the courage to get out of bed anyway. On those days it is enough for you to care enough to refuse to give up — to muster the energy for one step towards another; to radiate one small smile.

So please remember that when the night is darkest, one tiny candle will light an entire room. It IS enough that you get out of bed ... It is enough that you simply refuse to give up.



Love is Courage ...
(11/02/2011)

I have often searched the depths of my mind for peace, & I have journeyed over & again to the ends of the earth looking for Love. Both these quests have always ended in vain ...

And yet today I seek these things no more, for I find them, whole and untarnished, every time I give them to another.

*“We waste time looking for the perfect lover,
instead of creating the perfect Love.” ~ Tom Robbins*

*“You don’t have to go looking for Love
when it’s where you come from.” ~ Werner Erhard*

*“Love is a fruit in season at all times,
and within reach of every hand.” ~ Mother Teresa*



Bravery is the ego crushing our fear of Love with distance or bravado, while Courage is being deathly afraid of Love & yet choosing to Love anyway ...

... Choose Courage.

Letting GO ...
(11/03/2011)

*“I try ... I fail.
I try again ... I fail again.
I try harder ... I fail even worse.
I am determined to see Love “win”,
so I try again ... I fail spectacularly.
I let go of all my desires ...
I simply Love for Love’s sake ...
... & I succeed.”*
~ inspired by Samuel Beckett

I have been trying so hard to “Love correctly” lately. I have been striving so hard to “do it right” and “make a difference” and “be good enough”. Over & over I have tried — and over & over I have failed.

And yet I realize today that it was not me who failed. It was not my “wrong actions” that led to disaster. Rather, it was my striving that ensured my defeat. I was failing because I wasn’t actually Loving at all. Indeed, it is impossible for us to truly Love another while laboring for a particular outcome that we deem to be “better” or “best” for them.

In the end, our task is not to have Love blossom a certain way or even to help another to understand Love as we know it. Our calling — nay our privilege — is simply to Care, without any hope or agenda at all.

It is our privilege, quite simply, to simply Love.



Love anyway ...
(11/04/2011)

I think it is clear to us all that Love is not a warm feeling you have for someone, but is actually a caring deed you do *for* them. And I see many people these days — more & more every day — who are engaging acts of Love for others as opposed to merely maintaining mere “warm & fuzzy” thoughts about them ... This is a good thing in-deed.

*“The road to holiness always passes
through the realm of action.” ~ Dag Hammarskjöld*

*“All who Love ...would win must give it ...
Love was born a twin.” ~ inspired by Byron*

And yet I think it is also clear to all that the only Love that is powerful is the Love that is difficult to give. After all, who really takes notice when we hug a best friend or wish a Lover well from afar? These are good things to do, of course (keep doing them!), AND they are also not powerful deeds — they do not bring about real Peace and they do not enliven real Love.

*“Strive to rediscover your true,
honest, untheoretical Self.” ~ Brenda Ueland*

No, real Love is born and lives only in the moments we do not wish to do a Kind deed, and yet reach out to do that deed anyway ...

*It is born when we set aside a large chunk of time to speak with a Loved one, instead of doing “more important” tasks or meeting “more important” people ... And it is born when we so wish to speak with a Loved one and yet do not call him, instead of even rightfully demanding his time.

*It is born when we gently hold a Lover, instead of going to sleep because we are exhausted from a long day’s work ... And it is born when we let a tired Lover sleep, instead of reaching out to be held.

*It is born when we sit down next to a beggar and speak with her, instead of dropping some change and walking away ... And it is born when we gently forgive an enemy who is harming us, instead of reasonably lashing out in self-defense.

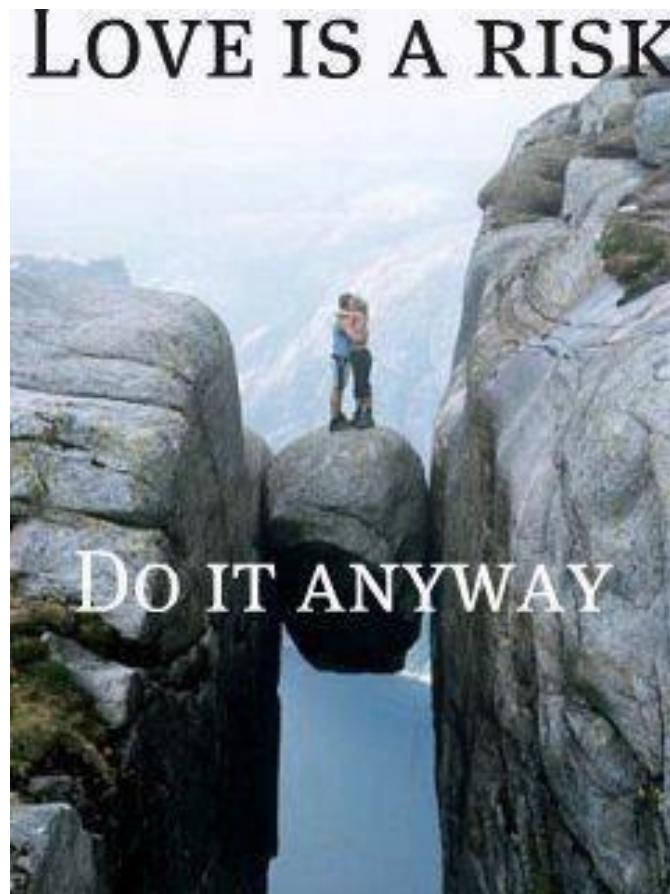
I could provide many more examples of such “radical Kindness”, of course, and yet I think you get the point ...

In essence, we have not been offered this amazingly Beauty-filled life merely to revel in it for as long as possible (though reveling in life is indeed highly recommended) ... No, we have *ALSO* been given this miraculous life to use the limited time we have in it to give others the very Love that is most difficult for us to give.

This is what it means to live a “holy life” ...

This is what it means to rediscover your “untheoretical self” ...

In-deed, this is what it means to Love.



*“If you don’t risk anything,
you risk everything.” ~ inspired by Erica Long*

Reveling in the IS ...
(11/05/2011)

*“The artist is extremely lucky
who is presented with the worst possible ordeal
which will not actually kill him.
At that point he is in business.” ~ John Barrymore*

Pain is an integral part of living, and yet our suffering is not. Our suffering comes from *OUR* choices; from refusing to see that pain is part of the process of awakening; and that discomfort is a necessary facet of our reawakening. Indeed, without the challenge of pain, we would never let go of all that “could be” or “should be”; we would never choose to embrace the life that already IS.

*“It is not frustrating to be where one is.
It is only frustrating to think
one would like to be somewhere else.” ~ John Cage*

Indeed, there is no more important task than the one waiting already before you ... There is no more important Love to give than to the person(s) with whom you already share your life. There is no “better job” to do, and no “perfect partner” for us to find. For the Meaning in life comes not from finding “something better”, but from opening up to what is already here.

“Jump.” ~ Joseph Campbell

Every one of our frustrations comes solely from striving to find & fill “bigger” & “better” shoes ... the very shoes that life has already placed upon our feet.

We don't need new shoes, my Friends.
We simply need to get up & courageously set forth in the ones we are already wearing ...

Happy trails!



Let's Dance ...
(11/06/2011)

It's Sunday today — a day when a significant portion of the population in this country is going to church to engage their once-a-week tête-à-tête with God. Well, I'm here to tell you, we don't have to wait for Sunday to "go to church", and we sure as heck don't need to be still & "reverent" on Sunday when we do so. Indeed, I've got some really great news: The Divine is always everywhere ...

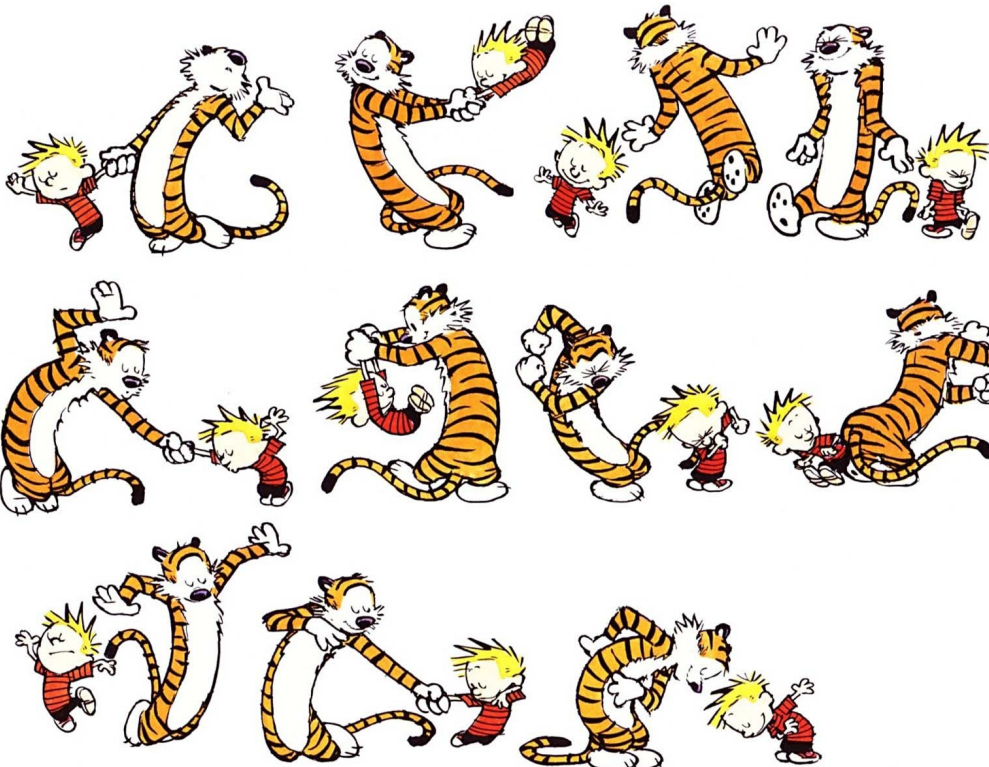
... and It simply *loves* to dance!

"I would believe only in a God that knows how to dance." ~ Nietzsche

"Never trust spiritual leader who cannot dance." ~ Mr. Miyagi

You've only got this one brief life in the body you currently inhabit, my Friends. So dedicate today to being exuberantly thankful for that body; dedicate today to worshipping your version of God the way He (or She, or It) really wants you to — by moving joyously ... by laughing while dancing ... by dancing as though there is no tomorrow (there isn't) ... by dancing as though you remember how Wonder-ful this glorious life truly is.

"Kids: they choose to dance before they learn that there is anything that isn't music." ~ William Stafford



"Become again as a child." ~ Jesus

(Get out there and have fun ... you kids!)

Seeking to Accept ...
(11/06/2011)

*“Always carry with you a little reasonable doubt,
just in case you meet someone
who needs to be found innocent.”
~ Robert Brault*

*“Be slow to criticize
and quick to commend.” ~ John Wooden*

*“Kindness is in our power,
even when fondness is not.” ~ Samuel Johnson*

(Note: your analysis of others is always either
self-reflective -- or incorrect.)

BELIEVE
THERE IS
GOOD IN
THE WORLD

(To See the Good,
you've got to **Be the Good.**)

Fare-well for Now ...
(11/07/2011)

*“I’m not a teacher: only a fellow traveler
of whom you have asked the way.
I have merely pointed ahead – ahead for myself, yes.
And yet also ahead for you.” ~ inspired by G. B. Shaw*

I’ve had lots of fun on Facebook over the past year+ of my life. Intimate dialogues have been exchanged, clear Wisdom has been shared, strong Friendships have been forged & strengthened ... For a man who poo-poo’d social media in general back in 2009, it sure is amusing how important Facebook has become in my life recently. It can’t ever take the place of person-to-person interaction, of course, and yet it is a Beauty-full way to connect and reconnect with others ... Like everything else in life, Facebook is what we make it, and I am so thankful to all of you for making it so Meaning-full and enlightening for me.

That having been said, the next several months of my life hint of sporadic Internet access and a large amount of interacting with others directly — which will limit my time to share online. Of course, I will be logging on whenever it’s “in the flow”, and when I do I will still joyfully answer any questions or field any comments any of you might have. I realize that all of you already possess the answers to all of your own questions, and yet I recognize that dialogue with another can sometimes bring clarity closer to Awareness’ smooth surface.

*“Advice is what we ask for when we already know the answer ...
... but wish we didn’t.” ~ Erica Long*

The Journey that is Life flows ever onward. In various ways, we are all seeking to “comprehend Truth” & “find Life’s Purpose”. And yet in the end, Life is far too vast an adventure to ever fully understand ... We simply cannot ever hope to “figure it out”.



We can only keep bringing ourselves back to each particular moment, and extend as much Love as we can to those with whom we are blessed to share the ride.

Peace & Joy to you all ... S

*“I cannot understand; I Love.” ~ Alfred
Lord Tennyson*

LOVE lives on ...
(12/07/2011)

*“There is no Love without forgiveness,
and there is no forgiveness without Love.”*
~ Bryant H. McGill

“Forgiveness is the final form of Love.”
~ Reinhold Niebuhr

*“While a relationship that ends never truly began,
it only takes one to keep Love alive.” ~ anonymous*



HUMAN NATURE

IN THE MIDST OF HUNGER, HOPELESSNESS AND DEATH;
HAPPINESS, CARING AND LOVE IS STILL IN ABUNDANCE.
REMEMBER THIS PICTURE THE NEXT TIME YOU FEEL LIKE
YOU'RE TOO ANGRY TO HUG, HOLD OR KISS YOUR MATE.

motifake.com

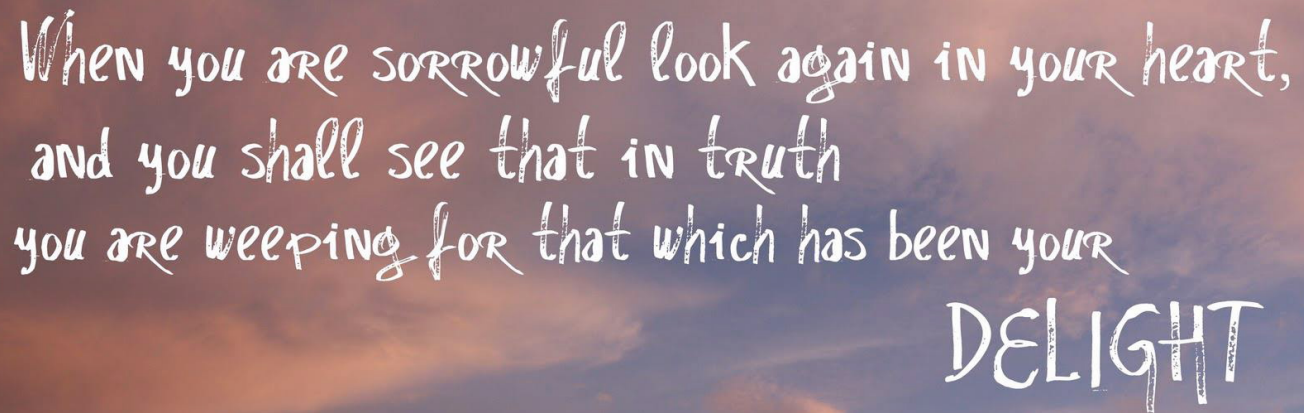
(Forgiveness real and true ... is a verb.)

To Live, LOVE ...
(12/29/2011)

*“Choose Life over all the other stuff. Get out of your head ...
LIVE. Dress up ... Revel. Reach out to others ... Help out. Give up ...
LOVE people ... Give your best away.*

*There’s more to life than what you’ve been taught & told. Feeling stressed? Relax. You’re going to die? Throw a party ... Eat off my plate ... **SING ... DANCE ... GIVE** out random hugs. Let your amazement out into the room. Pry open the box in which you currently hide your Joy ... **BECOME** a poem.”*

~ inspired by John Patrick Shanley



When you are sorrowful look again in your heart,
and you shall see that in truth
you are weeping for that which has been your
DELIGHT

- Kahlil Gibran

Nothing & everything ...
(12/29/2011)

“So many conditions intertwined in the mind. One must unravel thousands of knots and at times when we unravel one we accidentally create a new one. The labor is great and can only be accomplished with Love; the Love of the labor first, and then Love for the individuals who knotted us to begin with. And once Love has loosened those knots light can reach our inner-most being. And over time that light breaks down the strong fibers of the conditions that have previously caused us distress. And once all those conditions are untangled there is nothing left but emptiness, and through that emptiness a kind of loneliness emerges along ... And it is that divine loneliness that truly unites us all.” ~ inspired by Osho

Osho’s “unraveling the knots of the mind” is indeed a path to Awakening, to be sure, and yet it is a highly inefficient one ... I prefer the Way of the Heart, which completely & instantly frees the True Self from all ego-bondage in every moment of Joy-full self-sacrifice ... And once **this** Freedom of Self is attained, I have found not emptiness within, but **EVERYTHINGNESS** — not a loneliness, but a recognition that we are all separate-yet-interconnected; that we are all **ONE!!!**

As such, once we have awakened to **this** Truth, it is no longer possible to feel lonely – as we realize that we are never truly alone.

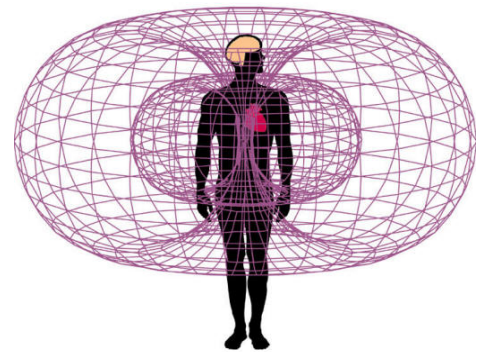


The Final Step ... (12/29/2011)

“Realize that you are the generator of all emotions, that you control your reaction to anyone and any situation ... With courage, focus your awareness in the chalice of the heart ... Your heart beat is connected to the vibrations of the planet ... It is your mission, your purpose, to consciously use this power source to radiate Love to all ... It is the intelligence of the heart that will guide and uplift you in all your actions. Practice asking your heart before you ask your mind. Practice bridging and connecting the heart’s intelligence with the brain’s intelligence ... Envision this upon awakening and throughout your day ... Practice finding the emotions of gratitude ... Practice feeling acceptance and compassion for your neighbors, the stranger on the street, the homeless individual you encounter ... It is so important for you to realize and own that when you practice heart consciousness it affects your health, your family, friends, surroundings and the global matrix.”

~ Peggy Black

Realize as well that visualizing Love alone is merely the first, small step on the Path to Awakening ... And realize thereafter that extending uncomfortable acts of Kindness is the only step that thereafter remains.



Re-mem-bering Clarity (01/02/2012)

*“This place where you are right now,
God has circled on the map for you.” ~ Hafiz*

We cannot clearly see our current Moment without knowing where we have been, & we cannot truly know where we have been without pausing long enough to re-cognize where we are headed ... And where we are headed — where we are *ALL* headed, slowly yet surely — is back to a reunion with The One ... we are all flowing steadily (though sometimes not so smoothly) back towards a Bliss-filled experience of our own innate Divinity; back towards a knowing of complete Harmony with all that *IS*.

And know that this is not a Journey of “learning” or of “growth” — we don’t need to learn anything new whatsoever to get there, nor do we need to “better” our current selves or improve in any way. All we need to do is have the humility to look at our lives through the clear lenses of “Who Can I Help”, as opposed to the foggy goggles of “How can I be happier?”

We are allReady Divine, my Friends — and all we need to do to *EXPERIENCE* this Truth is have the courage to act accordingly; even for just one small bundle of moments ... All we need to do is re-*member* what we already know.

*At the very latest on our deathbed, we will remember that our lives are to be Lived for the in-Joy-ment of others, not for the gathering of our own pleasures & comforts ...

*At the very latest on our deathbed, we will remember that all of the people who harmed us — every one of them — showed us clearly where we were stuck; they showed us what we had to release in order to finally experience true Peace ...

*At the very latest on our deathbed, we will remember that real Success has absolutely nothing to do with what we “earn” or what we “achieve” in life.

At the very latest on our deathbeds we will know these things ...

... but why wait until then to re-member?



Never growing UP ...
(01/05/2012)

Sometimes children remind us of facts we have long since forgotten ...
“No matter how hard you try, you can’t baptize cats.” ~ unknown child

... and sometimes they remind us of Truths we need to remember:
“Love is foolish...but we still need to try it sometimes.” ~ Floyd (age 9)

When I am around children, I am reminded that, even though growing old is eventually required of us all, “growing up” is optional. We can choose to remain “young at heart” and revel in the times we have been given — and this, no matter how “old” we are ...

And yet this fact is not enough for me.

For there is an even deeper Wisdom I’d like to share with you as well: that to avoid “growing up”, it is not enough for us laugh as children laugh (though whole-hearted laughter is indeed a very good thing), nor is it enough for us to live as children live (though having fun is also a fine way to appreciate life).

No, to truly keep from “growing up”, to truly avoid eventually becoming jaded and brittle and tired and bored, it is necessary for us to also remember how it feels to Love like children Love ... the all-out, soaked-in-the-moment, no-holds-barred, completely selfless, don’t-care-at-all-what-anyone-else-thinks-or-says, never-ever-quit-on-you-or-leave-you **LOVE**.



You see, to **Love** like this is what it means to “become again as a child” ...

... to **Love** like this is what it means to remain “forever young” ...

... and to **Love** like this is what it means to be truly Happy.

True Happiness ...
(01/10/2012)

*“It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves,
and yet it is not possible to find it elsewhere.” ~ Agnes Repplier*

We are all looking for happiness — that’s part of the program with which we enter this life — and each of us is alone responsible for finding Joy in living. Odd then, isn’t it, that we spend so much time worrying about what other folks believe about how we are living ...

*“What will they think of me?” must be put aside
for Bliss to come. ~ Joseph Campbell*

Indeed, the way to true Happiness isn’t that difficult to comprehend, though it is rather difficult to experience (Hint: it cannot be found via accumulating physical pleasure or hoarding material “wealth”) ... For starters, we have to set aside all fear — especially the fear of being labeled or judged or condemned for what we choose to do or say or think or believe.

Thereafter, we simply have to make life simple ... We have to make life about *THIS MOMENT*, we have to make it about what we can *DO FOR ANOTHER* — and then we have to take a step ... just one step (even a small one) in that general direction.

That’s it. It’s simple, really ...
simple, yet absolutely brilliant.

So enjoy, my Friends ... in Joy!

*“Simple does not
mean stupid.”
~ inspired by
Benjamin Hoff*



HAPPINESS

A Cure for every dis-ease ... (01/20/2012)

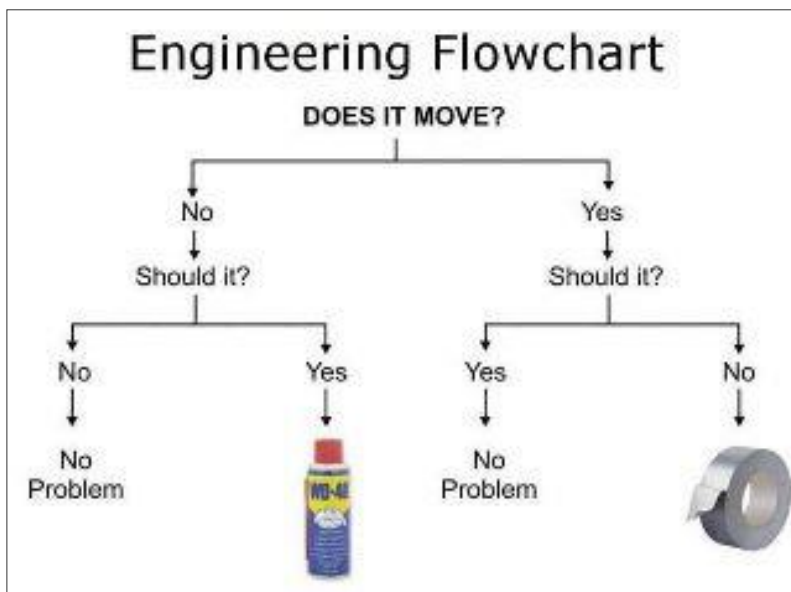
Life keeps on sending us challenges ... No matter how “well-adjusted” or “wise” or “functional” we become, we will all continue to experience situations that will be painful or frustrating, and we will do so for the rest of our lives. It’s the “nature of the beast” — it is the nature of living a conscious life — it is the nature of being human.

And yet, even though we cannot hope to attain a life that is constantly and permanently pleasant, we **can** choose to accept the “hard times” with grace when they come ... and we **can** choose to use our difficulties as sources of empowerment ... and we **can** choose to Love (& thereby be Happy) anyway.

Indeed, every time something “bad” happens to us, there is an alternative available to all conscious beings — an alternative to bemoaning our “bad luck” or railing against that “injustice” or striving to fix that “unfairness”.

In some of those moments, there is nothing we can actively do about the problem that caused our pain. And yet, even in such “helpless” times, we **can** pause for one second and choose to be thankful anyway — we **can** choose to be thankful that we are alive at all. And this is the mental “WD-40” that allows us to slide back into being Joy-full again.

There are also moments when our dis-ease comes from another person. In those times, there IS something we can actively do to alleviate our own suffering. We can pause for just one second -- and then choose to do something Kind for that person. And *this* is the “duct tape” that reconnects us; that mends that discord; that eventually turns enemies into friends — ultimately forcing that other to choose between being Kind to us in return, or leaving us in Peace.



WD-40 & Duct-tape & **LOVE** ...
... They really are the answer for every problem.

Facing fear ...
(01/12/2012)

*Having died of self-interest, we risk everything and ask for nothing.
Love gladly parts with every gift that God has bestowed.
For without cause God gave us Life;
So without cause, we give it back again.” ~ Rumi*

Yes, we can “take care of ourselves” and thereby come to “have a good life” ... Yes, we can invest in “healthy boundaries” & thereby keep ourselves “safe” ... And yes, we can strive to attain “balance in our relationships” and thereby receive the “love” that we do indeed deserve.

And ... I wonder if this is what life is really all about.

I wonder if real happiness comes from simply gathering “fun” and in investing primarily in those who love us (and/or in those we happen to love). When we are lying on our deathbeds, I wonder if we are going to look back on such “justified selfishness” with a sense of accomplishment — or with a sense of regret (if not disgust, or even dread).

Frankly, I’m not so sure ... Yes, everyone has to decide for themselves what they are going to do with the time they have left. **AND** -- I think I’m going to err on the side of believing that there is more to this Journey than my own sense of ease & pleasure. I think I’m going to err on the side of believing that there is more to being human than living a long, comfortable life ...



I think I’m going to err on the side of believing that I am here to serve, not to merely be served; that I am here not to live a life of mere “happiness”, but rather to enLiven one that is full of Peace & Meaning. I think I’m going to err on the side of believing that I can make a significant, positive difference in others’ lives (even if it turns out in the end that I cannot).

In essence, I think I'm going to err on the side of **LOVE** — not the “love” that feels warm & fuzzy when everything is going well (though that feeling is quite nice when it comes). I mean the **LOVE** that comes when we are being harmed and yet choose to forgive; I mean the **LOVE** that comes when we are tired or in pain and yet choose to get up and Care for another anyway; I mean the **LOVE** that comes when we go out of our way to extend Kindness to those we do not like or those who are treating us poorly.

After all, real **LOVE** is “an intense appreciation for another’s life via a reckless disregard for one’s own.” (anonymous) And *this* is the only **LOVE** that will create the change we all wish to see — *this* is the only **LOVE** that will bring us the deep-seated Peace & the Joy that are our true birthrights.

It takes great courage to live this **LOVE**, of course, and yet that is what makes it so powerful when it is chosen. And if the little man in the photo on the precious page can stare down that bull (naked, no less!), can't we at the very least get out there and be Kind to our “enemies” — even if only for a few minutes? ... Of course we can!

So who's with me? ... Who's ready to go forth today and do one “radically Kind” deed?

Who's ready to step up and experience how it feels to **LOVE**?



Luv, mo betta ...
(01/17/2012)

*“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that ...
Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism
or trudge through the darkness of destructive selfishness.”
~ inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Dr. King was right — not only because he took the stand that was “moral”, but also because he took the stand that *functioned* ...

He and those who courageously followed his example proved that it is both practical & effective to extend Love to those who are harming us — he & his proved that “evil” people (or those who are “abusive” &/or “dysfunctional”) are not looking for our energy or our pain, but rather are looking for our anger or our sadness or our fear. They are looking for victims. And when we choose to give them compassionate Love instead, they ultimately have no choice but to look for their “victims” elsewhere ...

What is truly fantastic about Dr. King’s example of Peace-fullness is that it not only works against the injustice of political oppression; it not only works in large groups — *It works just as well in ALL our relationships!*

When our loved ones or our family members or our coworkers or our bosses or our classmates or even life’s strangers are harming us consciously, the one thing they cannot stand to receive in return is unconditional Love. And if we have the strength to extend raw, unconditional Kindness in response to their selfishness, and when we have the courage to persist in doing so (not to “change them for the better, but merely to be Kind to them), these “dysfunctional” & “abusive” folks are forced to change their behaviors.



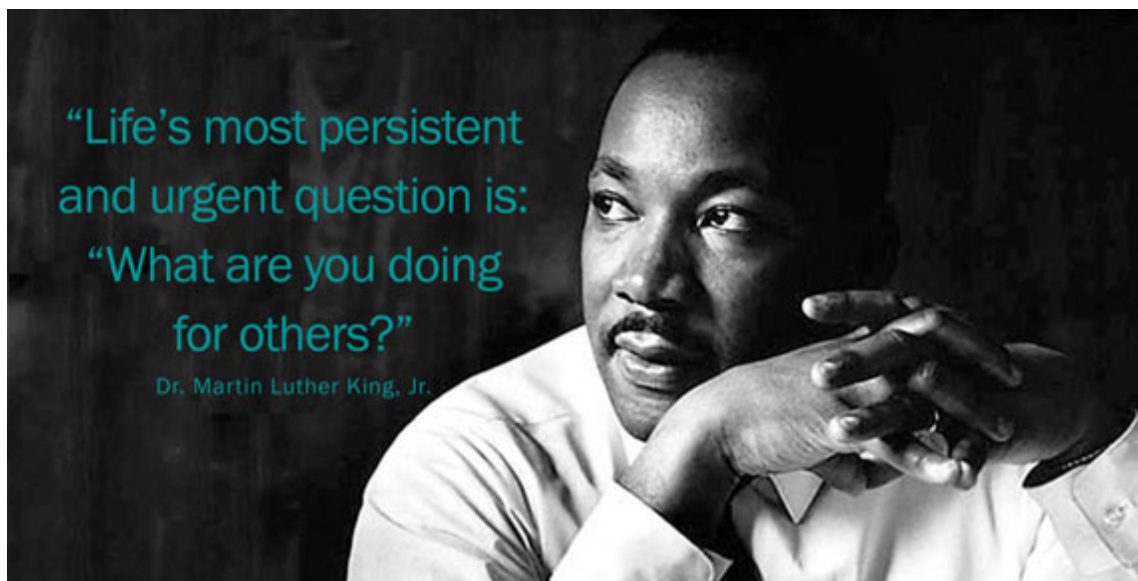
Sometimes our Love “wakes them up” — reminding them of their true, caring Selves -- whereby they cease being abusive altogether. Most of the time, however – and at the very least, they have no choice but to leave us in Peace and look for their ‘victims’ elsewhere – to look for others who will give them the fear &/or anger that they “deserve” and desire.

And that is what is so wonderful about Dr. King’s rediscovery ... It really has nothing at all to do with the more nebulous concepts found in spirituality or ethics. Rather, it is a profound behavioral Truth founded in the very basics of human psychology. It is practical, it is functional, and best of all — it’s Love is transformative; both for those of us who have the courage to give it, and for those who are blessed to receive it as well.

Now *THAT* is real Grace! And *THAT* is something we can *all* use to make this world a better place ... and we can do so every single day!

But don’t take my word for it ... Heck, don’t even take Martin Luther King’s word for it. Go and see for yourself how amazing Love is — especially the LOVE that is hardest to give.

“Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love ... Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him ... The means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek.”
~ Martin Luther King, Jr.



Judge not ... (01/22/2012)

*“A hallucination is a fact, not an error;
what is erroneous is any judgment we base upon it.”
~ Bertrand Russell*

We have a habit of criticizing others ... We have a habit of analyzing their choices and attempting to correct their mistakes ... We have a habit of witnessing a certain behavior and then formulating a general opinion about the person who performed it. We catch someone lying to us and we label them a “liar”. We see someone behaving fearfully and we label them “a coward”. We see another consciously causing another being pain and we label them “evil”.

Fair enough — sometimes our analysis might even be correct. We might very well be able to guess another’s motives correctly (though most of the time we do not), **and yet** no matter how accurate our observations might be, the only thing that we are truly illuminating in such moments are *our own* tendencies ... We cannot see the “liar” in another without currently in some way being a liar ourselves. We cannot see the “coward” in another without currently in some way behaving like a coward ourselves. Indeed, we cannot even see the “evil” in another without being “evil” enough to arrogantly make that very judgment!

And yet, we continue to point those fingers ... We continue to analyze and criticize and correct and condemn. This instinct is so deeply programmed in us all, and you might believe it is too difficult for you to discontinue. If so, fair enough — just remember the next time(s) you do so that every time you point one finger outward at another, there are *always* three fingers pointing back at yourself; that it is a patent Truth that we can only “see” in others what we ourselves already are, recently were or are about to be.

So judge all you want, folks — just remember to catch yourself doing so; look in the mirror and humbly see the same tendency in yourself, and then act with compassion immediately thereafter; *especially* towards the very person you are judging.

Please remember that none of us are our mistakes ... that none of us are our “sins” ... that none of us are our behaviors. You are a Beauty-full, Kind & Caring being who sometimes makes selfish mistakes ... And so, too, is *EVERYONE* else in your life.

Please remember this today —
... and please act accordingly.



Kindness matters ... (01/24/2012)

Yesterday, my supervisor and I had an interesting discussion. As it turns out, he took a bit of an exception to the small acts of Kindness that I was doing for others at work ...

Now it wasn't anything big or saintly I was doing for them — just refilling the espresso machine with coffee beans & cleaning up after others every now and then & doing the small favor here or there. It wasn't that big of a deal each time, and the folks for whom I did these deeds seemed to appreciate them (even though most of the time I did them “secretly”).

Still, my supervisor made some good points as to why I shouldn't be Kind in this way:

*He said that each favor I do might be small in & of itself, but that together they made for a lot of extra work ... And you know, I think he was right about that.

*He said that correcting others' mistakes would never force them to “learn the hard way” ... You know, I think he was right about that as well.

*He said that being Kind to others in this way would lead them to expect the same in the future, and to then be disappointed in me (or even angry with me) if I ever stopped helping them in this manner ... Once again, his argument seemed to be “on the money”.

And yet, even though he made sound arguments, I think I'm going to keep being Kind anyway ... I think the extra work (even if it turns out to be a lot of extra work) is time well spent. I think that saving others the pain of “learning the hard way” is always a good thing to do (they will, after all, have *many* other opportunities in their lives to learn from pain). And I think that it feels really good to be Kind to another, because I am doing it for *THEM* — not to receive anything in return; not to have them like me more or think well of me.

In essence, Kindness may not be the most practical way to deal with people, and yet it *IS* the only way that brings real Joy ...

... And I think that Joy, not practicality, is what we truly need.



Candle in the darkness ...
(01/30/2012)

“In the meantime, remember that it is those of us who comprehend the perfect Light of Love who have been called to walk in the darkness — to light the way for others stumbling in the gloom; and this whether those others choose to follow our flame or not ... Alone bringing the candle near gives them warmth — even if they choose to remain where they are, cold and shivering in the abyss.

*Please remember: even when it is seemingly rejected or unperceived, selfless & gentle Love **always** inspires transcendence of the past; **always** effectuates evolution in the present; and always brings more Harmony to the future ... **ALWAYS.**” ~ anonymous*



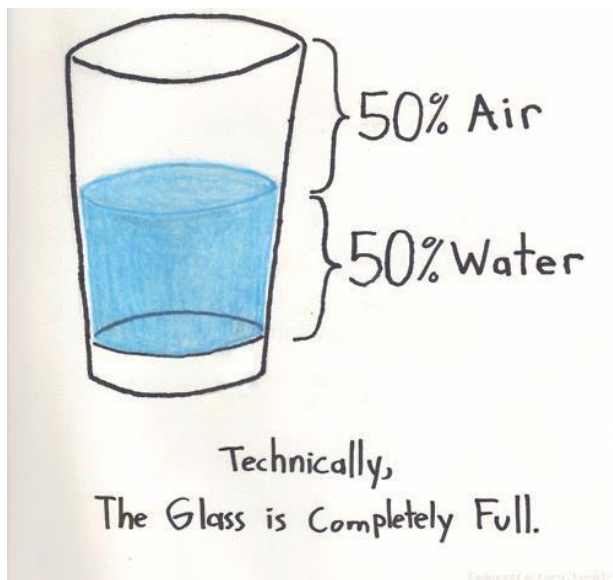
Glass half-full ... (02/03/2012)

“The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice.
And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice,
there is nothing we can do to change ...
... at least until we notice our failing to notice.”
~ inspired by R.D. Laing

... and the biggest thing we keep failing to notice is that *LIFE IS ALWAYS GOOD*. This doesn't mean that it is always pleasurable, of course, and yet there truly is allWays – in every single moment – a Great Good available to us.

We all know that when we are having a “good time” and are “feeling good”, we can revel in gratitude for the same. I assume that most of you, like me, are already quite good at this ... And yet it is the other side of the coin that is so intriguing. After all, how difficult is it to be happy when things are going well? It is for this reason that it is the times when life is “bad” or painful or frustrating or disturbing or scary that we can awaken to what it means to be powerfully Human(e) — the times when we can stop moping or complaining or bemoaning our “bad luck”, and get out there to Care for someone else instead.

Understand that this selflessness isn't a duty or a requirement or an obligation ... Rather, the ability to “be Kind when least inclined” is a *privilege*; an *honor* bestowed upon very few organisms in our Universe — most of whom are ruled by their primitive self-preservative instincts; their drive to survive. We humans, on the other hand, as potentially fully conscious beings, can always pause in such situations and do something radical — we can choose to reach out when we most want to retreat; we can choose to forgive when we most want to attack; we can choose to courageously Care when we most want to disengage & look away.



And *THIS* is the ability that is so priceless to us ... *THIS* is the greatest of our many blessings ... *THIS* is the choice, regardless of our particular personal circumstances, that can make our life's glass completely full!

So here's to your emotional Health, my Friends ... Drink up.

The glass is full & the water's fine!

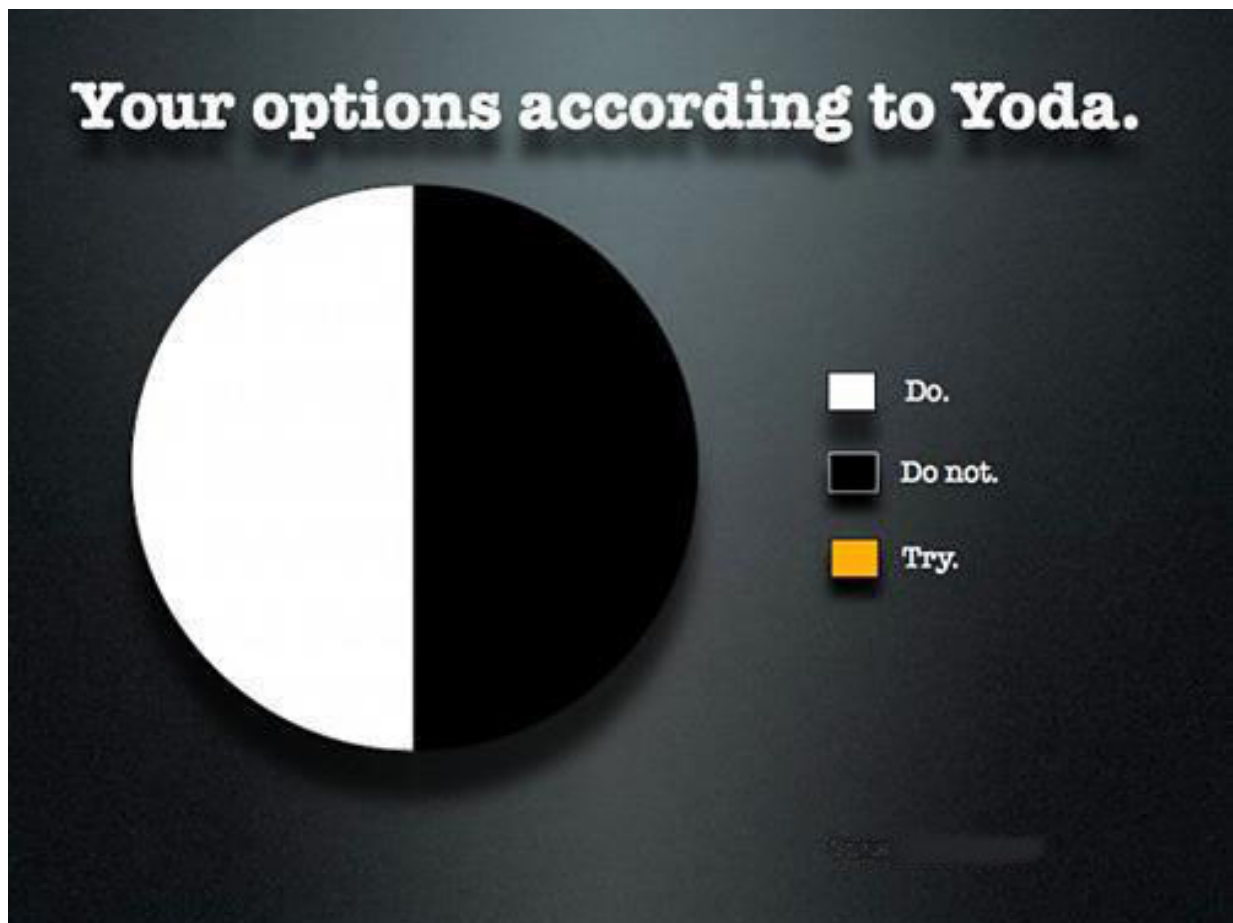
Just LOVE ...
(02/16/2012)

When it comes to Caring for others, it's really pretty simple:

When in doubt, avoid worrying about whether a particular person is a stranger or a friend or an enemy; and avoid analyzing whether or not a potential act of Kindness will help or hinder ...

Just pause, look, find — and be Kind ...

It's really pretty simple: Just *LOVE!*



Do Good anyway ...
(02/18/2012)

I look for a chance to be Kind ...

I find one easily (every person encountered is such an opportunity) ...

I move forward to extend them some Kindness – a caring smile, a gentle nod of recognition, an encouraging word – and then my ego chimes in:

“You are only one person — you can’t make a real difference.”

“Being briefly Kind to a stranger won’t really make their life better.”

“What if you scare them or make them uncomfortable?”

“What if they reject your Good Deed?”

“What if you fail?”

*It's the action, not the
fruit of the action,
that is important.
You have to do the right thing.
It may not be in your power,
nor in your time,
that there will be any fruit.
But that doesn't mean you
stop doing the right thing.
You may never even know
what results come
from your action.
But if you do nothing,
there will be nothing.*

– Gandhi

Well, I might indeed be only one person, ...

... and I might indeed not make anyone’s life significantly better,

... and I might indeed scare someone or make them uncomfortable,

... and they might indeed reject my act of Caring.

Heck, I might indeed even “fail”.

And yet, I’m going to continue to err on the side of Giving ...

I think I’m just going to keep on being Kind anyway.

Remembering awesomeness ...

(02/19/2012)

“I will not die an un-lived life, I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire. I choose to fully inhabit my days; to allow my living to open me -- to make me less afraid, more accessible, to loosen my heart until it becomes a wing, a torch ... I choose to risk my significance; to live so that which came to me as seed goes to the next as a blossom, and that which came to me as a blossom, goes on as fruit.” ~ Dawna Markova

ahhhhhhhh ... I *love* how that Truth sounds ...
... & I *love* even more how that Wisdom *FEELS!*

Let's all go forth today and be our innate awesomeness.



(P.S. Awesome is as awesome does ...
Awesome, after all, is a verb.)

Seeking & Finding ... (02/22/2012)

“When someone seeks, then it often happens that his eyes see only the thing that he seeks, and he is therefore able to truly find nothing, to truly take in nothing – because he thinks only about the thing he is seeking; because he has one particular goal; because he is obsessed with that goal. Seeking means: having a goal. But FINDING, on the other hand, means: being free; being open; having no goal; choosing to simply See what there is to be Seen – and to simply Do what there is to be Done”
~ inspired by Herman Hesse (in Siddhartha)

In order to truly Find what our Hearts seek, we must have the humility to truly SEEK with an open-mind; we must be willing to See not what we wish to see, but rather to See what is already there to be Seen.

And to Seek in this manner, we must also have the courage to stop being led ... We must have the courage to set aside “learning” and “teachers” and “leaders” & *LIVE* our Truths, not merely think about them or read about them or talk about them ... We must be brave enough to enliven the wisdom of Jacques Cousteau and “go see for ourselves”.

So ... when you set forth to Love – when you set forth to really *LOVE*, without limit or expectation or hope or desire – what do *you* Find?



Big-time LOVE ...
(02/24/2012)

*“I pray to tumble headlong into Love,
and not reach out even once to try and break the fall.”
~ Danna Faulds*

Big-time *Love* requires some big-time courage – the courage to face the fears of rejection and ridicule ... the courage to face the fears of danger and pain ... the courage to face the fears of opening up to another person and letting them know -- regardless of how they might feel about you -- that you truly Care.

And this kind of Love cannot be relayed with words, & it certainly cannot be communicated powerfully with mere thought ... No, to share big-time *Love*, we have to get out there and *DO SOMETHING KIND* – especially for those who annoy us ... especially for those we dislike ... especially for strangers.

So why not start with the latter? Consider taking 15 minutes of your day today to go give a sandwich or a salad or a bag of healthy cookies to a stranger ... It’s fun, it will wake up the real You, and — much more importantly, it will shake the world!

“You need to pay more attention to what people do, not to what they say or how they seem. It’s what they do that tells you about them.” ~ Jean Pasley (from “How About You”)

Real LOVE is a verb ...
... got LOVE?



Fulfilling the Wish ...
(02/25/2012)

*“The right word may be effective,
but no word was ever as effective
as a rightly timed pause.” ~ Mark Twain*

We look for intimacy for ourselves, & yet remain alone ...
We look for pleasure for ourselves, & yet remain in pain ...
We look for satisfaction for ourselves, & yet remain in yearning.

Maybe we are looking for the wrong things in the right places,
& maybe we are looking for the right things in the wrong places ... &
maybe, just maybe, we are looking for the right things in the right places. yet
FOR the wrong people.

(.....pause & think about that last statement for a moment

Instead of making wishes for our own Happiness, maybe today we can
wish for others' to be Happy ... Maybe we can wish to become the change
we wish to see ... Maybe — just maybe — we can choose to set those
wishes in motion ...

... and Become the *LOVE* we already truly *ARE*.



Mr. Rogers Day ...
(02/27/2012)

*“I think everybody longs to be loved,
and longs to know that he or she is lovable.
And, consequently, the greatest thing that we can do
is to help somebody know that they are loved
& that they are capable of loving.”
~ Fred Rogers*

Nine years ago today, Fred Rogers passed on at the age of almost 75. He left a legacy of Kindness & Generosity & Caring that is still in high demand ... How odd then, when I researched his life online, I found so many distortions of his Truth: that he was a child molester (False!), that he was a sniper in the Marines (doubly False!), even that he “flipped the bird” to the audience of his final show (False!, False! and False! again) ...

Listening to such hogwash, it almost seems as though the human ego cannot bear to see another person attain the heights of Love that are possible for us all; that instead of reveling in the courageous achievements of others and allowing the same to inspire us to similar heights, we denigrate and distort in order to soothe our own lack of faith in our own ability to do similar Good Deeds.

Well, with that in mind, I have some very Good News for each of you, and that Good News is this:

***EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU
IS AS KIND ... & AS GIVING ... & AS CARING
AS FRED ROGERS EVER WAS!***

It really is True ... And all that remains for you to realize the same is for you to go forth today and simply act accordingly — one moment at a time; to whomever you happen to meet; one deed after another.

Fred Rogers reminded us all that real *LOVE* is a verb, enlivened in times when our emotional or intellectual “love” is most difficult to give.

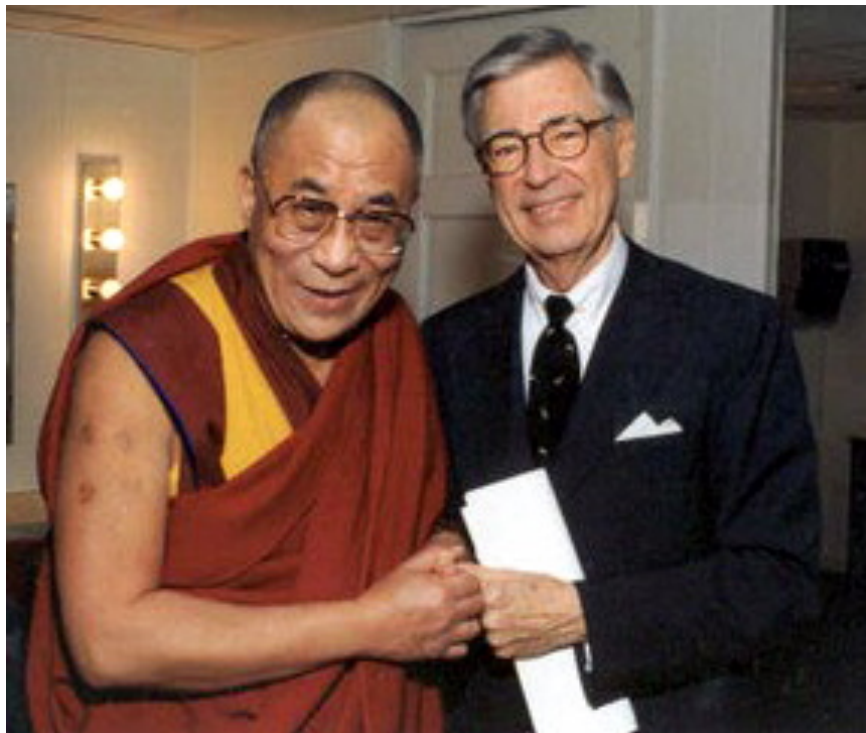
So, with that in mind ...

Got *LOVE*?

“Our world hangs like a magnificent jewel in the vastness of space. Every one of us is a part of that jewel; a facet of that jewel. And in the perspective of infinity, our differences are truly infinitesimal ...

If only you could sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to people you may never even dream of. There is something of yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person.

How sad it is that we give up on people who are essentially just like us ... And when I say it’s you I like, I’m talking about that part of you that knows that life is far more than anything you can ever see or hear or touch; that deep part of you that allows you to stand for those things without which humankind cannot survive: Love that conquers hate, Peace that rises triumphant over war, and Giving that proves more powerful than greed.” ~ inspired by Fred Rogers



Just BE it ...
(02/28/2012)

“Become interested in life – living is the real thing ... Don’t go on collecting information about what dancing is. There are encyclopedias on dance, but the whole thing is utterly meaningless if you don’t dance yourself. Throw all those encyclopedias away! Unburden yourself from knowledge and start living instead. And once you start living, then ordinary things become transformed into thing of extraordinary Beauty ... Life consists of small things – but when you bring to them quality of intense, passionate, selfless Love they become transformed; they become luminous.”

~ inspired by Osho

Today is the day to reawaken to Who You Truly Are ... Today is the day to go forth and do something radical ... Today is the day you do what your Soul has been begging you to do since birth ... Today is the day you choose to not only comprehend what it means to Love, today is the day when you experience that Love in a powerful way — when you choose to show that Love directly to an enemy.

You smile at a stranger and wish him/her a Wonder-full day ...

You do an anonymous deed of Kindness for a friend ...

You courageously forgive someone who has done you wrong.

This **Love** is what is going to free you to live a Meaning-full life.

This **Love** is what is going to save our species.

This **Love** is a verb ...

So, got **Love**?



your Inner Saint ...
(02/29/2012)

IF....

If you can be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains & can resist complaining,
If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy & can take criticism and blame without resentment,

If you can avoid correcting another's limited knowledge & can resist treating a rich person better than a poor one,

If you can face the world without lies and deceit,

If you can relax without the aid of liquor & can sleep without the aid of drugs,

If you can honestly say that deep in your heart you have no prejudice against creed, color, religion, gender preference, or politics ...

then and only then you have *almost* reached the same level of spiritual development ... AS YOUR DOG.

So many times over the course of the past seven years, I have had people come up to me after one of my presentations about “radical Kindness” and say something like, “Unconditional Love sounds great, but I can't live my life like Jesus all the time.” ... Well, sheesh — me neither!

Fortunately for us all, it is completely unnecessary to be as Kind as Jesus or as Loving as your dog all the time. It is only necessary to be that Kind & Loving for one instant — *this* instant ... No one living in fleshly form can be “perfect” for any significant length of time, and yet it is not difficult at all for any of us to do so for a single moment. As such, to live a life filled with Meaning & Power, all that remains is to simply make that insanely easy, selfless choice — and then repeat the same as often as you wish during any given day.



So, to repeat: Being saintly over the course of a day: — admittedly impossible ...
Being a Saint for one second: — extremely easy.

But don't take my word for it — Give it a try and **SEE for yourSelf!**

Remember: **LOVE** is a verb ...
So, got **LOVE**?

*“Dear Lord, today let me be
the kind of person my dog thinks I am.”
~ unknown*

A most true LOVE ...
(03/01/012)

“Oh lovers, who are you looking for? Your beloved is right here. She lives in your own neighborhood ... She hides behind screens calling for you, even while you search and lose yourself in the wilderness and the desert. So cease looking for flowers outside, for there already blooms a garden in your own home. While you go looking for trinkets, your deepest treasure awaits you within your own being.” ~ Rumi

We seem to be... so fascinated with “finding true love” — with locating our “Soulmate” — with finding that one perfect person who will join us in life and “make it all better”. And yet, whether married or engaged or single, real Love will only find us once we start giving it away ... And it is just as important to remember that, whether divorced or separated or broken-hearted, we are never truly alone — for there is *always* someone nearby who desperately desires our Kindness.

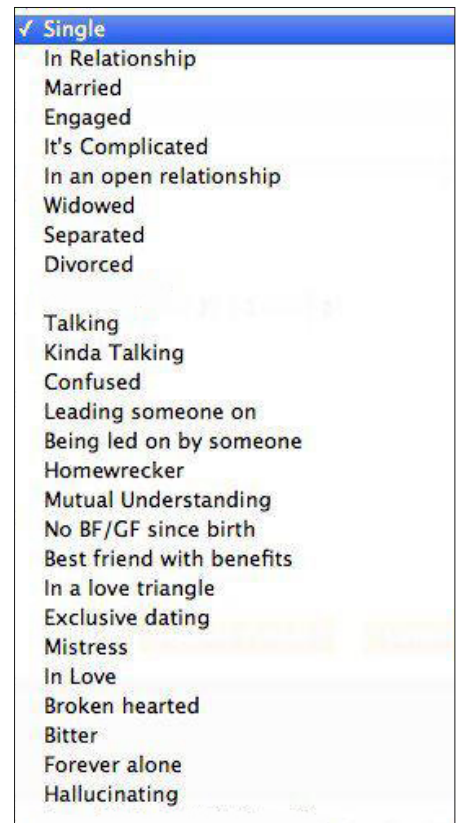
Love is never “complicated” or confusing, my Friends ... We either give it or we don't. It is impossible to be “led on” or “cheated on” while we are giving to another unconditionally ... It is impossible to be “betrayed” by another while we are truly Loving them. And no relationship is ever “open” either ... We either Love the other with everything we've got, or we don't have a relationship at all.

Love is not a square (“family”) or a triangle (“good sex”) or even a line (“romance”) ... Real & pure Love is choosing to walk so deeply in the other's shoes for one moment that you feel their pain as your own — so deeply that you then do everything you can in that moment to soothe the same (some eye contact, a gentle smile, and a big hug are often enough).

So, today I remember these things. Today, even though I am “single”, I go forth to actively Care for everyone I encounter. Even though I am “alone”, I immerse myself in the scintillating Sea of Beauty that is Humanity.

LOVE is a verb ... so,

... got **LOVE**?



Turning it around ...
(03/02/2012)

*“When I slow my breath
I can see the turn of the planet.” ~ Ginnie Sams*

The sun never rises, and the sun never sets ...
... it is *WE* who are doing the turning.

An objective material Reality exists — at least I believe it does. And yet, even though there do indeed seem to be “facts” and there do indeed appear to be “fictions” — we live in a concrete Reality that even the most intelligent of us cannot ever hope to even partially grasp. Despite this Truth, with a little Humility and a dash of Courage we *can* all choose to see deeper ... we can all learn to See the Truth within every illusion ...

*We can See the enormous Beauty that exists in every “normal” encounter & every “boring” situation ...

*We can See the opportunity to powerfully Care that rests at the center of every crisis, every difficulty & every “tragedy” ...

*We can even pause long enough to look past the “meanness” & the greed & the dishonesty to See the Good in every one of our “enemies”.

Indeed, if we pause long enough to remember that it is our world that is turning, maybe we can “turn” with it as well — maybe we can wake up and See this life anew ...

... and maybe then we can remember to act accordingly.

LOVE is a verb ...

... Got **LOVE**?



Keeping it simple ...
(03/03/2012)

“Dear God: Please protect me from knowing what I don’t need to know. And protect me from even knowing that there are things to know that I don’t know. And protect me from knowing that I decided not to know about the things that I decided not to know about. Amen ... And dear Lord, please protect me from the consequences of the previous prayer.”

~ Douglas Adams

“An expert is a man who tells you a simple thing in a confused way in such a fashion as to make you think the confusion is your own fault.”

~ William Castle

It’s brilliant humor aside, the Douglas Adams quote above has a very deep Truth somewhere inside it (hint: it rests in the irony of the last sentence) ... Of course, as William Castle points out with equal brilliance, it doesn’t have to be that complicated.

So let’s keep it simple:

The convoluted path with no satisfactory end: seek “love” for ourselves.
The simple Way to a fantastic life: get out there and LOVE somebody!

LOVE is a verb ...
... got **LOVE**?

“Stripped of all its outer encrustations, spirituality emerges as a science; as scientific as any other; as verifiable in its results.”
~ Kirpal Singh



Making life Great ... (03/04/2012)

“I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no brief candle to me; it is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.” ~ George Bernard Shaw

None of us know exactly when “our time” will come — none of us know exactly when our “bell will toll” and our lives will end. Maybe we have years left, maybe only a few hours ... And yet, regardless of the particular death that is coming for each of us, there *is* Purpose to be gleaned from this amazing life; there *are* Good Deeds waiting to be done, and we do not have to look far to find them. Indeed, none of us need wait to get started living a Meaning-full life — for we can each go forth *today* and make our lives truly *GREAT* right away.

My Friends, no matter how we have lived in our past, and no matter how little time we might have left, we can all take profound solace from the fact that every act of Kindness we engage from here on out is *incredibly powerful* — especially those acts of Caring we choose to give to strangers or our enemies; especially those done when we are “too sad” or “too angry” or “too tired” or “too weak” or “too busy” or “too scared”. Indeed, one single small act of Kindness instantly transforms a previously meaningless life into one filled with Purpose — takes a life that was mumbling & stumbling through the malaise of hollow pleasure-gathering and molds it immediately into an existence that literally overflows with Joy & Peace. One act of Kindness is enough ... One act of Caring — done *today* ... One simple deed of selfless Love starts that ball rolling towards the innate Greatness that awaits us.

So, go forth and do something Wonder-full today. Even if you do so for only five minutes, live this day as if it is your last ... After all, it just might be ... Make it a great one regardless!



Being “Crazy-Good” ...
(03/05/2012)

There’s so much Wisdom to be gleaned from so many children’s books, and one of my all-time favorites contains the adventures of Winnie the Pooh. Ok, most of the characters therein have pretty big hang-ups — most of them are pretty “dysfunctional”. And yet through it all there is Pooh, gentle and considerate and Caring.

And maybe that is the greatest Wisdom of all: that if a “bear of little brain” can “get it” — if Pooh can continue to be Kind to the folks in his life who are aggressive (Tigger), wimpy (Piglet), obsessively uptight (Rabbit), depressingly negative (Eeyore) and downright delusional (Christopher Robin), maybe we can too ...

So what do you say?

... Go be “crazy Kind” to someone today!



“Love is taking a few steps backward — maybe even a few more than a few — to give way to the Happiness of the person you Love ... Just because an animal is large (or mean or greedy or dishonest) doesn’t mean he doesn’t want Kindness ... A little consideration, a little thought for others, really does make all the difference ... You can’t stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.” ~ inspired by A. A. Milne

WINNIE THE POOH

yeah, it's that bad already

Waking UP ...
(03/06/2012)

“Any awakening which does not inspire the sleeper to Love has roused him in vain.” ~ inspired by Jessamyn West

In order to truly Wake UP, we must have the courage to not only open our eyes, but also to actually get out of bed ... to not only get out of bed, but to actually put on some new clothes ... to not only put on those new clothes, but to actually go forth and wear them publicly.

In other words, it is not enough to have the Humility to “wake up” mentally with regards to what it means to really LOVE another, though that is both an important and an impressive first step. No, to live truly Meaning-fully; to truly LIVE — we also must have the Courage to enliven that understanding — to actually live that LOVE.

*We must have the Courage to shed our “old clothes” of religious fervor — including the religions of atheism (science & logic) & New Age mysticism (“self-help”) — in order to go forth and actively Care for others ... to appreciate a friend by doing them an anonymous favor; to forgive an enemy by doing something Kind for them as well.

*And we must have the Courage to shed our “old clothes” of political fervor as well — including the political “parties” of our apathy & our indignation — in order to get out there and actively serve others ... to give to the poor in our community; to actually be Kind to the strangers we meet.

We CAN make a big difference, my Friends — we CAN be a force for goodness and positive change. And yet we can only do so if we choose to get up out of our bed of familiarity, to change into the “new clothes” of real LOVE, and to then go strut that stuff!



“Whether one believes in rebirth or not, there isn’t anyone who doesn’t appreciate Kindness.” ~ Dalai Lama

LOVE is our only real reBirth ...
... got **LOVE**?

real LOVE ...
(03/08/2012)

*“Anger and intolerance are the enemies
of correct understanding.” ~ Mohandas Gandhi*

Over the course of human history, we humans have repeatedly shown that we are quite adept at being nice to our friends — at being “kind” when it is easy to do so. And yet, while such superficial friendliness is definitely a good thing to encourage, it is not going to bring us any further as a species, and it certainly won’t bring us any further as individuals either.

No my Friends, for us to get different results, we must choose to engage different behaviors. As such, for us to experience a sense of real Peace & lasting Joy in our lives, we must not only do what we’ve always done (i.e. be nice to those who are being nice to us), we must also choose to be Kind to those who are not.

Indeed, we’ve tried everything else over the past 10,000+ years, and nothing has brought us any lasting change. It’s high time we tried something new ... It’s high time to try some courageous Kindness.

So, consider doing an anonymous Kind deed for a friend today ... Consider extending some real Caring to a stranger ... Consider having the guts to forgive an enemy.

After all, our **LOVE** only becomes powerful in those moments when it is difficult to give but is given anyway.

So ... got **LOVE**?



Becoming humble as a child ...
(03/09/2012)

*“Be humble for you are made of earth.
Be noble, for you are made of stars.” ~ Serbian proverb*

Such a misconstrued concept, humility ... We have been taught that humility is subservience -- or groveling, or weakness, or obedience, or even low self-esteem. In reality, of course, real Humility is something quite different ... Humility is actually the ultimate Strength — the choice to set aside selfishness to serve others; the choice to set aside self-doubt to be true to the Caring Self within; the choice to stop hoping for help and start giving the same ... Humility is remembering that we are royalty, and then acting with appropriate benevolence. It is knowing that we *DO* make a difference ... and then acting accordingly.

Today, while I am aware of my many shortcomings, I am equally aware that my actions *DO* make a difference; that I *DO* have the power to make others' lives better ...

So today, and maybe just for today, I am going to walk tall and **BE** the change I wish to see.



LOVE is a verb ...

... got **LOVE**?

Hear the angels sing ...
(03/12/2012)

*“Hark! the music of the angels
Floating onward still we hear;
Blessèd music, sweetest chorus
Ever sung to mortal ear.” ~ F. Crosby*

How blessed that we are each able to rise up through fear and fatigue to Care for the downtrodden! ...

How blessed that we are each able to rise up through hatred and annoyance to forgive our trespassers! ...

How blessed that we have all been given the ability to Love the unlovable! ...

And how blessed that we can all pause in any given moment and — for just one moment — become someone’s Angel!

*“Remember to Care for all strangers,
for by so doing so — without even knowing it —
you are actually Caring for angels.”
~ unknown (Hebrews 13:2)*

LOVE is a verb ...
... got **LOVE**?



Being super-Strong ...
(03/13/2012)

“It takes more courage to reveal insecurities than to hide them, more strength to relate to people than to dominate them, more ‘manhood’ to abide by thought-out principles rather than blind reflex. Toughness is in the soul and the spirit, not in muscles and an immature mind.” ~ Alex Karras

True Strength is not mastering your desires — true Strength is altering them; shifting them from yourself to others.

We expend so much energy trying to “get healthy” (i.e. live a long life for ourselves), “look good” (i.e. attract a lover or a partner for ourselves) or “be successful” (i.e. attain popularity or material comfort for ourselves) — and yet so often fail to realize that real Peace & real Joy cannot ever come to us from these superficial sources.

Indeed, lasting inner Peace & deep-seated Joy only come to us when we engage actions designed to bring *OTHERS* better health, to bring *OTHERS* deeper Love, to bring *OTHERS* real success ...



Strength doesn't come from what we do — it comes from **WHY** we are doing what we are doing. All choices made for ourselves ultimately make us weaker, just as all choices made for others always make us Strong.

Strength is being Kind to strangers ...
Strength is forgiving our enemies ...
Strength is willingly sacrificing for loved ones.

Here's to your Strength ...
Be STRONG today!

LOVE is a verb ...
... got **LOVE**?

While ya got 'em ...
(03/14/2012)

We are blessed to have each other
for only a short while ...
Some of us will be together for a brief lifetime;
& most of us will meet & depart after only a glance or two.

And yet, regardless of the time we have together,
... there is always Love to be given.

Cherish those who wish to be with you,
... and set those free who wish to leave.

Caring deeply for others
while they are in your presence
allows them to blossom.

And letting others go
while continuing to Love them
allows them to take flight.



Giving anyway ...
(03/15/2012)

“Love is the most practical thing in the world. To love, to be kind, not to be greedy, not to be ambitious, not to be influenced by people but to think for yourself—these are all very practical things, and they will bring about a practical, happy society.” ~ J. Krishnamurti

Love is only practical while it is being given to another ... not with thoughts or words, but with actions.

& Love is only powerful when giving it is difficult ... and yet it is given anyway.

LOVE is a verb ...
... got **LOVE**?



LOVE Revolution ...
(03/16/2012)

*“Laws, like sausages, cease to inspire respect
in proportion to how much we know
about how they are made.” ~ John Godfrey Saxe*

We are told to be careful of strangers; to not make prolonged eye-contact with them; to avoid provoking them by being “too friendly” ... We are told over and over again to “tow the line” and remain afraid.

Well, I’m tired of that game ... I’ve walked and rode and flown all over this world for the past several decades and in all my travels I’ve yet to find a single “bad person”. Yes, I *have* been attacked &/or yelled at by “crazy men” on drugs ... Yes, I have been ridiculed and rejected ... Yes, I have been lied to and cheated on ... *AND YET* the people who did these things to me weren’t “evil” or even “bad”. They were simply people who were confused and in pain; people who were trying their best to survive in this crazy world that can indeed sometimes be more than a bit scary.

Come to think of it, maybe to them *I* was the stranger. Maybe they simply thought they were protecting themselves from *me*.



In essence folks, we cannot be the change we wish to see until we wake up and realize that we are all truly ONE — that the homeless person on the street corner is not a “bum”; that the lover who lies to us is not a “jerk”; that our rich boss is not “greedy”. These are all *PEOPLE* — people who are in many ways *just like you and me*. They long to be liked, they long to be Loved, they long to be respected ... and they long for someone to reach out to them in Kindness.

I know, our law-makers want us to “behave” and not cause too much trouble. I know, our society wants us to keep on judging and criticizing and condemning our enemies — to keep on walling ourselves off from the life of Compassion that would indeed prove to be our source of true Freedom.

Well, I say it’s time to ***BREAK FREE*** of all that ...
... and smiling at strangers is a great place to start .. ;)

*“It is the spirit and not the form of law
that keeps justice alive.”*

*~ Earl Warren
(U.S. Supreme Court Justice)*

(The same is true of Kindness, Earl ...
and the same is true with Love.)



LOVE is a verb ...
... got ***LOVE***?

Being really Lucky ...
(03/17/2012)

Today is St. Patrick's Day ... a day of luck and revelry; a day when we tend to wish for more of the former, while often engaging in an excess of the latter. Fair enough ... I too have yearned for more good fortune in my life ... I too have engaged in some full-tilt celebrations.

And yet, maybe today is also a good day to re-examine just what it means to be "lucky", and just what it means to truly "celebrate life".

First, a **look at LUCK** ...

*"Any fool can have bad luck; the art consists
in knowing how to exploit it." ~ Frank Wedekind*

Good times are going to find us — no doubt about it. And it is a great thing to revel in them when they do; to honor their arrival with deep laughter, Soul-piercing gratitude, & even a touch joyfully raucous rambunctiousness ... *AND YET* "bad times" are going to find us as well. We are going to be in pain ... We are going to be ill &/or injured ... We are going to lose loved ones ... We are going to have our regular bouts with sadness, anger, fear & frustration. Such struggles come to every human being; they are part of what this amazing journey of being conscious is all about. No matter how hard we strive or pray or hope, difficult times are going to come to us — and they are going to keep on coming.

Traditionally, these painful periods are judged as "unfortunate", and we have been taught to either "wait them out" until they pass, or engage in various practices that will bring back the "happy times". Indeed, you can visit any local bookstore to find hundreds, if not thousands, of "self-help" books dedicated to helping us to identify & destroy the sources of such "bad luck" ... Well, there is another way to look at things — there is another way to *CELEBRATE* life. I won't call it a "better" way, but it is available to you, and I think it is at least worth a try or two.

And this other way involves our innate gift of choice — the power we all have to choose how we view difficult situations, as well as to choose how we to respond to them. In this other way, when pain arrives in our lives, instead of striving to remove it or fix it; instead of hopelessly waiting for it to pass and for life to then "get better", we can choose to proactively *USE THE PAIN* to empower our lives — to make every act of subsequent Kindness a life-changing event.

And how do we go about doing this, you might ask? Well, it's pretty simple actually — Whenever you “feel bad”; whenever you encounter some “bad luck” in your life, just reach out do something Kind for another person ...

- *When your are ill or injured, give someone a smile.
- *When you are tired, utter a few Kind words to a friend.
- *When you are angry, forgive an enemy from your past.
- *When you are scared, do an anonymous good deed.
- *When you are sad, be compassionate to those suffering similarly.

Ironically, when you have the courage to do such things, not only do these simple actions become immensely Power-full for others, they also fully neutralize your own suffering. Indeed, such “irrational” acts of Kindness are so potent that they actually heal the body and mind — bringing wellness to the unwhole, energy to the fatigued, inner Peace to the angry, courage to the frightened, and Joy to the depressed ... Essentially, when we have the courage to make such “radical” choices — when we choose to be Kind to others when we are least inclined to do so — our tragedies immediately transform into blessings.

- *In this way, where others see misfortune, we see opportunity ...
- *In this way, we reclaim the Power over our own existence ...
- *In this way, we literally “make our own luck”.

And *THIS* is a new way we can truly *CELEBRATE* the amazing gift that is our conscious life ... As such, I wish you all lots & lots of **LUCK** today!



*“A lot of what we ascribe to luck
is not luck at all. It’s seizing the day ...
It’s seeing what other people don’t see,
and then pursuing that vision.”
~ Howard Schultz*

LUCK is a verb ...
... got **LUCK**?

Getting really Clean ...
(03/18/2012)

*“A systemic cleansing is definitely the way to go
after each holiday.” ~ Lee Haney*

There are so many ways to cleanse the body & mind. Warm showers, trips to the sauna, brisk walks in fresh air, deep-tissue massage, Tai Chi &/or fasting are some ways we can cleanse our bodies. Meditation, prayer, visualization, Tai Chi &/or quietly soaking in the beauty of Nature are a few of the many ways we can cleanse our minds. All of these are fine practices — all of which I have used extensively in my past (and some of them even in my present) to great personal benefit.

And yet today I focus on another kind of cleansing:

... the Cleansing of the Spirit.

Regardless of your religious beliefs (indeed, even if you do not have any at all), there is something within you that can be labeled a “Soul”. Maybe you prefer to call it “conscience” or “consciousness” or “the True Self”, but you do have one nonetheless. And even though many self-help books will tell you that the above-mentioned practices (or others like them) will cleanse this Soul, it is important to realize that this is actually *NOT* the case ...

You see, your Soul only knows Oneness ... It only comprehends Love ... Frankly, it doesn't comprehend “self-help” at all. As such, the only way to truly cleanse the Soul is to Love others; to actively and courageously go forth and be Kind to them.

Now I freely admit this is pretty scary stuff, and I also admit that it can be quite uncomfortable when you take that first step towards “Spiritual Cleanliness” (see the photo on the facing page). And yet, what makes it all so much more than worthwhile is that every act of selfless Love — especially those given in the times we least wish to do so, to the folks we least wish to give them to — cleanses the Soul for the duration of that act.

That's right, every time you choose to LOVE someone in this courageous manner, all your past "sins" & faults & mistakes are instantly washed clean: every kindness extended to a stranger ... every anonymous good deed done for a friend ... every moment of forgiveness sent to an enemy – each and every one of them makes us Whole again ... Each one of them gives us a fresh start ... Each one of them makes us truly clean.

And *THAT* is a bath well worth soaking in ...

*“However it is debased or misinterpreted,
Love is a redemptive feature.
To focus on one individual
so that their desires become superior to yours
is a cleansing experience.”
~ Jeanette Winterson*



***Purity** is a verb ...
... got **Purity**?*

Knowing real Change ...
(03/24/2012)

*“Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
And in our response lies our growth and our freedom.”*
~ Viktor E. Frankl

Now that the “find & punish Joseph Kony” craze has died down a bit — now that the emotions that were provoked by the viral video calling for his capture and imprisonment have subsided enough to be a bit more clear-headed, I thought I would offer some additional in-Sight into the matter ...

First of all, I am going to mostly circumvent the debate about the facts of the matter: that the producers of the video in question are primarily using their campaign to support their own organization — *not* to help the children in question; that the abuses of which Kony is accused have been steadily declining since 2004; that there is a very good chance that Joseph Kony is no longer in Uganda at all; and that this entire issue (only one of thousands of child-abuse tragedies worldwide) has only come to the fore to give the U.S. government an excuse to passively invade Uganda in order to acquire that country’s vast natural resources before China &/or India do the same. To all four of these charges I offer a most sincere: “Maybe so” ... “Maybe so” ... “Maybe so” ... and “Maybe so”.

Yes, it is quite reasonable to get very angry when confronted with “evidence” of another person abusing children. And yes, it is noble to want to do something about it ... *AND YET* therein lies the rub. You see, whether Joseph Kony is actually committing these atrocities or not is not the issue. The issue is how can we truly help the children.

And one thing is quite certain: capturing and punishing Joseph Kony will *NOT* solve the problem! First of all, “dysfunctional people” (even those we label as “evil”) were not born that way — they chose to become that way in response to being subjected to immense pain. Now this does not excuse their “evil” choices, and yet it can allow us to understand why they are doing what they are doing — it can open the door for us to do the only thing that might allow them to change — to exude the one thing to them that they lack; the one thing that they want more than anything else: *Compassion*. Any other option — as “justified” as it might be — will only serve to escalate the problem and make it even worse for the very children we are trying to protect.

Kill Kony and another “evil” man will fill the power-void left behind; a man even more determined than Kony to succeed where he failed. Punish Kony and his self-esteem will take yet another hit, making it that much more likely that he will commit even worse atrocities in the future. Ignore Kony and he will keep on keeping on ... But openly and courageously extend Kony acts of Compassion, and he will have no choice but to re-awaken to who he truly *IS* underneath all that “evil” — to the pure, happy, loving being he was in his own early childhood.

Now, even though I have successfully utilized this method literally thousands of times over the past eight years of my own life, and even though *it has always worked*, I humbly admit that it indeed might not “work” on Joseph Kony. So, if punishing him is counterproductive, and Forgiving him might fail, what are we to do for the children? Fortunately, the answer is an easy one — *START RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE!*

There are thousands of children in your own neighborhood desperately in need of Kindness — there are thousands of children right nearby who are desperately yearning to be Cared for; to be given a smile, to be listened to, to be played with for even five minutes. And the best thing is, you don’t need to cross the ocean and invade another country to do something for these children. They are your own kids — they are your neighbor’s kids — they are the kids you pass on the street on the way to work.

I know, it’s so much easier to simply sit at home and get ticked off at people like Joseph Kony; to ask our inept governmental “leaders” to do something about it because Kony is too far away for us to be of any real assistance ... Of course, the children in our own neighborhoods are hurting just as badly, and they are just as worthy of Love as those suffering in Uganda.

Yes, it is indeed difficult to face our innate fear of intimacy and *DO SOMETHING* for children — to volunteer at a local Boys/Girls Club, to extend warmth to our own kids, to smile and maybe give a compliment to a child we meet in a store or on the street. And yet it remains most true that we *CAN* be the change we want to see. Indeed, if we truly want things to get better for our children, we are going to have to be that change.



Compassion is a verb ...
... got *Compassion*?

*“I would hunt in the night for the face of my fear
and take it home to tea.” ~ Louise Cloutier*

The War on Peace ...
(03/26/2012)

*“When we remember that we are all mad,
the mysteries disappear and life stands explained.”
~ Mark Twain*

Today marks the 10 year, 5 month, 19 day anniversary of our entry into the Afghanistan War — a conflict that has claimed the lives of *at least* 49,344 lives (that is the low-end estimate; the real total is probably much, much higher) ... with *at least* one fourth of those killed being civilians who had nothing at all to do with the war; civilians whose family-members now have a very understandable rage against and hatred for the United States. In essence, we have engaged a “war on terror” and are thereby creating terrorists ... That is completely insane.

We also learn today that the American government has agreed to pay \$50,000 to the families of each of the 16 Afghani citizens killed by a U.S. soldier earlier this year after he opened fire on them while they slept.

\$50,000? ... seriously? ... That, too, is just as crazy.

Throwing our money around is not going to solve the problem. Apologizing sincerely, leaving the country immediately, and sending plane-loads of flowers & food would be a start. And as ridiculous as that last option sounds, it’s actually not too far-fetched a concept— After all, 33 years ago today Egypt and Israel signed a Peace Accord that actually bore good fruit for many years.

Of course, such a rational choice is simply not going to happen. There is too much “wealth” at stake — there are too many egos involved; too many folks who don’t have the guts to be courageous enough to do the Right Thing and humbly step away when they had the chance.

“Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people ... and neither do we.” ~ George W. Bush (signing a multi-billion dollar defense spending bill)

“When you’re training for this, you joke about it, you can’t wait for the real thing. Then when you see it, when you see the real thing, you never want to see it again.” ~ Capt. Sal Aguilar (standing in a field with dead Iraqis all around him)

But what does this all have to do with us? What can we really do to make a difference; what can we do to help end this madness? Very little, of course ... Our votes are not going to change our government’s policies; that has been proven over and over again for the past several decades. And the angry words of Occupy Wall Street are clearly raining down on deaf ears ...

AND YET, no one “in power” can stop us from being the change we wish to see ... No one can stop us from creating the Caring Community in which we wish to live:

- *No one can stop me from being Kind to strangers ...
- *No one can stop me from championing forgiveness ...
- *No one can stop me from selflessly serving the poor ...

For if I cannot stop war abroad, at the very least I will make Peace at Home ... Please go forth today and help me make it happen.

LOVE is the Revolution, my Friends ...
... got *LOVE*?



“Revolutionary subordination exposes the evils of power and violence without mirroring them – by gently allowing them to destroy themselves ... and then rising above the ruins.” ~ Shane Claiborne

Conflicting with Peace ...
(03/27/2012)

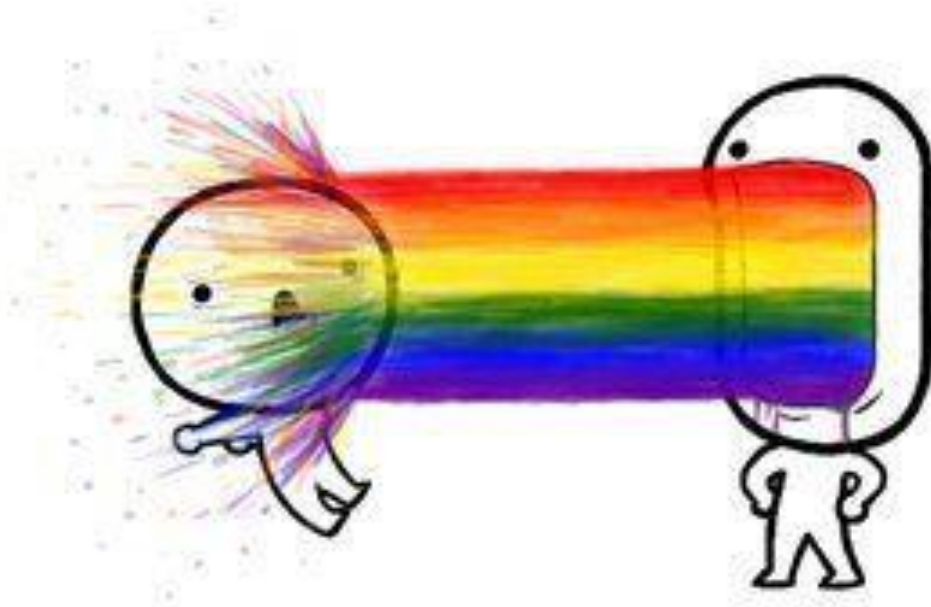
*“Behind all seen things lies something vaster.
Everything is but a path, a portal or a window
opening onto something greater than itself.”
~ Antoine de St. Exupery*

If we can't do much about war abroad, let us at least make Peace at home

Make PEACE real today — be Kind to someone you don't like.

“This is a new kind of Peace for me; Peace in a way that may not always be Peace-full. It's like there's been a small break in my basic foundation and Love is pouring in. It's changing the nature of my entire world.” ~ Heather Peroni

Peace is courageous Kindness ...
... got **Peace**?



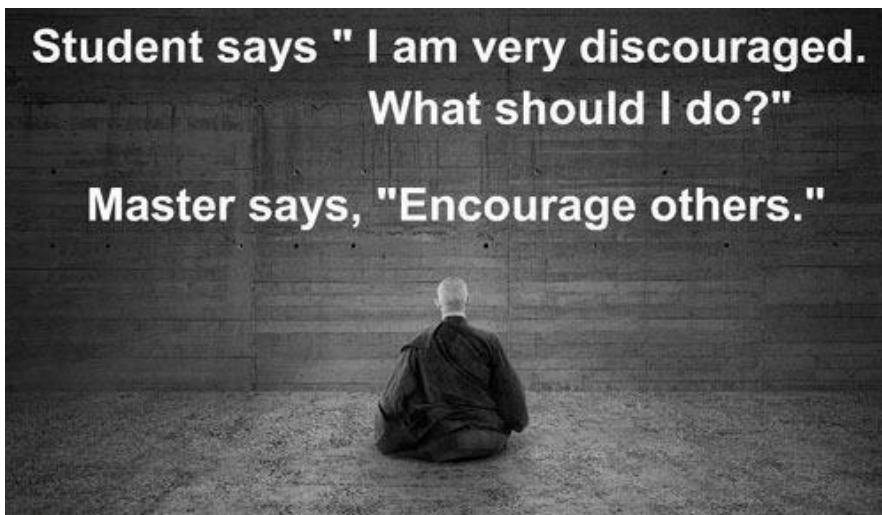
Courage to encourage ...
(03/28/2012)

*"I have not failed. I've simply found 10,000 ways that won't work."
~ Thomas Edison*

We've seemingly tried everything to fix our world — to make our lives Meaning-full. We've been politically active, religiously zealous and exuberantly... healthy. We've put up "healthy boundaries" and engaged dozens of "self-help" practices. We've prayed and meditated and visualized ... and yet still we find ourselves sinking back into pain and confusion ... still we find ourselves yearning for real Happiness.

Well, here's some news: Life is going to break you. That's what it does. Nothing can protect you from that — not being loved by the "perfect partner" ... not possessing material wealth ... not having a beautiful body ... not knowing "inner peace". Even choosing to live completely alone will not protect us, as we are programmed to share life, and as such solitude will end up breaking us in its own way as well.

No, eventually you are going to have to realize that there is only one Way to know real Meaning — that there is only one Way to know profound Peace — that there is only one Way to know true Joy ... You are going to have to *Love* ... You are going to have to revel with others when they win and feel for them when they hurt ... You are going to have to reach out into your community and Care. And ultimately, you will realize that this is the reason you are here. You are here to risk your safety by opening your Heart. You are here to be swallowed up in something greater than yourself ... And when you finally comprehend this Truth and it thereafter happens that you become broken once again — betrayed, or left, or hurt, or death brushes near — you will choose a different path ...



Instead of wallowing in your sorrow and wishing that things were better, instead of merely sitting by an apple tree and listening to the apples fall all around you, wasting their sweetness, at that time (maybe today), you are going to get up and go help the children.

(inspired by Louise Erdrich)

Pausing to BE ...
(03/29/2012)

*“We may not all live holy lives,
but we do all live in a world alive with holy moments.”
~ Kent Nerburn*

It seems like there is just too much to do these days. I find myself juggling so many tasks — tasks that are all designed to help others in some way, and yet tasks that I feel are all important things to do; all important things to “get done”. And if I’m not truly Care-full, all this busyness can start to stress me out.

Well, I stopped long enough this morning to realize that each of you probably know exactly what I am talking about ... I stopped long enough to realize that maybe this “too much to do” syndrome is an innate part of our human programming. Maybe we are designed to “do — Do — DO” because our primitive brains believe that doing anything “productive” is what keeps us alive — or is what protects us from imminent danger — or is what prepares us to survive if it ever “hits the fan” — or is simply what a “responsible person” does.

Well, this morning I woke up to another Truth — one that I think also applies to every one of you just as well as it applies to me. Ad that Truth is this one: ***IT IS OK TO PAUSE*** & look around!

An unknown Wise One once said that “Juggling is dropping things with style”, and this wisdom helps me to bring it all into perspective. For everything is *NOT* going to get done to our satisfaction. Once we realize that we are so often “juggling bubbles”, we come to realize that some things are simply going to have to be “dropped”.

And once we do drop them, it is OK for us to do the dropping of them Purpose-fully ... It is OK to gently pop the bubbles of hope and fear and worry that we are so earnestly juggling ... It is OK to let the “to do” list sit for awhile and just BE instead — to just BE while consciously soaking up the amazing Beauty that surrounds us in every moment of our lives.

To get the full effect of what I'm talking about, you can do so right now ...
So go ahead – use the following steps: Step 1) stop what you are currently doing ... Step 2) get up & go outside (or look out a window) ... Step 3) take a deep breath while you let the Beauty of your Life flow smoothly into your awareness.

Now repeat these steps for a few breaths ... Stay with this conscious “Appreciation-break” for several minutes if you wish, and remember to smile while doing so. (Of course, as you find yourself slipping into a deep Gratitude for simply being alive, the smile will come on its own.)

“The crucial point is that we can relate with our life just as it is right now, not later when things might improve.” ~ Pema Chodron

While you are taking this little “Loving-Life Break”, avoid worrying about those bubbles on your “to do” list — they are still right there where you left them, and everything of any true importance will still get done when it needs to get done. What is truly *IMPORTANT* is that we regularly pause to Appreciate our lives while they are flying by ... because this day is a priceless treasure, never to be repeated; never to be re-lived.

And then, after you have cherished your existence for a few minutes and you head back into your everyday life — as you return to your life's ever-present “juggling act”, feel free to remember these final two tips:

Tip #1: “The trick to juggling is determining which balls are made of rubber & which are made of glass.” ~ unknown

Tip #2: Almost everything on your to do list is “made of rubber”, & *every single person* you encounter every single day is “made of glass”.



So, with that in mind, have fun *BEing* today — and then have some fun juggling as well.

LOVE is showing gratitude for life.
... got *LOVE*?

“If a good deed I may do, if a kindness I may show to a fellow man, let me do it while I can. I will not delay, for it is plain that I shall not pass this way again.” ~ Stephen Grellet

Dying to fear of death ...
(03/31/2012)

“In everyone’s life, at some time, our inner fire seems to go out, whereupon it is then burst into flame again by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.” ~ Albert Schweitzer

One year ago today, while preparing to set forth on a 900+ mile Peace Pilgrimage from Chattanooga (Tennessee) to Pompano Beach (Florida), I received an invitation from Robert Estling to share about my Journey at his Seraphim Center (in Gainesville, Florida). The week prior to his offer, I had sent several hundred emails to pastors and community leaders all along my proposed route, informing them of my Pilgrimage, and offering to stop-over and share about my Journey with them & theirs if they wished ... Robert was one of the two people who responded.

Now I fully understand why a group leader would be more than hesitant to invite a stranger to speak to his or her congregation — especially a “freak” like me. I do not hide the fact that my message of “radical Kindness” is a challenging one, and I openly refuse to receive any compensation for sharing about its Selfless Way. This is an incredibly frightening combination for most pastors, and I am not at all surprised that so few responded to my offer ... And yet this is not a post about rejection, but rather one about acceptance. It is not a post about fear, but rather a testimony to Courage.

I am sure that Robert was a tad nervous about inviting me to share for his friends. I could have been a thinly disguised religious zealot ... I could have been completely off my rocker ... I could have been a rambling lunatic, for that matter. And yet Robert Estling heard that the message was Love, and that was enough for him to take the risk ... Robert Estling set aside his very reasonable fears and extended a hand of Kindness ... Robert Estling chose to shrug his shoulders and open himself up to a stranger.

Long story shortened: I walked the Pilgrimage and did indeed make it to Gainesville, where Robert treated me like royalty from minute one of my arrival — showing me gentle Kindness from the day he picked me up in Lake City to the morning I departed for Orlando a few days thereafter. Indeed, the healing care he showed me during that time was one of the reasons I was able to complete my Pilgrimage a few weeks later ... Robert chose to be the change we wish to see, and he inspires me still to do the same.

And yet that is not the only reason I write about Robert today. You see, Robert passed away last December 30th, and so I wish to honor him and his life today as well ...

None of us knows how long we have to live, and it is very easy to get lost in the busy-ness of our everyday lives and forget the fact that today could very well be our last day. Indeed, death is on its way to us all — this much is certain, and yet we need not become immobilized by a fear of it. After all, regardless of our various religious beliefs (or complete lack thereof), the only thing that is certain about “the afterlife” is that we are all going to be surprised ... No, instead of fearing my own death or, even worse -- choosing to ignore it, today I choose to live in the full awareness of my very real mortality. Today I choose to live as if this day is going to be my last. Today I am going to live in such a way that I will be able to one day pass onward with a gentle smile on my face and a soft “Thank You” on my lips ... And I humbly invite you all to do the same.

And the only way to do so is to **have the courage to Care** for others — to be Kind to the strangers we encounter; to let our Friends know how much we Love them; to say a resounding “Yes!” to every opportunity we are given to serve another.

I remember that it will be no solace to me on my deathbed to think about all the “fun” I had during this lifetime (though fun is quite the nice thing to enjoy) ... Indeed, the only thought that will bring us any real peace at all while we pass away is the knowledge that we honored the Gift of Life by using it to help others enjoy their own ... and today is the perfect day, indeed the only day, for us to start re-membering this Truth!

... So let's get out there & have some fun with that, shall we?

Everyone is so afraid of death, but the real sufis just laugh: nothing tyrannizes their hearts. What strikes the oyster shell does not damage the pearl

(Moulana Jalaluddin Rumi)



“Live every day as if it's your last, because one day, maybe even one day very soon, you're gonna be right.” ~ Ray Charles

The politics of politics ...

(04/02/12)

“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and then applying the wrong remedies.” ~ Groucho Marx

I know that the U.S. Presidential elections are still a few moons away, and yet I also realize that there will be *LOTS* of news coverage between now and November — and lots of discussion — and lots of debate — and lots of arguing — and lots of nasty insults & misleading innuendos. In short, many of you will be flooded with boatloads of information that will be both highly volatile & highly inaccurate; information that could very well distract you from the things that really matter in life — from the people and the issues that are truly important.

Consider the following — just a small sample of the inane ramblings of some of America’s “top” politicians, one of whom will in all likelihood be the next President of the United States:

“I don’t know how much God has to do to get the attention of the politicians. We’ve had an earthquake; we’ve had a hurricane. He said, ‘Are you going to start listening to me here?’ Listen to the American people because the American people are roaring right now. They know government is on a morbid obesity diet and we’ve got to rein in the spending.” ~ Republican presidential candidate Michele Bachmann

“I will tell you: It’s three agencies of government, when I get there, that are gone: Commerce, Education and the — what’s the third one there? Let’s see. ... I would do away with the Education, the ... Commerce and — let’s see — The third one, I can’t. Sorry. Oops.” ~ Rick Perry (forgetting his own plan to cut the Department of Energy)

“Corporations are people, my friend...of course they are. Everything corporations earn ultimately goes to the people. Where do you think it goes? Whose pockets? Whose pockets? People’s pockets. Human beings, my friend.” ~ GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney

“I should tell my story. I’m also unemployed.” ~ Mitt Romney (speaking in 2011 to unemployed people in Florida ... Romney’s net worth is over \$200 million)

“I have two grandchildren – I am convinced that if we do not decisively win the struggle over the nature of America, by the time they’re my age they will be in a secular atheist country, potentially one dominated by radical Islamists and with no understanding of what it once meant to be an American.” ~ GOP presidential candidate Newt Gingrich

And then of course there is the current U.S. President — Mr. Obama, who mentioned (during his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, no less) that “the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace”. (What?! — see the picture facing for the only sane response to such idiocy) ... This is the same man who, along with his massive string of broken promises and caving in to the interests of big business, recently appointed Michael Taylor — a Monsanto Vice President & chief lobbyist — to be the senior advisor to the commissioner of the U.S. Food & Drug Administration! (again: What?!)

So my Friends, even though today is the day after April Fool’s Day, it looks more and more like the joke is on us ... but only if we allow it to play out that way. You see, politicians — even those few who happen to be ethical -- do not hold any real solutions for any of us, and once we accept this Truth, we can take all that energy and time and invest it in something that will actually bear a positive return — something like Caring for the poor, or being kind to children, or beautifying our neighborhoods.

Regardless of how you choose to serve, it is certainly time to start doing so. Rest assured, debating politics or championing certain politicians is *not* going to help anyone. And shaking your head in disbelief (or even anger), while more than understandable, is not really going to help either ... What *WILL* help is helping others — actually going out there for one hour a week to do something positive; to actually be the source of the change you wish to see — the very change that your favorite politician will *not* be effectuating for you.

In essence, even though politics has become a hollow game of greed, we don’t have to play anymore ... And even though our politicians have become a joke, we don’t have to laugh along with them anymore either.

It’s time to take a stand, my Friends ... It is time to quit waiting for someone “higher up” to fix our communities ... It’s time to start doing the fixing ourselves.

LOVE is a verb ...
... got **LOVE**?



“Democrats are politicians who complain about greed. Then they get elected and become gluttonous. Republicans are politicians who say government doesn’t work. Then they get elected and prove it.” ~ inspired by P. J. O’Rourke

“The enemy isn’t conservatism or liberalism. The enemy is bullshit.” ~ Lars-Erik Nelson

Respecting Life ... (04/03/2012)

“We have enslaved the rest of the animal creation, and have treated our distant cousins in fur and feathers so badly that beyond doubt, if they were able to formulate a religion, they would depict the Devil in human form.” ~ William Ralph Inge

First things first, a few challenging facts:

FACT: Animals are sentient beings, each of whom cares for their loved ones, seeks a pleasurable life, and fears pain & death.

FACT: It is *NOT* necessary for humans to ingest meat protein to live in vibrant health.

FACT: Over 19,000 animals are slaughtered in the United States *every minute* of every day.

*“From beasts we scorn as soulless, in forest, field and den,
The cry goes up to witness the soullessness of men.”
~ M. Frida Hartley*

And now, a positive side of this Reality:

FACT: You are a caring, sentient being — capable of wonderful acts of compassion and kindness.

FACT: It is *NOT* necessary for you to eat animals to live in vibrant health.

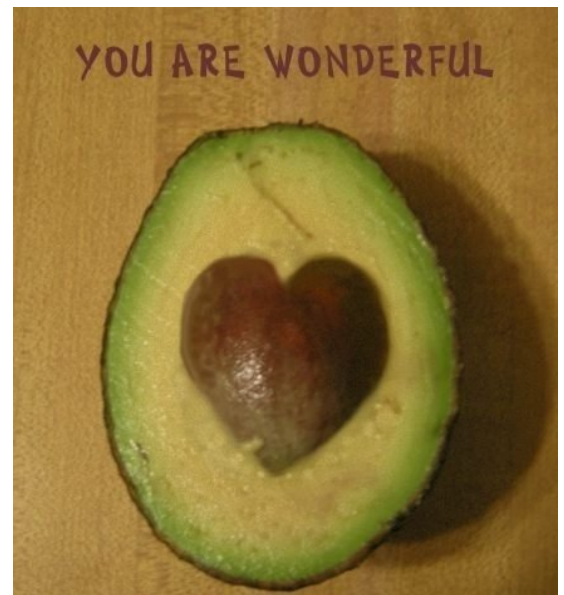
FACT: By refusing to eat animals, you will encourage great change — you will powerfully speak the only language that the meat industry speaks: the language of supply and demand; the language of your money. And rest assured, listen they will ...

In conclusion, here’s one final **FACT** for you: It may not be easy, and it might require some sacrifice, and yet *you can be the change you wish to see*. So go get to it, my Friends ... Go get to it!

LOVE requires doing things that are Right, even if they are difficult ...

So ... got **LOVE**?

“If you love animals called pets, why do you eat animals called dinner?” ~ anonymous



to Serve ...
(04/04/2012)

“Service which is rendered without joy helps neither the servant nor the served. But all other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy.” ~ M. Gandhi

There is little doubt that our world is falling apart all around us –
*from the corruption in our politics to the zealotry in our churches,
*from rampant economic injustice to massive ecological destruction,
*from the seeming increase in the condemnation of those who don’t believe like we do to the apparent decrease in the simple bravery of Kindness.

And yet, despite it all, we remain Beauty-full beings; beings whose very nature it is to reach out with courage – to forgive corrupt politicians & give the most rabid pastors a well-needed hug ... to give what little we have to those with less & to care for our planet like she were our first-born ... to let our criticisms dissipate with the morning sun & to replace them with gentle tones of compassion.

We are so very very Beauty-full, each & every one of us – far too Beauty-full to not let that Beauty shine forth into our everyday living.

There is no such thing as a small act of Kindness, my Friends.

Each & every Good Deed we enliven radiates a warmth that kindles a smile in all nearby; each one of them sends forth a brightness that illuminates even the darkest corners of our world.

If our neighbor is raking his yard, just picking up one leaf for him changes his entire day ... just letting him know that you Care is what it’s all about.



So go forth with Love today ... & shine brightly, my Friends.

*“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”
~ Mahatma Gandhi*

Love is the meditation ...
(04/06/2012)

Love is a wonderful meditation ... If you can simply understand it as a device, you don't have to do anything; whatever you are doing is being done by Love.

You are walking, it is Love moving about ...
You are sleeping, it is Love resting ...
You are speaking, it is Love singing ...
You are silent, it is Love in stillness.

And as you do so more & more – as you gradually let Love be your reason for being, slowly everything begins to settle ... and then there is no need for the technique.

When you are living as Love, you throw away the meditation. Then you live as Love – alive, radiant, contented, blissful, a song unto yourself; a song for everyone to witness; a song for others to hum along.

Your life becomes a prayer without any words – a grace, a beauty which cannot be tainted by pain or greed or fear ...
... a ray of Light shining from within into the darkness.

(inspired by Osho)



Embracing real Hope ...
(04/09/2012)

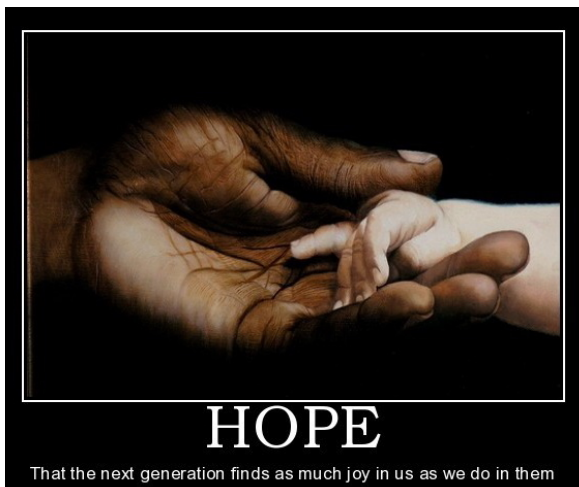
*“And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
and the greatest of them is Love.”
~ the “Apostle” Paul (1 Corinthians 13:13)*

It’s Easter Monday, and spring is booming its *BIG BEAUTY* all around us. I guess that means that today is a day for celebrating the rebirth of hope — and this, whether you are a Christian or not ... That having been said, it is important to keep hope in its proper perspective — otherwise it will do us more harm than good. Indeed, regardless of how you feel about Christianity & its Bible, the verse above illustrates this Truth very well. As Einstein himself so astute pointed out: *“If people are good only because they fear punishment, and hope for reward, then we are a sorry lot indeed”* ... And this is especially so when we realize that the “love” mentioned by Paul is actually “agape” in the ancient Greek manuscripts — a word that meant so much more than mere “love”.

Indeed, “Agape” fully trumps both faith and hope combined ... Indeed, it is only Agape that can save us. Hope and faith both yearn for what *we* feel to be a better future — often for ourselves or the ones for whom we happen to care. Agape, on the other hand, simply gives and gives and gives.

It is Agape that serves the poor ... It is Agape that greets strangers warmly, as though they were long-lost Friends (As they are!) ... It is Agape that forgives those who are wronging us ... It is Agape that goes forth each day, grateful not for the good that will assuredly come our way, but rather for the Good we can do for others.

And if we can remember this Truth and act on it in our everyday lives — maybe only for ten minutes each day — then our hope begins to shift ... We start to hope to lessen the suffering of those in pain ... We start to hope that the saddened once again know Joy ... We start to hope for a world of Peace, and we start to hope that we can play a small-but-significant part in making it so.



This is the hope that comes from real *LOVE* .
So ... got *HOPE*?

*“Lord, save us all from the tree of hope
that has lost the ability to put forth blossoms.”
~ inspired by Mark Twain*

Opening the Gate (04/07/2012)

*“Alter what you long for & you will shift who you are becoming ...
Let go of what you long for & you will Become who you’ve always been.”
~ inspired by Phil Cousineau*

So many of us are looking for “the good life” — so many of us are searching for the new partner or the new job or the new city or the new self-help technique that will finally make us happy ... And this deep yearning presents us with a pretty big problem, because there are only two ends to it: either we fail to realize our desires and remain extremely disappointed with life, **or** we receive the very things we hope for, only to then realize that they don’t make us truly happy at all (whereupon we go searching once again).

I’ve danced this dance for so many years; danced to this music that wasn’t quite my style; always hoping for a better song or a better partner to dance with — never satisfied with either — always just a bit off-step & always just a bit out of rhythm ... I mistakenly believed it was my environment that was lacking ... I thought that I too needed a partner who “truly loved me”, a job that fully rewarded my abilities, a community filled with “my kind of people” — people who respected me and provided me with regular doses of “fun & excitement”.

Then one day, I woke up to quite the liberating Truth; the Truth that deep & lasting Happiness has nothing at all to do with what I want; that it has nothing at all to do with what I do or do not possess in my life; that real Peace & real Joy only come to me when I dedicate my life — moment by moment — to bringing Peace &/or Joy to others.

“Do not assume that comfort is a sign of divine favor ... The question of what gifts are essential for you revolves around your unique role in the universal conspiracy to perpetrate blessings upon others.” ~ Rob Brezsny

And the best thing about this Truth was — I didn’t need to wait for “better times” to let it play out. I didn’t need to wait to “get healthy” or “have enough money” or “make the time” to Love on the other folks around me.

Indeed, the worse I felt physically, the more potent my Love became when I chose to give it anyway. The less money I had, the more potent my generosity became when I chose to give anyway. And the less spare-time I had to share, the more Meaning-full that time became when I chose to share it anyway.

Every little deed counts, folks ... Every “small” act of Kindness — especially those you do for others when you are “too sick” or “too tired” or “too poor” or “too busy” — is *INCREDIBLY POWERFUL*.

Indeed, real *LOVE* truly enters our lives while we are giving it away in radical fashion – only when we choose to live as though today were our very last day; as though we’ve been penned up for so many long years and someone finally left the gate open ...

And, ironically, it is this *LOVE* that will — in those moments we have the courage to give it — become the source of very Happiness we seek.

Opportunities to *LOVE* are waiting for us all right now, my Friends ... and the Gate is wide open ...

So ... got *LOVE*?

“I don’t care who you are, you are into well-doing. You have some talent that is blessing those in your sphere of influence. It may appear to be small but it is not. There is no such thing as a small talent. There is no such thing as a small act of well-doing.” ~ Dalton Roberts



To find God ...
(04/08/2012)

*The average man does not know what to do with this life,
yet wants another one which will last forever.” ~ Anatole France*

Here we are on Easter Sunday, a day when many will go to church in one form or another to get back in touch with the Divine – a day when we will enter “God’s house” and look for answers, or salvation, or grace, or God Itself.

“Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me.” ~ Alice Walker

Personally, I was taught that God resided in the church, and yet I have discovered during the course of a life dedicated to spiritual adventure that, while God does indeed reside in churches all around the world, He (or She, or It) tends to define “church” a bit more loosely than most of us do. To the Divine, which encompasses literally everything in this glorious Universe, “church” is wherever you happen to consciously *BE* at any given moment in time. Essentially, I have found that – to truly access God -- it is not enough to go anywhere in particular; but rather, we must first choose to pause and fully *BE* wherever we already are.

Of course, step two on this search is even more important: Once we are conscious of the Divine that resides within everything around us, we then become aware that the very same perfection reside within us as well — and then we realize that the only way to sincerely honor that Essence is to *ACT ACCORDINGLY*; that the only way to truly “do God’s will” is to reach out to Care for another.

Being a member of a church or attending church regularly or being baptized in the Holy Spirit or professing Jesus as “your only Lord and Savior” are all fine and dandy. Heaven knows that the Christianity’s “Apostle” Paul would be immensely pleased with all four of these choices. Of course, to truly please the Divine — to actually enter the “Kingdom of Heaven” that Jesus himself describes in the Bible, it is necessary to reach out for one moment and be Kind when least inclined. It is necessary to care for the downtrodden; to forgive those who insult or cheat you; to actually embody the Love we all so wish to see.

“If anyone brands you as an infidel, tell him that Love occupies a position more exalted than religion, and has nothing to do with faith or heresy. Whoever sets his feet firmly in the abiding-place of Love transcends both the bounds of infidelity and the limitations of faith.” ~ inspired by Attar

Frankly, it doesn't really matter whether you are a Christian or not. To be "saved" is to feel how it feels to be literally ONE with your life ... And to feel this perfect Peace, it is necessary to Love — to Love courageously & Love actively & Love radically & Love with empathy.

At least, that was Jesus' position on the matter ...

"A new command I give you: Love one another. Just as I have Loved you, so you must Love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you show Love to one another ... If you understand these things, blessed are you while you do them." ~ Jesus Christ (John 13:34-35+17)

Love, the verb, is the very reBirth that Jesus so wanted us all to know — which is why he preached that we could all do "even greater things" than he did. You see, there is nothing greater than Caring for those you don't like — there is nothing greater than having the humility to reach out and be Kind to a stranger ... there is nothing greater than having the courage to openly forgive your enemies.

As such, my Friends, Easter is not about being a "good Christian" ... Easter is about reawakening to the perfect Love that resides within you right now — the "Christ" that lives within every living being on this planet.

Yes, regardless of your religion (or lack thereof), real & perfect **LOVE** is waiting to be reBorn in your life.

So ... got **LOVE**?

"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried." ~ G. K. Chesterton



No small Kindness ...
(04/10/2012)

“Pilgrim, are you walking with your Heart or with your head?”
~ Camino de Santiago graffiti

That really is the question, isn't it? Whether we are going to work or tending the baby, sharing time with a friend or being attacked by an enemy, the only thing that truly matters is whether we are in those moments with our cold & analytical heads or with our compassionate & courageous Hearts.

Today marks the one-year anniversary of the very first step I took along a 900+ mile Peace Pilgrimage I walked from Chattanooga (Tennessee) to Lighthouse Point (a bit north of Miami, Florida) ... I walked 700+/- miles of that way carrying no money, no food & no water, and I never once asked for assistance of any kind. In the wild, dangerous, terrifying place that is “the world”, I was completely penniless and completely alone.

And in the beginning of this great journey, I was indeed often “in my head” — cold and afraid and hungry and alone. Needless to say, it was less than pleasant ... *And yet* something occurred on day three that I will always remember: I chose to stop worrying about myself and whether or not I would “make it”, and I started opening up to folks — I simply started trying to make *their* days a bit better. And when I did so, an amazing thing happened: my fear disappeared, and my hunger faded away along with it. I wasn't even cold anymore.

And as I began reaching out more & more to connect with the people around me, I rediscovered something truly wonderful — I rediscovered that people are quite simply amazingly *GOOD*.

Indeed, even though I was literally sustained for a large portion of my Trek by “the Divine” (whatever that is), I still wouldn't have survived were it not for the profound Courage & amazing Kindness of the hundreds of folks who reached out to me along the way ... Conservatives and liberals, black folks and white folks, the dirt poor and the exceedingly rich — over and over and over I was shown that real *LOVE* exists at the core of the human heart.

And all we each need to do to feel that *LOVE* blossom again in our own lives is to have the guts to Care — especially for the strangers we meet ... especially for those who annoy us ... especially for our enemies.

Rest assured, my Friends, every single act of Kindness – even the tiniest version thereof -- is very important to the one receiving it ... Indeed, without such “small” acts of Kindness, I would already be dead.

So, to all those who woke up and did the courageous thing back then – to all those who swallowed their very reasonable fears and reached out instead to this big, gangly, strange-looking stranger ... I offer a most humble and a most Heart-felt **THANK YOU!**

LOVE to you is LIFE to someone else ...
... got **LOVE**?

“A Pilgrim does not quench his thirst with whatever is offered, and yet touches each cup with gentle lips. A Pilgrim knows that breathing is praying, and thereby becomes himself a prayer. A Pilgrim sees insecurity as the possibility of possibilities, allowing his dread to dance joyfully under the sun. A Pilgrim knows that, even though he may travel in circles, with Love he can never go astray.”

~ inspired by Bodvar Schjelderup

*“Where there is Kindness and selfless Love,
God is truly present.”*

*~ Latin saying
(Ubi caritas et amor,
Deus ibi est.)*



Silliness as a Service ... (04/11/2012)

“Another way we can lay hold of some solitude is a quiet walk with a friend. Just walking slowly and not speaking at all. Sometimes holding hands will enhance it and sometimes it won’t. Try it both ways. The more we are tuned into others, the less need we have for language. We feel close, with some deep part of us deeply knowing we are sharing a special experience together.” ~ inspired by Dalton Roberts

That’s a very nice tip indeed — just slow down for a few minutes each day and be with someone; really **BE** with them ... No need to chat about anything going on in your life or share anything about how you are feeling ... Just walking together, side by side in silence — grateful for each other’s presence; grateful for being alive and sharing life.

Of course, there is another way to get some Big Meaning out of living — a choice made brilliantly by our Friend Mr. Seal in the attached image, and that way is this: go somewhere where folks are being “serious”... and flagrantly do the opposite ... Jump up & down, sing, laugh heartily, make eye contact & smile, greet others warmly, dance in the rain, raise your hands reverently to the Heavens or place them Joy-fully over your Heart.

Sometimes the greatest service is waking folks up to the fact that Life is allWays somehow very Beauty-full ... and sometimes the best way to do so requires not a single word.

LOVE is often Purpose-fully goofy ... got **LOVE**?

“There perhaps is no more important service than openly exuding Joy ... When you choose to overcome anxiety, or sadness, or grief, or anger – alcohol dependency, losing a loved one, a physical illness, the fear of death, the agony of divorce, or any other personal discomfort – everyone around you becomes inspired.” ~ called forth by Barry Neil Kaufman



Love's happy Leap ...
(04/14/2012)

*"If you can get humor & seriousness at the same time,
then you've created a special little thing,
and that's what I'm looking for,
because once you become pompous,
you lose everything."
~ Paul Simon*

Interesting word, "serious" — on the one hand it implies that we must be earnest with our existence; that we must realize that we all only get one shot at this dance called Life, and that we might do well to wake every day as if it were our last — to wake every day and go forth to "Love all-out" ... I think this side of "seriousness" serves its Purpose quite well indeed.

Of course, there is another side to being "serious" — and this is the side that tells us we can only have a Meaning-full life by struggling to be perfect; by struggling mightily to "make the world a better place"; by fighting aggressively to enforce "justice" &/or by putting on a dour face and persevering "to the bitter end" ... Nobly intended, these intentions are, and yet I'm not so sure they actually honor Life (and I am quite certain that they don't work).

You see, to truly honor the precious gift of Life we have been given, we must indeed at some point set our selfishness aside and serve our Community — we must indeed release the desire for "personal wealth" in order to Give to others — we must quit building "healthy boundaries" in order to courageously Love our enemies. *AND YET*, these efforts are not a dour, "serious" business ... Rather, the selfless mentality is actually a *PRIVILEGE*. Indeed, "caring" for others because we "must" or because we are "supposed to" or even because it is the only way to attain true Happiness for ourselves will actually prevent us from attaining that very Success. Indeed, the only way to truly honor life is to choose to serve others Joy-fully – to choose to self-sacrifice Joy-fully ... to choose to forgive "mean people" Joy-fully ... and to choose to have lots of fun while doing so.



In-deed, once we set aside our fears & desires for self and happily "dive in" to Caring for others, *LOVE* is actually lots of fun.

So ... got *LOVE*?

"Things won are done; Joy's soul lies in the doing." ~ William Shakespeare

Joy in taxes ...
(04/15/2012)

*“None are more hopelessly enslaved
than those who falsely believe they are free.” ~ W. Goethe*

HAPPY TAX DAY everybody! ... OK, I know this is not the happiest of days for most of you Americans. In all likelihood, you are either groaning about the money you were “forced to pay” or you are fretting about being late with that payment. I used to pay taxes in the United States and now I pay lots of taxes here in Germany — so I get it. Of course, this post is not really about paying taxes. It’s actually about your Freedom ... I have a motto in life that has served me well over the years: Choose to *want* to do it, or don’t do it at all. Indeed, if you are moping or whining about doing anything in your life, you are not really benefiting yourself or anyone else by doing it.

How does this Truth relate to paying taxes? Quite simply: either pay them Joy-fully -- or don’t pay them at all ... period!

Now I realize that this advice seems pretty tricky for most Americans, especially once the following facts become evident:

Fact #1: The IRS can indeed throw a U.S. citizen in jail for not paying their income taxes. That this act is unconstitutional & thereby completely illegal is irrelevant; they truly can do this.

Fact #2: *Not one penny* of your income tax dollars goes to pay for any of the services you think they are paying for. That’s right, your income tax dollars — all of them — actually help pay for the ill-advised spending policies of our past & current “leaders” (i.e. the interest on the federal debt). Oh yeah, a significant part of them also help fund the “just wars” that the American military is currently fighting (as well as all those “just wars” that we are currently planning to fight in the near future).

“If the American people ever allow the banks to control the issuance of their currency ... the banks and corporations that will grow up around them will deprive the people of all property, until their children wake up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered. The issuing power of money should be taken from banks and restored to the people to whom it belongs. I sincerely believe the banking institutions having the issuing power of money, are more dangerous to liberty than standing armies.” ~ Thomas Jefferson

Of course, if you support paying the Federal Reserve trillions of your hard-earned dollars, and if you support the current U.S. military operations that are actually *creating* hundreds if not thousands of new “terrorists” every day, then feel free continue to pay those taxes. Rest assured that I will think just as highly of you whether you do so or not.

After all, this issue is not at all problematic for me here in Germany, where around 40% of my monies are taxed, but go towards beautifying the environment, maintaining fantastic schools, caring wonderfully for the sick & the elderly, and preserving a very high quality of living for the poor ... Remember, the real issue here is not your taxes — it's your *FREEDOM*; the freedom you will always have to choose to *want* to do whatever you choose to do.

So what options are left for those of you who really do not want your earnings to make the rich mega-bankers richer or the United States a more violent nation? Well, there is some **GOOD NEWS** for you folks: you do indeed have some very attractive options:

Option #1: Purpose-fully & consciously & courageously refuse to pay your income taxes. Around 80 million Americans engage this option every year, so of you do so, you will be in very good company.

Option #2: Purpose-fully & consciously withhold the 25%+ of your income tax dollars that reportedly go towards financing our current military operations around the world.

Option #3: Purpose-fully & consciously pay all of your taxes, *AND* include a letter (or write a note on the check itself) explaining that *ALL* of your money is to be used for Peace-full domestic policies. You can even designate the specific areas of assistance that you prefer (e.g. education, health care, environmental protection, caring for the elderly etc.) ... This doesn't mean that your cash will actually be used in those ways, of course, but at least your intentions will be made known; at least someone at the IRS will cash that check and be forced to think a bit.

Option "BEST": Pay your taxes willingly just to get the U.S. government off your back, and then get out there and use your remaining time & your remaining money to do the very things that your government should have already done with your taxes long ago – Care for the ill, be Kind to the downtrodden, give to the poor, beautify your neighborhoods, & share the harvests from your gardens.

In closing, just because those "in power" have made this decision a very difficult one doesn't mean that they have removed your Power to choose! You will always have the Power to Love — as long as you choose to exercise it.



LOVE requires being true to your True Self ...
LOVE requires conscious action ...
LOVE requires making courageous choices ...
... got **LOVE**?

"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous effort ... We must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent." ~ Martin Luther King Jr.

Perfecting Desire ... (04/16/2012)

“You can do anything you steadily purpose to do. Unless you happen to ignorantly aim at something which would enslave the free will of another, only vacillation can defeat you.” ~ Elizabeth Towne

Ahhhhh, “success” ... So many books on the matter; so much advice to be heard from “the experts”: books on “manifesting wealth” ... advice on “getting your fair share” ... articles about “co-creating your destiny” ... expert opinions on how to finally be truly happy.

Of course, deep down we all know that real *SUCCESS* has very little to do with how much we earn or how much we own or how much pleasure we reap from life. Deep down we all remember that real *SUCCESS* in life is not found by obtaining what you desire, but rather in altering what you want –

*It’s about choosing to want to cease wanting ...

*It’s about choosing to want that others receive *their* wants ...

*It’s about choosing to want that all others cease to want.

And the only way to go about attaining that true measure of *SUCCESS* is to live each moment as if there are no speed limits to your Love ... for indeed (indeed), there aren’t any.

“The Tibetan word for arrogance is ‘nga-gyal’, or ‘me victorious’” ~ Pema Chodron

“The most unrealistic person in the world is the cynic, not the dreamer. Hopefulness only makes sense when it doesn’t make sense to be hopeful. This is your century. Take it and run with it as if your life depends on it – For indeed, it does.” ~ inspired by Paul Hawken

“Be contagious ... Be peace in a strong fashion.” ~ Lee Peterson



Love's full Cup ...
(04/21/12)

It is easy to care for those who are far away, and it is often quite difficult to Love those closest to us. It often seems we would rather give a cup of rice to relieve hunger on a distant shore than give a cup of actual Caring to relieve the thirst for intimacy that exists in our own neighborhoods.

As such, please remember to bring courageously flagrant Kindness to everyone in your home and to every stranger you encounter today — for this is where real **Love** is born, this is where real **Love** is nourished, and this is where real **Love** then blossoms into the Light that will brighten your entire world.

Courageously Caring for everyone you meet is the only Cup of Life that is truly full ... And it is waiting for you right now — waiting to be shared with others; waiting to be savored in its giving; waiting to refresh your Soul.

It's right there inside you. It's free and it's cool & it's pure — & it's waiting patiently to be sipped ... So drink up, my Friends Drink UP!



*“Life is a beautiful and endless journey, in search of the perfect cup.”
~ Barbara Daniels*

(inspired by Mother Teresa)

Enemy of enemies ...
(04/20/2012)

123 years ago today, a beautiful baby boy came into the world ... Like most other babies, his early days were full of joy and wonder. And as he grew older, like most other children, his days were filled with hope — He wondered about his future, and he wondered whether his dreams would become his reality. And as he grew older, like many children his age, this particular young boy reveled in the beauty of nature, played happily with his friends, and even sang in his church choir.

When he was 10, however, the tragic death of his younger brother affected him severely. He became argumentative and morose, and instead of being treated with gentle Kindness, he was instead frequently blasted by his parents (primarily his father) with criticism and denigration. His downward spiral picked up speed when his dream of becoming an artist was set back by his parents' refusal to allow him to study that craft — instead sending him to a technical school. Here, he was miserable and he performed poorly on purpose, in the hopes that his father would see the futility of that particular schooling and, in his own words, “would finally let me devote myself to my dream.”

And he was not without artistic talent. Indeed, the attached picture on the page facing is one of his many fine works — works that show an appreciation for the Beauty of life; an appreciation that can only come from a heart that knows what it is to Love.

Alas, his dream did not materialize for our young hero ... Indeed, his plummet continued, as he was repeatedly rejected by art schools. His mother then died at the young age of 47, and he finally ended up homeless and alone. At this point, his rebellion turned more extreme — against not only his parents but apparently against humanity itself, a degeneration which eventually landed him in the throes of his country's growing trend of radical political nationalism. The rest, as they say, is history ... His name was Adolf Hitler.

Now I'm not going to sit here and attempt to justify the choices Hitler made in his later years. I think every sentient being with a functioning conscience is aware that many of Adolf's adult decisions redefined repugnance. What I will do, however, is remind all of you that, while an act or two of Kindness probably would not have stopped him from murdering millions once the gas chambers commenced their cruel reappings, an act or two of courageous Kindness shown to him a few years earlier could very well have done just that ...

A kind word from his father encouraging his artwork ... A kind word from an art school official instead of a rude rejection ... A kind word from a passerby when he was begging for food ... A kind word from a stranger when he was mourning his brother or his mother ... Any one of these courageous acts could have very well turned the tide and opened the door for Adolf Hitler to replace the path of murder with a path of Peace ... Yes, Hitler chose the evil way, and he most certainly paid a terrible price for that choice. And yet he was *NOT* born “evil”, nor was he an “evil man”. He was simply a man in immense pain who made extremely cowardly and extremely evil decisions.

We like to look at our enemies as “other than” — we like to criticize & gossip about & point the scathing finger at those in our lives who don’t treat us the way we wish to be treated. Indeed, it’s so much easier to point the one finger out at others than to have the humility to look in the mirror at our own failures. For we too have turned away from the homeless beggar ... We too have ignored friends in need ... We too have denigrated politicians from “opposing parties” ... We too have expressed fear of those who look & act differently than we ... We too have sat back passively and watched while our own government continues to commit acts of cold cruelty and raw injustice.

And yet, we too are intensely *GOOD* within — and we too can make a *HUGE* positive difference in the lives of those around us. Indeed, we are quite fortunate that we are presented every day with the opportunity to stop evil dead in its tracks, as every “mean person” we meet has the potential to become another Hitler.



And yet, when we have the courage to extend to those people the one thing they are so desperately seeking — the Caring Kindness that has been withheld from them for so long — then the “evil” within them has no choice but to flee; it will have no choice but to let those people reawaken to how wonderful it feels to be “nice” and “good” again.

LOVE has the guts to reach out to those least deserving of Love ... In this way, we do our part ... In this way, we remake “evil” into the change we wish to see ... So, -- got *LOVE*?

“Mankind has grown strong in eternal struggles and it will only perish through eternal peace ... How fortunate for governments that the people they administer don’t think.” ~ Adolf Hitler

Caring for the Earth ... (04/22/2012)

“We’re so self-important. Everybody’s going to save something now -- save the trees, save the bees, save the whales, save those snails. And the greatest arrogance of all: save the planet. Save the planet?! We don’t even know how to take care of ourselves ... The planet has been through a lot worse than us -- been through earthquakes, volcanoes, plate-tectonics, solar flares, magnetic storms ... hundreds of thousands of years of bombardment by comets and asteroids and meteors, worldwide floods, tidal waves, erosion, cosmic rays, recurring ice ages ... And we think a few plastic bags and some aluminum cans are going to make a difference?!?”

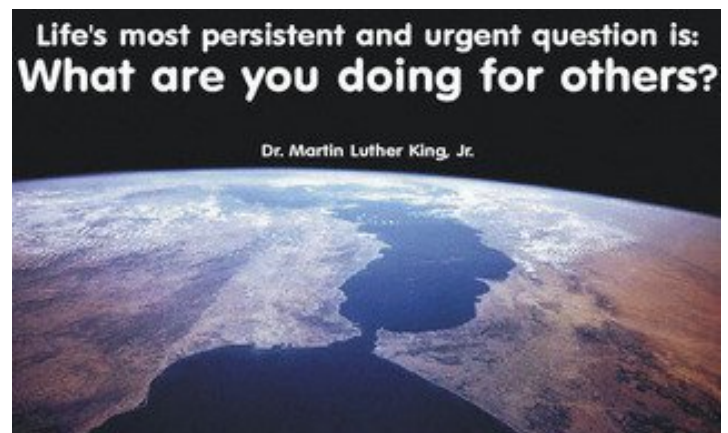
The planet isn’t going anywhere ... WE are! We’re going away ... We’re going away, and we won’t leave much of a trace, either -- well, maybe a little Styrofoam ... The planet’ll be here and we’ll be long gone; just another failed mutation; just another closed-end biological mistake -- an evolutionary cul-de-sac. The planet’ll shake us off like a bad case of fleas.

The planet will be here for a long, long, LONG time after we’re gone, and it will heal itself, it will cleanse itself, ’cause that’s what it does. It’s a self-correcting system. The air and the water will recover -- the Earth will be renewed. And if it’s true that plastic is not degradable, well, the planet will simply incorporate plastic into a new paradigm: the Earth plus plastic.” ~ George Carlin

OK, I’ll admit that this quote is a little negative and somewhat edgy (to be Kind, I even edited out Carlin’s more ‘in your face’ phrases therein), and yet it *does* make an important point: namely, that The Universe is doing just fine — that we are indeed far too “small” to really do any permanent damage to our planet’s “bigger picture”.

Aaaaaaaaand yet, George seemed to miss another point — one that is possible much much much more important. And that point is this: **WHAT WE DO HERE TRULY DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!** You see, Earth Day is about so much more than just taking care of the planet — It’s just as much about remembering to **Care for each other**. After all, if we can remember to actively do the latter, the former will naturally follow ... So get involved this Earth Day, my Friends. Heck, make the principles of Earth Day an entire Earth Year — Heck, make them an entire Earth Life!

“When you have once seen the glow of happiness on the face of a beloved person, you know that a man can have no vocation but to awaken that light on the faces surrounding him. In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.” ~ Albert Camus



Perfect Tempo ...
(04/23/2012)

*“Slow down, you move too fast.
You got to make the mornin’ last.
Just skippin’ down the cobblestones,
Lookin’ for fun & feelin’ groovy.”
~ Simon & Garfunkel*

It can be a crazy world -- lots to do, obligations to fulfill, bills to pay, relationships to tend ... At times it can feel somewhat overwhelming.

That’s why it is even more important to remember to pause regularly and *BE IN THIS MOMENT*. And there is no better way to do so than to slow down for just a few seconds & look around for someone who could use a Kind word or a gentle smile; for some Good Deed that is being left undone. Saying that word or giving that smile or doing that deed is what will bring you back to your Life.

Rest assured, when you have reached your End & are looking back on your time here, the “fun” you had might make you smile and the work you did might make you proud, and yet it is the small acts of Kindness that you shared along the way that will make you truly Happy — it is only the times when you slowed down to help the downtrodden that will allow you to feel ready to finally Go.

So, with all due respect to Paul & Art, let’s change their lyrics just a bit, ... and then let’s get out there and *LIVE THEM*.

*“Slow down, you move too fast ...
You’ve got to make the moment last.
Just flowin’ down the cobblestones ...
Lookin’ to **LOVE** & feelin’ groovy.”*



The time we have left ...
(04/29/2012)

*“On a long enough time line,
the survival rate for everyone drops to zero.”
~ Chuck Palahniuk*

*“An awareness of death
encourages us to live ...” ~ Paulo Coelho*

When Alexander the Great was coming to India, he met a man named Diogenes. It was a winter morning when he did so. A cool breeze was blowing, and Diogenes was lying on the riverbank, taking a sunbath. Now Diogenes had nothing, not even a begging-bowl, and yet Alexander had never seen such a graceful man (for when a person has chosen to live as a Loving Soul, a Beauty arises from within which is nothing short of other-worldly). In utter awe of Diogenes’ serenity, Alexander said, “Sir, I am immensely impressed by your being, and would like to do something for you.” Diogenes looked up calmly and replied, “Simply stand to the side, if you would, because you are blocking the sun— Nothing else do I need.” Alexander then said, “If I have another chance to come to the earth I will ask God, instead of making me Alexander again, to make me like you.” Diogenes laughed and he said, “Who is preventing you from doing so right now? For months I have seen your armies moving and preparing – Where are you going? and for what?” Alexander replied, “I am going to India to conquer the world.” Diogenes smiled again and asked, “And then what are you going to do?” Alexander paused and answered, “Then, I will rest and extend justice and kindness to all those I meet.” Diogenes laughed heartily at this and said, “How odd! I have not conquered the world, and yet I am resting now – already I am just & Kind. Who has told you that before you can be Kind, you must conquer your enemies? And I will tell you a secret: if you don’t choose Kindness now, you never will, for something or other will always remain to be conquered. And time is ever-fleeting. Indeed, if you continue to proceed as you are, you will die in the middle of your journey – because everybody dies in the middle of the journey -- and you will do so without ever having known real Love.”

And Alexander departed from Diogenes – and he did proceed to India – and he did indeed die in the middle, while he was returning from India -- and on that day he remembered Diogenes. (~ inspired by unknown)

There is nothing like a nice bout of intense illness (or injury, or accident, or failure) to wake us up to the Truth illustrated by this parable — that even if we are young &/or healthy &/or powerful &/or wealthy, we are all very close to death indeed; all very close to departing this glorious gift of life that we have been given.

And when we do finally depart, we will take absolutely nothing with us; not even the “fun we had”; not even our “greatest success”; not even the personal identities we have so finely honed over the many weeks & months & years since our birth.

Will our “Souls” live forever? Possibly so ... And yet one thing is for sure: “You” as you know “You” today will *not* be making that journey. Aaaaaaaaaaaaaand *THIS IS A VERY GOOD THING!*

You see, it is *THIS* Truth is what makes every moment of *THIS* life priceless ... It is *THIS* Truth that makes every selfless act a deed of true Power ... And it is *THIS* Truth that has every conscious moment literally overflowing with amazing Beauty ... If only we would pause to notice those miracles; if only we would reach out to do those Kind deeds.

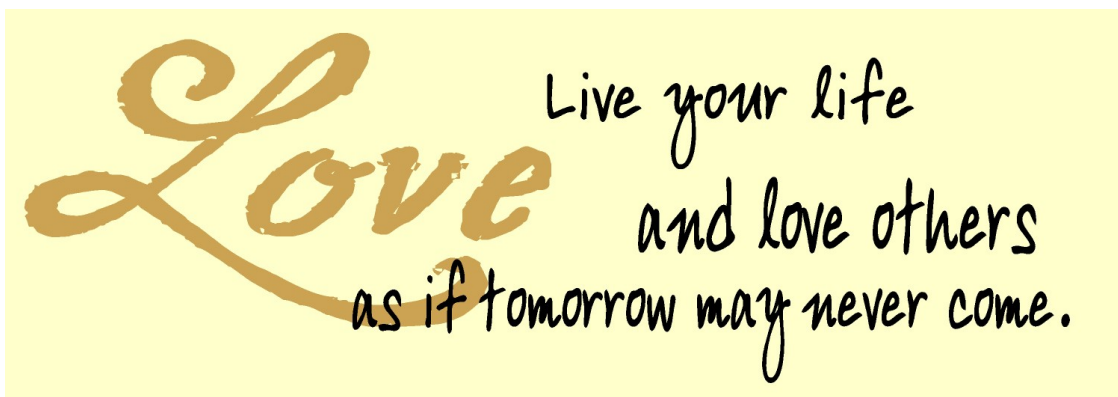
So, my Friends, let’s avoid saying that we are going to serve our communities tomorrow ... that tomorrow we will be Kind to a stranger ... that tomorrow we will forgive an enemy ... that tomorrow we will give past the point of comfort.

Why wait for tomorrow?
... For tomorrow truly never comes.

Why not *now*?

“The story of my recent life’ makes more sense to me than ‘the story of my life’, because we each get so many lives between birth and death -- a life to be a child; a life to come of age; a life to wander, to settle, to fall in love, to parent, to test our promise, to realize our mortality – and in some lucky cases, to do something even after that profound realization.” ~ inspired by Mitch Albom

*“Wherever you go,
go with all your Heart.”
~ Confucius*



Your true Fortune ...
(04/30/2012)

One year ago today, while I was waiting for the start of a Chi Gong conference to which I had been invited, some friends and I decided to check out our horoscopes. One after another my companions each picked up the daily paper and read aloud the bland, overly-general advice that pretty much applied to every human being in the room, if not to every person on the planet. Still, it was lots of fun and we all shared a laugh or two. When it got to be my turn I wasn't really expecting anything even remotely relevant. After all, what would a horoscope have to say to someone in the middle of a 900+ mile Peace Pilgrimage — to someone with no home, no money, very few possessions & very few desires? As the paper was handed to me, after glancing to my companions and rolling my eyes a bit, I looked down and read the following:

“If you can, walk home.”

I guess there are many points to this story -- and I'll leave each of you to discover the ones that are most relevant to you, and yet for me, I was reminded that day that there is Good Advice being “spoken” to us in every second of our lives, if only we have the Humility to open up and Hear It ... And to do so, we must first choose to set aside our judgments of others & our preconceptions about life — We must loosen the taloned grip we have on our personal beliefs long enough to perceive what is truly right there in front of us (as opposed to what we already know is “actually there”).

Of course, to truly SEE what we are being “told”, we have to do more than simply open up and *Look* — We must also have the Courage to take the second (& far more important) step on this two-step journey: *WE MUST ALSO ACT* on what we have allowed ourselves to See ...

Indeed, if we don't make such a Leap of Faith when presented with these special “messages”, then a horoscope remains just an “amusing phrase”; a chance meeting with a friend remains simply an “unusual coincidence”; that direct eye-contact with a stranger becomes just a “random glance”; and that beggar on the street remains “just a bum”.

Now I didn't put much faith in horoscopes back then, and frankly I still don't today (something about them de-emphasizing the importance of Free Will & the power of choice just bugs me). And yet one year ago today, I chose to act on what my horoscope “told” me ...

As it became quickly clear that the conference wasn't a place that resonated with what I had chosen to learn about (**practical Oneness**) or what I have chosen to share about (**selfless Love**), I chose not to wait and ride back to the hotel with my friends ...

I chose to get up and walk home.

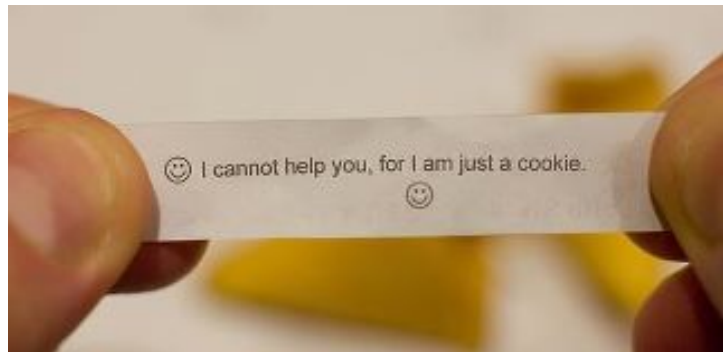
And on the way, even though it was "only a horoscope", I decided to assume (just for kicks) that it had "spoken" to me for a reason; that there was indeed someone along that route that day who might very well need my assistance.

And of course, I did find someone "in need" that afternoon, and I did indeed get lots of Joy from helping them. And even though it was only a "small deed" I did, the mere fact that I went out of my way to help seemed to bring them great Joy as well.

I guess what it boils down to is this: Some of us spend lots of energy reading horoscopes or listening to fortune tellers or reading the teachings of self-help gurus in order to "figure life out" or "find the way" — and that is all fine & good. *And yet* if you do so, I think it's important to realize the following two things: **#1**) The only Guidance that is going to bring you any lasting Joy is the Guidance that encourages you to reach out and Care for others ...

and **#2**) The only way to truly "understand" that same Good Advice is to take the risk and get out there and *LIVE IT!*

Until you do so,
... it remains just a clever cookie.



P.S. Just for fun, here are some clever Fortune-Cookie fortunes:

"The fortune you seek is in another cookie."
"Avoid mistaking temptation for opportunity."
"There is no error so great as that of always being right."
"He who laughs at self never runs out of things to laugh at."
"You will be hungry again in one hour."



*“And I will take one from a thousand
and two from ten thousand,
and they shall Become a single One.”
~ Jesus (Gospel of Thomas 23)*