

XIV. Connecting to the Spiritual

Level

There is a place in you where there is perfect peace. There is a place in you where nothing is impossible. There is a place in you where the strength of God abides.

— A COURSE IN MIRACLES

Two “rooms” within our mind exist simultaneously—one ruled by the ego and the other guided by the Spirit. When we “live” in the part of our mind where ego thoughts rule, we experience life as scary, limiting, unsatisfying, and stressful. In that very same moment, if we move our awareness to the spiritual level of consciousness, we experience life as safe, exciting, fulfilling, and joyful. This makes sense when we consider the differences between the ego level and the spiritual level of consciousness.

Thoughts on the ego level can induce fear, regret, anger and resentment, and convince us that we are

guilty and unworthy. Thoughts on the spiritual level can release us from fear, remind us that we are loveable and deserving, and guide us to abundance and fulfillment. Therefore, if we want a situation to change for the better, it's important that we connect to the spiritual level. However, crossing the threshold from one level of consciousness to another can be challenging.

When a man asked Jesus what he needed to do in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus replied that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. In other words, the threshold between the ego level and the spiritual level is narrow. If we cling to ego thoughts, desires, and solutions, we cannot fit through the narrow frame. Yet, for many of us, letting go is not easy.

I once heard a story that is a great example of how difficult it is for us to let go of ego thoughts, even though holding on to them is unsatisfying and painful.

A woman approached a spiritual guru asking for help. "I am sad and lonely," she began. "I have been betrayed by my friends, criticized by my parents, and

ignored by my children. Please help me.” With infinite patience and compassion the guru replied, “If you want to feel love, joy, and peace, you must let go of these thoughts.” “What?!” the woman exclaimed, “but you don’t understand. Everyone hates me. You wouldn’t believe how others treat me.” With infinite patience and compassion he replied, “Let go of these thoughts as well.” The woman began to cry. “You don’t get it,” she whispered through her tears. “I was abandoned and left all alone.” With infinite patience and compassion the guru replied, “Let go of these thoughts as well.” The woman became angry. “I can’t!” she argued. “They’re true. I can’t let them go.” With infinite patience and compassion the guru remained silent.

At times I was like the woman in this story. One evening, while drowning in a pool of ego thoughts and emotions, I prayed for relief. The Spirit offered me the same advice as the guru. An image appeared in my mind of my hands clutching a cactus plant with long, prickly needles. I then heard a gentle voice say, “Just let go.” Even though I understood the message and I wanted relief from the pain, I felt powerless to stop listening to them. I cried out, “How can I let them go?”

I received the answer in a dream.

Dream

In the dimly lit house that I share with friends, life is monotonous. Today my housemates are playing a card game to occupy their time. Uninterested, I look around for something to do. "I suppose I could watch TV," I sigh. These dull living conditions are getting difficult to bear. To make matters worse, we share our living space with an uninvited, annoying roommate (our ego). He is disguised as a little man who acts childish. He wants to be the center of attention and needs to be constantly entertained. He is never satisfied and very critical. Right on cue, he tugs on my sleeve and whines, "What should I play with next? I'm bored." Deflated, I slump in my chair. I'm not sure how much longer I can tolerate living like this.

I glance to my right and notice a hallway off the living room. "Is that new?" I wonder. Wait... I remember now. This hallway leads to another part of the house! I survey our current living conditions: A friend vacuums the living room rug, a few others play board games, while our little roommate annoys everyone with his constant chatter.

“Whatever is on the other side of the house must be better than living like this,” I mutter to myself. I am determined to leave.

I gather my friends together. Careful not to alert our roommate, we squeeze into a huddle and speak in hushed tones. “We can leave!” I announce in a loud whisper. Confusion ripples throughout the circle. “Leave? But where would we go?” asks a friend. “There is a hallway that leads to another part of the house,” I explain. “I don’t know what it’s like to live there, but I’m going anyway. Are you with me?” After a momentary pause they reply in unison, “Yes!” “Shhh,” I plead, pointing to the little man who is coloring at the kitchen table. “We can’t take him with us. We need to distract him so he doesn’t follow us. I have an idea.” We engage in a few more conspiratorial whispers and then we take action.

We entice our roommate to go into the bedroom with the promise of many toys. Enthralled by the shiny trinkets, noisy trucks, and stuffed animals, he doesn’t notice the door closing. We tiptoe toward the hallway. I take the lead. Everyone follows single file down the long, narrow hallway. “This is very

exciting,” a voice behind me says softly. “I can’t wait to see what is on the other side of the house.”

Arriving at the end of the hallway, I hold the door open and gesture for my friends to cross the threshold. Suddenly, a piercing screech stops everyone in their tracks. “Don’t leave me. I can’t survive without you!” We turn around to see the little man running toward us. He looks forlorn and terrified.

I know that his heartfelt pleas are a trick to keep us from leaving but the others do not. A few friends take steps toward him. “Do not listen to him,” I state firmly. “He is trying to trick you into staying. Ignore everything he says and keep walking.” The friends in the front of the line reluctantly follow my instructions and cross the threshold. This action causes another heart-wrenching plea from the little man. “Please, please don’t leave me.”

“Shouldn’t we help him?” a friend asks. Others nod in agreement, their resolve weakening. I remain resolute. Recognizing that his cries are a ploy to get us to stay, I command, “Do not listen to him. Keep walking!” My certainty keeps everyone moving forward ... except the girl at the end of the

line. I can tell that she feels guilty for leaving him behind. His clever tactic is working. She looks at me, glances at the little man, and then stares back at me. "He needs me," she counters. "I should pick him up." She runs to the little man, swings him up onto her back, and walks toward me.

I cross the threshold, turn around, and make one last attempt to persuade her. "Please put him down," I plead. "You can't bring him with you. If you hold onto him you won't be able to cross the threshold and live in the other part of the house." Even though she realizes this is true, she cannot bring herself to let him go. Sadly, I watch as the door closes.

I turn around and become aware of my new surroundings. The furniture, floors, and walls are sparkling white. People dressed in soft shimmering robes float effortlessly around the room. Exhilarated by sounds of laughter and lively conversations, my skin tingles with excitement. I feel alive!

A woman with kind eyes floats toward me. She beckons me to follow her into another room. I stand at the doorway. My daughter is lying on a bed

holding her newborn baby. I race to her side. Tenderly, she kisses the baby's forehead and says, "Her name is Cherished, which means blessings."

This beautiful new life fills my heart with joy. I can't believe that at the same time we were living in the dull and lifeless part of the house there existed these beautiful, light-filled rooms! If I hadn't decided to leave we would have missed all this beauty. My heart bursts with gratitude that I remembered this part of the house and that we made the choice to live here.

This dream message is a reminder that the ego is not a powerful wizard who can control what we think or what we do, nor does the ego have our best interest at heart. The ego is a frightened little voice within our mind who has only one objective: self-preservation. It will say whatever is necessary to keep our attention and prevent us from connecting to the spiritual level. When this happens, we may be unable or unwilling to withdraw our protection and love from the ego.

The reasons why we choose to "live" with the ego vary. We may cling to painful and fearful thoughts believing that we are powerless to let them go. We

may feel uncomfortable leaving familiar solutions behind. We may be convinced that we need the ego to protect us from harm or to satisfy our deepest desires. These doubts and fears are the ego trying to prevent us from connecting to the spiritual level.

The ego knows the weakest spot in our armor and uses it to keep us engaged. If you are tempted to listen to the ego's threats and empty promises, do not judge yourself. Instead, with infinite patience and compassion, pause and consider your choices. You can hold on to ego thoughts and remain on the ego level of consciousness or you can drop the ego and step across the threshold into a "world" of light and love.

The dreams and visions in this book are examples of what can happen when you take a chance and decide to leave the ego level in pursuit of spiritual answers. When you connect to the spiritual level and as a result, experience safety, joy, love, and inspiration, you will be happy that you remembered this part of your mind and that you made the choice to "live" there.

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