

# **MIND PURPOSE TRUTH**



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**Dear Reader,**

The book which you are reading is actually a collection of excerpts from my previous book, *The Truth as I See It: A Collection of Spiritual Writings*, along with other original material which I posted on my blog at [www.mindpurposetruth.com](http://www.mindpurposetruth.com). Whereas *The Truth as I See It* was a collection of my spiritual writings, this book is a collection of excerpts from the writings, which gives the material a different, smaller, bite-sized feel. I find that there's something powerful about highlighting one specific thought and letting it have a life of its own, to see if it can stand on its own two feet, even out of context. Some of my favorite books are books of quotes, just like these. I'm happy to share them with you and hope that they find a place in your heart, mind, and soul.

— Adam Soto



# MIND PURPOSE TRUTH

## On Atonement and Perfect, Unconditional Love

Here are what I believe to be four of the most ignored (or least applied/understood) scripture verses in the Bible. Wouldn't any understanding of God that portrays God differently, even if it's from the Bible, do so in contradiction to these verses? \*

### **1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NLT)**

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud <sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. <sup>6</sup>It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. <sup>7</sup>Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

### **1 John 4:16 (NLT)**

<sup>16</sup>We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

### **Matthew 5:43-48 (NLT)**

Teaching about Love for Enemies

<sup>43</sup>“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. <sup>44</sup>But I say, love your enemies!

Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who persecute you! <sup>45</sup>In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For

he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.<sup>46</sup> If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much.<sup>47</sup> If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that.<sup>48</sup> But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

### **1 John 4:18 (NLT)**

<sup>18</sup>Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

The Bible has many different portrayals of God. Some verses portray God's love as perfect and unconditional, as these verses do, and in others, God's love is conditional. The basic rules of logic and reason dictate that two contradictory statements can't both be true, so which is it? Is God's love perfect and unconditional, or is it conditional?

I have heard some argue that God is too "pure" to be in the presence of "sinners"—hence, the necessity of Jesus' atonement. (*Atonement* refers to the forgiving or pardoning of sin in general and original sin in particular through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, enabling the reconciliation between God and his creation.<sup>[1]</sup>) To say that God is so pure as to be unable to be in the presence of sin gives too much power to sin and not enough power to God. God's love is the greatest force in existence! Being in the presence of sinners can't possibly harm or change God, for God is love. God is love regardless of anything *we* do, because it is God's very nature to "send sunlight and rain to the evil and the good, the just and unjust alike." Not only that, but Jesus spent the majority of his time in close contact with the "unclean" and "sinners." Did that make Jesus unclean? Was Jesus less

pure by being in contact with them? I think the obvious answer is, “No.”

As it says in the verses above, God is love, and God is perfect; therefore, God’s love is perfect. Any idea of perfect love would have to include the idea that God’s love is unconditional, for if it was conditional, then it wouldn’t be perfect. Also, if God’s love is perfect, God’s love would also possess all of the qualities (attributes) that we consider to be a part of love; hence, God has perfect and unconditional *patience*, perfect and unconditional *understanding*, perfect and unconditional *mercy*, perfect and unconditional *grace*, perfect and unconditional *forgiveness*, etc...

In regards to whether God’s love can be both conditional and unconditional: Can a circle be both a circle and a square? A circle—by definition—is round. A perfect circle—by definition—is perfectly round. If there is any imperfection in the roundness and shape of a perfect circle, then it could no longer be considered perfect. In the same way, conditional and unconditional—by definition—are contradictory terms, so logically speaking, they can’t both be part of God’s nature. Love is love; if it isn’t love, then it’s something else. Perfect love is perfect; if it isn’t perfect, then it must be called by another name (conditional) and understood in another way.

Look at it this way: if God is love, then there can never be a time when God isn’t love, correct? If God is perfect, then there can never be a time when God isn’t perfect. So I’m perplexed as to how anyone could reconcile the two (conditional/unconditional) and still consider God’s love to be perfect. Any explanation would simply defy the logical premises on which the ideas of perfect, conditional, and unconditional are built; there really is no other possible outcome or explanation.

It is for this reason (one reason among many, actually) that I dismiss any understanding of God that portrays God’s love as conditional (which obviously includes the atonement).

Human beings often forgive people without any need for payment or recompense. If humans, who are imperfect, can do that, shouldn't God, who is perfect, be able to forgive without any kind of payment? Anyways, isn't that the very definition of forgiveness, that a debt or wrong is forgiven or forgotten, without payment?

What we are discussing here is the most fundamental question there is about God: What is God's nature? Or in other words, What is the essence or character of God? As you can see, I believe that God is Love, and God's Love is perfect and unconditional.

Really think about this: if we are forgiven by God only AFTER Jesus' "atoning sacrifice on the cross," that is a textbook example of *conditional* love; our forgiveness is *conditional* on the death of Jesus. That contradicts the message of love and grace Jesus taught us about God, and contradicts how Jesus told us to love and forgive our fellow man (and the example he set for us).

Isn't forgiveness universally considered an attribute of love? And if forgiveness is an attribute of love, and God is Love, then forgiveness is also an attribute of God. Taken one step further, if God is Love, and God is perfect, and forgiveness is an attribute of love, then an attribute of God's perfect and unconditional love would be God's perfect and unconditional forgiveness.

In my view, sin (which I simply define as *separation*) isn't taken away by someone dying (Jesus); unity happens through love, by intentionally aligning our will with God's will for love and unity.

God is already love; the goal is for us to also become love, to the best of our ability, and seek unity through love as the ultimate fulfillment of God's will.

We are united with God when we love as God loves, when we live as God lives. That's why Jesus told us to "love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." We are to "be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect" (to the best of our ability, anyways). "Those who live in love, live in God,



and God in them.” This is the gospel, the “Good News” that Jesus taught us; that God is love, that God’s love is unconditional, that God wants unity with us, and for us all to have unity with God and each other through God’s example of perfect love and unity.

To be clear, I’m not saying that Jesus’ death was meaningless; on the contrary, Jesus knew that he would be killed for teaching what he taught about God because it undermined the authority of the powers structures of his day, but he taught us anyways. So he did sacrifice himself; I just believe that his life and teachings and the new way he taught us to think about God’s nature and character was more important than his death.

When we have God’s Love and grace in us, and share that love and grace with everyone else, that is when we are unified with God, that separation is taken away.

In conclusion, if people’s most basic understanding of God’s nature is of a God whose love is conditional (atonement), what follows will automatically be colored by that brush. Similar to trying to solve a complex math problem and making a mistake in step one of the solution, all steps thereafter will be affected by that error. Therefore, we must be willing to refine our understanding(s) of the nature of God, and discard any understanding that doesn’t pass the filters of God’s perfect, unconditional love and unity. For if we continue to hold on to and practice certain ideas that—by their very definition—limit God’s love, the world will continue to allow separation and exclusion in the name of God, as if it is part of God’s nature and will, and we will continue to work *against* the Kingdom of God on earth and within ourselves.

“Unconditional love is not based on the performance of the receiver, but on the character of the giver.”<sup>[2]</sup>

-Jack Frost

\* *These are verses that have helped to shape my understanding of God. To be clear, I'm not appealing to the Bible as the only source for our understanding of God. I demonstrate more than once in my writings that we should use as many sources as are available when trying to distinguish the truth (or potential truth) of a subject. The theory of atonement, especially as held by Christian theology, is the subject of this essay; hence the use of Christian scriptures.*

[1] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atonement\\_in\\_Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atonement_in_Christianity)

[2] <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/47287864817289719/>



## **Belief**

I believe that anyone can know God. Not just a select few or the “chosen,” the rich, the poor, or the learned. Anyone.

That being said, we are all very different. Each of us is special and unique, and I believe that there are many ways in which a person can come to know God. But I also believe that with these many ways there are some constants which are always present, such as love, peace, unity, appreciation, honesty, forgiveness, non-violence, and so on.

To any honest, truth-seeking person, my message is this: You can know God. You can know the truth. If only you put your mind and spirit in a state that is receptive to the possibility of it, God will do the rest. Take not only my testimony, but the testimony of the peoples of ages past. Take the testimony of your own life, the flashes of God and spirit you may at times have felt, and open yourself up to it. Open your spirit to God.



## Soul

I believe in the soul. My basis for this is through my experiences with God. As God is somehow able to communicate and reveal things to me without need of a physical body, and I'm able to receive these revelations without the use of any mental deduction or brain power (*the very definition of revelation*), the part of me which is able to understand this I call *spirit* or *soul*.

The soul, in my experience, isn't bound by the same limitations as the body. Physical things have physical laws, but the spirit is something altogether different. Though mental deduction is an important part and contributing factor in understanding our relationship with God, revelation has proven (to me at least) to be the most enlightening means of insight, with the least amount of possible misinterpretation. How it works I can't explain, though for me it isn't necessary; I just accept it for what it is.

To me, the soul can be compared to our conscience (though I'd say our conscience is part of our soul); as our conscience tells us what's right and what's wrong, so the soul does with spiritual matters. The more we try to live in the spirit, the greater in-touch we become with our soul and with God. It is through this that I believe the truth can be revealed to us.

I think all of us can relate to this through the relationships we have in our own lives. The closer we get to people, the more we know about them. I think the same is true with God.

If you're a parent, don't you take delight in sharing all you have with your child? Wouldn't it be the same with God? I believe it brings God much joy to share these things with us.



## **Love and Unity**

Name one thing greater than love. Isn't that what we all want, to love and be loved? To feel a sense of *unity* with those around us and with God?

Therefore, reflect on love and unity. Meditate, think about, and study how you can better share love and unity in your own life. Think about love and unity in the highest sense of the terms. What would it mean to have perfect love? What would it mean to have perfect unity?

Apply these to your life and watch your own joy—and the joy of others—grow around you.



## **Faith**

The beautiful thing about faith is that anyone can have it. You don't need to lift weights or exercise to have it. You don't have to go to college or any kind of special school to have it. You don't need to read certain books or follow a ten-step course to have it. You don't need to stand or sit or kneel, or have any kind of special training whatsoever.

All that is needed is to surrender oneself unto God's loving spirit and *trust* from there on out.



## Open Your Heart

Be careful not to limit God, my friends. God often comes in ways unforeseen by our own expectations.

Therefore, open your heart to God. Not just the doors but the windows too, so that nothing remains untouched by God's transforming light.

And may we open our hearts to each other as well, so that we may be One—all of us—one with God in love and unity.



## Seeds

Within each of us is the seed of God. Therefore, nurture it, water it, feed it, talk to it. Let the sunlight in and let it grow. Eventually it will grow into a tree whose fruit is both good to eat and to share, with a never ending prosperity of joy and happiness.



## Trust/Sacrifice

Trust is a *gift*. It's something we *give* to people, to God. Anything given of oneself takes sacrifice. Trust is no different. To trust, especially in a relationship, we must say that we're willing to give our entire selves to whoever it may be; God, our family, friends, loved ones—and promise that no matter what it takes, we'll be there for them and try

our best to never let them down. This also means trusting in their intention to do the same.

The questions we must ask in any relationship are, “How much are we willing to give?” and “How much will we sacrifice for others?”



## **Gifts**

We all, each of us, have been given certain gifts by God. We must look within ourselves and pray to God to help us develop these gifts so that we may, indeed, become the salt of the earth, enriching the lives of those we encounter, in ways in which we all become closer to God and everyone around us.



## **Flaws**

None of us are perfect. We all have that in us which we are ashamed to look at in the mirror, which we’ve strived to conquer yet still fallen short.

The beauty comes in trying ... trying each and every day to rid ourselves of that which we despise.

In trying, there is some victory. And every victory adds another brick to the foundation we’re trying to build. Until one day, without realizing it, our house is built and we’re able to live in peace and joy.

And we'll soon discover that as we work hard to change ourselves, the world around us is changing as well.



## **Thankfulness**

Another word for thankfulness is appreciation, and the best way to show appreciation for any gift is to take care of it. This applies to spiritual gifts as well.

If we let our spiritual gifts fall into ruin through abuse or neglect, then we aren't appreciating how fortunate we are to have them. Therefore, take some time every day to thank God for your many gifts. Use them as often as you can and to the best of your abilities. A spirit of appreciation is always accompanied by a great sense of joy and unity with God and those around you.



## **Prayer**

Prayer can be something very personal or something shared as a group. In either case, clear your mind and let joy and appreciation enter your heart. Speak with God as often as you like, wherever you are, whatever you're doing. About big things or small things, happy things or sad things—whatever it is that brings you joy or trouble. Be open to whatever ways God may answer you. Have patience and faith—God will never let you down.



## **Anxiety**

Try your best not to let anxiety grow too strong in you, whatever the cause. Instead, entrust your hope with God. Ask for guidance and understanding in whatever it is that troubles you. Draw strength in remembering that nothing can separate you from God, not even death. Therefore, never lose your hope or trust in God.



## **Joy**

Some time ago I wrote a quote that says, “There is both good and bad in life; those who are happy concentrate on the good.”

There will always be bad things in the world and things to be negative about, but there is also much joy, much more joy than sorrow. It’s never healthy to concentrate on too much negativity. I’m not saying to bury your head in the sand or close your eyes to suffering, but why dwell on it when there’s so much more to be happy about?

There’s an old saying that “like attracts like.” So if you concentrate too much on the negative, what do you think you’re going to attract?





## **Goodness**

Good people are good, regardless of how anyone else treats them. Their goodness has an effect on the people around them, even those who try to use or abuse or take advantage of them.

Good people must be willing, when necessary, to bear the injustice the world may throw their way and turn it into good, so that through their example, the world can wake up and remember how to live.



## **Inspiration**

Just as we need food every day to stay alive and healthy, so it is with the spiritual aspects of our lives. Therefore, find things that will inspire you in your relationship with God and those around you. Study various religious or spiritual sources and put them into practice; they are your food and drink to keep you strong along your journey.

It is when we are “in-spirit” that we are closest to God and each other and can find the greatest growth, revelation, and joy.



## **Unbelief**

Don't be surprised if some people don't believe you when you talk about God. Some may say that you can't have any knowledge of God because of your age—you may be too young or too old. Others be-

cause of your education or lack thereof: “If you didn’t go to seminary, how could you know anything about God?” Your lifestyle: “You’re not perfect—how can *you* talk about God?” Perceived human limitations: “Humans can’t possibly grasp a being as grand as God—how arrogant!” The many different portrayals of God: “Everyone has a different perception of God; therefore, no one can know the truth.” Or that we can’t possibly know the truth *now*: “We won’t find out until we’re dead.” But believe none of them. Let no one define your limits for you, and let no one define the limits of God. If God wants to share a revelation with you, who is anyone else to say that that’s impossible?

Stay true to God, and have a faith without limits.



### **Tolerance/Forgiveness**

Always try to be as understanding as possible with those you meet along your journey. We all have our faults, our negative points, our addictions.

When someone you know or encounter treats you unfairly, try to picture them as someone you love immensely, someone you would never speak to in a harsh or unloving way. Be always ready to forgive. Life is too short and the time we have too precious to waste brooding away at someone.

Forgiveness is a gift that never stops giving. Sometimes we give it, sometimes we get it, but whenever it’s present, there’s always great joy.



## **Guidance**

In planning for the future, remember that there's nothing wrong with asking God to help guide and lead you along the way. In any situation, anything you do, invite God to be with you. You don't have to go alone.



## **Effort/Transformation**

Living the spiritual life is more than just proclaiming a set of beliefs; it is a declaration of commitment to live as God lives. It takes great effort and hard work—a very transformation in the way we live and think, our philosophies and attitudes, in all things that keep us separated from God and those around us.

Like from a caterpillar to a butterfly, we too can break away from our selfish ways of living and learn to spread our wings and fly.

Love is the air that will keep us afloat.



## **Seeking God**

In seeking God in your life, be true to yourself and never be afraid to seek the truth wherever you may find it. Always follow the leadings of your own spirit and let God's love light the way. If something doesn't make sense to you, pray to God to help show you the truth.

Share your joy and your experiences of God with others. Build them up as they will build you up, so that together, with God, we all can experience a true heaven of love and unity.



### **The Kind of Love Everyone Should Have**

I started ... with the Gospel of Matthew. I read about the birth of Jesus, the preaching of John the Baptist in the wilderness, Jesus' temptation in the desert, and then I came to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) ... What I read there changed my life forever.

I was only fifteen, but somehow I knew that within those handful of paragraphs was the way life was supposed to be. What Jesus described made so much sense to me. The kind of love he talked about, I knew, was the kind of love everyone should have. And from that moment forward, it was the kind of love I knew I wanted to have.



### **The Right Way to Live**

As I continued reading the Gospels, I was confused by some of the miracles and the contradicting stories. For the most part, I blocked out what I didn't understand and concentrated more on what did make sense to me. What made sense to me more than anything was the "Golden Rule:"

“Do to others what you would like them to do to you.”

—Matthew 7:12

If everyone were to treat others as they wanted to be treated, I figured, the world would be a much better place. And the idea that if we tried to live like this regardless of how anyone else acted seemed to me like the right way to live.

This, then, became the religious foundation of my life. It became my way of judging whether I was doing good or bad in the world. In anything I did, I would always try to ask myself if what I was doing was the way I would want it done to me.

It soon became clear to me that when I followed this way of living, I felt good, and when I didn't, I felt bad. Also evident was the fact that the more I followed the Golden Rule with others, the more it seemed they would follow it with me. This was a powerful realization because it showed me that what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount was true; others will treat you as you treat them.



### **Joy and Understanding**

Before long, the Golden Rule became an ingrained part of my conscience and the judge of my actions. It brought me joy and understanding, and it made me feel closer to God.



## **Real and Alive, Powerful and Present**

Over time, I began to feel God more and more in my life. I honestly can't tell you when I realized that what I was feeling was God. It wasn't something I ever thought about. There was no defining moment, just a gradual awareness of God's presence that grew as time went on.

To an extent, I had always felt God in my life, even as a child. Growing up in a religious background I'm sure had something to do with this, but more than anything, there had always been those moments in life where something truly profound would happen, and I knew without being told that what was happening was beyond coincidence. These moments always had a great impact on my life because they showed me that there was "something else" out there, something quite real and alive, powerful and present.



## **"In-spirit"— In God**

It wasn't until I began reading the Bible that I began to feel God in my life on a daily basis. Exactly what I mean by this is hard to explain. It's been said by many that when you try to share with people what it's like to experience God that it can't be fully translated into words. It's quite literally an *experience*, something uniquely personal and subjective to the person experiencing it; one can describe it, but it will never be able to take the place of the experience itself.

Nonetheless, the first major highlight in my spiritual journey happened on a night as I lay in bed reading the Bible. Feeling inspired, I began to write a prayer to God on a piece of paper. I call it a prayer,

but it was more like a “mission statement,” expressing my faith and trust in God and asking for guidance in my life.

Then, as I lay there, something happened to me, something I had never felt before. I was “in-spirit”—in God. A wave of euphoria flooded over me, and in that moment I seemed to realize the full extent of God’s love.

It was a powerful feeling, so deep and penetrating that it was as if the center of my being had been touched and the peace and joy of God was all that I could feel. It was a feeling of love so magnificent and consuming that I felt love for all the world and everything in it, an ecstasy so unifying that I felt that I was part of everything and everything was part of me, and together we were one in God.

I knew then that the love of God was the greatest thing in the world, and to share this love the greatest thing that I could do. From that moment on, I knew that I could trust in God’s love.



### **Discussing the Bible**

Discussing the Bible with people brought with it many mixed opinions. On the one hand were those who felt as I did, confused by some things but finding relevance in the Gospels, while on the other hand were those who seemed to concentrate more on “The Cross” and “The Blood of Christ.” While both viewpoints were interesting, it was hard for me to accept that a God so full of love and grace would require a blood sacrifice as a way of atoning for the sins of mankind. In my view, that kind of atonement was neither loving nor forgiving. It required that someone had to pay, and in that case, couldn’t really be

considered forgiveness at all. It resembled more of an “eye for an eye” philosophy to me than it did a “turn the other cheek” philosophy.



### **Lead Me to the Truth**

But the most important thing I learned from hearing other people’s ideas about God was that what we believe makes a difference in how we live and think in relation to God and those around us. It showed me that a model of a loving God was more able to produce loving people, full of charity and grace, while a model of a vindictive God brought with it, in many ways, more harm than good, producing people of a more harsh and sometimes unforgiving and unaccepting nature.

It was clear to me then that in order for me to grow and move forward on a spiritual level, I would need to leave behind any kind of thinking that portrayed God in an unloving manner. The God I had come to know was full of love, mercy, and understanding. Anything that portrayed God differently did so contrary to my own experience. What I needed then, I knew, was to let go of dogma and tradition and explore love for myself.

God, I had faith, would lead me to the truth.





## **To Follow the Spirit**

And so I began a journey in search of experiences similar to my own; not for validation, but for accounts of those who could say what they experienced better than I could. What I knew to be true was hard to express in words. Words couldn't capture what I had experienced with God that special, beautiful day and the many days since, and I now know that they never will. Words are imperfect, but they're the best tools available to us to try to share what we feel.

The path I followed was random, but it was also more than that. At times it felt as if I were being guided by the Spirit of God. I was drawn to writers who were free-thinkers, who told it how it was regardless of what anyone else thought of them. Coming from a family of free-thinkers, I've never been afraid to form my own conclusions on things. To follow the spirit within is not a sin in my eyes; that's the part of us that's most connected with God. Where else would one look to find the truth ... to be unified with God?



## **Many Other Beautiful Horizons**

I was happy to learn that there were many people who had experiences similar to my own. Although I didn't agree with everything I read, I always tried my best to keep an open mind and learn as much as I could. Slowly, over time, I began to see that what I had experienced with God had been experienced countless times throughout history. People, I learned, had been trying to describe what they felt to be true for thousands of years, and I was shocked to see how similar even some of the oldest accounts were to my own.

Growing up as a Christian, I was even more surprised to see how rich other faiths were in their descriptions. I had always been taught that Jesus was the “only way” to God. Without the testimony of Jesus, it’s quite possible that I never would have come to know God myself, and for that I am eternally grateful, but I’m just as grateful to God for showing me the many other beautiful horizons. It wasn’t easy letting go of some of my dogmatic beliefs, but I put my faith in God. I stepped into the river of spirit and trusted where it was going.

My experience of God was one thing; I understood it, but I still could not articulate it. I knew I was getting closer. After all, every river eventually leads to an ocean.



### **Love Has No Religion**

Eventually I came to learn that God can be found in many places. Love has no religion, and no religion can have a monopoly on God. God can’t be limited to a religion or a church, but can be found in the hearts of anyone who has the love of God inside of them and a never ending desire to share that love with everyone else.



### **Message of Love**

During my explorations of love, I studied many religions and many bibles, and read books on a wide range of religious beliefs. There are

many similarities in the teachings of Jesus, Buddha, Zarathustra, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, and many others, with much to be gained from all of them. Although these religions have their differences, it's clear that at the core of each of them is a message of love.



### **Hatred and Separation**

So I thought to myself, “What’s the problem here? Why is there still so much hatred and separation in the world?”

The problem, I came to realize, is that most religions are all too willing to define the limits of God’s love. You’re either saved or not saved, righteous or unrighteous, Jew or Gentile, sinner or saint. But is this really the way God sees things? Can a being of perfect love ever *not* love?

To me, the answer is no. If it were “yes,” then it wouldn’t be perfect love at all, it would be something else. And so I thought, “That’s it! Perfect love! God’s love is perfect! It has no limits!”

Although I already knew this to be true and I had seen the words “perfect love” together many times, I had never thought about it as a spiritual concept before. It described God more completely than any other way I had come across. It was clear to me then that this was the “Good News” Jesus was talking about in the Sermon on the Mount. This was the kind of love that made so much sense to me as a teenager. This was the kind of love I had experienced from God.



## **The Power of Love**

Perfect love, I realized, is the only thing that can bring us together, whether it's in our relationship with God or our relationships with those around us. That's the ultimate function of love anyways, isn't it ... to bring about unity? Deep down, isn't that what we all want in life, to love and be loved, and through this sharing, find peace, joy, and unity? In my experience, that's what God wants, too.

That's why the idea of an eternal hell is a foreign concept to me now. For hell to exist, it would mean that God would have to say, "I'm sorry ... it's too late. You had your chance. We can never be together now." A God of perfect love would never do that. Hell would show a limitation to God's love.

Although we're all free to choose our own paths in life, I believe that no matter how long it takes, the power of love and God will unify even the most resistant soul, until all are One.



## **Without Any Limits**

My experiences of God have been of a love so perfect it's hard to describe. I know that we're imperfect beings, and I know that it's impossible to fully describe our feelings and experiences, but I will never believe that it's impossible to know God. What God wants us to know we can know without any limits, our own imperfections aside. Our minds and our bodies may be imperfect, they may cease and fade away, but our souls can understand what our minds cannot.



## **Flourish and Prosper**

I believe that everyone and anyone can know God. It's this belief that has allowed my relationship with God to flourish and prosper, and open my eyes and heart to the love of God.



## **Guide the Way**

Over the years, my relationship with God has given me the kind of trust to never be afraid to search for answers wherever I may find them. I've always believed that, no matter what, God will lead me to the truth.

This doesn't mean that answers always come instantaneously. It can be different for different people. Sometimes it's a process where one thing must be learned before another can be understood, or maybe we're not ready for certain lessons or we've closed our minds to the lessons at hand. Whatever the case may be, always trust in God for guidance. Be willing to think about things for yourself and follow the feelings of your own heart. Let God's love guide the way.



## **Patient and Tolerant**

When dealing with others, we must always try to understand that we're all at different points in our relationship with God. This means that we should always try to be patient and tolerant with each other, ready to help and be helped, and never try to force our thoughts or ideas on someone else.



## **Finding Their Own Way**

It's important to remember that each person has their own relationship with God, and therefore, we should give them whatever freedom they need in finding their own way, whatever way that may be. We may, at times, be at different points in the journey, but we're all going to the same place, so be patient ... it'll all work out.



## **God is Spirit**

God is spirit. Your true life is spirit as well. Therefore, live for things which will develop your spirit and bring you closer to God and those around you.



## **Seek Communion**

Seek God. Trust in God and seek communion. Think about, study, and understand God's ways. Transform yourself into a God-like being and share yourself and your experiences of God with others. This is the spiritual life.



## **Alive in God**

Your true mind is part of your spirit. It is the means by which we are alive in God. Although in this world we have our constraints, the spiritual mind is free.



## **Ultimate Freedom**

To control and come in harmony with your mind is to know ultimate freedom. It is the kind of freedom which will remove all barriers in the way to intimacy with God and those around you.



## **Fruit of the Mind**

Actions are the fruit of the mind. They are the reflections of our true selves and the mechanisms by which others will relate to us.



## **Show Grace**

In your dealings with those around you, show grace, and know that grace is greater than justice. Justice is—at times—necessary, but not when it causes separation. Therefore, forgive those who have wronged you. This is the way of love. To not forgive is to act counter to unity. Being imperfect yourself, remember to love all as God loves them, and be lenient in your dealings with others, as you would want them to be with you.



## **Emotional and Spiritual Violence**

Seek not to harm another; emotionally, physically, or spiritually. Emotional and spiritual violence can leave scars that do more damage than physical ones.





## **True Love**

To physically harm another cannot be considered love. Know that true love treats others good regardless of how they are treated. Hate feeds off of hate and causes separation. To love a person that hates you is to wake them up to their true selves.



## **Let Your Light Shine Out**

Remember that life in God is spiritual and that even the death of the body is not the end of life. Therefore, love everyone, and let your light shine out for the world to see. Let it shine brightly, until all the darkness is gone. Defend yourself with love, and no matter what happens, you will be with God.



## **The Absence of Selfish Desire**

Perfect love is the absence of selfish desire. It embraces where selfishness pushes away. It thinks about what's best for the whole and not just for itself.



## **The Worth of Every Soul**

Perfect love is unconditional. It loves no matter what, seeing the worth of every soul regardless of how they are.



## **Bring Joy**

Perfect love doesn't discriminate. It thinks of how it can bring joy to that which it encounters. It thinks of how it can share itself with everything else.



## **The Evolution of Your Soul**

To practice perfect love is to bring about the evolution of your soul. Where once you held a grudge, you forgive instead. Where once you were jealous of others, you're now content with what you have. Where once there was disappointment, understanding takes its place. Where once you demanded your own way, you're now willing to sacrifice for the sake of another. Where once you thought only of yourself, you're now conscious of the needs of others. Where you once took things for granted, you're now appreciative of what you have. Where once there was hatred and separation, there now is love and togetherness.



## **Revenge, Hatred, Selfishness, Dominance, Greed...**

Revenge, hatred, selfishness, dominance, greed ... these are what destroy our souls and make unity an impossibility.



## **Indicators**

When trying to understand perfect love, one can look for any of these indicators, just to name a few:

Is what you're doing of benefit to yourself alone, or does it benefit God's plan as well?

Is what you're doing bringing you closer to God and those around you, or does it separate you from the two?

Is what you're doing loving and beneficial to everyone, or is it harmful or injurious?



## **When We Act Selfishly**

When we act selfishly, it inspires selfishness, and keeps us separated from God and those around us. But when we act lovingly, it inspires love, and unifies us with God and those around us. We should always try to act in a way that inspires love in those around us; toward our family, our friends, and as hard as it may be, our enemies as well.



## **No Longer Enemies**

To act hateful towards an enemy only makes their hateful feeling stronger. It justifies—in their minds—their reason for hating you in the first place. Love, on the other hand, diminishes the hateful feeling, and forces the one with the hatred to reevaluate their feelings toward you and their feelings inside of themselves; until eventually, you're no longer enemies but friends.



## **Beautiful and Glorious**

In striving to encounter God in your daily life, find things that bring you closer to God and those around you and use your God-given-gifts to help others to do the same. Do your best to love everyone you meet, seeing them as they truly are, a beautiful and glorious part of God, and not as they sometimes seem to be. Be compassionate, full of grace and

understanding, and forgive those who wrong you. Remember the grace that's been shown to you at times and do the same, so that through your love, you may be friends.



### **Cherish Each Relationship**

Be forever thankful for the people in your life. Cherish each relationship with love and gratitude. Seek to bring joy to those around you, for the joy you give will return to you in happiness. Be willing, when needed, to sacrifice your own desires for the good of another. This is true love and the sign of a God-filled heart.



### **Perfect the Love Within Yourself**

...Always seek to perfect the love within yourself, knowing that as your love increases, so does your joy, and through this joy, you may grow ever closer to God and those around you.



## **The Most Important Questions We Can Ask Ourselves**

What is God? Who is God? Does God exist? What is God's will? Does God love everyone? Does God hate anyone? Is there a hell? Would God really torment someone in hell for eternity? What must one do to be unified with God?

Do you ever ask yourself these questions (or questions like these)? How often? How do you arrive at an answer? Do you think about these questions for yourself, applying reason and logic (including spiritual reason and logic), or do you simply accept what others have said (others being your pastor or parents, church, religion, or society)? What about your own experiences and relationship with God, and the feelings of your own soul—how much do these factor in when trying to answer these questions?

For those of us who believe in God, shouldn't these be the most important questions we can ask ourselves? Shouldn't answering these questions be directly associated with our very reason for existence? If so, how does someone even begin to approach a subject as grand as God?

These are good questions; you might as well know that I don't have all the answers... But I believe that it's in the very exploration of these questions that the answers begin to be revealed to us.

These answers can come in a variety of ways—through meditation and reading, through the sharing and exploration of questions, ideas, and experiences that we and others around us have had, or through the feelings of our own soul and our own relationship with God; the possibilities are endless.

And when exploring these ideas, I believe two things are of fundamental importance: we must maintain an open mind, and we must trust in God to lead us to the truth. That means questioning both old and new beliefs and experiences, comparing them with all available information,

and trying to ascertain their truth and credibility in relation to God and the feelings of our own soul.



### **Not Just Known—But Experienced**

The truth or validity of any belief or experience must be tested within a person's own conscience or soul. It's in this way that the truth can be known—and not just known—but *experienced*, and through this experience, can become more than just an abstract idea, but a living reality.



### **To Know God as a Friend**

This, I believe, is and should be the goal of any true seeker of God; not just to know God through what others have said—what's been passed down through the generations and through religion—but to know God for ourselves, to know God as a friend—as our best friend.



## **Here—Now—and Always**

...It's in Jesus' relationship with God that the meaning of his life seems to find its greatest expression, for it shows us that we, too, can have a relationship with God, a deep, life-altering—life-fulfilling—relationship, one that transcends time and space, and isn't bound by mere flesh and blood; a relationship that's not in some far off future, but is here—now—and always.



## **Significant For Many Reasons**

The many interpretations of Jesus—both now and throughout history—are fraught with debate, and are significant for many reasons, most important of which is how they affect our relationship with God and the world around us. If someone's image of God or Jesus allows room for hatred, judgment, or violence, it follows that they—too—will be hateful, violent, and judgmental. Therefore, it's crucial that we examine—to the best of our abilities—God's true nature, and furthermore, which interpretations of Jesus seem to hold the most amount of truth.



## **Unification as the Ultimate Goal**

...It's apparent when reading the Gospels that Jesus' main focus was always on our relationships; specifically, our relationship with God and



our relationships with those around us—with unification as the ultimate goal.



### **Truly Unified**

...If God’s love is perfect, my love needs to be perfect as well (or at least as perfect as I can make it), for it’s in this way that we become truly unified.



### **We Can Never Be Separated From God’s Love**

The Sermon on the Mount portrays God as feeling love towards us regardless of what we do—that we can never be separated from God’s love, and can only feel that we are when we act in a way that’s contrary to God, through selfish thoughts or behavior.



### **Spiritual Filters**

Eventually, I developed my own system to help decipher what I thought was of God and what wasn’t. I call these my “spiritual filters.”

These are filters that I apply to any thought or action in daily life, such as, “Would \_\_\_\_ be considered love?” or “Could I consider \_\_\_\_ perfect forgiveness?” It works on small topics, where something like the Golden Rule (Matthew 5:12) might suffice, or in more complex situations, such as how I might feel about abortion, the death penalty, or war.

Here’s an example of how it works ... First, I need to figure out which filter or filters I’m going to use. For instance, I might use love, life, peace, and beauty. (You can add as many as you like. It’s also helpful to ask if your results would make for a healthy spirituality and a beautiful world.) Then you just run through the list.



### **What’s Most Important**

It is interesting to note that nearly everything Jesus taught can be put into one of two categories: our relationship with God or our relationships with those around us. There is nothing more important than these.



### **Open and Receptive**

We should always try to see things from God’s point of view. Yet there are some (many?) who say that it’s impossible to do so, that human beings are incapable of even beginning to grasp a being as grand

as God. But that's letting someone else define God's limitations. What God wants us to know, we can know—without any measure or limit. We must be open and receptive to it.



### **The Sooner We Make Amends, The Happier We Will Be**

I realize that—at times—especially during a conflict or immediately afterwards, each party may need some time to heal or come to terms with their emotions. But I think the sooner we make amends, the happier we will be, and the closer we'll walk with God.



### **Challenge the Status Quo**

While there are many religions and beliefs in the world, it's important that we always respect each other's views, even if we disagree with them. That doesn't mean we have to accept their views, but we need to accept that each person's free to follow God (or not follow God) in whatever way they choose.

However, not all views are equal (as can be seen in this book). Just as Jesus was willing to question the beliefs of his day, we too must be willing to speak up when something doesn't feel right to us—to challenge the status quo. It also means never being afraid to let others challenge our beliefs when the opportunity presents itself.

As I hope this book demonstrates, it's essential to our spiritual health and progress to question our experiences and beliefs in light of any new information that may come our way. Otherwise, how can we grow?



### **What Kind of Freedom is That?**

...I don't believe that any part of our relationship with God is based on rewards or penalties. When we do good, we feel unity with God and those around us; that is its own reward. Likewise, when we act selfishly, ungodly, or irresponsibly, it follows that we will feel more disconnected from God and others. Penalties and rewards are just the natural results of our thoughts and actions in the world.

Additionally, to say that we have free-will and then punish us for using that freedom would be akin to saying, "You're free to do what I want you to do, and if you don't, I'll hurt you." What kind of freedom is that?



### **Following What the Spirit Says**

Living the spiritual life is more than just following what a book says, it's following what the *spirit* says. That's the part of us that's most capable of connecting with God. The spirit within is our *true es-*

*sence*. As spiritual people, when something we learn or are told about God doesn't feel right to us, we must have faith that God will lead us to the truth. We must believe that it's possible and let God lead the way.



### **How Everything Fits**

There have been plenty of people since Jesus who have taken what Jesus or other religious figures have said and advanced or evolved what they taught to make it even better. As people, we're constantly finding better words and ways to understand not only the truth about God, but the truth about us, our souls, and how everything fits in the grand scheme of things.



### **Much to Learn From All Religious Texts**

We must be willing to put the love of God and unity of all at the head of the table. I'm not saying that we need to throw people like Jesus, Moses, or Muhammad out of the banquet hall; on the contrary, there's much to learn from all religious texts, but what's important is to always test what we encounter through the filters of love and unity, and if they don't pass the test, we must be willing to look for something that will.



### **Talking it out Open-Mindedly**

We all must follow what we feel is right. You may not agree with everything I believe in and vice versa, but we mustn't shy away from talking it out open-mindedly and seeing what we come up with.



### **Embrace a New Understanding**

The religious and spiritual people of the world today need a revolution. We need to evolve beyond the schizophrenic images of God we've held for thousands of years and embrace a new understanding, one that combines the best of what the past and present have to offer, while letting go of any distorted, man-made dogmas that seem only to keep us apart from each other and from God.



### **We're All Chosen**

It's time to ask ourselves the tough questions, let go of empty traditions, discard hateful teachings, and understand that we're *all* chosen—that we're *all* loved—and we should love *all*.



## **The Spiritual World of God and Your Own Soul**

So what will it be? Will you ask the tough questions? Will you have the courage to seek the answers, no matter where they lead? It may mean having to leave your comfort zone and confronting God and yourself in a whole new way. It may mean giving up the feeling of security you get when you believe that your church or religion has it all figured out. ... What happens when you don't have the authority of a holy book to back your claims? Can you put faith in God to lead you to the truth? Can you let go of your ego, your pride, your selfish desires—and see the spiritual world of God and your own soul?



## **Concentrate on the Good**

There is both good and bad in life; those who are happy concentrate on the good.



## **Those Who Are Happy**

Those who are happy in life realize what makes them unhappy and do the opposite.



### **Letting Go of the Past**

Forgiveness means letting go of the past for the sake of the future.



### **Forgive Others**

You should forgive others, just as you would want them to forgive you.



### **Love is the Key to Life**

Love is the key to life. Those who become most acquainted with it find the most joy.



### **Everything**

To some, love is many different things. To me, it is everything.





### **Show Them**

To love someone is great. To show them that you love them is greater.



### **Love Keeps On Growing**

Hearts will be broken and tears will be cried, but love keeps on growing the harder you try.



### **Always Worth the Risk**

Love is a tricky investment ... you might not get back what you put in, but it's always worth the risk.



## **The Strength to Carry On**

When you're looking for the strength to carry on, think about what's most important in your life, and it will help to carry the load.



## **Be Ready Just In Case**

You don't need to run to accomplish the things you want to do in life ... but be ready just in case.



## **Return the Favor**

When you give to someone, don't expect anything in return. And when you are given something, always do your best to return the favor.



## **Charity**

Charity is an exercise in selflessness.



### **When You Live Only to Please Yourself...**

When you live only to please yourself, you'll rarely please anyone else.



### **When We Are Selfish**

It is when we are selfish that we are at our worst.



### **At Our Best**

We are at our best when we show compassion, grace, forgiveness, love, and sacrifice. For it is then that we are thinking less of ourselves and more of somebody else.



## **The Ultimate Test**

To conquer selfishness is the ultimate test of a human being. To love others as you love yourself is the ultimate measure of a man.



## **Confidence is Believing**

Confidence is believing what you already know is true.



## **Believe In Yourself**

If you don't believe in yourself, why should anyone else?



## **Confidence and Will Power**

Confidence and will-power are like the legs of a table. Without them, everything falls flat.



## **Through Other People's Eyes**

Once in a while you should try to see things through other people's eyes—and see how the world changes!



## **Sunny Days**

It's the rainy days that make the sunny days seem so nice.



## **Keep Your Eyes Open**

Always keep your eyes open—you might find a new way of looking at things.



## **When We Lie**

When we lie, it just means that the truth will make us look bad.



## **The Right Way**

There are only two choices of action in any given situation: the right way and the wrong way. I consider anything in between the wrong way.



## **Known By Their Actions**

A person is known by their actions. Whether good or bad, that's what they'll be remembered by.



## **Those Who Respect You**

If you do what is right, those who respect you will see that your reasons justify your actions.



## **A Set of Beliefs**

It's not enough to have a set of beliefs. You must also act in accordance with those beliefs.



### **If You Treat Them the Same**

If someone treats you unkindly and you treat them the same, then you are no better than they.



### **Even If They Did It First**

If there's something you don't like done to you, you should never do it to someone else, even if they did it first.



### **No Fault of Your Own**

Don't worry if other's treat you unfairly. As long as you treat them with fairness, there will be no fault of your own.



## **Don't Worry About How Others Treat You**

Don't worry about how others treat you. Worry about how you treat them.



## **Because Somebody's Counting On You**

When you say you're going to do something, try your best to do it. Not only to maintain a good reputation, but because somebody's counting on you.



## **Never Do Yourself**

Anything that you feel is wrong for someone else to do, you should never do yourself.



## **It All Fits Into Place**

Life is like a puzzle. We might not always know what we're putting together, but eventually it all fits into place.





### **Look for the Key**

So many people go through life trying to knock down doors. I always thought it'd be better to look for the key.



### **The Winds of Truth**

A lie is like a spider's web. When the winds of truth come, it's bound to get knocked down.



### **A Goal to Work Towards**

Excellence requires practice. Practice requires discipline. Discipline requires patience. Patience requires focus. And focus requires a goal to work towards. And in life, there's never a shortage of goals.



## **Compromise and Sacrifice**

Compromise and sacrifice make happy relationships.



## **Like Attracts Like**

Like attracts like. So if you always look at the negative, what do you think you're going to attract?



## **It's Not Easy Being Critical**

It's not easy being critical. You can only look at the negative so long before becoming negative yourself.



## **Chances Are You Have**

Anytime you want to criticize someone for something they've done, take a long look at your life and see if you haven't done the same thing at one point or another—chances are you have.



### **A Rare Individual**

It is a rare individual who realizes a good thing before it's gone.



### **Better to Ask for Help**

It's better to ask for help than to become helpless.



### **The Freedom to Choose**

The freedom to choose for yourself is the greatest freedom of all.



### **The Choice is up to You**

There are three things you can do when confronted with a problem: you can complain about it, you can accept it, or you can fix it and move on. The choice is up to you.



### **The Healing Process**

Sadness is like a wound to the soul. When we cry, it helps to wash away the pain, and makes it possible for the healing process to begin.



### **To Complain Without Offering a Solution**

To complain without offering a solution is like trying to fix a water leak by yelling at the water.



### **Smile**

Smile—I'm sure you can think of a reason.



### **Real Value**

Anything of real value can never be measured in money.



### **No One Likes to Lose**

No one likes to lose. But it's losing that keeps us humble.



### **If It Wasn't for the Wind**

Pride is like a kite that thinks it can fly. It never realizes that it wouldn't be flying at all if it wasn't for the wind.



### **Like a Butterfly**

Pride is like a butterfly gloating to a caterpillar of its superiority. It never takes into consideration that it was once a caterpillar too.



## **Everything is First Built on Faith**

Whether it's religion or relationships, everything is first built on faith.



## **Two Kinds of People**

There are two kinds of people in life: those who worry and those who hope. I like to hope.



## **A Sense of Honor**

A sense of honor is just a highly tuned conscience.



## **Force is Never the Way**

Whether it's religion, politics, or love, force is never the way.



### **When You Always Want More**

When you always want more than you have, you'll never have enough.



### **Something You Decide On Ahead of Time**

When you meet someone, try your best not to pre-judge them. Because prejudice is something you decide on ahead of time.



### **How Much You Have**

If you're jealous of what others have, it only means you don't realize how much you have yourself.



### **Those Who Lose Their Temper**

Those who lose their temper often times lose more than that.



## **Love and Be Loved**

All most people really need in life is to feel wanted or appreciated or worth something. They want to know that there's somebody out there who accepts them for who they are, and realizes that all they really want to do is love and be loved. And if we would only stop for one second and open our arms to them and embrace them, and let them know how much they mean to us and how important they are in our lives, then this world would be a better place ... a much better place indeed.



## **To Perpetuate and Maintain**

According to [Anthony] deMello, people suffer because of their beliefs—or rather, their distorted perceptions of reality. But where do these beliefs come from? How did we get this way?

Most of these beliefs are handed down from generation to generation, through culture, society, and religion. Most exist simply to perpetuate and maintain some sort of established control system, either political, philosophical, or religious. Throughout history, once an organization or group of people establishes some form of domination over large groups of people, the only way to maintain that power is through control systems. The most important element in controlling masses of people is to control their *minds*, for from the mind comes all



action and behavior. This isn't the making of a conspiracy theory—on the contrary, it's Psychology 101—and History 101, for that matter.



### **Control Mechanisms**

...From an early age we're bombarded with control mechanisms designed to shape our minds and behavior, to keep us under control. It's no coincidence that we're never taught the basics of self-knowledge in school or in our religions because that would free us from their control. Once enlightened, we would realize that we're being psychologically tampered with, and we'd throw off our mental chains and live as free people, no longer accepting the legitimacy of any controlling domination system.



### **Awareness is the Key to Everything**

Awareness is the key to everything. We must understand our programming and our own minds first and foremost, observing how the mind operates, and become acquainted with certain natural laws associated with the functioning of the mind. Then we need to question the ideas and belief systems that shape our mind and behavior, both internally and externally, freeing our minds from any untruth or programming we find there. And finally, we must explore the world in and

around us, trying to discover and experience truth for ourselves. In the process—and in the results—lie the keys to our happiness and freedom.



### **The “Energy Flow” Principle**

In attempting to understand your mind, there is one principle that needs to be understood above all others; let’s call it the “energy-flow” principle. Simply put, the mind is like an energy conductor; it gathers and directs energy. The basic principle of energy in relation to the mind is that wherever energy goes, something grows. Whether it’s good or bad, positive or negative, it doesn’t matter. Where energy goes, something grows.



### **The Power to Direct the Flow of Energy**

...Within each of us there is the mysterious presence of whatever makes us conscious, an individuality or “I.” Within this presence is the power to direct the flow of energy, what’s typically called the “individual will.” This *will-power* is like a muscle in our minds—the more we use it, the stronger it gets. If developed to its full strength, it can direct the energy flow with complete mastery.



## **The Garden of Your Mind**

Look around you—are most people generally happy? Are they peaceful and carefree, living in harmony with themselves and the world around them? Or do they seem to be unhappy, anxious, always flustered and fighting with people in their lives, victims of their own troubled minds and emotions? Now ask yourself these same questions. If you see within yourself and the world around you evidence of unhappiness and chaos, perhaps it's time to re-evaluate the garden of your mind.



## **The Tool of Self Observation**

The number one tool at your disposal to help understand your mind is the tool of *self-observation*. Developing this tool is easy; simply pay attention to your mind and thought processes, but do it as if you were an outside observer. Watch your mind in play, at work, in your relationships ... in all of the activities that make you happy and sad, confident and afraid, discontent or peaceful. Just watch and experience your own mind. See the energy flow first-hand, how thoughts lead to actions, how actions lead to results, and how results lead to *reactions*, both within yourself and the people and world around you. Take note of which thoughts and actions bring you and those around you joy and peace, and which ones bring unhappiness and turmoil. And of course, observe this process in the lives of the people around you as well.



## **Freeing Your Mind**

...Once you've observed your mind long enough to get a good understanding of its functioning, then it's time to move on to the next step—the step of *freeing* your mind.



## **Question Everything**

Once you've observed your mind and the way it functions, it's now time to *question everything*! Re-evaluate everything you've ever been told. Dig up the garden of your mind. Analyze every tree, flower, and seed. If it is good, keep it. Replant it. Nurture it. Water it. Give it plenty of attention and sunshine and help it grow. If it is bad, throw it away! Cut it down! Get rid of it immediately! And be on guard lest these seeds try to get back into your garden. If some bad seeds somehow slip in, pull them out at the earliest sign of observation. Garden your mind in this way.



## **The Very Core of Your Being**

The task of gardening your mind, though easy to explain, is extremely difficult. Some seeds have grown into large trees with roots that penetrate to the very core of your being. These roots have wrapped

themselves around you so completely that it would seem impossible to cut or kill them without cutting or killing yourself.



### **The Harder It is to Let Go**

Over time, we come to *identify* with the thoughts, trees, and flowers in our garden (mind). One tree may be called *ego*. Another is *desire*. Another is called *attachment* ... and so the garden grows. The stronger we identify with each tree, the harder it is to let go.



### **What We I-identify With**

So what do you identify with? It's time to question everything! For many of us, we identify with our ego, a certain element of the mind that always wants more for *itself*—more attention, more possessions, more *control* over others ... more, more, more, more, more; and it doesn't usually care who it hurts in the process as long as it gets what it wants.

Otherwise known as *selfishness*, this desire for more separates and alienates us from the people and world around us. Once we've *acquired* what we want, it becomes a *possession*. And from there it becomes an *attachment*. We no longer believe that we can be happy without whatever it is that we're attached to. It has become part of our identity. When our ego, desires, and attachments become part of our

identity, it becomes part of the “I,” the individual. They have become extensions of our very selves.

If anything were to happen to that which we *I*-identify with, we feel threatened, insecure, depressed, hurt, devastated... The more we *I*-identify with, the greater the chance of our being hurt, disappointed, and unhappy.

The key, then, is to identify with things which bring you happiness, security, peace, love, and harmony with the people and world around you (in other words, positive energy), and to dis-*I*-identify with anything that causes negative energy.



### **A New Perspective**

To free your mind you must be able to see yourself and the people and world around you without any ego, desires, or attachments. It requires a new perspective on old ideas.



### **Think Outside the Box**

Think outside of the box, without boundaries. Question every belief you've ever had, and any new ideas you encounter along the way. Become a freethinker, and evaluate/re-evaluate what you know while putting every thought and idea through certain tests or filters.



### **Right Thinking**

...Right thinking is necessary to acquire happiness and freedom. Therefore, knowledge is the key to understanding.



### **The More Free a Person Is**

The best way to arrive at knowledge is through a process of *questioning* the people, ideas, and world around you, *comparing* any (or all) available data, *eliminating* any useless or untrue information, and ultimately (if possible) gaining first-hand *experience* of a subject. *Will power* is needed to seek knowledge in the first place and to *implement* any useful knowledge once it is *attained*. The best use of knowledge is to use it to help *understand* the nature of a thing (whatever object you decide upon) and to then use this knowledge to *free yourself* from anything that impedes your *will*. (This works equally for both noble and sinister objectives.) The level of freedom an individual attains correlates directly with the amount of will exerted and knowledge grasped, which then correlates with a person's overall happiness in life. The more free a person is, the happier they tend to be.



## A Clear Vision

...Knowledge is the first step towards freedom. If freedom is the goal, one of the most important *questions* we can ask ourselves is, “What forces exist that keep us from being as free as we can be?” The answer to this question falls into one of two categories: internal and external forces. Internal forces are your fears, desires, pride, envy, ego, attitudes, etc. External forces would be the people, (friends, family, associates, government, strangers...) or circumstances in your life.

All internal forces related to emotion or thought are connected to the mind, the most powerful tool at your disposal. Like any tool, it must be used to serve its purpose. When used to the height of its abilities, it becomes sharp as a razor. It’s only when the mind is strong that it can be used to control emotion and will, and thus achieve its goals with any kind of consistency. When it is weak, it only tends to create turmoil. Before a person can even dream of freedom, they *must* have a strong mind and an iron will. In fact, these must be indomitable. You must have a clear vision of yourself and the people and world around you—not as you *want* them to be, but as they *are*.



## Internal and External Forces

...We have a *choice* in what we let into our minds, and how much we let internal and external forces affect us... Remember, energy flows. Where energy goes, power flows.





## Expand Your Mind

Now that we have illustrated the basic principles of why so many people suffer and how to understand, free, and harmonize your mind, it's time to *expand* your mind. Continue to cultivate your garden. Question and explore this amazing world. Search for useful knowledge, helpful habits, and empowering ideas.



## To Truly Know Ourselves

To truly know ourselves, we must know more than just our mind. We must know whatever it is that makes us, us.



## Experience the World for Yourself

That's why it's so important to have a free mind. Beliefs that have never been tested through close examination and/or experience are simply *someone else's* theories or experiences! Experience the world for yourself! Don't always rely on someone else's word. And that most certainly includes everything I'm saying in this book! Don't just accept something because your religion, society, or some *authority figure* says to. Do the work yourself! Try to find the truth *experientially*; then you shall *know* without any *doubt* whether something is true or not.



## **A God-Centered Life**

...Everything in life is comprised of choices. We can choose a life of love and inclusiveness, what I'll call a God-centered life, or we can choose to live a life centered only on ourselves and what makes us happy individually, regardless of the effects it has on others (a self-centered life).



## **Living the Happier, More Fulfilling Life**

...Take a moment to think of the people you know in your life, of those who are the most self-centered and those who try their best to live a life of love and unity with others. Do those who lead mostly self-centered lives seem happy or unhappy to you? What about those who are always doing things for others, who are forever willing to sacrifice some part of themselves to help someone out or be a friend to a person in need? Of the two, which seem to be living the happier, more fulfilling life?



## **Integrated Love and Unity**

If you were to use observation and mindfulness to analyze the people and world around you ... (and the feelings inside of yourself), over time I believe that it would become apparent that a self-centered life more often leads to unhappiness than a life of integrated love and unity with others.



## **What We Become**

...That which we *I*-identify with becomes part of the “I.” What we identify with the most is what will grow, is what we will *become*.



## **A Faith That Has Limits Is No Faith at All**

To me, a faith that has limits is no faith at all, so I see no good in saying that all a person can do is believe *in* God but that they can't actually *know* God. Secondly, that kind of thinking limits God and takes away the possibility that God can reveal things to us. And thirdly, we are not just bodies and brains; if we were to limit ourselves to mere human intelligence, I, too, would agree that it would be impossible to know God. But just as I believe in the Spirit of God, I believe in the spirit inside all of us as well, and this spirit isn't bound by the same

earthly limitations as the body. And so with these three main reasons I put my faith in God and believe that the truth can be revealed to us.



## **Two Awakenings: Experiential and Philosophical**

I find that there are two main awakenings in a person's spiritual journey; one is experiential and the other is philosophical. Whichever comes first, I'm sure, is different for different people, and I'm sure they're never mutually exclusive as one always helps to progress the other as we mature and grow along the way.

For myself, the words of Jesus opened up my mind to the possibility that I could know God. The way of life he talked about and the kind of love he described made sense to me and helped to solidify and shed light on some of my own questions and experiences of God.

Before reading the Gospels, I had no idea how to approach God. For me, God was distant. God was in heaven. But Jesus' description was different. God was *close* to us. We could *unify* with God. We could know God *now*.

After a while I began to believe that it was possible to know God myself. It didn't seem strange to me to think this; on the contrary, it felt natural. I guess I'd seen enough circumstantial evidence in my life by that point that the question of whether God existed or not was no longer a question for me. The only question was, "How do I get to *know* God?"

I was young at this point and I was starting to analyze the world around me. Even at the age of fifteen I could see that most of the suffering in the world was the result of hatred and selfishness, and that the

worst thing a person could experience was separation and loneliness, and that love and unity were the keys to life.

The kind of love Jesus described God as having struck a chord within my soul. Reading the Gospels made it clear to me that God must be approached with a selfless kind of love. Jesus made me feel that I was precious in God's sight, that God loved me and wanted to be with me, and that if I were to only trust in this love, God would always be there for me as a friend. He taught me that I was a spiritual person and that concentrating on developing the spirit within was the way to joy and understanding ... that it was the way to *true life*.



### **Spiritual Free Agent**

I consider myself a spiritual free agent. I seek to know and experience God spiritually, without any dogma, attachments, or affiliations. I adhere to no particular religion or creed, organized or otherwise.

I see freedom as an essential part of spirituality (and society). Without freedom, especially the freedom to choose how to live one's life (religiously/spiritually, socially, and economically), human beings can never truly be content or at peace—within themselves or with others. I do not believe that God controls us in any way, shape, or form. That would be the opposite of freedom, which, in my view, would be the opposite of love—the very love that makes up the essence of God.

According to my beliefs, all that exists is a part of God. All of life, even in the physical/material plane, is still spiritual in its essence. I see the physical/material plane as a spiritual classroom designed to teach us lessons and help us develop spiritual understanding of God and spiritual matters. Although we are a part of God, we are given free-will, as freedom is an essential part of love, which I see as the essence of God.

Everything is spirit, and spirit is eternal. The purpose is to become loving beings in harmony with God and all of existence. This is a process. Being given free-will, we were given souls that were/are free of any pre-programming. Thus, the process of understanding and becoming beings of love has no time-limit. We continue to learn and grow until understanding/enlightenment allows us to become beings of perfect love, unified with God and all that is a part of God.

The purpose of life is to know God and the spirit. Seeing and experiencing God/spiritual reality is the way to true understanding and happiness. A successful life is one where God's perfect love flows through and is the fabric of one's soul, and helps to unify them with God and those around them.

Society and religion teaches us (or tries to teach us) their versions of what is right and wrong. Outside of what we learn from society, on a spiritual level, the more a person experiences love and unity, the greater in-tune they are with God, spiritual matters, and their own soul. Thus, God, through the soul, will help us to understand right from wrong.

As I believe that God has Mind/Intelligence without a physical body/brain, so do we as spiritual beings. Logic, including spiritual logic, is part of the Mind/Intelligence of God. Therefore, logic, especially logic coupled with experience, is essential to determining what is true versus untrue.

Society and religion feed us too many ideas about what's true and what should be important to us. I believe that true spiritual exploration is greatly discouraged by our society and our religions; they just want to keep us pliable and under control. Neither society nor religion wants to see people who are awake and free—free to question and explore, to build a strong, personal relationship with God. Society wants us to get jobs, pay taxes, buy stuff, donate money, acquire debt, and live a material life—the exact opposite of what it means to be spiritual. Religions want us to believe their particular version of spiritual truth so that they can continue to control and exploit their devotees, thus allowing them to remain in power. That is the ultimate goal of both society and religion ... to perpetuate their existence, even if it means hiding the truth about God and spiritual reality.

More people need to explore God/spiritual matters for themselves. They need to drop any conditioning or programming placed in their minds by their parents, society, or religion, and think for themselves. People need to learn to get in touch with their spirit within and with God, and let spirit and God be their teacher and guide. As long as people continue to perpetuate the materially-minded ways of society and organized religion—ways which have kept people at odds with each other since the dawn of time—nothing will ever change. We will continue to fight over God (who God loves, who's acceptable to God, heaven and hell, etc,...), power, control, land, money, and material matters. We must concentrate first and foremost on God and spiritual matters, with God's perfect love and unity as our ultimate goals.



### **The Integrity of the Spirit**

The integrity of the spirit within should be our main focus. What matters more than anything is our unity with God and each other and always promoting this unity under any circumstance. It is—at times—a heavy sacrifice to live this way, but it's the way to love and unity.

That doesn't mean that we should bow down to the will of every would-be tyrant or oppressor. We should promote and seek unity, but never at the cost of our principles. To stand up against a tyrant or oppressor in non-violent ways is not in conflict with the principles of love and unity.

Just as Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. refused to cooperate with the injustices of their day, we too may someday be called to stand up for what is loving and right.

In the end, Gandhi and MLK Jr. used nonviolent, non-cooperation with evil to open the eyes of their oppressors, to bring about a greater unity for all.

This is the power of love in action. This is the power that can change the world.



### **Moments of Perfection**

Question: Do you think a human today can be/become a Perfected Being? If so, how?

Answer: I think that we can (do) have moments of perfection. When we love someone without any thought of self, or exhibit any other kind of Godly virtue in relation to those around us, I believe that these are moments of perfection. I'm not sure if any of us will ever be able to live completely unselfishly while on this earth. I think that we are all susceptible to moments of weakness, where we know the right thing but fail to act on it. I think following the Zoroastrian mantra of, "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds," is the best approach to living. Trying to be good, to love, to seek unity in all that we do ... I believe that is the goal and purpose of life.

There is an old Catholic monk from centuries ago named Brother Lawrence who is famous for a collection of letters called, "The Practice of the Presence of God." The idea is that we willfully include God in everything that we do. Our first thought in any situation should always be to God, and we should view God as a constant companion.

Practicing this, I believe, puts one in close contact with God, a kind of contact which feels stronger and more intimate as time goes on. I've been practicing this since I was a teenager, and it is the foundation in which all of my spiritual joy is built. I don't think that it has made me a



perfected being, but I do believe that it has helped me to feel closer to God and build a more Godly character.



### **Centering Your Energy On God**

Question: What is prayer? Can you describe different forms of prayer? What power does prayer have, if any? How can prayer help the world and all of its inhabitants, today, here and now?

Answer: I see prayer as a way of aligning our soul/mind with the spirit/mind of God. It's a way for us to center our energy on God (and others).

I'm not sure that I can describe different forms of prayer. For me personally, I have a running dialogue with God throughout the day. I mostly offer short gratitudes for whatever good things I feel blessed with in my daily life. I also have a time once a day where I go through a list of things that I'm thankful for. I don't think that God needs this from us, to satisfy some sort of egotistical God-complex ... but I like to practice it as a way of always keeping my energy aligned with God's.

I think that there could be more to prayer, though I don't have any concrete ideas or experiences in any ways other than personal. I believe that the energy of a group prayer could help in healing ... I acknowledge the possibility of it, for sure. But I don't have much to say about it, being that it's outside of my experience.

I don't believe that any souls *need* our prayers. My experience of God is that God loves us completely and unconditionally. "*God is not a torturer.*" "*All is mercy.*" (These two lines are from a movie entitled, "Diary of a Country Priest," and I believe them wholeheartedly.) But to remember people in our prayers I think is a good practice. And since God's love (in my opinion) is unconditional, our intercession isn't necessary or required.



## God and Religion

Question: Why don't more people think about God and religion for themselves?

Answer: In the end, I suppose it all hinges on where we start from. At some point in my journey with God it became clear to me that the purest way to know God would be to start with my personal experiences first, and build from there. That meant letting go of any descriptions of God that contradicted these experiences (and, of course, using logic and reason, including spiritual logic and reason). To do that I had to undo any previous programming or indoctrination that I'd already been exposed to. That's not an easy thing to do, and the very idea of it terrifies most people.

The reality is, most people are very insecure about their beliefs. I feel that the majority of people don't know and can't envision any other way to approach God and spiritual matters than the way they already know. Also, they don't want to be an "outsider"; they want to be a part of an organized religion for the sense of community they get from being part of the group. (Community usually is, or can be, a positive thing; I'm not knocking that.)

As I illustrate in my writings, most people want a doctrine or set of beliefs that is already figured out for them. They start with *someone else's* ideas or experiences of God and build from there. Therefore, their starting point is always from someone else's point of view, and has, in many cases, thousands of years of dogma and tradition already built into it. If that's the way someone wants to go about it, that's their choice, and they're free to do so. But what happens when some of our most basic questions about God and existence are asked and thought about starting from the ground up, without any preconceived notions?

That's why I have such a hard time with religion. Most of it is based on hand-me-down theology. Very few people think about God

and existence on their own. They limit their understanding to a very strict set of *unquestionable* ideas, and never test these ideas against *all available evidence*.



### **Everything a Part of God**

Question: In your writings, you say that everything is a part of God; could you explain more about that?

Answer: Sure. Gandhi illustrates that if you were to take a drop of the ocean and isolate it somewhere, in essence, it's still the ocean. It's a beautiful analogy, and I derive spiritual inspiration from it, but a drop of the ocean doesn't have free-will as we do. That's the biggest thing that makes us individual. It is not an illusion that we're individual. We are, of course, interconnected with all things, but the point isn't, in my opinion, to lose the *self*—it's to lose *selfishness*. There's nothing evil about being an individual. I believe that God created us as individuals because of the grand beauty and uniqueness which that inevitably creates, and which creates so much joy when shared at its full potential.



### **Unique Identity**

Question: Many Eastern and New Age religions claim that all separateness and self-identity is an illusion; What are your thoughts on that?

Answer: I see some of the thinking involved with this kind of outlook as an escape valve to *not* have to develop ways to transcend the ego/selfishness.

Of course, it's important to see the interconnectedness of all things; I have had experiences of the interconnectedness of all things as well. But the connections are complex, and need to be seen for what they are. The things that keep us separated in spirit can't be wished away, but must be understood and righted.

In my view, ego/selfishness can't be transcended by merely saying that it's an illusion; it is a willful process which takes unending work, and hard work at that. There are many philosophies and religions, especially trending now in our current age, that want to tell us that all we need to do is acknowledge that we are one with the universe and—Whoola!—that's it. End of story. The problem is, I don't recall Gandhi, Buddha, or Jesus claiming that to become unified with God and those around us, or to realize spiritual enlightenment, is such an easy task as to merely say that our apparent separateness is an illusion.

I believe that we are all unified to the Spirit of God on a very basic, fundamental level (as the interconnectedness of all things to the Spirit of God). As I illustrate in my writings, I believe that we are a part of God that God willfully *gave* to us to be something new and unique. To be whatever we want to be. To share or not share. To raise ourselves to the heavenly heights, or suffer unhappiness in the pits of selfish indulgence.

For me, unity doesn't mean a loss of identity. We share ourselves with God and all things and they share themselves with us, and in that way we are unified, we are One, but never do we lose who we are. It's not the losing of self but the *sharing* of self that makes the whole process of life so beautiful and enjoyable.



## The Historical Jesus

Question: What are your thoughts on the historical Jesus?

Answer: I have many thoughts on the historical Jesus. But first I must say this: that it is what Jesus taught us about God and the nature of God, and the example that he gave us to follow, that is of most importance. It is the *spiritual Jesus* that is most important to me, for it is in following the *spiritual Jesus* that we, too, can come to know God in our lives. But I do find the study of the historical Jesus fascinating.

My thoughts on the historical Jesus ... I believe that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah (more on that later). I definitely do not believe in the Trinity or that Jesus was God in the flesh. It's a subject I've researched extensively. From what I can tell, the evidence that's available points to the original followers of Jesus in Jerusalem seeing him quite differently than Paul (or Paul's eventual followers) did. To Jesus' original followers in Jerusalem, Jesus was a prophet, a reformer, the Messiah, but definitely not God. That would be the most blasphemous idea a Jew at that time period could ever conceive of, and certainly was not one of the many varying views of what the Messiah was, or would be.

I'll explain this as simply as I can. The original followers of Jesus worshiped in the Temple like any other Jew who lived in the homeland until the Temple's destruction. Therefore, it would be hard to imagine them proclaiming anything about Jesus that was too out-of-line with mainstream Judaism. It was Paul, and to a further extent Paul's eventual followers and the Greek Jews who, I believe, Hellenized (made more Greek) their own unique portrait of Jesus that developed and evolved over time, and is the version of Jesus that eventually "won the day," especially after the destruction of the Temple.

A good, hard study of the subject of the historical Jesus would show that Jesus more than likely viewed himself as a prophet or reformer *within* Judaism, not the creator of a new religion. At most, he may have seen himself as the Messiah, but that did not mean co-equal with God or "God in the flesh," as Jesus eventually came to be viewed over time. Such a concept would have not only been alien to any orthodox

Jew, but outright blasphemous. As I said above, neither Jesus while he was alive, nor his disciples after his death, would have been welcome in the Temple if they were making any such claims of Jesus being co-equal with God (and they are said to have lived in Jerusalem and worshiped in the Temple for upwards of thirty years after Jesus' death). The most sacred belief of the Jews was that there is only one God. To say otherwise was to risk being stoned to death, and anyone making such claims certainly wouldn't be welcome in the Temple, the most sacred of all places to the Jews.

This doesn't in any way lower the significance of Jesus' life and mission in my eyes. Jesus presented a reformed portrait of God's nature, one of overflowing love and forgiveness that was rarely emphasized in the overly legalistic Judaism of his day. This *Good News* changed the way people viewed God's nature, and brought people closer to God and each other. For this, Jesus is, indeed, a savior—one of the world's many saviors who helped spread God's love throughout the world.

Was Jesus born of a virgin? Was Jesus resurrected? Is Jesus the “only Son of God?” Is Jesus part of the Trinity? Is Jesus “God in the flesh?” Did Jesus perform miracles? Questions like these, more often than not, only take the focus *away* from what Jesus said about God and the good example that Jesus gave us and end up being *authoritative proclamations about Jesus* that never really touch the core message of what Jesus had to say about the love of God, and how to share this love throughout the world.

For those who read this and find it hard to accept, or simply disagree, that's your prerogative. You can either research it for yourself, or we can agree to disagree. In either case, we can both try to follow the example of Jesus in our own thoughts and daily lives, and in that way, be a light in this world, a light that continues to spread God's love, grace, and peace.



## **Picking and Choosing**

Question: Do you believe that the Bible has been tampered with? Is it wrong to “pick and choose” the parts we like and don’t like?

Answer: I don't know that I look at the Bible as necessarily being tampered with. Some parts may have been, who knows? It's certainly possible. But mostly I see the Bible as the reflections or thoughts of specific persons or communities, each of which had their own biases, agendas, and understandings of things. In the end, they were all people just like you and me; some things they may have been right about, others they have been wrong about.

It's funny, a common criticism that people put out there is, "You can't pick and choose what you like and don't like from the Bible." Says who? I think that's exactly what a person should do. Nothing should ever just be accepted as truth. Everything should be questioned and evaluated. Some ideas should definitely be discarded as false when enough evidence suggests them to be so. So that's all I'm saying about the Bible. Find what seems to be true and helpful, and as to the rest, if it isn't helpful, who needs it?



## **Self-Loathing**

Question: Do you have any recommendations/thoughts about getting self-loathing turned around? My "intellectual" self knows God doesn't hate people (me included); rather, I hate myself. That, in turn, my subconscious mind turns into God hating me. Any suggestions?

Answer: My thoughts would be this: Try to figure out the source of these feelings. If (and I'm saying *if*) you feel that God hates you because of something(s) you've done, then confess your wrongdoings to

God. That process itself brings peace and tranquility. Then—and this is also extremely important—you would need to forgive yourself. Sometimes that's not easy, but it is necessary. And the third step in this process would be to accept and acknowledge that as far as you and God are concerned, you now have a clean slate going forward. Accept God's love, share your love with God, and believe in and accept the sense of unity that love brings. Foster these feelings and invite God to work in your soul and your life. But again, only you can find the source of why you think God hates you.

Secondly, as you also indicated in your question, I don't believe that God hates anyone, or that it's even possible for God to hate. Understanding this fundamental principle of God's character is essential to having and building a healthy relationship with God.

Hopefully that helps. And please know that I'm not judging you in any way. But there must be a source for these feelings you have, so until you identify this source and try to figure out why you feel this way, only then will it be possible to realistically address these feelings and find a way to peace and understanding.



## **Spiritual Guides**

Question: How do you trust the Bible AT ALL when there are so many passages you don't believe?

Answer: Great Question! It's important to remember that religious or spiritual texts are meant to be guides to help assist us in our spiritual journeys. No text will ever be perfect. No teacher will ever be perfect. The ultimate goal, in my view at least, is direct, personal unity with God. The knowledge and understanding that's acquired in a personal relationship with God trumps any and all texts and teachers, as religious texts and teachers can at best offer second-hand knowledge rather



than first-hand experience. How someone goes about having a personal relationship with God is, I'm sure, unique to each person, but I think that it begins with putting one's self in a state that is receptive to beginning that relationship, fostering it in their thoughts and actions throughout the day, and building on the little 'coincidences,' signs, and experiences that happen on one's journey. Sort of like the building of a friendship or relationship in the physical world, just on a spiritual level ... opening up and trusting, growing and building little by little, until eventually you realize that you really do have a relationship with God, and you feel God's love first-hand, not as something read out of a book but in your heart and soul, something that's real and *alive*. Books and teachers are still great tools to help inspire us in our relationships with God and with others, so use them often. Just find things that speak to your heart and soul. If something doesn't speak to you, let it fall away; you don't need it. That's what I do, at least.



### **Peace of Mind**

Question: In your writings you say that “the mind is the greatest tool at our disposal”: How does one go about controlling the mind and finding peace?

Answer: I'll put it like this: There must come a time in each of our lives when we decide what it is we truly want from life. That means asking the tough questions. Do you want to feel pain and misery? Or do you want to feel peace and tranquility? Do you want to feel confused and frustrated, or enlightened and free? As the Stoics say, we must be in control of our minds. We can—and must—decide what goes in and what stays out.

For me, I choose to have a clear and peaceful mind, to see myself as a spiritual being connected with God, who wants to grow and evolve

and mature along this journey we call life. I refuse to let negative thoughts drag me away from that goal. I choose to have a strong, impenetrable mind that no force in the world can penetrate unless I allow it to. I'm responsible for my life, my thoughts and my actions ... I'm the captain of the ship ... It's up to me to decide which direction I'm heading. I accept no excuses. I cast no blame. I follow the advice of Epicurus: "First decide what it is you will be, then do what you have to do."

I want to be love. I want to be peace. I want to be beauty. I want to be free. I want to be connected to God and the people and world around me. These are powers that each of us have, given to us by God.

Use them to the best of your ability. Refuse to let anything keep you from your goals. Be as free as you can be. And feel the peace and love of God.



### **The Stoic Philosophy**

Question: Your writings seem very Stoic. How familiar are you with Stoicism? Could you explain Stoicism in a nutshell?

Answer: Sure. As far as the Stoics go, I find them very practical. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and living a life of virtue. They stress living in accordance with nature or reality, realizing that some things are in our control, and others are not (internal things = in our control, external things = mostly out of our control). They practice mastery of the self, especially our attitudes and emotions and anything internal. They concentrate on seeing the positive in every situation, and using anything negative as an opportunity for growth. If you're interested in learning more on Stoicism, check out these sources, just to name a few:

- *The Art of Living: The Classical Manual on Virtue, Happiness and Effectiveness* by Epictetus and Sharon Lebell
- *The Daily Stoic: 366 Meditations on Wisdom, Perseverance, and the Art of Living* by Ryan Holiday (Also a website: <https://dailystoic.com>)
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoicism>



### **The Power of Positive Thinking**

Question: From reading your writings, it's clear that you believe in the power of positive thinking; How much actual power can positive thinking have in our lives? Can positive thinking cure diabetes? What about phobias and mental conditions?

Answer: What can and can't be cured is not for me to say, but I do believe that positive thinking can shape our attitude and response to diabetes. Phobias, mental conditions, and whatnot? It's hard for me to speak on that, as the only mind that I truly know is my own, but I will say this: as weightlifting, proper diet, and exercise can build strength and stamina and reshape the body, so too can positive thinking (re)train and reshape the mind to more positive ends. How far or to what extent is not for me to say, nor do I really want to, because I'd rather not limit the possibilities of another person. As the writer Richard Bach says in his book *Illusions*, "Argue for your limitations, and sure enough they're yours." So I'm not going to put a limit on it. But as all exercise is dif-

difficult and time consuming, and the realization of any goal takes hard work, sacrifice, and determination, so too does reprogramming and re-shaping the mind take practice and dedication, will-power, and a "never say quit" attitude.

I'm not saying that limits don't exist in this world. That would be absurd. But amazing things can and do happen. I like to keep an open mind when it comes to what's possible.

Growing up, I watched the show *Unsolved Mysteries* all the time, even into my twenties when I worked 2nd shift. It helped to show me that there's so much that's possible in this world, so many things that happen that defy explanation. So I'm very cautious about putting limits on things, most especially the spirit or mind.



### **More Positive Thinking**

Question: Another question on the power of positive thinking ... Are there ever times when it's okay to have negative thoughts?

Answer: Any negative thoughts or emotions that we experience indicates a misunderstanding of reality.

Never forget that as your true essence you are a spiritual being. Life on this human journey consists of a series of lessons meant to help us grow and evolve as spiritual beings.

For instance, the negative emotions we commonly associate with death (mortality) are misdirected; mortality is a lesson designed to help us understand immortality. How can one truly understand immortality without mortality?

Death is a natural part of this temporal, physical world we live in. But when one remembers the immortality of the soul, and that our jour-

ney through the material world is but a temporary educational training course, death loses its sting. To see it negatively indicates a misunderstanding of reality.

The same can be said about other negative emotions. Someone treats you badly ... understand that they have yet to fully comprehend (spiritual) reality, and use the opportunity to practice your own spirituality. The same with disease and other misfortunes.

Always try to find a positive, spiritual outlook to everything that happens, and use these opportunities as building blocks for spiritual growth.



### **Anger In Relation to Wisdom and Understanding**

Question: Is there ever a time when anger is the proper response to a situation?

Answer: I would have to say no. Think about it like this: Using God as our example, God is considered to be a perfect being. In understanding what it means to be perfect, we have to define what attributes contribute to God's perfection, such as love, mercy, peace, joy, wisdom, understanding, and so on, all of which would need to be perfect if God is perfect.

Now let's concentrate on just two of these attributes, wisdom and understanding. Would a being of perfect wisdom and understanding ever get angry? A perfectly wise being would anticipate the possibility of any and all situations. Also, a being who possessed perfect understanding would comprehend any and all reasons for a person acting a certain way or a situation happening a particular way.

Let me illustrate this with a quote from Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*:

“Begin each day by saying to yourself: Today I am going to encounter people who are ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, and hostile. People have these characteristics because they do not understand what is good and what is bad. But insofar as I have comprehended the true nature of what is good, namely that it is fine and noble, and the true nature of what is bad, that it is shameful, and the true nature of the person who has gone astray: that he is just like me, not only in the physical sense but also with respect to Intelligence and having a portion of the Divine—insofar as I have comprehended all this, I can neither be harmed by any of them, for no one else can involve me in what is shameful and debasing, nor can I be angry with my fellow man and hate him, for we have been made for cooperation, just like the feet, the hands, the eye lids, and the upper and lower teeth. To hinder one another, then, is contrary to Nature, and this is exactly what happens when we are angry and turn away from each other.”

*-Meditations, Book II (Needleman, Piazza, The Essential Marcus Aurelius, 2008)*

As can be seen at the beginning of the passage, Marcus is well aware that he may encounter people who are ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, and so on. It doesn't take a perfected being to anticipate this kind of behavior from imperfect people. If we remember that people act in less than noble ways because of some faulty understanding of their own, we would feel compassion and understanding for them, not anger.

The same goes for situations that arise in daily life. Certainly a wise person would anticipate that not everything will go the way that they want it to 100% of the time, and rather than getting angry, would accept any situation that didn't go their way calmly, with wisdom and understanding. If they can alter the outcome later, that's great; they should calmly go about doing so. If not, why get angry? It doesn't change anything, nor does it usually help the situation. The true mark of wisdom and understanding is to accept the things that cannot be changed, and to change the things that can (if, indeed, it would be wise to do so).

Also addressed in the quote by Marcus Aurelius is the idea that anger always carries with it the possibility of putting a wedge between us and the objects of our anger, especially our fellow man. As the entire purpose of love is the realization of unification between beings, I cannot envision a time when God wouldn't seek unity over division. Therefore, it stands to reason that as beings who are constantly striving to emulate God's perfect love, wisdom, and understanding, anger is never the appropriate response to any given situation.

The challenge is to envision what a perfected being would look like, and realize that God is the embodiment of that vision. Contemplate what a perfect being would look like without any preconceived notions, without any dogma whatsoever, and you will see a vision of God more beautiful than any you have known before. That is the way to God.



### **Jesus and Charity**

Question: What are your thoughts on Jesus and charity?

Answer: Jesus did tell us to help the poor, that's true. The question is, where would Jesus draw the line? Would he expect us to help every poor or homeless person in our neighborhood? Town? County? Country? (In the case of borders, even other countries?) Would Jesus expect us to give until we become as poor and dependent as those we're trying to help? Where would he draw the line? (Bear in mind how much the average working American already contributes to helping the poor through taxes.)

Obviously, that's for each person to decide for themselves. Many people have families, mortgages, car loans, college loans, and many other responsibilities to account for before they can even begin to think about giving to charity. With the ever increasing cost of living, especially in raising a child, most people don't have much left over (in fact,

if you're in debt, you technically don't have any leftover). My feeling is, don't feel bad if you can't give much to charity. If a good opportunity presents itself and feels important to you, and you have it in the budget to help, then give what feels right out of the kindness of your heart.

Personally, I enjoy helping out on little things that I know make a difference. Supporting fundraisers for school activities or other organizations like Girl Scouts or the Salvation Army are ways that I feel a little goes a long way.

I'll also add this: there's a difference between being *selfish* and being *responsible*. The word *responsibility* means *being able to respond*. Give when you can, but be sure that you are *able to respond* to your own personal needs first. There's nothing selfish about that.



### **Would Jesus Be a Socialist?**

Question: How would Jesus navigate a capitalistic democracy?

Answer: Great question! Perhaps Jesus would opt out and live more along the lines of the Amish, who practice *simple, voluntary communal living*, not government sponsored communism/socialism. As far as capitalistic democracy is concerned, it has helped western countries become the most prosperous nations in the history of mankind, helping to raise the standard of living for the common man (and the poor, as well) to fantastic heights. (My personal reason for liking capitalism, at least in the way that it *used* to be practiced, is that you only paid for what you wanted—and if you didn't want it, you didn't have to pay for it. That goes along pretty well with my strong beliefs in *freedom*.) I believe capitalism would continue to prosper if not for “special interests” shaping laws and regulations in their favor, but that's a complex topic; best to stick to the topic at hand.



Would Jesus be a socialist? I don't believe that Jesus would be. *Voluntary* wealth redistribution (charity) is fine. But would Jesus consider it love to take (steal) money (property) from one individual and give it to another (wealth redistribution), with the threat of *violence* or *imprisonment* if they refuse? That's not love, that's theft. *Thou shalt not steal* and *Thou shalt not covet* are two of the Ten Commandments, so I think that's pretty indicative of where Jesus would stand on socialism.

On top of that, I do not believe that socialism is a "completely selfless ideology," as some people believe. *Voluntary communal living* could be, but not government sponsored communism/socialism. I'm sorry to say this, but I see most socialists as being very covetous, with little to no *respect* for other people's property (money), and who wish to steal the fruits of someone else's labor. I see them as control freaks who believe that they (*they* being voting socialists or socialist governments) have the *right* to redistribute other people's money as *they* see fit. That's not freedom. That's not the way of love.

Yes, I believe that Jesus would have been considered very liberal in terms of love in *personal relationships* (both with our fellow man and with God), but I'm not convinced that it would translate the same *politically or economically*. Sure, I believe Jesus would expect us to love anyone who has different beliefs or sexual preferences, but many other issues are harder to discern. Being that God gave us all free will, I believe that Jesus would also have been a champion of freedom. With freedom comes responsibility—what we choose to do with that freedom is up to us as individuals.

In America, we already have a fair amount of wealth redistribution. Both wealthy and middle class Americans are doing their part to help the poor or those who are in need. There are many government-sponsored opportunities for anyone living around or below the poverty line to take advantage of, but as *tough love* would say, there comes a time when people in need must do everything in their power to *help themselves* as well. Like I said above, with freedom comes responsibility. (I'm all for helping those who are truly unable to work or have other legitimate disabilities, for the record.)

I'll ask again, for good measure: would Jesus consider it love to take (steal) money (property) from one individual and give it to another (wealth redistribution/socialism), with the threat of *violence* or *imprisonment* if they refuse? That's not love, that's theft. Always has been, always will be.

We should never diminish the idea of *consent* in our interactions with our fellow man, either individually or as a society or nation. If a person doesn't give their *consent* to take their money or property, then it can only be considered *theft*, based strictly on the definitions of the terms.

Remember, many wealthy people work very hard for their money, and despite what is sometimes portrayed in the media, statistics show that the very wealthy pay a large majority of the taxes in this country (don't just take my word for it, look it up!). No one is *entitled* to someone else's money, just because they have a lot of it. It would be great if certain rich families or business owners *chose* to do more by their own *free will* out of *love* for a greater good, but it is only *love* if they *give*, not if it is *stolen* or confiscated through taxes or political movements.

We must always *respect* the *freedom* each person has to give or withhold as they see fit.



### **Definition of Heaven**

Question: What is your definition or understanding of Heaven?

Answer: My definition of Heaven is simply this: When a person is in spiritual unity with God and those around them, that is Heaven.



## Tough Love

Question: In your writings, you speak often of the term “unconditional love”—where would “tough love” fit into that?

Answer: In my opinion, “tough love” can absolutely be considered a form of unconditional love. How “loving” would it be to indulge a friend or loved one by helping them to be an inferior version of themselves, to be less than their true potential? To be honest, tough love is the most difficult kind of love because it usually means that we have to stand by and watch someone suffer until they are willing to confront their destructive behavior and embrace their true potential. To assist someone by helping them to continue in their own self-destruction seems to me to be the *opposite* of love.

I’m not suggesting that tough love should be an automatic response to a given situation. There are many avenues that can be explored first, such as counseling or an intervention, but if someone refuses *constructive* help, they may need to hit “rock bottom” before they are ready for a constructive approach.

I think a good question to ask in any given situation is, “Am I helping this person to be *constructive* in building themselves up, or helping them to be *destructive* in tearing themselves down?”

I understand that each situation is unique, so you must follow what you feel is right based on all of the information at your disposal—the mental state, financial concerns, family circumstances, and other miscellaneous variables of the person (or people) involved. If tough love seems appropriate given the circumstances, know that, in my opinion, it is still love—you love them so much that you’re not going to be an accomplice in their own destructive behaviors.



## Gratitude Becomes Your Attitude

Some of you reading this may have heard the phrase “An Attitude of Gratitude” before. I’m not sure of the history of the phrase, but it’s catchy and important, and it’s on my mind today.

Try this: as you go through your day today, tomorrow, and so on, take some time to analyze your thoughts and your surroundings. Observe the people, places, things, and circumstances in your life and try to find something positive to be grateful for. Pay attention to the little things and big things, in all of your tasks and interactions throughout the day. Your car started on a cold morning... you got an unexpected call from an old friend... you woke up and felt a little less pain in your knee than usual... you managed to *not* burn the garlic bread this time... you said something that helped someone’s day go a little better.... Every little thing you feel grateful for will help to add *joy* to your life—every *moment* of your life.

Even not-so-good things that happen throughout the day can be turned into something positive; perhaps a situation can wake something up inside of you that helps you to be more sensitive to an area (or person) in your life that maybe you weren’t very grateful for until now, or a negative situation can help you to appreciate all of the times when things are going well.

Another benefit of practicing gratitude throughout the day is that when you’re paying attention to the positive things happening in your life, it makes it harder for negative thoughts to dwell in your mind. With enough practice, your thoughts of gratitude *become* your attitude. You will have developed a way to see the good and positive in every thing and person around you, and joy and happiness will fill your thoughts and your days.

I truly believe that *an attitude of gratitude* can be a transformative power in each and every one of our lives!



## God, Punishment, and Free Will

One of the most important things Jesus did during his life was help to change the perceptions people had about God's nature. Rather than being vindictive and punishing, Jesus presented God as overflowing with love, understanding, and forgiveness. I believe that spirituality and religion, for the most part, still have a long way to go to in transforming their image of God's nature. Far too many people continue to hold on to and preach an image of a vindictive, punishing God.

Think about it this way: we all have free will, right? What kind of just god would give us free will and then punish us for using it? If you had a child and told them that they were free to choose a good, healthy meal for supper, or that they could choose to eat ice cream, would it then be fair to punish them for choosing ice cream? And if the child gets a stomach ache from eating ice cream for supper, isn't that just a natural consequence? It's its own form of punishment, is it not?

I believe that it is the same way with us and free will. I don't believe that God punishes us for using our free will; but if we choose to live in selfish or ungodly ways, the results are usually negative, or cause us unhappiness or separation. They are simply the natural consequences of our choices, just as choosing to live in Godly ways brings us happiness, peace, and fellowship with God and those around us.

I'm asking that you really examine your understanding of God. Any just god would have to give each person free will; if not, then we would be slaves, and true love would never make a slave of anyone. For love to be true and perfect, freedom is the only way.

An understanding god would know that we can be very selfish and weak at times, and that this usually stems from some form of ignorance. A patient and understanding god would let us learn from our mistakes, not punish or torture us, knowing that the natural, negative consequences of our actions is punishment enough. Anyways, God also gave us souls that live for eternity, so we will all continue to grow into love and into God, no matter how long it takes.

I'd also like to add this: it's very easy to let other people do our thinking for us. Whether it's our parents, religion, or society, we often

accept whatever people tell us, regardless of our own feelings on the subject, and without much investigation into the matter. God gave us all individual minds so that we can think for ourselves. It is not a sin to question your beliefs. Jesus obviously questioned the religious beliefs of his day and spoke out about what he thought were misrepresentations of God's nature.

Understand that it is built into many of the power structures in our religions and society to make us feel bad about questioning authority; some will even preach that it is offensive to God. This is designed to protect those who are in power from anyone questioning their authority. See this for what it is, and never be afraid to think for yourself.

So what do you believe about God's nature? In my experience, God is all love, all mercy, all grace. God's nature is one of compassion, understanding, empathy, love, and forgiveness—and all is unconditional. This is the Good News that Jesus was willing to die for in opposition to the established religion of his day. This is the Good News that isn't talked about nearly enough, and has the power to change people's hearts and minds. It has the power, in fact, to change the world.

Believe this Good News.



### **Blessed Are the Peacemakers**

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” This is, perhaps, one of the hardest things to do in life—to be a peacemaker when those around us are troublemakers. To be a unifier when those around us are dividers. Sometimes it means giving no reaction at all to some slight or intentional jab inflicted on us, or meeting negativity head-on with love and positivity.

There will be no end in life of those who will try to disrupt your peace. Recognize these people for what they are, and feel compassion for them, for they—themselves—are in a state of turmoil, and in this

moment, simply do not understand the joy, love, and beauty of a life of peace in fellowship with God and all that exists in God.

Pray that they may soon understand and experience this peace. And through your example, show them the ways of love and of God.

Remember this when you are at work or at home, wherever you may be. In every situation, try to be a peacemaker.



### **Leniency and Understanding**

In your day to day life, remember that we are all works-in-progress. Some people are lost. Confused. Ignorant. Trapped in a world of ego and self-indulgence. Some people, especially those who are insecure, want to control everything in their lives, including the lives of those around them.

Try to be patient. Try to be kind. Be lenient and understanding. We're all at different points in our journey. Show the same love that others have shown you when you stumbled off of the path.

What goes around, comes around. We all need a little leniency from time to time.



### **Content of Character**

When will we start to relate to each other “not by the color of our skin, but by the content of our character,” as MLK Jr. dreamed? The term “white privilege” has the word “white” in it! It literally lumps a group of people together and judges them primarily by the color of their skin, and not by the content of their character.

For the love of God, don't get sucked into this trap! We are letting all of our "labels" divide and define us. "Black," "white," "Democrat," "Republican," "male," "female," "rich," "poor." The list goes on and on...

Our society seems to be increasingly obsessed with labeling everyone and everything, whether it's by the color of our skin, our sexuality, our beliefs, or in whatever other way in which people like to "identify" themselves or those around them. The thing is, what do any of these labels have to do with the content of someone's character? The most important thing to me is if someone is a good person or not; that, in my opinion, should be what our "identity" is based around.

As Gandhi said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Be a unifier, not a divider! Refuse to get baited into seeing the world through the "labels" that "society" has thrust upon you. Treat all people equally. Build the content of your own character and live by the principles of love. Let this be how you are known to the world and those around you... And let it be how you know the world.



## **A Better Future**

Too often, individuals or groups of people concentrate on the injuries of the past, picking at the scabs of healing, drawing fresh blood from old wounds. This will never create the type of environment where love and healing can prosper, where unity can become a living reality.

Wounds that are forever agitated can never heal. Much of the hatred and division in the world results from an inability to move on from past injuries. How can we see where we're going and move forward if we're constantly looking behind us?

Whether individually, as a race, or as a nation, it is essential to the peace of our world *right now* to let go of past offenses, to actively seek forgiveness and reconciliation, and concentrate on building healthy,



loving relationships *in the present*. It is the only way to build a better future.



## **Mind Control**

I would like to redefine a term that you have probably heard many times before—the term *mind control*. Mind control is commonly thought of as one person (or group of people) controlling another person’s mind. I would like to redefine it as *you* being in control of *your own mind*.

It works like this: If you notice yourself feeling stressed or depressed about something, hit the *pause* button. Take a moment to *relax*. Change the way you are thinking and talking to yourself about whatever it is that’s making you feel this way. Try your best to find a solution to what troubles you. If no solution is immediately found, then continue to seek a solution, but do so with a calm mind. It is much easier to think clearly with a calm mind anyways. Replace stressful or depressing thoughts with peaceful, happy thoughts. It is within your power to do this. Do this as often as is necessary.

It’s also important to remember that emotions like anxiety, anger, dissatisfaction, and negativity develop from having *attachments* to preconceived ideas or outcomes. Rather than becoming attached, it would be better to say, “My attitudes, actions, and reactions are the only things I am completely in control of in my life. I will do the best that I can with whatever comes my way.” And then do the best that you can with whatever comes your way.

When confronted with anxiety, anger, or dissatisfaction, ask yourself, “What am I attached to that is causing me to feel this way? Is it proper for me to be attached to this? Is what I am attached to a realistic possibility? Have I done everything in my power to achieve my goals?”

Always evaluate yourself in this way, and adjust your ideas and desires accordingly.

If negative thoughts come knocking, just don't answer the door! If they somehow break in and enter, stop them in their tracks and throw them out! This is your mind! You are the one in control!

Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. Practice! Practice! Practice! This is what Mind Control is all about—controlling your own mind!

Never forget how unbelievably powerful your mind is! You are strong! You can conquer any negative thoughts that come your way! Believe in yourself. Use your mind to create happiness, not turmoil. Your mind can be one giant happiness producing machine if you direct its energy that way. You are the one in control!

Promise to never allow yourself to be a victim, a helpless bystander, or a hostage *to your own thoughts and emotions*.

It's up to you. Observe your mind and emotions and choose peace, happiness, and positivity. Practice Mind Control. If you choose to dwell on negative, stressful thoughts, you have only yourself to blame.



## **Attitude and Perspective**

Attitude and perspective—they are the only things that make life a heaven or a hell.



## **Choose**

Right now, you have to choose.  
Will you be happy, or sad?

Peaceful, or stressful?  
Positive, or negative?  
You must choose, right now, what you will be.

And in another minute, or ten minutes, or hour,  
You will have to choose again.

This is what life is.  
Over and over and over again.

And for some reason,  
We have a hard time learning this.  
And hardly anyone teaches us this.  
And despite moments of clarity,  
We forget this.

We forget  
How powerful we are.  
How strong we can be.  
How happy we can be.

How happy we are  
Right now.



### **What Are You Waiting For?**

We can experience freedom right now—this very second! All we have to do is make up our mind to be free from whatever it is that binds us. If the source is external, only so much external power is in our control (though our attitude towards it is always in our control); but if the source is internal, our only limit is our own free will.

You can be free right now. It may not be easy. It may take every ounce of *will* to build your mind the way it needs to be to be free, but it can be done.

What I'm saying is that it's possible to flick a switch and say, "No More! From this point forward, I will be free!"

To experience this freedom, you can—and must—train your mind, strengthen your will and resolve, and accept no compromises. If you practice and succeed, stay strong; temptations will come, but don't give in.

And as you continue to conquer your selfish desires and bad habits, you'll experience a bliss that you never before imagined was possible, and you'll *live* there. Bliss will be your new home, your new habit, your new way of interacting with the world...

You can be free right now. What are you waiting for?



### **Prayer for Unity and Understanding**

God, grant that I may see all things in a spiritual light.

Grant that I may always remember that the world we live in is a school—a classroom—meant to teach us about God and the spirit.

Grant that my eyes may always see through the illusion of the physical and see the spiritual Oneness that connects us all in unity in You; that I may be in the world and not of the world.

Grant that I may become ever One with your Spirit, and that the strength and depth of my spirit may mature to completeness in your love and unity.

And grant me the strength, love, grace, and ability to share this Oneness with all whom I encounter.



## **Prayers of Appreciation and for Guidance**

Dear God,

Thank you for everything. You are so good to me.

Thank you for teaching me, guiding me, and watching over me.

Thank you for the things you've revealed to me, including your very Spirit.

Thank you for the relationship we share. This unity is the source of all of my joy, strength, and peace.

Thank you for your endless patience with me, and the kindness you've blessed me with throughout the years. Though at times I've been selfish and weak, I know that no matter what happens, nothing can separate me from your Unconditional Love. Help me to stay strong on the path of righteousness, so that I may grow ever closer to You and everyone around me, and we may all grow closer in peace, love, and unity.

Help me to see things not merely from a human point of view, but from Your point of view. Help me to reprogram my mind to a more spiritual nature, living less and less for myself and more for You and my fellow man.

Help me to direct all of my energies to the pursuit of godliness. Help me to have good thoughts, words, and deeds. Give me the strength to defeat all of my inner demons, so that perfect peace, freedom, and unity with You may be a constant, living reality.

I trust you with all of my mind, heart and soul. When I look back on my life, I can see that everything has happened for a reason—the good and the bad—and that trust carries me forward. I know you'll never abandon or forsake me.

I trust in your will, God. Although you've made us free, I've given my life to you, and I know that your will for me is only that I experience the peace and freedom of living a godly life, for this is the only way to experience love, joy, peace, beauty, and harmony—in unity with you and all that exists—until I can reach that place where my love is perfected in You and I shall know that state of being that is timeless, eternal, and perfect.

Direct my steps. Help me to know your will. Teach me your ways. Help me to love with Your heart, to see and experience life as You see and experience life. Help me to be a godly example for others, and to share with them the things You share with me. Help me to do this with grace and humility, never letting ego get in the way of doing Your work.

You are my rock and my fortress. Help me to put my hand to the plow and never look back.

Resurrect me, God. Every time I fall, lift me up. Wash me clean. Give me strength. Give me fortitude. Give me your love and your light, and a spirit that shines and is free.

I love you. Thank you so much for everything.