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Letting Go

A message from Jim

In talking with people recently, I've been struck by how many of us struggle with relationship issues, especially those that have to do with being so attached to another person or situation that it's hard to let go and get on with our lives. These attachments can last not just days or weeks, but sometimes months and even years. There is nothing wrong with attachment. The issue is really just the *letting go* of that attachment when it is no longer serving us and no longer needed. When we don't let go and move forward, we live in the past instead, and this keeps us from moving on to our new opportunities.

In my counseling, my primary emphasis has been on coming into the realization that letting go is something we must *choose* to do, and it is an ongoing process that takes place in each moment. Although it may not always *look* like it, new opportunities and directions are being presented to us every day, and it is important to remain awake and responsive to them. Although it may sometimes *seem* that we have no choices, this isn't really true, and we must be careful not to shut down and close ourselves off – from our feelings, from other people, and from the new directions that are being laid out for us.

In our pain, disappointment, or disillusionment, shutting down is a common reaction, and yet we make it much more difficult and painful for ourselves in the long run when we choose to “go numb” as a way of coping. When we do hold on and shut down, we can't possibly move forward; instead, we find ourselves becoming stuck and feeling denied and separate – separate from our feelings, from the moment, from other people, and from the opportunities that *will* come forward when we just stay focused in the moment and move into whatever is next.

Often, we would prefer (and even expect)

things to remain as they have always been, but the world is in a state of constant *change*. By staying in the consciousness of movement into what's next, what's available, and what's *now*, it becomes so much easier to accept the changes that come forward in our lives, and then “work them” to our betterment.

When whatever it is that we have attached ourselves to is *not* going to move forward with us (a person, a career, a house, etc.), there are a number of things we can do to stay in the process of movement. The first is to simply realize that things have changed. If we don't take this first step, then we're holding on to something that isn't even there to hold on to any more. This choice to accept the changes and face what is really happening can be painful at first, but once the energy starts moving, it isn't nearly as painful as we'd thought. With time and a little distance, letting go and moving forward just become easier and easier. Another part of this waking up has to do with recognizing when we *have* been attached, and recognizing that this attachment is not really serving us.

When we are *willing* to let go and move forward, one of the most helpful things we can do next is to forgive – to forgive ourselves, the other people involved, and God, whom we often subconsciously blame when our lives change and our expectations aren't met.

We can also use prayer and meditation. For example, we can ask for “a clearing” – that our attachments and any negativity be lifted from us. Along with this, however, we must also be responsible for our own clearing *actions* when this clearing energy comes to us. In other words, we must move with that clearing energy and not expect it to do our work for us.

We must also realize that letting go is ultimately an attitude of heart. It isn't enough to just mechanically “go through the motions” of letting go. We have to sincerely be willing to move forward. When that sincere desire *is* really there, our actions may sometimes look or feel mechanical at first, but they will begin to take us where we really want to go, which is *forward*. ■

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Raise Your Banner, Toot Your Horn

by *Nicholas Martin*

One day when the chips were down (or so it very much seemed to me), I realized that the decisions we make in our lives revolve around a central vision – one that may be very much subconscious, often passively “borrowed” from somebody else, or one that we have actively and intentionally chosen for ourselves. Whether we’ve thought it through to a conscious level or not, we each have a guiding vision which we’ve adopted as our individual “banner,” so to speak, and then represent in the world. This core vision is our fundamental purpose, like a theme that permeates nearly everything we do and underlies nearly everything we create in this world.

Our banners are far more than subconscious programs; and they are not really beliefs as such. They are, instead, our very basic motivators, and they form the foundations of our ethical

ideals. They stand independent of what anyone thinks, what anyone does, or the response of the world. The banner is a statement *to ourselves* of our very purpose in being alive. It is a deeply personal thing and not something we would readily share with others. And yet it weaves like a basic thread in the fabric of our existence – in our “actions that speak louder than words.”

Because our banners are always self-chosen (even when subconscious and borrowed), we are always free to change them. When we know what our vision *is*, we are free to revise it at any time, and thus live our lives with more conscious *intention*.

We’ve just started a brand new year. I’d like to suggest that we all take a moment to ask ourselves, “What are we really here for?” What are we deciding right here and now is our reason for living? And then let’s watch how our worlds reflect back to us the banners that we hold.

Nick lives in Wimberley, Texas, with his wife, Kathleen. He has been an ILM minister since 1989 and is the editor of the ILM newsletter.

A Winter’s Journey

by *Steven R. McAfee*

Out of the woods and across the field,
my footsteps delightfully crunching
atop the icy pristine snow;
Through the awesome stillness,
in solitude I go.

Through the cloudless, star bright night,
air so clear and crisp and cold,
I breathe in precious life, invisible,
and blow it out again.
A shape, white and cloud-like,
a visible, vaporous puff
that hangs suspended,
Searches in space for a moment,
and suddenly is no more.

Far off I can see the light of the hearth at home,
and I hasten towards its warm, inviting door.
There, waiting lovingly to welcome me,
all the sweetest and best in Life:
the family and friends, and the saints I adore.

I will not miss the cold,
but I am forever richer
for having walked upon the snow.
And somewhere in my heart I know
that I but pass through this world of winter
that can be so cold,
In which the greater life lies quietly hidden
deep below.
Richer by far for having been here,
I turn my steps once more towards Home.

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Becoming a Man

by Steven McAfee

When I was a child, I was fortunate to grow up in a home where I was loved, treated kindly, and given many advantages that not all children have. But as I grew, I was exposed to the everyday world of reality outside the safety of my home – a world filled with dangers, injustices, peer pressures, and all sorts of social behaviors I was expected to learn and conform to – one of the seemingly most simple being an image of what it means to be a “big” boy.

“Big boys don’t cry.” Uh oh, I do. What’s wrong with me? I better not let anyone see.

“Big boys aren’t afraid of the dark.” Oh no, I am. Now what? I’ll just pretend that I’m not.

The list, of course, goes on and on, and everyone has heard it. No doubt there is an equally long list for “big” girls. It seems, however, that even such apparently simple and harmless “programming,” received from those we love and who have authority over us, can make a deep and lasting impact on our vision of ourselves. At least it did for me. So, today I found myself wondering what it really means to be “a man,” and I’d like to share some of my thoughts and insights here.

I realized that the “little boy me” is still inside, even though my face in the mirror has changed, and that this is the inner child I really am. But there is another me now, one that started out as “just pretend” but has been with me so long that he even *feels* like me now. This artificial “big boy self” is the one I built to conform to the world in an effort to make *others* happy. The *real* little boy, the one who loved to run and jump and climb trees and play – him I hid away inside, like a favorite rock hidden in an old cigar box under the bed. While I learned to play the “let’s pretend” big boy very well, I always was (and still am) really that *genuine*, playful little boy. The only problem is that, like other things I’ve hidden away, I can’t always remember where I

put it, and I sometimes have trouble *finding* that real self, even when I want to.

So, what I’m coming to understand is that a “real” man is someone who embraces his little boy again – someone who *does* cry sometimes and is not afraid to do so; someone who *is* afraid of the dark sometimes (the one around him *and* the one inside him) and yet isn’t ashamed of his fears any more; and someone who, no matter *how* he feels inside, still chooses to act in the most loving way he can, both to himself and to others.

Through respect for the child in himself and in others, I believe that a real man can now become a genuine, healthy, and helpful role model for younger men – of any age. He can respect and appreciate children, just as he does his own child inside. He can guard and protect *all* those who are hurting, fearful, and still “growing up” towards what they are becoming. He can honor and respect his feminine side, too – the tender, gentle, feeling side that is part of every little boy (and girl).

As we look around at all the other little boys and girls, who also grew up conforming to some image in the world, it’s evident that not many of us will easily share that inner child. Like me, they’ve hidden them in boxes inside, and are sometimes too afraid to show them, or they simply can’t remember where (and who) they are. In “misplacing” those little children, we create an alienation from ourselves and from all others. Is it any wonder we often want to scream in despair, or cry out with loneliness and pain? But being “good” little boys and girls, we usually keep our feelings to ourselves.

But a real man (and a real woman, too) will welcome and respect that crying out, whether from within himself or from another. He (or she) will listen to *every* voice with respect, and strive to be the welcoming arms or protecting cloak that child within is calling for.

Perhaps, then, a real man is only this: a little boy looking for the joyful innocence of being that once was, and still *can* be. We know in our hearts it is rightfully ours, and we, none of us, can truly rest until we reclaim it and make it once again our own. ■

ABOUT ILM

Inner Light Ministries (ILM) is a nonprofit outreach organization founded in the fundamental principles of ancient and esoteric Christianity. It is dedicated to the development and balancing of the fourfold nature of the individual. Towards this end, it provides education and services concerned with the integration of the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical aspects of the self, and with the development of publications and materials that aid in this process.

Among its fundamental tenets is that we really are "temples of the Holy Spirit." As we seek and express this presence within, we find the peace, love, power, and wisdom we all so earnestly desire.

The many services of ILM are geared towards this path of individual unfoldment – through meditation, study, and prayer on an individual and group basis.

Service to humanity and the planet is its second major emphasis, and ILM encourages individual service, in any of a wide variety of possible forms, as a vital aspect of our daily experience.

Please write or phone for
more information.

ILM EVENTS IN THE MIDWEST

ILM minister, Steven McAfee, offers a variety of activities in Fort Wayne, IN, including: Thursday evening spiritual study classes; Sunday morning presentations; and a monthly study group. In addition, Steven offers monthly weekend retreats rotating between Grand Rapids, Chicago, Urbana, and Fort Wayne. For more details, please call:

In Fort Wayne:

Steven (219) 485-2167

Grand Rapids: Faithful Heart
Center (616) 887-7841

Chicago: Loretta Lassandro
(708) 481-7751

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An Open Letter from ILM

Dear Friends:

As a way of focusing our vision of ILM, what it does and whom it represents and serves, we are asking those who are interested to affirm their solidarity with us in our work.

What follows is the official ILM Creed. If you share this vision with us, please sign the form below and allow us to think of you as part of our body of membership. There are no contingencies, requirements, or expectations involved – only the affirmation of our shared vision. *[If you have already submitted this form, there is no need to do so again.]*

INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES CREED

We believe in God (the Father-Mother Creator), in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, who together form the Holy Trinity. We believe that Christ is the consciousness of light and love, and that we can obtain the same awareness of being Christ that Jesus promised in saying, “the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do” (Jn 14:12). We believe that the Holy Spirit is the presence of God, and that through the action of the Holy Spirit, we are lifted up into our own Christ consciousness.

We believe in the ever present grace of God through the uplifting action of the Holy Spirit. We believe that this upliftment is available to all who seek to find it. As it is said in scripture, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Mt 7:7). We believe this is accomplished through meditation, prayer, study, and service.

We believe that through meditation, prayer, study, and service, we open ourselves more each day to the loving light of Christ and the uplifting grace of the Holy Spirit, and we enter into ever greater oneness with God, who dwells within.

Please cut along dotted line

Yes, please consider me a member of ILM: _____
signature

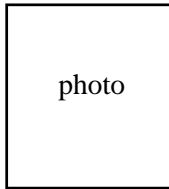
If you would like to remain on our mailing list but *do not* wish to be thought of as a member of ILM, no action is necessary on your part. If for any reason you would prefer to be *removed* from our mailing list altogether, please just let us know by signing below.

Please remove my name from the ILM mailing list: _____

We do our best to keep our mailing list up-dated, and we sincerely apologize for any errors in spelling. Please help us to serve you better by letting us know of any changes or errors. If you are not yet on our mailing list but would like to be, just send us your name and address (printed or typed). There is no charge.

We thank you and bless you!

Please return to: **ILM, Route 4, Box 1685, Wimberley, Texas 78676**



Going for the Cheddar

Laura Kesten-Beaver

I am always amazed when I hear people talk about a decision they made in their early 20's that didn't pan out as they expected, such as a marriage, schooling, a job, or having kids too early. "I just didn't 'know myself' in my 20's," is what I often hear. And my response (although I've always kept quiet up till now) is, "And *now* do you 'know yourself'?" Now that we're in our 30's, 40's, or 50's, do we really have a better idea of who we really are? Or, with all these years of practice, have we just gotten our *routines* down better? After all these years of experience, why then do so many of us still find that our decisions are not panning out as we planned? Have we given in to such clichés as, "That's just the way I am," or, "That's just the way things are"?

Well, consider the mouse who has to find his way through a maze if he wants to get to his destination – the cheese. Before too long, with only a little bit of effort, he zips through the maze and is rewarded with his cheddar. Then one day his master changes the rules and places the cheese on *another* track. The mouse carries on as before, only this time to no avail, and he now has two clear choices: he can either continue on the same track as he always has, hoping and praying that the cheese will be there on arrival; or he could listen to his hunger pangs, realize that the old track takes him to nothing, and use his nose to sniff out a *new* way to his cheese – he could come to his senses (excuse the pun) and decide to scurry along on a different track.

In many ways, life is a similar series of "experiments." We often continue in the same old tracks, which of course usually bring us the same old results. Old patterns die hard, and even though they may not bring us the desired results, these old routines are often both comfortable and familiar. Indeed, after so many years of practice, we do them with great expertise.

There's a saying that goes:

*If you always do what you've always done,
You'll always get what you've always gotten.*

Early in our relationship, my husband once told me that I was comfortable with being uncomfortable. It was hard to take that in at first, but he was right: I had been so used to living my life on the edge of disaster that I'd grown accustomed to all the drama. If there *wasn't* any drama every couple of days or so, then I created it! But I never really *liked* that kind of life, and after sitting a while with what he'd said to me, I made a decision that I was ready for a change.

I wanted my life to be happy, peaceful, and loving. Like the mouse, I was aware of my hunger, and I resolved that I *would* find my cheddar. Of course, all I knew was what I'd always done (and always gotten), so I needed to "sniff out" some new ways to my goals. This effort to change demanded every ounce of energy, every minute of the day, and I was exhausted. Yet I was more determined than I'd ever been in my life, and by "changing tracks," I began to find the results I was seeking.

Several years ago, I was teaching 8th grade science. On the day of a unit test, one of my students came in balancing a book on his head. When I asked him what he was doing, he replied robotically, "Osmosis – volumes of info through osmosis."

The next day, I handed back the graded tests. I gave him his test and waited for his reaction. He looked up at me and just muttered, "Uh-oh," to which I replied, "Guess your osmosis theory didn't work. What's next?"

And he said, "Study."

Bingo! What a *bright* boy. He caught on quickly that if he wanted different and more positive results, he had to change his approach.

Life is "the big maze," and if we want our lives to work for us, we have to be willing to change our tracks in order to get to the cheddar. And when we go for it 100%, the results we *really* want will manifest from our courage and efforts.

Laura is an ILM staff member who resides with her husband, Tom, and daughter, Cally, in Honolulu. A licensed teacher, Laura has a deep commitment to personal growth, and a special interest in women's and children's issues.