

photo

Action/Reaction Another Perspective

by *Jim Gordon*
Founder of ILM

Over these last few months, I've had both the joys and the challenges of overseeing the construction of a new house, and then finally moving into it after a number of unexpected delays. In the process, I have had a chance to observe a wide range of qualities inside myself – some that I really like and some that I really don't. And when some of these qualities have come up, I've found myself thinking, "I already took care of that," or, "I've dealt with that before, and I don't really want to do this any more." And then a little bell goes off, and I remember so many of the people in my counseling sessions and what I've often said to them in similar situations.

So many of us have been working on changing certain patterns of reaction that we've had for many years, and maybe even all our lives. And when we finally learn a lesson and resolve a particular issue that we've been struggling with, we have a tendency to think that we're finished with it now – we've done what we needed to do, learned what we needed to learn, and now we can move on to something else. But oftentimes the situation is a little bit different: we don't really finish a particular lesson, we just take it to another level. Then it comes back to us a little bit differently, and we can either see it and respond to it the way we want to, or we can fall back into an old pattern of reaction that we thought we had outgrown.

So, as I've been watching the construction of my new house, I've been seeing certain qualities come up, and some of them – the irritation, the anger, the worries – are just not the way I really want myself to be. Those old ways of reacting just aren't part of my expression; they're

just not who I am any more.

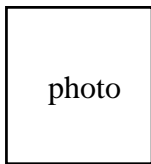
When similar situations and reactions have come up for me in the past, I've had a tendency to put judgments on them, thinking, "I'm done with that. I shouldn't have to deal with this same thing again." But now I find myself thinking, "Okay, here we go," and letting it be almost like a fun game. By taking off the judgments and the charged energy, I find that it makes it a lot easier to move into the situation, to identify what the lesson or challenge is for me, and to decide how I really want to deal with it.

When I started to look at my challenges as "choices-of-action," instead of going into judgment and automatic reaction, I began to see where I could empower myself to take control of the situation, rather than lose control and immediately go back into some of my old patterns. And instead of the lesson coming back to me in some hard and uncomfortable way, I found that the lesson and a pathway of action became laid out clearly and smoothly before me. I also found that, in this way, I could actually move beyond the challenges much more quickly than if I resisted the "game" and put judgments on myself or the experience.

So, with all the ups and downs of building a house and moving again, I've reminded myself of what I've so often told others: when we've grasped a certain lesson or resolved a certain challenge, we shouldn't think we're necessarily done with it and that that's all there is. Instead, we can expect that other parts of it are going to come up, and we'll have to deal with those parts as well. And if we can do it with a sense of acceptance, openness, and even joy, it will make it so much easier. ■

Jim Gordon has a new address:

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All the Comforts of Home

by Steven McAfee

As I write this article to all of you who read our newsletter, I am sitting in front of a cozy fire, nestled safely in the quiet comfort of the family room in our new home. It is difficult to feel troubled here, listening contentedly to the crackling of the flames, surrounded by the love our family has created together. I am protected from the cold of the winter snows that lie in drifts outside our windows and doors. Although this is technically the family room, our kids call it the *fireplace* room, and at this moment, I can understand why. This spot is a very special place for me, a place where I enjoy what C. S. Lewis called an “inn of comfort along the way home.”

Today I am awestruck by how blessed I am to have this family: my new wife, Anita, and daughters, Sarah and Lisa; and my sons, Shawn and Justin. The blending of our two families into one, since our marriage in this very room on Thanksgiving Day, has been miraculous and restorative and joyful. And beyond our personal happiness, I am finding a deeper awareness of what a home really is, and how vitally important a home can be to the well-being of the human heart.

A home is a place where love lives – not just in a moment or on a special occasion, but every day, moment by moment, breath by breath. It is a place that we can count on to be safe and

supportive, a place where we are free to express who we are and what we are thinking and feeling, a place where we are truly cared for throughout both the triumphs and the tragedies of our lives.

Home is the “witness” to heaven – a place on earth where we can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell the nature of love (there are freshly baked cookies in the kitchen, whose fragrance is softly calling out my name). Home is where we can know through personal experience that love is real, and that it is deeper and more enduring than any trouble which may threaten to overwhelm us. In our family, each of us is learning to be an “inn” for each other, and it is a challenging and wonderful process.

In the presence of this kind of love, it may be hard to believe that an even greater love exists. And yet beyond even the magnificence of a truly loving family on earth is the promise of our eternal home in God – a home not built by human hands, a home untouched by the ravages of time and space, a home in which we discover, often to our amazement, that we are not only loved just as we are, but that we are, in reality, that very love itself.

Until, through the grace of God, we come to establish ourselves in that divine state of heavenly consciousness, let us recognize, honor, and promote the blessings that families can be. And whether we are single individuals, single parents, couples without children, or couples with children, let us practice building homes – places in the world where love really lives, inns of comfort on our journeys Home. ■

INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES PRESENTS A WOMAN'S WORKSHOP

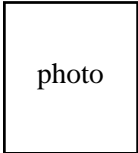
A CIRCLE OF WOMEN

with Laura Kesten-Beaver, Facilitator

Spend a day in the country in a nurturing, female environment. Through ceremony, meditation, writing, and nature, you will experience yourself with new depth, appreciation, and love as we focus in the heart of woman. Join us in the celebration of woman spirit.

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For details, please call Laura at (512) 894-0992.



Labor of Love

by *Nicholas Martin*

As a recent father, people are often asking me what being a dad is like for me. Beyond a vague, though truthful, “Wonderful,” it’s a hard question to answer, mostly because the experience seems to touch me on so many levels. I’m reminded of a greeting card that says, “Some of our deepest feelings are the hardest to express.”

One constant aspect of my experience as a new parent has to do with some of the many ways in which our parenting seems to mirror God’s parenting of us: when we cry, He hears us; when we are in need, He comes to our aid; no matter what we do, we are loved and forgiven – there is no such thing as a judgment or barrier from God.

As new parents (generally speaking), I believe that we offer a reflection of this spirit of loving in the attention, compassion, respect, and service we offer to our babies: no matter what they do, we love and serve them; forgiveness need never be asked, it simply is; and all we seem to ask in return is for their health and happiness. A simple smile is reward enough; in fact, it is a precious gift. And we feel grateful for the opportunity just to share our lives with them. Isn’t it possible that, in a similar way, our health and happiness is God’s greatest desire for us, and that our true joy is a joy to Him as well? This spirit of service that being a new parent calls forth in us just seems to flow so effortlessly, so willingly, so joyously. Truly it is a labor of love.

And what really is a “labor of love”? In my experience, when we use the term, we are often referring to a sacrifice, a toil, or a burden that, out of love (or what we think of as love), we are willing to hoist upon our weary shoulders and to suffer in silence. But what I am learning now as I willingly, and even joyously, change a dirty diaper or get up in the night to rock my crying baby, is that a true labor of love is not at all one of toil and burden. Yes, it may involve sacrifice

(of time to ourselves, of sleep, of finances). Yes, it may involve labor, in the sense of an expenditure of effort. But what makes a labor of love what it really is, is that it bears with it that quality of willingness, loving, and joy. The emphasis is on the *love* and not the labor, and in this way alone does it truly convey the real spirit of service. And I find myself wondering, “What if all of our work was a labor of love?”

I believe God has given us this nearly universal experience of being a new parent so that we might have an opportunity to see what His relationship to us always is, and what our relationships with one another can potentially be. In some ways, it seems to parallel the falling in love experience, where the universe gives us an opportunity to experience unconditional loving – perhaps not as something to last forever so much as something to show us what is possible, what we can work towards, what *would* be if the loving spirit within us were never obstructed. I think it’s just possible that the joyous service we so naturally and willingly offer to newborn babies is potentially the spirit we can take to our workplace, to our friendships, to our marriages, to all of our daily affairs. I feel very certain that Jesus did, and that the ability to make each of our labors a labor of love is a hallmark of real enlightenment. I suspect that this was part of what Jesus meant when he urged us to love one another “as I have loved you.” ■

Nick lives in Wimberley, Texas, with his wife, Kathleen, and daughter, Miya. An ILM minister since 1989, he is the editor of the ILM newsletter.

THE ILM NEWSLETTER IS AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE

If you would like any of the following back issues, please let us know:

- 1990: January, June, October
- 1991: June, October
- 1992: January, June, November
- 1993: January, May, September
- 1994: January, April, August, November

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.

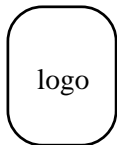
Service to humanity and the planet is its second major emphasis, and ILM encourages individual service, in any of a wide variety of possible forms, as a vital aspect of our daily experience. Please write or phone for more information.

When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams....Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Staff of the Shepherd by Jim Gordon

A new ILM publication focusing on the human journey through life and the many helpers who assist us on our way. 158 pages, soft cover. \$6 plus \$3 shipping.



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Happy New Year!

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A Real Family Reunion

Laura Kesten-Beaver

This past Christmas, I had a reunion with my mother. By my own choice, I hadn't seen her in seven years.

Christmas traditionally is a time for family reunions. For many of us, however, these reunions are out of obligation – a sense of “have to” instead of “want to.” We feel it is our duty to show up during the holidays, and yet these get-togethers are often stressful. Old and sometimes painful family patterns are acted out, and when we part, we feel a sense of relief. Why are some family reunions so painful? There must be some lessons in there somewhere.

My own family consisted of my mother and my three older sisters. Like so many families of the 50's and 60's, we upheld the pretense that we were an all-American, happy, “The Waltons” type family. We learned to keep our feelings, especially any painful feelings, to ourselves and to hide what was really going on inside us. We also learned that family matters should stay within the family and that nobody else needs to know our business. This kept us isolated from sharing our real selves with anyone outside the family as well. We pretended to be something we were not – a happy, healthy, loving family. These were the “rules” of our family, and this was how I learned to “do” relationships.

With the birth of my daughter eight years ago, I decided that I wanted something better with her. I wanted a relationship in which we could feel safe to be open and honest with each other, a relationship that allowed us to feel our greatest joys and our deepest hurts, a relationship that allowed for truth, acceptance, support, and growth. I had become ready for relationships that were based on different rules.

Well, my new approach didn't seem to work with my mother and sisters, and I was unwilling to continue pretending that everything was always okay. Unable to play by the old rules any more, I divorced myself from my family.

Seven years have passed now, and I have created many new relationships based on openness and honesty, without secrets and pretenses. And I felt strong enough in this new way of relating to try again with my mother.

So, this Christmas, when families everywhere got together, my mother and I met with openness and honesty. We talked for several hours. And much to my happy surprise, when I acknowledged the pain and suffering in our family, she was also able to acknowledge the hurts and the hardships my sisters and I had gone through in our childhoods. It was not easy for her. We cried and held each other, and she told me she understood why I had left the family for so long, and she said, “But now we have each other again and we have a fresh start.” And then she said, “Merry Christmas.”

It is my experience that when we make a commitment to ourselves to only bring openness and honesty into our relationships, we will then feel a certain joy within ourselves. And we will help to create a space for others to feel safe to be open and honest with us. Oftentimes, when family reunions are painful, it is because we feel unsafe to be ourselves. We hook into playing out old and familiar family patterns, and find ourselves being dishonest with people we love. Perhaps our only “obligation” to the family is to uphold openness and honesty and play with rules by which everyone can win. ■

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

MEMBERSHIP IN INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES

Becoming a member of Inner Light Ministries is a matter of affirming your solidarity with us in a shared spiritual vision as stated in the ILM Creed below. There are no contingencies, requirements, or expectations involved. If you would like to be thought of as a member of ILM, please sign below. (If you have already signed a statement of membership, there is no need to do so again.)

Please consider me a member of Inner Light Ministries:

Signature: _____

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THE 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.

THE INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES MAILING LIST

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Please note that being on the ILM mailing list is not by itself an indication of membership in ILM. There is no charge to be on the mailing list, and ILM does not rent or sell its list. If at any time you would like to be removed from the list, please just let us know.

Please return to: **ILM, 111 Lighted Way, Wimberley, Texas 78676**