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Taking It Step By Step

by Jim Gordon
President of ILM

In the last few weeks, a number of people have asked me about supposedly upcoming “earth changes” – planetary events, like earthquakes and disasters, that have been predicted. These prophecies are often stimulating people in their fear patterns, leading them to ask questions such as what’s going to happen, where’s the best place to live, what do I do so as not to go through this, or what do I do to help the world go through it. And my response has been to encourage them to see that focusing on tomorrow and the fears of “what if” isn’t really assisting them in their lives today. Instead, what’s most important is that we maintain a focus on our own spiritual process and the steps that are right in front of us today. When we do that with full responsibility, then whatever comes up in the future we will also be able to handle with greater responsibility. So, what’s important is just to take care of the things right in front of us, because that’s where our lessons are, and it is whatever is right in front of us that eases the pathway when tomorrow comes. What’s happening in our lives right now may seem unimportant and not really relevant, but later we’ll see how it all fits together. Ultimately we will see that by taking care of today, we are building a good support to stand on in the future.

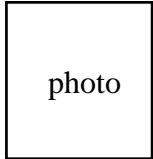
A long time ago, a teacher on the inner levels taught me to focus on “one day at a time, one breath at a time.” In other words, to focus on right now. It is only when we do that that we are really able to fulfill and to complete. If we’re focused on our tomorrows, we’re not going to get much completed right now, and tomorrows never get completed that way, either.

What is also very important to realize is that whenever we live in fear, then what we promote

in our future is fear, and we promote exactly what we fear will happen. In the Bible, it says, “What I feared has come upon me” (Job 3:25), and those who are holding these fears of changes are actually promoting them by holding for the energy to come about. Instead, it would be better to hold for healing, forgiveness, loving, and peace, and for participation and wholeness, as opposed to separation and disturbance. And the easiest way to do this is to bring about a state of peace within ourselves. As we focus on forgiveness, oneness, and peace inside ourselves, the same energy goes out into the world and affects others.

In 1987, I had the opportunity to be part of a group that met with the Dalai Lama in India. While we were there, he said, “So many people are calling out for peace in the world, but what I would like for them to know is that, if they want peace in the world, they must first find peace within themselves. So, one thing I would like for you to do when you leave here, if nothing else, is to go out and ask people to focus on peace and on loving, and on forgiveness. If I tell people to focus on peace, they think, ‘Well, that’s just what he’s *supposed* to tell us.’ But if you, as individuals in your everyday lives, go out in the world and say, ‘Let’s focus on peace,’ they’ll hear you more than they’ll hear me, because in their eyes you’re more a part of their lives and equal to them. They see me as separate and above them, and therefore they take what I say in a different way and act upon it differently. So, I want you to go out and ask people to live from their place of peace, to live from their place of loving, and to go into the world with a sense of forgiveness.”

There are no unimportant events in our lives. There are no unimportant actions in our lives. They are all leading us to the next and then the next, and if we don’t take care of that which is right in front of us, whatever is next after that will also be left unnurtured and incomplete, and the pathway will not be built upon the way it could be if we just take it step by step. ■



Seeking the Light

by Steven McAfee
ILM Midwest Coordinator

When asked to describe the kingdom of heaven, Jesus often answered with a parable. In contemplating the many stages of our great spiritual journey toward the Light, an understanding began to unfold within me in a similar form.

Imagine with me for a moment a great, radiant sun – one that shines every day in both “good” and “bad” weather. Clouds do not limit the sun’s brilliant radiance; they only temporarily limit our vision of it from below.

Imagine now that this same sun shines down on a calm, beautiful lake, and a nearly perfect image is reflected on the still surface of its waters. This image is then again reflected on the shiny, polished side of a marble temple near the lake. The sun can now be seen on the side of the temple, although its image here is not so clear, nor quite so lifelike, as the image upon the lake. Near this temple, a large mirror has been placed against a tree. The mirror catches the image from the side of the temple; and the temple, the lake, and the sun are all reflected in the mirror.

Now, along comes a seeker of light, who is astonished to behold the images in the mirror. Excited, he believes that the mirror is the source of the light. But no matter how he tries, he cannot actually touch or be touched by this mysterious light in the mirror. It remains forever distant and separate from him. And should the mirror become cracked or broken, the sunlight appears fragmented and no longer whole.

Then, someone comes along and offers him a higher vision by turning him toward the side of the temple. The seeker is bewildered at first when he realizes that this is the *real* temple, whereas the image in the mirror was only a copy. He now understands that the temple, not the mirror, was the source of the light he has seen. He can even feel the warmth of the light when he touches the temple wall. Yet, again, this light

remains somehow distant and elusive, no matter how hard he tries to grasp it.

Eventually, it dawns on the seeker that, while the temple is real, the image upon it is but another reflection. And so he sets off in search of its origin, and discovers the vastness and beauty of the lake. Here at last, he believes, is the true source of the light, appearing to arise from somewhere within the unfathomable and mysterious depths of the water. He becomes lost in wonder.

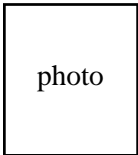
But at the very moment that the seeker reaches out to touch that light, the image disappears amid a flurry of ripples. Countless new reflections now appear within the waves, until the original is lost amid its replicas. In desperation, the seeker begins to grab at the waves, only to find that the more desperate his efforts, the more turbulent the waters become, and the more the light eludes him.

But if the seeker persists, and if his longing is genuine, one day someone comes along who is a *finder* of light. In his compassion, the finder points up to reveal the real light; and the seeker, though momentarily blinded by its brilliant power and majesty, at last sees the light of the sun itself in the sky.

In this moment, the seeker finds what he’s been looking for: he directly beholds that which he has sought for so long, and feels its warm embrace all around him. He can now touch and be touched by the light. He begins to understand that this same light *is* present everywhere – in the lake, in the temple, in the mirror – and yet can be found in none of them. It is reflected in everything but has only one true point of origin.

So it is in our search for the Light of God: we seek His face in an endless array of captivating reflections, and long for the day when we shall see face to face the grandeur and wonder of His Light as our origin and as our true, unfailing Source.

Editor’s note: *Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.* (1 Cor 13:12)



Still Wet Behind the Ears

by *Nicholas Martin*

In the weeks before a newsletter comes out, I often find myself pondering a particular issue or theme. It's as though a new chapter opens for me with the printing of one newsletter and continues to the printing of the next. And the theme that has been "calling" to me lately has to do with the nature of "wet behind the ears," and the possibility that this is in some ways true for us all.

As many of you know, I became a father for the first time just six months ago. And I've been having the opportunity to watch as our baby goes through her earliest stages of development. I was there at the moment of her birth and have been with her since she was literally "still wet behind the ears." And I've been watching her grow and change with remarkable speed as she moves from one set of challenges to the next. And here's the kind of thought that keeps coming to me: first she had to learn how to nurse, then how to drink from a bottle. Recently she learned how to roll over. Now she's working on how to sit up. Soon she will learn how to walk. When she's ready, she will learn how to talk. And some day she will learn how to write, to jump rope, and to ride a bike; and then to understand a foreign language, to handle rejection, to cope with injustice, to find inner peace, to deal with death, to be a mother herself, to find meaning and Truth.... It doesn't ever stop; it just moves from one set of lessons to the next.

The other day, I noticed a sign on the window of a bookstore, and it said something to the effect of, "No man knows what he truly believes until he begins to instruct his children." And it's like the universe is saying to me, "Don't you see – there is no end to learning. There is no 'better than' or 'more important than' or 'more adult' or 'more childish than.' It's just a multitude of souls attracting, embracing, and advancing through

their own next and rightful lessons."

I can do that (drink from a sippy cup) only because I attracted, embraced, and progressed through that lesson once; and I can do that (stand unassisted) because I attracted, embraced, and progressed through that lesson, too. And I'm pretty good at dealing with injustice (some forms at least), and I'm so-so at dealing with rejection. And death – well, that's a challenge at the best of times. So, I guess I'm still attracting, embracing, and progressing through those lessons, and no doubt others, too.

Now that we're "adults," how much do we really know? Aren't we all still moving into and embracing whatever lessons are next before us – building a business, coping with loss, learning to love.... Who among us isn't just embracing our very next lessons at the level of our present development? And through them, we all move on to whatever is next.

People often say that our daughter looks a lot like her daddy. Maybe her daddy looks a lot like his child.

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.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

An ILM Week-end Retreat

*with Jim Gordon, Steven McAfee
and Nick Martin*

September 8-10, 1995

Camp Mack, Milford, Indiana

(an hour northwest of Fort Wayne)

*Watch for details in our
next newsletter.*

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.

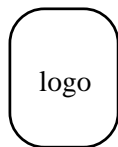
Among its fundamental tenets is that we really are “temples of the Holy Spirit.” As we seek and express this presence within, we find the peace, love, power, and wisdom we all so earnestly desire. The many services of ILM are geared towards this path of individual unfoldment – through meditation, study, 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.

The Staff of the Shepherd by Jim Gordon

An 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.

A special “thank you” to those who have sent in membership forms or changes of address. We sincerely appreciate it!

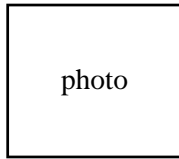


INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES **Editorial and Publishing Office**

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Wimberley, Texas 78676
Phone: (512) 847-5033

Forwarding and Return Postage Guaranteed
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
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A Circle of Women

Laura Kesten-Beaver
ILM Minister

A few years ago, a friend of mine placed in my hands a book written for women entitled *A Circle of Stones*, by Judith Duerk. I opened the book at random and read this passage:

How might your life have been different if there had been a place for you? A place for you to go . . . a place of women, to help you learn the ways of woman . . . a place where you were nurtured from an ancient flow sustaining you and steadying you as you sought to become yourself.

As I read this passage, I remember feeling like I was bursting with excitement, as if something old and familiar had just been awakened inside me. After reading the book, I had dreams at night about creating circles of women so that I and other women could receive what we might not have received as children or as young women – a sense of belonging within a gathering of women, where an “ancient flow” would bond us together and sustain us. I knew that I wanted to surround myself with this kind of feminine energy which supports, nurtures, and renews, and is in balance and harmony with Mother Earth.

So I began to learn more about the Native American Indians and their Women’s Circles. I learned that Circles of Women were formed to celebrate woman spirit, through storytelling, dancing, singing, and meditation. These rituals allowed the women to focus inwardly and experience balance and harmony, and the connectedness between themselves, each other, and Mother Earth. Then, in January and March of this year, I facilitated two Circles of Women. They were magical experiences, and I would like to share a little about them.

In our Circles, we are learning to listen – to

the chatter inside our heads, to our own heartbeats, to the inner silence, and to nature’s song. We listen to words in poems, stories, and songs. We listen to each other’s stories. We reclaim our own voice and learn that it is okay to speak our truth. We are learning to give to ourselves – to value our own stories, thoughts, and feelings – and we are learning to feel worthy of this time.

In our Circles, we are putting aside our women’s roles as care givers. These circles provide rich opportunities for women to *receive* – and to learn to do so without guilt. As one example, a meal is provided for the women in which they come to the table and all the food is prepared for them – just for them. The table is set, the candles are lit, the fresh bread is still warm from the oven. This gift to them does not go unnoticed and is taken with much gratefulness and tenderness.

In our Circles, we also receive from Mother Earth. We practice some of the Native American rituals of dancing, singing, and meditation as ways to reconnect with the Great Mother. Through these rituals, we find that we begin to resonate with a power far greater than anything we can experience by ourselves – the power of the Great Mother, who nurtures us, cradles us, gives us the air we need to breathe, and provides us with the food we need to nourish our bodies.

Just as a circle continues, I will continue to facilitate Circles of Women – the Circle here in Austin, Texas, will continue to meet, and we will soon start a Girl’s Circle for mothers and their daughters. Circles will also be started this summer in Michigan and Indiana.

As a prayer of affirmation we use reads, “A Circle has no beginning and has no end. It is continuous. It must be in constant harmony with itself to keep its form. We are a Circle of Women joining together for strength and support in search of our womanness, and to reconnect with woman spirit in a way which our ancient ancestors knew so well.” ■

Some of Jim's Favorite Quotes

If we could hold our attention in the eye focus, our attention would then be able to grasp the Truth which is vibrating within us and is self luminous and audible as Sound Current. So long as the attention is scattered in the body or out of the body in the world outside, our face is turned away from Truth.

Sawan Singh
from *Glimpses of the Great Master*

You can say, "I am doing the meditation," provided you are doing it. But when you really do it, then you won't say, "I am doing it." "I" only comes when we don't do it. When we truly meditate, then "I" just disappears. Then we realize His grace.

Charan Singh
from *Words Eternal*

It is true that slow and steady wins the race. How many times do we stumble and fall when we learn to walk. But as we grow older we forget the struggles and enjoy the performance. So it is with spiritual work.

Charan Singh
from *Words Eternal*

You have had the experience of being in love and having a warm, special feeling for another human being. Use that quality of loving to enhance your spiritual practices. Meditate upon the Spirit of God as though you were going to see your sweetheart, your lover, in the next two or three minutes. You know what that feeling is. Use it as a springboard to connect you with your love for God. Place that feeling of love and devotion inside you; then meditate upon God.

John-Roger
from *Walking with the Lord*

INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES PRESENTS A WOMAN'S WORKSHOP

A CIRCLE OF WOMEN

Facilitator: Laura Kesten-Beaver

Spend a day in a supportive, nurturing, female environment. Through ceremony, meditation, writing, and being with nature, we will experience a deeper understanding and a more loving appreciation of ourselves as women. Join us in the celebration of woman spirit.

Fort Wayne, Indiana Saturday, July 8, 1995 8:30 am – 7 pm \$25

Contact: Brenda Fishbaugh (219) 749-5062

Kalamazoo, Michigan Saturday, July 29, 1995 8:30 am – 8:30 pm \$25

Contact: Carolyn Dailey (616) 327-6851 home, 375-2000 work