

photo  
#1

## Discovering Your Greater Mission

by Jim Gordon  
ILM Founder & President

In discussions I've been having with people lately, it seems that many of us struggle with the issue of our real mission in life. And this issue often seems particularly challenging when we must also consider our responsibilities to our partnerships, marriages, or family relationships.

For most of us who are in relationships and/or who have families, it seems that we are usually, at least at first, very focused on our partners and/or families. For a while, this seems to be our main focus, and an area in which we feel a real sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. With time, however, something seems to shift, and we sometimes begin to look for something more, something greater; and we don't seem to find that same fulfillment in the relationship or the family any more. And so we begin to feel disheartened or disillusioned, thinking that there must be something more for us to be doing. On some level, we have a sense of some greater mission that we're supposed to be performing in the world, but we just can't get clear on what that greater mission really is.

What I have come to believe is that for many, if not all of us, the "greater mission" is often sitting right across the table from us, or living under the same roof, although we may not see it because it's not a mission we've envisioned and it doesn't seem to have the "greatness" that we think a real mission should have. And yet, the very greatest mission that any of us can have is the sharing of our own loving, our own caring, and our own nurturing with those of the same household. If we can be loving and caring with ourselves, and then with our partners and children as well, we have fulfilled one of the greatest

missions we have come to do in this world. And as we hold to this loving of ourselves and our family members, we actually begin to live the mission we came into this world to do: to learn how to live in the spirit of loving. As we begin to do this, we then just naturally begin to expand our circle and take our loving out into the world.

A lot of times, when we have that sense that there is something greater than what's right in front of us, we are missing the lessons and the opportunities we've been given. Throughout our lives, God gives us opportunities. As we fulfill those opportunities, He then gives us new ones. No opportunity is really greater or lesser than another, even though the world may tend to measure them that way. Instead, each opportunity is just the next step forward on the path of our growth, the path of coming into the fullness of who we truly are in God. And so we need to look and see the opportunities that are right in front of us now, today, and make *them* the important thing in our lives to do, to fulfill, and to come into the greater knowing of. As we do that each day with awareness, with intention, and with loving, we'll find that new opportunities will come our way, and that each new opportunity will expand us in ourselves and also expand our sharing in the world. We'll just naturally move from one great mission to the next. Before long, we will come to see that life itself is the mission: to come into the world and live life, and learn from life, and share what we have learned back into life. That is the truly great and wondrous mission we have all come here to fulfill. ■

### A FAMILY PRAYER

by Steven McAfee

*Lord, bless, guide, and protect this family.  
Allow it to grow and to blossom, and to bless  
each life it touches. Grant me Thy grace  
that I may do my part faithfully, in joyful  
harmony with Thy sweet will.*

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#2

## Unto You a Child Is Born

by Steven McAfee  
ILM's Midwest Coordinator

No, this is not a Christmas message, but isn't it fascinating that we associate it with one? How many children were born into the world today? How many parents wept tears of joy over the miracle of giving life? And yet, how many of these children do we treat as the divine souls they really are?

A living, breathing soul, a direct emanation of God, is given at birth into the care and keeping of its earthly parents. Throughout the years, the child will grow, will become an adult, and will begin the circle of life all over again. The span of time in which the soul is in the home of its parents is brief, and it passes before we realize what has happened. About the time our children learn to be quiet, learn to take care of themselves, and learn to pick up after themselves, they move out and are gone, and our home is all *too* quiet.

What do we do with them while they're in our hands? How do we treat them? Every day we are overwhelmed by the challenges of mortgage payments, checkbooks that don't balance, too many people wanting too many things from us in too little time, too many desires for what we do not have in life, and too many regrets over what has been or never been. And yet, every day of our lives together, we are also presented opportunities to teach our children what we know of life – how to solve problems, how to handle feelings, how to be a loving person, how to stay close to God. In the midst of all our commotion, do we lose sight of who our children are? Have we become beasts of burden, wearily carrying out our duty to care for their bodies while neglecting their souls?

It is the soul in each of us that loves, feels love, seeks love, and *is* love. It is the souls in our children that reach out for meaning and direction in this often harsh and hardened world. But do

we remember that inner presence of love in our everyday encounters with them? Do we respond to them with the priority and tenderness they deserve? Or are we prone to forsake and neglect the essentials, for the more pressing demands of what is, in reality, inconsequential? "We'll play tomorrow....Later, I'll look at your drawing.... We'll talk about that in the morning...." In other words, "When we're not so busy doing something more important, we will give you our time and attention."

None of us is perfect in rearing our children, nor must we expect ourselves to be. Perhaps the gift that has really been given us is the adventure of learning *together*. Perhaps it is not so important that we make all the right decisions, or that we always know what needs to be done. Perhaps what is far more vital is that we willingly give our attention to our children while they still yearn for it. Our attention is a gift we can give or withhold. Empty actions are empty of what a child seeks the most – the feeling of love and importance. It is not enough to take care *of* our children; we must care *for* our children.

One day I was working on some important paperwork at my home, when one of my sons came up and asked me to play. I told him he would have to wait until I was finished. He patiently consented. A while later, he returned, again asking me to play. This time, I spoke to him more sharply, "You'll just have to wait. I'm doing something important right now!" He turned away sadly, and I went back to my notes on the retreat I was preparing. It was on teaching people how to be more kind and loving. I set the papers aside and went out to play with my son.

I believe it is time we begin to look seriously at how to incorporate our spiritual values and principles into our family lives, so that the family may become a safe haven for each soul embodied there – a place of learning and wonder, a place where spirituality isn't just taught but lived. Every child brings God's spirit to this world. We are the world that awaits their arrival. Unto you a child *is* born, and with it the promise of all that can be. ■

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#3

## Holding Hands

by *Laura Kesten-Beaver*

This summer, my family and I moved from Hawaii to Texas. After leaving Hawaii, my daughter and I spent six weeks in Michigan, and then drove the three-day trip from there to Texas. Our first overnight stop was in Illinois, and that night, at bedtime, my daughter became very upset. She said she wanted to go back to Hawaii, and she felt very strongly that she did not want to move to Texas. She was unable to give reason to her feelings; she only knew she felt awful.

I felt that I needed to do something to give her reassurance and clarity, but as we parents know, there is no manual to tell us how to guide our children through every difficult situation. So, relying on my intuition, I asked her to close her eyes and imagine having two pieces of paper in front of her. I asked her to imagine herself in Hawaii – her room, her favorite doll, her bed, the kitchen, the ocean, and so forth. Then I asked if she could draw these things on one of the pieces of paper, and she replied that she could.

Then I suggested she imagine her house in Texas – where her room was, the kitchen, her favorite things, and so on – and I asked if she could draw this on the second piece of paper. And her reply was, “No.”

When I asked her, “Why not?” she said that she didn’t even know what the house in Texas looked like because she had never seen it.

I said, “Now, keeping your eyes closed, imagine two fresh pieces of paper in front of you. Draw a picture of your school in Hawaii, your teacher, all your friends. Can you do that?”

“Yes,” she said, and the tears came fast.

I said, “Now draw your school and your new friends in Texas. Can you do that?”

She began to cry even harder, and she threw her arms around me sobbing, “No.”

“Well, why not?” I asked.

And she said, “Because I don’t know what they look like.”

I rocked her back and forth and said, “Of course you don’t know. You don’t know where your room is, or who your new friends are, or if you’ll feel safe. You have no idea what to expect. So being scared is okay – it fits this situation perfectly. And I promise you that your dad and I will hold your hand and take every step with you in your new surroundings.” As I assured her that she would not have to fare alone, her cries became softer, and she drifted off to sleep.

The next morning, I sat on her bed when she awoke, and I asked her, “Well, do we drive to Hawaii or Texas?” She grinned, knowing that you can’t *drive* to Hawaii, and she said, “I guess I’ll try Texas.”

Transition is a time of unknowns, uncertainties, and discomfort. We often become stressed and may want to return to what is familiar. It is appropriate to feel afraid during this time, since we don’t know what God may have in store for us, and His plan for us may be completely different from what we might have hoped for. However, we can also use transition as a time for reflection – and for faith. It is a time when we must try to still our minds, be quiet within, and trust that God knows what is best for us and that He will guide us each step of the way.

As in the example of my daughter, who felt relief after being reassured that her dad and I would hold her hand through all her transitions, we can find comfort in knowing that God is willing to take our hands and walk with us each day, taking every step together with us. He will not leave us unattended.

We must have faith and trust in the Lord that He will guide us in our lives in the way which is best for us, remembering that only He really knows what is truly best for us. ■

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*Laura is an ILM staff member with a professional background in education and a special interest in women’s and children’s issues. She now resides in Austin, Texas, with her daughter, Cally, and her husband, Tom.*

# AWAKENING TO YOUR INNER LIGHT

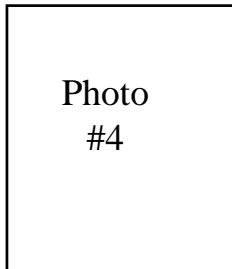


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**AN ILM FALL RETREAT**

**OCTOBER 14-16, 1994**

Camp Mack, Milford, Indiana



Photo  
#5

a pleasantly intensive,  
experiential weekend

**with Jim Gordon and Steven McAfee**

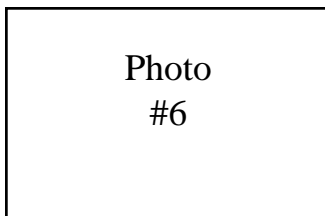


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\$125 per person  
covers meals, lodging,  
and activities.

Details will soon be  
sent to all those on the  
ILM mailing list.

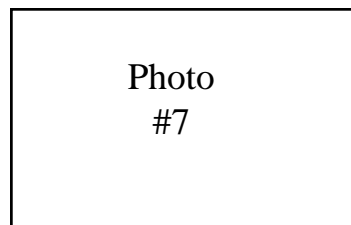
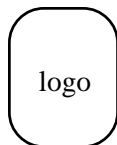


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(photos are from last year's Camp Mack retreat)



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