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Quick Links

[Current Bulletin](#)

[CwG Homepage](#)

[Life Education Program](#)

[CwG Online Store](#)

[Last Weeks Bulletin](#)

In This Issue

[A Time of Gratitude](#)

[An Invitation](#)

[Thanksgiving](#)

[Neale Talks About
"Doomsday
Predictions"](#)

[Our Beloved Poet](#)

[A Recipe for Happy
Holidays](#)

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A Time of Gratitude



As far as I know, Thanksgiving, as a special time of the year, is strictly an American tradition. However, the giving of thanks, the feeling of gratitude is shared universally... although perhaps not as frequently as would be in our best interests. After all, the "Attitude of Gratitude" is a wonderful feeling and can be applied to almost every life situation.

Unfortunately, we tend to concentrate our thoughts on the negative events and things in our lives, often overlooking the many things we have to be thankful for... is our cup half full, or half empty? It is our thoughts about what is going on in our lives that determine our moods. Do you prefer feeling upset about something, or can you look deeper and find something about that particular circumstance to be grateful for? Do you bemoan the fact that you can't walk as easily as you used to, or do you celebrate the fact that you can walk at all? Someone you love just died... do you mourn your loss or remember all the good times and feel happy that this person was in your life?

There is always something to feel grateful for, if you will really look for it. Change your focus, and you will find your life changing and bringing you even more things to feel good about. Try deliberately concentrating on the things that please you, rather than those that stir your feelings of anger or remorse. You may be surprised at the results.

~ Rose

An Invitation

To make next week's Thanksgiving edition of our bulletin very special I'd like to invite you, readers and friends, to send me snippets of ideas, or short (very brief) stories of thanksgiving and gratitude. Then next week, we'll share those here in the bulletin.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to our efforts.

Thanksgiving

are saying

"This retreat has been the most marvellous experience of my 72 years of life and for certain the best investment I have ever made."

~Mary Mumford

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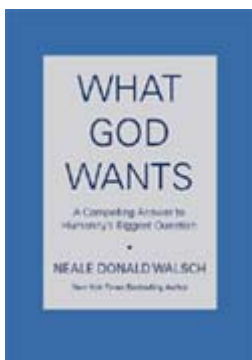
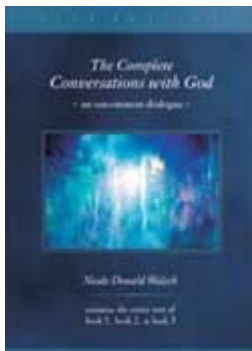
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by Bonnie Starr
Mandell-Rice - LEP
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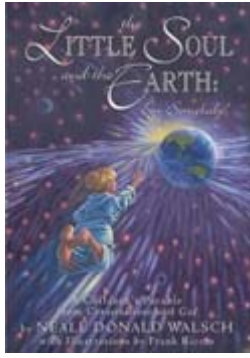
There is an old Buddhist story about a monk and a fool. The monk had spent many years meditating, doing all the practices, and

living an ascetic life. The fool was, well, a fool, a very simple man. Both yearned to be enlightened and to experience their oneness with God. One day the monk, despairing and weary of all the effort, cried out to God: "Oh, God, when will I be enlightened and at one with you?" God answered him: "A thousand more lifetimes." The monk groaned, "Oh, no! I have worked so hard for so many years. I can't believe I have to endure another thousand lifetimes." He sobbed and went away. The fool, who was happily splashing in the river, called out to God: "God, how much longer until I am enlightened and at one with you?" God answered: "Ten thousand lifetimes." The fool replied joyously, "Oh! Only ten thousand lifetimes! Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you God!" Instantly, the fool was enlightened and entered into union with the Divine.

I love this story for it points out two essential truths: what we are (being) is of paramount importance, and gratitude and joy in the face of what is or is not happening or present in our lives in any moment will most quickly align us with our good, with our heart's desire.

Many of us have, and do, a variety of practices from prayer to meditation, from saying the Rosary to chanting, from going to church to going to yoga class (or both and more). Like the monk who did his practices to become enlightened and at one with God, we do our practices for similar purposes. If not for enlightenment and Divine union, we do the practice for the purpose of aiding us in becoming (as if we were not already) and experiencing some particular attitude, expression or quality of God, such as love, peace, or joy. Whatever we do, however, is informed by what we are being, what we are feeling, in the moment of our doing.

If you are doing something only in order to get something or somewhere, and your attitude is one of "I have to do this to get that," or "I should do this to get that," then where is your heart? If your heart - your love, your gratitude, your joy - is not in your practice, then like the monk, your practice and your life will reflect that: there will be impatience and ingratitude, unhappiness and suffering. On the other hand, even if you are doing something to get something or somewhere (forgetting that there is no where to go because there is only, as Neale Donald Walsch so beautifully pointed out in *Conversations with God, Now Here - the present moment*), if you do it as the fool did, with love, joy and thanksgiving in your heart, your life and your practice will reflect that.



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This is true in every moment of our lives, not just in those in which we are "doing a practice." For you see, in truth, all life is a practice - we are exercising our God muscles, practicing to be God in expression, since we are vehicles through which God expresses. All life is (or can be) a meditation and, as in meditation, there are moments where we bring all our focus and love (which is another name for God) to it and we experience the bliss of the moment. We have all had these experiences: the sunset that stops us in our tracks and fills us with awe; the look from a loved one that takes our breath away; the gurgling laughter of a baby, which awakens our own joy. Then there are the moments where our attention is elsewhere, not focused at all on the present, and we miss out entirely on the love, the joy, the beauty, the blessing that is right before us. In other moments, we may be focused but if what we are being is unhappy, angry, and frustrated about "what is," we still miss out on the present, because it is with our being grateful for what is before us that we open the present - the gift - inherent in each moment.



This was what the fool did. When God told him he had another ten thousand lifetimes until he would be enlightened, the fool took that as a blessing, as a gift. He saw the proverbial glass as at least half full. After all, God might have said ten million lifetimes! He heard God's answer as being that his prayer was being fulfilled in the fullness of time, in Divine and perfect timing. So he gave thanks. In his joyous acceptance of and gratitude for the present God had given him, the present opened (like a window in time, revealing eternity) and he discovered that it already contained all that his heart desired.

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Neale Talks About "Doomsday Predictions"



Are the predictions about 2012 going to come true? Is our world coming to an end? Will the earth tilt on its axis? Are billions doomed?

I received a question about this recently at Ask Neale, the online Q&A feature that appears on my personal website. I found the question thought-provoking enough to include it this week in the CWGBlog

Now I want to include it here, in case you may have missed it in those other locations, because it brings up a fascinating discussion...

Hi Neale!

I'm Tiare from Mexico and I was at one of your workshops last year and I loved it! I've been going to other workshops and I've found some things that even though they're not supposed to be scary, they did scare me. One of them was that I went to Ramtha's School and he is now preparing all of us for the days to come. He says that the earth is changing in tremendous ways and between the war, the climate change and 2012, everything will be practically...hmmm...well, different.



He says the earth is going to tilt 3 degrees and that will cause amazing changes that will cause the oceans to get empty, with winds up to 3000 mph, and nothing will be left; atomic bombs prior to that, maybe on 2008 or 9),



earthquakes, volcanoes everywhere, the coasts are going to move, like half of Mexico gone, California, NYC, Florida, etc. gone, almost all of Europe will freeze, no clean water, total disaster, fear, etc. which is starting in 2010 until 2012.

So, he says the only way to survive that is to build an underground shelter on the highest place we can find and have everything for 2 years (including a pump for underground water) and not coming out for anything on those 2 years because people will kill you for water and food. And, to practice everything, focus, knowledge, etc. to create our lives for the future (really, create them in order to survive because we download the future from the universe and assure our survival)

On the other hand, there's the Mayan Prophecies, that kinda says the same thing, but in a spiritual level. They talk about changes in everybody's consciousness and going to a new level, the 4th dimension. New awareness, new world, etc. But... their calendar ends on December 21, 2012.

Besides that, I've heard about the Photons Belt that the sun is about to go in and that will cause 3 days of darkness and that's it. Of course, the changes for that are incredible.

So, after all of this, I feel that I "have" to do something that I don't want to do (like build a shelter), I don't know how to create my life anymore because I feel like I have no choice, I'm feeling that responding to this is out of fear, and not out of love and faith. I'm especially scared of living and acting with fear and for fear (feeling that if I don't do it I won't

survive, nor my family) and not with love. I feel I don't want to do anything I want or I love because what for? Everything will be gone in 5 years or less... so, I'm paralyzed...

I want to know if according to God (if you please may ask her) this is true and how to approach it.

Thank you so much and hugs!

Tiare.

PS. Ramtha doesn't teach fear, this is my perception of the information (others are taking it pretty good).

Neale's Response

My dear Tiare...Conversations with God says that we are creating our own reality, at every step along the way. This is true or it is not. If it is true, then we can alter our future and recreate it in any way that we wish. We can do this using the Three Tools of Creation...Thought, Word, and Deed.

If you think that all that Ramtha predicts is actually going to happen, then it will in your reality. If you are willing to create -- and co-create with the rest of us -- another reality that is more pleasing to you, we can work together to do that. I want to suggest that even if my statement here is all wrong, and the Ramtha predictions are inevitable, we will at least have spent our time between now and then in joyful pursuit.

Which does bring up another, and interesting, question, Tiare. What are we trying to do here anyway? I mean, here on the earth? What is our purpose here, however long we may live? Is it to "survive"? Or is it to announce and declare, express and experience, become and fulfill Who We Really Are? And if we do that for only one moment before the end of our physical lives, has our life been worth it? Did we do what we came here to do?

I want to suggest to you, my friend, that the answer may be yes. So let us use the days and times ahead as opportunities for personal and spiritual growth and expansion, allowing our divine selves to know through our direct experience Who We Really Are.

Be good and kind, caring and thoughtful, forgiving and forgetting, grateful and gracious, to all those whose lives you touch. Help others to feel the wonder and the glory of who they are.

And now I want to make this prediction: When the horrific events predicted for 2012 do not occur (just as they did not occur as predicted for the catastrophic computer crashes at the New Millennium that were going to make all the world's systems collapse), what Ramtha and others will say is this: "The shift in global energy produced by the newly aroused determination of millions of people to create the future in another



way has resulted in saving our planet...for the time being. Our predictions were therefore instrumental in awaking humanity, and we likewise wish humanity to know that continued vigilance is now necessary, as disaster for your world may still be around the corner."

In this way, people can keep the pressure up, keep the spiritual stress level high, and, not incidentally, keep an audience listening with ears glued to every word. Impending doom has been a magnet for the collective mind for thousands of years. It continues to be so today.

But not for me. And if I am wrong, and doom IS right around the corner, what difference will my having been wrong make? I certainly am not going to build an underground shelter and figure out a way to live in it for two years before coming out and living like a caveman in a primitive world...

Nope. Don't think so.

Hugs and love, and lots of faith in our ability to live out a Larger Plan...Neale.

From M. Claire Our Beloved Poet



The Best Dancers

The Best Dancers
God keeps me here like this:
to stumble a little.

If I was to
suddenly
just
turn into light, blinding
myself even
to the most precious
and necessary illusions

then what hand could hold my own?
Where would rest a weary head?
What good use for warm hearts;
for hot tears?

Why eyes to see, why arms
to open?
Which Lovefamily to fall into?

*

The best dancers know
what grace
every stumble
contains.

The Best Dancers - m. claire
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A Recipe for Happy Holidays

by Bonnie Starr Mandell-Rice - LEP Graduate



The holiday season beginning with Thanksgiving and ending with New Year's is a time that is, we think, supposed to be full of joy and family. We all have our ideas of what the "perfect" holiday will be, many of them gleaned from magazines full of happy families and friends gathered round a sumptuous table, beautifully decorated and laden with abundance of delicious food, or of the same happy family gathered round a beautifully decorated tree, exclaiming over the perfect gifts they have just received. We look forward either with high hopes or dread for the gatherings. I discovered the recipe for a happy holiday back in 1995. Before giving you the recipe, however, I will tell you the story of its discovery.

Typically, my family, my sister's family and my mother (while she lived) spend holidays together. As my younger daughter and I have been vegetarians since 1989, and my older daughter was a vegetarian from 1989 until 2002 or so, my sister would make turkey for the meat eaters and I would make the vegetable "side" dishes that would form my daughters' and my dinners. In 1995, however, my sister and her family decided to do something else for Thanksgiving. Thus it was that on Thanksgiving Day 1995 only my mother would be spending the holiday with my husband, our two daughters, then ages 11 and 8, and me. Although my mother and husband were not vegetarians, I really did not want to cook a turkey - I became a vegetarian largely because I could no longer look at meat on my plate and see "meat;" instead, the living thing it once was always seemed to stare back at me. So the thought of cooking a turkey didn't appeal to me. Still, I wanted the meal to be special for them as well as for my daughters and me. I decided to prepare a gourmet vegetarian dinner. I scoured cookbooks for recipes that would please the palate and the eye.

Thanksgiving morning I began my preparations, my daughters alternating between helping when things seemed interesting (like making the dessert) and playing with their

dad or their Grammy (my mother), who also periodically came into the kitchen to sit on her stool and "supervise." I was having a great time. I felt so inspired and creative as I whipped up a polenta and roasted red pepper appetizer, a pumpkin gnocchi for the main course, and (my favorite food) a green salad, all to be followed by pumpkin and apple pies.

At last, it was time for dinner to be served. My mother, who eyed most vegetables with suspicion if not disdain, was somewhat dubious about these strange foods but was willing to give them a try. My children, being children, also were a bit dubious about the new foods, but they too were willing to try them - or just eat salad and pie. My husband, tolerant as ever, was (and is) willing to eat whatever I concocted without complaint. I brought out the polenta. It had the consistency of hard Jell-O. It was bland.

While I was happy enough with the roasted red peppers, clearly this was not the best. I said: "Oh well. Maybe we should just move on to the main course." I served the gnocchi. It tasted like soggy mashed potatoes mixed with pumpkin puree - without the benefit of sugar and spice. This was not going well. So, I did the only thing that could be done: I laughed and asked: "Okay, who wants pasta?"

After a rousing chorus of "I do's," everyone helped clear the table, while I started to boil water for pasta. As we waited for the pasta to cook, we took all of the polenta appetizer and gnocchi outside and dumped them on our compost pile. We blessed the food and wished all of the creatures - the birds, squirrels, raccoons, and skunks - who we knew frequented the pile a very happy Thanksgiving. Then we went back inside, gave thanks for being together, and having good food to eat - and enough to share with the wildlife - and ate spaghetti and salad and had a wonderful time, laughing about my culinary disaster.

In this tale lies the recipe for a happy holiday:

1. Decide what you want to do. This is big. Every time you do something solely to fulfill another's expectations, beware. This means that you both will resent them and that you expect something in return from them: love, appreciation, gratitude, their being nice, whatever. Then, if you don't receive what you expect, you feel even more resentful. On the other hand, if you decide to do what another might expect simply because it would give you pleasure to do it for them - even if they say not a word of thanks - then go right ahead. Now on Christmas Eve, I actually will poach a little salmon for my husband and older daughter (no longer a vegetarian) - blessing it all the while - to go along with the salad, vegetable terrine and wild rice we traditionally eat.

2. Have fun doing what you have decided to do. Bring love, joy, creativity and inspiration into the doing. If you are not having fun, why are you doing it? Love, gratitude and appreciation - all that you might be expecting to receive in return for your efforts - is not out there, to be doled out to

you by someone else. It is in here, in you. Be loving, grateful and appreciative, - these things are in you just waiting for you to open your heart and express them - and remember to give yourself love, gratitude and appreciation for your efforts and for who you are.

3. Let go of expectations and attachment to outcome:

that someone will like what you've done or what you bought them. Remember: you had fun doing all the preparations. Anything after that is just icing on the cake. Enjoy the moment - whatever it brings. The next moment will bring something new, if you let it by being present to it and not stuck in the past, nursing resentment or disappointment.

4. When things are looking bleak, remember to laugh.

The only thing that is important is that you are with people you love. Sweetness, kindness, and simply listening to others without any expectations or agendas also help. I can't get this next line to move over, or put a 5. in front of it.

5. Give thanks - for whatever shows up. In every cloud there is a silver lining. If you don't see the silver lining, make one up! If, as happens with me, your children do not like the gifts you bought them, instead of being angry that they don't like them and seeing them as unappreciative, be thankful that your children can tell you honestly how they feel. I used to feel terrible about my seeming lack of gift selecting skill. Now, I am grateful for any success and, in regard to all the "losers," I am grateful that I have daughters who can be honest with their dad and me about how they feel (and not just about gifts) and that I (who love more than just anything to be with my daughters) then get to spend a day or two at the malls exchanging gifts with them and taking them out for lunch!

There it is - my recipe for happy holidays. Enjoy!

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Please note that because of the volume of mail that we receive, it is possible your letter will not get printed here. However, we do our best to see that all letters get a response, if not directly from Neale, then from a CwG Foundation staff person, or LEP participant.