

A pair of bright orange sneakers with white soles and blue accents is positioned on a weathered wooden log. The background is a soft-focus field of orange and yellow flowers, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. The sneakers are the central focus, symbolizing a journey or a path forward.

Wisdom for the Journey

**Where are you now in
the journey of life?**

Where are you now in the journey of life?

Are you happy?

In love?

Reaching for a dream?

Or are you ***hurting?***

Angry?

Grieving for someone you have lost?

Are you facing a new direction in life?

Are you trying to find your *life purpose*?

Are you **bored?**

Wherever you are in your journey,
you are **NOT** alone...

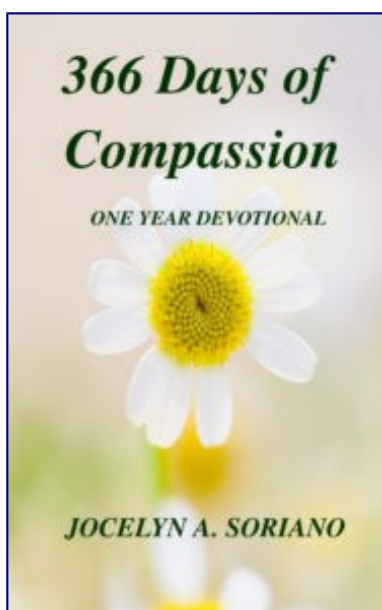
Wherever you are,
you can have **wisdom** that will guide you on your way,
like a compass that tells you which way you should go.

You may also want to read the following books:

[366 Days of Compassion](#)

One Year Devotional Book

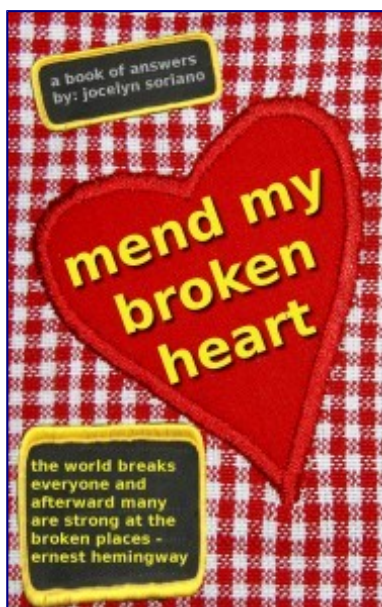
“Your companion for healing.”



“The deepest wounds of the soul are healed only by compassion... People do not merely need to be clothed, they need to be **embraced with love**. A love that enters into their own fears and frailty, a love that suffers with them and stays with them **through their darkest hour.**”

[Read More - CLICK HERE](#)

I will betroth you to me forever. Yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness, in justice, in loving kindness, and in compassion.
– Hosea 2



[MEND MY BROKEN HEART](#)

“The world breaks everyone and afterwards many are strong at the broken places.” – Ernest Hemingway

MEND MY BROKEN HEART is meant to guide you for **30 critical days** with its rich words of wisdom, answering your deepest and most painful questions, and guiding you with *powerful reflections and activities* that are more than sufficient to fill your days **ONE DAY of Healing AT A TIME**.

This book is a result of years of listening to real people who have **real hurts** and who struggle with the pain of not knowing how to heal a broken heart. This book has gathered the *griefs* of those who were brave enough to **UNMASK how they really feel inside**.

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LIFE IS A JOURNEY.

Where are you now in the journey of life?

Author: ***Jocelyn A. Soriano***

www.itakeoffthemask.com



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Are You Trying To Find Your Life Purpose?

Who Do You Really Want To Be?

When I was a kid, I used to have very simple dreams, one of which is being able to finish my studies, the other one is being able to land a job that will be able to support my family and afford us a decent and more comfortable life. I was able to do that. I graduated with a degree in Accounting (with flying colors!). Then I became an auditor and landed a job that pays me enough to afford us the simple pleasures of life, very simple pleasures like dining out, watching movies, buying an air conditioning unit, having our own computer.

I celebrated that. I rejoiced when those dreams came true. Yet somewhere in my heart, I knew I had a few **secret dreams**. Dreams too extravagant for me then that fulfilling them seemed to be selfishness already for me. For how could I even think of them if I didn't even know how we could get by from day to day?

I dreamt again. I dug up the passions I've buried for so long. Music, photography, writing. I wanted to do the things I've always wanted to do. I

wanted to put more meaning into my life.

And yes, I was able to do those, too. I won recognition in a national scriptwriting contest. I was able to write my first book. I was able to establish a website that can reach thousands of people around the world. I celebrated that, too. I felt so blessed to be able to touch lives and comfort others through these gifts.

At first I thought this was enough. I thought I only have to strive harder to improve my skills so I can be more effective in making a difference in the lives of many I haven't even met. Then it hit me. I'm such a fool thinking I could make such a difference in others while neglecting my own growth, while failing to define **who I really am**, who I really want to be!

Funny isn't it? When you thought you've been trying to be what you want, when all the while you didn't even know who you really wanted to be.

I thought I wanted to be an accountant. I thought I wanted to be a writer. And yet it seemed the picture had always been incomplete. For a person is not always in one's office doing the piles of paperwork at her desk. Neither is a person writing some humorous or inspirational article 24 hours in a day. When I'm not doing any of the two roles I mentioned, who am I? In fact, who am I when I'm not doing anything at all?

It was then that I realized how I had been living my life all these years. I realized how I had been striving and pursuing my dreams while remaining the **faceless** person I had been all along. Yes, faceless and nameless, for I was without a clear understanding of my **whole person**, and without a concrete vision of the kind of person I really wanted to be.

It's no wonder then how shy I had been for so long. I was always **withdrawing**, always afraid. In truth I was afraid of looking at myself, and of realizing how far I am from the person I really wanted to be.

It was not that I was a bad person. But I had always been aware of my **weaknesses and faults**, even the slightest defects I've had troubled me. I thought I could never be perfect and beautiful, so why even try? I thought I could never blend in as a normal kid, so **why risk rejection?**

So began my journey in the shadow of my fears. So began a life without a real identity, for maybe I'd rather have none than an ugly unacceptable one.

And now, as I ponder upon what I truly want to achieve, these things haunt me as ghosts from a troubled past. For in order to begin the journey towards the person I desire to become, I must begin by **facing who I am now**, and of **accepting myself**, warts and all.

I accept my defect. **I accept my limitations**. I accept and recognize the darkness in me that needed to be illuminated. Yet I also accept my virtues. **I accept my gifts**. I recognize every *good seed* that had been planted in my heart all along. And then **I am free**. Free to remain the way I am today. Free to *change* and be the best possible me I could ever be!

Finally, I could ask myself who I really wanted to be. Not what job I want. Not what achievements or awards I would like to have. But the kind of person I truly want to be. Because that's the only thing I could always possess, the only thing no one can ever take away from me, the only thing that can truly make my life meaningful and worthwhile.

Who do I really want to be? I paused and looked into my heart and soul. I asked myself how I wanted to live my life, how I wanted to deal with other people, what *impact* I would like to create, what sweet fragrance I wanted to leave wherever I should set forth. Am I to be a gloomy cloud casting darkness wherever the wind blows me? Or am I to be a soothing joyous light that brings **happiness and peace** wherever I may choose to go?

And if I wish to be the latter, shouldn't it follow that I must learn to **shine** in order to give out light? Doesn't it follow that I must take off the dark cloak that has hidden my *true beauty* all these years?

Indeed, if I choose to be light, I must be a light in everything I do, anywhere that I may go, in all my ways, and in every aspect of my being, from my thinking to my manners, from the purity of my heart to my physical appearance.

From the light of that vision, I began to define myself. For what indeed is light? And **what indeed is beauty?** And I must define these in the light of my own wisdom, lest I fall into the trap of trying to please only other people, lest I forget what's truly important for me.

I can begin now. And I begin by writing down my life purpose:

To walk in perfect peace, true love flowing from my heart, my spirit resonating with a song of gladness as it touches other people's hearts, comforting each troubled spirit, breaking free from the loneliness and emptiness that had been, and moving on towards the burning flame of hope that never ever dies.

Passing on the flame

I may not leave lasting footprints when I pass by, but may I pass on a flame that will keep on burning until it reaches another torch that will carry on the radiance of its warmth.

Life Statement

I will go through this life only once,
and I shall have but one chance to live;
Not all people will like me,
others may even despise me,

as I may not be easily understood;
Yet I will take this chance to live,
and I will reach out in ways I know;
I will **love** those whom I can,
and I will strive to understand them more;
Not all days will bring me **sunshine**,
so I will rejoice also for the rain;
Not every endeavor will be a success,
but I will savor the **victories** I achieve;
Not all dreams I dream will be mine,
but in time *new dreams* will fill my heart,
and as from a star
those hopes will propel me **forward**
doing everything the best way I know I can;
No fear shall trample me whatsoever,
though some tasks seem to outweigh my strength;
I will only do what I have to do,
and God will take care of the rest!

Unblocking Your Flow

Much had been said already urging us to discover our desires, pursue our interests, nourish our gifts, follow the passions God has given us. **Find your flow** – that is the way to succeed and live a fulfilling life. We then have a pretty picture in our minds of that day when we need not do our boring jobs anymore, and when we shall find **abundance** pouring in in ways we could never have imagined. We feel the excitement pulsing in our veins, finally doing what we're all supposed to do, living the glorious destiny to which we have been born into.

Then all of a sudden, we find ourselves living just the *opposite* life we dreamed. We find ourselves in a rut, a dead end, or a yellow light that has kept us waiting longer than we have expected for us to realize the vision that has been given us. **What went wrong?** What sin have we committed for us to deserve this kind of punishment that has fallen upon us like a thief in the night stealing our dreams and the life that has been promised us?

We then re-think our choices, wondering if we guessed our purpose right. ‘**This cannot be my flow**’, we say to ourselves, and we move on to the next option, hoping it’ll finally be the right path.

And yet, if we come to think of it, was *David* not in the right path when he was still a shepherd and learned to kill bears and lions in order to protect his sheep? Was *Joseph* not in the right path when he was sold as a slave, worked as administrator of an Egyptian household, and later as head of the prisoners when he was accused without any fault of his own? Were the *disciples* not in the right path when they worked as fishermen instead of being trained as pharisees and scribes learned of preaching the law?

Each of these men were **destined** for something, each with a **seed of desire** for that destiny planted within their hearts. Yet each also was not able to perform it immediately – **each had to wait**, each had to undergo a seemingly *irrelevant* pruning so that the desired flow may be unblocked!

David was not born as prince and immediate heir to the throne. He was not given lessons in swordsmanship nor given training in walking, talking and dressing like a king. He was a shepherd and a musician! But his years of taking care of his flock and of defending them against wolves, bears and lions have provided him not only with the outward skills he needed to reign as king, but with the inner strength and compassion for all of those under his protection and care.

Joseph had a vision of his great future, but instead of being enrolled in an Egyptian school of languages, economics and administration, he endured a lowly life as a slave. He managed an Egyptian household under stress of persecution and imprisonment. Now is it a likely position to be in to consider it as being in the ‘flow’? Was everything happy and abundant at the moment?

But uncomfortable though as it may be, Joseph’s strength and mindpower had been trained in the process. Amidst his suffering, his heart was opened up for those who also suffer and made him accountable and responsible for the critical position that would be given him in the future. His **harsh training** was the key that unblocked his inability to enter into his ‘flow’.

There are many times indeed where the problem is not in finding where our ‘flow’ is, but in ‘unblocking’ our way towards that flow. It is not in choosing which path to go, but in being fit enough to tread the path we desire to walk upon.

What is blocking you? Your fears? Your lack of strength? The need to open up your heart to suffering so you can better serve many?

Be patient and do not lose heart. In times when you *feel stranded, hindered, or powerless*, God may just be preparing you, working carefully and lovingly upon you, **unblocking** the way so you can finally enter your ‘flow’ and fulfill the **deepest and greatest desires of your heart!**

Finding Your Purpose in Life

Finding your purpose in life is often one of the most difficult things we desire to do. What job is meant for you? How do you know what you really want to do in life?

After all the hard work studying, you’ve finally graduated from school. After all the hard work applying for a job, you’ve finally landed a job that pays you. And after all the hard work finding other jobs, you’ve finally landed a job that pays you well. Happy? Why not? Isn’t this what you really wanted to do all along? **What seems to be missing?** Why do you feel as though you’re starting from the very beginning? Worse, you feel you don’t even know where to start. For the first time in a long time you ask yourself, **“What do I really want to do in life?”**

I’ve asked myself the same questions, and of all the questions I’ve ever asked myself, this is one of the hardest indeed. But there is a way. And we must believe that all those who seek earnestly finds the answer that they seek.

Following are some of the things that helped me realize what it is that I really wanted to do, what it is that would make my life worthwhile and meaningful. It's certainly not an easy journey, and it's easier said than done. It may take even years for some, but take heart, and believe that it is never too late to find the answer you're looking for.

1. Remember you childhood dreams

We weren't always the grownups we are today. Once upon a time we were just kids learning to walk, talk and find our way in this world. Once upon a time we had the imagination to dream and to feel in our hearts what we really wanted to do. But something happened along the way. The necessities imposed upon us and the prejudices society taught us made us think differently. We lost touch of the child within us, the child who knew how to dream and to believe in that dream.

Get in touch with that child again. Hear his voice. Pretend you're not afraid of the many difficulties that lie ahead. Pretend you haven't heard of what the many other grownups around you say a responsible person should be doing. Think everything is possible. Think God can grant you your heart's desires.

What do you want? What would you ask for? What have you asked for when you were once a child? Did you want to be a doctor then and heal people? Did you want to be a teacher and feed the mind of young ones with knowledge and wisdom? Did you want to be an artist and paint the world with colors? Set yourself free. Oftentimes, what we really wanted to do, we already knew since when we were but children when our hearts were yet pure and our minds unbridled by the many rules the world has taught us later when we grew up.

2. Explore

Now that you already have the means to support yourself, you can finally

do things you've only dreamed of before! On my part, I was able to go to places I've never been to; I was able to attend seminars like 3D animation, scriptwriting, and playing the guitar; I was able to buy a digital camera and experiment on taking pictures; I was able to buy an oven and the ingredients needed to bake and cook; I was able to play computer games as much as I wanted and design my blog for hours using the computer I bought myself; I was able to buy the books I've always wanted to read.

I have the means now to finally explore the things that delight me and interest me. I can finally nourish the dreams the child in me used to dream only with her heart and with her head.

Explore. Don't think you need only to do the things where you can get outright monetary returns. Just set yourself free, now as an adult who knows how to enjoy yourself. Do what you want. It will lead you to those things you would want to be doing all your life.

3. Make a survey

The people around us usually have clues about our strengths, talents and skills, and the things that we enjoy doing. Ask these people. They may even tell you things you haven't realized yet, like a good singing voice you've always kept to yourself before! Or you may discover that you're a good leader, and that you inspire the people you work with. You may discover how many people count on your wisdom and insights and thus, seek your counsel for important decisions in their life. Make a survey, and let it guide you in your discovery.

4. Fear not your own beauty and strength

In your journey of discovery, you may sometimes get a vision of yourself, your best self, the one you've been searching for all along. But oftentimes too, we immediately disregard this vision, for we cannot believe it to be true. It overwhelms us to think we can be that beautiful and talented and strong. We regard it as an illusion we can never reach, and we settle for the

next best thing that comes to our mind.

Don't do that. For God did not intend us to settle for something lesser than His greatest plan for us. God made us to be the best and most beautiful we can be so that other people may best be blessed as well through us. Don't belittle yourself. And do not be afraid to see yourself for who you really are, and for who you were truly destined to become. Shine forth your light and fear not your own beauty.

5. Accept your gift

Once you have faced the vision of your destiny, learn to accept it with all your heart and spirit and mind and soul. Deny not your gifts, and deny not the accountabilities those gifts carry with them. If you have the gift of entrepreneurship, accept it. Accept that you have the power to lead many people. Accept that these people will count on you. And fear not that you may fail them in the end. Instead, fear that you may not even begin.

6. Do something you won't ever get tired of doing

Once you have explored your many interests, learn to discern which of these things will delight you only for a time, and which of these things will give you joy forever. As for me, I once enjoyed my guitar lessons. But then I soon got tired of practicing and playing the same music again and again so I can master it. I didn't want to hear the song that way. It made me lose interest in the song. But I found out I could compose songs, and that I do not tire of composing them.

Realize that when you choose something, your passion in doing it must be that great so as not to tire of doing it all your life. Can you imagine painting everyday of your life? Can you imagine practicing golf for hours for all the days of your life? What is it that you won't ever get tired of doing? What is it that even if others attempt to stop you, you would still be doing just for the sake of doing it? Something you could never stop yourself from doing, because stopping yourself would mean stopping the

very flow of life in you?

7. Do what enriches you and blesses others at the same time

I've realized that when I write from the heart and from the very depths of my soul, the words I have written do not only help other people, but those very words inspire me first of all. Such is when I know that I have practiced my passion, when I feel enriched instead of feeling exhausted, when I feel that I have received and I have been blessed instead of feeling deprived and spent. I noticed too that when I write from the heart, other people are blessed, they are moved, and in one blessed moment, our souls touch, and our souls are both blessed by the God that gives us all good things.

It is thus that you know you have truly found your gift: when the thing you do both enriches you and blesses many others along the way.

8. Set aside what others deem as right, beneficial and noble

Although I've suggested to you previously to make a survey of what others think of you and your gifts, you should also be careful that you don't listen to everything people tell you. Try to sense if they are sincere, and if they're truly speaking from the wisdom of their hearts. Other people merely repeat what others say without reflecting on it. Other people would dictate upon you what worked for them, and what may not work for you.

Most of all, when you have already discovered what you really wanted to be doing, set aside the prejudices of the world and trust the God who entrusted to you this mission and these gifts. Do not let the opinion of others belittle you or tell you that there are other tasks far nobler or greater than the one you'd like to be doing.

9. Do what really makes you happy and complete

God has implanted upon your own heart the desires that would truly make you happy. These are the things that will guide you in your journey. These are the things that will shed its light in your path where there were only shadows and uncertainties before. Discover the deepest desires of your heart. For it is such desires that if fulfilled can really make you happy and complete.

10. Pray

Above all these things my friend, pray. Seek for the counsel of God's Spirit and God will guide you all the way to finding your purpose in life. Pray for enlightenment. Pray for perseverance. And then pray for the courage to use your gifts. It is such that you will know God has a great plan for you, and it is God Himself who will help you to make your dreams come true.

I Am a Tree

I am a tree
sprouting forth and reaching out
for the glorious sunny sky
strengthening my stance
drawing forth life
from the warm womb of the ground
bearing forth what fruit
i may offer to all
giving my shade
to those who may want to rest awhile
Not all men may notice me
when they pass by
not all may taste the fruit

that i have whole-heartedly offered
nor avail of the shade
of my embrace
and yet i stand
and yet i stand
for a tree remains to be a tree
though no one comes to rest in thee
its arms remain wide open
its fruit renewed always in their season
its gaze always before the sky
smiling
knowing
standing firm
where God has appointed thee.

Are You Facing a New Direction in Life?

Change is never easy. And yet it seems, the only thing constant in this life is change. We are still in a journey, we are not yet home. We're still going to see some new places, climb new mountains, meet new friends, and get ready for new adventures. Are you facing a new direction in life right now? Take heart, for **the best is yet to be!**

True Humility

True humility is never seen as clearly as when one is starting out yet another path in one's life. In that part of the journey, the soul is as meek as a child, as though learning to walk all over again, yet it is confident enough, knowing that it can certainly do it as he has done so many times before.

Mastering Life Transitions

Your heart was broken into a million pieces, how do you pick up the broken pieces to be whole again? How do you transition into the new person that you are?

Surviving difficult life transitions is one of the most important things we need to know if we desire to live a full and meaningful life. We may not have noticed it, but transition follows us the moment we were born until the moment we die. First, we make the transition from childhood to adolescence, from adolescence to adulthood. Then we make the transition from single life to married life, from an active career into retirement.. In between are many other difficult transitions challenging us, sometimes ripping our very hearts apart that we know not how on earth we're ever going to survive.

How do we survive a sickness and achieve healing? How do we gain

wisdom and grow from our immaturity? How are we ever going to rise from our poverty into abundance? From brokenness into wholeness? From darkness to light? From death to eternal life?

What is transition anyways? How do we survive difficult transitions in our life?

TRANSITION is CHANGE. It is a transformation we undergo in order to reach a desired end.

Transition is therefore stepping into another level, into another world where we are not so familiar with, where we may not yet be equipped to enter. Transition is that difficult process we make in order to CROSS OVER to that OTHER WORLD.

Following are several things you may find useful in assisting you in the many life transitions you may undergo. I cannot guarantee its completeness nor can I be able to summarize it in 3 easy steps in a way many "how to" articles are done. Transition after all, is not a simple process, and everybody deserves to receive as much assistance as one could possibly get.

1. Understand what's happening

Before you could go on to any other point or desired end, you must first be able to know what's really going on at the moment.

What's taking place at the moment? Why is it taking place? What's making the situation difficult? Is what you're going through a natural process that cannot be avoided? If it isn't, what are the alternatives?

Are you broken hearted from the separation or passing away of a loved one? Surely, you did not intend any of it to happen, but it happened anyway, and the only road that lies before you is the road of healing and recovery from your pain.

Are you frustrated at your current job and planning to move on to the next? Maybe you can first ask yourself why you're frustrated in the first place. What's causing your frustration? A grumpy boss perhaps? A jealous

officemate? What are your alternative causes of action? Will it be an outright move into another career? Will it only be a change from one company to another? Is there any possible improvement if you should study further and acquire more relevant skills to the position?

Understand what's going on right where you are.

2. Accept the Difficulty

It is not enough that one understands what's going on. One must also ACCEPT "what is" in order to move on to "what there can be".

You are in poverty perhaps, and I cannot say that where you presently are is a comfortable place to be, it surely isn't! So why am I talking about acceptance here?

Please do note however that when I say acceptance, I do not mean that one accepts his situation forever. If that were the case, there would be no transition, and nothing else pertaining to change remains to be discussed. When I talk about acceptance, I mean to talk about accepting one's present condition "for the present moment". I do not even speak of one whole day, just the present hour, the moment where one is.

"But why the necessity for this?" you may ask. "Aren't we trying to change because we are not happy where we are in the first place?"

You have a point in there, yet as much as we'd like to achieve change the soonest time possible, we cannot deny the truth in the present circumstance of our life, that point where we want to start our journey towards change.

Understand also that I do not instruct that anyone should be "happy" at this point. One must only accept the present situation where one is and be willing to face its difficulties.

The significance of this step is this: If one would not be willing to accept the difficulty of the moment, one would be DENYING the truth of his present situation. One who denies the truth cannot go anywhere because he cannot face anything, starting from the many difficulties one already has where one is.

Accepting the difficulty in one's present condition also prepares you to face the other challenges that are sure to come your way when in the process of transition. If you cannot accept your present difficulty, how much more could you not accept the uncertainties and difficulties in the road ahead?

In addition, not accepting your current situation tells that you are exerting much effort at resisting it, resisting something you cannot really change "for now". Wouldn't it be wonderful to use that energy instead in devising a feasible plan rather than resisting what already exists? Surrender is a mighty powerful word. It is that calm we see in the eyes of those who though still suffering, are letting go of the urge to fight the unalterable. It is the calm we see in the eyes of those whose days are already numbered by a dreaded disease yet still having the zest to live and make the most of each day given them.

Acceptance is the shortest path one can take towards peace. This may be hard truth to chew, but it is possible to have peace even in the midst of difficulties, it is possible to have peace even in the midst of your most painful tears.

That peace is needed in order to have a stable ground with which to start from. Otherwise, we shall only be driven by fear, or anger, or any other strong emotion that clouds our minds and prevents us from seeing things for what they really are. Peace brings us closer to our true nature and restores our connection with our Eternal Source. Seek peace therefore through acceptance.

He who cannot accept his present affliction is bound to live with the thing he resists the most; he who can befriend even his most terrible pain is one who can turn it around and transmute even curses into GIFTS of power and healing.

3. Let your difficulties strengthen you

One other thing your acceptance of your difficulties brought you is the ability to be able to use your difficulties in order to strengthen you and propel you in your transition. Had you denied them, you wouldn't have

even admitted their existence, more so, studied them to be of use to you in your transition. But how could it be so?

Many times, the difficulties we encounter at present signify to us some weakness we must overcome in order to proceed to the next level we're looking for.

For instance, you may wish to be a businessman and acquire wealth so you can be of service to many people. At present however, you don't have much materially, and your difficulty at present is in making both ends meet with your low budget. Maybe you don't want to experience that difficulty anymore. You just want to be that wealthy businessman who knows all the tricks of the trade to make money at the right place and at the right time. But the fact is, your difficulty in budgeting your expenses may not necessarily disappear the moment you become rich. The fact is, your difficulty may even be amplified as you try to budget not only your own expenses, but the expenses of an entire Corporation that you own! Now how is that?

I am not saying that everyone who can't come up with a feasible budget from a limited source of income do not have financial skills. But it can be one of your difficulties. At the same time, it can also be one skill you can learn from, a skill that may yet be able to help you achieve your highest dreams.

In order to proceed somewhere, we've got to start from where we are and use what we have. You cannot start with nothing.

What do you have at the moment? Your disappointments? Your tears? Your poverty? Use it and let God help you in transforming it to joy, to abundance, to victory. Remember that even a mighty oak tree wasn't always the majestic tree it is today, it started from a puny little seed that unleashed its potential, kept its ground, and allowed the nutrients of nature to take its course and create a great miracle.

4. Let a compelling vision propel you

Oftentimes, carrying our crosses is not our main problem. Our main problem is the lack of heaven in our minds with which to strengthen us in

carrying our cross!

Have a compelling reason for you to undergo transition, something that is beyond moving away from the negative things you wish to leave behind. Think of what you desire to achieve. Think of the people that will be happy, think of the joy in their eyes. Without the said vision, you'll just be going around in circles not ever landing to where you truly desire to be. In my article "How do you carry your cross", I've mentioned how Jesus urged us to "follow him" as we take up our cross. Our real goal is not only to take up our cross, it is to follow Jesus himself! If you are not enthralled by his glory, if you are not captivated by his beauty and his light, will it be any wonder if you will always complain of how heavy the cross you're carrying is?

5. Devise a plan and make it flexible

Once you were able to calm down and assess the situation where you are, it is time to devise a workable plan to guide you along the way. Don't edit your plans so much at the start, but rather, gather as much information and possible strategies as you can. This would be especially helpful as you would have a vast resource available for you, back up plans you can avail of whenever your chosen plan does not work out as you expected it to. This would in turn free you from ATTACHMENT to one plan, which more often than not contributes to unnecessary pressure and stress. When I planned for a successful business and opened a coffee shop of my own, I was glad I didn't resign from my day job. If I did, and I didn't know I would go broke then, I would have had nothing to fall back into when all my hard earned earnings were suddenly swept away.

6. Accept that there will be temporary setbacks

No matter how far you have moved on in your journey, there will be times when you fall back or trip over a little bit. Accept that there will be temporary setbacks along the way, but don't think that just because you encounter them, you cannot make progress anymore. Treat them instead as periods of rest or reflection, of assessing what you have already done, and where you're really headed. Oftentimes, setbacks are like mirrors reflecting to us an image of what has been happening. It is an indicator and a warning signal that something's been happening and if you continue on

your path now, you'd surely be going further in your chosen path. It's asking us if we're sure we want to continue in such a path. It's giving us the time to assess if we'd like to make last minute changes and move on to another direction.

Have you been broken hearted and felt you've already recovered? Then, just when you thought you've finally made it through, a painful memory suddenly slips in and brings back every hurt you felt before. Does it mean you haven't been healed? Does it mean all your efforts at moving on have just been wasted? Of course not!

What it could mean is that not every wound had been patched yet, not every hurt healed. Healing often comes in seasons, one painful memory at a time. If it were not so, we might have been overwhelmed, and we could have seen no point in trying to move on. The next set of healing comes when you have recovered enough, when you have gained enough strength to make it through the difficult process of letting go.

Think of it this way. If you were diagnosed with cancerous tumors and scheduled for chemotherapy, can you survive it if such a therapy is given you in a non-stop manner until every cancerous cell in your body had been wiped out? Those cells may be killed indeed, but so will you!

7. Enjoy the journey

There are transitions we can better enjoy than other kinds. A move into a new country is one. Getting married is another. We usually don't complain about it but celebrate all the excitement it brings.

Other transitions are more difficult. Losing a loved one for instance, or retiring and losing a job you've held for more than half your life. Yet even in these times, know that there are moments you can claim as your very own.

When a boyfriend has betrayed you for someone you believe is not as deserving as you, what do you do? You cry your heart out of course! You cry for the hurt it caused you. And what do your family and friends usually do? They stay beside you and support you and would do almost anything you tell them to! People are kinder, they bring you gifts, they

treat you to a new movie, they cook dinner for you, they let you win card games when you have pajama parties in your room since you can't sleep.

Quite often, we don't notice it and remember it only when it's too late! One by one your friend excuses herself, a meeting has come up, or a pet has been too sick to be left alone. They notice you're improving and can now fend for yourself. Bad times are over, but so are all the fun things you could have done with them while they were still with you.

8. Don't make big leaps without sufficient confidence or resources

One mistake I've noticed people usually do is to make great leaps of faith when their faith is not so great yet to support their leaps. It is true that faith can indeed move mountains. It is true that almost anything you set your mind on to you can achieve. But whoever said that it is also true for all of us - now?

Some of us are not yet prepared. Many have not yet truly believed. That's why when things don't immediately happen as suspected, almost everybody who talked aloud just a while ago departs slowly unto oblivion, blaming everybody else for leading them on to illusions they can never possess.

We build our confidence through various seasons of testing and strengthening, not in a single instant of jumping in what's fad. There are many gurus and more gurus to tell you what you want to hear, but remember that in the end, it is you who will live the life that you make. I believe there is a Chinese saying that goes like this - teachers can only open the door for you, but you walk in that door alone.

Don't walk that door scared and startled. Walk in there with enough confidence that can match the challenges before you in your next step. For goodness' sake, test the waters with your toe and not your whole body!

Are you trying to seek for a more stable income by engaging in business? Test it first on a small scale and see if there is any market for the product you're selling. Be wary of get-rich schemes. More often than not, they are get-broke-quick schemes driven to take away what little capital you have that you could have invested wisely somewhere else.

Take intermediary steps that can help you proceed to the next level. When I was younger, I didn't know how I could help my family financially. We were poor, we had no connections, we have no rich relatives that can help lift us up. The only way I worked my way through was having a good education. One small step at a time, I was able to graduate from an elementary public school. In high school, I was able to get a scholarship. The same thing with college where the country's biggest auditing firm had me as their scholar until I took my board exams. It was not easy, but I've made progress and built my confidence from each achievement that came my way.

9. Keep what's important, forget it not

Moving on does not mean letting go of everything that has happened and that has made you who you are. Being able to transcend into a new being doesn't mean nullifying the person you were before. You will be a different person, but in many ways, you will still be the same. If you will not, you will be lost as a mist that has quickly vanished in the light of the bright noonday sun.

Keep what is worth keeping, let go what has only been an outer shell you thought were your true essence. Keep the happy memories with the ones you love, with the places you've been to. Keep the lessons learned, the wisdom gained, the power and strength and the legacy that has been passed on to you by countless beings that have guided you to be where you are now. Forget them not. Forget not who you are.

10. Accept and celebrate the new

Not many people are willing to accept the new because not many are willing to let go of the old. No matter how broken their old self was, they find it hard to leave it and be made anew. Few men live again because few men are willing to die in order to have new life.

Realize that for one thing to be embraced, another has to be left behind. We cannot serve two masters at the same time. It would not benefit us if we stand always at the fork in the road, never making a choice, never making any mistake, but never making any progress as well, and never

being able to live life to the full.

Accept the new and celebrate it. It is the only way you can give honor to the old, by being a better you, the you that could never have been had you always remained scared of seeking the best that you can be.

Life indeed is a transition. We see it in the passing of each season, in the rising of the sun and in its setting, in the evaporation of raindrops and in its pouring down again unto the sea. Life must transcend for life to thrive. He who chooses not to transcend has already chosen to decay and to die.

What shall I find as I cross the uncertain bridge of life? Shall I find at last my lost memory? Shall I finally discover my ancient beginnings? Full of questions do I cross this bridge, yet full of hope do I walk towards my destiny.

What If...

What do we look forward to?

When we were kids,
we looked forward to growing up
when we were teenagers,
we looked forward to finishing our studies
when we were young adults,
we looked forward to getting a job
when we were finally stable,
we looked forward to getting married,
when we got married,
we looked forward to having kids
when we had kids,
we looked forward to seeing them grow up
and so the cycle goes....

but what if we stopped
somewhere
when we were adults
thinking what life really means

what a life that matters really is
and what we'd really like to do
will the cycle stop?
shall we move on to another circle?
after our soul searching
the cycle may go on
we marry
we have kids
we look forward to them growing up
but then all the while
that this happens
a change within tells us
things are finally different
not because we've headed in a different direction
but because we took the road
with a new heart
and a fresh new pair of eyes.

Are You Hurting?

No matter how far we've come along in our journey, no matter how strong we've become, there will be times when we will get hurt. It may be our fault, it may be another's, or it may be the result of something we cannot understand. In such times of difficulty and emotional pain, may you always have hope, believing you will rise again.

“Yes, I understand why things had to happen this way. I understand his reason for causing me pain. But mere understanding does not chase away the hurt. It does not call upon the sun when dark clouds have loomed over me. Let the rain come then if it must come! And let it wash away the dust that hurt my eyes!”

There are times when life suddenly casts a shadow before us: we suffer for sins we did not even commit, we go through situations we certainly do not deserve to be in. In such times, we have so many questions throbbing at the back of our minds, but the biggest of them all is **“WHY?”**

We want to know the reason why we had to go through such excruciating pain. We want to know why we were not able to do anything to prevent the terrible things that happened. We want to know why God failed us, why He let us down at the time we needed Him most.

Yet even after we are able to answer these questions, the pain remains, life stands still, and we can do nothing but wait until everything's over, until we can move on again like we used to, when our hearts weren't shattered yet into the thousand lonely pieces they broke into. We then come into answering our second biggest question, and that is **“HOW?”**

How do we deal with the awful feeling of brokenness? How do we start to move on? How on earth are we ever going to smile again?

Like many people, I've been through dark and painful moments in my life as well, moments I wanted to skip, moments when what I really wanted the most is to have my own time machine so I can either go back where I was happy, or fast forward anywhere in the future where I can find myself again. But no machine like that has ever been invented yet, and the only way to move from the terrible place where I stand is to go through the dark tunnel ahead that will lead me towards the new beginning I'm looking forward to.

If you're willing to go through that dark tunnel with me, let us begin. Let us try to answer the only question that can lead us into a better place. How indeed can we ever deal with our grief?

1. Accept the challenge and do my best.

We can never move on anywhere unless we acknowledge where we stand at the moment. Acceptance is the shortest route to peace. Acceptance will help you let go of your WHY's so you can start focusing on your HOW's. Accept that things have already happened. Accept that you can do nothing to turn back the hands of time to undo everything that's already been done. You can blame everyone, you can blame God, you can even blame yourself but that would never change your situation. That would never help you get out of the pit that you're in, the suffering you're going through. Find the way to acceptance, and you can begin to find the strength and the will to move on.

2. Rest when I can no longer carry on.

It is a good thing to cry and mourn for your sorrows. It is good to release your tears, your anger, your pent-up emotions. But there are limits to our powers, to our physical and emotional strength as human beings. We need enough time to rest in order to renew our strength so we can have a

better cry next time. Have enough sleep. Force yourself to watch television or buy groceries and give yourself a break. Try to forget your troubles even if only for an hour or so. That way, you do not exhaust yourself to the point where you no longer have enough strength to face the challenges of the coming day. Reserve some of your strength until you are able to make it through.

3. Take comfort in God's greatness, love and strength.

Many people may criticize me for this. But those who knew torment and have survived from it a better person understand the comfort of knowing someone is there listening to you, someone who understands you, all those hurts you're going through. Someone who doesn't judge you or condemn you, just someone who loves you and trusts you that if you will only hang in there a minute more, you will surely make it through.

It may be quite ironic, but I have found my greatest joy in the arms of my God in my darkest hour. I felt him hugging me, comforting me, crying with me. He didn't just watch me. He didn't scold me and reprimanded me to get up and be strong and stop being such a fool. He cried with me. He knew my pain and he claimed it as though it were His own.

4. Bear the pain and be patient.

This seems to be the hardest part of all. Pain is pain and suffering is suffering. There is no pill or any kind of painkiller that we can take to prevent us from feeling our hurts. We have to bear it head on and cling to the thought that things will definitely change for the better.

"I have deep sorrow today, and an unclear vision of the future. But

nobody ever died of loneliness - only of hopelessness! As long as I have hope, no problem is ever too difficult, no night ever so dark that it can prevent the rising of another day!"

There are times when we are so lost in the dark that no matter how hard we try to find our way, we find not the roads we're looking for; no matter how desperately we seek, we grasp not the answers, and we continue to grope in the shadow of the night.

But faint not, and fear not the voices that creep in the dark. For in your hour of need, help shall come upon you. In your moments of greatest fear, a flame of hope shall arise and give you peace. The night is short and the voices will soon fade away. Darkness shall falter and surrender to a brand new day.

Take heart; stand firmly and strong, for it will not be long before the awaited dawn.

5. When it is time, stop dwelling on the pain

There are times when the pain finally subsides, and we are given a chance to move on a notch higher. Finally, we have the chance to break free from our pain. The problem however is that many of us choose to cling to our hurts. We let the pain linger longer than they should. Maybe we got so used to it, we don't know anymore what we're going to do without it. Maybe we feel mad at ourselves and we choose to punish ourselves for the things we thought we did wrong. Maybe we're mad at someone else and we want to punish him by punishing ourselves. Whatever it is, it will not help you find your path to living the full life you should be living. Let it go. Let go of your pain and move on.

6. Live from day to day. Or if that is too long, from moment to moment.

There are some wounds that take a longer time to heal than others, and there are some hurts that take a while longer to subside. The important thing is that we stay afloat one day, one moment at a time. Don't think of how hard the whole process is going to be, you'll go nuts doing that! Don't think of all the lonely days ahead of you. They haven't even arrived yet! Just think of the moment. If you can live and make it for the moment, that is all that is needed to make it through.

7. Claim the strength God gives me to rise above the situation.

There is a strength God gives you in times when your strength is no longer enough. However you may call Him, there is a Higher Power that will see you through. I've received it. I've felt it coming just in time when I can no longer see how I'm going to carry on. That is why we should never compare our strength with the weight of our problems. We'd probably make a wrong estimate doing that! There is a strength that comes to you to help you overcome whatever you're going through. Wait for it! It will certainly come and will not delay.

8. Learn everything I can from the process.

When we're in pain, we seldom realize what lessons we can learn from the process. Though it is quite understandable why we do not give attention to things like that in times of grief, the truth remains that we do learn many things during our darkest hour. It is a time when everything we know and have ever learned are being challenged in an instant. It is a time when we come to realize what it is we value the most in life. It is a time when we get to understand other people better. Let us take advantage of those times when we see things more clearly than we ever saw them

before.

9. Protect my joy at all times.

Sounds crazy doesn't it? This thing you can ignore if you want to, but I believe that joy and sorrow can definitely exist at the same time. Yes, we are hurt. Yes, we're broken. But yes, we know we're going to make it. And yes, we know we'll get out of it better persons than we used to be. Somewhere in our hearts, there is a chamber of joy that should remain intact, untouched, forever guiding us in our most troublesome paths.

It is indeed a painful thing to grow, but afterwards, you will be glad that you have undergone the process. You will feel stronger. You will feel like you have just been released from your self-made prison. You will carry with you the joy of God being there for you, comforting you in your darkest hour. You will have greater confidence as you learn more about the true beauty that lies within you. And you will move forward in life with greater strides knowing that the things which have caused you pain could no longer touch you and torment you the way it did before. You will overflow in spirit realizing that you have just risen from your former horizon and moved on to greater heights. And you will look forward to His guiding hand that will carry you farther from one God-destined glory to the next.

I Will Smile Again!

I will smile again
Though tears flow from these eyes
I will smile again

And trust tomorrow the sun shall rise
Though darkness may enfold me
Though heavy rain can't help but pour
Though shattered, lost and broken
Though heart could barely bear it all
Though tired and weary and confused
Though badly hurt and bruised
I know that I will smile again
And I will smile again!

Tides arise...

intense emotions
can't stand the pain
parting
farewells
tears my soul apart
how do you keep on hoping
while holding
the broken pieces of your heart?
but you hope
you hold on
you take a deep breath
and you are able to breathe
alas
hope is there
in that very breath
and you are able to wipe away your tears
for a while
tides recede
for it is nature's way
it will rise again
but so will you
so will the broken pieces
of your heart

Why Is My Cross Heavier?

Have you ever felt those times when the cross you're carrying seems heavier than it should be? Much heavier than you can bear? Much heavier than the crosses other people are carrying?

Our crosses it seems, vary greatly in the burden and the difficulties they inflict upon us. Why do some crosses appear to be far easier? And why do some appear to be so huge, our trust upon God's wisdom and justice is already shaken to its very core?

We see rich, beautiful people whose only problem it seems, are the next orders they're going to pick from the menu. And then we see beggars who don't even have a place to sleep at when night falls. We see celebrities gambling loads of money in a casino. And then we see parents doing back-breaking work day after day, just so they could send their children to school. We see politicians squandering the wealth of the nation, and getting credit for the small portion of funds spent in useless undertakings. And then we see cancer victims, fighting for their next breath, not knowing where in God's hands they're going to get the amount needed to provide for the family they're going to leave behind.

Where indeed is fairness in this life? Where is the easy yoke we have been promised to bear? Is God already playing favorites here?

Oftentimes, when people start asking these questions, the only response they get is something like one of these:

“God works in mysterious ways.”

“Stop that! You're doubting God's wisdom.”

“See? There is really no God who guides His people. Either He isn't real, or He isn't really good.”

I would not be content with those answers though. There must be some answers more satisfying than those. Following are some of the answers I believe in:

1. We don't really know the burden people are carrying within

People may appear happy on the outside, but they may actually be crying terribly within. However well-off they appear to be, secret hurts may just be tearing them apart.

Never ever believe instantly the external strengths you see, the smiles that greet your eyes. For sometimes beneath those smiles are tears, and beneath that strength is a yearning to break out and to be understood.

Do we see people who earn more in a day what we could possibly earn in a year? Do we see people who look so happily established in their married lives? Do we see healthy people who can do whatever they want to do be it mountain climbing or spelunking or sky diving? Do we see them and envy them and wish so hard we were the ones in their shoes?

The fact is, there are some things we don't really see. We don't see the sad children whose parents are so busy working their way up the corporate ladder. We don't see lonely wives who have lost their self worth and sunk unto the everyday routine they needed to keep. We don't see consciences being seared just so money can be earned and ambitions can be reached. We don't see hearts crying out in loneliness amidst all the external blessings the world believes them to possess.

We don't see many things. Surely not the things people wanted to hide. They are the only ones who know the true weight of their crosses, and there is no way we could possibly get in their shoes in order to make a fair comparison with the burdens we carry upon our shoulders.

2. We sometimes carry crosses that are not really ours

If you feel you're carrying so much more burden than you could possibly bear, pause for a while and ponder whether the cross you're carrying is your own cross and not another one's burden.

Ask yourself, "Is this cross the one God really wants me to bear? Or is this suffering something I have only insisted on inflicting upon myself?"

There are many crosses we insist on carrying, loads we are not suppose to carry in the first place. Due to our stubbornness however, we refuse to let it go.

We refuse to forgive the people who have hurt us, because we do not believe they deserve to be forgiven. We refuse to forget our past wounds because we want to get even with those who have caused us pain. We refuse to lay our burdens to God because we don't trust Him enough to believe everything will be taken care of. Sometimes we even refuse to let

other people carry their own crosses because we believe we are the only ones capable of doing the right thing.

Carry only your own cross, my friend. That is all that is asked of you.

3. We do not see that our crosses are in proportion to the strength given us

We may be carrying a far bigger cross upon our shoulders, but have we ever cared to know the resources given us to be able to carry that cross? We were so busy comparing the size of our crosses with our neighbors', but have we ever cared to compare the strength we have with the strength that they possess?

My friend, the cross given you is in direct proportion to your strength. The pain you bear is in direct proportion to the tolerance that you possess. We may be carrying different kinds of burdens, but we cannot really say that the difficulty we encounter are far different from the troubles others are going through.

Are you in pain? So am I. Were you hurt? So have I. But you can never say you were more hurt than I have been because you have never ever been me, not even for a single moment. You do not have my weaknesses. You do not have my strengths. I do not have the wealth of your previous experiences. And I do not have the people who support you in your hour of need.

Stop comparing one another's crosses, because in truth, there is no way that we can really be able to compare them.

4. We do not avail of the unlimited strength being offered by God to help us carry our cross

There are many times when all that we can see are the huge crosses we carry upon our shoulders. We see how weak we are. We see how tired and exhausted we have been. But we do not see God's hand reaching out to help us. We do not see the strength being offered us when our own powers are no longer enough.

Maybe our financial condition is just enough to feed one child, but just when we're least expecting it, another one comes along contrary to what we have planned. Maybe we feel so alone, and the only person who has ever been there to support us suddenly leaves, never ever to return. We feel helpless and broken. And we do not have the strength anymore to face the challenges that come our way.

It is during these times that we should keep our hopes up and believe that a Higher Power will see us through. Help will come just in time, just when we needed it, just when we have given our last ounce of strength.

You may think of how limited your resources are at the moment, but a better opportunity may already be on its way. You may think you've lost everyone who has ever cared for you, and yet the one who will love you like you've never been loved before may just be standing outside the door, knocking, hoping you would just open the door and let him in.

There is a God who watches over us, and who sends His angels before us to guard us and to guide us along the path He has prepared for us. He will never let us down. He will not give us crosses too heavy for us to bear. And just when we think our crosses are getting bigger, He will give us more strength, more power than we believed we could ever possess. So just hang in there a minute more. Hope. Believe in miracles. They still come true, you know.

5. We see no purpose in carrying our crosses

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me. (Matthew 16:24)

“Follow me.” That’s what Jesus said. And in following Him, we are to forget ourselves and carry our crosses. Our goal would be to follow Jesus, not just to be able to carry our crosses.

Have you ever had such a great drive to achieve a dream? A drive so great you are tremendously inspired to reach for your dream whatever sacrifices you may have to make along the way? Have you ever had such a loved one, someone so special you were willing to undergo hell just so you can always be with the person?

It’s the same with [carrying our crosses](#). Carrying our burden is merely incidental to our true goal. We must be passionate enough, enamored enough, enthralled, raptured, captivated, powerfully moved in following our life mission, it doesn’t matter whatever difficulties may come along. We know we could overcome anything, for the prize ahead is worth far more than the sacrifices we are to make along the way.

We have to know our purpose and our destiny. Otherwise, we would just be focusing on our crosses, complaining how heavy and difficult they are.

It is only in being driven towards our greatest and utmost passions and desires that we are able to forget ourselves and bear the burdens we never knew we’d be capable of.

The crosses that come our way were never meant to hinder us from reaching our God-given destiny. They were meant to help us and

strengthen us so we can be the kind of persons we are supposed to be. The greater one's cross is, the greater is the opportunity and the gift attached to it, if only we could take our eyes off our suffering for a moment, and see the blessings being poured upon us in the process.

Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out. (1 Cor. 10:13)

Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light. (Matthew 11:28)

Psalm of a Wounded Soul

O wounded soul
who can understand thee
if not the God
who created thee?

Who can bear with thy sorrow
and who can fathom thy tears
who can plunge into your darkness
and bring some light therein
where light has been forgotten
where warmth is nowhere
and no sympathy is afforded thee

Yea I shall cry out to my God
who knows me
and who will always be with me

Yea even in the darkness

I am not alone
for Thou has remembered me
and Thou has saved me
when I knew not even
that I can be saved

Are You In Need of Healing?

Inner Wounds

Why must old wounds be opened up and inflict me with pain I thought I've long gone over with? In anger, I've asked this of God, and in shame I've learned that there are still inner wounds, deeper wounds that need to be sought out and healed.

There are times in our journey when we get sick, physically, emotionally or spiritually. During such times, we need to rest for awhile and find healing. It may not be the best time to decide for a major shift or detour in your life, or to blame yourself for anything that has happened. But it's the best time to talk to God and to reflect upon your life. It's the best time to let go, ask for help and renew your strength.

A Time For Joy

This may not be a time for dances,
but this is a time for prayer.

This may not be a time for clapping,
but this is a time for songs.

This may not be a time for merriment,
but this is a time for awakening.

This may not be a time for running,
but this is a time for rest.

This may not be a time for kisses,
but this is a time for hugs.

This may not be a time for laughter,
but this is a time for smiles.

This may not be a time for parties,
this may not be a time for noise,
But this is a time for healing,
and this is a time for joy!

Prayer of a Sick Man

My Lord, I've been bed-ridden for so long that I could hardly remember the time I've been well enough to take a simple walk out of my garden. I've been suffering night and day and the pangs of pain seem to get stronger with the passing of each day. I am losing hope of ever getting any better, of being well again.

And my pain only doubles up whenever I see the suffering of my own family. I know how much they miss the person I used to be. I know the troubles they go through to put up happy faces in front of me while hiding away their own pain. They don't want me to worry so they say that everything's fine. But I know that things are not so fine anymore. Surely by now the house is already mortgaged and the kids are working triple time just so they can pay the loan. Surely by now prospects of a new business project is dim and my wife is pulling herself two ways – attending to me and worrying about our financial distress. I should be the man of the house.

I should be the one taking care of my family. But here am I lying in bed, waiting for my hour when I shall shatter their hearts again just so I can escape from pain. Forgive me God for my waning courage. Forgive me for giving up hope at the time it is needed most.

I come before you almighty Healer. If my time has truly come, let it be so. But I will not give up without a fight. I trust in your goodness and unfailing love. I trust that the miracles you did you still do today and if only you will will it, you can heal me. You can save me and my loved ones from these dark days that have sapped all our laughter and our hope. Touch me O God with your healing power, forgive me of my sins and let me arise from this bed, whole and willing to serve you strongly once again!

Forgiveness

Heaven is forgiveness. Being forgiven. And being able to forgive. Forgiveness brings peace. Forgiveness unites us and builds bridges where we once built walls. Forgiveness allows us to lay down our burdens, our guilt, our anger. When we finally find healing and wholeness, we find forgiveness as well. Forgiveness is heaven.

“... everyone has need to be forgiven.” – **Lord Herbert**

Accept and Forgive Yourself

As much as we must learn to forgive others,
so too, should we learn to forgive ourselves.

As much as we should learn about our strengths,
so too, should we learn and accept our limitations.

The problem with us is that we often attribute
every tiny bit of problem to ourselves.

In our obsession to be in control of everything,
we consequently believe that anything that ever goes wrong
is our fault.

Accept your faults.

Do everything you can to correct them.

But learn also that not everything is your fault.

Learn that you cannot correct the things,
which are beyond your control.

Stop trying to carry the burden of the world upon your shoulder.

Carry only your own cross.

That is all that is asked of you.

Acceptance is the Key to Happiness and Peace

To accept
what has been
what IS
and what will be,
To be able to stand
immovable
and unshakable
as a mighty rock

that does not complain
nor wince out loud,

To be able to accept everything
and still stand,
is to truly possess
great power.
It is when things
have already been counted as lost
that all things rise yet again
to be gained.

A strong rock **can withstand any blow, any wave crashing against it.** After the wave settles, the rock still stands whole. Its happiness can't ever be lost or swept away because its foundation is so strong and sure that it does not worry about the chaotic waves threatening it.

What are you afraid of? What is it that you cannot accept? **The shortest path to peace is still acceptance.** Without acceptance, we cannot even begin from where we are.

It is important to begin where you are so you can start your journey to where you really want to be - to **HAPPINESS and SUCCESS.** If you **DENY** your current problems, you're only fooling yourself. You cannot plan accurately. You cannot plot the course you need to take because you are living under the **ILLUSION** that you are already **"OK"** when you are not.

Accept your problems. Accept your tears. Accept your defeat. Accept your weakness and your wounds. Accept your exhaustion.

To accept means to acknowledge, to admit, to see. Whenever we accept something, we recognize two things: 1) we recognize an **existing problem** that needs to be solved, and 2) we recognize **we are still there,** hanging on and with a faith big enough to accept the difficulties that come our way.

In a way, acceptance denotes a certain kind of **CONFIDENCE**. Without acceptance, we say that whatever it is we cannot accept is so big it will certainly crush us to pieces. Acceptance says that though we be crushed into pieces, it's still alright. With God's Grace, we can still pick up those little pieces in order to form a better and stronger whole. With God, no problem will ever be beyond help. God is always bigger than our problems, and with Him, we can accept every problem with hope.

So much of the things we cannot accept cannot be changed anyways. No matter what we do, we cannot run away from it. ***Bitter memories haunt us like ghosts.*** We let them haunt us rather than confine them to the past where they belong.

We **can't change** anymore the bad things that have happened in the past. We can only accept that they have happened. Only when we ***accept*** the past can we begin to declare that they have no power anymore today.

To RESIST is to WASTE precious energy fighting an impossible battle. Surrender that battle so you can win the next battles, the more important battles that will define your life.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Accept your grief today, and then accept God's love and healing for you. **ACCEPT** the path to your happiness and success.

DETACHMENT

Detachment. Strong word. Pretty scary word. Given the choice, we'd avoid it, we'd put it so far below our list we'd wish we'll never need to consider it anymore. For whether we admit it or not, detachment brings to our minds our most dreaded fears - separation, letting go, goodbyes. It's as though the very word reminds us of brokenness, depravity, hurts we couldn't even describe.

Yet is this the true essence of the virtue? Is detachment a cold harsh tool that rips us off our humanity and replaces our hearts of sorrow with hearts of hardest stones?

It is just the opposite, my friend. For the true essence of detachment brings us not to the barrenness of the desert we fear so much, but to the **calm undisturbed waters in the deep** that neither moans nor retreats from the fast changing currents at the surface.

Detachment is a steady tree in the middle of a roaring storm, it is an anchor that keeps us safe and secure from the might of the crashing waves. It guides us as we journey forth to our destinations, like the sun whose brightness never fails to shine upon us wherever we may be. It allows us to weep, yet gives us also the freedom to rejoice, trusting everything will be just fine.

Detachment is after all, not a detachment from the people and things we value the most, but a **detachment from our own fears**, from the fear of losing the ones we truly love.

If we can just begin to understand, if we can just believe that God stands with us, that God provides everything we need, that God is not selfish nor covetous of our desires and happiness, maybe we can trust that our joy will not be taken away from us without a deeper purpose nor will it be taken away from us forever. If we can just believe that God is everywhere, and that God is in all things, maybe we can be assured that all things we hold dearly lay safely upon His hands. Maybe we'd be comforted for we'd know that God is only a prayer a way, and hence, so are all things in whom He dwells.

Detachment therefore is not about being deprived of the good, but of being free from our burdens. Detachment is not about letting go but of **holding on so fervently and confidently**, believing that no wind or storm can ever take away that which you have loved. *Detachment is not about our brokenness, but of our wholeness, of being able to protect and keep our joy whatever the external circumstances may be.*

Joy In Surrender

I have worn myself out scheming for my desired end, yet only in

surrender did I find an end far more than what I could have ever hoped for!

When It's Such a Hard Work To Rest!

It used to be so easy to rest, back in those days when “recess” was our favorite subject in school, or when Friday was our favorite day of the week because we’d finally have a hard-earned weekend to indulge in a lazy Saturday afternoon.

Yet have you noticed how many people today find no more satisfaction in the simplest activity of all? We get anxious with our vacant hours and we try to fill our days with as much activity as we can just so we can avoid that time when we have nothing to do but be with ourselves.

One time, I had colds and it necessitated a leave from work as well as a leave from the many activities I enjoy, including writing. How I prayed that it be over, how I desired to get back to my normal routine. But the body it seems, knows when to go on and when to take a pause, when to wake up, and when to get some time to sleep. It’s the rhythm of life, the ebb and flow, the natural course of nature that keeps everything in balance, and that makes everything fresh and renewed.

But why the unnatural response from many of us? Why the difficulty in surrendering to rest?

1. We’ve lost our ability to wait.

The modern times have provided us with so many tools and gadgets we need that make our life easier. It has enabled us to do things in an INSTANT, in a single click of a button. We do things real FAST!

Rest is waiting. It is downtime, a healing time both for the body and the spirit. We just couldn’t accept the fact that we are not after all as perfect and as powerful as we thought we could be, that we can’t be on the go 24/7

much as we wanted to.

2. We've lost our ability to trust.

Rest and healing is doing nothing necessarily active on our part, but trusting that our body knows what it is doing to repair itself, to grow, maybe even to be better than before. We believe that only our conscious efforts can accomplish something, and if we're not doing anything therefore, we're already doomed! We don't trust anybody, not even our own body when we know we are not consciously in control.

3. We've lost our ability to receive.

Our culture has impressed upon us the necessity to give; giving is a concrete sign of being alive, of being of value. When we are not able to give or to do anything productive, we quickly lose our self esteem. Our self worth is so connected in doing what we do, that when we're unable to do anything, we feel empty and worthless inside.

We do not realize that receiving is also an integral part of being. Receiving is actively cooperating to the one healing us, actively acknowledging that we are worthy of help, of being assisted in times when we couldn't help ourselves. Receiving is honoring ourselves as being worthy of notice and honoring others as being able to endow upon us something that is an important part of themselves. Receiving, like giving, is being able to share and be a channel of the flow of life.

I've learned that even times of sickness and un-productiveness can teach us something. I've learned that in times like that, it's quite okay to wait, to trust the way of life, and to receive healing from the God who never abandons us whether we're living our lives energetically, or whether we're merely trying to while away our time sneezing and teary eyed in the comfort of our cozy beds.

The Power of Surrender

Surrender is a mighty powerful word.

Sometimes we wonder why God had to wait until we're tired and worn out, until we've finally given up before He gives us what we want.

And the answer is that we have made Him wait that long before we allowed Him to carry on His work and give us what it is we've been praying for.

Is Happiness a Choice?

Is happiness a choice? Is it a mere decision we can make at any situation, every step along the road of life? Can we always say that the glass of water given us is half full instead of being half empty? Can it be made full by believing that it is full when it is really not?

What shall we say to the beggar who has not eaten in three full days? What shall we say to orphaned children whose parents were devoured by a dreaded disease, children who now roam the streets naked and helpless and lost?

What shall we say to the unloved, to those who have nobody to show them the way of compassion, sympathy and friendship? What shall we say to the imprisoned when no real sin accuses them of their supposed crime?

Is it easy to decide to be happy? Is it even possible to find peace when a hurricane hovers about you, ready to tear you apart?

I am not saying that it isn't possible

I am not saying that we cannot

Yet say not so easily that happiness is a choice
and that at any point in time, we can choose to be happy

Say instead that we can choose to approach God Most High
and that we can enter His sanctuary

Say that we can surrender there
and let go of our tears

Say that we can ask for Grace, for Strength, and for Healing
For this we have a choice
and with this we can have Hope
Finally my friend, we can hold on to that Hope
and believe that we can find
what it is we're looking for.

A Little Piece of Heaven

This is a sad time and a sad generation. Although there is no world war, although the technology to live a comfortable life has never been as advanced, although we can now reach one another in a click of a button; all the good things we possess can't seem to cast away the dark clouds that hang everywhere, obscuring the azure sky, blocking the warmth of our bright and faithful sun.

Stripped of its radiance, we walk on cold pavements each day, flaunting the calloused hearts that hold back our tears, wandering the streets hurriedly, as though we knew where we should be going. The truth however is that we walk naked, pretending we are strong, numbing our hearts and killing our souls, just so we can get by, just so we'd be the people our twisted society wants us to transform into.

Rich and poor alike are dying within, the humanity of their souls being sucked away either by the necessity of their survival or by their meaningless ambitions. Where then can we find that little piece of heaven, that small flame of hope that would keep us from stumbling in the dark?

I urge you to look more closely, for it is there, streaking through the thick fog, making its way through the darkness.

-Busy morning. You hurry off to work unable to take a single bite of breakfast. You arrive at your office. You see what's on top of your table.

Coffee and croissant with a sweet note from a dear friend. You pause for a while, you savor the strong aroma of java, and take a good sip. Not much for a tv commercial, but enough to catch the first glimpse of sunlight of your day. A little piece of heaven.

-A man stricken with AIDS and considered an outcast. An old nun who reaches out, treats his wounds and embraces him warmly, passing no judgment, no fear, no condemnation. The man smiles and looks up to heaven. He breathes his last, but in that last breath was a breath of hope, and a renewed faith in God. A little piece of heaven.

-You got busted at work. On your way home you went through a hell of a traffic jam. Then right there at your doorstep, your two-year old child opens up her arms and hugs you. You feel her tiny fingers holding on unto you. She kisses you. Numerous little kisses that take away all your tiredness and frustrations. A little piece of heaven.

-A rebellious daughter. A patient and prayerful mother. A realization that brings a lasting change. Repentance. Daughter graduates valedictorian in her class. Mother listens to her speech, tears streaming down her cheeks. A little piece of heaven.

-A storm has just passed. The city lay in flood and ruins. In a few moments more, children emerge from their houses. They proudly carry the paper boats they've just made. No flood could dampen their spirits, no storm could darken the light in their eyes. You hear their laughter. You get infected with their joy. A little piece of heaven.

-It's way past lunch. The young scavenger still has to search heaps of garbage before she could buy anything to eat. Something unexpectedly catches her eyes. A soiled doll with blue eyes, a red apron, and a missing leg. She smiles for her good fortune. She's just found a gift for her little sister's birthday! A little piece of heaven.

-Christmas. An old lady lives alone. The doorbell suddenly rings. The house is quickly flooded with young professionals bearing gifts for their old teacher. They could not forget her motherly hand. They remain thankful for her wisdom. A little piece of heaven.

Have you seen them? **Have you caught a single piece of happiness lately?** You may not be looking. Or you may not feel you can give some little piece today. **Look. Believe. Smile.** A smile brings out a lot of sunbeams, and attracts streaks of happiness along the way. Catch a piece today, your very own piece of heaven.

Are You Angry?

“Be angry but do not sin.”

anger is after all
only an emotion
that is neutral in itself
we can sin while we are angry
as we can sin while we are sad
or even when we are happy
maybe we just noticed
that we only sin more
when we are angry
for anger is a powerful emotion
that can overpower us
if we do not know
for why
or how
we should express it

Manage Your Anger By Mastering Your Powers

Can you still remember the last time you felt angry? What was it you felt so angry about? Did someone say anything bad against you? Did someone hurt you? Did someone hurt a loved one? Have you seen a terrible violence or injustice done against another person?

There are so many things that drive us to anger, so many things that frustrate us. And despite of it all, the world around us tells us to behave, forgive, let go and manage our anger. What is anger management? Can it really be accomplished? Most people can so easily say how we should repress the intense feeling we felt within. They can even judge us and tell us we're not so good after all, since we cannot control our anger. A lot of these people don't know what they're talking about and mistake passivity to control. Not reacting isn't management of anything. (Note however that

acting carelessly without regard for the consequences is also not acceptable.)

Anger is just a reaction. It's like fear or excitement or disgust. It's not the source of our troubles. It only signifies where we have trouble in. It isn't anger that we should focus on managing. What we should focus on is managing ourselves and our powers.

Let me acquaint you with what anger really is. **Anger is simply being powerless to do what it is you wanted to do.** So someone said bad things against you? You felt angry because you weren't able to stop that person from hurting your feelings. So someone did some kind of injustice to a person close to you. You feel angry because you weren't able to stop that person from doing the evil thing that he has done. If only you weren't so helpless. If only you were powerful enough!

In order to control anger, we must learn to master ourselves first and be proactive. Why get angry when someone tells you bad things? Is their opinion that valuable to you? Is your self worth attached to how they see you? Being angry in these situations may only signify a lack of self confidence or of self acceptance. Nobody needs to be perfect. And nobody needs to be flawless in order to be loved.

Other things that make us angry include inability to stop bad things from happening. Again, we must learn to be proactive. If we don't take control of ourselves, somebody else will, somebody with more willpower, somebody with a more passionate goal than you. **Take responsibility for your own life and you will feel less of a victim. You will feel less angry.**

Another thing that we don't usually do is to pray for the things that matter to us. Praying communicating to God Himself and getting in touch with His love, His peace, His holiness. Praying is also sending a protective shield to our loved ones. It is best to pray than to neglect our loved ones in our thoughts and then to get angry later when something bad happens to

them. Evil acts. What happens when 'good' remains passive? Whose will shall prevail?

Anger signifies our powerlessness to do something, to do the good we've always wanted to do. God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of POWER, of LOVE and of SOUND MIND. You are not powerless. God is not powerless. **Be less angry. Be more POWERFUL!**

The Defender's Anger

After defeating a great number of enemies, the Defender came to the Inspirer feeling beaten and lost.

“I am not fit to be your Defender. I am evil as I often let myself succumb to anger. Today, I have defeated a hundred men in my rage, yet I have almost killed an innocent mother and her child,” the Defender confessed.

The Inspirer’s eyes were kind and full of understanding as she replied, “You are not evil. You are a fighter, a warrior of righteousness, and it is but natural for you to feel anger towards unrighteous deeds. Anger is not evil. It merely guides you and alerts you against injustices that defy your conscience. It also gives you strength to fight that injustice, to have the needed courage for the moment and not be afraid.”

“**Be alert of two things** about anger however. Do not let it remain longer than necessary because it will consume you. Secondly, do not let it encroach upon your freedom such that you already do things you do not wish to do.”

“**Be more powerful than your anger.** Use your weapons wisely and do not be used by them.”

Of Frustrations and Expectations

Our frustrations are directly proportionate to our expectations, to our "failed expectations" that is. The more we expect something to happen, the more frustrated we are when that thing doesn't happen.

This explains why we get more frustrated with people who are closer to us. We certainly have higher expectations of these people, and when those expectations aren't met, our world suddenly falls apart. Sometimes it seems unfair to put this kind of burden to those we love, isn't it?

This also explains our frustration with God. With God, we have the highest kind of expectation, for He is perfect, isn't He? For the mere fact that He can do so much and He doesn't do as much in our lives and our concerns, we get angry at Him, because He failed as BIG. But did He?

With God however, we should remember that He can only do so much in proportion to the faith we accord Him. It is not the absence of power or of love that hinders the fulfillment of our expectations, our prayers. It is the lack of faith, of the willingness and heart to let go and to let God be God.

How about you? Have you had any failed expectations?

How do you treat a bad person?

We're not always fortunate enough to be in the company of good and **highly conscious** people. There are times when we encounter **selfish** violent people who don't even care what **harm** they do to others. **How do you deal with those kinds of people?**

Granted that they are only doing those things because they are not conscious enough, they do not know the harm they are doing to others and to themselves. It's easy to understand it that way **theoretically**. But what if you have a real encounter with such a person? What if you discovered her saying things that damage your reputation behind your back? Or what if a person was just plain rude and gave you derogatory remarks in front of

others? Would you still be able to **understand? Will you not get angry?**

Other people have a **quick fix** for this. They tell themselves that they wouldn't get angry and take revenge because they don't want to go down to that **lower level** where those people are. That's a quick fix because it will immediately boost your ego to the detriment of the other person's worth. **She deserves it, right?**

If you are truly **highly conscious** however, you know deep within that it doesn't reflect the whole story. You know that the person was only **lost and unaware** of what she's doing. But it doesn't mean that that person is no longer valuable in God's eyes. That doesn't mean that the person no longer has a soul and no longer has the right to exist like you and me. So how do you do it? How do you treat a bad person?

Before you answer these questions, could you please ask yourself, "**How do I want to be treated?**" Not that you're a bad person. Of course you're not! If you ever did some bad things in your life, **you didn't mean it**, and most of the time, you weren't even "**aware**" you're hurting other people already, right?

If I were that person, here's how I want to be treated. I want to be treated with **understanding and tolerance**, because if I had known I would do something bad and I had the power not to do it, I wouldn't do it. I know I'm not yet perfect, but I'm on my path to **growth**. I 'm doing my best here to be the best person I could be. I want to be treated with **respect**, not like I'm some kind of lower being with no soul or hope of ever being redeemed into a better future. But I would also like to be **stopped from doing harm**. And I would like to be **aware** that I'm doing something bad. I would like to **realize** my faults so I could grow and do better.

Note: Though we generally assume that bad people would repent once they learn the evil that they do, we cannot disregard the FREEWILL of people. There may be those who would stubbornly choose to refuse good,

and for such, all we could do is to leave them where they desire to be.

Source of Negative Emotions

Are you angry?

You must have been injured
Your loved one must have been done a terrible terrible wrong
You must have been neglected
You must have been forsaken
You must have been greatly hurt

Are you sad?

You must have been misunderstood
You must have been left alone
to battle the many storms of life
without your beloved
without the one with whom
you dream your dreams
without the one you trust
the only one you can entrust your heart upon

Are you afraid?

You must have lost your ground
the rock you held on to amidst all your troubles
You must have been quite uncertain
barely hanging on
with each mighty blow of the wind

Every negative emotion can be traced to this:

that we have not been loved enough
that we can no more be loved enough
or that we can barely see what love is
where we are

where we have been
and where we shall be tomorrow
Wherever there is any lack of love,
there shall also be our sufferings,
and there shall also be caused
all sorts of negative emotions.

Where there is love,
there shall also be healing,
there shall be joy
there shall be peace!

Are You Filled With Love?

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket –safe, dark, motionless, airless– it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside of Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell. – C.S. LEWIS

The Mystery of Love

Who can comprehend the mystery of love? Love is more than joy, more than feelings, more than thought, more than we can ever imagine, much more than we can ever desire and be thankful for!

On The Nature of Love

Love is the Father

Love is the Son

Love is that which the Father and the Son express and manifest, that which encompasses both, that which communicates and conveys the most sublime.

Love is **personal**

Love is real

Love is the most tangible thing you'll ever know

You lose yourself into love

but then you are never truly lost

You find oneness with the one you love

but in the process learn to discover yourself more

You are strengthened in love

You are **defined in love**

You can never be a better you apart from love
For only love unites in such a way
as to make the **beautiful even more beautiful**
and to make each lover stronger and purer than he or she could ever be
alone

In love, you are never alone
for you are one **with your beloved**
you are one **without being lost** into the empty chasm of your own self

Love
is **not** realizing that **you are all there is**
Love
is realizing that **you are not alone.**

Will You Still Love Me Even If I'm Not Perfect?

Will you still love me even if I'm not perfect? Will you still love me even if I'm not the kind of person you wished I were? Will you still look into my eyes with warmth even if you saw my shadows? Will you still hold my hand even if you knew there will be times I'd let you down?

For though I yearn to take care of you as I should, though I desire to love you with a love that never falters and fades, my knees tremble this very moment that you hold me in your arms.

Shall I kiss you? Shall I hold your hand and bask in the light of your spirit knowing that I have my darkness, knowing there will be times that the light of my love will sometimes be overshadowed by the darkness that is in me?

Sometimes I'd be silent and I might bore you. I may not laugh at your jokes, and you may not understand the spell that's enshrouding me. Sometimes I'd get troubled and I'd fail to put into words what the hell it is

that troubles me. I wouldn't be good company then, and I couldn't make you smile.

Sometimes I'd get moody and I might not enjoy the things you'd like us to do together. Sometimes I'd lose my temper and I'd no longer act like the fine person who stands before you today. Sometimes I'd get jealous and I might say things I don't really mean. Sometimes I'd talk too much that I might drive you away.

Sometimes I'd get touchy and I'd get easily hurt. And no matter how mature I try to be, at times I'd act in childish ways. I'd demand things I shouldn't, I'd say things I shouldn't say. And no matter how much I desire to protect you and make you happy, sometimes I'd be the one who'd cause you the most pain.

If you will love me I cannot promise you that I will not hurt you. I cannot promise you that I will not make you cry and that I'll never break your heart. But if you will love me, I will bare my whole self naked before you, and I will reveal to you my soul. If you will love me, you can be certain that it is I that you will love, not a mask that fools you and gives you only what your eyes desire to see. If you will love me, you can be certain that you will love the depths of me, all of me that is in me, and I in turn will love you with all of me, with all my soul, with all my mind, with all my spirit, with all my flaws and beauty, and with all my very heart.

Love and Perfection

Love does not say,
"I am now **PERFECT**,
you can now **LOVE** me,"
for such makes love conditional
upon one's perfection,

and makes the beloved proud and arrogant
instead of being full of gratitude.
Such a love evokes fear
for it is a love that can easily be lost
upon the **slightest** mistake
and upon the smallest sign
that the beloved is not worthy of one's love.
Let those who yearn to know
what true love really is behold -
"I am wretched
but You have lifted me up and LOVED me.
Your LOVE has made me PERFECT!"

What's The Love We Really Seek?

Love is a great thing
greatest of all goods because it renders light every burden
and bears equally all that is unequal.
Because it carries a burden without feeling it,
and **renders sweet and pleasing every bitterness.**
Nothing is sweeter than Love,
nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing more sublime
nothing more expansive, nothing more joyful, nothing more abundant
nothing more pleasing in Heaven or on earth
because love is born of God,
nor it can rest upon created things, but only in God.
The lover flies, runs and rejoices,
he is free and nothing can restrain him.
He gives all for all, and has all in all, because above all
he rests in that one Sovereign Good
from whom all good proceeds and flows.
He does not regards the gifts,

but he turns himself above all goods to the giver.

Love often knows no measure,
but **burns beyond all measure.**

Love feels no burden, values no labours,
would like to do more than it can do,
without excusing itself with impossibility,
because it believes that it may and **can do all things.**

Love watches, and, sleeping, **slumbers not**
When fatigued it does not become tired;
when pressed it does not work through constraint;
when threatened it is not disturbed;
but like a lively flame and a burning torch,
it mounts upwards and securely overcomes all opposition.

Whoever loves knows well what this voice says
A loud cry in the ears of God is the ardent affection of my soul, which says
O my God, My Love,
you are all mine,
and I am all yours.

-The Imitation of Christ, Thomas Kempis

All The World is Meaningless Without Love!

The radiant sun is nothing
but a big ball of fire
that hovers above us.

If not for love,
what could the sunrise mean?
What could everything mean at all?

Even the brightest of stars grow pale,
Even the moon loses its mystery,
Nothing hides beneath the seas,
and no mountain is ever worth climbing for.

And yet with love,
even a candy wrapper

can be put in a special golden box,
even a torn ticket
can be held with the highest regard.

It is because you walked these streets,
that I come back here again and again;

**It is because you sat in this chair,
that I sit as though
this is the most beautiful chair in all the world.**

I touch this pen,
and I feel your fingers,
I hear a song,
and tears flow down my eyes.

Everything comes to life
because you have touched them,
but all the world is meaningless
without love.

Love Is Not Blind

LOVE IS NOT BLIND
there is someone
who understands you,
who sees you
even more than you can see yourself
his eyes are like clear mirrors
reflecting to you
the you he loves and sees
and though you are afraid at first,
your fears are vanquished
and you are able to see through his eyes
what you were afraid to see
love is not blind after all
for love sees more

love sees what no other sees
and looking through those eyes
you finally discover the person within
you discover
the one he loves
the one whose beauty
reaches deep within his soul
you discover
and you see yourself
and you love the more
the one who opened up your own eyes
the only one
who is able to reach your heart.

Are You Reaching For a Dream?

A Dream is a very important thing, it is like a seed one must plant and water and take care of so it can grow and bear fruit in time. When you find it, take care of it, protect it. Some people walk through life not even finding the seed they wanted to grow.

The Small Seed

Let a seed
be buried deep down into the ground
deep down where there is nothing
but darkness
and the smallness of the seed,
let it wait
let it face its greatest fears
for only in being buried
can it sprout forth with new life
only in the truth of its smallness
can it realize its power
to grow
to bear fruit
and to reach the highest heavens

Soaring High

Give me freedom, give me liberty no matter how much it may cost me, and I will pay for it! Set me free like a bird who is learning to fly. Let me go so that I may spread my wings! I may fall once, I may fall twice, I may fall so many times but I will not fall always. I will learn to fly!

If you will not let me go, how can I be strong? How can I live? How can I learn to rise from my fall, from my mistakes?

You may think seclusion shall protect me, but what you do not know is that boredom can kill me a hundred times more. It is more than stupor, it is

worse than death.

Let me feel the hurt and the pain so that I may enjoy comfort. Let me experience sorrow so that I may have glorious happiness! It is better than being idle: like a stone that never knew what's on the other side of the mountain, like a shell that never knew what's on the other side of the sea.

Let me live, set me free. Let me be responsible for my own soul. Let me think, for I do have a mind. Let me feel, for I too, have a heart. Let me go, for He who made me is free!

In order to reach your dreams, you must first be able to dream. You must be FREE to dream and to reach for that dream.

Determination Versus Hard work

I came to a very good realization one morning. I realized that there is one thing that's missing in me, and that is the determination to reach my dreams. It's true that I've been trying very hard in finding ways and means to realize my life goals, but trying hard isn't the same as being sufficient, trying hard isn't helping you keep your hopes alive when you meet one disappointment after another.

Sooner or later you'll be exhausted, sooner or later you'll give up. It's as though you're merely trying out your luck in the lottery, and when you don't win, you say that at least you've tried, but it was just not meant for you, you weren't lucky enough. But luck is truly not the question, for luck is not the same as destiny. And destiny can only be reached with a firm "resolve".

When I studied hard to make it through college for instance, I didn't just say I will try my best, and see where it gets me. I told myself that I will finish my studies whatever happens, whatever it takes! Whether I have enough money or not, whether the subjects are difficult or easy, I'm going to do it, and nobody's stopping me. Destiny is like that. Its when you say

to yourself that this is what you really want and you will never ever stop until you make your dreams come true!

Perseverance Is Your Key to Success!

“I hope that you will **persevere**
Until the very end,
Because it is only then
That you will find out
That the end is but the beginning
Of the realization
Of your **dreams.**”

Persevere in prayer. Persevere in your hope. Persevere in your faith. He who cannot persevere has not truly BELIEVED from the very beginning.

Countless endeavors were called **FAILURES** not because they were doomed to fail, but because there was not enough perseverance to discover the **SUCCESS** and the **HAPPINESS** that awaited on the other side of the road.

If only one man climbed a few more feet higher. If only another man dug a few more meters deeper. If only a businessman had enough capital to last a few more days. **IF ONLY.**

Let us not be victims of changing our minds too soon before we reap the success we have sown. Giving up *too early* only shows our lack of belief in what we are doing. It shows that we have not thought about our plans well .

It shows how shallow our hope really is.

Do you know what you are actually building with your

perseverance? You are building a very strong momentum that increases steadily and expands larger and larger until it becomes so huge no hindrance could ever stop it along the way! Without perseverance, all you may have is a stone. *Nothing much can be moved by a stone.* But when that stone becomes a big rock, a boulder, an entire hill, it can move anything as it rolls down the path you chose for it to tread.

Never underestimate the power of perseverance. Much of what people call as overnight success wasn't really made overnight. The seed was sown a long time ago, although in secret. The growth seemed almost negligible at the start, but after years of preparation, the seed suddenly explodes and all that the world sees is the magnificence of that moment!

How long have you been trying? Are you losing faith already? Take heart! This may just be the moment you've long been waiting for.

HOW DO YOU TEACH AN EAGLE HOW TO FLY?

(An Excerpt from one of the chapters in my series "The Good- For- Nothing Boy")

"Good-for-nothing!" How many among us felt as though we were good-for-nothing and unwanted?

How many among us ever felt without a purpose in life? Today, I will tell you one of the chapters of the story of a little boy who felt the same way. Together with his firefly friend, let us join him in his search for his purpose as he journeys over strange and distant lands and as he miraculously uncovers his worth, his mission, and his heart.

It was raining hard that day and the little boy found himself running desperately for shelter. With the firefly cupped in his hands, he tried to make his way farther up the mountains. There used to be lots of trees there, but now, the land is almost barren. The path was slippery, and the boy often tripped as he ran.

“Are you all right in there?” he asked the firefly cupped in his hands.

“Still alive, boy; still alive,” replied the firefly.

“Just a little while more. I think I see something ahead.”

“I’m glad to hear that. I could hardly breathe in here. Where have all the trees gone anyway?” the firefly asked.

“They say they were used to make houses and many other things,” the boy replied.

“Well there are no houses here, that’s for sure. I wish they made some, too, for fireflies like me.”

“I don’t think they do that, you know.”

“Well if they can’t do that, they might as well leave some trees here,” cried the firefly.

“Yeah, I guess that’s fair enough.”

Suddenly, a mighty lightning struck and almost hit them had the boy not dodged just in time!

Crawling, firefly still in his hands, he tried to reach what seemed like a cave in the middle of the barren land.

“Whew, that was close!” the firefly sighed with relief.

“Indeed, too close. I’m glad we found this cave. We can stay here until the storm is over.”

Tired with the day’s ordeal, they slept deeply through the night, not knowing where or what they have gotten themselves into.

“Little boy, wake up! The cave is moving!”

“Wh – what? You might be dreaming, get some more sleep –“

“But the cave is really moving. Wake up!” the firefly insisted as he hovered near the boy’s ear.

Just then, the boy was awakened by the sudden gush of wind that chilled him to the bones.

“Whoossh! Whhooosssh!”

“What’s that?!” He could not believe his eyes. For right there where he thought the cave had been, is the biggest eagle he’s ever seen!

“No, please don’t go,” a gentle voice suddenly spoke. “I have no intention of harming you or your friend.”

“How – how can we be sure?” asked the trembling firefly.

“Look here.” And they saw that the eagle was tied to the ground.

“I have not gone anywhere since I was tied here. All that I ever asked of strangers was to get me some food from the nearby forest. As you can see, I can’t provide for my own needs. If you would be willing, I shall be very thankful for you both.”

“I am willing,” said the boy.

“I – I – well I – if you say so!” said the firefly.

And so everyday, the little boy gathered food from the forest to offer to the giant eagle. Everyday, they ate together and became really good friends.

“Was it really long ago since you were tied here?” asked the boy.

“Yes, I was just a little eagle. Some hunter caught me, for some reason though, he did not return.”

“And have you...”

“Oh yes, I did try to break away, but I’ve found my efforts futile that one day I resigned to accept my fate.”

“But – but as you said, you were just a little eagle then. Now you’re so big I believe you can already break away. I would really like to help you, but I’m just too little to be able to cut these chains. I know you can do it yourself.”

“I don’t know, little boy. I have failed so many times. And even if I could break loose, I don’t even know if I could still fly. Wouldn’t it be more shameful to see a free eagle who couldn’t fly?”

“But wouldn’t you want to see your family again? Wouldn’t you want to meet new friends and see new things? I know there are lots of things on the other side of the mountain, not to mention the other side of the sea. For an eagle as big as you, I’m sure there are lots of things in store if you would only try. If only I were an eagle, I wouldn’t give up no matter how many times I fail.”

“You made it sound so easy that I’m tempted to do it,” the eagle said.

“Don’t just be tempted, giant eagle. Do it! I want to see you free and soaring high!”

“It – it may be possible...”

“Yes, it’s possible!” chorused the boy and the firefly.

“Could you help me then?”

“Of course we will! I can’t teach you how to fly, you must discover it yourself. But we will support you. We will.”

“Thanks, I hope I make it this time.”

“You will! I guess you should start by practicing to flap your wings everyday. And when your wings are strong enough, maybe we can begin the real test.”

After weeks of preparation, the moment has come for the eagle and his friends.

“I’m quite nervous,” the eagle said.

“Don’t be! We’re right behind you.”

And so with one final breath, the eagle flapped his wings and tried to break loose. “Whooooosshh!”

Everything seemed to be going so well, the eagle was rising when all of a sudden, fear struck him, he lost his balance and fell!

“I knew I couldn’t do it. I knew I couldn’t.”

“Giant eagle, you must believe you can do it. There is no other way. Each failure brings us closer to the dreams we have. I have an idea! I will give you something to say to yourself while you’re practicing. You must practice everyday until your wings have become strong enough to really fly.”

And so the boy gave the eagle some inspiring words as he practiced everyday and persevered to learn how to fly; words he must believe and trust until the time comes when he is ready to fly again.

That time came. The eagle flapped his wings once more. And this time, with such strength and conviction he never thought he had. He kept on reciting the words the boy taught him as he tried to break loose and fly.

SOARING HIGH

Why should I be afraid to fly?
And why should I be afraid to try?
When I was born to meet the sky –
I was born to meet the sky and fly!
I may fall once,
I may fall twice,

*I may fall so many times
But I will not fall always!
I will try again and again and fly!*
Spread your wings now
Get ready!
Let go of your fears
As you leave the ground –
Be prepared now, steady
You're getting better,
You're flying stronger
You're soaring higher up the sky!

Suddenly, the eagle was able to break loose and soar high up in the sky; so high that the boy knew the eagle can now fend for himself. It is now time for him to move on and seek his own sky.

How Do You Deal With Life's Setbacks?

Have you ever had that feeling that everything is going well and you're well on your way to achieving all your heart's desires? You have pondered upon the Universal Laws and learned them all by heart. You have followed them religiously, built your grandest visions and seen them start to happen one by one. You were so certain you're on the right track and nothing can ever move you.

Then one moment, a single remark gets at you and all your dreams are torn into pieces. At that moment, you went so far back just when you thought you were making progress. You've climbed so hard just to slip away and see all your efforts turn to waste.

Yet was that really what had happened? Were your efforts wasted at all?

I believe that for a person who has made so much progress and growth, authentic growth, there is no such thing as wasted efforts. It may be true that you may see a lot of work that has to be redone, but doing that work is

indeed not a waste at all. In fact, if you really did your homework well, you'd find yourself much stronger and wiser now, and you'll be able to accomplish the same task in less than half the time you've spent doing it before.

What you've experienced is merely a TEMPORARY setback, and even setbacks can be opportunities for more growth.

During such times, you will realize how stronger you have indeed become. You will also be able to assess how much room there still is for improvement in many areas in your life. Speed is not the main thing after all, but the right direction in which we are headed to.

To Dream Again

Tell me what is the most difficult part of dreaming. Finding your dream? Persisting in reaching for them? At times my friend, these are not the most difficult part. At times my friend, it is that part when you let go of the dream you've worked so hard for, so you can dare to dream another dream.

It was not an easy thing for me to achieve my dream. We were but a poor family, I had no educational plan, and our sole breadwinner was my father who worked as a company driver then. The only reason I got to study in an exclusive Catholic school in high school was through a scholarship granted by the Alumni Association of the school. It was also by a scholarship that I was able to finish my Accounting Degree in college, a scholarship that fortunately continued during my review for the CPA Board Examinations. I had to study hard year after year. I had to prove again and again that I deserved my scholarship because falling just one point short of the required grades would mean the end of everything I strived so hard for. I had to give it my utmost concentration, and forget everything else that may get in the way. I even had to forego the usual things that teenagers were supposed to enjoy: parties, night outs, romantic relationships.

I was in my last year in college when my father died; he wasn't even there to see me graduate with honors. And he wasn't there as well when I passed the CPA Board. The year he died until I passed the Board, our only source of income was my father's small social security insurance, an amount that proved insufficient, and we incurred a lot of debt just so to make both ends meet.

When I finally worked as an auditor, I assumed the role of family breadwinner. It was the start of fulfilling my dreams for me and my family.

Years passed, and though I didn't become rich, I became financially stable. I was able to see my younger siblings graduate. I was able to treat my family to places I couldn't afford before. I was able to work in prestigious companies that enabled me to practice what I learned, to travel for free in various parts of the country, and to hope for a secured future and a stable career.

I was actually living the life I dreamt of. And I was on my way to reaching a predictable advancement in my career, probably until my retirement. Here was everything I've ever hoped for, the dreams I've worked so hard for all my life.

And yet, after achieving all these, I didn't feel as contented as I thought I would be. I felt like something's missing, something that would give more meaning to my life.

It is true that I was able to use what I've learned, but as days went on, I felt unable to share more and more of what I know. The audit reports I write may be quite useful for the company I work with, but the words they contain prove only useful for a time, and for a limited number of people. Most people can't even understand what it says or what it's worth. I wanted to start writing eternal and useful things for many people. I wanted to write words that heal, words that inspire, words that touch lives and bring light wherever there is darkness.

To sum it up, I had another dream, a dream so different from the one I've worked so hard for all these years.

Many people would call it foolishness, a risk so high that no professional in her sound mind would dare take. For why should I begin again? Why should I throw away all the skills and experiences, all the qualifications that would help me advance in my corporate career? Shouldn't I be taking up a Master's degree or something?

But then I asked myself, what satisfaction would I ever get in continuing what I'm doing today? No matter if I achieve a higher position this year, I would only be aiming for a higher one next year and so on. There is really no career ladder to aspire to, but a deadend for exploring the best I could yet become.

It isn't easy to dream again, and to leave behind everything you've accomplished. But life goes on, and it cannot go on by holding on to the things you know will not lead you farther in your journey. Each of us was borne to accomplish the task which only we can perform. The world awaits us to perform it. The world awaits us to find out what it is and dream again.

A Song To Dream Again

I.

You've come so far from where you wanna go
and you reached the dreams you've made some time ago
as you walk along the shore
seems you couldn't ask for more
yet the restless sea is calling you
to go and dream once more

Chorus:

What lies ahead
what lies across that restless sea
is there something that my heart should find
or someone waiting just for me
oh how would I know
I'll never know unless I try
I'll never know unless I dream again
with you Lord by my side

II.

You've wished upon a star sometime ago
yet there are millions more just waiting for your call
as you walk beneath the moon
someone waits to see you soon
and you know that you can even dance
as you build your dreams once more

Risk And Moving Mountains

One thing I've learned in being an auditor is the ability to quickly assess the risks that exists and the possible means by which to eradicate or mitigate them. Give me a situation and in less than five seconds, I can start enumerating the risks involved. Give me 30 seconds and I may even be able to classify those risks according to likelihood of happening or the materiality of the consequences possible. Very handy skill, isn't it? Could save you millions right? Right. Could make you lose millions, right? Right as well! You ask how that could happen? Here's a simple illustration. If you are to go into a business with only a one percent chance of clicking and you plan on investing your hard earned money all in that basket, you can definitely thank me when I tell you that slim, almost nil percentage of success, and save you from losing all of your money. On the other hand, if you could've actually made it among that one percent who succeed, then you can also blame me for scaring you so much and making you lose such a great opportunity.

But of course, you would never have known that unless you risked it. And had you risked it and profited among that one percent, you'd have been so happy you won't blame anyone anymore. You'd just thank yourself for following your instincts instead of following statistics.

What I'm saying is this: there are very real risks that we should be aware of, but then there are some things which we can make real despite of all the risks involved!

Stated in another way, follow statistics if you want to play it safe, if you just want to take a chance, if you don't have the tenacity and the willpower to push yourself beyond what you've always done and accomplished. If you don't think miracles can't happen anymore, if you find it difficult to follow a different drummer, by all means see the risks before you and get out of their way.

But if you feel deep down in your heart that this is what you really wanted to do, and if you believe you will do everything within your power to reach it, with a burning desire to accomplish all that you have set out to do, if you really believe you can move mountains, then I salute you and give you my utmost respect.

You are one of the few who can make things happen. You belong to that one percent of people the other 99 percent should be wary of. Because if you ever get in their way, the tables of possibilities would've already been turned. Chances are that it is the 99 who would give way for you, for the one who knows definitely, and believes whole heartedly where he is going.

Faith works like that. Faith sees the way despite the many obstacles that others see. Faith is certain. Its voice is calm and sure, confident that the things it perceives will happen and become a reality.

Risks may tell you how difficult a path to be taken will be, but it is only faith that will get you across to where your heart desires to go. No

mountain can ever stop you, for by faith even the waters of the sea can be parted, and even the mountains that stand in the way can be moved!

The Secret of Flying

This is the secret of flying:

When there is tremendous pressure all about you that you can do nothing but to rise above it all less be crushed underneath!

I want to share with you a speech I made when I was in college. It has often reminded me of how we are able to pursue our dreams, and about what really matters in the end.

Graduation Speech

Today, we celebrate our success after all these years of hardship, struggle and perseverance. We reminisce the challenges that stood before us, and we savor the victories that came upon our hands.

It was not so long ago when we dared to dream, and not so long ago, when we dared to take the first essential steps towards its fulfillment.

Along the way, we met a lot of trials, but our burning desire to reach our goals has kept us from straying or giving up. Along the way were many uncertainties, but certain beacons of light showed us the right path to take.

Let us thank God therefore for His unceasing grace and guidance; our professors, for their immeasurable dedication; our parents for their unconditional support althroughout these years; and our friends who walked along with us, side by side.

Because of them, we were able to reach our dreams. Because of them, we can truly say, "We made it!"

Yet is this really the end of all our dreams? Friends, we should not just stop

here and dwell with memories. Rather, we must look onwards and dream once more. But this time, let us dream not only for ourselves. Let us dream for the nation, and let us dream for the world.

The medals and diplomas we received today must not be mere symbols of high grades or prestigious positions, but emblems of the true light, which God has given us, and which we are now called to give others in return.

It is not sufficient anymore to be the mere hope of the nation. We must be the fulfillment of that hope!

So do your best not only to improve yourselves, but to improve the socio-economic conditions of your country. You have a great role in making this nation great again.

And when you work, don't just work to earn a living, but work so that you may live in the real sense of the word. Don't just earn money, earn it honestly and with dignity. Put meaning to everything you do so that when you reach your destination, you have not only reached it, but you reached it with honor in your soul and strength in your heart.

Never look for success in money, for success is never measured by one's bank account. Don't look for success in power, for absolute power corrupts absolutely. Don't look for success in fame, for it is the prayer in silence which is most dear to God.

As a matter of fact, don't look for success first, for it may be hard to find. But put God first in everything that you do, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success.

Friends, a bright tomorrow awaits us. Let us get there by making the most of what we have today. Never be afraid to try. Never be afraid to dream. For you are like a bird that is just learning to fly. You may fall once, you may fall twice, but you will not always fall. You will learn to fly!

Are You Praying For a Blessing?

Are you praying for a blessing in life? Does it seem too impossible to be answered? Why do some prayers take so long to be answered, while some get answered instantly? How do you pray a prayer that makes miracles come true?

Why Can't We Receive Our Blessings?

What keeps a person from receiving a gift, a very precious and significant gift?

Given the chance to accept such a gift, a brand new car perhaps a beautiful house and lot a precious jewel, how many among us would refuse something totally for free?

Following are some of the things I thought would prevent us from receiving the blessings/ gifts the good Lord has meant us all to receive:

1. Hostility/ doubt towards the giver

It doesn't matter sometimes how beautiful or precious a gift is as long as we do not approve of the giver. Who would ever receive a gift from someone she doesn't trust? From someone with a vested interest perhaps? From someone scary? From a monster?!

We are unable to receive many gifts because we do not approve of the giver.

2. Feeling of unworthiness

Even if we believe in the giver, we oftentimes refuse our gifts because we do not believe ourselves worthy of them. We think we do not deserve a new car because we have not studied well, we do not deserve to be forgiven because we have been so bad in the past.

But have you ever considered what the giver is giving the gift for? Maybe it has nothing to do after all with what we did or did not do. Maybe it is being given just because the giver would be happy to see us receive the blessing. Maybe it is because of his generosity. Maybe it is because of his *unconditional love*.

3. So much focus on other things as not to see what is being given

How do you receive a gift you do not even notice? If we are so busy doing something else, talking to this and that person, taking care of this and that, worrying, fretting, anxiously thinking of our fears, would we ever have the time to even think someone's waiting for us, intending to give us something beautiful?

4. Lack of confidence to be able to use the gift

If we do not know how to operate a personal computer, not even having the slightest interest to learn, would it matter at all that someone's giving us a top of the line PC, complete with accessories, software and technical assistance?

If we think we'd have no use nor skill for something, we may refuse something being given us.

5. Ignorance on the nature and worth of what is being given

Our ignorance on the nature of the gift being given us hinders us from receiving it with open arms. Instead of gratitude, we have doubt. Instead of excitement, we have apathy and we don't care whether we receive the blessing or not at all.

6. Ignorance of one's needs that can be fully satisfied by the gift

If we do not know ourselves and our needs, we may not be aware of what good the blessing before us is going to give us. An abundant feast may have been set before our eyes, yet if we do not even know we're hungry, it wouldn't satisfy us a bit. We may even look for other things we think we need.

7. Comparing one's gift to the gift given to others

How many times have we refused our blessings because we deem it lesser than the gifts we saw given to other people? Our blessings may be the best for us, yet oftentimes, we look at bigger packages given to another. We know not that inside the small package is a precious jewel waiting to be revealed if only we'd have opened our hands to receive it rather than whine about how small it is compared to what our neighbors have received.

Have you found your blessings yet? Have you prayed and received not the answer? Reflect for a moment and consider, you may have refused the very blessings God has placed before you all the while.

If There Is Abundance Around, Why Can't We Receive It?

We've heard how life seemed so abundant in all things, in sunshine, in water, in the air we breathe. Everything is there for the taking, and the only thing left for us is to claim them. Yet how is it the many of us still lack in many things, particularly in material wealth? If the earth never lacks in water, why is it that we never seem to have even a small drop of it at times?

If water could be compared to the blessings we receive, and if the said blessings should be in abundance, we ask why some people receive more of it than some of us do. And so we look at lakes far wider than the rest, or oceans far deeper and clearer, or waterfalls stronger and more majestic

than many. And then we look at creeks and small trickles of water, of canals that lay stagnant and could not deliver such a powerful flow.

Can we now see it better? Can we now see how water (life's blessings) can be so abundant, and how at the same time, we seem to have so little of it?

If we want to have more of it, like a big lake perhaps, it's up to us to dig more deeper and to **ALLOW** more of the water to pass through, to flow and to come in. The bigger the space we carve, the more water there will be, the more share of blessings we can have in the infinite abundance of life!

Why God Doesn't Give Us Our Desires

*"You must rest, O soul, to receive your heart's desire."
-Streams in the Desert*

Sometimes, God doesn't give us the things we want because He knows the things we truly desire, desires that we may not even be aware of because we do not truly know ourselves.

We cannot truly know ourselves unless we really choose to, and we cannot discover our true desires unless we let go of the things we think we want, things borne not out of love, but out of fear, anger or other things other than what our heart is yearning for.

Had God immediately given us our requests, our joy wouldn't have had a chance to be complete because we would have settled for the "Second best".

But God allows us instead these momentary frustrations

so that we can discover little by little
what it is we truly desire.

When I Asked For a ROSE

It was January 31, 2000, and Valentines Day seem so near. I was praying to God when I suddenly felt so sad. I felt so lonely. I knew that dreaded day would soon be coming when girls would soon be receiving flowers from their special someone, when they would all go about proudly carrying those flowers, certain of the sincere love of those that offered them. I haven't got any lover though. So no flowers for me, no bouquet, not even a single red rose.

It was a bit embarrassing, but I knew the Lord knew my heart and there was no point in hiding anything. I remained true to my feelings, and I asked God for something I've never asked before. I've asked Him to send me a rose, just one. I don't know how it could possibly happen, but I prayed, like a daughter asking something from her dear father. I prayed for a single red rose. I prayed for a small expression of love, a small sign that I am loved, and that I am special as well.

It was a heartfelt prayer, though I never really thought much of it the day after. I guess it was enough for me that I uttered it, and that the Lord heard me. It was already upon God's hands whether to grant the prayer of silly girls like me.

So I went through my activities for the day, attending a seminar in the morning, and meeting my bestfriend afterwards in the afternoon. My friend and I strolled at a mall for a while, and then proceeded to pick up our materials for our upcoming training in Puerto Galera. After picking them up, we tried to find a ride back home. We found it difficult though, and found ourselves trying to find alternative routes.

On our way to EDSA, we chanced upon the Manila Seedling Bank, which we had seen many times before from the outside. A bit curious, we decided

to look inside. We were amazed to see such a variety of plants wherever we proceeded. We certainly didn't expect so much there. But it turned out there was even an exhibit at that time from many skilled participants all over the country!

There were plants of all shapes and sizes, of common and rare varieties. There were beautiful flowers everywhere: gerberas, orchids, sunflowers, yellowbells, roses of all colors! Their scent enthralls the senses, their soft and vividly colored petals can't help but delight the eyes. The presentation was just terrific, and it really felt like we've just entered an enchanted garden, far from the harsh activities of men, protected by fairies and elves that guard them night and day.

And suddenly, right in the middle of that garden, I remembered my prayer. My prayer for a single red rose. And I realized, right there and then, that that prayer had been granted far beyond how I expected it to be answered. For right before my eyes lay not just a flower, not just a rose, not just a red rose, not just a bouquet of roses, but hundreds of flowers flourishing, blooming, glorifying the God that answers all of our prayers.

I've only asked for a small emblem of care, but what I received is a mountain of flowers testifying God's immeasurable love for me. I felt so happy. I felt so special and blessed. I believed then that no other girl was able to receive as much that Valentine's Day. No other man could have given as much. But the One who did was the One who loved me, the One who loved me enough to answer that silly prayer for a single lonely rose.

Who Are Blessed?

I've often heard people saying "*I'm truly blessed*", or "God blessed me."

Does that mean other people weren't blessed?

If God causes the sun to shine both on the good and the bad, will He withhold His blessings to some and give it only to a few?

Who are we to say that some people are less fortunate than us?

I believe that God pours His blessings upon us all... **always**.

And maybe, when we say that we are blessed, it is only like saying we have finally found the faith to **receive** what God is giving us. Finally, we have recognized God's goodness, and for that, we say that **we are blessed!**

The Secret to Mountain-moving FAITH!

A child is having a seizure, he foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth, he is thrown to the ground and lays as rigid as a rock. Meanwhile, the disciples of Jesus gathered around him, praying, laying their hands and shouting words of affirmation, trying to cast away the evil spirit that has possessed the child. Still the child rolled around, foaming at the mouth. The disciples couldn't drive away the malady. After all the miracles they've seen through Jesus, after all the miracles they have performed themselves, they stand defeated and confused.

Just then, Jesus arrives and is quickly approached by the boy's father, asking for the healing of his son. Jesus asks the man if he believes. The man answers, **"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"** Jesus commanded the spirit to depart, and at once, the boy was healed!

After the crowd had left, the disciples asked Jesus why they couldn't drive out the evil spirit. Jesus replied, **"This kind can come out only by prayer."**

But wasn't it prayer that the disciples uttered when they tried to heal the boy? Why didn't it work? Did they not have enough faith? And **why was their faith lacking?** What prayer finally drove out the spirit away? It isn't just the prayer of Jesus, but the prayer of the father's child when he proclaimed that he believed.

But what's the difference between his prayer and the prayer of the disciples? Shouldn't the disciples know more of faith than the suffering father did?

The disciples may have had more experience in their work, but when

they came across a difficult case, they themselves started to doubt. And when their hearts were gripped by *fear and worry*, there was nothing within them that urged them to persevere in their work. **They lost their faith, and then they lost their hope, and they had nothing more.**

But the father of the child, though he admittedly lacked also in faith had something more. Something that urged him to persevere. Something that urged him to come to Jesus and to try once again. **He couldn't just give up.** He couldn't bear the sight of his very own son suffering that way. No, he will do everything he can so he can save the boy he loves so much!

And alas, through the hands of Jesus, his son had been saved. Through the hands of Jesus, his prayer had been answered. His was the only prayer that prevailed, the only one who was able to **overcome his unbelief.** And what prompted him? It was his unquestionable love for his son. **It was love.**

If I speak in tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophesy and can fathom all mysteries and knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing... Love never fails. (1 Cor. 13:1-2,8)

Secret to Answered Prayers

What is the secret to answered prayers? Will God answer my prayers?

The Bible has a very simple guide on how we should pray:

Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not... ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. – Matthew 21:21

And when we look back at all the prayers that Jesus had answered, honesty and simplicity in those prayers were very much evident.

And behold, there came a leper and worshiped him saying, Lord, if thou

wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, saying, **I will; be thou made clean.** And straightway his leprosy was cleansed. -Matthew 8:2-3

*And as Jesus passed by from thence, two blind men followed him, crying out, saying Have mercy on us, thou son of David. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, **According to your faith be it done unto you.** And their eyes were opened.*
– Matthew 9:27-30

Such simple and straightforward prayers, and yet these prayers were often the prayers that Jesus praised for their faith.

Why then do some of our prayers seem to remain unanswered until now? What have we failed to understand? **What is the kind of prayer God always hears and answers?**

I've listed THREE easy guidelines that have helped me tremendously in my own prayers. They're so simple and easy to remember, and they have guided me through much of my prayer life.

Three things we need in our prayers:

1. To KNOW what we want

What is it that we truly want? Are the concerns that escape our lips in prayer truly the things we desire? We are to remember that prayer isn't about mere words no matter how beautiful or how well composed they seem to be. Prayer is that which comes from our hearts, the things we lift up towards heaven when we close our eyes and kneel before the One who hears the voice within us. For all we know, the things we say are just the opposite of the things we really want. For all we know, we have not yet come to discover the things we truly desire.

Do we still remember the blind man whom Jesus healed?

*And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, **What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?** And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

Why did Jesus ask him what he desires? Wasn't it already obvious that he needed to see? What I can say is this: the prayer, the real desire of the blind man should come from him himself. Jesus wanted him to realize the desire that lies in his own heart, to claim it, to proclaim it, and to believe that it can be done. Because this is the way to authentic prayer. God does not suddenly appear before us and insist on the things we obviously need. What would you say if He suddenly comes to you and says, "Well John, I think you need a new job so you can buy a new shirt because you really look so shabby already, and I can't bear the sight of you!" Well, won't it be encroaching upon our God-given will, on the honor He has bestowed upon us as His children? On the right to receive whatever gift we want, not the gifts thrust upon us by force?

We need to seek inside our hearts those desires that have slept there for so long. Unless we do, we do not know what to pray for in the first place, and we end up sending a bunch of mixed and weak signals that do not really know the things it asks for. Have you ever heard someone talking on the phone over a choppy line? Well, was it easy to understand what he was saying? If the person was asking you for something, would you have understood what it was? And having never understood what it was in the first place, would you have given what the person was asking for?

We must uncover the prayers our souls are crying for. And in order to do so, we must learn how to remove all the impurities that conceal our true desires. Know what you want. Be brave enough to face yourself in the mirror and see what it is you're lacking. Do not content yourself with the outer layer of your problems. Seek the core of your difficulties. It is only then that you will know you are blind. It is only then that you will know

you needed to see!

2. To BELIEVE that we can get what we want and that God can answer our prayers.

What is the point of praying if we do not believe our prayers will be answered? What is the point of praying if we do not believe someone hears them and that the one who does can answer them? You might have noticed how people often simply murmur their wishes, hoping some genie might pass by and grant them their wishes if he so desires. Not a very empowering concept, isn't it?

See if you can relate to the following:

a. We think we do not deserve what we pray for

Having a realistic assessment of ourselves is good. But insisting on our unworthiness as a cause to believe that our prayers should not be granted is another. Remember that God does not force us to receive anything, however wonderful or generous His blessings are. If we do not wish to accept his answers, we are the ones closing our doors and shutting out every good thing God sends out to us.

b. We think God is not good or generous enough to grant us our desires

We may have an idea of a God who never even smiles, a God who gives out all these commandments for us to follow and who watches our every move so He can punish us if we violate any of those laws He has given us. If this is how you see God, it is no wonder that you do not believe your prayers will be answered. In fact, if this is how you see Him, you may never even have the guts to pray to Him at all!

Believe that God is good. Believe that God loves you so much He gave up His glory to be just like you in order to save you. Believe that if He can

grant you His One and Only Son, He will not withhold anything from you.

3. To fervently and consistently DESIRE the thing we want.

Sometimes we know what we want, and we believe that God can grant them. But when some sort of delay comes, we start doubting our prayers, and subsequently, God's generosity to grant what we ask for. A persistent prayer proves how far our faith can go. It proves how much we believe in the things we pray for.

When we fail to pray fervently, the following happens and jeopardizes our prayers:

a. We settle for the initial results we get instead of pursuing what it is we really want

Sometimes, we recognize some things as answers to our prayers. It may be a job, which pays enough, but is not as rewarding as we envisioned it to be; or a boyfriend who seems okay, but one with whom we do not feel truly happy with. Though these answers seem good enough, they do not fully satisfy our desires. And we settle for these things instead of pursuing the true essence of our prayers.

These things may have been answers indeed, but only answers to the broken prayers we prayed when we have not yet uncovered our true desires. They have been sent according to our faith, but that doesn't mean they are the true answers to our deepest desires. They may only be there to help us dig deeper, to ask ourselves what it is we truly want. If they can satisfy us now, then well and good. But if not, if we can't pray a prayer of thanksgiving with a heart overflowing in joy and gratitude, then let go of these things. These are not yet the answers you are searching for.

b. We change our minds even before we get the desired results

Sometimes it happens that even before the answer to our prayer arrives, we retract our prayers and ask for something else instead. And after doing so, we change our minds again and ask for another thing, and then another

thing, and then another. How do you expect then to get the answers you want? If you keep on changing your mind, you only prove you do not know what it is you really want, and that's why you cannot persist in your prayers. You just keep on jumping from one prayer to another hoping that you may finally hit the jackpot by randomly guessing on what you really desire to have.

Consider the blind man whom Jesus healed:

And it came to pass, as he drew nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. **And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.** And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God. – Luke 18:35-43

Though the people rebuked him, though they urged him to keep quiet, the man continued to cry out to Jesus. He knew his need and he believed that Jesus can grant him the answer to his prayer.

Unlike the blind man, some people nowadays listen more to the people rebuking them than to the inner desires in their hearts. Often, we believe these people, and we allow them to make us believe our prayers can't be or don't deserve to be answered.

Don't listen to these people. Listen to your heart, because somewhere in there, God had planted a sacred seed of desire that will bring you to your happiness, to the destiny He has planned for you all along, if only you will believe.

So go ahead and pray. Pray your deepest, innermost desires. For such is the secret to answered prayers. Believe that God listens and God longs for you to have your prayers answered. Pray fervently, do not give up. For as you might have observed, Jesus never turned down anyone who's ever asked Him for anything; **NOT ONE**.

Are You Grieving the Loss of a Loved One?

There are times in our journey, when we need to say goodbye to fellow pilgrims who have been with us along the way. We know not how long we will be with our companions, yet we are grateful for being able to travel with them. But how do we deal with this great grief of separation? In this part of our journey, how do we carry on?

When my grandfather died, the first question that crossed my mind was, "Shall we ever, as a family, be able to smile again?"

He was a very kind man, a sweet and loving man who also happened to be a retired Captain of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, a proud veteran of the USAFFE in World War II. I loved him - very much, and regarded him as my very own father. He used to carry me up his shoulders when I was but a little girl. I never saw him mad. He was always calm and gentle, but with that certain kind of strength in him that never needed to be boasted about anymore. Maybe this kind of admiration was the source of my childhood dream of being a lady cadette officer. Well, I didn't realize that dream, but in my heart I knew I've acquired that kind of courage he had, and it sort of stayed with me through the years.

I also admired the kind of love he cherished with my Grandma. Something that lasted for fifty golden years, the 50th year being the year of his demise. I often told myself that theirs was the kind of marriage I fervently pray to have - simple, sincere, lasting, abounding in love, courage and understanding. The day my Grandpa died, my heart broke, not only for my own grief, but for the grief of seeing such a blessed marriage come to a sudden end right before my eyes.

How indeed are we going to go about our lives after his passing? How do we spend our late evenings without his stories? How do we celebrate Christmas without his jolly smile?

The seat he occupied at dinner will remain vacant thereafter. The sight of him and Grandma embracing each other after a petty quarrel will be nothing more but a sweet memory to look back to.

The funny thing was, I never really considered him old. He had always been strong and healthy and happy. I thought he'd always be there, for me, for my Grandma, for everyone who has ever gotten to know the wonderful person he is. But I guess death is like that. It takes from you in an instant the people you've cherrished for a whole lifetime. Just like that. As simple as that. And you are suddenly left with two things: anger for having been deprived of your beloved for no reason at all; and emptiness, a vacuum that gnaws right at your heart where all the joyful moments once had been.

And how will it be for people who have lost not only their fathers, but mothers, children, both parents, lifetime partners who spent their lives through thick and thin, who dreamt together and journeyed together and found meaning in each other's lives?

How are we to begin grieving for them? Where could we ever find the tears to weep, tears that will pour out and cry in behalf of our torn and shattered hearts?

1. Cry

Find those tears. Try to let them out however painful the process is. Let them out. Let them pour showers that will cleanse away every bit of

darkness and bitterness from your heart.

Shy not from crying out aloud. You have every right to be heard, and all the right to be hurt. No one's going to stand in your way even if you wail. Let your cries rise up to the clouds, unto the ears of heaven who understand what sorrow mortal men go through in this valley of tears.

Cry for the pain of parting. Cry for the sad mornings that will greet you without your lover's arms. Cry for the words that shall remain unspoken and unheard. Cry for the places you will never be able to walk together anymore. Cry for the dreams that will remain as dreams. Cry for the memories that will remain as memories. Cry for the hand that can no longer caress you. Cry for those eyes that can no longer see your tears.

Cry your heart out. Because the truth is - it hurts, and it really hurts so much!

2. Forgive

There are many things we don't want to admit in times like these; things we believe would only dishonor the memory of our loved one, or things that would dishonor us before their memory. But unless we deal with these things, we would always be burdened by things that should have been buried with passing of our loved ones.

a. Forgiving our loved ones

People are not perfect. No matter how much we love them or no matter how good they are, they may have hurt us at one point or another. They may have judged us and disappointed us. We have to admit how they failed us, and then forgive them with a forgiveness that comes out of the generosity of our hearts. We know that we do not have time anymore, we can no longer wait for them to see their faults and ask our forgiveness. So we forgive them. We let them go with no bitterness in our hearts.

b. Forgiving ourselves

When our loved ones pass away, there is always a feeling of guilt left in us - how we haven't loved them enough, how we could've saved them, how we could've made them happier. But when we come to think of it, how much more could we have really done though? Even if we could've made a difference, could we be able to turn back the hands of time?

Forgive yourself. Admit your faults, go to confession, slap your face hard, observe fasting for a week, shave your head even! But don't punish yourself forever for being unable to make the proper retribution. You can no longer do that. It's not your fault anymore. Blaming yourself could never earn for you the forgiveness you so desire. If you can't be content in praying for forgiveness alone, if you really believe you still have to do something to be forgiven, then do this - love those people still within your reach. Do this, and you'd have earned more than forgiveness; you'd have loved. Love heals. Love forgives.

3. Deal with the pain one day at a time

Grieving for our loved ones who passed away is probably one of the most painful things we'll experience in life. Deal with it one short day at a time. Don't think of the whole 25 or 50 years ahead of you. Just think of today, and of all the support being given you just where you are. It is times like these when we get to know who our true friends are, people willing to extend their hands and their hearts to help see you through. Accept the help given you, and you'll make it today.

4. Honor/ treasure their memory

Many people will suggest to you to move on, which is a fine thing. In the process though, they may also urge you to forget all about the past, and

start letting go. Now letting go is not such a bad thing, it could mean giving up all our unrealizable expectations and all of the things we cannot do anymore. But to forget all things completely - to do so would be to start cheating on our true feelings for our beloved who passed away.

We can't just act like we had amnesia all of a sudden. We can't pretend that the things that happened didn't happen, and that the precious moments we've spent with our loved ones don't mean anything to us anymore. Something happened in the past. Souls touched in the past. Lives changed. Souls were inspired.

Our grief is only amplified with the thought that we are forever parting with every remaining essence of our loved ones. That's what makes our mourning even worse, to believe that we are forever losing that part of our lives that changed us and made us happy. Don't throw it all away. When inspiration comes upon you, they need not leave. They never leave. They inspire us forever.

When my Grandpa died, I thought it was the end of the wonderful love he had with Grandma. But I was wrong. It did not end there. It cannot be ended that way. Up to this moment, I am still a witness on how true love is kept alive in the hearts and minds of those who carry on the radiance of its warmth.

5. Think of the legacy they left behind

I've always thought that when our loved ones go away, they take a part of ourselves with them. It's like a part of us withers away and dies. We feel like an arm or a leg had just been taken away and we can never be whole again. We feel we are lesser people than we used to be. We then wonder why people had to meet at all only to be separated in the end, only to feel broken and incomplete.

But then I've also learned that when people become part of each other's lives, their lives become richer from the whole new world opened before them by one another. They gain a new perspective, they get a deeper understanding of themselves, they learn new skills and hobbies, they discover new places, they get to love a new song. Each one leaves a mark, a precious legacy, a part of their very selves to the people they love.

Even after their lives together had ended, even after one has gone and passed away, that part they have given to us will remain. Because when people become a part of us, a part of their own souls remain in us, forever enriching us, and we are never the same as before.

My Grandpa had been gone for 16 years now, but the things he left me, the imprint he left in my soul will always be there, guiding me through my journey ahead. Love of country, courage, dignity, love of family - these are the things I will always be thankful for.

6. Schedule activities that help vent out your emotions

You cried, you wept, you wailed. But as you miss your loved one more painfully with the passing of each day, you feel the emotions within you continue to surge, emotions that need to find a proper outlet to let go.

Schedule those activities with a friend that will encourage you to perform them:

-Play badminton, let go of all the hurts you feel everytime you hit the shuttlecock. Hit it hard! Hit it as far as you can.

-Run the treadmill. Everytime you feel the urge to escape, walk tirelessly. Walk like you never walked before. Run. Run and release the pain you keep within you.

-Swim, imagine your tears being washed away. Do your most powerful strokes, and glide away from all the expectations the world thrusts upon your shoulders. Just make sure a trusted friend and lifeguard is watching over you, okey?

-Grab a crayon and a sketch pad. Draw the abstract feelings you can't and don't want to decipher at the moment. Draw in hard wild strokes. Then tear the sheet in pieces.

7. Replenish your soul

Once the strong feelings begin to subside, replenish your soul with activities that promote peace, wholeness and a fresh beginning.

-Plant a seed and watch the new plant emerge from the ground from which it was buried.

-Take care of a chick and help it grow into a hen. You can even enjoy the eggs she will lay for you later!

-Watch a sunrise with a trusted buddy. See how darkness transforms into a magnificent rising of a brand new day.

-Travel somewhere you've never been to. Get to know the locals and try to enjoy their way of life.

8. Give yourself time to adjust and recover

It will take time for you to carry on your usual routines each day. Just be patient with yourself. One day survived is one day of battle won. The more days you survive, the more confidence you will gain that you will make it.

If it's really difficult for you, you can try to write letters to your loved one

as though you were only miles away.

This will help you cope with the abrupt change of suddenly not being able to talk with your loved one. This will also help keep your life in check as you literally report what you're doing with your life.

9. Think of the legacy you wish to leave behind

The torch has been passed on to you. Your life has been made richer by the legacy you received. What do you do now with what you have? What legacy do you want to leave behind to the people that matter most to you now? Remember that you are now a different person by having been a part of someone's life. Everything you do, any difference that you make in this life is not only because of you, but also because of the one who loved you. When you leave your mark unto this world, you leave a mark formed also by every person that truly touched your life.

10. Believe that God will see you through

God knows your grief. He weeps with you. He hopes with you. He cares for you so much that He willingly died for you to conquer death forever and to give you the perfect and eternal life He wants you to enjoy. Things have not ended here. They have only just begun. Take heart! He will see you through. It is Jesus Himself who said, "The girl is not dead but asleep." (Matthew 9:24)

When my Grandpa died, I used to doubt whether we can still smile again, now I know the answer: WE CAN

Poem of One Grieving

Where would you go
that i cannot follow?
for how long must i wait
until we meet again?
what would i do
in times that i miss you?
where would i go
in times when i long to see you again?
how must i spend
the nights without you?
how do i bear
each morning that you're not there?
shall i ever smile again?
will i ever laugh again?
will i ever face the world again
knowing that i'm not alone?
why must you leave me?
why must i cry these tears
when you're not here
to wipe them all away?
why must i suffer
the empty days without my beloved?
why must i dream
without you by my side?
the days shall never be the same again
i will never be the same again
without you
the life of my soul,
the joy of my heart,
the light in my eyes,
the hope of my dreams,
the comfort of my lonely nights,
without you my beloved,
i grieve and cry,
i grope and stumble in the dark,

i weep with all my soul
i desire with all my heart
i let go of all of me that you took away with you
i keep all of you that is in me,
and will always remain in me
wherever i may go
i wait and pray and hope
i will look forward to each brand new day
thankful for all that I've had and will always have
thankful for the sun that shines again
believing and hanging on
believing that life will go on
it can't help but go on
it shall go on
and in so going
there really is no end
only mornings and evenings
and life that never ever ends.

The Unbreakable Thread

I cannot understand
how two people
who used to be so close,
whose souls were knit
so tightly together
could suddenly
be parted
and stripped away forever
from each other's arms
mere whispers
used to draw our hearts together,

but now even my loudest cries
fail to bring you back to me
how can it be?
how can you suddenly
be so far away from me?
must I accept your passing
as a fitting end to what we've had?
should I accept that from this moment
there will always be a chasm between us
one that I can never cross
to see you
and to be with you again
not even for a single happy while
have you really gone away
have you really left me
all alone
can't you hear me now as I speak
can't you see me now as I search the skies
for traces of your smile?
O how I wish you could see me now
And how I desire that all this time
that I've been praying,
you're really sitting there, listening
gazing at me
loving me
as you've always done before
How I pray
you have not really gone,

that you haven't left my side at all,
not even for a short lonely while
That all the while I have been weeping
you're holding out your hand
catching my every tear
that all the while I have been praying
you're praying with me, too
and with all the angels
in whose company
you now walk amongst
Who knows indeed?
who knows?
maybe you haven't really left
maybe the love we've had
has woven a golden thread
between you and me
a thread that shall remain
as surely as love remains
a thread that shall draw us together
forever
and we'll never ever need
to say goodbye

Are You Getting To Know Yourself Better?

One of the very first things we need to discover is who we are. Before we go out and continue our journey, we must make sure we know who the traveler is. Who are we really, stripped of other people's expectations of us? What do we really want? What could we offer our fellow travelers? What do we set out to achieve in our journey?

Shadow

Part of getting to know ourselves is getting to know our shadows and weaknesses. What are we hiding all these years? What are we running away from?

You can't run away from your shadow. You can't avoid it and live as though it wasn't there. You have to face it courageously and see clearly how dark and big and ugly it is. You have to accept it's there. All these so you'd know what efforts and prayers, what struggles and sacrifices you ought to make to conquer it, lest you fall all of a sudden, brought down shocked and unaware of the monster that lay hidden all these years.

“Lift up your tired hands, then, and strengthen your trembling knees! Keep walking on straight paths, so that the lame foot may not be disabled, but instead be healed.” – Hebrews 12:12 TEV

Shadows aren't meant to scare us. They are meant to lead us into the light.

At The End of Ourselves

Most people do not accomplish everything they are capable of doing because they have not come to the end of themselves and the beginning of their God-ordained destiny.

Who Am I?

Who am I?

Who am I that heaven should be kind to me?

Who am I that angels should bow down before me?

Am I not a mist that comes and goes
or a frost that forms and quickly melts away?

Who am I?

I am but a leaf the wind tosses about

I am but a flower that blooms and then withers away

I can find no lovely thing in me

I can see nothing that I wanted you to see

Had I seen it

I'd have had no reason to fear

Had I found it

I'd have lifted up my face towards the stars

Who am I?

What say you to a nameless fool?

Had somebody known

Had somebody only told me

Had somebody seen the faintest shadow that I left

I would have died

I would have loved

I would have lived again

Who Are You Really?

**“For God hath not given us a spirit
of fear; but of power, of love, and of
a sound mind.”**

Yet how often do we find ourselves
weak, hands hanging limp

head bent down
spirit drained and hopeless
as though we were paupers
and weaklings
rather than sons and daughters
of the Most High God?

Being good is not being gutless
and being kind is not being
bereft of courage
See yourself for who you really are
someone with an eternal heritage
redeemed and imbued with royalty,
soaring
and breaking through
like the sunshine
towards your divine destiny!

You Are Unique!

You are not merely made up of your shadow and weaknesses. You have a gift, and that gift is as unique as you are. Only you could possibly offer your gift to the world.

We learn to love each other when we begin to realize how truly unique and wonderful each one of us is. Like seashells along the shore, no one is entirely alike, each is crafted with an imprint of God's hand, each has something to share, and each has something to admire and long for in another.

People often see me as I quiet person, one who rarely cracks a joke, one that can comfortably sit in a corner and have a good time reading a book or listening to good music. But that doesn't mean I couldn't engage in good conversation. That doesn't mean I couldn't comfort a grieving soul. That doesn't mean I couldn't share the kind of happiness that comes from things the world hardly notices in its race towards unreachable dreams. I am the kind of person God has masterfully and lovingly made me to be. I am happy. I am beautiful. I am unique!

You May Not Be Perfect, But That Doesn't Mean You Can't Be Loved

There are some things you love
imperfect though as they are;
sometimes you wish you can improve them,
that in one way or another
you can somehow make them perfect;
but then you realize
that even if these things happen,
they will no longer be the same ones
that you have loved;
you realize that you love them more
just being the way they were,
with all their flaws
and weaknesses;
you realize that you love
even these flaws
and one way or another,
such things just blend in
and then you know
what true beauty
really means.

There Could Be a Genius Hiding Within You

Very few realize what burdens geniuses carry their whole lives – what of Van Gogh, of Edgar Allan Poe, of the mathematician John Nash?

Very few realize how hard it might have been to constantly manage and control that great power that they possess, to undertake it all alone,

ostracized by the society that fails to understand them intellectually, and to sympathize with them as normal human beings who also need to be understood and to belong.

People may not realize the efforts that they made in order to reach out. On the other hand, people may look at them as snobs who can get by on their own and need not anyone else to fellowship with their whole life. Others may even envy them and shy away from taking their company for fear that they might lose their self esteem in their presence.

Indeed, the greater the power given, the greater also is the cross and the task of harnessing it to the full. May God help us all attain our full potentials, and may He help us find good friends who can lend us a warm hand along the way.

Not all are called to be artists in the specific sense of the term. Yet, as Genesis has it, all men and women are entrusted with the task of crafting their own life: in a certain sense, they are to make of it a work of art, a masterpiece.

-Pope John Paul II

Who Do People Say You Are?

Who do people say you are?
Do you believe them?
Do you hate yourself afterwards
because they have made you feel worthless?

People may be mirrors that help us
reflect the truth
and they do help us a lot of times.

But there are times when the very mirrors
we are counting on
are marred
and broken
and cannot reflect the truth that we wanted to see

Who do people say you are?

What images have they formed in your mind?
Are these images accurate after all?
Are the mirrors you're using
clear
well illuminated
true?

Who do you say you really are?

**I bare my nakedness
To the world,
That the world may see who I am;
Not the mask that hides my flaws,
Not the mask that hides my beauty.
I bask in the light
And I take off the mask!**

You can never find true happiness until you become true to who you really are. Many people wear masks to hide even from themselves. They do not like who they are. They fool themselves into thinking they are the masks they wore. And so they try to satisfy the mask instead of satisfying their true selves.

Throw away that mask!

No matter how beautiful it is, it can never be you. It cannot give you happiness. Even if somebody learns to love your mask, you'd know that it is only the mask he loves, not the real person behind the mask.

People who are most truthful about themselves are the most happy. They accept themselves. They allow themselves to be loved for who they are.

It's true that not everybody will love them. Others may even criticize them and reject them. But there are people who will like them. They will be able to see their true beauty. They will admire their courage for standing up for

truth.

Before any acceptance or healing can take place, one must face the truth. No matter how painful, the truth must be exposed. Otherwise, people will always remain in the shadows of their masks and never get to see the Light.

This Light is freedom, not only to be yourself, but to be the BEST of who you are!

There is only one YOU. The world deserves that person. So live an **AUTHENTIC LIFE!**

Are You Bored and Nothing Could Excite You Anymore?

There may come a time in your journey when you'd feel bored as though nothing could excite you anymore. It's as though you could already foresee everything that would happen in the days to come. But could you? Did the world really stop turning or were you the one who settled down in this part of the road you're traveling?

Is There Nothing Beautiful In This World Anymore?

Is there nothing beautiful in this world anymore? Is there nothing at all that can delight us and give us hope? How many times have we felt we've seen it all, and there is nothing more that can inspire us the way things have inspired us before? How many times have we felt there is nothing more that can move us, that there is nothing more that can touch our hearts and bring our eyes to tears?

Were the people of old merely more sentimental, and we more practical in our thoughts and ways? Were the folks that have lived before us merely too unfortunate to have fewer things with which to content themselves, or have we found too many things that overwhelm us, and we have lost sight of those things that can truly make us happy?

What has changed? What has passed? Whatever faded that the more we grew and learned, the more we saw the shadows, the more our eyes longed for the beauty that faded through the passing of the years?

Was it really something that left us, never ever to return? The crispness of the morning air smothered by the urban smog? The pristine waters of brooks and streams, now ever rare as dark shadows crept even the mightiest of seas? The freshness of flowers in gardens now finding but

lesser and lesser space in the city's towering skyscrapers? Or was it something in our eyes that blurred our vision, such that we look and stare but we can no longer see?

What are we after anyway? What do we yearn to see? Is it beauty still? Is it goodness still? Or have we shifted our gaze from things eternal and pure to thrills that excite our senses but never satisfies us in the end?

Worse, we may not be looking anymore, we may not believe anymore that there is something beautiful in the world, in us, in one another. We are afraid to look. And everything we do seems only to escape the emptiness within that all the wealth and glitter of the world we have created cannot really fill.

Look within. There is wisdom and unspeakable peace that await you. Look again. There is still wonder in the single drop of dew that clings upon the faded petal of a rose. Look with a new pair of eyes and with a new heart. A heart filled with courage. A heart filled with faith, believing that there is still some beauty in the human soul, and in the breath of God blowing upon its creatures, making all things new, revealing all things beautiful.

This people will listen and listen, but not understand; they will look and look, but not see, because their minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears and have closed their eyes. Otherwise, their eyes would see, their ears would hear, their minds would understand, and they would turn to me, says God, and I would heal them. – Matthew 13:14-15 (TEV)

Mystery

The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of

mystery— even if mixed with fear— that engendered religion. A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, our perceptions of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which only in their most primitive forms are accessible to our minds: it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute true religiosity. In this sense, and only in this sense, I am a deeply religious man.

-Albert Einstein

If you feel bored, you may need to ask yourself some questions:

When was the last time you got out of your comfort zone?

Have you discovered your passion?

Have you fulfilled your life purpose?

Are you afraid to take some risks at this point in your life?

A comfortable life should never replace a meaningful life. Pray and ask God's help to lead you where He wants you to go. Don't be afraid. If God asks you to go somewhere, He will never send you without providing for all your needs to accomplish the mission He is giving you. **It's an exciting journey!** No one really knows what will happen next, but we have our firm foundation in the God who will never let us go astray.

When is Being Safe The Most Dangerous Place You Can Be?

What's wrong with being lukewarm? Isn't being somewhere in the middle the right place to be? The safest place to be? I mean, who would ever complain of people trudging silently and patiently along, never bothering anyone? Why did the Bible deem it better to be cold instead of being lukewarm? Is being bad better than being not good enough?

I used to ponder about this when I was a lot younger, because I just

couldn't believe how being lukewarm can be very much like a sin for one to be reprimanded for. It was only later though that I realized the true gravity of the condition of people being referred to as such.

What is being lukewarm anyway? To begin with, we should make a clear distinction between being lukewarm and being average. Being lukewarm does not refer to one's status or capacity in life, but in one's state of inner consciousness and aliveness in spirit.

Being lukewarm is a state of passivity, of being totally crippled to move either forward or backwards, of being stuck and not having the least desire or discontent that would prompt him to change and grow and really live. Being lukewarm is being oblivious to what is happening around him as he isn't even aware of any activity happening within himself. He has reached a state of living where he can get by, and where he has been able to achieve enough that he is afraid of losing what little he has, and hence unable to risk anything to gain that which could really make him happy.

Truly it would be better if the person were in a worse condition. By then, he would have risked everything believing that he has really nothing to lose and everything to gain. It would have been better if he were miserable and in pain. He would have sought the cause of his troubles and remedied them, arriving nearer to his healing and salvation.

But for a man who doesn't even want to move from where he's always been, who is too comfortable to know he isn't really happy, who is afraid to risk dying so he can find new life, for such a lukewarm spirit, what is it that can save him and bring him out of the comfortable grave he has made for himself? What can prompt him to laugh like he's never laughed before? What can prompt him to weep as he has never wept? What can prompt him to love and find the real meaning to the life he so desires to save but unknowingly loses the more each time he chooses to be right in the middle and safe?

Are You Enjoying The Company of Friends?

Friends are gifts in our earthly journey. Their company is a blessing that gives warmth to our lives. Are you enjoying the company of good friends in your life right now? Then you are truly blessed. Trustworthy companions are God-sent and must be cherished and taken care of for life.

If I Could Ask God One Prayer

If you can face your God at this very moment, what prayer would you ask of Him? A solution for a grave personal problem perhaps. Riches that would help you serve other people better. An end to the world's problems on peace. What would it be?

I used to think of it as a very difficult decision, on what prayer indeed I would lift up to my God.

Until one night when one thought struck me, a prayer I would desire not only for myself, but for every man trying to make it in this life.

If I can ask God one prayer, this is what I'd pray for: I'd pray that for each and every man that journeys in this road called life, there be at least one person who'd stay beside him, at least one person who'd make him feel he is not alone.

And by such a person I don't necessarily mean a lover or a soulmate as everyone seems to be looking for, just one person, one friend who'd sincerely care, one person who'd love another as though that other is a part of his very own life: a child who'd write you a birthday card saying how much she really loves you, a mother who'd stay through the night and take care of you when you are sick, an aunt who'd listen to your heartaches when you've got no one to tell it to, a sister who'd treat you to an ice cream parlor when you didn't make it to the auditions you went to, a friend who'd take a leave from work just so she can keep you company whenever you

feel so far from home.

This is what I would pray for. This is what I believe would help each of us face whatever difficulties we are going through.

It is true that we meet a lot of people everyday, and it may be true that we even call many of them our friends. But who is your friend really? When things go wrong and the going gets tough, who would stay with you and stick around? Who would sacrifice their comfort just so they can comfort you?

Perhaps if there is one such person we know who truly cares for us and takes accountability for our lives, we'd all feel a little better, and we wouldn't feel so afraid. Because in truth, what many of us fear the most is the fear of being alone, the fear of having no one who would care for us, and of having no one who would expect the same kind of concern from us.

We will never be content in being loved as part of the crowd, as a mere part of the group, not even in the collective sense of being all children of God. For though we are part of one body, each of us is a unique person who needs to be recognized, appreciated and loved. We have to know that God knows our name, and that He has written our name in the palm of His hand. We have to know that He would leave the 99 sheep behind so He can look for us and make sure that we are found. We have to know that we matter as a person, that we are seen, and that somebody's going to miss us when we die.

Won't you be God's warm hands today and hold just one trembling hand, keeping it from turning numb and stone-cold? Won't you be God's ears today, attentively and patiently listening to someone who would like to believe nobody cares anymore? Won't you be God's voice today, speaking words that empower and uplift, making another person feel how important he is to you?

Won't you be God's heart today, inviting somebody in with whom you will be responsible for, devoting and even sacrificing your life so that you may bring him healing and love and joy?

Won't you let another person know that somebody enjoys her company, somebody delights in the way she laughs, and somebody looks forward to seeing her again? For these indeed are the things we need, simple things most of us often find so easy to ignore and to forget.

Much as we desire to be noble and to claim an undying love for all mankind, maybe what the world needs now is just one person, fully devoting oneself to another, making real the manifestation of God's immeasurable love for each and every person He called His own. We cannot measure that in numbers, but in how well we were able to reflect unto another soul God's deep, sincere, intimately personal and all encompassing love.

Thinking about it now, maybe my real prayer is this: that every person may know that he or she has a friend in God, that God is the One who loves them most, and only in His friendship could we ever find the joy we've been yearning for!

What Can I Give?

What can I give to the person who gazed with me the sky, the sea and the morning? Who ran with me, and chased with me the wind that rushed against my cheeks? Who walked side by side with me, and held my hand in warmth, reassuring me that I am not alone?

Who dreamt with me and believed with me, that dreams do come true and are oftentimes just within your reach? Who talked to me her all – her love, her life, her soul? Who listened to me as I poured out everything my heart and mind can ever say?

Who sang with me and danced with me and prayed with me? Who praised and worshiped with my spirit the Great One that created it and blessed it with another so reflective of His love? Who ate with me and slept with me when this tired body could take no more? Who wept with me and rejoiced with me? Who argued with me and reasoned with me? Who learned with

me what life is really all about?

Truly, I can never give enough to such a person, in the same way that I can never really thank Him enough who gave me such a friend.

My Beloved Friend

I call her my beloved friend. Her mere presence brings me such great happiness, and there is nothing more comforting than knowing there is somebody whom I can share life with – life in all its beauty and excitement.

She makes me dream once more, like when I was a child, and she propels me to go on and grow whenever I become too complacent from where I stand. She opens my eyes to the challenges of life, and brings me to a new beginning each day, like a breeze which can't help but bring a new freshness to my heart.

She deals with me in such a way that I am her equal, nothing more or less. And she gives me the chance to care for someone, to love another soul so much that I know I have loved another just as much as I have cared for my own self. I find in her a vessel with which to pour out all the goodness in my being, such kind of goodness that cannot be contained. For who can contain love in one's heart alone? And who is not redeemed by allowing that love to flow into another? Into the heart of a beloved friend?

A Poem On Friendship

I may not always be by your side,
but my prayers will be with you.
I may not always help you,
but deep inside you know I want to.
I may not always do what you like,
but I will do the best I can.
I may not always understand,

but we can still walk hand in hand.
I may not be the perfect friend,
I may not be the best out there,
but in spite and despite all these,
you can be sure somebody cares!

**“Who are my friends?
Are they the ones
Who never hurt me
And never let me down?
Are they the ones
Who are always there
And will never leave me alone?
Let me not seek my God
In my friends**

For I shall only be disappointed
Only this I know:
That friends are precious gifts
And despite all their weaknesses,
They have claimed me
As their own.”

He who has found true friends has found a real treasure. By finding people he could draw close to his heart, he has already divided his sorrows and multiplied his joys.

His friends open up to him another world, a new world to discover, to cherish and to explore. He learns new things from them. He discovers new things that can make him happy.

When he opens up his own world to them, his happiness is also multiplied because he sees the joy in the eyes of his friends. He is able to share to them something new. He is able to impart a significant part of his life.

Friendships are therefore like bridges. We go back and forth to draw out happiness and to share our own happiness in return.

Friends help one another grow. By constantly trying to understand the other, friends extend themselves and become better persons.

Why be alone when you can be with another? Why grow alone when you can grow together?

Even in business undertakings, having a core group of people you can trust and depend upon creates a big impact to your success. You don't have to think of everything on your own. You don't have to do everything yourself. In times when you are too weak to perform your task, you know that there will be another hand to help you out.

Friends also reveal to you who you are. They are like clear mirrors reflecting the person you have become, the person you have grown into. Do you like what you see? Ask the people who truly know you. They may see things you often fail to see.

Your friends see the strength behind your tears. Your friends see the greatness of your dream behind your seeming defeat. Your friends believe in you even in times when you cannot believe yourself.

Some people ask what is the difference between a family and a friend. All I can say is that you can never have a true friend without considering her as a real part of your family.

Together, your family and friends give you a home to come home to, a warm place where you can just be yourself and be loved for who you are.

Happy are they who know where their home is. They will never be lost.

They will always know how to find their way back to joy.

MAKE FRIENDS

When you have found true ones, you will find how blessed you really are! I'm glad I was able to reach out to you. And I'm glad you were able to reach out to me. I'm glad I was able to break free from the walls that surrounded me. For indeed, the world is more colorful, and life is more beautiful when shared. Knowing another person is like knowing another world. It is learning new things, engaging in new adventures and finding new places within your heart!

A Prayer For My Dear Friend

Dear Lord, bless my friend who came from Thee
Save her from every harm
Rescue her from every evil and pain.
Guide always her path
And provide her with your Light,
That she may not stray,
And always find her way back home.
Protect her thoughts oh, Lord,
That she may not be anxious
But have the assurance that comes from Your Grace.
Surround her heart with your strength
That she may live in love
And thereby live a meaningful life
Wherever she may be.
May she never forget our friendship
And find in it a treasure that does not fade.
May she remember that there is a person she can lean on to
In times of need,
In times when she may cry.
And even in those times when I can't be there
To hold her hand,

May she always know she's not alone
For You are there, O Lord,
The One who has given us this blessing of friendship,
The One who will protect its joy forever more.

Are You Overflowing In Joy?

There are times in our journey when we are so filled with joy that we can't help but give joy to others as well. We are like guitar strings that have been plucked, and that resonate that joyful music which inspires other people who hear it. Are you so filled with joy that you overflow? God bless this moment! Treasure it forever in your heart.

Why Not?

You ask me why I'm happy?

I am happy because I have a great inheritance.
My Father is the King of the Universe,
And I am a daughter of royal blood.

My time never runs out
For my time is forever;
Never will I worry of the moment,
For mine are the eternal reaches of time.

My peace surpasses the understanding of the wisest men
For it is a peace that never shatters
With the most troubling shadows of the night.
It is a peace that comes from the spring of letting go,
Completely letting go.

You ask me why I'm happy?
I ask you rather, why not?

A Poem of Joy

Sing me a new song,
and let us dance with glee;
Come paint me a rainbow,
and remind me that I'm free!
Hug me and kiss me,

and let us dance for joy!
Declare this a new day,
in triumphant voice.

For my heart can't contain
such a feeling of bliss,
For my heart cannot ponder
what has come from abyss.

In the spur of a moment,
in the blink of an eye,
all that's before us is gladness,
all around is delight!

There's a shower of blessing,
there's a pouring of light.
There's a flooding of flowers,
in a world that is bright.

Had I lived before,,
I have never really lived.
For today is the day,
that I have learned how to live!

I will give of my all,
I will share what is mine.
I will search all the earth
to make love yours and mine.

God has blessed me indeed,
God has blessed you and me,
For once I was blind,
but now I can see!

Soaring Higher

Why should I be afraid to fly?
And why should I be afraid to try?
When I was born to meet the sky;
I was born to meet the sky and fly!
I may fall once,
I may fall twice,
I may fall so many times,
But I will not fall always!
I will try again and again and fly!
Spread your wings now,
Get ready!
Let go of your fears
as you leave the ground.
Be prepared now, steady.
You're getting better,
You're flying faster,
You're soaring higher up the sky!

Most people measure their happiness in terms of physical pleasure and material possession. Could they win some visible goal which they have set on the horizon, how happy they could be! Lacking this gift or that circumstance, they would be miserable. If happiness is to be so measured, I who cannot hear or see have every reason to sit in a corner with folded hands and weep. If I am happy in spite of my deprivations, if my happiness is so deep that it is a faith, so thoughtful that it becomes a philosophy of life, —if, in short, I am an optimist, my testimony to the creed of optimism is worth hearing. **-Helen Keller**

Are You Letting Go of Someone?

When we lose a loved one, whether by a broken relationship or by unexpected death, the most difficult part we experience is **the vacuum of loss** we feel in our hearts.

All of a sudden, a very significant part of our life, maybe the biggest or most important part is taken away. There is no immediate replacement. What we have left is just a BIG VOID, an empty space, a black hole we cannot understand. We feel hollow, like our hearts have suddenly been taken away.

Our problems therefore are two-fold:

1. Lack of anything to look forward to for the next day and for the many many days to come.
2. No person to share with our thoughts, our dreams, our trivial problems, our discoveries, the funny experiences we have from day to day.

For the one thing that changed, that became absent in our life, everything else seems to have changed as well, everything was **BROKEN**.

I will not say that there is a magic formula. But I will try to suggest some things that could help. Do note however that the following only applies at the point of total loss or separation, where nothing could ever be done to remedy the situation. For breakups that need to be thought about, for relationships that need to be healed, for situations that need to be fought for with all your strength and with everything you have, do not apply this yet. Thou can live with loss, but thou shalt not live with regret.

1. DON'T THINK ABOUT IT

I know, I know. That's technically impossible. But consider this. Haven't you spent a single day without the company of your loved one? Haven't

you been to a vacation without him? How did you feel then?

True, you may have missed them. But you didn't suffer as much as you do now. You may have even enjoyed your time alone, that certain space and freedom.

The only difference is this: PERSPECTIVE. Whereas before, you knew you'd see them again, right now you're burdened by a future of emptiness you see before you.

Don't think about that future yet. Don't think of the hundreds of days ahead that haven't even arrived. Spend the day as you would as though all these didn't happen. It's hard, it will take all your willpower. But it can be done.

2. DISTRACT YOURSELF

Many people might say that this sounds like an escape mechanism, and I agree. But people who say it may not know how it is to really feel lost, empty and left all alone. They don't know how dark and painful it is in there and how any measure of light, even a flicker, could help you carry on.

Find as much distraction as you can to keep your mind from focusing on your loss. Focusing on such loss will not lead you anywhere but to further despair, especially when you're not yet strong enough.

One day at a time, try to survive the day, the hour, the minute, without your beloved.

3. REALIGN

Even escape mechanisms has its limits, an expiration date. Even the most skillful cannot fool themselves forever. When that time comes, you'll know that its time to realign.

For quite a time now, you were able to survive many days without your beloved. You have lived through empty days and you have filled your days

with something else. They have not fulfilled you. But they have witnessed your survival.

Without being aware of it, the first steps of realignment have been made. Think about the following perspectives:

FIRST PERSPECTIVE

I love this person. I spend each day with him. I share with him my dreams, my happiness, my hurts, my experiences.

SECOND PERSPECTIVE

I love this person. I no longer spend each day with him, but as though like a prayer, I still share with him my deepest and most treasured emotions.

REALIGNMENT. Some things change. Yet some things remain. LOVE REMAINS.

In many situations, we can use this very important tool to help us adjust and still keep what's worth keeping.

When kids grow up, our relationship with them changes. Yet they're still our children, our love. But where before we could cuddle them anytime, now it suffices to know they're raising good families of their own.

Our friends too, may make moves that take them to far distances. They may take jobs elsewhere. Yet even these could not truly take away our friendship. We can still share with them our thoughts, dreams, hurts and achievements. And they will rejoice or weep with us just the same.

Where distraction merely avoids the issue of our loss, realignment brings us to the right perspective, to the TRUTH.

Without it, we may believe HALF-TRUTHS only and be overwhelmed. And what is this half-truth? The half-truth given us during a loss is this: That we have LOST EVERYTHING. It is a half-truth because nothing is every truly lost. We might have lost SOMETHING, a physical presence

perhaps, the ability to hold their hand whenever we desire. But they have left us with SOMETHING, too. Their memory, their love, their soul. Something that has truly been a part of us can never ever be taken away. We carry that something with us, always, wherever we may go.

Let Go

Let go of your tears,
and you will see the light.
Let go of your worries,
for tomorrow is alright.
Let go of your troubles,
or you might lose your peace.
Let go of your fears,
and you will find your dreams!
You will find your life,
is more meaningful to live.
You will find your burden,
getting lighter like your soul.
You will find happiness,
always waiting on your way.
You will find heaven,
getting nearer each day!

A Prayer Letting Go

Dear Jesus, I come to you now with a broken heart and a weary spirit. I don't know how I can carry on each day knowing that a part of me had already gone, never ever to return. Can I ever be complete again? Can I ever smile again at the coming of a new day? Day after day I miss him more and more. Day after day my longing grows but it can never be fulfilled. How can I possibly live my life again? How do I overcome this feeling that I am now all alone and I shall always be alone or the rest of my life? How do I let go? The places we've been to, the celebrations we had together, they will never be the same. The emptiness in my heart is so big I can no longer breathe sometimes.

Help me O God! The pain of separation seems more painful to me than death itself. I don't know how much longer I can carry on. Help me carry on this day Lord. Help me to let go, I pray. Though I may not forget, help me to remember how you have always carried me through. Though the pain may not yet go away, assist me in carrying this cross with hope in my heart.

Let me not forget the people who love me and assist me in this hour of need. May I find strength in them, consolation in the generosity of their hearts. And whenever I'm afraid, let there always be a hand to hold on to, a smile to brighten up my path. Send down your angels Lord and may I recognize your hand upon your every gift and blessing. Give me something to do that I may not feel useless, yet teach me also to rest knowing all will be well after the long dark night.

You are my Rock and my Provider, Savior and Defender, Friend and Lover who will never ever let me down. You will lead me through this day. You will fill my every hour with peace, my every moment with thoughts of your love. I cannot bear the burdens of tomorrow but I will offer you all that I have today. Today is yours O God. This moment is yours. Embrace me and take my hand. I am in your heart. I am safe. I am loved.

Are You Facing a Challenge in Your Relationships?

Loving Broken People

We cannot exempt ourselves from the world
while we are in the world,
and while we are in it
it is our lot to love **broken men**.

Yet how can we do it
when we ourselves are **broken**,
and need to be assured
that we are loved
that we are accepted
for being the broken people that we are.

We cannot love a person
with an all accepting, transcending and encompassing love
without being hurt somewhat,
without being disappointed,
without being failed
of our expectations.

We cannot love
without being broken,
yet we cannot continue in love
without *being stronger*
than our brokenness.

It is only in Jesus
where we can find healing and strength

so as to continue in this love,
so as to continue suffering again and again
yet rise again and again
in a love that is far above
any expectations,
in a love that does not retreat
from any hurt
or any frustration,
but in a love that dares to dare
in a love that dares to dream
in a love
that never ever fails!

Problems in our relationships are often caused by unmet expectations. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all love unconditionally as God loves us? But we are not yet perfect, and so are our loved ones. Our relationships must always be filled with acceptance, forgiveness and understanding in order to survive the many tests it will encounter along the way.

How To Give Unconditional Love

Have you ever wondered how only God can love us unconditionally? Because only God is perfect and need nothing from us. If He will love us, we can be certain that it's not because He wants anything back.

We can't love like that. Our love, however good is still conditional. We want something in return because we are not perfect, and we try to get from others what we lack.

That is the reason Jesus gave us two commandments, why we needed to love God first. In truth, it is a command to allow God to love us, to be so

embraced and ensured that we couldn't ask for anything more. In that way only can we love others truly as God has loved us.

That kind of love is therefore not waiting for any condition or reward. That love is also not boastful, self righteous or looking down upon another person because it knows that whatever love it can give has come not from itself but from God, like the moon reflecting only the light cast upon it by the sun.

It is hence our first duty to seek God's love, to know, to believe, to feel, to be enveloped in the Light of God's marvelous compassion. All else that follows are but mere expressions of our gratitude for the priceless gift we have received.

Whenever I feel injured or angry against another, it is most likely because I felt unloved at that time and the solution is not to continue seeking it from the person concerned but from God Himself.

Relationships Are Fragile

Relationships are fragile. The reason why we often hurt more the ones who love us most is because we do not realize this.

We take for granted the people who are always there for us and we care not to be as careful with their feelings as we are with people we hardly know.

A careless word. A negligent disrespectful act. We often think we can get away with anything when we are with the people who love us.

While it is true that they will extend to us their utmost understanding, it is also true that they are but human beings after all.

They get hurt. And they get hurt the most by the people they love the most.

Relationships are fragile. It is far easier to protect it and to take care of it rather than to mend it when it is already broken into a million shattered parts.

Must we spend our precious time trying to gather the broken pieces? Or should we rather spend our moments checking our tongues, saying words of encouragement, holding the hands of the people who truly matter to us?

Relationships are fragile. They are gifts to be cherished and protected and taken care of as much as we take care of our own hearts.

Is Your Relationship Based On a Checklist?

There are many relationships today founded only upon a **checklist**. Each partner qualifies like an applicant qualifying for a job interview.

He is witty. *Check.*

She is kind. *Check.*

He is rich enough. *Check.*

She is sexy enough. *Check.*

But what happens when you mistakenly check qualities you should have crossed out? What if both partners fraudulently misrepresented themselves? Or what happens when people **change**?

Ooops! The prince had just become a frog.

Ooops! The princess had just become a witch.

Where is your relationship founded? Is it based on a mere checklist you could easily crumple and tear apart?

Choose a good foundation.

Choose **LOVE**.

When People Hurt You, Does It Mean They Don't Love You?

When people hurt you, does it mean they don't love you?
Does it mean they don't really care at all?
Take heart and wallow not yet in misery.

For the words which have pierced you the most,
words which may have even come
from the people you loved the most,
were not the only words said about you.
Those were probably not the only words
they've said about you;
not the only words they wanted to say;
and maybe, just maybe,
not the words they should have said
had they only known how to say
what they truly mean to say.

Relationships thrive not only because there are people willing to give, but because there are people who are willing to joyfully receive the love that is being given them.

Are You a Generous Receiver?

Have you ever bought a special gift, worked hard just to get it, and then only to be refused by the person you were giving it to? Felt bad didn't it?

Receiving gifts. Sometimes, it is not our ability to give something in return, but our ability to receive the gifts given us that counts.

Our relationships are greatly enhanced when we become not only generous givers, but generous receivers as well, people who accept gifts gladly,

thankfully, wholeheartedly, with the kind of smile you'll never forget.

Receiving opens up a great channel, it allows love to flow. It recognizes the love of the giver, and it also shows how you think of yourself.

Are you the kind of person who always thinks he or she doesn't deserve the gift given him/her? What is it that you deserve? Are you thinking of remuneration or payment? Then that is not a gift anymore but a fee or a salary.

Gifts are freely given, whose only reason and purpose is love. It has served its end when it is also received in love. Don't you think you deserve love? Only those who value and love themselves can fully realize a fruitful relationship with other people. It is only they who are also capable of giving of themselves for the sake of love alone.

Are you a generous receiver?

How Do You Know You Are Loved?

My friend,
you are dearly loved.
Even when you don't feel it
sometimes;
Even when people fail to tell you
just how much you mean to
them;
Even when people don't express it
the way you want them to.

How do you know you are loved? Below are some of the things worth exploring:

1. GET A HUG

Nothing can compare to the warmth generated by a hug.

No person feels as secure, as intimate, as needed, as loved, as someone being hugged.

At times I forget the nicest things said about me, but I cannot forget those times I have been hugged. For surely, it brushes away our fears and turns our tears into waterfalls of grace.

Don't be ashamed to ask for it from those whom you know has great concern for you. Oftentimes, people really want to give it away, but are just afraid to offer it. Such people would be more than willing to give to you that loving embrace if only you will ask. So why not ask?

*A sweet smile,
a warm embrace,
a hand to hold;
small things,
precious things,
joyful moments,
for the one who receives,
and the one who lovingly gives them*

2. GIVE OTHERS THE CHANCE TO CARE FOR YOU.

We are so wrapped up
in our independence,
in our pride,
in our self-sufficiency.

We have built a wall around us
to protect ourselves from pain.
But in doing so,
we have starved ourselves
from the love and concern
of those who truly care for us.
The wall we have built
has kept us from
receiving the attention and care
for which our inner selves
have long been screaming for.

*Let others care for you.
Ask help when you need it,
and gratefully accept help given you.*

Ask your mother to cook your favorite
recipe.
Ask your friends to come over for a
pajama party.
Ask your officemates to help you for a
work you find too difficult to do.
Ask your churchmates to pray for you.
Ask the kids to help you with the
house chores.
Ask your husband for that kiss you've
been missing for so long.
Ask and admit your needs.
Ask and it shall be given you!

3. FORGIVE; DON'T EXPECT PEOPLE TO BE PERFECT.

In order to feel loved,
we must learn the value of
forgiveness.

Remember that no matter how deeply people may care for us, there will be times when the very people who love us would be the same people who would let us down.

But even that does not change the fact that we are loved.

Mistakes, weaknesses and momentary hurts must not waste a lifetime of caring and sincere devotion for one another.

**There is so much
to love
in each other,
but we are so often blinded
by little moons,
which eclipse
the entire SUNS
of our beings!**

Life is not perfect,
but that does not mean
we can never find happiness.

Life is difficult,
but that does not mean
it can never be beautiful!

My friend, do something
for yourself and
for the people who love you:
Believe that you are loved!

TRUST.

Have faith!

Cling on to this truth and fight for it!

*It may have been easier
had we only understood
why people failed us,
why people hurt us,
why people acted in ways
we never expected them to.
It may have been easier,
but there are some things
we just couldn't do.*

We cannot peek into their hearts
to see how much sorrow
they are trying to bear.
We cannot sink into their thoughts
to know what struggles
they are going through.
We cannot demand that
they explain themselves to us
and do what we want them to do.

We can only be a bit kinder
than we are supposed to be.
We can only be a bit braver
than we think we ought to be.
In times when we cannot understand,
may we learn to trust.
May we learn to be still
and have faith.

**Only those who are strong
can truly love fully.
Strive to be strong.
Forgive when others are weak.**

4. NOURISH YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Everything that is of great worth

should be properly cared for.
Plants left untended wither;
Houses left abandoned end in ruin;
Copper left unpolished tarnish;
Friendships left unattended die.

If anything is of much value,
spend time and effort
to care for it.
And nothing is of greater importance
than our bond
with the people we love.

Though we are important to people,
we should also let these people know
how important they are in our lives.
Only in giving do we truly receive.
Only in loving can we ensure
to keep the channels of
intimacy and affection open.
Express the love you have within you.
Let its joy overflow!
For what is love if we cannot share its
warmth with someone else?

**It is useless
to tell your brother
how much
God loves him,
unless
you are willing
to extend your hands,
and be
the manifestation
of the love
you are talking about!**

Take time to call your mother
every now and then.
Write a letter to a friend
you have not heard from in
years.
Treat your partner to dinner
and reminisce the old days.
Schedule an outdoor activity for
people you don't see everyday.
Hold a class reunion after 20 years.

Nourish your relationships.
Spend time while it is yours to give.
What you intend to do
need not be costly.
It need not even require a whole day
from you.
You can choose to spend your minute
in full and undivided attention
for someone
in order to reap a blessing
that will last for a lifetime.

**We take care of our clothes,
We take care of our car,
We take care of our muscles,
We take care of our garden,
We take care of our dogs,
We take care of our hair,
We take care of our jobs,
We take care of our shoes,
We take care of our computers,
We even take care of our nails.
Shouldn't we also take care
of our relationships?**

5. UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT PERSONS, AS WELL AS DIFFERENT SEASONS

People are different.

What is true to us
may not be true to some.

What is trash to many
may be a treasure to few.

Who can therefore judge another?

Not one has lived a day
within a body other than his
own!

How do we know then whether
we are loved or not?
Through the words people say?

*Some people are just not good
with words.*

Through the hugs we receive?

*Some people are just not
touch persons.*

Through the gifts given us?

*Some people just don't know
what gifts to buy.*

(Some people just don't have
the money!)

How do we know then?

My friend,
sometimes we just know it!

At other times,
we don't even know...

I used to think my father doesn't love me. And I grew up believing there is nothing I can ever do to please him. While other kids would happily play games with their dads, I couldn't even hug mine.

Until this day, I couldn't remember a single moment that I ever saw him smile at me. He was just a strict father. A breadwinner. The man who wouldn't even let me out of the house to play with other kids.

That was all I knew, at least, until he died. Until his wake where his officemates told me just how proud he was of me. The man who wouldn't even talk to me has talked much about me! Proudly!

Later, I also learned that even his over protectiveness was a sign of his deep concern for me. Growing up without getting the kind of attention he yearned from his parents, his strictness was after all, a sign of his great love for me. I didn't know it. I didn't know how much I was loved!

**Each one is unique.
Each has his own way of
expressing the love
he holds within himself.
In the same way,
each season is distinct.
And the same people who love us
will not always love us
in the same way.**

There will be seasons of spring.
Such is the yearning of every heart
that loves.

A season of affection
pouring down like showers
in springtime.

A season of intimacy and
intense attachment
with each other.

It is the season of lovebirds,
Of young love budding out of
nowhere,
Of friends taking sudden interest
in each other's lives,
Of mothers and babies enjoying
moments of quiet embrace.

Such is spring.
Such is the season to be savored
and saved, to be cherished
and lived as though
it would never come to an end.

There will be seasons of summer.
Of adventures and events
which leave us
both breathless and thankful,
both tired and excited with the ride.
Enjoy your summer.
Enjoy the many activities,
which shall strengthen your
bond.

Yet in all these,
there shall also be
autumn and winter.

There shall be moments of silence,
and there shall be moments of biting
cold.

How we desire to forego such
seasons.

How we yearn to go back in
summertime,
and how we miss the magic of spring!
Yet even in such moments,
even in such seasons,
we can find that we are loved.

There will be times of
misunderstanding.

There will be times of pain.

A time when we have all the right to
doubt the love we thought was there.

Indeed, there will be times of biting
winter winds.

Yet even the pangs of winter
cannot kill the roots, which
have deeply established itself.

We have only to dig within,
to discover,
to remember,
to know that we are loved.

Your child has disobeyed you and went after the man she chose. Yet it
doesn't mean your child does not cry secretly in sorrow of disappointing
you.

Your father has not approved of the career you desire and insisted his own
plans instead. Yet it doesn't mean he sleeps soundly at night and does not
yearn to take back the decision he made for you.

Your friend did not accept the apology you made and acted as though she

could never accept you again. Yet it doesn't mean she doesn't miss you and desire your company once more.

**Life does not
disappear
in winter.**

**Love does not
disappear
as well.**

**It is embedded
in the innermost part
of our being.**

**It is deeply rooted
and shall rise again
in spring.**

In autumn, when we cannot foresee
spring as clearly as we can in winter,
we have with us the harvest of
summer and spring to see us through.
All the work has been done.
Memories have been made.
We wish it could remain forever
in ways we have been used to,
but another season opens...
Change comes,
and we must yield.

The kids have grown up and now have affairs of their own.
Friends have married, and we terribly miss the adventures shared with
them.
Neighbors have gone abroad, and we suddenly have no one to share our
secret recipe with.
Lifetime partners have passed away, and we have no idea how to fill the
void they have left
in our lives.

Autumn comes and takes away

that, which we hold so dear.
Autumn comes and we are called
to let go once more.
In certain ways,
we let go of a child who has grown up,
we let go of a friend who seeks a new
path in life,
we let go of a loved one who has gone
before us in the next life.
Yet even death does not and cannot
take away the love you have shared
at one point in your life.
TREASURE IT!
It is forever yours!

I remember the great love of my grandparents for one another. For fifty years, they were able to show the world that love can indeed stand the tests of time, that affection for one another need not pass away with age, and that the greatest legacy we can ever leave is love freely and unselfishly given.

I was blessed indeed to be a witness to that love for a few years that I have lived before my grandfather died. And the day he died, my heart was broken. Not only because I would miss my grandfather. Not only because I grieve for my grandmother. But more so because I couldn't bear to witness the end of such a love.

Through the years however, I've learned how I have greatly underestimated the extent and depth of that love, how I have misjudged it; for in truth, it never really came to an end the day my grandfather died.

To this very day, I am still a witness how my grandmother is able to treasure the love they have shared. I am still a witness how love is kept alive in the hearts and minds of those who carry on the radiance of its warmth.

**Autumn can take away many things,
but not the love we have**

freely given away.

**Each season brings
a new challenge.**

**But no season
can hinder us
from knowing we are loved.**

6. LEARN TO REACH OUT

Not many of us are blessed with a family who has always been there for us.

Not many of us have loads of friends whom we can count on to

to see us through the darkest and loneliest of days.

But few of us could ever complain that we have not been given any opportunity to reach out and care for people within our reach.

We need not look far to find lonely people.

We need not walk long to brighten someone else's day.

We need only to open our eyes and see.

We need only to open our hands and reach out.

How many people do you meet everyday?

Whether you are working at a business district, a wet market, a school, a shop, a construction area, a store, or even at home, there are

always people within your reach.

And sometimes,
all we need
is a smile
to bring a little warmth
in another person's day.

There might be that grouchy man you always bump into at rush hour.
There might be a little kid asking for a piece of bread.
There might be a boss who just couldn't open up his heart.
There might be a widower longing for a little chat.
There might be an old aunt yearning for a bit of attention all these years.
There might be an employee feeling a bit left out.
There might be a mother terribly missing her daughter.
There might be a daughter terribly missing her Mom.
There might be a stranger needing a little help.
There might be a neighbor waiting for a smile.
There might be a friend hoping for a chat over a cup of coffee.
There might be a heart longing for another heart.

**You may claim to be lonely,
but there are people lonelier than you
are!**

**You may claim to be poor,
yet you did not take into
account
how much you can still
give away...**

Mere surfing over the internet could give you a pretty good idea how many lonely people are out there: people working in a foreign land, people with disabilities and debilitating diseases that keep them from going out and meeting new friends, people who have been hurt and abandoned by those they cared for the most.

You could be a light to them.
Your messages can be the warm
hand of a friend they have been
longing for.

Wherever you are,
there will always be people
you can touch.
And the briefness of the encounter
need not hinder us from making a
lasting difference by sharing whatever
small thing we can give

Go ahead!
Touch.
Reach out.
Do random acts of kindness
and don't expect
anything in return!

But if in any chance
you do get something back;
if in any chance, you realize
you have made another
person happy;
and then you finally realize
that you are loved,
that would be a miracle
we should all be thankful for!

When you realize
you are loved,
could there be any logical reason
you should not love yourself
as much as others have
cared for you?

Are You Trying To Help a Fellow Traveler?

How Do You Lift Up a Lonely Heart?

You hear her cries, you see her tears, and you wonder how on earth you're going to wipe them all away. You try to wipe them with your handkerchief, but then she cries again, and tears continue falling.

Your heart breaks, and deep in your soul you don't want to see her that way. You get furious at those people who've hurt her like this, surely they have no right to do this to her. But what could you do?

You can't turn back time, you can't pull it back to that moment when she's happy and her eyes filled with the spark of laughter. No matter how much you wish, you can't undo the evil that has been done.

But you can stay beside her, and you can hold her hand. And if you can't pull her out of the darkness she's in, you can join her where she is and let her know she is never truly alone.

You can wait with her until the storm passes. You can remind her how beautiful she is and how you believe deep down in your heart she's going to rise above it all a stronger and more beautiful person.

You can be a shoulder to lean on to, a reminder of the strength she already has. Yes, you can wait with her for the morning, when the sun shall reveal once more a glitter of hope upon her teary eyes.

It is not easy to help a fellow traveler. Just think about trying to help yourself, or that time in your life when someone is trying to help you. It isn't easy to open up yourself to someone, even if that person is trying to

give you assistance. It isn't easy to TRUST. The person trying to help must earn your trust, and for that matter, he has to have enough patience and persistence in earning it.

How do you save someone who is lost in the dark?

Someone groans in the darkness. Someone cries endlessly and writhes in terrible pain. Someone wants to find her way out of the pit she's sunk into, but she's frozen in fear and does not know the way. **How do you save her? How do you bring her into the light?** Shall you shout unto her and tell her she's got to get up and try to find her way out? Shall you direct her shaking knees to go to the left, to the right, make a u-turn, crawl under, jump, tread the narrow and winding path that lies before her?

Shall you encourage her how wonderful it is to bask in the light? Or shall you tell her stories of people who made it through the difficult path she's going through?

Shall you tell her to group with the hopeless man nearby? Shall you tell them to lead each other out of the pit they're both in?

You must have guessed it. **There is no other way but to go into the darkness where she is and lead her back into the light!**

No, it's not an easy thing, never will be. But if we are to truly desire to share the happiness we have where we are, **we must be willing to leave it for a while so we can accompany those who do not know their way.**

Are they in poverty? Then **you must be willing to eat the bread of the poor.** Are they in prison? Then you must be willing to sleep where homeless men dwell. Are they weeping? Then **you must be willing to have your heart broken,** so you may understand, and so you may not judge where their tears are coming from.

But make certain also that you **bring enough light with you**; otherwise, you will both be stranded in the darkness.

Bring as much light as you can, as much joy in your heart as you can possibly save. For it will usually be a long journey, and you do not want your light to be swallowed up by the deep darkness that will surround you.

Be prepared for opposition, especially from the one you're trying to help. Change is never an easy thing, and fear is probably the greatest enemy to overcome.

Keep the vision of your home always fresh upon your memory. Do not forget who you are, where you came from, and for what you have set forth to accomplish. Otherwise, the people around you, who do not know of it may convince you that the darkness you see is all that's ever existed.

Such is the way to rescue someone who is lost, and such is the way each and every one of us have all been saved.

For God Himself stripped His Glory and Divinity, becoming flesh and man like us, that He may bring upon this dark and lonely world an inextinguishable flame of hope, and life beyond everything we've ever hoped to have.

I have never heard of any other God who would do the same so He can save His people, who would do the only thing possible to bring them all into the Light, which they do not know.

And yet that was what He did. He knew hunger for us. He knew how it was to be tempted. He laughed, He got angry, He wept. He was judged, and mocked and betrayed. He knew how it was like to be deserted by all of His friends in His darkest and most painful hour. He even knew how it was like to die. He who is Life itself, has hung upon the cross until His very

last breath had been taken away from Him.

All these He did that we may understand and believe, and that we may know what we should pray for. Heaven is so far above us that we could not possibly figure it out no matter how hard we try. We needed to witness the truth right before our very eyes. We needed to be healed so we may know wholeness. We needed to be truly loved so we can give true love away.

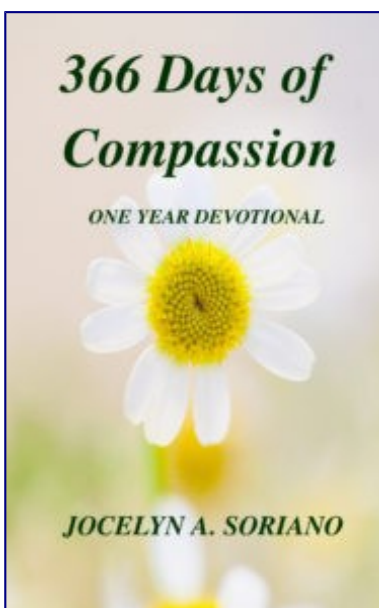
How do you save someone who's lost in the dark? Take a very good look at the **cross** today, **you may just realize what it really takes.**

Thank you for taking the time to read this book. GOD BLESS YOU and keep you always in His care!

For more inspiring articles, go to www.itakeoffthemask.com

You may also want to read the following books:

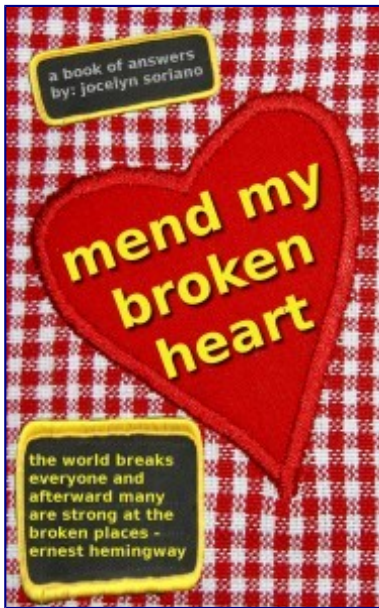
[366 Days of Compassion](#)
One Year Devotional Book
“Your companion for healing.”



“The deepest wounds of the soul are healed only by compassion... People do not merely need to be clothed, they need to be **embraced with love.** A love that enters into their own fears and frailty, a love that suffers with them and stays with them **through their darkest hour.”**

[Read More - CLICK HERE](#)

I will betroth you to me forever. Yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness, in justice, in loving kindness, and in compassion.
– Hosea 2



[MEND MY BROKEN HEART](#)

“The world breaks everyone and afterwards many are strong at the broken places.” – Ernest Hemingway

MEND MY BROKEN HEART is meant to guide you for **30 critical days** with its rich words of wisdom, **answering your deepest and most painful questions**, and guiding you with *powerful reflections and activities* that are more than sufficient to fill your days **ONE DAY of Healing AT A TIME**.

This book is a result of years of listening to real people who have **real hurts** and who struggle with the pain of not knowing how to heal a broken heart. This book has gathered the *griefs* of those who were brave enough to **UNMASK how they really feel inside**.

[Read More - CLICK HERE](#)

