The Power of Presence
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Now is the time. Now is the only time—our point of power where time touches eternity, where the choices we make can change our lives forever.

To “seize the day” means “living in the now.” It means not dwelling on the past or the future but consciously living in the now moment, every day. When we shift our thinking to the present, we discover an endless stream of blessings and opportunities.

Jesus himself lived in the now, and he encouraged his disciples to do the same. He knew it was his point of power, where a bountiful harvest was constantly available.

“He who is last, he shall be first; and he who is first, he shall be last” (Mt. 19:30). He encouraged them to truly see what was before them and to reap what has been sown in consciousness, moment by moment.

You’re Never Alone

If you’re ready to seize the day and all its blessings and opportunities, remember that God, the creator of the universe, is with you … just as God was with Jesus. “The Father and I are one,” he said, and this oneness gave Jesus immediate access to all power to fulfill his purpose.

The same power is within you too—to begin again, to break through, to heal or resolve any condition or challenge in your
life—however it appears. The Spirit of God is always fully present and available to guide you and give you whatever you need or desire.

**Claim Your Power**

God has also given us dominion over our own consciousness—the way we think, the ideas we accept or reject. This conscious power of thought was considered by Charles Fillmore, cofounder of Unity, “the highest power in the universe.” He called it our “creative center,” and through it, we build our personal world.

Unity teaches that a single thought, energized with conviction and feeling and held consistently and persistently in mind, has the creative power to actually materialize in one’s life. Some divinely charged thoughts, like those of Jesus, have changed billions of lives!

**Law of Cause and Effect**

As we think, so we are. This is the spiritual law of cause and effect. Our dominant thoughts take form in our lives. If we don’t like the effects, we can change what is causing them: our thoughts.

Generally speaking, positive thoughts cause positive effects; negative thoughts cause negative effects. Let’s seize the day, then, and take every “now” opportunity to change our thinking and our lives as we want them to be.

**Begin Now!**

We begin right where we are—with God, in whom everything is possible. Rather than choosing thoughts aligned with our own human egos, or a worldly or material consciousness, we can choose thoughts aligned with God and higher consciousness. We can choose positive, uplifting thoughts of Truth, not negative, draining thoughts we know are false. By releasing false ideas, we actually make room for new blessings and opportunities to emerge in our lives.
Here are five ways to align your thoughts with God:

1. Pray daily in silent communion with God, listening for Truth.

2. Read God’s word in the Bible and other sacred texts. This will guide you in developing Christ consciousness, the perfect pattern for spiritual growth.

3. Discipline your mind by releasing negative thoughts, even denying them, and affirming positive thoughts. Unity’s Daily Word® magazine is a wonderful way to practice affirmative thinking.

4. Look for God, the Good, everywhere—regardless of outward appearances. Each event and person we encounter has something of value to teach us.

5. Practice gratitude. During quiet moments, focus on a few blessings to appreciate. Cultivating gratitude helps open us to receiving our good in every now moment.

God withholds nothing from us, yet we can accept or reject God’s help. If our thoughts are aligned with Spirit, the harvest will indeed be great in peace of mind, wisdom, healing, and all good things. With God, all things are possible … now!

“Now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!” —2 Cor. 6:2
Step outside for a moment. Breathe deeply. Fill your lungs. Ahhh! Isn't it wonderful? The air we breathe sustains our lives. We cannot see it, yet it is full—full of sound, full of smells, full of color, full of heat or cold, and full of flying insects, birds, and airplanes. God's presence is like that. It is all around us, within us, sustaining us, and uplifting us.

We cannot point to God’s presence, because to point that God is “over here” is to imply that God is “not over there.” Pointing is a limiting exercise. We can, however, “point out” signs of God's presence everywhere—in the daffodils pushing through the thawing earth, in the wave of a neighbor’s hand, in the driver who lets us move into the exit lane, in the rat-a-tat-tat of a woodpecker.

In reality, it is not possible for us to be apart from God, but how can we stay aware that God is always with us? Most of the time we are not consciously aware of God's presence. We are like a young child who cannot see his or her mother in the next room. The child assumes that Mommy ceases to exist until she steps back into the room again. We forget that every breath we take is God’s breath; everywhere we step is holy. We forget that we are the expression of God.

You Are Free to Choose God

If God is everywhere, then how can we possibly seem separated from God’s loving presence and blessings? I believe it is because
we are given the gift of free will. Free will is like a double-edged sword. We can use our free will to deepen our awareness of God’s presence, or we can use it to act as if God does not exist. This situation reminds me of the saying: “Engage brain before opening mouth.” Our brain is always present, but we don’t always use it before we speak. Instead of speaking with wisdom, we can speak thoughtlessly and end up hurting others. This is not because we lack a brain, but because we fail to use it. The choice is always there, and it is always ours. Free will puts the responsibility of how we live squarely upon our shoulders. Do you acknowledge God’s presence in your life, and do you act as if God and you are working together for good?

One way to become aware of God’s presence in our lives is to begin to see our free will as God in action. Every time we make a choice—and we make hundreds each day—we can see ourselves as doing God’s work. Will I compliment my daughter or nag her? What tone of voice will I use on the phone with the next telemarketer? What will I have for dinner? When will I go grocery shopping? These may not seem like major decisions, but God exists in the nooks and crannies of our lives. Until we can see God in the little things, we will not be aware of this guiding, healing Presence with us at all times.

You Are Part of the Plan

Unity Village has a copy of a medieval labyrinth painted on the surface of one of its parking lots. The circular design looks like a maze with one entry-exit point. There are no dead ends in this labyrinth. You simply start walking at the entrance and follow the switchbacks until you come to the center. The way out is to walk the reverse of the way in. The purpose of walking this labyrinth is to open yourself to God. Because of the design, when you walk, you cannot tell how close you are to reaching the center. The path leads you sometimes closer to the center, then back out along the outer edge. The circuitous path forces you to surrender the need to
know how far along you are, and you simply open up to trusting the path to lead you. A slow, meditative walk can take 45 minutes from start to finish, allowing for time spent in prayer in the center.

One evening I went to the Village to walk the labyrinth with my daughter. I was contemplating the issue of “my will versus God’s will” and thinking about the upheaval that sometimes occurs in our lives when we open ourselves to God. The upheaval occurs because we finally let go of trying to control our lives by living in a limited arena of possibilities. We surrender to the limitless possibilities that God has in store for us. As I walked the labyrinth, I pictured Mary, Jesus’ mother, walking with me. I asked her, “Did you have any idea what you were getting into when you said yes to God?” Her reply was: “It doesn’t matter what happens to you, as long as you say yes to God. Whatever happens afterward is part of God’s work, and you are part of that plan.”

Mary could have said no, but she didn’t. Jesus could have said no, but he didn’t. God needed both of them to say yes so that God’s divine plan could be brought forth into our world. God needed Mary and Jesus just as God needs you and me to do our part in the divine plan. We can never predict what miracles will come about when we say yes to God.
You Are God in Expression

It is part of the wonder and mystery of life that when we stop clinging to what we think is our safety net, the universe provides marvels beyond our imagining. When we stop clinging to an old, unrewarding job, a new, fulfilling job can enter our lives. When we stop focusing on blocking the pain and, instead, feel it entirely, the pain transforms and disappears. When we stop resisting change, we cease to be a dam to the universal energy and we become part of the universal conduit. We are actively in the flow of God's presence.

Myrtle Fillmore, cofounder of Unity, once said: “All of us sooner or later come to the place in our development where we are no longer satisfied to go on living the old life, without the knowledge of our oneness with God, the Source of our being. Sometimes, when we reach this point in our soul's progress, we do not at first know just what is taking place. We may become restless and dissatisfied. We may go through experiences that we do not understand. We may even be tempted to think that our good has gone from us. But just as surely as there is a God, the one Presence and one Power, we shall find that all is well and that we are but going from one room, as it were, into another, larger and lighter room.”

Are you “no longer satisfied” to live as if you are apart from God? Have you reached the place where trying to live without God-awareness is like trying to live without air? Now is the time to let God guide your thoughts. Now is the time to acknowledge God in the dance of life you see before you, wherever you go. Now is the time to consciously allow yourself to be an expression of God's action in the world.

I See God There and There and …

We are not called to be heroic. We are called to be fully human, which means that we are called to live spiritually while existing in a miraculously material body. How do we find God within and express God with our arm? Our eyes? Our knee? Our stomach? If
God is everywhere, then each part of our body is an expression of God and is capable of doing God’s work in this world. When you see God as existing everywhere, even in your body, you treat your body well. In doing so, you honor God as your body.

When you see God in your body, then you can see God in the body of others. How will your hand touch the hand of another? Now is the time to assist someone across the street. Now is the time to help someone carry a burden. Now is the time to hug someone in consolation or in joy.

When you see God in the play of light through the trees, creating dappled shade on the ground, then you honor God as the sunlight, the trees, and the ground. How will you then treat the ground? Now is the time to pick up the litter at your feet. Now is the time to plant a pot of flowers at your doorstep. Now is the time to recycle your glass jars, cans, newspapers, and plastic containers.

Seeing God all around you automatically creates reverence for life. Our thoughtless actions and words can only occur when we forget that God is right where we are, in every situation. Now is the time to breathe deeply and to consciously feel the presence of God filling our bodies. Now is the time to fill our minds with spiritual thoughts of kindness, compassion, and love. Now is the time to be the expression of God in our world. Go forth and be that universal conduit of God’s energy. Our world needs each one of us—now.
Simple logic and an understanding of the laws of physics declare that the sun can never stand still, and yet in Joshua 10:13 it is written, “And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped.” It is a remarkable verse of Scripture. The purpose of the astronomical event was for the Israelites to complete their defeat of the Amorites. The sun stood still to give Joshua’s army the time to complete their rout of the enemy.

The search for time sounds like a twenty-first century problem. We tend to be so busy that the gift of 86,400 seconds each day seems insufficient. Have you ever been so busy that you wish you had more time? “Just give me another day,” we say, or “How about another hour?” Most of us have made such statements, but is it possible to create more time? Can we make the sun stand still? The answer is yes.

There are people who are highly efficient. Others accomplish little over the course of a day. Some people seem to “save” time, while others put it to death. How often have you told someone that you were “just killing time”?

As a minister I have the privilege of sharing the challenges of living with many people. I usually counsel with several individuals
each day. As a person comes for a session, I often ask if he or she is aware of my custom. The word is getting out, so many of the people are aware that I like to begin each counseling session with five minutes of silence.

Most people crave a time to rest and willingly sit in the silence with me before we officially begin sharing with one another. Although I have never noticed the sun stand still during the five minutes, I am aware that often we lose all sense of time. We enter a state of consciousness where God is present, and there is no time. We complete our five minutes and say, “That was certainly fast. Where did the time go?”

I have come to believe we sometimes enter the kingdom where there is no time. When we return to the world, this consciousness clings to us and Spirit can have its way with us. The time we spend talking with one another is more productive.

Silence is a timeless realm, and we can enter into it by simply being still and giving attention to God. This method of making the sun stand still requires that we withdraw from the world, but there is another way to make the sun stand still, and it allows us to remain fully engaged in our day-to-day activities. It is to stand at the threshold of the Infinite called the now moment.
Many of our thoughts roam in the past or the future, and therefore we have no contact with the current moment. The challenge is that the eternal now is the threshold of the kingdom of God and true power. A simple act of conscious walking or gardening can connect us with our Source. There is no past or future, but there is peace in the moment, the wisdom to know what to do if action is required, and the strength and power to act.

Why don’t you try to make the sun stand still? Spend some “time” in the silence focused upon God, and then simply observe the productivity of the following hour. Give conscious attention to some simple act and then plunge into your day and observe how much is accomplished. The sun stood still long ago, and, if you look carefully, you will see it rest in the heavens when you are still or engaged in conscious living.
“If we want deep peace, abiding love, and lasting happiness, we need only wake up to the heaven that is already here.”

Millions of people have become enamored of The Secret as a way to achieve more abundance in their lives. Newly empowered by the law of attraction, they are busily conjuring images of what they want—holding their desires in mind and asking the universe for the cars, jobs, money, partners, vacations, whatever they believe will make them happy.

There is no real harm in applying The Secret this way. However, it does perpetuate a disturbing underlying premise: the idea that something is missing and that we must find—or attract—that thing in order to be happy and whole. The very word attraction implies that we must bring something else into our lives in order to be complete.

Madison Avenue was built on this concept and indeed relies on it every year to sell billions of dollars worth of advertising. We often fall prey to these ads, buying everything from makeup to medicine in order to find happiness.

But deep down, we know better. There is something in us that knows, if only on the subconscious level, that we are already whole, perfect, and complete just as we are. Our peace and joy come from within, not from outside. We are created in the image and likeness of God, and it is God’s good pleasure to give us
the kingdom, right here, right now. There is nothing to “attract” because nothing is missing.

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” What else could we possibly want?

An honest answer would be: We want to know this heaven. We want to see it and experience it, every day.

And for that, we need a deeper secret than the law of attraction. We need what I would call the law of attention. For although it can be entertaining to manifest outer things, what we manifest on the outside is less important than what we manifest on the inside. If we want deep peace, abiding love, and lasting happiness, we need only wake up to the heaven that is already here.

When we enact the law of attention—when we apply the power of our perception to a full experience of the present moment—we are lifted to a fuller awareness of our oneness with God and with all of creation.

Applying the law of attention doesn’t take years of study. It doesn’t require buying, attracting, or pursuing anything. It happens simply through a shift in focus—and the reward is instantaneous.

A few years ago, I experienced the power of attention in a most moving and memorable way.

I had been reading Eckhart Tolle’s landmark book *The Power of Now*, noting how often I was not fully present in my daily life. In particular, I realized that I often half-listened when my children, Ben and Emily, were talking to me while I cooked and cleaned.
One night, I decided to respond differently. As I was setting the dinner table, Emily, then 13, came in and began telling me about a problem with a friend. Instead of continuing my task and answering her with rote “uh-huhs” and “really?”s,” I put down the silverware and turned full around to face her. I looked right into her eyes and focused entirely on her and every word she was saying.

After a few seconds, my attention on her became so intense that the room around us disappeared. I lost all sense of self and felt as though I was falling into her—into the pools of her eyes, into her soft voice and tender heart. I felt overcome by my oneness with her, and tears filled my eyes.

A few weeks later, I told a spiritual mentor about this experience with my daughter, trying to make sense of it.

“I felt like I was falling into her,” I said.

“You were,” said my teacher. “You were falling in love.”
Yes, that was it. Once the distractions were cleared, once I was totally present, the way was open for a rush of love.

Interestingly, I have had similar experiences with perfect strangers in a Unity class or workshop when we were instructed to look into one another’s eyes for a minute or two without speaking. While this exercise initially feels awkward and uncomfortable, invariably a deep connection occurs. I typically find myself moved to tears, having looked into the soul and humanity of someone who is both unknown to me and yet, through the great interconnected web of life, part of me.

Unity’s poet laureate, James Dillet Freeman, captured this state of being in his beautiful book, Be!:

I have walked down a street crowded with strangers when suddenly they were not strangers and I felt myself expand and take them in. I felt their loneliest longings, their loftiest aspirations, their hopes and fears, their love and faith and joy. I was the self that transcends self, the larger self that is not bound by space and time, the self that knows that it is one with the reality in all people.

It thrills and amazes me that this mystical oneness can be achieved with anyone or anything, at any time, by being fully attuned to what is before us. What we give our attention to grows before our very eyes. When we pay close attention, our perception takes us deeper and deeper still.

Poet William Blake expressed how wonder-filled this awareness can be when he wrote:

To see a world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

Such insights remind us that the simple pleasures are the deepest. The most fulfilling moments in life are not characterized
by complexity, or acquiring or possessing. They are a product of simple awareness, pure consciousness and love.

The law of attention opens the way for our connection to the divine. We sharpen our focus on what is in front of us and feel ourselves become open and receptive. At such times, we see with soft eyes. We perceive the highest and best in others. We are attuned to the voice of God.

Some of my most inspiring teachers in this practice have been animals, who surely provide the greatest examples of living in the present moment. While they do not have the intellectual abilities of humans to reason, plan, imagine, and so on, neither are they encumbered by the complexities we self-create. They live in pure simplicity, for better or worse. And in the quiet moments we share with them, they bring home the power of the present.

One cold, rainy winter night several years ago, I realized at 3 a.m. that I had left my cat outside. I scurried downstairs, opened the front door, and found her sitting quietly on the front stoop, wet and cold. I towel-dried her, and five minutes later she was snug, warm, and asleep beside me in bed. I compared her response to how a human might react: There was no drama (“It’s about time you opened the door. I’m freezing!”); no guilt-tripping (“What in the world were you thinking, leaving me out there?”); no retaliation (“You can forget about snuggling with me after that little escapade!”). She did not waste her time on the past or the future; the present moment was too valuable to miss.
We live in a perfect world, with blessings so deep and vast they are almost too much to take in. Marianne Williamson was right when she said it is our light that frightens us most; this bright, amazing, beautiful, wondrous, incomprehensible universe can seem too good to be true.

And yet, it is true. When we realize that, and awaken to it, there is no wanting, no craving, no need to attract more. We are truly basking in the divine, a moment at a time.

The law of attraction can help us improve the circumstances of our lives and is valuable for doing so. The risk is if we begin to believe this is all there is. Our ego is perfectly capable of conjuring up one thing after another that it thinks we “need” in order to be happy. We then find ourselves on the same treadmill that has led so many people to live, in Thoreau’s words, “lives of quiet desperation,” always chasing after the next thing.

By contrast, the law of attention implies a peaceful practice and expanded awareness. Attention is a manifestation of love, so being more attentive means being more loving. We know this from our own experience: When someone pays attention to us—looking, listening, giving—we feel cared about. Conversely, when someone ignores us, we feel demeaned, insignificant, unloved.

The more we focus on the present, the more we experience “the peace that passes all understanding,” and the more ably we radiate that peace to others. The kingdom is at hand; the true riches of life are already here. As we release our need to own, to get, and to have, we can apply the power of attention to discover the true bliss that comes from no-self and no-thing at all.
It is never too late
to walk on a beach
warm sand beneath
feet that have journeyed
many miles
to pick wildflowers
to grace a cracked
checked vase,
to sit beside the
spring stream
and allow the sound
of icy water racing
over timeworn rocks
to sing to senses
thirsting for serenity,
it is never too late
to extend the loving heart
In John 21:1-6, there is an episode in which Jesus teaches through a “living parable.” The disciples, who were mostly fishermen, were plying their trade on the Sea of Galilee. After a whole night of work, they had caught nothing. At daylight they returned to shore, tired and discouraged. They came upon Jesus, who suggested they try again, but that this time they should “cast the net on the right side of the boat.”

Just imagine their reaction! After all, they were experienced fishermen. What could the carpenter know? And yet, after all they had seen, how could they question his insights? So they cast out their net as he suggested, and now they were not able to haul it in for all the fish.

The disciples, in consciousness, were out of the flow of life. By the sheer act of casting from the other side of the boat, they changed their whole experience. This means that by the device of turning in thought from negative to positive, from moods of insufficiency to attitudes of confidence, one may alter one’s whole experience from failure to success. “On the right side” of life you get in tune with the inexorable flow of good.

Many are they who have suffered through painful illnesses that have defied all curative processes. Like the disciples, they have figuratively “toiled all night” in their quest for healing, possibly employing either or both medical and prayer treatment, but without avail. The story seems to imply that regardless of
the experience of the techniques involved or even the fervency of the desire, if you are on the “wrong side” (negative state of consciousness) there is no help. The need is to get on the “right side,” to get into the flow of the healing.

A Universal Flow of Wholeness

Let’s take a look at this healing stream, this universal flow of wholeness. You are a child of the universe. You do not walk your path of life alone. The whole universe walks with you. It is dynamically involved in you. Its dynamic flow is ever expressing as you. Thus health is not something you can “get” physically, in pills or potions, or metaphysically in prayers or treatments. You cannot get health. You can only be health. Health is the reality of life, the normal condition of humankind.

Some years ago, Cornell University Medical School decided to research “what makes healthy people healthy.” This led the researchers away from the “norm” of deterioration and death and into a study of “healthy-mindedness” as the obvious key to bodily health. The scientists found that the healthiest people are those who have habitual attitudes that make them impervious to social situations and surroundings.
Nature Versus Nurture

Once you catch the idea that you are a whole creature, the very self-livingness of a universal stream of life, you will never again be satisfied until you find improvement in health. Unity cofounder Myrtle Fillmore was a Methodist-bred schoolteacher facing what was in that day a terminal case of tuberculosis. The doctors agreed that she had but a few months to live. It was a condition that had “run in the family,” and thus the prognosis was accepted with resignation. She was, however, a spiritual adventurer on the quest for the truth about life.

One day Myrtle had a great revelation that changed her life, and by her influence, the lives of thousands of people. She affirmed: I am a child of God and therefore I do not inherit sickness. She began to cast the net on the right side of the boat. Despite the medical verdict, she got into the flow of healing life and went on to live a full life for forty-five years beyond that time.

This is not to say that heredity has no influence on the conditions or tendencies of the body. But it does say that regardless of the kind of physical body heredity has given you or the conditions of consciousness your parents may have imposed upon you, all this is incidental to your experience of life. Fundamental, however, is the truth that you are a child of the universe. Jesus said, “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt. 25:34 RSV). The inheritance is yours, for you are the living enterprise of the creative process. But you must claim it, know that you are entitled to the fullness of life, and get into the flow.

The Flow of the Infinite Through You

God is a circle that is centered in you. All the attributes of the Infinite are in focus as you, flowing forth through you. It means that you are created in the image-likeness of an infinite idea. You are the only begotten of God from the standpoint that, no matter
what other influences may have left their marks on you from the outside, there is that of you that is begotten only of God, which is forever the “flowering” of the divine flow from the inside. This is the fundamental Truth. All else are incidental facts.

We might turn to the story of the fishermen again and note that the fish were there, as always. The change from discouraging emptiness to joyous fulfillment was not in the habits of the fish, but in the attitudes of the fishermen. The healing stream is an eternal reality. There is an allness even within the illness. The whole universe is within you, and its flow is ever the reality of you in a fundamental sense, no matter what the incidentals may be. And it is this reality of wholeness that is the key to the constancy of a healing and renewing process within the body—even when you do nothing or know nothing about it.

In the morning, take a few moments in bed, even before you are up and at it, to “wait on the Lord” or get yourself plugged in. The current of life is within you as always, but you need to get your thoughts consciously on the right side. You can affirm something like this: *I am in the flow of life, and I move easily with the flow. I am radiantly and enthusiastically alive. I am free from tension, stress, and strain, and I go forward in the flow of life—unhurried and unworried.*

Then determine that you will fish only on the right side of the boat. Keep yourself free from negative reactions and the sense of burdensome competition. Your life is to be lived from the inside-out. The things that happen around you or to you can have little bearing on your physical well-being. What counts are the things that happen in you.

Emerson says to gird yourselves about with incessant affirmatives. The reason is easy to see. In this way, you lift the focus from emptiness to fullness, you turn to the other side of the boat, and you actually tend to alter your level of consciousness.
From Nowhere to Now Here

The moment you start working from the right side you realize that your health is “now here.” You can say with confidence: *I am now full of life and health. The short step from “nowhere” to “now here” is the pause to be still and know . . . I am in the flow.*

Whenever you have a health problem, remember, *health is now here.* The most important factor in healing is getting out of the “nowhere” consciousness. On this level, the healing effort is motivated by fear and frustrated by the tension of the very anxious effort to find health. Always the first step should be to get into the flow. Life is whole, and you can never be less than whole in the reality of you.

Keep in mind that the healing stream is constant—not present only when you affirm that it is working. You are in this stream constantly, even if you have been fishing on the wrong side of the boat and manifesting less than wellness in experience. The need is not to overcome illness but simply to get into the flow.

There is a healing stream. It is one of the great realities of life. Wherever there is even a faint glimmer of life, that stream is a reality and a potential for help and healing.

There is no incurable illness—only incurable persons who may be locked into certain negative states of consciousness. But consciousness can be changed. One should not oversimplify the process nor assume that by saying a few affirmations or metaphysical treatments a miracle of renewal will easily come. However, know the Truth: *You can be healed; you can open the way to the eternal flow of life.*
“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest.”—John 4:35 RSV

Hot and tired from an all-day drive across the desert, we quickly checked into our motel and began searching for a restaurant where we could relax in comfort and eat a simple meal. That's all we wanted, but this proved to be the start of a two-hour adventure of many miles and much frustration.

The first restaurant we entered was so dark that only after we were seated and our eyes adjusted from the desert sun did we discover how dirty it was. We politely returned our menus and groped our way out.

Next was a large restaurant where we were confronted by a grumpy host puffing on a cigar and coughing uncontrollably. He grunted for us to follow him and headed for a table. We headed for the door!

Our next try was a place where the music was so loud that the hostess had to ask us three times how many were in our party. To have eaten there would have been like eating in the middle of a rock concert, so out we went.

The next restaurants were as bad.

How did it all end? Two hours and many miles later we ate at the restaurant adjacent to our motel. How was it? Excellent.
It was clean, simple, and the food was served with a smile. The lesson? The grass is not always greener (and neither are the salads) somewhere else.

**As Green As It Gets**

Right where you are is as green as the grass will ever get. Within you is a potential for happiness that does not diminish nor ripen over time. Happiness doesn't need time to ripen, it only has to be called forth. It is ever available, ever waiting. Your present circumstances may look discouraging and may lead you to play the “if onlys”: “If only I were richer”; “If only I weren't sick”; “If only someone loved me”; “If only I were happier.”

Actually, you will never have more potential for prosperity and wholeness than you have now. There will never be more of an opportunity for peace and love than exists for you right now. You will never be closer to complete happiness than you are right now.

When you were conceived in the mind of God, you were given all that you needed. God holds back nothing, but it is your life choices which decide if and how you use those gifts.

**There Is Only Now**

“Now” is rather an enigmatic concept when you ponder it for a while. No time exists other than now. Think of it—the past is over and gone. It will never be in your life again. Whatever happiness or grief it deposited in your life has already been delivered. The future? It's not here yet and when it does arrive, it will no longer be the future. It will be now. So now is really all you have and all you ever will have. The past is compost, the future is a seed not yet planted, the present is the only soil in which you can grow. So lamenting a missed chance for love in the past or nervously anticipating a need for prosperity in the future is wasting precious opportunities for all of your good in the present.
Why not begin doing the best you can right where you are? You can’t get on an airplane that left yesterday, and you can’t board one today that will leave tomorrow. You can’t grow from where you were yesterday, and it’s impossible to grow from where you will be tomorrow. The only growing has to take place exactly where you are planted.

You are planted where you are because that soil is best for you at this time in your unfoldment. The soil, the circumstances, in which you now find yourself contains all the elements that will make you grow best. Trust the process of growth. Trust God. Pay attention to the details in your life, doing your very best with each challenge that presents itself.

Of course, growing where you are planted does not mean that you should accept the limitations of your present circumstances. No, indeed. The flower planted in the shade still seeks the sun. Any problem that you are now facing does not have to be accepted at face value. It can become a chance to grow, a chance to claim more of the good that God has for you. God’s desire for you is absolute good, so do not be satisfied with less.
The Good Old Days

Sometimes we have a tendency to walk backwards through life. Like travelers facing backwards in the observation car of a cross-country train, we don't quite know where we are or exactly where we are going. We only know where we have been, and too often we find ourselves longing for those “good old days.” Through the mist of the past, things often seem to take on an attractive patina. We have trouble seeing the blessings in the now because we view things only through the filter of the past.

Yet the past can include problems like growing up in a dysfunctional family or the early death of a parent or a very sad love affair. These often have a devastating effect on us, and we allow them to affect us throughout our entire lives. Anchored in these past events, we cannot stretch into the newness that each day presents to us. Entrenched in the past, we frustrate our present potential.

Kingdom of God

Paul said, “Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward ... the upward call of God” (Phil. 3:13-14 RSV). In other words, seek first the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not in the past. Staying in the past is meandering in the dark caverns of the mind. The past is illusion, mere memory. It is only what our mind is able to selectively recall. The longer something stays in the mind, the more it changes
and the less it resembles what really happened. The past, like the future, is only our perception.

The Past Is Important … But!

The past is the raw material of the present, but the past is not a blueprint for the present! Give thanks for the lessons of the past. No matter how painful they were, they have given you an awareness of who and what you are. Many people recovering from an alcohol addiction state, “Thank God for my alcoholism” and mean it! What they are grateful for is the fact that the disease utterly forced them to connect with their own spirituality.

Instead of fearing the past or resisting and resenting it, use all of the raw material of the past, the good as well as the “bad,” to design a new blueprint for the present. Looking back with fear or resentment is dragging the limitations of the past into the now, and that’s like a boat dragging an anchor. Life is progress, and each now moment is a stepping-stone that leads to the next now moment.

You can’t change the past. In fact, there is no need to because the real you doesn’t dwell there anymore.

The Future Is Important … But!

What about the future? Can you believe that if you keep on thinking the same thoughts, saying the same words, doing the same things, going in the same direction, the future will be any different than now? To look to the future as a savior without changing the present is to think an orange tree can grow from an acorn.

Yes, you can change the direction of your life, but changes can’t happen in the past or the future; they can only happen in the now. At each now moment there exists an unlimited amount of possibilities, which makes anytime a good time for a new beginning. In fact, every moment is a new beginning.
You don’t have to wait for a new year to resolve to make a new life. You are, right now, at the junction of what you were and what you can be. This junction of your life, this now moment, is ripe with possibilities. This Possibility Junction—this “now” moment—contains all of the good that you can ever hope to have. At each of these junctions, you decide what road you will take.

When you think of how you want your life to unfold, it may seem awesome, but when you are at Possibility Junction, everything is possible. All you really have to remember is that God is with you, because God lives at Possibility Junction. The God which dwells within you and has given you a new vision of yourself will keep you on course. The God which has allowed the vision will, with your cooperation, fulfill that vision.

**Begin Where You Are**

Look for the seed of good in every situation, and you will see that the fields are already ripe for harvesting. All you will ever need is yours—Now.

Begin where you are. Do what you can. Even a small effort to change, to grow, to improve, will bring astonishing results. When you desire to change and you make an effort to change, God rushes forth to meet you. As in the story of the Prodigal Son, God waits for us to return “home.” When we do, God immediately responds to us with an outpouring of everything we need—Now.
So walk forward and don’t turn back. (You can’t drive a car by looking in the rearview mirror.) If you want to discover the genuine you—the person that you really are—release the person that you were. When you yearn for the past, you make yourself a slave to the past. When you learn from the past, you become a master of the present.

You can choose to build on what you were, but you are not what you were. You can focus on what you will be, but you are not what you will be. What you are is what you are right now—the inheritor of all of God’s gifts.

Now, this moment, is the first moment in the rest of your eternity. You can start it fresh with God.
My first grandson was a strapping ten-pound baby who was born with a set of lungs that could command a battalion. Once he learned to walk, his very favorite thing to do was to go outside for “walks,” which were more like runs. He would bound down the sidewalk until something caught his attention, like a sewer cover, or a flower, or a front door. He would make a cursory investigation, then turn quickly and move on to some other fascinating attraction. Everything he laid his eyes on was alluring.

My role in all this was to corral him. When he insisted on going into every open garage and tinkering with whatever he could find, like lawn mowers, shovels, tires, I’d pick him up and turn his focus to something harmless, if only for a moment. I’d carry him over to a flowerbed and invite him to touch the flowers as I named them. He’d invariably rip one off its unyielding stem, and I’d be hoping that the owner of the home wasn’t watching as I responded, “No, no, Blakie, pretty flowers, smell.” He was never much interested in just smelling.

Our minds tend to be like that—toddlers running in every direction, sometimes incredibly creative and sometimes running oblivious into dangerous terrain. Our great discipline is to corral these always-busy minds of ours and lead them away from contaminated waters of fear, blame, jealousy, self-deprecation, resentment, harsh judgment, or envy, and toward the refreshing
waters of constructive thoughts. That’s what prayer does; it aligns our thinking with infinite wisdom and love.

Prayer is not about focusing our creative energy on God for the purpose of changing God or motivating God to get moving on our requests. It is not about focusing our energy to turn God around to our way of thinking or doing. It is about disciplining the tendency of our mind to run off in many directions, thereby dissipating our power, heading us, often enough, down blind alleys and potholed paths. Prayer is about focusing our creative capacities, which are infinite, on God so that God’s presence can be apprehended and embraced and welcomed to minister to and through us.

As you continue to answer the call to adventures in prayer, you will experience God transcendent and God immanent—God everywhere present outside yourself, working with you through the people and circumstances of your life, and God at the center of your own being, guiding, healing, strengthening, and comforting you. While you may believe that God is present everywhere in the universe, prayer opens the door of your awareness to actually experience the activity of God, the grace of God. You will recognize God working through the people and circumstances of your life in ways that you could never have plotted on your own or even imagined. You will hear someone say just what you needed to hear at just the right moment and appreciate that this is the grace of God. You will notice the immanent activity of God as changes in yourself—changed attitudes, perceptions, and character qualities.

The story of Job in Scripture tells of his spiritual awakening to the presence of God. As he considered the sudden downward turn in his “luck,” he began to feel abandoned by God. With the challenges to his faith so severe, with his losses and pain so great, with feeling so powerless in the midst of it all, his faith was slipping through his fingers. He turned inward on himself, hating himself, and wishing he were dead. It is a classic example of faith grappling with adversity, one that we all experience.
The story ends with Job meeting God, not on his own terms but on God’s terms. Job sees God with new eyes. As we pray in the midst of all that life brings, we, too, come to see God and our relationship with God with new eyes.

The courage you are not sure you have; the beauty of your deepest, purest dreams and desires; the spark of love that grows into compassion, kindness, tolerance; the ounce of strength that grows into courage, patience, perseverance; the kernel of hope that grows into enthusiasm and passion that bring joy and life to all you do; the persistent yearning for peace and harmony with all people and all of life; the growing urge that leads to doing the right thing; the creative energy that shows up as your gifts and talents and uniqueness—all of this and more is the life of God within you. Theologians call it grace. All spiritual traditions have a name for the dynamic activity of God in us.

Consider the importance of focusing your mind through prayer, because the more you do so, the more you will see God active in your life. Being able to focus in prayer also allows you to apply the power of prayer to all the major arenas of life, including making good choices and wise decisions, creating harmonious relationships, handling change and difficulties, and experiencing expansive abundance and ineffable joy.

Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and mystic who authored close to a dozen books on spirituality, beautifully describes the purpose of focused prayer. He says, “We come to know God by
seeming to touch God. It is a response to a call from the God Who has no voice and yet Who speaks in everything that is, and Who most of all speaks in the depths of our own Being.”

Jesus Christ said, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket, but rather on a lamp stand and it gives light to all who are in the house. In the same way let your light shine before all so that they may see the good that you do and give glory to God.” When people see our light shine even in the midst of difficulties and stresses, they recognize a goodness, a power that is greater than our humanity, and they can’t help but be touched. When your light shines, it awakens others to their own light.

Jesus was not the only one to point to the light of God being within us waiting to be discovered and uncovered. Leaders from traditions across the spectrum of spirituality talk about ways to uncover the light of the Divine within each human being. It is the light that created and pervades the universe and each of us.

Focusing your thinking through prayer is like taking the bushel basket off the light of God in you. It not only lights your way, it lights your thinking with clarity. The energy of your prayer little by little dissolves the darkness of the protective shell you have built around your tender, vulnerable heart, the darkness that can distort perceptions, block the flow of love, misdirect your decisions, and toxify your body.

As you focus your mind on aligning with divine mind in prayer, your energy clears and becomes lighter. You become like incandescent light because you become energetically purer. You become a presence of peace and joy that brings light into our world. Your prayers can then become like laser beams, so focused, so coherent, that nothing can stop them—or you.
What is a river? That am I.  
But who can say what rivers are?  
Am I the water flowing by?  
Am I the near bank and the far?  

You chart my depth and breadth and course  
And find about me nothing strange—  
But I say, rivers are more force  
Than fact, are everlasting change.  

Though your description and your name  
May fit me now, I shall not stay  
Even a moment hence the same—  
I am already on my way.  

Out of the infinite, a flow  
Of life across infinity,  
Into the infinite, I go  
How like a river to the sea.
Sometimes people need help in praying—extra spiritual support when it feels too difficult to go it alone. In times like these, it is comforting to be able to contact a prayer ministry such as Silent Unity®, one of the oldest and largest prayer ministries in the world.

Silent Unity serves people of all faiths, and all prayer requests are treated with reverence and strictest confidentiality and are enfolded in prayer for thirty days.

The work of Silent Unity is based on the belief that true soul satisfaction can only come by knowing God—that experiencing the presence of God is the real need. In other words, God doesn't have what we want—God is what we want.

Silent Unity helps people know their oneness with God, that they may open themselves to the presence of God and recognize this divine presence in all people and circumstances.

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