

The
Oneness
Gospel

Birthing the Christ Consciousness
and
Divine Human in You

by

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Let Your Goddess Grow! 7 Spiritual Lessons on
Female Power and Positive Thinking

The Women's Book of Empowerment:
323 Affirmations That Change Everyday Problems
into Moments of Potential

The world is one family.

Contents

Introduction

The Oneness Teachings are for Everyone · Looking East Expands Our Spiritual Understanding · Life is an Interfaith Dialogue · Grace Flows Through All Aspects of Your Life · Birthing Ourselves to a Higher Order · Linking with the Divine Presence · Your Spiritual Growth Begins Now

Chapter One: Our Modern Problems

A Great Spiritual Divide is Cultivated by Politics, Churches, and the Media · We Belong to God, not a Particular Religion · Belief in Separation Obstructs Our Perception of Unity · Surrender and Silence Are Unfamiliar to the Western Mind · We Don't Understand Oneness

Chapter Two: What Is Oneness?

You Are the All · You Are Birthed from Within: A Word from John · The Begotten Son is You · The Truth of Who We Are Lies Underneath Flawed Perceptions · Separation is the Root of all Suffering · Oneness Begins by Practicing the Love Commandment · As Within, so Without: A Practical Approach to Daily Life

Chapter Three: Spirituality and Awakenings

Spirituality is to Know Thyself · Negative Conditioning Thwarts Spiritual Awareness · Mr. Ling · Spirituality, Mysticism, and Religion · Enlightenment is a Process · A Spiritual Transformation Gives You Joy in Simple Things · A Spiritual Awakening: Kundalini Rising

Chapter Four: Consciousness Is Essence

Where to Find the Kingdom · Lower and Higher Consciousness · Consciousness Is an Awareness of What Is · Shared Consciousness is a Projection of a Deeper Order · Rising from Sense Consciousness · Atman and Brahman · Embodiment of a Teaching: The I AM · Raising Consciousness · Change the World by Raising Your Consciousness · Mystical Experiences · Evolutionary Consciousness

Chapter Five: Separation and the Ego-Self

What is the Ego? · The Ego Has a Purpose · Ego, Satan, and the Dark Side · Getting in Touch with Your Ego · Gurus, Guides, and Personal Saviors · The Ego-Driven Life · The Ego, Relationships, and Conflict · Develop Self-Awareness by Practicing Acceptance Not Resistance · Working with a Healthy Ego · Self-Awareness is Fulfillment

Chapter Six: Mind and Thought

The Mind Exists Through the Process of Thinking · The Contents of Your Mind and the Collective Mind · Thoughts and Thinking · Thoughts and the Law of Attraction · Managing a Busy Mind · Thinking is the Problem, not the Solution · When Mind and Ego Marry · Taking Personal Responsibility for Your Thoughts · Resistance to Negative Thoughts · Repentance is

Changing Your Thoughts and Inner Reality · Sin and Erroneous Thinking · The Mind-Body-Brain Connection · Mind Games · Mind and Thought Management

Chapter Seven: Emotional Charges and Healing from Trauma

An Emotional Charge is a Burden · Illogical Decisions Made in Childhood Can Leave an Imprint · Emotional Charges Affect Our Chakras and Koshas · Trauma Changes the Brain · Healing Emotional Charges with Deeksha · Science, Medicine, and Emotional Charges · A Story of Emotional Charges and Stored Trauma · Discovering Emotional Charges from Childhood · The Process of Samskara Shuddhi · Releasing and Clearing Emotional Charges · Living a Charge-Free Life

Chapter Eight: Freedom from Suffering

Suffering and Victim Mindsets · East and West Have Different Views of Suffering · About World Saviors and Karmic Law · A Final Word on Suffering Caused by Sin · States of Suffering · Suffering is Trying to Change What Is · Choosing to Suffer · Habitual Responses to Suffering · Suffering is Not in the Fact, but in the Perception of the Fact · Being Present During Grief · Kisa Gotami: Your Suffering is Not Unique · Be Liberated from Suffering through Self-Awareness

Chapter Nine: Living in Heart-Centered Awareness

Characteristics of Joy · Heart-Felt Compassion · Forgiveness Comes from the Heart · Practice Self-Love and Self-Sensitivity · Joy and Relationships · The Difference between Joy and Pleasure · The Heart Blooms through Awareness and Meditation · Opening the Heart through Energetic Transmission · Spiritual Masters Practice the Art of Compassion · The Heart is Interdependent with all Life · The Anahata and Oneness · The Heart is the Only Reality

Chapter Ten: Being at Ease With Yourself

Being at Ease is Accepting Yourself · Self-Reflection Leads to a State of Ease · Be Who You Are and Have Self-Honesty and Inner Integrity · The Sage and the Mouse: A Tale of Authenticity · Two Principles of Intelligent Living · Perfect Action is Born from Intelligence, not Conditioning · Conditioning Breeds Conflict · Practice Self-Acceptance · Self-Love and True Love

Chapter Eleven: Loving God

God's Attributes · The Nature of Divine Grace · Get to Know God through Gratitude · Have Faith, not Fear · The Kingdom is Within · The Difference between Prayer and Meditation · Seeing God · The Christ Expression · Oneness

Chapter Twelve: Twelve Principles for Becoming a Divine Human

With Thanks

Sri Bhagavan's Core Enlightenment Teachings

References

About the Author

Introduction

During the last ten years, a spiritual renaissance has migrated from India to nearly every corner of the world in the form of the oneness teachings. These lessons have helped millions of people understand that the second coming of Christ is an internal shift in perception, a recognition that a divine spark exists within every human being. This spiritual awakening is a realization, a higher level of awareness a person reaches when they grasp that everyone is a piece of individualized consciousness that binds all creation. It is the core idea of the oneness movement.

When a person moves into this field of consciousness, or into oneness, there is a huge sense of relief for both the person entering this state of bliss and the spiritual teacher who is witnessing this experience. It is a beautiful thing to watch because you know that God exists and is active in our lives. Watching someone move into oneness affirms our greatest hope and our deepest desire: once we discover truth and experience divine love, we are permanently changed. We feel illuminated and see our potential. And then it's not much of a stretch to believe that the entire planet can change ... and suddenly it seems effortless because we know we are an extension of everything.

However, living this truth is an entirely different matter. After the realization or workshop, when we advance to the next round of self-development, we meet an entirely new set of daily challenges that come with being an embodiment of truth. How do we make sense of what we know after having felt one with all creation? With God? Can we go home and watch a movie and eat a pizza and still be spiritual? The short answer is *yes, you can*. The oneness teachings help us learn to love ourselves and each other, and just get more out of every

experience. We begin to appreciate the present moment with a sense of overwhelming gratitude. There is more joy in everything.

The Oneness Teachings are for Everyone

The teachings pertain to knowing one's self within the broad scope of human experience. These simple but deeply spiritual lessons, which are often grounded in science and psychology or refer to the New Testament or the Upanishads, seem almost self-help-oriented. They are based upon the joy of being and the strong sense that God is near, present in nature, and within us. They have helped thousands get to know the Divine. They are practical and dogma-free. Dogma has left many in the West spiritually barren because it cannot provide an actual live experience of the Divine Presence and has been known to accumulate around Jesus' teachings like a dense fog. For many spiritual seekers who are interested in the mystical dimension of Christianity, the oneness teachings open up fresh insights to see their faith in new ways. That's why the teachings and the retreats, which have a big experiential element, are appealing to Westerners.

Flavored with elements of yogic spirituality, they include practices that open a mystical door so anyone can experience the same profound connection to the Divine a mystic feels. They are enjoyed by everyone—not just Buddhists, New Agers, Muslims, or Jesus lovers—because the teachings speak to the divine dimension and potential in all people that Jesus became aware of within himself. They revitalize our sense of connection to each other and show us how to have experiences that exchange energy with the universal life force we call the Presence, which is the definition of conscious living. Jesus looked deeply within for this truth. He knew he was an expression of this unity, or Christ consciousness, an openness that is joyously ours when we

realize our spiritual work is to achieve this same higher level consciousness together. To fully realize our unity with God, we must look within for this truth as he did.

If you feel congested by certain aspects of the church experience or even wounded by the idea of Christianity, or if you are among those who are simply curious, you can still read this book. Whether you want to keep Jesus close in your heart, reexamine his ideas from a safe distance, or feel you don't need Jesus at all, it does not matter. The oneness teachings are not contradictory to the Christian faith, but are *interfaith*, like a universal wireframe that you, the webmaster, can drop images and text into to create your own unique spiritual homepage. Of course, God hosts your page, and it is always flavored with your own ideas and belief system.

At this moment in history, we are observing the birth pains of a world civilization striving for a new way of being, one that wants support from a new, shared consciousness, one that respects individuality but recognizes the same divine light lives in everyone. Today, people already sense an urgency to shift their perception, but they can't articulate why they need to change, only that every sphere of human existence, whether it is education, politics, science, or medicine, seems to be accelerating, and something needs to be done. Most of us are eager to find a tidy path to the eternal truth—the *Sanaatan Dharma*, or the eternal principles of righteousness that uphold the universe in ways that help us better understand life. Since the oneness lessons are sensible and contemporary, they can show us a practical way to live with more wisdom, maturity, and self-reflection through this period of planetary growth. Not only do they speak to our acceleration into a new world without divisiveness and separation but they are also grounded in the oneness of all things—oneness in nature, oneness of matter and consciousness, and the indivisible relationship between human being and God.

Looking East Expands Our Spiritual Understanding

However you find your way to the kingdom in your travels and contemplations, I will unequivocally say that after my own journey, India, and all her contradictions, monks, temples, and thousands of images of the Creator, has always pointed my attention inward when I'm seeking a relationship with the Divine Presence. A great spiritual wealth exists in India. Religion seems less important than a willingness to find a direct, personal bond with All That Is. Whether you are on location to physically inhale incense during a *Homa* or a holy pilgrimage or you're visiting through the writings of gifted gurus and yogic masters, there is something in India's numerous wisdom traditions that both enriches and rejuvenates your unique communion with spirit. No matter what you believe, India and her wide variety of spiritual guidance will offer you some experience to grow your ideas about who God is and what Jesus was here to do.

As a unity-minded Jesus lover and a non-literalist, I don't buy into the concept of original sin. I believe Jesus was both human and divine; he's an example of humanity's potential, not the exception. He assured us that each of us could rise to the same level of consciousness by effort, reflection, and loving God supremely. I don't think spiritual evolution is a reward for subscription to a correct belief system. But for many people, it has been difficult to reconcile the whole gist of traditional Christian dogma and churchianity with his guidelines for living as presented in the Gospels without any instruction or discussion on metaphysics, mysticism, or grace. In this respect, even small doses of Vedic philosophy and Indian yogic commentary make his teachings clearer.

As an extraordinary teacher of the divine law in all manifestation, Jesus gave us the ideal principles by which we can govern our lives in the sight of God. He was a reflection of God the Father in creation and evolved his consciousness to become one with God himself. He offered us

the keys to unlock our awareness of our own divine spark, which is our God-self that's perfect in every way. Because we are all individual sparks of divinity who spiritually awaken at our own pace, there is no eternal damnation or hell, and certainly no innocent child is born in sin, at risk for not experiencing a happy afterlife if they don't accept Jesus as a personal savior. Like Jesus, the yogis teach that there is nothing to be saved from, other than our own erroneous thinking and negative conditioning or belief systems that create a wide variety of nasty realities and suffering during this lifetime and others.

We get lots of opportunities to fix ourselves, which is the good news I missed in church school. Because our Christ consciousness is latent within every soul on this planet, all people are capable of achieving the same level of enlightenment and mastery as Jesus. Life is guaranteed to improve when we decide to see the good (God) in everyone and consciously apply his lessons. Life's great when we choose to elevate ourselves from our son-of-man consciousness—our physical body limited by sensory boundaries—to a state of unity with God, a state that is blissful, love and light-filled, and full of optimism. In this way, our shared destiny is to become Christed or Christ-lighted. *All of us*. And being saved means when we finally rise to meet our God-self and a higher state of conscious awareness, we break the cycle of suffering and are illuminated by inseparable unity with all creation.

Life is an Interfaith Dialogue

I departed from the traditional Sunday ritual because I wanted to figure out what the mystics and sages have said about these truths and how to work with them in our everyday lives. I wanted to search for deeper and more substantive meaning of the eternal truth, but I couldn't find it in the Bible until I read beyond it. Paramhansa Yogananda, a preeminent spiritual figure

of the early twentieth century who led people of all faiths to a deeper understanding of the Bible and Jesus, was fully attuned to the infinite Christ consciousness. His work alone is a triumphant merge of Eastern and Western ideas. I read volumes about his personal realization of the Divine. Yogananda, a yogic master who lived until 1959, navigated through the Bible, Bhagavad Gita, and Nag Hammadi books and celebrated the powerful message of the Gospels. He was an exceptional teacher who emphasized our intimate relationship with God and with each other. He encouraged us to deeply contemplate the New Testament with regard to our human interaction in all matters. Along with many other modern Hindu saints and Christian mystics, such as Ramacharaka, Kriyananda, Sri Yukteswar, Lahiri Mahasaya, Meister Eckhart, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Teresa of Avila, Yogananda moved us toward a more mature and reflective spiritual search. They urged us to rediscover the symbolic language that structures very complex ideas. Contemporary teachers, such as Thomas Moore, David Wallace, Steven Hairfield, Russill Paul, Andrew Harvey, Joseph Campbell, Wayne Teasdale, John Shelby Spong, and many others have taught us how to examine scripture on many levels, from the historical and cultural to the metaphysical, and explore the rich messages that help us create a balanced physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual life.

I decided to do the same and expand my thinking. I read outside my own theology and spiritual perspective and included the prolific teachings of today's self-help writers, modern-day monks, ministers, former priests, and psychologists who understood the major ideas of both spiritual traditions. I studied for many years, got a Ph.D., attended religious classes and the seminary, wrote books, taught, and reflected upon my own life journey.

After examining other scriptures, such as the Gita and the Vedas, I was led to the wisdom in the non-canonical and Gnostic gospels. I even read the opinions of those who rejected such

thinking. But, overall, I found two thought-provoking ideas that repeatedly migrated between the holy works and popular literature of Eastern and Western scholars: (1) we are bound together by our unity and shared abilities, and (2) God is omnipresent and exists within every individual. I find nothing contradictory about those ideas, only an invitation to find oneness in this shared expression we call life.

As one who has built a happy and peaceful spiritual nest with Indian yogis and Christian mystics, both modern and ancient, one thing is apparent to me after many years of my own study: I do not feel Jesus ever wanted religion to be an exercise in elitism or dogmatic fundamentalism. Nor did he want us to have lifeless secularism, but a spirituality that empowers and sustains us from our very soul, where there is ample room for free choice and faith. Truth, as he taught, was for everyone, from the meek to the magnanimous, and God's glory is so great it should not matter how one communes with God in his or her heart. For some of us, there appear to be elements of Christianity and its tenets that neither illuminate nor seem welcoming to many groups because of its emphasis on exclusivity. To me, a religious practice ought to make a person feel whole and nurtured, not trapped and unable to express his or her own brand of uniqueness. Faith and an emotional attachment to a religion ought to be balanced with reason and create space within an individual to personally grow.

As my own awareness continues to evolve and the more unity-minded I become, I am certain that humanity's true church is a state of consciousness where we realize divine potential within every child of God. Writing, research, meditation, prayer, yoga, and teaching are my unconventional spiritual practices today and part of my "church" wherever I go. It's my way of life. As my husband lovingly reminds me, I am in church all day long. I have become completely annoying to live with as I frequently point out some connection between a piece of everyday life

and its possible deeper meaning. At least once a day his eyes roll and he tries to get away when he senses my urge to point out an Upanishad or New Testament lesson in a TV commercial or at the market (“... you know, ” I casually say, “this piece of bread reminds me of something interesting....”). Oh well. I’m still learning patience and light-heartedness from him, so I suppose it’s a good trade at the end of the day.

Grace Flows Through All Aspects of Your Life

Years ago, when I first turned to several Indian teachers to shed some light on Christ’s lessons, I began looking for congruency between Christian and Hindu ideas. I got to know the Gospels better this way, and my studies elevated my understanding of consciousness. With all this guidance available, I slowly came to know that the Divine Presence was fully at work in my life. It was like grace notes in music. I recognized that even days filled with banality or suffering had value and held moments of grace. In a musical piece, grace notes are those light, tiny accent notes added as embellishment, usually before the principal note is played. They are ornaments to a larger note or sound and help create the beauty of a *raga*, jazz, or classical piece. Intuitively, when we learn to hear our own experiences as a musical expression, both joyful and despondent, and also see grace beautifully drawing our attention to what’s really there and what’s important to take note of, we are hearing and seeing life as an intricate and harmonious creation designed for our benefit and evolution. Jesus, the great example of the Christ, or the God-reflection in humanity, showed us the way to be in communion with life as a total sensory experience. He also showed us the value of mental, spiritual, and emotional balance. He demonstrated wholeness, a way to live in conjunction with the unity of God. Wholeness is an idea that never ceases to impress me. Even in front of the bread counter.

Birthing Ourselves to a Higher Order

At this time in history, humanity is swiftly approaching a deep abyss filled with hatred and misery. If we don't make a commitment to personal growth, we're jeopardizing the quality of life for future generations. I believe the modern spiritual seeker needs a blend of teachings to best understand Christ consciousness and how to achieve it. Consequently, the concepts discussed in this book are a big roadmap pointing toward our own unique human-divine experience. No single program, sacred text, or organized religion can fix us; no self-help process, philosophy, and belief system can be all-encompassing and facilitate world peace. We need to broaden our intellectual parameters and also rely on common sense. We've been fighting about who's right for so long that humanity is getting close to the dangerous tipping point of self-destruction.

Humanity is rapidly moving into a new age of awakening where it is imperative that each individual accept his or her own divinity, know they are one with God, and transform himself or herself accordingly. We can no longer sustain our personal and world relationships without recognizing the omnipresent intelligence in every particle of creation, and this intelligence includes what we see in the mirror. *Spiritual transformation occurs within first* when we act in accordance with self-love and acceptance. Only later can any positive vision be manifested outwardly in the form of peace and goodwill toward everyone. Until humanity sees itself as a reflection of Spirit and rises in consciousness, we will never rise to our true potential. These tasks are essential for our survival as a species.

Linking with the Divine Presence

Any great spiritual guide or teacher worth their salt will tell you the teachings of Jesus the master are owned by all humanity. Those lessons can help us probe into the darkest and most uninspired corners of our lives and find hope. But his statements may seem multi-layered and cryptic and need to be carefully unpacked if we want to understand their richness and wonder and gain insight on what makes humankind tick. Even if you look at tiny pieces of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John (plus the non-canonical gospel of Thomas), the passages carry vibrations of purity and truth that leap out from the text, despite the numerous translations. There is definitely something in there worth reading, but for most people, the eternal truth is hard to find in the Bible.

Today, if we want to understand enlightenment, Jesus' spiritual practices and his higher streams of consciousness, or even grasp the magnitude of God's grace, it's helpful to spend time with people who direct our attention to the *experience* of unity and are alive on the planet today. *Feeling* a real link with God and the cosmic vibration, such that we want to continually pursue this connection in our every expression, is a lot different from reading about it in sacred texts. In the East, they say a level of spiritual mastery is passed from teacher to student by the teacher's physical presence. A master or an avatar transmits energy that elevates a seeker to levels of awareness they could not obtain on their own. In which case, we are lucky to encounter teachers such as Sri Amma and Sri Bhagavan, spiritual teachers who have incarnated on earth to awaken people to the nature of their divine self. They will invite you to meditate with them and link to their consciousness simply for the sake of elevating your own. They want you to feel God's presence, not theirs. They are like energy elevators and help you get a little closer to your own experience of the Divine Presence.

Bhagavan's mission of eliminating suffering and encouraging people to understand the unity of all things has been in concert with *deeskha*, or simply The Blessing, as an important step to God-realization. Amma offers healing blessings and comforts the masses like a mother. They see *deeksha* as a way for God and human to come together and relate. It has always been Bhagavan's vision, who sees everyone as a spiritual seeker and welcomes any wisdom tradition that helps an individual love God more deeply. And if you don't have one, it's still OK. In his eyes, everyone has the potential to flower into the divine human they already are. God is active and ever-present in those who are deeply sincere and drawn to divine grace, and, as Kriyananda says, it's nice to have someone who has been empowered to assume the job of guiding you out of your fixations born of ego-consciousness to perfect your self-realization.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, which is as ancient as the Roman Catholic Church, this person is your *staretz*, a living, spiritual guide, your personal link to Christ. The Bhagavad Gita says, "One moment in the company of a saint can be your raft over an ocean of delusion," so attuning your consciousness to a saint, a guru, or an awakened one who is free from ego consciousness and fully aware that God is the sole reality is one way you can awaken to your bitter or unproductive mental tendencies. You can then heal yourself and reach upward toward more spiritual goals in life. For me, receiving Bhagavan's blessing personally, and also his energy through other blessing givers, was the contact that began to redirect my brain molecules and reawakened my interest in Jesus. It has been odd, but also supremely fulfilling, and has taken nothing away from my own faith.

For these reasons, and for Bhagavan's lessons as given to me by the monks, or *dasas*, that studied with him, I am eternally grateful. They want us to go deep within to explore our suffering and see reality for what it is and open our minds to a new way for humankind to exist. It is an

abstract vision but one that resonates with love and honesty, no matter our personalities or politics. Bhagavan is ever controversial, and he will probably remain so, but he visualizes life for every individual without any separation from God. In my experience, liberation from the concept of separation has allowed me to fully explore a more loving bond with God and, as a result, has enhanced every one of my relationships. I am extremely fortunate to have so many teachers who have challenged me to discover this simple truth.

Because of the healing and guidance I received from the *dasas*, I've rediscovered my own faith as a lover of God and often can't decide what to call myself. Some days, I'm a suburban mystic with Hindu undertones, other days, a unity-minded, *deeksha*-giving Christian. Thankfully, however, in the worldwide oneness community there is no need for such labels or names. We are the same family seeking higher level consciousness. Religious labels seem to negate the very essence of what oneness or unity attempts to convey, as a Buddhist, Hindu, New Ager, Pagan, Muslim, or Christian will elevate the collective consciousness by his or her alignment with Buddha, Krishna, The Universe, The Goddess, Allah, or Jesus.

Humankind already shares a set of unity teachings. These are not owned by anyone or any organization. They are simply there and bring us to the center of our faith and personal truth. Today, the Oneness University spiritual guides, as well as Amma and Bhagavan, want you to love God for the sake of loving because it is much easier to love another human being when we learn to love the Divine Presence and regularly see God within. They want you to open your heart, have an immense feeling of connection with others and the natural world, and perceive reality as is without the conditioned filters and unceasing interpretations of the ancient mind. Essentially, that is their mission. If you embrace this point of view and open up to your own potential, whether you got it from Sri AmmaBhagavan, Jesus, or the mailman, it doesn't matter.

It just means you have made the shift to awakening, and birthed the Christ consciousness in your being. Once it is delivered, you can expand from there. And it's a beautiful process.

Your Spiritual Growth Begins Now

Above all, know that your journey never begins where you want to be. It starts exactly where you are today, in this moment. All you need is the desire to grow in consciousness and open yourself to new possibilities. Dr. Steven Hairfield, author of *A Metaphysical Interpretation of the Bible*, once said a teacher merely confirms the essence of what you know. That's true. I cannot teach you anything you don't already resonate with. All I can do is share my stories and know that by doing so, I'm moving my own journey forward and walking beside you on yours. By raising my vibration, and because my words are present in your thoughts, I am helping you elevate your consciousness through these teachings. This thought pattern, along with the blessing that is included energetically in every copy of this book, will translate into some form of learning. Thus, this book is not meant to be one of those usual guides to enlightenment but a gentle nudge to point you toward ways to expand your heart and mind. Your true awakening will be a result of your own genuine lessons, discoveries, experiences, and perspectives on life.

No matter who your mentor may be or what your wisdom tradition is, after reading this book you may find that the Christ self is none other than the *Atman* or the Spirit that dwells within you. It is the image and likeness of God in which we were all created. This realization alone gives you greater power to reclaim yourself and will enrich all areas of your life. There is no better or bigger reason for believing in the unity of all beings after realizing this truth.

I am deeply honored to be of service to you during your process.

Om Shanti and Many Blessings,

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Bloomfield Hills, Michigan,

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Our Modern Problems

An authentic spiritual journey almost always begins with what St. John of the Cross called the dark night of the soul. That's the messy, question-filled part of life. Although our natural tendency is to avoid taking an honest look at how we arrived at our negativity, disease, and anguish, living in truth requires taking a microscopic look at what's inside our heart and mind. We have to clean ourselves out in order to make room for something better. It's a vigorous exercise, the most painful part of which is facing our ego and our suffering. Along with making peace with the past, we must also offer true forgiveness to ourselves and learn to love ourselves with wild abandon. Next, we need to forgive and learn to love others who don't love us.

Given the current state of the world, it's safe to say that this cleansing and forgiving process is not our strong suit, either as individuals or as a society. Instead of putting new wine in a new skin, it seems easier to just recycle the old skin and opt out of the total spiritual makeover. Most of us successfully avoid this personal housecleaning by adopting mindless religious or spiritual practices that neither enrich us nor bring us any true sense of communion with God. Then we have to overcome additional obstacles to our spiritual work—hurdles like overeating, overexercising, overtexting, overdoing anything else we try, and being overwhelmed with life in general. Our work culture is so rushed we are expected to solve problems before our competitor does, so there is no space or time left in our lives to simply *be* with a problem and contemplate on it. Since our culture's emphasis is on doing, not being, the fastest thinkers win the race. We can't hear God over the din in the marketplace, nor in our personal lives, and it appears we are losing our spiritual guidance system, that deep sense of connection with the Divine Presence that is our internal compass. What's holding us back in the West?

A Great Spiritual Divide is Cultivated by Politics, Churches, and the Media

When it comes to assaulting oneness, we are our own worst enemy. American politics are no exception. Many feel we are slowly drilling out any connection Western culture has with God, a spiritually damaging proposition because it doesn't reinforce our unity. Yes, we are a secular nation, but still, we are one nation under God ... just like every other country on the planet. But here, our intertwined faith and politics have polarized and paralyzed our progress toward a vision that sees every person as an individualized spirit under God's creation. With the separation of church and state, of course, there is a degree of sensitivity when proposing legislation that seems to pertain to one's religious beliefs. Is it right for a person or group to use their religion or belief in a higher power as justification when trying to lobby for laws? Not really. Our laws are secular, not religious, so our behavior and the standards under which we govern ourselves must be derived from secular reasons. Murder is against the law, not because it's in the Ten Commandments, but because there are great secular reasons to stop us from killing other people, and the large majority agrees.

Although we learned all this in high school civics class, politicians have hijacked the American mentality on a number of controversial issues. Abortion, a procedure whose support varies between religious groups, no longer resides in a discussion on whether or not our tax dollars ought to be spent there; it has morphed into a Republican versus Democrat issue. It finds the least support within conservative circles, the Catholic Church, Evangelicals, and the Eastern Orthodox Church and the most with a number of liberal and mainline Christian and Jewish faith groups and organizations who say abortion is sometimes an acceptable option. Since Americans cannot reach consensus on the topic, would it make sense to make funding it optional for those

taxpayers who want to contribute or find some other middle ground? Instead, the use of political framing to convey opposing perspectives and a “pro-life” and “pro-choice” stance is used at every opportunity to fuel more controversy and further divide the nation.

Another movement has also been gaining momentum lately. This is the Christian Nation debate: are we or are we not a nation founded upon Christian principles? Conservative, often pro-life, advocates say our country was founded upon Christian principles and advocate legislation justified on a political interpretation of Christianity. If we are opposed to abortion because our religion says so, I think that is how our founding fathers wanted us to think, regardless of our political party, if we even have one. But if Christian congressional leaders who may hold the majority say, “I think the country should ban abortion because our religion says it is wrong,” and then they back it up by citing the Christian Nation debate, I think we are entering a danger zone. What about the non-Christians?

I thought that in 1797, during John Adams’s administration, the Senate unanimously ratified the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which states in Article XI that “The government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion.” Those in favor of the U.S. being a Christian Nation say that John Adams actually said that “the general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God,” and he may have advocated it anyway. Does it really matter how we would refer to our nation, unless we were interested in creating more separation? If we decided we were a Christian Nation, would it influence the individual behavior of elected officials and cure our separation woes? We aren’t ready to have that kind of debate until we can assemble enough congressional leaders who can remember our oneness and give up their self-sustaining systems of selfishness. We’re supposed to celebrate our diversity while remembering our unity, and hopefully elect people who govern

from the center. As it stands, once elected, current leaders push their personal agenda so far outside the middle that Americans who are trying to maintain some sort of legislative balance by taking their best guess at the voting booth feel like ping-pong balls being slapped across the net. Washington seems to have evolved into a self-sustaining system of selfishness. Congress has become a house of either-or and individual gain and loss.

In Congress, where little bipartisan congeniality and rationality exist these days, Christian and non-Christian politics are layered between lobbyists and legislative pushes. Power and control have been usurped by groups who have decided that citing God and a particular set of Judeo-Christian values is the best, most convenient way to energize a political base and garner more votes. Even moderate Christians and the far-right conservatives cannot agree on what constitutes a “true Christian.” The politically moderate, fiscally conservative, unity-minded Christians of today are not viewed as Christian enough by the far right because they depart from them on several issues. They don’t want to humiliate gays or advance the kingdom of God through governmental action. They tend to respect all forms of life, but see a women’s sovereignty as important, too. Do we always have to be for or against something? And what of the interfaith minded? Or even the non-faith minded? In addition to the controversy of when life begins, we are all over the board on our objectives in school prayer (couldn’t we call it “morning meditation” so we don’t offend yet another special interest group?), stem cell research, displaying the Ten Commandments on public property, and many other highly flammable issues that have moral and religious tones. Now, the anti-religious have prohibited the recitation of the *Ave Maria* at a public school graduation and the Supreme Court agrees. I can respect the decision, but I wonder when we are going to turn on the news and hear about an incident or issue that unifies, not polarizes, the nation.

Americans have a great deal of confusion about where faith and politics intersect, and when they do intersect, we become more focused on ego-consciousness rather than using it as an opportunity to recognize God's presence in all creation, even if we don't all agree on how that translates into federal spending. I speculate that God would not take any particular position in Congress, other than to remind everyone about the love commandment, to love our neighbor as ourselves, as it is repeatedly said in the Gospels. As Senator John Danforth (an ordained minister) said, it is the only absolute standard of behavior and takes precedence when we sense conflict with our laws.

In a perfect nation, we would be able find the balance between instituting policies that uplift the All, the collective consciousness that is the hub of all life, while still respecting those who just aren't there yet. This unity-mindedness can happen, but our entire political system needs a oneness wake-up call. We are a diverse nation, a great experiment; we are often imperfect seekers of the truth, even though we do our best to serve humanity. Everyone needs a recess to contemplate the unity of all beings and intelligently find space to relate, regardless of the next election outcome. In the oneness movement, avoiding extremes is taught as a helpful tool for awakening. I wish our leaders could bring this simple philosophy into our political arena. Unity-mindedness is basically common-sense driven. It's an interfaith spiritual movement that doesn't have a political agenda.¹

If I were in charge, I would advise everyone to enjoy God wholeheartedly and with great love. Speak of God often and remind folks that light vibrates everywhere, mostly within the individual. Collectively, this consciousness can never be contained nor drilled out of the very fiber of our nation. If everyone puts God first in their lives, all else will easily fall into place, and

¹ Extremes to avoid are mentioned in the oneness teachings. They are: avoiding the extremes of certainty and uncertainty; indulgence and abstinence; dominance and subservience; possessiveness and indifference; resignation and extreme seeking; carelessness and being obsessed with perfection; and analysis and synthesis.

even the most controversial issues can be managed wisely and judiciously. Maybe my practical and positive Midwestern nature doesn't see this as such a big problem. What's so difficult about speaking freely of our love for God whenever we want for the joy of doing so? Let's set aside the political posturing and get back to the basics. It makes as much sense to seek God within as it does to outwardly rejoice in him as often as possible. There are many of us working toward that goal, despite what we see on the evening news. So much energy is wasted in blocking our natural expression of oneness. Everyone is always in, under, and within God, and humanity is certainly indivisible. If we can just recognize this and honor everyone's path, we will all be happier. We will stop wasting time keeping the lawyers in business over some frivolous lawsuit involving God. Congress might actually pass a budget that works.

Our unity is also severely assaulted by the media with an energy that thrives on controversy, arguing, and negativity. Churches have happily jumped on-board to increase their membership. In religious programming, we are still witnessing scripture wars served up by old-school fundamentalist talk-show hosts. It's an unfortunate exercise in one-upmanship by people who can argue their point faster and louder than anyone else on behalf of their version of what God wants us to do, selling fear-based images of sin and one-way tickets to salvation through religious dogma. I've seen commercials on these programs encouraging voters to "Vote Christian." I am just an average American who does my best to keep up with world events and be an informed voter, and I don't even understand what that means. If I don't vote for a "Christian" policy based upon a "Christian value-set," does that mean I am anti-Christian? How can anyone be against the achievement of higher level conscious awareness that is the birthright of every human being on the planet? Again, we seem to advocate more separation at every

opportunity when we should be working towards connectivity. Congress and the media need a good, old-fashioned consciousness-raising session.

It's time for churches to step back and take a look at their intentions to divide the nation. Last winter, I attended a program in a Unitarian-Universalist church. I was met at the door by a person holding a brochure that explained why Unitarian-Universalists are liberal Democrats, a vitally important voting-block. I was reminded that if you are Unitarian, you cannot be a conservative. This brochure went on to show the congruencies of Unitarian-Universalism and liberalism and cite what's currently wrong with the right. I thought unity was a part of the word "Unitarian." Equally contradictory is a Catholic church my friend Rob attended one Sunday. There was a sign in the vestibule stating that members of the congregation must not believe in abortion, nor vote for congressional leadership that advocates abortion if they want to attend that church. Rob found this sign offensive and pointless, inconsistent with the contemplative and quiet atmosphere he needed that morning. Church memberships have become voting blocks. No longer are they the spirit-oriented, judgment-free gathering places dedicated to God they were meant to be. We need churches that welcome everyone. We need polarizing media and more sensible politicians who have not lost sight of what is truly important about communing with the Presence. We've already seen the hazards of religion driven by extreme political agendas. If we fail to learn that people just want more honesty, positive language, and acceptance, we will be doomed to repeat history.

Everyone bears responsibility for healing this deep spiritual divide because these behaviors spring from humanity's belief in our separation from the Divine. No matter what tradition we practice or in what part of the globe we may reside, our belief system cannot sustain itself in any modern sense with this divisive conditioning. If we don't wake up to a new way of

being and a better way to process our emotions, experiences, or just ways to get things done, we will eventually cancel each other out.

We Belong to God and not a Particular Religion

Spiritual individuals who don't identify with an institutional church tend to want to skip the religious labels. They might refer to themselves as "spiritual," but not "religious" because "spiritual" seems broader. As our concept of a global human community continues to expand economically and socially, many choose to opt out of the confines of religion, and choose a faith and a spirituality that works with their lifestyle. Church attendance across denominational lines has declined in the last ten years, partly due to declining fertility rates, but spiritual poverty has also been cited as the reason many are abandoning organized religion. Has the global youth culture become pluralistic? Or is our soon-to-be godless society degrading? I think it's a reflection of our awakening as a species, where we are looking for less confinement and more ways to connect with the human spirit that knows no boundaries. True spiritual transformation happens when we elevate our capacity to love and live an authentic life, then inspire others to do the same. Enough information is already out there, and it seems we don't want more religion or gurus to do it for us. It's time for us to practice what we've learned.

The more unity-minded we become, the less important it seems to be to declare a religion because to love God is to own the universe. God, or divine energy, maintains us the same way he maintains the universe, giving us a wide berth to develop ourselves in the way we see fit within a big support system. We are going to evolve as long as we love God and recognize our partnership. Does a lily make a conscious effort to grow its own petals? The Divine is our binding force and power-system, and we are delusional when we think we are doing all the work.

We need to stop trying to grow our petals, so to speak, and let ourselves be maintained by the divine energy. More people want to be more firmly centered in God and less planted in the pews, so they are renouncing religious labels. As science has made it abundantly clear, energy is pervasive and constitutes every atom in existence. We want to connect with the divine energy. Does it really matter how it is labeled? When asked what religion I belong to, I always answer, “I belong to God.” Like Rumi or Sri Aurobindo, I work on loving and honoring the Divine Presence within my own heart and mind. The more I do this, the more I easily see it in others, and then I feel Spirit expanding. There are many working with these ideas who are in favor of being called “spiritual.” It is hardly godless.

Underneath the spiritual and political face-off, there *is* the congruency of a shared spiritual message of a global oneness community. These folks do not advocate a lifeless secularity. They are interested in maintaining harmony despite different sets of holy works, practices, and faiths. A mutual love and respect exist in this spiritual community, and they love God with passion. They may be Christian or non-Christian, Muslim, New Age, Pagan, Jewish, or Buddhist. Some define themselves as a blend or nothing at all. What they want is the freedom of a true spirituality with accountability. Their desire is to encounter the sacred in normal, everyday experiences and lead a mystical life while fully engaged in the world. They want to know that anyone can be saved, that reincarnation is possible, that our Western traditions and culture are not evil, but enhanced by knowing that enlightenment is within reach for everyone. They want the living truth to *breathe through them*. They want to enrich themselves with new spiritual practices that embrace the vibrancy of their own wisdom tradition, but at the same time, they don’t want to feel guilty about doing so.

Contemporary Christians within this group generally regard the Bible as written by spiritually-minded people who may or may not have had an agenda and believe this collection of inspired writings reflects a wide variety of views that have been edited over the centuries. They recognize everyone who has looked at Jesus has been influenced by economic, linguistic, cultural and political issues and has shaped and reshaped him through time. They read other sacred texts, consult a broad range of scriptures from both East and West, and often include psychology and personal stories as guides to looking deeper within for solutions to life's biggest challenges. They believe a loving God does not judge and has no labels. They enjoy learning about meditation and prayer and are just as likely to attend a *Kirtan* (a Hindu devotional song about some aspect of God in which the lines sung by a leader are repeated by the congregation) as a midnight mass on Christmas Eve. With an inter-spiritual approach to nurturing the inner presence of God in their lives, they are inclined to see the Divine gloriously present in every individual, in all families, workplaces, and communities.

When we adopt a unity point of view, advocating church attendance or a merger of wisdom traditions is not necessary, nor is diversity a problem. Only our inability to look within has prevented us from reaching a higher level of consciousness. People are beginning to understand the necessity of a self-reflection which leads to the still waters of inner peace. It is how the world will eventually improve. Sacred texts, such as the Bhagavad Gita (a classic Yogic scripture which scholars date back to around the fifth century BCE), the Upanishads (Hinduism's New Testament), and the Christian Gospels speak to us clearly about what's necessary to transform ourselves so that we will reach the kingdom of heaven. These basic lessons on how to encourage our egos to take a back seat, quiet our minds, cultivate love, joy, forgiveness, faith, and compassion for all beings are being adopted by more people today outside of church, as are

many daily practices of prayer, contemplation, or chanting. Communing with God from a higher level of conscious awareness is taking a front seat. Reaching Christ consciousness is no longer a secret guarded by saints and mystics.

For centuries, mysticism has been cultivated behind the walls of ashrams and monasteries. It hasn't been available to the public before, certainly not in mainline churches, but today, this vitally important information is being presented in various forms and digestible chunks by modern day mystics, philosophers, and other spiritual leaders. We need to open our ears, revisit the basics, share some stories, and quit worrying about whether what we're hearing comes from the East or the West. We need to turn back to the texts we best resonate with and seek the truth of our oneness. If not, all the church-going and other spiritual practices in the universe won't bring us inner peace or the sense of community with God we yearn for.

Belief in Separation Obstructs Our Perception of Unity

The invitation to step into our own divinity is our birthright, but to claim it, we must care of our personal business *first*. When we develop some self-awareness, we make room for the Presence to work through us. To prepare for the New Age (and blast off into a new vibratory realm to change the world), therefore, we have to start from the beginning and reflect on our past suffering and family problems. I know it's no fun to take responsibility for our own joy, and it's much easier to place the blame elsewhere for our perceived challenges. But adopting self-reflection and self-responsibility is the only way to clear the pathway to truth without having to enter a religious order, which doesn't work for most of us living in modern-day suburbia. With some prayer and application, we can learn to recognize the Presence in us so fully that there can be no differentiation in our existence and God's. We already have at our disposal the most

beautiful and enriching written wisdom owned by all of humankind, so let's embody the light. Everyday life can become the co-creative experience it was originally meant to be.

To work in conjunction with the Divine Presence, we need to be conscious that *we exist as one*. Co-creation is our natural state. The universe is one big, receptive, energy sphere. It reflects our intentions, thoughts, and actions so we can learn to be conscious co-creators with the Divine Presence. For years, my spiritual work was simply getting people to think positively and affirm what was right and good in their lives. I taught people how to broadcast through their words and energies that they are whatever they think they are. When we invite success, prosperity, love, or any number of wonderful qualities into our experience, we are working with natural laws. We enjoy the results. It's great practice. But it's not enough. The spiritual seeker who is striving to be a Christ-light and wants to attune his or her consciousness with God (and as a result, create loving miracles of healing and abundance in his or her experience) must go beyond positive thinking and realize that we are one with the Father, no matter what our perceived differences are. That's how to find the kingdom within. It's also nice to have a mystical experience of a unified universe, a deeper connection, a sense of the eternal that doesn't discount our Christianity but refreshes it.

Oneness is our natural state. It is a complete harmonic convergence with the Divine, where we draw ourselves back to conscious oneness with all creation. It is our realization of God's own reflection in the son of man, in all of humankind. *In all of us*. To have the Christ light within, or "have Christ in you," is to obtain that level of consciousness. A Christed one is a person who has awakened to their own divinity, to their own light. It is an enlightened person who embodies the higher vibration and fully reflects God.

Surrender and Silence Are Unfamiliar to the Western Mind

However your journey has been going so far, I'm guessing that if you've already knocked on God's door and asked to enter the kingdom, you've had to surrender yourself in some way, probably to uncertainty and abstraction. You might also have faced surrendering the cunning part of you, the part that schemes and strategizes and has the power to manipulate. This, of course, goes against the grain of the Western mind and our market-driven culture. We like facts and metrics, and three easy payments of only \$19.95, results guaranteed in thirty days or less. Surrender is something we don't do very well, but surrender is the place where healing and insight begin, where we put aside our weaknesses and obsessions with the ordinary world. When we align our own will with divine will, which has no boundaries and is guided by wisdom, we are not relinquishing control of our lives but using our will to attract and bring goodness and loving-kindness to all.

Surrender is where grace enters the picture. I've always thought of grace as God's love and ability to operate within us. It makes its appearance known to us in many forms—through blessings, serendipitous circumstances, freedom, forgiveness, and love. Receiving grace puts us in a place where we tenderly invite ourselves into unity consciousness, or oneness. Oneness is direct, personal experience of God. It's not only a mystical place of peace, wisdom, and bliss, but it is *home*. It's the place we yearn for our entire lives. The place where there is no separation between us and the Divine Presence. And it's the ultimate high, a very good buzz we can get without having to drink an apple martini.

The Christ realization is an internal experience. It's not at all about being a Christian or identifying with any specific religion, but about experiencing truth in our own individual consciousness. Birthing the Christ-self means we have *cleaned house* (translation: gotten rid of

our old baggage and emotional suffering) and can now live a balanced life in the present moment. We volunteer to surrender our old thought patterns and uncover our egos and then take a long, hard look at them so we can let go of self-doubt, judgment, and negative conditioning. It actually takes a lot of courage to do this. We examine our faulty thinking, like the belief we are sinners or inherently bad, and make a conscious choice to change our outlook and self-perception. Letting go of anything familiar is always difficult, but it is the first step.

We must be willing to replace negative conditioning with the successful practice of the higher ideals of compassion, forgiveness, unconditional love, and adherence to the natural laws. This means we regularly lie down in the garden to reflect on the truth of who we are and have a regular conversation with God, whom we consciously invite into our decision-making process. It means we *participate in love* and apply it across the board. And when we understand that our place is in a higher reality, and that life is not just all about what's on earth and our physical existence, then we can rise beyond our Christ-self and come into union with God. *Brahman*, as it is known in Sanskrit, the ancient language of the Vedas and the Upanishads, is the unified ground of *Being* in which all forms and thoughts arise. The Hindus believe they do not *have* Brahman, or God, in everything. Everything is present *within Brahman*, that which is all-encompassing. There is nothing independent because our entire existence is an expression of the One that is a state of self-fulfillment and joy. We lack nothing. Separation is an illusion. God is present, is our only reality, and our expanded self is one with him.

Jesus spoke of this intimacy and complete harmony with God. From the depths of his fully realized Brahman consciousness, he encouraged us to uncover our own God consciousness. He knew that only through a properly ordered inner state can we manifest great works in our outer world because we constantly animate creation with ideas and thoughts. Jesus knew that

God resides at the center of everything. God dwells in the heart of every atom and knows us from the inside-out. So, in the truest sense, God is our thoughts and feelings and Divine consciousness resides within us. It's the kingdom we've heard about so frequently. To get in, Jesus encouraged us to awaken and be "reborn" from above, from the light of our authentic being, which is a form of surrendering our old ways of thinking about ourselves in favor of new ways.

After reordering our inner states and entering into harmony with God, we must learn to love God supremely. We have to make time to do it. And practice often. With the pace we've set for ourselves in this busy Western world and our achievement mentality, we've lost the art (and meaning) of true communion. Holy Communion is about spiritual union with God. It can be found in a few minutes in tranquility—meditation or silence, breathing, walking, yoga, or a multitude of contemplative habits. Observing silence, or *mauna*, is actually a spiritual practice that calms the mind so Brahman, the Absolute Self, can be perceived clearly. Western culture does not yet understand the benefits of quietude. We have grown accustomed to noise, and there is little support for contemplation, although I see this beginning to change.

Spiritually speaking, devotees who have quieted their minds and reached perfect stillness are far beyond ordinary peace. They're in a deep state of bliss, in total harmony with the ineffable. They are drinking in the Divine. The difference between those who experience oneness occasionally in their spiritual practice and an ascended spiritual master is that a Christed One resides in that state all the time. He or she can continually operate at that frequency, passing the good vibes on to everyone and everything, altering conditions everywhere on earth. This is what happens when we become God in action, or a divine human. It takes some discipline and practice, but it can be done. Jesus and other great spiritual masters encourage us to realize our

own divinity and assure us it is possible. I can't think of a better time in history to start realizing our potential.

What have we got to lose?

We Don't Understand Oneness

The greatest masters on this planet have agreed that self-realization, or the unfolding of God within us, is *already present within us*. We don't need to subscribe to any particular religion, culture, spiritual practice, or dogma. It's not a private club. It's just there. Our ability to be a Christ exists the moment we arrive on the planet, Christian baptism or not. *Our entire life* is a conversation with the Presence who is showing us how to become that which we already are, which is divine. It's the entire reason we're here.

Our purpose is not only to understand God from the intellect, but also to experience him through the art of living. It's to become one with God's infinite intelligence, which is embedded in every particle of creation. To raise the Christ vibration within us so that each of us is a breathing manifestation of *Kutastha Chaitanya*, the Krishna Consciousness of the Hindu scriptures. The Sanskrit word *Kutastha* means "that which remains unchanged." *Chaitanya* means "consciousness." In the West, we call this *Christ consciousness*. It's an intelligence that is present in all creation, a pure reflection of Spirit in the created realm.

We are already empowered to walk this path of ancient mastery and live divinely as co-creators with God. Jesus, Krishna, and Yogananda were examples of our potential and they belong to everyone. Their light survives in our sacred texts today, and if we choose to let it, this light can animate us. Their messages of self-divinity, translated and taught by the many avatars and spiritual guides who have walked this planet, are available to every human being. They still

joyfully extend this invitation to us. Every one of us can rise to meet their higher consciousness and discover our own divinity.

But why does it take so long? And why don't we *feel* God's presence?

Part of our problem is that we are conditioned to believe in our own imperfection, sinfulness, and unworthiness. But it's time we outgrew this negative approach to spiritual development and stop hanging on to past emotional traumas and dramas and all forms of self-imposed suffering. It's time to spend more time in the present, time to release outdated, unfit beliefs. Doing so is a conscious choice. Until then, we prevent ourselves from fully realizing our divine nature. We block the experience of oneness with God and the rest of humanity. When we seek the inner kingdom in our individual, spiritual journeys, we can make better sense of our everyday conundrums and accomplish great works.

Many people are apprehensive about oneness. They think it's just another doctrine, a clever way to relinquish our rugged, Western-style individuality. But nothing could be further from the truth. Oneness is a congruent, timeless teaching that already has a long shelf life. No matter where it originated, the practice of spiritual peacemaking and embodiment of pure love leads to awakening. Remember, *true spiritual messages always support one another*. I've rejoiced over the sheer intellectual beauty of Jesus' message, but my contemporary teachers have brought this material to life. I've hugged Mata Amritanandamayi, meditated with Sai Maa Lakshmi Devi, and laughed with the guides of the Oneness University. Any one of them will explain that everyone on this planet is worthy of everlasting and unconditional love from our Source. Last time I looked, this was Jesus' message to the masses. From a Hindu perspective, realizing self-divinity and being a fully illuminated human being is completely doable today, not tomorrow in a galaxy far, far away, or in the next lifetime. When we merge the best ideas from

the East and the West, therefore, we can find many ways to understand and move toward unity consciousness. Since the essence of God inhabits everyone, we are all traveling to the same place anyway.

Birthing our Christ consciousness and maintaining a higher state of awareness gives us the *choice* to be divine humans. We are *already* in the process of becoming divine. This light lies dormant within us, and we only need to realize this natural state to become enlightened. It is a state of awareness of our own divinity. A divine human communes with God anytime, anywhere, and ushers in the New Age with peace and joy, right here, right now, in the present moment.

What are we waiting for? Let's do it!

What Is Oneness?

Oneness is not a new teaching. It's a timeless, fundamental principle of all creation that refers to one source uniting everyone. Humanity's yearning to find congruency with God and the Divine within us has given us common ground. From cave paintings all the way to the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, it doesn't take much to see that this intention has been around for thousands of years. Whether we find it in the Vedas or Christianity, oneness has been a popular subject for great spiritual masters who have offered us plenty of opportunities to awaken. We've been talking about being one with creation for thousands of years. Oneness is the nature of existence, a law governing every function of the universe. Once we discover this blueprint for living, we see that it's abundantly ripe with the possibilities of what life can be. Call it a flowering of the heart, call it freedom from the mind, call it discovery of the higher self, or call it becoming God—it refers to the end of our perception of duality and separation.

You Are the All

The universe is one system because matter and energy are eternally united, a concept deeply rooted in science. Every existing substance can be reduced to a pattern of energy that interacts and connects with other forms of energy. Although we think of ourselves as separate individuals, that separation is an illusion. There is only a changing totality, a self that is one. It is a vast, endless, omnipresent, collective self that dwells in all beings, a cosmos that moves as one entity. And if the universe is moving as one, we already *are* one. By being consciously aware of being the sum total, we are everywhere.

For a moment, extend your awareness out from your body. Now go further. Extend it out from the human species. Further. Out from the solar system. Go still further, and imagine the outside of the universe (or even collective universes). What is beyond the infinite realm? There is nothing—“no thing”—outside of this all-inclusive infinity. Oneness is a totality where every level of awareness and all creation are held. It is effortless and uncomplicated. In the big picture, oneness means there is a unified mind, not a collection of separate, single minds. And there never was any separation from God. Only the illusion of separation mirrored by your body, mind, and being.

Nobody leads an independent existence. You don't suddenly arise from nowhere. You are connected and dependent upon the whole; therefore, you are everything. There is no independence. Your lungs constantly exchange oxygen with the trees. You receive energy from the sun. All life and nature are extensions of you. Your existence is dependent upon the planet, and the planet's existence is dependent upon you. Your body is dependent upon thousands of other systems making your physical existence possible. You are one, big, extended body, and your thoughts are part of a unified consciousness, too. You are a daily illustration of quantum physics, a constant light-energy-body exchange. Can you claim any resource, property, or tangible item as exclusively yours? Of course not. But you *can* claim ownership of the All because that is who you are.

You Are Birthed from Within: A Word from John

Clearly, if there is nothing outside of what is boundless eternity, then wouldn't it make sense to think we originated from a single source? We don't have to *become* somebody because we always were that source from which we came. Cosmically, we are birthed from within. There

is actually great harmony on this point between the Christian and Hindu scriptures with reference to India's *Sanataan Dharma*, the eternal truth. The Eastern view sees creation as a process of beginning where life grows outward from within, much like a plant developing from a seed or the formation of the human embryo. In contrast, when we fabricate something like a car, we impose upon nature *from without* instead of *from within*. Life definitely manifests differently than the objects we produce.

In the beginning, the One Spirit was the source of all creation and birthed finite creation without changing Itself. For in Spirit, there was neither beginning nor end. No time and space existed. This cosmic consciousness had no dimension, no objects of creation; it was only Spirit. Ancient wisdom tells us that God (or Goddess) dreamed or vibrated the universe into existence, and it became creation. The opening verses in John restate the spiritual cosmology set forth by in the Indian scriptures that were handed down to the masses by the *rishis* (shamans or holy men and women) when they were in high states of consciousness. These seers were representatives of God through whom the wisdom of the Vedas flowed. According to the *rishis*, John's *Logos*, "word," meant "intelligent vibration and energy going forth from God."² "Word" is a cosmic vibration that has materializing power. It was the *Prakriti* that informed all matter. As soon as unmanifested Spirit had a thought, it became God the Father, the Creator of all vibration. In Hindu scriptures, He is called *Ishvara* (Cosmic Ruler) or *Sat* (Supreme Consciousness) and remains untouched by any vibratory tremor. He is the *primae mobilae*, static and immoveable; hence, unchangeable and eternal. In verse 42 of the Bhagavad Gita, it says "I, the Unchanging and Everlasting, sustain and permeate the entire cosmos with but one fragment of My Being." So

² When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was. The Word, then, was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him. All that came to be was alive with his life, and that life was the light of men. John 1:1-4.

when creation was birthed, we came forth as intelligence from vibration, which started from thought. Today, as humans, this is the way we create anything. It all begins with an intention and a thought, and we use energy to make it a reality.

When this vibratory force emanated from Spirit (called the Holy Ghost by Christians or the Great Cosmic Mother by other wisdom traditions), it was said to be the word *Aum* (*Om*). *Aum* is the vibration that brought matter into being. In the Gita, the Lord affirms, “Among words, I am the one syllable *Aum*.”³ *Aum* is the sound that one hears in deep meditation. To merge into its stream is to experience boundlessness. Anyone can do it. Yogananda said we are all vibrations—the frozen imagination of God. In science, matter appears to be solid, but solid matter is actually subatomic particles in motion, tiny strings whose rates of vibration in different patterns produces different creations. Although diverse, this stuff composing all matter and forces is the same.

This oneness is often referred to as the trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is acknowledged in Hindu scriptures as *Tat, Sat, Aum* (All That Is the Truth or the Supreme and Absolute Truth) or *Sat Chit Ananda* (The one and only reality, pure consciousness, bliss) in Sanskrit. “Of all manifestations, I am the beginning, middle, and end,” says the Creator in the Gita, who pretty much describes himself as All That Is.⁴ Of course, biblical writers were not versed in any terminologies of modern science, and maybe not Eastern philosophy and beliefs, either, so they used “the Word” and “Holy Ghost” to explain the character of cosmic vibration that created the universe in a perfect pattern.

In using this same cosmic principle, Jesus aligned himself so completely with divine intelligence and God’s will that he consciously yielded healings and “miracles,” which are

³ Verse 25.

⁴ Verse 32.

simply manipulations of matter. The *rishis* believed that if human will power and mind are aligned with God's will, anything can be successfully materialized. We actually practice this same principle by releasing the vibration (thought + energy + intention) that accompanies human speech or writing. It is the power behind the Word or the creative principle affecting all matter. In India, *Vak* is the potential power of speech. To manifest any desired condition, keeping your speech auspicious and positive at all times is essential to raising your individual vibration; hence, raising your consciousness depends upon how disciplined you are in aligning your will with God's will in thought and word. It takes self-discipline to have complete awareness of your own thoughts and to bring them into positive alignment with God's will.

Essentially, we are sparks, or individualized ideas, of the Divine Presence that exists within all creation. But just as human intelligence is needed to create anything purposeful, vibration and consciousness need intelligence for matter to evolve. Hence, God's intelligence is present within all vibratory creation and is called *Christ consciousness*. The yogis explain that Christ consciousness is the pure reflection of God, or the only begotten Son. Not the only person who could reflect God, but one who has already done so. This consciousness is present in the tiniest specks of creation and is the only undifferentiated, or indivisible, pure reflection of God the Father. It is more of a universal, cosmic principle than a person. In other words, it is the conscious presence of God's intelligence *in you*. It's kind of like his perfect, personal signature in each one of us. And everyone has it.

Oneness is being completely aware of God *within yourself*. God is knowable; it is your conscious choice to lift your awareness higher to do so. Like you, Jesus was an expression of God, but at some point in his life, he realized he was one with creation. He became totally aware of his Krishna-Christ consciousness and encouraged us to do the same, to look beyond matter to

see clearly.⁵ He taught us that matter is not the only reality and that it is possible to see the truth that lies within the heart of every human. His mind was clear and free of delusions, and he reflected the intelligence and light of God non-stop through compassion and love. He was a beautiful, clear conduit for grace. I imagine him being joyfully in higher states of *samadhi*, or blissful states of union with God, for extended periods of time while engaged in the world as a teacher and friend. While in a human body, he showed us what was possible when we attain memory of our oneness with omnipresent Spirit which is uplifting and wonderful. He, like Krishna and many other spiritual masters, demonstrated that we are all one. God's love, which is present around and within us always, helps us rise in our return to him.

The Begotten Son is You

The "only begotten son" does not refer to Jesus' body, but to his Christ consciousness. The "only begotten" is the spiritual human, the principle of the divinity residing within all humankind. Meister Eckhart, one of the great mystics of the Middle Ages, said that God never begot just one Son, but the eternal is forever begetting the only begotten, which is the spiritual human. The phrase "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to redeem it"⁶ means that by putting himself as the Christ intelligence in all matter and living beings, he welcomes all of us, and all things, back into his being. He invites us back into oneness as soon as

⁵ When Jesus showed up for baptism, John the Baptist recognized that he had already mastered the concept of Christ consciousness, or had become the Christ. John did not feel worthy of baptizing Jesus, but Jesus insisted, assuring him they were essentially the same, except Jesus had realized his true self and John had not yet done so. This did not speak of John's potential, as Jesus told him it would eventually come.

⁶ Further, in John 3:16-18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." In other words, one is not condemned for not believing in Jesus, but for *not* believing in the *divinity* that resided in him. When you don't believe in your higher self, you reject your spiritual potential, or the Divine Presence within. In Christ consciousness, God becomes fully revealed. In all creation, no other reflection exists of the still, ever-unmoving, vibrationless Spirit that is beyond creation. This is what is meant by "only begotten." We are all only begotten sons and daughters and the Bible says we "declare God" by revealing him in our soul.

we rediscover him within. And where else could we go? It is impossible to get outside of endless love, eternity, or everlasting life. No matter what any of us experience, we all have the infinite potential of the Christ intelligence.⁷ It seems to me this creative exercise was not a sacrifice. It takes nothing away from God, but only enhances the entire evolution of the cosmos. It is humbling to know that genius is stored in the one place where every person can find it, no matter where he or she lives, no matter their age, their socio-economic status, or their religion. God's genius is completely accessible because it is present within us.

These ideas are not exclusive to Christianity but are shared by numerous wisdom traditions. How could Spirit be partial in deciding who gets to evolve and who doesn't? We are all one and born with the same spiritual potential. Not one person incarnates on earth without belonging to the entity we call God, not even Hitler or Ramses. After we arrive on earth, it is up to us to decide what to do with our self-development toolkit.

I think our purpose is to fully receive and reflect God in every part of our individual being—in our body, mind, and soul. Life as experienced through our authentic self is a true masterpiece. Through our own efforts, each of us is destined to pass from a “son-of-man” consciousness (sense, material, or body consciousness) to a “son-of-God” consciousness so we can experience being a Christed one.⁸ We have witnessed many ordinary people become divine humans and serve as avatars and spiritual masters. They transcended delusion, negative thinking,

⁷ If we believe in our own divinity, we won't truly die, but will have everlasting life. This was the essence of the Gospel teachings. Jesus' discovery of the divinity of all humankind was restated in John 3:16. Since God gave humankind something pure and perfect, it is begotten *only* of Him (God). This means no matter what a person experiences or does in life, they always have this potential for perfection. According to the Bible, Jesus believed it so completely that he proved it because even death and a tomb could not contain him.

⁸ Jesus referred to his own human self—his body or personality or his “I-ness” —when he spoke of his son-of-man consciousness. When he spoke of the son of God, he meant the only reflection of Spirit in creation: the Christ consciousness.

and used self-awareness, spiritual principles, and human effort to know God within. They became living, breathing pieces of unity consciousness. And so can we.

Birthing Christ consciousness within the human body is natural because God's omnipresent intelligence exists in every particle of creation. The *consciousness* is the only begotten son of God because it is the sole perfect reflection in creation of the transcendental absolute, or the Father. According to Jesus (as recorded by John), anyone who becomes united with Christ consciousness can be called a son of God when he or she knows he is us and they are part of him. Since the mind and intellect cannot fully "know" (because wisdom also includes experience, not just knowledge) we must demonstrate a quality, and be fully identified with it in every way, in order to *become* it. To "know" is to experience beyond words. Jesus spoke of his own unity consciousness, his awareness of this same union with God when he said, "I and my Father are One"⁹ and "I am in the Father and the Father in me."¹⁰ However, to have this realization of being one with the totality of God, you have to attune your consciousness with the Christ—in other words, you have to raise your own vibration to the highest level and receive the wisdom of God's reflection in your body, mind, heart, and soul. This is what it means to be a divine human.

In daily life, it is completely liberating to know that we have the same potential. This, according to Yogananda, is *self-realization*, the inner enlightenment of the truth. And what is that truth? That we consist of God in every fiber of our being, even though no two people will discover the truth in the same manner. God consciousness in the human being is Christ consciousness; it is the universal *Kutashta Chaitanya*, a standing invitation to our own unique

⁹ John 10:30.

¹⁰ John 14:11.

evolution. That is what Jesus meant when he said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”¹¹ He wanted us to pursue this path leading to self-development and invited us to explore this inner kingdom. He assured us it was humanly possible for us to do so and guaranteed it by demonstrating his ascension into higher level consciousness.

The Truth of Who We Are Lies Underneath Flawed Perceptions

Oneness is an empowering and magnificent thought. For far too long, like a bunch of preschoolers having temper tantrums, we have protested against this truth and justified separation. We have protected our individuality to the point of ridiculousness, not just in the West but the world over, citing the preservation of cultures or state religion as sacred. But oneness is not thinking the same way nor practicing the same rituals to celebrate a connection to God. It is certainly not subscribing to the same political party or one way of governing. Oneness is living with the deep knowledge of a shared consciousness. It is realizing our God-self, our infinite nature. Oneness is not only feeling compassion for every life form and acknowledging the magnitude of God’s genius, but also having humility and deep gratitude for who we are as individualized sparks of divinity, from the universe’s strings and quarks all the way down to our own quirks and DNA.

Oneness is a shift in perception, a vision of humanity becoming God and God becoming us, a merger that signifies the end of dual perception. That’s the overall vision of oneness. But we get into trouble when we insist on seeing ourselves as less than an extension of God. Until we wake up to the truth of who we really are, our minds work overtime to show us why we are *individual* pieces of matter and not one with the Source. To move in the oneness direction, we need to heal our own lives first. This begins when we look within to uproot our negative

¹¹ John 14:6.

conditioning and the impulse to blame our woes upon someone else. We have to search our database for negative experiences that have grown into narrow-mindedness or dislikes for certain family members.

To adopt a new perception, we must also claim responsibility for the aspects of existence we don't like. We think, "Oh, I can never be one with that person. I can never be one with pollution, ugliness, this horrific incident, that fashion trend, or his/her sexual preference." Or worse: "I didn't create this disease, prejudice, or poverty." Championing our own goodness (which naturally ranks far above the next individual's) and holding steadfast to an arrogance that has existed since the beginning of organized society often makes us feel good. We think we know better than the next person what is good for humanity and say we are not responsible for what was created. (Since we are one, we actually have had a hand in it somewhere along the line.) Then we might reject the other point of view. Our minds get preoccupied with who is correct (*we are, of course*), and our bodies receive a comforting endorphin rush that reinforces our sense of self, our individual identity. Actually, we're just plunging into more suffering created by our perceived separation. In our growing paranoia, we then worry over who is responsible for creating that separation. But the belief in separation just perpetuates more separation. It is an endless cycle of discontent.

Separation is the Root of all Suffering

I grew up in a time where life was a constant series of comparisons to determine one's place in the world. Maybe many of us have had similar experiences with parents of the post-war generation that had survived the horrors of humanity's darker side. They saw the world through a different lens as they attempted to squeeze out a living in what seemed to be a hostile world. Life

was a polarity, an either-or experience. Either you survived or you died, either you ate or you went hungry, either you had money and a job or you didn't. That post-war generation taught separation in the form of class and race consciousness. Labels were assigned to people: Christian, Jew, Black, White, Rich, Poor, Democrat, Republican, White-Collar, Blue-Collar—the same concepts as generations before, but in a different language. And then they indoctrinated us in the *them-versus-us* principle. We learned to make comparisons between who's in and who's out. I frequently heard the phrase “we are all God's children” during my childhood, but I had no real understanding of unity to guide me through adult suffering.

A belief in separation translates into loneliness, lack of confidence, and unworthiness because we feel we are unloved and no parent or spouse can ever love us as much as the Divine loves us. A child needs to learn early on that what they see, hear, touch, taste, or smell is not our true reality but God who is within us is our true reality. Awareness of unity with the Divine is the spiritual anchor that can steady us during dark days. We can trust life's unfolding and be comforted by knowing every human being is constantly on the receiving end of unconditional love and that we are never separated from God.

Becoming God, or feeling one with God, is humankind's deepest desire. It is what most of our mythology is about. I have met thousands of people at spiritual retreats over the last thirty years, and nearly every person seeks to make sense of discontent, isolation, emptiness, negative conditioning, or lack of purpose. Some have experienced a lifetime without spiritual growth and want to know that life is so much more. I've seen people in deep despair who feel God is remote or unapproachable; these are messages they have heard from organized religion. Their homesickness for heaven and weariness of total autonomy usually brings them to their knees. After so much religious practice, it is shocking to see this psychological suffering, a self-imposed

madness caused by a belief in separation from the Divine. It is the worst disease in human history.

The East sees the West suffering from separation anxiety, unable to deeply relate and connect; it's a dysfunctional, cultural psychosis of our own doing. We can't even honor friendships anymore, as we're texting people while we're on call waiting, waiting to talk to other people while we're driving or watching TV. We're often more interested in farming people to see what they can do for us than in cultivating and honoring enriched relationships. Thinking our time is more valuable than anybody else's, we often show up a half hour late for dinner reservations. We're soothing ourselves with self-importance instead of identifying with the larger Self.

Young and old, people today feel a lack of meaning in existence and observe an increasingly positional culture obsessed with litigation or blame. We seem to allocate a huge amount of resources to fighting more over a point of view and taking less responsibility for outcomes. Do we keep ourselves busy twittering away our 140 characters so we don't have to look within? Western culture seems fixated on managing time and finding new forms of entertainment, adventure, food, and clothing. These activities have *become* our lives, along with managing our heavy sorrows and psychological pain. Now, more than ever, we are oblivious to the cause of our suffering. We don't know who we are.

The *dasas* say a lack of oneness causes all pain, anxiety, loneliness, boredom, disease, ill-health, and many of our bad habits. They say we need to remember our unity with each other and the Presence. It begins within each individual. If you travel to India, the most important oneness teaching the *dasas* will give you is to bring yourself forward to have a look inside, to clear out the blockages to your personal growth, like unforgiveness and resentment. That's where positive

change is birthed, not on another adventure-seeking expedition to meditate in a Tibetan cave. Without self-examination, you won't find unity and oneness. Nor will you find it by taking the usual "what's wrong with me" poll from your therapist and friends. If you improve your relationship with the Divine, who resides in your inner world, you'll find more acceptance and love in your outer world. You'll have recaptured the essence of who you are. You are one.

For my generation, oneness is no longer an option. It's not a function of fancy poetry about the origins of the human race. Oneness is a way to activate our potential and consciously evolve to higher levels of perception. I see this translating into world peace. Oneness means we can freely express the love that unites all people. The realization of oneness with God brings about an inner awakening more beautiful and more deeply satisfying than any other life experience. It's a state of being, congeniality with other people, a joy that trumps any emotion previously experienced in the mind or in any ordinary human encounter. A spiritual awakening represents the first few threads of universal harmony. And we need it because we live in an age where answers are needed. Take a look. People are in deep pain, much of it emotional suffering, the residue of old relationships, bad parenting, being drafted, self-imposed shame, confusion, and disappointment in what their life should be. These perceived shortcomings prevent us from knowing the truth of who we are: *we are creative manifestations of God, the One who objectified himself as matter, light, and mind.*

Sure, regaining our memory of our oneness with Spirit might be a pretty big conceptual leap. but it remains a choice: we can either begin to have awareness of God who lives within us and move toward our own perfection, or we can be burdened by limitation. It is a state of mind, an initial decision, a point of view that can be expanded to a state of being. Choosing the larger

Self as our own self is where we practice being God-in-action, where performing real-world service or loving others seems like the most natural thing to do.

Oneness Begins by Practicing the Love Commandment

In the oldest records of mysticism, far older than Hinduism or Christianity, we find sages who attempted to describe the essence of the experience of God. The Manduka Upanishads, said to be the work of anonymous forest seers in India who lived between three thousand and twenty-five hundred years ago, say that oneness is “beyond the senses, beyond the understanding, beyond all expression.” This is supreme unity consciousness, an unawareness of multiplicity. It is ineffable peace, a one without a two. Some cultures and religions call this undifferentiated unity the Mystery or the Unknowable, but, even so, the Divine is never too abstract to be approachable. How can we be distant from that which lives inside us? And how do we become more aware of the Presence?

The Upanishads, which contain some of the oldest and wisest spiritual writings in the world, talk about emptiness, or resignation, as a prerequisite for openly receiving the Divine Presence. “Emptiness” refers to open-mindedness, relinquishing our preconceived notions about a distant or judgmental God. When we empty the contents of the universe, we are left with some sort of unexplainable cosmic glue that invites peaceful acceptance, joy, or beatitude—all states of being. These states can be thought of as our container, or vessel, for more creative endeavors to take place. Likewise in our individual lives, we can empty our suffering and be open to more love. I have never received anything of value without first offering an empty cup to God. When I let go of tarnished emotional baggage and am willing to receive, I find that I am like the

cosmos—I am a perfect container ready to attract a new situation. What a great metaphor this is to understand the oneness of our divine design!

Oneness is eternal life, and we've got to be completely *in love with life* with our heart, soul, and mind. For cultivating the unity of the human spirit, and liberating ourselves from the delusion of separation, there are many tools that can take us to the experience of oneness. We can pray, of course, and meditate and ask for help to rise above our negative states, or we can engage in many other spiritual practices that help us master our life energy. But the process actually begins when we are able to love God with every fiber of our being. We must demonstrate loving actions toward our neighbor. That is how the love commandment¹² helps us reclaim our oneness. When we put this principle to work in our lives, we are not far from the kingdom. As a matter of fact, loving God with great spontaneity from the heart, mind, soul, and body accelerates our growth. This love can operate on all channels. Expressing love for the Divine mentally, intuitively, and with physical energy is the space a human enters into oneness with God. Talk to him once in awhile. Become his friend and tell him you love him. Love is the portal through which we can make a conscious connection. It's a good place to begin.

God and the bliss of oneness are revealed through many spiritual practices. In the East, it is the joy felt in meditation while hearing *Aum* during deep silence. It's the spur-of-the-moment love we feel when we see Labrador pups or a totally amazing sunset. If you aren't a dog or sun lover, then love your kids, your parents, the artwork you just created, or your plants. Nurture your love for him as manifested in nature. Love all creatures on the planet. Love the stars. Love yourself. According to spiritual law, these simple practices are pretty much the same as loving God. They bring you closer to a sense of oneness.

¹² You'll find this commandment in Luke 10:25-28, Matthew 22:35-40, and Mark 12:28-34.

In India, meditation creates divine union with God. In *Bhakti Yoga*, or union with God through unconditional love and devotion, the *bhakta* realizes that wherever their concentration lies, they are consumed by that love. A devotee will become completely absorbed in love for the Divine. Loving with our mind means concentrating on God with our full attention without mentally flitting to the grocery list. Loving God with all our soul is perceiving our individual soul as one with God. It is an intuitive experience to know that we are indeed a reflection of him, and it differs for everyone. It begins with a resignation to the inner world and an acknowledgment of your true self. I have seen people at many oneness processes enter this state: it is a state of exceeding joy and delight. People howl with laughter, they giggle, they often roll on the floor when they experience this union with God. Some, overwhelmed by the magnitude of love, cry; for a few minutes or an hour, they are completely saturated with the Divine and feel him in the deepest part of their soul.

As Within, so Without: A Practical Approach to Daily Life

As the world's conflicts increase exponentially, we have no choice but to look inside ourselves for answers. We create all conditions and are responsible for them, too, from the causes to the cures. Does a negative and needy planetary broadcast emanate from our core? If so, perhaps our lives are messy because we attract those vibrations and then spend the rest of our time managing our suffering. But when we understand that the outer world manifests from what is within us and nowhere else, we'll choose harmony instead of bigotry, negativity, and war. Since oneness is an internal principle, the good material within us will be reflected in the outer world, and we'll finally understand there is no demarcation between human intervention and

divine intervention. When we choose to mirror the Creator within ourselves, we will finally end separation and get to work on creating a better planet.

Fundamentally, growth is the basis of all creation. Every individual who looks inward and chooses spiritual growth moves bit by bit toward oneness. But even though we may hold a vision of humankind joining together in collective purpose, it is improbable that we will all reach the same higher state of awareness at the same time. How do we collectively meld our God-selves together? If people in our immediate family or household don't have a clue how to practice oneness, is it possible to co-exist with them without conflict? What's the practical approach to living in oneness?

I'll be the first to admit that it's a stretch to rise at 5:30 a.m. and melt away into the infinite, especially on those days when both my sons are home from college and there's a ton of laundry on the floor and the dog needs emergency colon surgery. But I've found that the more we have some kind of daily awareness of our inner and outer world, the more we can practice oneness. I've been known to take a contemplative break between the wash and spin cycles. Meister Eckhart might have referred to this kind of break as the eternal now, which is another name for God or an experience of God in the present moment. It's not necessarily just a concept. Even the familiar, "I don't have any clean shirts, can you launder them *now*?" from my youngest son is an experience of God. God is everything in the present moment, all events, all requests. For me, my place within God is a state of mind and I often use a reminder phrase to identify with the Universal Self (Brahman, the Absolute, or the Divine Presence) at any given moment. Even in the middle of the laundry.

Although Christians may see the nature of union with God a bit differently than Vedantists, who identify with Brahman (the first cause of the universe), it's all the same: *That*

Art Thou. The supreme source of the world is One. You are God, one being, one unified substance. Actually, you are *both* the individual *and* the universal self. The Upanishads say you represent all creatures. It's the essence of everything in the world. In the Svetasvatara Upanishads, it is written that when the yogi directly experiences Brahman's truth by realizing the light of the self within, he or she becomes one with God, present everywhere, both the creator and the created, within all beings. This "One" is akin to the pure consciousness of the Vendanta. When we can wrap our heads around that, that's the moment we are divinely illuminated by the truth. We can identify with the Divine everywhere. In practical terms, dissolving the boundary of what is self and not-self, and becoming a God-realized human being is about living in wonderment of all that is. We need to learn to be patient with life, notice the details, be invested in everyone's welfare as if it were our own.

To move civilization forward, we must also be unwilling to bear separation. Truly, who wants to be separate from perfection, genius, and creativity, our natural states? God is within us.¹³ We can no longer deny our oneness from a scientific point of view, nor can we continue to find any new, compelling philosophies that support any other scenario. Each of us is a spark of divinity and made of the same God-substance, even though our spiritual evolution may be different, as we might have made choices in our individual lives that didn't serve us well, like stealing, killing, or raping. These bad choices are reflections of our inability to see and practice our own divinity. But they're only options that have their own set of consequences and are not the substance of the true, God-realized human being.

This universe is everywhere present at all points in space and has a shared awareness. Any given point in creation is simultaneously known at every other point with no distance between because each of us is an extension of the infinite. When you recognize that you are both

¹³ According to Jesus in Luke 17:20-21, the kingdom of God cannot be seen; it is within.

God and human simultaneously, this is the commencement of your love affair with life. Be aware of your own divinity while still being human. This awareness is at the core of the most beloved spiritual wisdom of both East and West. Live in the present moment, live in the eternal moment of now, live as a whole being, live from the inside-out. When you know yourself, you can still have your identity as a unique, separate self, but you can also take conscious, decisive, and loving action as the One. This is living as God and human. It's a co-creative exercise in learning to express the essence of God within.