

DAILY GUIDES

DECEMBER 2024 BY REV. KRIS ALEXANDER

*Heaven
is a practice,
not a promise.*

— ALOK

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REV. KRIS ALEXANDER

This month, my inspiration for the Daily Guides came from our quest for authenticity and balance, while seeking to be radically gentle and kind. These Guides draw deeply from our incredible planet and the theology of eco-spirituality, finding profound lessons in nature that can guide us to set healthy boundaries and create a world that works for all.

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Comparison kills creativity. There is room for you. Nobody can do it with your voice, with your experience, with your insight.

— Karen Walrond

I do not think we should make such a claim to divinity that we forget we are human, for our humanity proclaims the creativity of the Divine.

— Ernest Holmes, “Know Yourself,” page 88.2

Diving deeply into my spirituality seems to unleash my creativity. The two go hand in hand. We often think of creativity as something only some people have, but the truth is we are all naturally creative beings. Creativity shows up in every moment, aspect, demonstration, manifestation and thought. There’s no escaping our inherent creativity.

Since we already are incredibly creative, maximizing this power is more about raising our awareness of what already exists than it is about growth or potential. We always are creating and forever artists, yet creating art with intentionality and boldness requires courage. It’s truly challenging to put ourselves out there and risk everything for our imagination and intention. This is the call of each day: to be more intentional and bolder in the lives we create, both individually and collectively.

Every day, I choose to see my creativity in everything I do, whether creating art, making breakfast, cleaning the house, handling paperwork or spending time with friends. My whole life is a creative endeavor as a spiritual being, just as each person expresses their creativity in everything they do. Therefore, a conversation is simply a co-creative project.

Embrace your creativity by recognizing the truth: You are a divine creative being.

When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.

— Audre Lorde

We must believe there is within us a pattern of living beyond all confusion, beyond all fear, and that it is here and now because the Universe in which we live is here and now.

— Ernest Holmes, “Creative Living,” page 70.1

Fear. That four-letter word often treated like a swear word. I’ve discovered that when I lean into my fear and ask what it’s trying to show me, fear transforms from a dreaded enemy into a friend. Fear is a natural human emotion. It keeps us safe, reminds us when we’re stepping out of our comfort zone and points to our unhealed past hurts. It’s not something to be afraid of, but something to embrace.

I often find myself so wrapped up in fearing the future that I forget all the good I have. Then, if the scary thing happens, it’s almost never as bad as I imagined. I’ve spent a lot of time being afraid of things that didn’t happen, weren’t that bad, were actually great or, in the worst-case scenarios, I got through with some messy grace and support.

As we work on releasing our fear, we also need to consider the other side of the coin: forgiving ourselves for the times we let our fear stop us — all those times we didn’t push through, made decisions out of alignment or just straight up made mistakes. It’s a lot easier for me to hear fear without acting on it when I am not busy being angry at my past self. She really did the best she could.

When fear arises, I invite you to lean in the way you would lean into a friend when they whisper to you. What is the message? What is the gift? How is fear stepping in and supporting you today?

AFFIRMATION

Creativity flows through me like a vibrant river, turning everyday moments into extraordinary works of art.

AFFIRMATION

I listen to fear’s whispers and uncover its secret gifts and lessons.

If you want to live an authentic, meaningful life, you need to master the art of disappointing and upsetting others, hurting feelings and living with the reality that some people just won't like you. It may not be easy, but it's essential if you want your life to reflect your deepest desires, values and needs.

— Cheryl Richardson, "The Art of Extreme Self-Care: Transform Your Life One Month at a Time"

The mind must get a degree of conviction of peace greater than the appearance of confusion, broader than the confusion, and rest in that conviction.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Power of an Idea," page 55.3

This holiday season, I focus on self-care. Many of us find it all too easy to let this "most wonderful time of the year" become a stress-filled marathon of trying to please everyone, attend every event and push ourselves to the limit while pretending to be nothing but joyful.

Whether or not you celebrate the holidays, you undoubtedly share in the common struggle to balance expectations, obligations and self-care. I choose a different approach, allowing myself to feel and express a full range of emotions. I give myself space to grieve for those who aren't with us, to rest rather than overcommit, to prioritize spending quality time with loved ones over chasing material concerns. I aim to move through this season — and every season — with intention and care, rather than rushing from one obligation to the next.

I invite you to join me in this shift. Let's transform our mentality from one of rigid expectations and obligations to one of gentleness, love and self-care. By focusing on what truly matters and allowing ourselves to be present with our feelings, we can create more meaningful, authentic and fulfilling experiences, no matter the time of year.

God depends on us. It is through us that God is achieved.

— André Gide

The reason no person has yet fully plumbed the depths of their own mind lies in the fact that their mind merges with the Universal, and we can never encompass the Infinite. Herein is the possibility of everlasting unfoldment, the glorious concept of an eternal emergence in ever-widening circles.

— Ernest Holmes, "Living Without Fear, page 94

The idea of an inner life makes me think of a myriad of amazing movies that have depicted people's inner thoughts, imaginations and minds. "Inception," "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," "The Matrix." I could go on and on. Each of us has a rich inner landscape that puts all of these movies, no matter how amazing, to shame.

The deeper into my own mind I choose to dive, the more I discover who I am and the more compassion and understanding I have for myself. This allows me to integrate all the aspects of myself — the loving, messy, complex, funny, serious, joyful, sad, beautiful and ugly — that come together to complete the whole picture. Luckily for us, we are individualized expressions of Infinity, and so no matter how deep we dive into ourselves, there will always be more to explore.

Our inner worlds are vast, ever-changing landscapes filled with untapped potential, wounds and scars, and boundless creativity. When we explore these inner realms, we unlock new levels of self-awareness and self-acceptance. This inner journey enriches our understanding of ourselves while also enhancing our ability to connect deeply with others.

By embracing the full spectrum of our inner experiences, we create a more compassionate, holistic view of ourselves. This self-acceptance radiates outward, allowing us to authentically and wholly engage with the world. Each dive into our inner life brings us closer to the truth of our being, revealing the infinite layers of our existence.

AFFIRMATION

I honor my need for rest and choose intention, care and gentleness over endless obligations.

AFFIRMATION

I explore the vast landscape of my inner world, uncovering and integrating the infinite layers of my existence with delight and wonder.

*Remember you are water. Of course you leave salt trails.
Of course you are crying. Flow.*

— adrienne maree brown, “Emergent Strategy:
Shaping Change, Changing Worlds”

*The universe is abundant, unlimited in every respect. If it were
not unlimited, it would have depleted itself long, long ago. ...
Instead, what do we find? ... The grains of sand on the beaches
are innumerable. The leaves on the trees continue to multiply.
Nature is lavish, abundant, extravagant.*

— Ernest Holmes, “Discover a Richer Life,” page 54.1

As I pack for a trip to the beach, I think about how the ocean makes me feel more connected, more divine, more sacred and calmer than anywhere else in the world. To me, it's so obvious, as I hear the waves crash and watch the abundance of life at the shore, that this is my ancestral home. All of life originated in the water, and there is a tiny part of me that remembers this truth.

This aspect of me is the home of my ecological consciousness, the place that whispers to me about my sacred connection to this planet, to the life on it and to the universe as a whole.

So often we say that we are spiritual beings having a human experience, and yet that phrase doesn't fully do us justice. It separates the spiritual from the physical in a way that suggests the two aren't one and the same. Nature calls us to return to our spiritual roots that exist *because* we are human, not *despite* being human. We are simultaneously 100% human and 100% a divine paradox of wholeness.

Nature is where the lines between the spiritual and the physical blur, and we remember that, truly, it is all one.

*Maybe sometimes we don't need to grasp at comfort within
difficulty; maybe sometimes we are just uncomfortable.*

— Lyanda Lynn Haupt, “Rooted: Life at the
Crossroads of Science, Nature and Spirit”

*Each is a center of divine love. Where do we first learn to
express this? In our home ... The same idea is extended to the
community, to the nation and to the world, until we finally
learn to feel that we are a part of life, that we belong to the
world in which we live and to the universe... .*

— Ernest Holmes, “A New Design for Living,” page 167

I have been thinking about the idea of comfort. Many of us have been taught that our individual comfort is a goal, but honestly, I don't think that's true.

The other day, I was walking barefoot through our yard and was stung by a bee on the bottom of my foot. It was unpleasant, to say the least. But after icing my foot and accepting that I was probably going to be tired, I began wondering: What was the alternative? If I had been wearing shoes, surely more comfortable for me, I wouldn't have felt the bee's warning, and the bee likely would not have survived. Was her life worth my comfort? I don't believe so.

Of course, I am not suggesting we all run around barefoot stepping on bees and throwing caution to the wind, but I am offering a moment of retrospection. As you look around, are there things in your life providing comfort to you at the expense of another life? It can be hard to discern both the source of our belongings and the relative suffering of those who made or delivered them. It is an interesting question, isn't it?

As I move away from thinking that I have the privilege of comfort above all else, I gently look around at my life and the things in it. What insignificant comforts can I release to allow all life to flourish? Where can I shift my mindset and way of life to support a world that works for all?

AFFIRMATION

The whispers of nature remind me that I am an integral part of this planet, a living testament to the unity of the physical and spiritual.

AFFIRMATION

In releasing my attachment to personal comfort, I open the door to deeper compassion and a more harmonious existence with all beings.

Treasure your curiosity and nurture your imagination.

— Shirley Ann Jackson

The real secret is that everything moves in circles. Everything bends back upon itself. What goes out must return. What is embodied within will complete its own circle, and if we wish to enlarge our experience, we must increase our capacity to understand, to feel, to embody and to know.

— Ernest Holmes, "Living the Science of Mind," page 206.1

Did you know you have a superpower? Now, don't get too excited about your newfound power, because it's a superpower we each can cultivate: the power of curiosity. The world around us teems with beauty, potential, wonder and endless mysteries. We can choose to move through our lives by rote, going about our daily activities as though every day is the same, or we can step into curiosity, choosing to open our minds and experience all this amazing life has to offer.

By choosing curiosity in every moment, even the seemingly mundane, we become aware of the Divine showing up in every aspect of life. This then allows us to fully embrace the possibilities that exist, and suddenly our lives, regardless of what is happening, become miraculous occasions for us to enjoy, rather than things to tolerate. We move from surviving to thriving.

Curiosity drives knowledge, learning, innovation and growth. It causes us to move past our fears, step out of our comfort zones and peek around the corners of the unknown. Curiosity indicates we truly are alive.

I love the saying, "Curiosity killed the cat," because the full saying finishes with, "but satisfaction brought it back." Yes! I love that feeling of satisfaction when I learn something new, discover what I wanted to know and lean into the unknown until, in a flash of insight, it suddenly becomes known. There's something absolutely magical about the "aha!" that follows a discovery. Embrace your superpower and lean into curiosity.

Asking good questions is half of learning.

— Elijah Muhammad

The answer to every question is within us because we are within Spirit, and Spirit is an indivisible whole. The solution to every problem is within us.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 365.2

If you've ever spent time with toddlers, you probably know that their favorite question is, "Why?" Why is the sky blue? Why do I have to put on pants? Why does the blender make that noise? Why do I have to pick up my toys? Why do we take baths? The questions seem endless until around their fourth birthdays.

Humans are naturally curious creatures. We want to understand what's happening in our lives, and toddlers offer the perfect blend of wanting to know everything and having almost no life experience to draw from.

Toddlers' caregivers eventually tire of the questions and respond with something like, "Because I said so!" or "Just because." I know that second one was my go-to when I was exhausted and my son wanted answers to life's great mysteries. He also made me realize how much I don't know, how often I just accept things and how complacent I can be. Toddlers are excellent mirrors, reflecting all the unconscious parts of ourselves.

When my son asked questions I couldn't answer, I took the time to find the answers, often googling queries like, "Why do koalas only eat eucalyptus leaves?" or "Why do ducks quack?" As he learned, I learned, too. Toddlers are remarkable teachers. They remind us to ask questions, not to become complacent with the amazing world around us, to seek knowledge continually and to slow down and find answers.

I invite you to join me in reigniting the sense of wonder and curiosity you had as a child.

AFFIRMATION

I am a spiritual superhero wielding curiosity to open my mind and heart, allowing me to learn, grow and innovate.

AFFIRMATION

I continually seek knowledge and understanding, slowing down to experience the amazing world around me.

There are at least three ways to love you: as you were, as you are, as you will be. I love you. That means I choose all three.

— Alexis Pauline Gumbs, “Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals”

Love is the lodestone of life, the great and supreme reality. Love is the highest gift of heaven, the greatest good on Earth and the treasure of all our search. It is the end and aim of everything.

— Ernest Holmes, “365 Science of Mind,” page 82.1

During my journey of self-love, I’ve been reflecting on the way our bodies change. Even when I think I finally reached the pinnacle of self-love, I inevitably wake up the next morning with another weird chin hair, random back pain or a giant zit on my face. No matter how much I love my body, it’s going to continue to age and change. This is part of why self-love is a journey.

On top of the societal soup of marketing, messaging, people, products and social media that suggests self-hate is the norm, we’re trying to love something that is constantly shifting, moving and changing right in front of us.

Love is both a noun and a verb. Just as I don’t expect those I love to stay exactly the same, I don’t expect my body to remain the same either. Love, then, becomes a conscious choice to show up, no matter what happens. I love my body no matter how it changes or if it no longer works the way it once did.

This body is *mine*, and it’s the only one I’ll get in this lifetime, so I choose to unconditionally love it, just as it unconditionally loves me. Embracing changes with compassion and acceptance allows me to appreciate this amazing vessel that carries me through life. I honor the evolving nature of my body and my journey of self-love.

I touch my own skin, and it tells me that before there was any harm, there was miracle.

— adrienne maree brown, “Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good”

The body of the universe cannot help changing. This is what constitutes the eternal activity of Spirit within Itself; the Spirit passing into form — creation eternally going on.

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 100.2

Sometimes I have what I call a “rough body” day or week. This can be anything from poor body image to feeling unwell to having mental health challenges. This happens to all of us. We can’t love and feel amazing in our bodies 100% of the time. Yet we tend to have this idea, especially in New Thought, that we *should* be able to think our way into always feeling great.

I’ve been working on accepting the range of ways my body and mind feel from day to day, moment to moment. Some days, I feel like Wonder Woman, able to accomplish anything asked of me. Other days, I find simply doing my spiritual practice to be nearly unmanageable. This is a natural human experience, and yet I still view one way of being as better than the other.

Learning to listen to my body makes it harder to push through those difficult days without resting. However, there tend to be fewer of these days because my body can trust me to rest when needed. My body and I are in a dance together, asking for and meeting our needs together.

Our dance isn’t perfect. I get frustrated when I think we are dancing the cha-cha, and all of a sudden my body wants to switch to a waltz or to leave the dance floor altogether. But we’ve been dancing together enough to realize that when we move and flow together, everything gets done in divine timing. This way of living requires deeper intentionality, but it is definitely worth it. Will you dance with me?

AFFIRMATION

I consistently *choose* to love my incredible body unconditionally, embracing its changes with compassion as I move through the phases of my life.

AFFIRMATION

I cherish the dance of trust between my body and me, allowing us to move together in divine timing.

If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive.
— Audre Lorde

God in the midst of me approves of me.
— Ernest Holmes, "A Holmes Reader on Change," page 14

Approval is a tricky thing. We're raised to seek it from those around us. Our parents taught us how to behave and responded with approval or disapproval. Teachers had expectations and their approval — or lack of it — came with positive or negative consequences. On the playground, we quickly learned how to interact with other children to fit in, creating a hierarchy of popularity that persisted into middle school, high school and beyond.

However, we rarely discuss our own approval. We spend so much time seeking validation from family, friends, coworkers, bosses and even strangers that we often overlook whether we approve of ourselves. Despite it being the most important, self-approval is often last on our list.

In my younger years, I constantly reshaped myself to fit an ideal. With each move, job change or hobby, I crafted plans to be the perfect version of myself — happier, thinner, quieter, more peaceful, more popular, less weird, less nerdy, more organized and definitely prettier. Yet, after a few days or weeks, I would revert to my old (and authentic) self.

It took me a long time to realize I needed to stop focusing on what I thought I should be based on others' approval and instead discover my own values, desires and dreams. By working to become the best version of who I truly am, I found that my own approval is far more important than the world's. With my own approval at the center of my life, I have a much better chance of success.

Heaven is a practice, not a promise.
— Alok

Heaven is not a place but an inward state of consciousness. It is an inward awareness of divine harmony and truth.
— Ernest Holmes, "What Religious Science Teaches," page 39.5

My spouse and I transformed our front yard into a Disney princess dream spot. We feed the birds, squirrels, deer, bugs and anyone or anything else that stops by. On any given day, our visitors include six squirrels, various bees and bugs, two deer and more than 100 birds, including sparrows, cardinals, goldfinches, tufted titmice, ravens, mourning doves and even a cheeky bluejay. Most mornings, we sit on our front porch with coffee, silently watching the world go by.

We learn so much about this secret world. Squirrels have different fur colors and personalities, and we named many of them. Birds engage in fascinating rituals, like courtship feeding, where females allow males to feed them until deciding who to mate with. We laugh as we watch male birds compete for the attention of a particularly attractive female.

This morning, despite seeing hundreds of sparrows daily, I noticed a bird with a different pattern and personality. When we looked it up, we discovered a new fox sparrow had joined us.

This morning ritual is a cherished part of my day. By simply observing, I learned so much about these ordinary critters. I discovered that there truly is no such thing as an ordinary creature in the beauty and creativity of nature. Every moment is extraordinary, and I'm grateful for the chance to experience it through intentional stillness and attention.

AFFIRMATION

AFFIRMATION

My own values guide my journey, and my self-approval is the compass that leads me on my true path.

Through intentional stillness, I connect with the magic of the ordinary, discovering the profound in the everyday.

Leveling Up and Showing Up

We dismiss / Their Concern / With a well-rehearsed / "I'm fine" / While searching / For strength / To inhale / One more time.

— J. Warren Welch

Believing that life is God in action, we must accept Its processes with a firm conviction that, in the long run, all things will work together for good. Resistance brings contraction; cooperation brings expansion.

— Ernest Holmes, "Richer Living," page 296.1

Emotions. Can't live with them, can't live without
Actually, we have no choice but to live with them, right?
When I first got into New Thought, people drilled into my brain that I had to be happy all the time. Something goes wrong? Just be happy. Need money? Just think positive thoughts. Relationship challenges? Just don't focus on it. Life falling apart? Fake it till you make it.

Many people tell me they only feel like they are truly practicing Science of Mind teachings when they are positive, upbeat, happy and life is going well ... or they can fake it. Otherwise, they sit at home, frantically avoiding emotions and situations, pretending everything is OK while falling apart on the inside. It reminds me of the cartoon dog sitting in the middle of a flaming building, remarking to himself, "This is fine," with a slightly terrified smile.

To me, this has always been counterintuitive. When things, in fact, are *not* fine, that is when we have the opportunity to fully lean into our teachings. Emotions happen. Life happens. Things happen to us. We can't control every single thing that shows up on planet Earth and in our awareness.

What we can do is decide how to respond, what to focus on and how to shift our perspective. When life is hard, lean into the messy emotions, tough situations and challenging relationships with the full gusto of this teaching. You won't always get it right, but you can show up.

AFFIRMATION

When life is hard, I lean into the mess and challenges, while staying grounded in spiritual truth.

Vulnerability as a Bridge

The difficult thing is that vulnerability is the first thing I look for in you and the last thing I'm willing to show you. In you, it's courage and daring. In me, it's weakness.

— Brené Brown

If we can bind ourselves together reverently, in love and compassion, in mutual tolerance and understanding, under the cohesive powers of the universal law of good and the beneficence of a divine and universal Presence, then shall we be able ... to lead the world down the pathway of a new enlightenment.

— Ernest Holmes, Science of Mind magazine, January 1991, page 7

Vulnerability, ugh. Anyone else have that immediate reaction, or is it just me? It's not that I don't see the value of vulnerability. I do. It's just that sometimes, I'd rather not. Choosing to show up vulnerably, to bring our whole heart to a situation and to be willing to be hurt in the name of staying open can be exhausting. Yet, the benefits greatly outweigh the drawbacks. Yes, it is more work. Yes, it can be tiring. Yes, it takes great courage. But in doing so, we allow others to show up with authenticity, creating brave and safe spaces for connection and wholehearted living. Isn't that what life is all about?

We often spend so much time armoring ourselves against the difficult parts of life, yet we honor and feel compassion when someone else shows us their vulnerability. I see it often in New Thought. We've somehow decided that these teachings mean we can force our lives to always be good, that we can avoid any heartbreak, challenges or hurt with the power of our thoughts. But it doesn't work that way. Life happens — good, bad and everything in between. Our job isn't to always be positive and avoid the messy parts. Our job is to show up to all of it with courage, perspective and love.

Let's embrace our vulnerability and let it be a bridge to deeper connections and richer experiences. In our openness, we find true strength and authentic living.

AFFIRMATION

I choose to bring my whole heart to every situation, knowing that vulnerability fosters brave and safe spaces for others to be authentic.

Hit Your Reset Button

The distinction that must be repeated as many times as necessary is this: We are not resting to be productive. We are resting simply because it is our divine right to do so.

— Tricia Hersey, “Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto”

We should believe that God is the invisible Partner in our lives and affirm that Divine Love goes before us and prepares the way.

— Ernest Holmes, “365 Science of Mind,” page 13.1

I love naps. I really do. They’re one of my go-to self-care activities when I feel stressed, overwhelmed, confused or frustrated. Stepping away for a 20-minute (or sometimes two-hour) nap is like hitting the reset button. It’s the human equivalent of, “Have you tried turning it off and on again?” I wake up from these reset periods with renewed energy, optimism and often the solution to whatever was on my mind.

There’s a reason the final step of spiritual mind treatment is release. If we never let anything go or take a break, there’s no space for Spirit to work Its magic. Our brains and bodies thrive on alternating between work and rest.

The rest and release phases of life are just as crucial to productivity and progress as the work phases. In fact, research now shows that working less can lead to accomplishing more. It might seem counterintuitive because it goes against what we’ve been taught, but it’s true. A balanced life, with equal parts work, rest and play, is best for our health, productivity and joy.

When is the last time you took a nap?

Live Your Passion and Purpose

The quality of our lives is not measured by the amount of time we spend in a state of perfection.

— Emily Nagoski, Ph.D., “Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle”

It seems that humanity exists for the purpose of self-expression. There appears to be no other reason or excuse for our being.

— Ernest Holmes, “Freedom from Stress,” page 24

I want to put a widely spread myth to rest. I often hear people say, “If you love what you’re doing, you’ll have all the energy you ever need. You will never get tired. You won’t need breaks. You’ll never work a day in your life.” I am calling B.S.

There are a couple of reasons this myth is dangerous. First, you can be doing something you absolutely love and are passionate about, and anytime it gets challenging or tiring, you will quit. You will believe it is the wrong path for you. Second, this approach perpetuates burn out, poor boundaries and an unhealthy work/life balance.

The truth? Work is hard. Life is hard. Passion is hard.

I love ministry. I know I am in the perfect place, offering my gifts in the perfect career for me. Yet, I still set boundaries, take my sabbath and prioritize self-care. Sometimes I get tired, don’t feel like working, am uninspired and get frustrated, especially while learning something new. None of this means I am not cut out for ministry. It means I am *human*.

It is OK if you love what you do *and* it frustrates you. Or sometimes you don’t want to do it, or you set boundaries or you take breaks. In fact, passion, whether for a hobby, your career or something as yet undiscovered, *requires* breaks and boundaries to be fully realized.

Embrace your passion; it is your purpose for being here. Just don’t take it so seriously that you forget to rest and play, too.

AFFIRMATION

Rest is my personal reset button, helping me approach challenges with a fresh outlook and optimism.

AFFIRMATION

I release the myth that loving life means I must be tireless. Instead, I honor my need for self-care and renewal.

Life is a chronic condition. ... I'm here to look into your gorgeous eyes and say, "Hey, there are some things you can fix and some things you can't." ... We can find beauty and meaning and truth, but there's no cure to being human. So, let's be friends on that journey. Let's be human together.

— Kate Bowler

Our experience is filled with laughter and tears, singing, dancing, praying and exalting, and sometimes falling into the depths of despair. We need to have a good-natured flexibility toward all we encounter, not fighting against life but cooperating with it.

— Ernest Holmes, "Know Yourself," page 88.2

I have news. It can be good news or bad, depending on your perspective. Or perhaps it is neither — if you can stay open.

Here's my news: *Life just keeps coming.*

There always will be moments of utter beauty, sheer ecstasy, crippling pain, heart-stopping grief, divine synchronicity and intense challenge. Sometimes they come one right after another, and sometimes they all pile up, pulling us in every direction at once.

Every time I think I've reached a plateau and found a moment of rest, something else appears, calling for my attention. In every moment, regardless of what is happening, I am at choice. I can choose to embrace the tides of life, allowing the ebb and flow of emotions and experiences to merge into a beautiful dance of joy and grace. Or I can resist, trying to fight against life's currents. Either way, life continues to move forward. Spirit always says yes, which means it doesn't matter whether we flow with It or resist; It simply agrees.

I find it much easier and a lot more enjoyable to flow with life rather than resisting it. Even if I occasionally resist, I always choose to return to flowing with the rhythm of life. How about you? Are you flowing or resisting?

Never apologize for being sensitive or emotional. Let this be a sign that you've got a big heart and aren't afraid to let others see it. Showing your emotions is a sign of strength.

— Brigitte Nicole

The Divine Spirit is ever present with us, no matter where we are.

— Ernest Holmes, Science of Mind magazine, August 1971, page 17

I love watching toddlers and babies get mad. It's so easy to see the entire experience wash over them. They start by getting a little frustrated. Then they try harder at the task eluding them. When that doesn't work, they move to full-blown anger. Their faces scrunch up. They throw whatever is in their hands, stomp their feet and begin ferociously wailing. And then it's over as quickly as it began. Forgotten tears dry on their cheeks as they move on to the next activity.

What do I love about this experience? Well, aside from thinking that scrunchy baby faces are utterly adorable, I love the *presence* of the experience. Children are all in. When they're joyful, they're 100% joyful. When they're sad, they're 100% sad. When they're focused, they're 100% focused. And when they're angry? They're all in. They aren't wondering if they're justified in their anger. They have no feelings of shame or guilt. They don't try to force themselves to not be angry when they are.

And for this reason, their anger lasts only a moment before they move on. They don't repress it, hold it in, attach themselves to it or decide they're an angry person. All that judgment and overthinking is purely adult stuff.

While I don't recommend you throw down whatever is in your hands and stomp your feet, I do suggest you begin to see your anger as a part of your divinity. What is your anger telling you? What is the gift? How can you honor it by allowing it to move through you without attachment?

AFFIRMATION

I flow with life as it comes, embracing its rhythms and dancing with the ebb and flow.

AFFIRMATION

I stay present to my emotions, allowing them to move through me without attachment as I listen and respond to their messages.

Earth is so thick with divine possibility / that it is a wonder we can walk anywhere / without cracking our shins on altars.

— Barbara Brown Taylor

In the true perspective, matter is the complement of Spirit and necessary to It, and is not unreal at all. And I believe this. God's world is not a world of illusion.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Anatomy of Healing Prayer," page 174.1

The body remembers, the bones remember, the joints remember, even the little finger remembers. Memory is lodged in pictures and feelings in the cells themselves.

— Clarissa Pinkola Estés

Out of eternal being comes everlasting becoming.

— Ernest Holmes, "Anatomy of Healing Prayer," page 14.2

I wonder what it's like to be a leaf, spending my life seeking the sun, relishing the rain and blowing gently in the breeze, part of something larger, connected through my stem, my core, my center, yet gently waving on my own. I wonder if leaves love the wind. I wonder if the leaves closest to the trunk have a deeper understanding of oneness, having felt the slight touch of direct connection. I wonder if they spend their lives telling the other leaves about this being, this divine presence they are a part of, that loves them and wants them to flourish.

Is crown shyness a moment of respect, a willingness to hold clear boundaries and witness one another from afar, or is it a form of tribalism, a concern that the other might be dangerous to them? I like to believe it is the former, that leaves teach us the beauty of boundaries when we take the time to look up.

What if God is the trunk, and we are the leaves? Is this universe a single tree in a forest? How expansive would my consciousness need to be to perceive other trees? Do the bacteria living in the trunk know of the existence of other trees?

If we are the bacteria of the universe, are we beneficial or harmful? We decide each and every day.

I choose to benefit the world I am in. I choose to make my presence a testament to the universe, to the tree I call home. What will you choose?

I always have looked at this message — that the body remembers — as a warning. Any unhealed traumas, emotions, feelings, pain or problems you don't heal become physical illness and disease in the body. You better watch out!

But now I see this as a comfort. The body remembers — yes, the pain and hurts, but also the wonderful moments, the blessings, the best times of my life. As I get older and realize there are many things I don't remember, I can trust that those memories remain housed in my physical home, if not in my mind.

Not only does my body remember my own life, it further carries within it the memories of my ancestors, those related to me by blood and by history. You know those amazing queer folks who changed the world by being authentically themselves, like Marsha P. Johnson and Harvey Milk? Their power, authenticity and bravery are stored in my DNA. My great-great-grandparents' love for one another and their children lives on in my bloodstream. The fact that my body is powerful enough, *spiritual* enough to know the history of humanity without my consciousness being aware is an incredible miracle, one I can't quite grasp.

What I know is that this means I can cut my body a little slack, because housing all those memories takes a lot of work.

AFFIRMATION

I expand my consciousness, allowing this broader perspective to guide me in benefiting the planet and all life.
I feel at home in the universe and in this body.

AFFIRMATION

Within my body, the echoes of history and the whispers of ancestors weave a powerful tapestry of strength and grace.

This complicated moment on Earth is no time to retreat into the simplistic metaphor of “bringing light.” The hope we must maintain, the imagination we must put to use and the physical health we require all ask of us a more intricate wisdom.

— Lyanda Lynn Haupt, “Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature and Spirit”

God, the Divine, never had but one Son. This Son is being born at every season, in every place, through all races and in all nations. Every birth is a divine event. Every conception is immaculate.

— Ernest Holmes, Science of Mind magazine, December 1962, page 48

Today is the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere, a time that reminds me of the origins of the Christmas tree. In ancient times, pagans brought evergreens into their homes during winter to brighten their spaces, celebrate the solstice and remind themselves that the sun would return.

I find it meaningful to remember that, just as the sun is always present, with its light obscured only by the Earth’s rotation, Spirit is always within me, even if my perception and awareness fluctuate.

Recognizing our inherent wholeness, especially when life feels lacking — such as during the dim light of the winter solstice — can be challenging. Yet, wholeness is our true essence, even if it doesn’t always manifest as what we deem “good.” It might sometimes appear as incomplete, messy, painful or difficult. In such moments, remembering that wholeness equals oneness, and oneness is a spiritual truth, can offer comfort. Perhaps, during tough times, we can find ways to metaphorically bring in a tree and celebrate the balance of all experiences, trusting in the continuous presence of Spirit within us.

What are you reminding yourself of today?

The land knows you, even when you are lost.

— Robin Wall Kimmerer, “Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants”

We can be certain that there is an Intelligence in the Universe to which we may come, that will guide and inspire us, a love that overshadows.

— Ernest Holmes, “The Science of Mind,” page 153.5

This morning, my GPS took me on a completely bizarre route home. I could see the road I thought I should have been on and knew there was no traffic or logical reason for the detour the GPS insisted I take.

As I sternly informed her of exactly how I felt about her inability to give proper directions, I remembered my “God Positioning System” and burst out laughing. There it was — a gentle reminder that we really do need to surrender, relax and trust that there is a higher perspective guiding us.

In the midst of my mini-rant, I realized that sometimes life’s unexpected detours exist as opportunities in disguise. Maybe I just needed to take the scenic route to enjoy my morning errands a bit longer, or maybe I was being set up to be in the perfect time and perfect place in the future.

In that moment, I embraced the unexpected, finding humor in the deviation and trusting that even in the twists and turns, there’s a purpose and a bit of beauty to be found.

How is your God Positioning System guiding you today?

AFFIRMATION

I honor the wholeness of my being, recognizing that I encompass both light and dark, joy and pain.

AFFIRMATION

I allow God’s Positioning System to guide me on my journey, trusting that every twist, turn and bump is for my highest good.

Laughter is our way of letting the universe know we agree with the passage of time.

— Ross Gay, “Inciting Joy: Essays”

All creation is a manifestation of the delight of God.

— Ernest Holmes, “365 Science of Mind,” page 214.1

I have a few questions for you:

- When was the last time you played a game?
- Who did you play it with?
- What game was it? Was it a serious game like Rummikub or Phase 10 or Bananagrams (some of my favorites), or was it a silly game like Mousetrap, Twister or Cards Against Humanity?

I personally think God loves to laugh and be playful. Of course I do, because I am God, and I love to laugh and be playful. Even though silliness is a core part of my personality, I sometimes get so caught up in my to-do list, the serious business of living and working really hard to “get closer to Spirit,” whatever that means, that I forget to laugh and play for whole days at a time.

Playfulness is a reminder that life doesn’t always have to be so serious. In these moments of fun and laughter, we reconnect with our lighter side and with each other. So let’s not miss out on these opportunities to embrace joy.

God is just waiting for an invitation to play with us, so let’s get out the ol’ Twister mat and spin the wheel. I’ll go first — right hand on red.

Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place.

— Zora Neale Hurston

We reach God in others by reaching out from God within the self.

— Ernest Holmes, “Words That Heal Today,” page 25.1

Relationships are hard. There, I said it. We can stop pretending they should be easy. Each of us brings our own history, beliefs, mood, thoughts, ideas, distractions and more to every interaction.

I’m generally kind and patient when running errands, but sometimes my background stuff affects the present moment. The other day, I went to the post office to drop off some letters. The postal worker told me it would cost an additional \$0.40 per envelope because of the wax seals. Not a huge expense, but it was my second attempt at mailing these letters, I was in a hurry, hadn’t slept well and really didn’t want to add extra stamps. I huffed a bit and stomped off.

Then I realized I’d been unfair. It’s not her fault that wax seals require extra handling. She was just doing her job. I went back, apologized and thanked her for her help. She visibly relaxed and asked me to bring the letters back to her so she could personally ensure my envelopes were properly sorted.

Despite my rudeness, a brief acknowledgment and apology were enough for this woman to go above and beyond for me. Instead of being annoyed or ignoring my apology, she allowed my humanity to touch hers, and we both left that interaction feeling better.

Relationships are hard. This one lasted less than a minute but was just as important as any other. Every moment and interaction connects us to ourselves, each other and our shared humanity. Relationships are about being willing to be vulnerable and continue to shift, change and grow.

AFFIRMATION

I invite playfulness into my life, knowing that laughter and joy are divine expressions of Spirit.

AFFIRMATION

I embrace the shared humanity in everyone I encounter, allowing each relationship to deepen my growth and vulnerability. I open myself to being transformed by every connection I make.

The Sacred Gift of Pausing

Highlight Reel or Behind the Scenes?

Productivity should not look like exhaustion. The concept of laziness is a tool of the oppressor.

— Tricia Hersey, “Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto”

As you learn to release all your burdens to the right action of God, you will find that everything falls into its proper place. You let your problems slip away from you, realizing that a Power greater than you are — and a Presence that is within you — is ready, willing and able to guide you in all ways.

— Ernest Holmes, “Thoughts Are Things,” page 89.1

In another life, I would have really liked just doing laundry and taxes with you.

— Waymond, “Everything, Everywhere, All At Once”

The Divine Presence is already what you are, and It contains the possibility of all joy in living.

— Ernest Holmes, “Thoughts Are Things,” page 87.1

To me, one of the misrepresentations of Science of Mind is the idea that because we are always in a space of creating — our reality, our life, our experiences, our body, our circumstances — we have somehow failed if we have anything less than what society deems an amazing life. On social media, it seems like every time we turn around, someone is posting perfectly posed pictures in some amazing location, eating incredible food, surrounded by smiling friends and family.

We can spend so much time looking at those highlight reels that we forget what happens behind the scenes to create that reality. Those picture-perfect moments don't just happen; they take a lot of work. And if we aren't careful, we can begin to compare our behind-the-scenes lives to others' highlight reels and then think there is something wrong with our own everyday life.

The life you live right now is the perfect one, even in all of its imperfect, messy, simple, boring glory. You don't have to save every bee, climb all the mountains, check everything off an infinite bucket list, attend every event you are invited to or constantly pursue your dreams to be living on purpose.

Sometimes living on purpose looks like curling up on the couch with a loved one, maybe a pet or two, with a bowl of popcorn to watch “Hocus Pocus.” Now excuse me. I have somewhere I need to be.

Let's talk about pausing. As children, most of us didn't have the ability to pause the TV. During commercials, we would run and do whatever needed to be done — go to the bathroom, take out the trash, do the dishes and grab some popcorn. It all had to be done in that finite time, with us rushing around to finish before we missed any key elements of the show.

Today's technology allows us to pause anything at any time. The beauty of the pause button means we can take time to do whatever we need to do without missing out on important plot lines or game-changing plays.

In life, the pause button is just as important. We've become so accustomed to rushing around, completing our to-do lists at a dizzying pace, that we forget to pause. When something challenging comes up, when emotions arise or when we feel confused or upset, we can take time to just pause.

This gives us the ability to respond to a situation rather than react to it, allowing us to choose how we show up in life instead of acting from old beliefs or past experiences. We can trust that when we pause, we have plenty of time to process and move through our thoughts, emotions and ideas before choosing to press play and creatively respond to what life puts before us.

That small pause button on the remote may just be the most important one of all.

AFFIRMATION

I honor the pause as a powerful tool, allowing myself the space to breathe, reflect and respond with intention.

AFFIRMATION

I honor the quiet, ordinary moments as deeply as the extraordinary ones, knowing they contribute to my life's richness.

Gratitude in Action

God has blessed you. Therefore, let your gratitude be good living for [Its] glory.

— Lailah Gifty Akita

Real giving is the givingness of the self. A kind word, a thoughtful act, perhaps just a smile can help lighten the burdens of others.

— Ernest Holmes, "Ideas for Living," page 55

I often struggle to maintain a gratitude practice, finding it hard to genuinely feel thankful during my nightly reflections. I know, clutch the pearls! A minister admitting she doesn't spend every night in rapturous thanksgiving for every moment of the day? Lying in bed, however, I mostly feel sleepy rather than grateful. A recent conversation with a fellow minister offered a fresh perspective: Gratitude works best when paired with action. It's not just about listing what we're thankful for but also using that gratitude to guide our actions.

Inspired by this insight, I've revamped my gratitude practice. Instead of merely listing things I'm grateful for, I now ask myself four questions:

1. Who or what inspired me today?
2. Who or what brought me comfort today?
3. Who or what brought me joy today?
4. What action does my gratitude inspire?

Gratitude is more than a nightly ritual. It is a guide for purposeful action. As we reflect on what we're thankful for, let's also consider how our gratitude can drive us to make a positive impact. In doing so, we become part of the reciprocal nature of gratitude, both giving and receiving in every moment.

I guess I am a gratitude practicing gal after all. Will you join me in this more intentional approach to gratitude?

AFFIRMATION

I transform my gratitude into purposeful action, enriching my life and the lives of others.

Closet of (Plant) Skeletons

My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view.

— Fred Dale

Failure does not mean the loss of something. Failure occurs only if the loss of that thing takes our enthusiasm, our courage, our zest for life, our faith, our conviction and our happiness from us. That is failure indeed.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Power of an Idea," page 56.3

When I think about failure, the first thing that always comes to mind is plants. I love plants. When I lived in Napa, I had hundreds of them, mostly succulents that were always blooming and growing in amazing ways. People would see my collection and inevitably say, "Oh, I wish I had a green thumb!" Or they might even say, "I have a black thumb; I kill everything."

I always told them that this beautiful collection of plants had a closet full of skeletons. Literally. Learning how to grow plants and support them in thriving requires a lot of accidentally killing plants. I don't know a single person with a green thumb who hasn't killed a lot of plants. It is part of the process.

Yet, despite the fact that I have killed dozens of plants, I still consider myself a gardener. This isn't about the failures; it is about the successes. Both the knowledge from the failures and the beauty from the successes are necessary to have an amazing garden. Every failure leads me forward, teaching me valuable lessons that help me grow and thrive, just like my plants.

What have been your most important failures?

AFFIRMATION

Just as a garden flourishes through both its blooms and its withered leaves, I embrace both my successes and failures as vital parts of my growth.

Our Intertwined Roots

Don't believe the lie of individual trees, each a monument to its own self-made success. A forest is an interdependent community. Resources are shared, and life in isolation is a death sentence.

— Becky Chambers, “To Be Taught, If Fortunate”

This “I Am” that is within us is God, the living Spirit Almighty, branching out through us into self-expression. The tree of life flourishes in our experience when watered at its roots with the quiet contemplation of the union of the soul with its Source.

— Ernest Holmes, “Pray and Prosper,” page 36.4

Let's discuss one of my favorite subjects: tree roots. Most tall, sturdy trees stay upright because of their deep roots. White oaks, walnut trees and sweet gums establish deep root systems. The shepherd's tree, native to the Kalahari Desert, has roots that can stretch down 270 feet. Wow!

But redwood trees are a fascinating exception. These ancient giants are some of the oldest and tallest trees in the world. They rise hundreds of feet into the sky in forests that smell sweet. Despite their towering height, their roots reach only about 6-1/2 feet into the ground. How is this possible?

A redwood, as scientists discovered, doesn't rely solely on its own roots. They create an elaborate, interconnected root system with other redwoods around them. They form a vast network, supporting each other through wind and storms.

I aspire to be like these trees, sending my roots into the earth while also extending them across the ground, wrapping around the roots of my friends and family, supporting them as they support me. Together, we grow tall through community, mutual aid, care, love and collaboration.

Inter-vulnerability Is Our Salvation

But in our inter-vulnerability is our salvation, because awareness of the mutuality of suffering impels us to search for ways to heal the whole, rather than encase ourselves in a bubble of denial and impossible individualism.

— Miriam Greenspan

In searching out the nature of the great invisible Cause back of all things ... we really are discovering our relationship to God and at the same time our relationship to each other, because we are all spiritual beings on the pathway of an eternal existence.

— Ernest Holmes, “A New Design for Living,” page 37

At the risk of sounding egotistical, I'll quote myself: “The most important relationship in the world is the one that's right in front of you.” This was repeated back to me in a recent conversation, and I thought, “Oooh, that's good.” I often think that the only relationships worth putting my best foot forward in are the ones that are going to be around for a while — friends, family, my spouse, the grocery store clerk who's always there. These people deserve my time and attention.

But what about those I'll never see again, like the person on the other end of Apple's customer service line, the folks I pass on the road or the clerk at the gas station? They might get my grumpy, inattentive self.

As I dive deeper into the idea of inter-vulnerability, I realize that my fate is just as intertwined with the lives of people I meet only once as it is with those I see every day. My divinity is reflected in treating every relationship as the most important one while I'm in it, whether it lasts for five minutes or 50 years. If we truly embody oneness, we need to act on it with our love, time and attention — not with just our words. Every being on this planet is an individualized expression of Spirit, deserving of the best of God from me and from you.

AFFIRMATION

I extend my roots of care and compassion to those around me, fostering a web of love and mutual support so we can grow together.

AFFIRMATION

I cherish the importance of every relationship, knowing my kindness and presence ripple through all my connections.

A New Relationship With Me

Perhaps we should love ourselves so fiercely, / that when others see us / they know exactly how it should be done.

— Rudy Francisco

When we say that the only God we will ever know we will discover within ourselves, we do not mean that such a God is a figment and creation of our own imagination, but rather that there is an indwelling God manifest through our own personal and individual relationship to the Infinite.

— Ernest Holmes, “A New Design For Living,” page 173.2

Ah, the most important relationship of all — the one with ourselves. I spent much of my childhood wishing I were someone else: quieter, smaller, more graceful, more popular. Every year, I wrote a long list of New Year’s resolutions that I was *definitely* going to keep. I thought, “This is the year I become everything I’ve ever wanted to be.” What I didn’t realize was that all those resolutions could be replaced with just one: to love the person I am, not the person I think I should be.

Over the years, I made that shift. I no longer strive to be someone else but rather to settle more deeply into being unapologetically me. This has become my lifelong resolution. It isn’t always easy or comfortable, but it’s the only resolution I’ve ever been able to keep.

Mel White says it this way: “A few years ago I switched to an entirely different kind of New Year’s resolution. Instead of vowing to improve, I pledge to do a better job of accepting my bad habits — to stop worrying about failing to be the person I used to imagine I could be.”

This is my every day resolution, not just at the new year. I choose to embrace the awesome person I am and to continue discovering myself. In doing so, I show up authentically, in integrity and with my own approval — something that is truly priceless.

AFFIRMATION

Each day, I settle more deeply into being unapologetically me, embracing my authentic self with love and acceptance.

To Land Upright

The theme for this month is to land upright on our feet after a spinning and twirling year. Because it is an election year, a great many people are joyously happy. But just about as many are quite unhappy. What would the ancient sages say about how we should handle this?

There is one sentence that addresses how to handle this issue, and it has three possible sources in antiquity, all legendary, from three traditions: Greek, Jewish and Persian.

John O’Donohue, in his book “Walking in Wonder,” wrote that the sentence is about transience and came from an ancient Greek contest about finding a sentence that was always true. Spoiler alert: It still is.

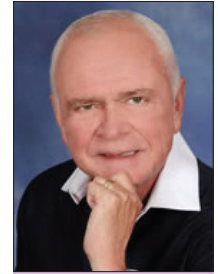
Edward Fitzgerald, though, thought it came from King Solomon, who had the sentence etched on a signet ring for the purpose of addressing both adversity and prosperity. It was to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, to make the sad happy and the happy sad.

Modern scholars tend to attribute it to a famous Sufi teacher, Farid ad-Din Attar, living a century before Rumi, who was familiar with his work.

Abraham Lincoln, in an 1859 speech, may have used the work of Attar: “It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words, ‘And this, too, shall pass away.’ How much it expresses! How chastening in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of affliction.”

Whatever your feelings about this passing year, if you are happy, then “make hay while the sun shines.” And if sad, tie a knot at the end of your rope and hang on.

It is always true that things in the visible world change, said Ernest Holmes in 1958: “The Golden Gate Bridge will someday fall down, rust out, be torn down, because something better will happen. Change is the only thing that is permanent. The only thing we can say of anything that looks static is, ‘This, too, shall pass away.’” ❧



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