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Preface



When I was fourteen years old, my family lived in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. Our house was surrounded by an acre of pine trees, but right in the middle of all those pine trees was a large oak. This oak tree had one unusual branch that stuck straight out from its trunk, and one day I decided to hang a rope from that branch to make a rope swing.

Most rope swings have a wooden plank at the bottom on which you sit. But I didn't have a wooden plank, so I just doubled the rope back on itself to form a loop at the bottom. It was fun to nestle into that loop and swing back and forth. But I soon discovered something that was a lot more fun than that. I would nestle into the loop, walk around the tree as far as I could go—wrapping the rope around the trunk of the tree as I went—and then I would push off from the tree with my feet.

Whenever I did that, I would swing out in a wide arc, spiraling out and around the tree until the rope wrapped itself around the trunk of the tree once more. Then I would push off from the tree again, but this time I would spiral out and

around in the opposite direction. The only challenge was making sure I always landed against the trunk of the tree with my feet—and not my back—but that turned out to be very easy to do.

I got so good at this routine, I soon added a little trick to it. While spiraling out and around the tree, I would do one or two quick spins before landing. I became a one-man Cirque du Soleil! I enjoyed doing this so much, I would do it over and over and over again. And that's when it happened.

What I didn't know then, but came to understand later, was this: When you do a repetitive body motion over and over and over again, it is possible to induce an altered state of consciousness, or even precipitate what some people call a mystical experience. And that's what occurred.

I got so involved in this repetitive physical activity, I achieved what the popular author, Eckhart Tolle, calls "a state of no mind." In other words, I stopped thinking. I stopped reflecting on the past, projecting into the future, or even analyzing or judging the current moment. I was just experiencing the now moment—fully and purely—without any thought at all.

And guess what you discover in that "state of no mind?" You discover the True You. You discover that there is a Consciousness behind your thoughts, and behind your mind—a Consciousness that some people call the Soul, Spirit, Higher Self, or God Self. In that moment, I experienced the Divine Essence that exists at the core of my being.

Mind you, this wasn't an out-of-body experience. No, I was aware I was in a body . . . but I knew I was not that body.

I was aware I had a mind . . . but I knew I was not that mind. I was even aware I had a personality . . . but I knew I was not that personality. All of those aspects of me—body, mind, and personality—were temporary and superficial, similar to the clothes one puts on each day. The True Me was an Eternal Spirit. I had always been, and I would always be. I was in this world, but I was not *of* this world. I was an eternal spiritual being having a temporary physical existence.

I don't know how long I was in that mystical state—probably just a few minutes. But when you are truly in the now moment—*truly*—it feels like an eternity. And that was more than enough time for the Divine Knowledge of my inner Spirit to make its way into my mind. Although this was a good thirty years before the term “downloading” came into being, that is close to what I experienced. I instantly “downloaded” a great deal of information about the nature of Spirit, the nature of God, and the nature of physical existence and its various dimensions. But I am not writing this Preface to tell you what I learned that day. I am writing it to tell you what I did *not* learn.

For whatever reason, I simply didn't grasp the fact that my inner Spirit not only had the answers to any questions I might have about the nature of the Universe, it also had the answers to any questions I might have about living life more successfully. It never occurred to me that my inner Spirit could guide me through my daily life, suggesting courses of action that would make my life more satisfying and fulfilling. It never occurred to me that my inner Spirit could help me live a life of joy and ease, rather than a life of stress and struggle.

In short, once my mystical experience was over, it never occurred to me to call upon my inner Spirit for assistance or direction. And so, I spent the next twenty years living my life the way many people do—relying solely upon my own innate talents, developed skills, and intellect to get by.

I'm not going to tell you that those years were unbearable. No, the fact is, through hard work and determination I managed to achieve a fair amount of "worldly success." But the stress and strain of trusting only myself, and trying to control every single outcome in my life, took such a toll on my mental and emotional well-being, I was finally "forced to my knees" at the age of thirty-four. Life at that point seemed far too difficult. I was far too fearful, far too frustrated, and far too unhappy. And I was making my friends and family miserable, as well. It was only then that I became willing to live my life differently.

It was only then that I became open and receptive to the idea that there *is* such a thing as celestial assistance in this world. It was only then that I came to see that this Universe of ours is not only intelligent, but it is *responsive* to our needs and wants. It was only then that I got quiet enough to hear that still, small voice within, and realize that my inner Divine Spirit was right there to guide me . . . and had been all along.

Dear reader, there is no need for you to wait twenty years like I did. There is no reason you can't experience the beneficence of the Universe today . . . and every day from now on. It will require your attention, true. And it will require your trust, too. But little more than that will ever be asked of you.