



## Questioning Our Beliefs

### What Needs to be Loved? —by Brad Miller

Last fall I was determined to enrich my life with a little added discipline. And what better way to do that than to start a strict meditation practice. With that in mind – I attended a 10 day silent meditation retreat. The rules regarding silence included no reading, no writing, no music, no talking, no nothing for 10 whole days. I think there was a part of me ready to ‘suffer for Jesus’ in this case – Buddha. To be honest, the idea of silence was terrifying. It hadn’t been that long ago that I filled my life with sound, listening to music, a teaching CD, a book on tape, TV or on the phone. At the time the distraction was exactly what I needed. Now it was time for me to dive into the silence and face my fear of being alone with myself. I was bound and determined to tame the crazy monkey in my head!

The first 3 days we were taught and practiced anapana meditation which is observing the breath as it entered and exited the nostrils. I was determined to see this through to the end. I was going to sit for 10+ hours a day on a cushion and observe the breath at my nose. No matter how much I tried to stop it, every memory and recurring thought that I was so afraid to consider appeared in full color along with intense feelings. The instructor reassured that this was typical and that I was doing the practice perfectly. I told the instructor (very quietly), “If you could see what is running through my head you would ask me to leave and keep my name on a list of name of people not to allow back!” Yet, the instructor smiled and assured me that my experience was normal and that I was to continue to follow the instruction. “Start again” was an instruction repeated often as we began our meditation times. It was beginning to have a new meaning. Back to the cushion I would go, to face it one more time.

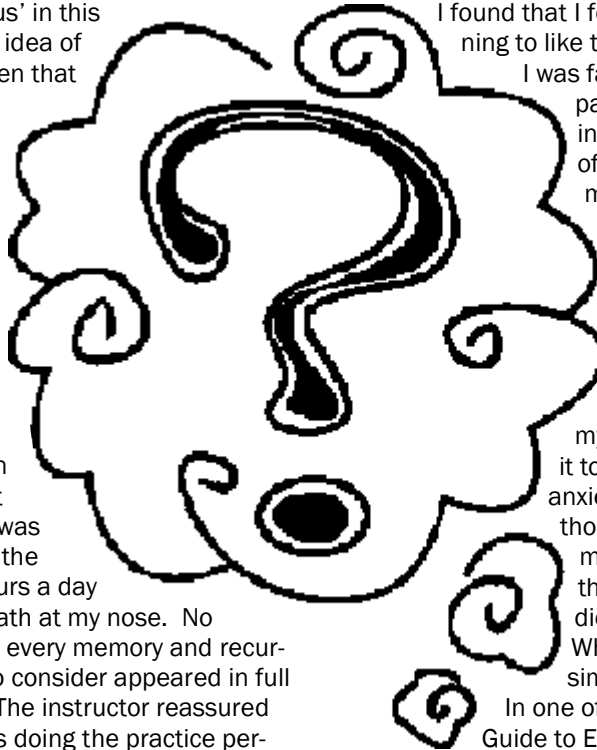
On the 4<sup>th</sup> day we started learning the vipassana meditation practice which was just as intense but in a different way. Now I was to scan my entire body looking for subtle sensations with the same concentration I had learned to use as I

observed my breath. The lesson I learned in this practice was every sensation whether it felt pleasant or was painful was temporary. What I observed was physical and emotional sensations changed, sometimes fading and sometimes intensifying but always changing.

To my surprise, when I would go to my little room to rest, I found that I felt comfortable in my skin. I was beginning to like the guy sitting on my cushion. In fact, I was falling in love with me. No matter what part of myself came forward for critical inspection I had survived the experience of the intense emotions flowing through me. By now I was pretty exhausted so it was easy to give up control. I just followed the practice to the best of my ability and allowed myself to feel the feelings. “Start again” the phrase repeated often during the course was becoming a life lesson.

Somewhere after the 6<sup>th</sup> day – I found my mind quieted down a bit. However, all it took to get the spin cycle of fear and anxiety going again was to attach to a thought running across the screen of my mind and start the typical dialogue of the inner judge pointing out what I did or didn’t do, too early, too late or never. When this occurred I knew what to do simply “start again.”

In one of my favorite books “The Lazy Man’s Guide to Enlightenment” the author Thaddeus Golas asks, “Well, what did you think it was that needed to be loved?” I now realize the parts of myself I considered unlovable were the very things calling out for my love. Now when my inner critic appears and starts to point out an area of deficiency I hear a gentle whisper, “start again” and I remember to simply love the part of me that has been brought up for question.





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# Quieting the Mind

—Heather MacLachlan

As I strive to go deeper  
In meditation

My mind wanders off like a lost child.  
As a persistent dripping faucet  
in the distance persists. . .  
I am distracted by the sound.  
In front of me  
a reoccurring thought keeps rolling in  
like a wave crashing in,  
Again and again grabbing my attention.  
As the flies dance rhythmically on the ceiling,  
Breaking all rules of proper meditation etiquette,  
Knowing that they are there . . .  
My eyes are magnetized to become their audience.  
Allowing outside stimulation to drift away,  
Shutting out all the sounds,  
Now there is SILENCE all around me.  
Engulfing me like a blanket.  
My eyes are closed now.  
I only see darkness  
STILL  
I am pulled to distant thoughts,  
In the same way  
A lighthouse signals boats to shore.  
Eventually the lights and sounds,  
Memories and nagging thoughts fade away  
Finding their way to other shores.  
As for Me . . . I, Myself  
Am entering other realms  
A quiet cave awaits  
For me, a place of refuge  
deep within  
Tranquil Peaceful  
Yes, Peace.  
Om Bliss  
NOW.



# FELLOWSHIP VOYAGES

An inspirational newsletter  
by and for Fellowship  
members and friends

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**Next Voyages Deadline:**  
Feb 15, 2010  
for Apr/May/June Issue

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# What's Next for Fellowship – Grace Menzel

As we move into the quiet reflective days of winter, it seems a fitting time for the Fellowship leadership and members to contemplate what is next for our group. To this end, a Strategic Planning Process is scheduled for January 9, 2010. Based on input we have received from members, we believe this process will help the Steering Committee identify FFT's direction for the next five years. Over the past several months, a successful June visioning process occurred followed by some short term planning for fall initiatives. In early November, members gathered to share their vision of what the Fellowship's future success will look like. Our upcoming Strategic Plan will set our course.

**Where we are**—After the retirement of Karen Arndorfer in June, the Fellowship enlisted the help of two interim ministers, Beth Monteith and Delyth Balmer to facilitate our services. They have been invaluable during this time of transition. Brad Miller serves us in several capacities; as a speaker, office manager and as an important voice on our leadership team. The Steering Committee consists of seven committed Fellowshipians who devote a great deal of time, energy and love to managing the everyday business of the Fellowship.

Thankfully, the budget crisis of last year has subsided. Although our contributions and fundraising are down 28% and we are still spending more than we are taking in, it is only by \$602 total for the first quarter, compared to last year's first quarter loss of \$10,202 - a nice change.



We continue to move closer to our goal of "living within our means". Since April, we have been meeting at the sanctuary of the Lansing Korean United Methodist Church where we are enjoying a positive relationship with our host community.

**Where we're going**—We estimate that the planning process will take four to six months to complete. It will begin with a 6 hour session on January 9<sup>th</sup>. The focus of the initial session will be to clarify the future direction of the Fellowship. This session will be followed by a series of smaller group meetings to work out more details of the plan over the course of several months. By early summer, it is anticipated that we will have a clear vision of our future and a solid plan of action.

Here are the questions we hope to answer in the first phase of the Strategic Planning Process: What do we envision the Fellowship will look like in five years? What will the leadership of the Fellowship look like? What is our true purpose, or why do we exist? How does the School of Ministry fit into this purpose? What kind of physical space (sanctuary, office, classroom) is necessary to support our goals? What is the role of members in the development of the plan? What kind of human, physical and financial resources are needed to achieve our goals?

We want to hear your ideas, questions and concerns as this process unfolds. If you would like to be a part of a small group or have thoughts to share, please contact me by phone at (517) 641-8621, email me at [grace@menzelcoaching.com](mailto:grace@menzelcoaching.com), or call the FFT office at (517) 337-4070.

**Thank You!**  
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# Unlearning — by William Frank Diedrich



"The motto of the ego, according to *A Course in Miracles* is: "Seek and do not find." The ego keeps us running from drama to drama. The ego keeps us from seeing our true Self."

Often the role of a teacher, coach, or leader is to help people unlearn. Most of us have learned so much stuff that either isn't true or that doesn't work. We each carry beliefs and assumptions about life that limit our ability to grow, to be effective at what we do, and to see life clearly. Our learning has created an illusory world that isn't as real as we might think.

In Advaita Vedanta, a branch of Hinduism, there is a concept called Maya. Maya is the world of illusion. The world of illusion prevents us from seeing God and from recognizing our true Self. Maya is the limited, purely physical and mental reality in which our everyday consciousness has become entangled. The goal in Advaita Vedanta is to pierce the veil of illusion and see the truth.

In modern psychology and spirituality we have adopted the concept of ego. The ego is the false self. It is a group of thoughts you hold that thinks it is you. The motto of the ego, according to *A Course in Miracles* is: "Seek and do not find." The ego keeps us running from drama to drama. The ego keeps us from seeing our true Self, because it wants to maintain its control.

If you would consider these concepts for a moment, and step back from every day life that you call reality, something interesting begins to happen. You find that "reality" begins to fall apart upon close examination. We are surrounded by messages containing beliefs and "truths" that simply are not true.

An example of this is the concept of "race". Race is a false construct that was invented about two hundred years ago in order to justify slavery. A pseudo science called "race science" was developed to give it credibility. Some "religious" leaders then interpreted certain stories from the Bible to give the concept a history. The Bible does not talk about race, only nations and tribes. Race was invented as a political tool to justify the unjustifiable, and to validate the positions of certain politicians of that time. Yet, many countries today, especially the United States, are very race conscious. Historically people have fought and died for a concept that is in reality, non-existent. We do have differences based on culture, history, and values, but race is not real.

In all of our debates about politics, religion, and money we often fail to question the assumptions underlying our views of reality. We

tend to believe that our reality is *the* reality. For example, money. Money is not a thing. It is an idea. Perhaps last year you had a nice nest egg in mutual funds. Now your funds, and everyone else's have shrunk to maybe 60% of the previous value. Where did all that money go? Does someone else have it? Value is an idea in your mind. Van Gogh only sold one painting in his lifetime, yet today his paintings sell for millions. What changed? Our ideas about the value changed. You might say to me that you can't take your ideas to the grocery store and get a loaf of bread for them. And I would say that the amount of money in your pocket is closely related to your ideas about money, yourself, and the world.

What are your assumptions about your ability to get money? Do you feel that you deserve to have money? Is there a part of you that believes it is not okay to have money? Are you constantly afraid of losing the money you have? Do you resent people with money? These underlying ideas influence your level of wealth, generosity, and how you treat other people when money is involved. If you don't have enough money, by all means get a job and earn enough to live. But if you really want to make progress, question the reality you have constructed around money. It is that reality which determines your prosperity, not the actions and decisions of other people. But don't believe me, test it for yourself.

In religious matters we assert our views with the underlying assumption that our image of God or the Universe is the right one. Yet, however you see God, you don't really see God at all. You hold an image, an idea. To explain God you have to make the infinite, finite; you have to limit the omnipresent to fit your interpretation. There is nothing wrong with having an image, because that is the best we can do. The problem arises when we try to impose our image of God on others. Such is the catalyst for judgment, conflicts, violence, inquisitions, pogroms, crusades, jihads, and all of the other things we do in the name of "God".

True spiritual growth is beyond belief. Beliefs can become placeholders for what we don't really know. Having a set of beliefs does not mean that you know God. Prayer, contemplation, questioning one's life and purpose, meditation, reading spiritual writings that seem to speak to you—these are the actions that help us learn the truth. Unfortunately, most of the world is content to let "experts" tell them what to believe. "The unexamined life is not worth living," wrote Socrates. And as for all those experts out there telling you what

to believe, the Taoists wrote: "He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know."

Today we live amidst a clash of realities—Republican versus Democrat; Christian versus Muslim; Palestinian versus Israeli; those who have versus those who do not. If you set aside your preferences and beliefs for a moment, and really examine the assumptions upon which each reality is built, you will find inconsistencies everywhere. Are you willing to face your own inconsistencies? Are you willing to face your fears and look at life straight on? Simply ask: "Who am I?" and don't fill in the blank with a belief.

What will come to you first is who you are not. You are not a manager, employee, dad, mom, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, American, European, African, Asian, good person, bad person, etc. These are roles that you play in life, and you are not your role. As you begin to shed your identity with roles you will find an unexpected gift. The gift is freedom. Freedom doesn't mean "I can do whatever I want." Freedom means I turn within for my guidance rather than letting the world (Maya) tell me what to think. Freedom means I place all of my trust in my Source (which I call "God") and live authentically. It means that I am not driven by my fears (ego), because I am free of the influence of fear. Freedom is a moment to moment decision.

The New Testament offers the following: "But seek first God's Kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things will be given to you as well." In a practical sense this says to me is that if I turn within and focus on the guidance that comes through my intuition (not my ego), what I need will be made available to me. If I look to the world (so-called reality, or Maya) to meet my needs I will struggle. The good that I receive in the world comes *through* the world and the characters I meet within it, not *from* it. Yet, how do we know if the still small voice is a higher wisdom, or just the continued ramblings of the ego? Practice. Keep asking questions and listening. This is contemplation. This is prayer. Prayer helps us unlearn. Prayer is not about getting things. It is about unlearning the thoughts in our minds that prevent us from being in the flow.

When you step back from beliefs and shoulds and have-to's, you find there is a purpose and a flow to your life. There is a direction calling you. No one else can tell you what to do. The world is a tricky place, and Maya is seductive. It is easy to be drawn into dramas and conflicts which result in pain and suffering. It is easy to think that the perfect car, or the perfect home, the perfect partner, the right beer, the right self help book, and everything else the world tells you should be the source of your happiness. The idea that happiness or satisfaction is found "out there" needs to be unlearned. Things "out there" are useful and helpful, but not the source of well-being.

The problems we encounter in life are not as real as we might think. Pain certainly feels real, yet there are those who learn to transcend it. Fear can hold us in its grip, yet we can learn to let it go. A person may offend us, yet we can refuse

to be offended. At one moment our finances may look bleak, and the next moment a brilliant idea, if acted upon, will bring us plenty. Perhaps the biggest untruth that we believe is the one that says we are victims of this world. Being a victim is a role you may play, but it is not who you are. Step back from all the dramas and you will see that people are playing the roles you have assigned for them. Your world reflects the attitudes and beliefs that you hold. Most of what you think you know is only what you perceive. When the darkness of perception receives the light of awareness, choice is what emerges.

There is one thing we know for sure: "I am". As Descartes proclaimed, "I think, therefore I am." We are aware. What we choose to do with that awareness determines our life. Awareness in an ego context teaches us how to manipulate others. Awareness from a spiritual context has us asking; being silent, and listening for direction. As for what we should believe, that's between us and our Higher Power.

*"Simply do this: Be still and lay aside all thoughts of what you are and what God is; all concepts you have learned about the world; all images you hold about yourself. Empty your mind of everything it thinks is either true or false or good or bad; of every thought it judges worthy and all the ideas of which it is ashamed. Hold onto nothing. Do not bring with you one thought the past has taught, nor one belief you ever learned before from anything. Forget this world, forget this course, and come with wholly empty hands unto your God."*

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# Question Authority - Janet Skole



Question Authority” has long been one of my favorite bumper stickers. When I was in my twenties, its message encouraged me and my peers to challenge the logic and ethics of those who established society’s rules.

As youth, we felt controlled by the forces of family, school, culture and nationality. Expressing autonomy and individuality, as part of normal human development, depended on our ability to think and ask questions. Our egos were developing voice; they were learning healthy expression through trial and error.

*“True exploration requires that I abandon all preconceived notions of destinations or answers, and be willing to question with an “I don’t know” mind.”*

I still smile when I see that bumper sticker, but the thoughts I think and the emotions I feel about the words are entirely different. The wry, cynical smile of my 20s has been replaced by a smile that feels pleasurable and serene.

What’s different? Perception. While I haven’t abandoned the necessity of questioning certain rules and regulations in the material realm, I’ve embraced alternate definitions of the words *question* and *authority* for my spiritual life.

**Authority** derives from the word *author*, which means the creator, or originator. So, who, or what, is my true authority? It’s not some clamoring, directing force outside of me, not social pressure or regulation, not advertising or religious doctrine. It’s also not the internal voice of imposed conditioning (the ego) that inhabits my mind, warning me what I should or should not do to gain gratification in this material realm.

My true authority, my source, is quiet, unassuming and reassuring; and it’s most commonly expressed by what is often called “the still, small voice within”.

Distinguishing the voice of this authority from the voice of the ego can occasionally seem bewildering. But that belief, in itself, is only the ego wanting me to doubt the ease with which I

can connect with the divine, which is my genuine and abiding authority. (The ego is cunning in its attempts to have me believe that life’s questions are complicated and that wisdom is elusive!)

Now, about the word: **question**. What do I mean by question? If I approach the meaning from the word *quest*, I could be embarking on a journey, a seeking, an exploration. True exploration requires that I abandon all preconceived notions of destinations or answers, and be willing to question with an “I don’t know” mind. It’s so much more of an authentic quest that way.

Bill Watterson’s last *Calvin and Hobbes* cartoon strip is a delightful illustration of such a quest. In it, the boy, Calvin, and his tiger playmate, Hobbes, are about to launch a sledding adventure onto an expanse of virgin snow, a symbolical representation of the quest Watterson himself was pursuing as he was retiring from his stable career and venturing into the unknown.

This is the sense of adventure and exploration I want to bring when I “question authority,” in other words, when I pray.

My favorite prayer is The Serenity Prayer. Like most prayers, it opens with a summons to God (for which the name Allah, Buddha, Krishna, or any other concept of author will serve just as magnificently). My summons is an invitation, a quest for, a meeting with the divine. Entered into with curiosity and openness, any prayer is a quest for connection to, and guidance from, my authority.

And what questions might be meaningful and helpful? Those most worthy of an encounter with my author come from a willingness to acknowledge my fears, to wholeheartedly welcome the unknown, and venture into the wilderness of surrender. How open-ended can I be? How willing am I to hear any answer I receive? Do I have the courage to act on my guidance?

Good questions.

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## First 'Call It Good Café A Grand Success — Julia Freije

We call it GREAT! Our first "Call It Good Café" on October 17 was a resounding success. Our social hall at the Lansing Korean United Methodist Church was transformed into our very own version of a trendy coffee house, and more than 50 Fellowshipians and friends joined together for two hours of great fun and entertainment.

This first of hopefully many evenings centered around entertainment by Matt Bliton and Linda Abar who performed both solo sets and many duets as only they can. Matt and Linda's beautiful music, the staging and lighting by Gary Novak, tasty refreshments provided by a group of thoughtful volunteers, and the decorations done by our fundraising committee (Diane Blakeman, Michele Dykins, Phylis Floyd, Julia Freije, Mary Molloy, and Deb Parks, with help from Delyth Balmer) all worked together to make this a truly memorable event. Gary also crafted a permanent sign to be used at upcoming café events.

Our 50/50 raffle held all during the event, was won by Joyce Palmerton, and thanks to the money raised from the raffle and love offerings at the door, the event raised over \$340 for the Fellowship general fund.

Thanks everyone for your contributions toward the success of this event.

## PRINCIPLES OF NEW THOUGHT: Salute the Divine in Others — from the writings of Emmet Fox

We often hear the expression "saluting the Christ in him," or "See the Divine in others," and we may ask ourselves what that phrase really means.

Actually it is simply the practical application of the rule of Jesus, who taught us to "Judge not according to appearances but judge righteous judgment."

Each one of us has a Divine Self which is spiritual and perfect but which is never seen on this plane. That is our true self, sometimes called "the Christ within." It is the real you, or the real he or she.

Whenever you dwell upon or realize the presence of the Divine One within yourself or within anyone else, outer appearance will at once begin to improve. The rate and degree of such improvement will depend upon the number of times that the indwelling Divine is saluted, or realized, and the degree of the realization attained. This saluting need take only a moment, and it never fails to benefit the individual concerned as well as the person who does the saluting.

When someone seems to be behaving badly, or when you hear bad news concerning another, salute the Christ in them instead of accepting the appearance. When a given condition seems to be inharmonious, whether it be an organ of the body, a financial situation, or anything else, see God working in it. If somebody displeases you, immediately silently salute the Christ in them. If someone says, "John Smith is sick," salute the Divine in Smith, knowing in reality he is spiritual and perfect, and refuse to lend your belief to the negative statement. If someone says anything against another's character, salute the Christ in him, refuse to discuss the matter, and of course do not repeat it.

You'll soon realize that as you continually salute the Divine in others, you will find It in yourself.

## Hands of Love Seeks Volunteers — Kay Taylor

It is time to update and replenish our list of *Hands of Love* volunteers. *Hands of Love* is a service group which provides assistance to members of the Fellowship community when needs arise. Typical requests include sending greeting cards, running errands, visiting, and preparing and /or delivering food. Occasionally we do light housework, gardening or other tasks.. You may volunteer to perform any one of these tasks or all of them. For example, some volunteers only send cards, others offer to do a variety of tasks or whatever is needed.

Currently this group is facilitated by Kay Taylor. Kathleen Coe takes responsibility for getting most of the cards out. If you are interested in serving the Fellowship community through Hands of Love, have an interest in co-facilitating the group, or if you have questions regarding this service, please contact Kay @ (517) 339-5992.

# The Value of Questioning my Beliefs — Diana Mitchell



“Only by questioning the stressful thoughts or beliefs that come up can I free myself of their negative charge”

I used to think that beliefs were big, global things that shaped my philosophy of life while having little to do with my day-to-day real life. Beliefs seemed abstract and somewhat far away: *I believe in a power outside myself, I believe in a democratic form of government, I believe that all people have a core of innocence and goodness.* Yet until the last few years I didn't understand that it's my beliefs about even very little things that permeate every aspect of my life and shape how I see the world.

For instance if I wake up feeling overburdened, I have learned to look at what I am believing that could be the source of my upset. It may be “I'm not worthy unless I'm busy,” “I'm not enough,” “I have to help so and so,” “I don't deserve serenity.” Thoughts like these are the source of my upset but before doing the work of Byron Katie I didn't understand that.

I now use the inquiry process of Byron Katie's (the work.com) to help me locate beliefs that are stressful. By writing down the belief, answering four questions, and doing the Turnarounds—the last step in Byron Katie's process in which you turn the belief around in as many ways as you can—I have learned that I am entirely responsible for my own life and happiness. Only my unquestioned thoughts and beliefs about myself, other people, and the world can cause me suffering.

My emotions, I have found, can point me to these underlying beliefs that are the core of my upset. Since I've returned from The School for the Work of Byron Katie, I have found that her questioning process is essential to locating my stressful thoughts.

For instance at the monthly meeting that Deb Canja holds at the FFT for those doing the Work, we did an “I resent” sheet and were instructed to very quickly write names and one-liners about all the people we resented. I was surprised to find myself writing down, “I resent my niece because she sends ultra-conservative emails to my family.” When Deb asked “And that means?” I burst into tears and said “I have to protect my younger sister from them.” Until that moment I had no idea I still carried the belief that this sister needed me to protect her.

At home later that evening when I did The Work on that belief I found one very telling Turnaround— “I have to protect myself from

me.” I saw an image of a huge dark figure with a billowing cape (the mean, critical part of me) swooping down towards the scared helpless child (me). As I found three genuine reasons that the turnaround could be true, I felt an opening, a new way to look at my life. It became very clear to me that although I have blamed others throughout my life for hurting or attacking me, that I am the most fearsome enemy I have.

I found I needed protection from my stern taskmaster who is hypercritical and mean. If I perceive anything is going wrong, I hear *it's my fault.* If a person is not happy, I hear *it's my job to make her happy.* If I want to spend time on something frivolous and fun, I hear that *I'm being selfish.* I hear *I am not lovable unless I do for others.* I hear *I don't deserve what I have.* I hear *you don't do enough, you're not good enough, you should have done a better job, you're a bad person, you don't know how to be a good friend.*

Now I can see the value of questioning these beliefs. When I become aware of any of these self-condemning thoughts, I take them to inquiry. I ask:

*Is it true? Can you absolutely know it's true? How do you react when you believe it's true? Who would you be without this thought? How can you turn this thought around and find three genuine reasons for that turnaround? Is that turnaround true or truer than the original belief?*

This inquiry has had the effect of gently encouraging me to see things another way. Only by questioning the stressful thoughts or beliefs that come up can I free myself of their negative charge. The bonus is that by recognizing that I am the one castigating myself or I am the one projecting on others I can see that all those who I accused of attacking or hurting me were really just me projecting myself on them so I didn't have to be aware of how cruel I was to myself!

I question my beliefs now as a matter of course. This practice keeps me very aware that it is my stressful thoughts that shape the way I view the world, other people, and myself. I've become aware that even though others' past actions may not have been kind or well thought out, it was what I made the actions mean about me that has caused my suffering. So questioning my beliefs is certainly worth the effort!

# A New Way Forward — Holly Makimaa

Are you willing to change your beliefs about who your “enemy” is in a difficult situation you are facing? If you are like me, you might be tempted to resist what you find displeasing. All too often, I have seen myself wage war with what is. I do this in an attempt to change aversive circumstances instead of really listening to what they have to teach me. Can you imagine what our world might look like if we did this before dashing into wars with each other?

Over the past few years with the help of spiritual teachers such as Eckhart Tolle, Paramhansa Yogananda, Pema Chodron and Michael Brown, I have learned to respond to challenges (and challengers) differently. I find myself more often now stepping back, letting life “be” and asking some key questions of my perceived “enemy” instead of automatically attacking. The questions that help me are: 1) What is wanting or needs nurturing here? 2) What strength (in me) is being called forth in this situation?

Stepping back and reflecting like this has not always been my first response to adversaries. One of the first times I stumbled (literally) upon this idea was almost a decade ago when I injured my foot while exiting a bus. The accident left me hobbling around for the good part of a year in a walking cast or on crutches. I went to doctors, podiatrists, physical therapists and Reiki healers trying to figure out what the heck was wrong. Yet, no one could say and the pain continued. In my typical Scorpio fashion, I pushed forward determined not to let the injury stop my life. I learned to drive with my left foot (which I now see wasn’t too wise) and got more comfortable asking for help with day-to-day activities that I used to be able to do myself. All the while, I unknowingly constantly sent negative energy to my foot, angry that it wouldn’t do what I wanted. I had somehow decided that my foot was the enemy, and I wasn’t willing to see it any other way until...

One cold, gray sedentary Saturday afternoon, cabin fever got the best of me. Feeling powerless and confined, I decided to take my frustrations to my journal. My pen flew across the page. In a moment of uncensored abandon, I scribbled, “Why are you doing this to me (to my foot)?” To my astonishment, I found myself writing a clear and coherent response, “because it is the only way I could get you to slow down.”

Instantaneously, I could see the wisdom in my foot’s response. There is a classic bible story that provides an apt illustration of what I was like at

that time in my life. It is the story of Jesus having dinner at the house of two sisters, Mary and Martha. Perhaps you have heard of it. Martha is running around in a frenzy making sure everything looks okay while Mary is sitting beside Jesus deeply absorbed in Spirit. I had spent most of my life up to that point more like Martha unable to be present to the Christ within my “home” because I was so busy doing.

I asked my foot, “What do you need from me?” – slightly worried of what someone might think if they ever found this journal dialogue. “For you to do less and be more,” it responded. Since I was desperate enough to be seeking an authentic connection with my foot, I knew I needed to be honest in my response. I admitted to my foot that I did not think I could stop “doing.” So, I brought my higher power into the dialogue and asked for help and strength in learning to just be. My foot seemed pleased and continued to dialogue with me. I ended the writing session by committing to dialogue again with my body to see how it was doing and what it was needing. Thus began my journey from doing to being. It also began my journey of listening to my adversaries for what they have to teach me:

**What is wanting in this situation; what needs nurturing? What new strength is emerging or being called forth in me?**

I have asked these two questions numerous times with different perceived enemies using the journal dialogue technique mentioned above. I am amazed at the insight and shifts that have occurred in my life and in the lives of my journaling clients as a result. In the case of my foot, it never occurred to me that what I found so displeasing was actually working on my behalf. I have concluded that the thing I am fighting, “my enemy,” usually has some incredible gift to bestow on me if I am willing to stick with the process of uncovering it. The well-known yoga teacher, Swami Kriyananda, says that “Life’s buffeting winds are life’s way of giving us strength and courage.” As the wind pushes and blows at me, I cannot promise that I won’t escape the uncomfortable feelings that may come with that. I can, however, affirm that blessings can be found when I let the feelings flow through me and allow the experience to direct me in a new way forward.



*“I see that the thing I am fighting usually has some incredible gift to bestow on me if I let it.”*

# “A Watched Pot Never Boils” — Delyth Balmer



A watched pot never boils”. Is that true? Of course not, we know the water in the pot in fact reaches boiling point whether we watch it or not. The beauty of idioms is that the wisdom lies beyond the literal meaning of the words. The message is about having patience and trusting that it does not require our standing and staring at the pot for the water to come to a boil. Likewise, it does not require that we “figure out” or “do” anything in order to be our true nature.

Are we able to trust that awakening is inevitable, whether we believe it or not and no matter what doubts or obstacles appear to be in our path?

What do we believe and why do we believe it. To have a belief is to be in the world of duality, to be in the judging thinking mind. “This is this and that is that”. The amazing thing about questioning our beliefs is that we always come to the realization that they’re not true. That which is true is beyond question. When we question, “who am I” or “what am I” it also cannot be found in this level of thinking. The answers that arise show us what we are not. Don’t take my word for it... try it. We come to realize that whatever we think is, is simply not true. It’s very freeing.

It takes a great deal of energy to maintain our mistaken beliefs. We must constantly stoke the fire looking for evidence to support the thought... and that goes for the good as well as the bad. It is a relief when we discover that we were wrong.

Over the life span our beliefs change. Beliefs about ourselves begin early in life. Those who share our world reflect back to us what we think we are....a good/bad child, a good/bad student. This continues as our roles change to a good/bad partner, mother, father, worker, spiritual aspirant and so on. A Course in Miracles says:

*“It is impossible not to believe what you see, but it is equally impossible to see what you do NOT believe. Perceptions are built up on the basis of experience, and experience leads to beliefs.”*

Beyond our thoughts about how we are playing our roles, we also have a core of mistaken beliefs about who we are in relationship to God. A Course in Miracles leads us to examine our belief in sin, separation, abandonment from God, guilt, etc., and assists us undoing our false ideas. It advises us to allow the Holy Spirit to be our guide.

*“I am leading you to a new kind of experience, which you will become less and less willing to deny. Learning of Christ is easy, for to perceive with Him involves no strain at all. HIS perceptions are your NATURAL awareness, and it is only distortions that YOU introduce that tire you. Let the Christ in you interpret FOR you, and do not try to limit what you see by narrow little beliefs, which are unworthy of God’s Son.”*

Our beliefs may be based on what we have been told, or taught. Perhaps we have a wise teacher, who we trust has reached a higher level of experience, or awareness than we have...so we may believe what they say. But even the Buddha and Jesus said... don’t take my word for it, find out for yourself. And here is the way to follow so that you are able to experience it for yourself.

In a recent radio broadcast, Adyashanti explained, “A belief is a story in our mind, an interpretation of what was, what is or what is going to be. It can’t be true.” He went on to explain this scenario: imagine you dropped a hammer on your foot, that’s what actually happened. Then you tell yourself “what a stupid thing to do!” You begin to create a story and soon the facts are no longer simply facts they are evidence of your belief about yourself. The story is irrelevant, yet we take the comments we say about a situation as real and true. We often take the comments as more real or more true than the actual event itself.

*“Reality is life without your distorting stories, ideas and beliefs. It is perfect unity from of all reference points, with nowhere to stand and nothing to grab hold of. It has never been spoken, never been written, never been imagined. It is not hidden, but in plain view. Cease to cherish opinions and it stands before your very eyes.”*

There is nothing to prove, nothing to do. How about simply resting in awareness and having a cup of tea.

I wonder if the kettle is ready?

*“There is nothing to practice. To know yourself, be yourself. To be yourself, stop imagining yourself to be this or that. Just be. Let your true nature emerge. Don’t disturb your mind with seeking.”*

**Nisargadata Maharaj**

## FELLOWSHIP HAPPENINGS

For additional information or to register for any of these workshops or classes, call the Fellowship Office at (517) 337-4070 or e-mail at [info@fellowshipfortoday.org](mailto:info@fellowshipfortoday.org).

### "Dying to Get There"

Limited to eight members  
facilitated by Rev. Beth Monteith  
Four weeks, Wed. afternoon 2-3:30 Jan 13 - Feb 3.

A group experience in discussing and planning our final celebrations. This is a small group class for any Fellowshipians and friends who would like to come together to discuss and design aspects of their own memorial service.

These are Beth's words, " For the past 25 years I have had the honor and opportunity to serve families at the time of a loved one's passing. In so doing I have learned how spectacular it is if a folder of biographical information, wishes, favorite poems, songs, or prayers are available for family members or others who are working to create a wonderful service." This is the first time I have offered this workshop for a group. If there is interest, it will be repeated twice in 2010."

### A Course In Miracles The First 50 Lessons

Saturday January, 16<sup>th</sup> 2010  
9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.  
Fellowship For Today Office  
2722 E. Michigan Ave. Lansing, MI 48912  
Facilitators: Carol Krauz & Dan Maynard

We will take an in-depth look at the first 50 lessons and take the guided steps necessary to begin the process of undoing the ego thought system you are *now* using, and replacing it with the thought system that sees the world through the eyes of your Christ Mind.

Dan and Carol have been Studying "A Course In Miracles" for 15 years. The Course has changed their lives in a way that is beyond words. Their relationship is an example of a Holy relationship that they want to share with others. They have discovered how to see the Love of God in every thing and everyone.

Cost \$85 Per. Person • Lunch Included  
To register for the workshop: Call: The Fellowship Office  
517-337-4070  
or e-mail [info@fellowshipfortoday.org](mailto:info@fellowshipfortoday.org)

## OUR CALENDAR

### 'A COURSE IN MIRACLES' STUDY GROUPS, ONGOING:

**FFT OFFICE, 2722 E. Michigan,  
Lansing, 517 337-4070**  
Wednesdays, 9:15-10:30 a.m.  
Wednesdays, 6-7 p.m.  
Thursdays, 7:30-8:45 p.m.

Tuesdays 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. 10th Floor,  
Boji Tower, corner of Capitol & Allegan.  
Call Doug Austin (517) 377-0838

Saturdays 10:00 a.m. 5331 Park Lake  
Road East Lansing. Contact Jim Noble  
at: [jamesdnoble@juno.com](mailto:jamesdnoble@juno.com)

### SUNDAY SERVICE

5:30 p.m.

**Korean United Methodist Church  
2400 E. Lake Lansing Road  
East Lansing, MI 48823**

DATE	SPEAKER
JANUARY 3	Rev. Delyth Balmer
JANUARY 10	Rev. Beth Monteith
JANUARY 17	Rev. Brad Miller
JANUARY 24	Laz Slomowitz
JANUARY 31	Rev. Beth Monteith
FEBRUARY 7	Rev. Delyth Balmer
FEBRUARY 14	Diana Mitchell
FEBRUARY 21	Rev. Brad Miller
FEBRUARY 28	Rev. Beth Monteith
MARCH 7	Rev. Delyth Balmer
MARCH 14	To Be Determined
MARCH 21	Rev. Brad Miller
MARCH 28	Rev. Beth Monteith



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"So, how do you get back to heaven?  
To begin with, just notice the thoughts that take you away from it.  
You don't have to believe everything your thoughts tell you.  
Just become familiar with the particular thoughts you use  
to deprive yourself of happiness.  
It may seem strange at first to get to know yourself in this way,  
but becoming familiar with your stressful thoughts  
will show you the way home to everything you need."

~ *Byron Katie* ~