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- *How to be present for others*

The God you reach out to is a God whose response is constant. That response is hardly a response, as we have said. It is more a presence. We can also affirm that your wish for a response to the needs that you are aware of in your human lives is not just a response. It is a presence, and it is in your being present fully that whatever response you seek will be a reflection of that greater spiritual presence.

We speak often of your response to others, and we say sometimes that response is prayer, sometimes it is action, and sometimes it is just being present. The presence that we speak of here is superimposed above all other responses, for being present really means being open. It is that heart vision of which you know. It is not merely a physical presence although that may be a part of it.

The presence we speak of is the presence of heart. It is the presence of heart vision. It is the presence of a loving acceptance of another that is more than just being there. You can be present, and that presence can be a very active presence even when there are no words exchanged.

Presence of spirit is an intentional presence. It is a presence of purpose. It is a presence that is a real reaching out, not only to touch, so to speak, but to bring inward. It is a presence where the person you are responding to becomes a vital part of who you are at that moment.

Good listening is a form of presence, for good listening is an active, intentional behavior. It is not just listening while being occupied by thoughts that are far distant. It means fully being in the here and now. Presence means seeking to understand what is meant, not what is said, for what is said is often just a visual manifestation of a part of what is meant.

When you ask someone “how are you doing,” and you get an answer that is the equivalent of “well, not too bad, okay I guess,” such an answer does not mean “not too bad, doing okay.” It means there are things going on in a person’s life that are not necessarily being expressed at the moment but are very much a part of the consciousness of someone else. If the answer is “oh, it’s going great,” how many people do you know whose lives are absolutely going great? There may be some parts of someone’s life that are going well, but there are always going to be corners of every life that are in the shadows and that are crying out to be illuminated. It doesn’t mean that when you receive a reply of “oh, it’s going great” or “it’s not bad” you should dig deeper and immediately ask “what’s not going well for you?” That’s not necessarily an advisable behavior to be encouraged. But what is important is to realize a simple greeting and a simple reply are just that. They are simple. They are superficial. They may be offered with the intention of being friendly and warm, but they don’t tell the whole story.

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Even looking at such a daily occurrence of greeting another and understanding the incompleteness of a reply, it is considerably more difficult to find ways of really being open to what another may share. One of you shared a strong example of what being open and receptive to another can produce. Your sense of heart vision is one of being Present with a capital P, being a good listener, being patient with others, being open and accepting of what others may say, even when you feel such remarks to be misguided.

Recently we have been communicating with you about your own fears and angers centered around the responses of others to stimuli not based on fact. Being present to everyone never implies blanket agreement, but such presence requires an acceptance of the reality that there are bases for the beliefs held by others. Just as lives have corners of darkness, beliefs also contain qualities of insecurity. Those who hold out strong beliefs as being absolute grab onto that life jacket because it gives them relief from the insecurities they experience. Sure, the life jacket may preserve the life, but they lead in themselves in no particular direction. The direction of one's life is going to find character and purpose through intention and not ultimately servitude, but in a position of uncertainty any life jacket is better than none.

So it is when you contemplate God's presence. There are many who choose to deny that presence under the guise of being certain there is no God. But beyond those claims of certainty, there is a deeper insecurity, and it is the fears that grow out of that insecurity that encourage one to occupy a position of absolute certainty. It is the closest line of defense that is available.

It is interesting to observe that many who think carefully about what is true and what is not, experience not comfort in their insight but discomfort in an awareness of what they may not know. All these approaches to life—the one who is certain, the one who is constantly searching—contain within them aspects of life unvoiced, unrecognized, and yet needing illumination.

When you are encountering others, what is most important is your PRESENCE, in capital letters. It is not just being there. It is also not just telling another what you perceive to be true. It is beginning to understand what may lie behind what is being said or what is being cloaked in silence. God's presence is not because you ask for it. Your presence in the lives of others is not because they ask for your presence. Your presence in the lives of others is most importantly a manifestation of your openness to accepting who they are, what they do, what they say, not necessarily as what you believe to be most beneficial, but yet accepting that you are acknowledging they are on their journey just as you are on your journey. God's presence in your life is a presence of empowerment. Your presence in the lives of others can also be one of empowerment, one of allowing insight.

The conduct of one's life is really given shape only by one's beliefs. In its most significant ways, the conduct is not the consequence of being told. It is the consequence of discovery. One could say that God wishes for you to discover. What is it you are discovering? You're in the process of discovering why you have human life, not how—

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why. The process of discovery as it relates to others you encounter in your presence is one of discovering what is truly important in their lives. What is important for you may not share the same magnitude of necessity in another, but what is important to another can feel like it has the same weight of necessity as what you give to your own life as an indication of importance.

Being present, therefore, in the lives of others is providing an atmosphere that encourages discovery. Isn't that what happens to all human life—you discover? Some discover more than others, but discovery is always taking place. This discovery can be insight. It can be a recognition of the sacredness of all life. Discovery takes on many appearances. For each individual, there will be a personal identity associated with discovery, but for such discovery to take place, it is most helpful when it grows in an environment that is nonjudgmental.

We say the best love is a nonjudgmental love. Why is that? It provides the nourishment for true personal discovery. God's presence in your life enables your own personal discovery. Your presence in the lives of others can also enable such discovery. The connection that exists between God and you is in principle no different than the potential relationship you have with others. Be open in your heart's vision to listening, to being present, to enable personal discovery, personal growth, mutual understanding, and nonjudgmental love.

All human beings have a capacity for discovery. Some will achieve much insight into the meaning of life, into the presence of God, into their own presence in the lives of others. Some people will be less skilled in the vision of the heart, and that's okay. But when you clearly know and understand that you can be a reflection of God's presence, life takes on greater depth, the vision becomes clearer, and the intention of being all that can be achieved in presence becomes a reality.

You are blessed as you grow in your capacity to be present. Be present to the needs of others. Be present to your own needs. Recognizing the sacredness of others is a reflection of the recognition of your own sacredness.

Being present for the needs of others is possible when you are fully present for your own needs. It is in God's presence that your own needs become clearer and become fulfilled. Be grateful for the opportunities you experience when you sense God's presence in your own life and grow in your awareness of God's presence in your life becoming your presence in the lives of others. The continuity of presence is clear and uninterrupted and is illuminated in response to the vision of heart.

Be blessed in your understandings. Be blessed in your times of being present. Be blessed in those moments when you are fully aware of the presence of God.

Amen.