

# Self-Empowerment

Summer 2005

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

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## WHAT'S THE "BIG IDEA"?!

I don't know if anyone uses that expression any more, but I recently found myself thinking of the phrase, "Hey, what's the *big idea*?!" I remember it as more of an exclamation than a question, yet it seemed to expect an answer. Just what *is* the *big idea*?

I have a new thought about that question. I think the *really* big idea is the *truth* behind appearances or circumstances, a truth which would rarely be found when one is focusing on negative conditions.

When seeing turmoil, pain, conflict, or suffering, the *big idea* that could be sought is the wholeness, perfection, unity, divinity, holiness, and unconditional love that is cloaked within the circumstance, just waiting to be found by someone willing to receive such a glorious vision. Instead of playing *hide and seek*, wouldn't you rather play *seek and find*? Instead of looking for love in all the wrong places, wouldn't you rather find that love is all there is?

But what about the relentless influx of negative circumstances that seem to keep showing up? They sure can feel disturbing, but even high drama loosens its tight grip when we find the gifts hidden within their bold challenges. With practice it becomes easier to find some level of perfection that is unfolding from even the most difficult of situations.

Many people study psychological and spiritual systems in an effort to find the big idea called Peace. Whether searching specifically for peace, love, joy, or freedom, I think the *big idea* encompasses them all. Some might even say that *God* is the Big Idea.

### An Act of Forgiveness

How in the heck do we get to that *big idea* when we are faced with a cause of anger, sadness and/or fear? Who could possibly experience peace, love, or joy in the face of the unacceptable, the unspeakable, or the gosh darn annoying? I am no saint, so how in the world can I see the perfection and wholeness in the perpetrators of my pain?

Left to myself, I would never see my way clear to look beyond anyone's negative behavior. After all, condemning judgment is a natural human reaction to any perceived hurt. Am I right? But many of us have

found that natural human reactions are a double-edged sword. We become ill physically and emotionally when we hold on to our victimization and fear.

Those on the spiritual path find that an act of *forgiveness* is the means to free us from suffering and move us toward the experience of wholeness. Forgiveness frees us to express the biggest ideas, dreams and creativity of our lives.

Forgiveness is a process, not a one-shot deal. It is not easy, yet the rewards are well worth the work. Sometimes I am barely willing to consider forgiveness and know that I need help with this. Fortunately, there is help to bring the experience of forgiveness to our suffering minds. Professional therapists can facilitate the release of grievances and various forgiveness exercises can be found in books, on tapes, and even on the internet. I did a "Google" search on the computer for forgiveness and found many interesting websites that focus on forgiveness.

### International Forgiveness Day – August 7, 2005

The Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance (WFA) is a non-profit, tax exempt educational foundation dedicated to evoking the healing power of forgiveness worldwide. The WFA is a non-denominational organization, open to all religions, creeds and beliefs. They promote forgiveness as a way of creating a safer, more joyful and peaceful world. As an essential part of that mission they are seeking to establish the first global holiday, International Forgiveness Day, celebrated on the first Sunday of every August. The 9<sup>th</sup> annual celebration will be held on August 7, 2005. Visit their site at [ForgivenessDay.org](http://ForgivenessDay.org). Other good website resources for forgiveness include: [ForgivenessInstitute.org](http://ForgivenessInstitute.org), [TheForgivenessProject.com](http://TheForgivenessProject.com), [ForgivenessGuide.org](http://ForgivenessGuide.org), and [ForgivenessWorks.org](http://ForgivenessWorks.org), [Forgiving.org](http://Forgiving.org), and [ChoosingForgiveness.org](http://ChoosingForgiveness.org). In this issue, reprinted from [ChoosingForgiveness.org](http://ChoosingForgiveness.org), is a poem of forgiveness called "Flow" by Noel Frederick McInnis and his story about the poem. (See page 3)

### Plumbing – from crisis to peace

I hesitated to share my plumbing woes, but it appears that this circumstance is rich with spiritual

Instead of playing *hide and seek*, wouldn't you rather play *seek and find*?

practice, so I share its gifts with you.

I am in the midst of my third major plumbing disaster, the magnitude of which has grown to epic proportions. One of the reasons we bought our house two years ago was to enjoy the luxury of three bathrooms for three family members. It's great when they are all working properly, but when they do not function it is very easy to fall prey to impatience, anger, and various forms of negativity.

In addition to forgiving myself and others (over and over) throughout this 'plumbing nightmare' here are five divine gifts of which I am currently conscious. (FYI - As of this writing, one of the three bathrooms is functional. Hallelujah!)

**1. Patience and flexibility:** My husband, Rick, likes to quote characters of Star Trek, including the Borg's message, "Resistance is futile." Any good spiritual practice worth its weight will recommend non-resistance to what is. We have endeavored to be patient and flexible with all the twists and turns that our house plumbing issues have taken. Being in the flow of God's unfoldment and listening for guidance from a higher vision is the way to lasting peace and joy.

**2. Respect and character development:** My husband and I handle things very differently. Although I do have a tendency to like my way better than his (most of the time), I recognize the value and appropriateness of his way (once in a while). We tend to pay attention to different details and handle them in a different order. Additionally, his more aggressive style is counterpoint to my tendency to avoid conflict. I, therefore, endeavor to see our differences as important complementary aspects of wholeness. When either of us recognizes and honors each other's strengths, we experience and extend greater respect. And as I work on my own issues regarding conflict, I develop greater character strength. With continued character development, Rick and I don't replay the old polarized positions as often or as intensely.

**3. Communication with love:** As a corollary to respect and developing character, there is the issue of remembering to communicate with love, especially under stress. That is when the true test of character is visible – under stress. It is much easier to be "nice" when things are going well, but when all hell breaks loose, it is quite revealing. There have been several times when my judgments, impatience, or feelings of overwhelm put a stinging edge on my words. However, my commitment to keeping love in mind when the going gets rough has helped me to keep my communications mostly grounded in a realistic sense of teamwork. With cooperation and compassion, we have been able to meet this challenge with grace.

Unfortunately our insurance agent has not had the same experience of communication with love, so it looks like there will a change there. Oh, well. It looks like Rick and I will not be nominated for sainthood this year.

**4. Humor:** I must say that humor goes a long way to keeping one's peace in the face of great challenges. When it comes to toilet humor, you've got to find a way to laugh to keep from crying. Walls are missing, the basement floor is dug up, one-year-old carpeting is now trash, and we charged a few thousand dollars worth of repair so far. Is that funny? Well, when the s--- hits the fan, we're ready to meet it with the yellow plastic gloves, bucket, pine cleaner, and a few one-liners. We figure that we'll find all of this funny some day, so we might as well start laughing now.

**5. Receiving:** A wonderful part of this circumstance is the joy of receiving the caring, support, and many offers of help from family and friends. Several people offered their bathrooms to us, one friend offered to let us move into her house, and Father Hank offered the church building for the Scott Kalechstein concert that was scheduled to be in my home. What a shower of blessings! The concert was a great success in the alternate location. We found ways to handle all of our bathroom needs. Though we only have one working bathroom at the time of this writing, I feel sure that we'll have three wonderful bathrooms again in the near future.

So, stay in the flow, dear friends, and may the Big Idea inspire you and fill you with peace!



Your fellow traveler,

*Rev Jill*

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# Flow

a poem of forgiveness by Noel Frederick McInnis

Be,  
as water is,  
without friction.  
Flow around the edges  
of those within your path.  
Surround within your ever-moving depths  
those who come to rest there—  
enfold them,  
while never for a moment holding on.  
Accept whatever distance  
others are moved within your flow.  
Be with them gently  
as far as they allow your strength to take them,  
and fill with your own being  
the remaining space when they are left behind.  
When dropping down life's rapids,  
froth and bubble into fragments if you must,  
knowing that the one of you now many  
will just as many times be one again.  
And when you've gone as far as you can go,  
quietly await your next beginning.

The foregoing poem, entitled "Flow," has assisted thousands of persons worldwide in finding forgiveness and other comfort in the face of inconsolable loss, catastrophic illness, impending death, and other tragic circumstances.

## Noel Frederick McInnis on the writing of "Flow"

One afternoon in the mid-1970's, during a time of great *angst* in my life, I was walking along a creek that flows into the Roaring Fork River south of Aspen, Colorado. I was impressed by the stark contrast between the turbulent and calm stretches in the stream – so characteristic of my own life's path.

Honoring an urge to sit down and put pencil to paper, I literally consulted the creek for advice. I asked the creek, "If you were literate, what would you tell me?"

In just a few minutes, I had "Flow" for my answer.

Receiving this poem so profoundly transformed my circumstantial perspective that I was inspired to share it with the world. To my chagrin, neither mainstream nor "new age" greeting card companies were interested in it. So I printed my own cards and wall-hangings featuring "Flow." Thus far I have given away or sold 10,000 copies of the poem, lamenting all along that it wasn't getting the widespread attention that I envisioned for it.

Over the past 25 years I have heard from hundreds of persons whose agony and grief in the face of an inconsolable sense of loss for loved ones, their own or a loved one's catastrophic illness, or their own or another's impending death, was greatly eased by their experience of hearing or reading the poem. My favorite account concerns a woman whose unsatisfying life was dramatically transformed by her reading of the poem, and who also proved that even my meager efforts were succeeding in getting the poem around the world.

I learned of her from Ray Gatchalian, an officer in the Oakland, California fire department, who was brought to my attention when he recited the poem at a eulogy held for those who died in the October 1991 Oakland fire. Ray, who has been regularly reciting "Flow" at public events in the U.S. and abroad since he received a copy in 1985, was introduced to the poem while traveling in Peru as a Kellogg Fellow. There he learned of a former Los Angeles account executive who had left that life behind to create, deep in the jungle, a home for abandoned children that she found on the streets of Iquitos.

Ray and others in his group made the trip to her orphanage, which was a few hours up a tributary of the Amazon river. The home that she and her orphaned children had created was utterly basic, having neither electricity or running water. Though the woman's knowledge of Spanish was limited, she communicated with the children quite effectively. Ray was so struck by the contrast between her current and former life that he asked her how she was able to turn her back on civilization and find contentment in such rudimentary circumstances. She said she didn't really know how to explain it, other than to hand him a piece of paper, on which was written the poem, "Flow."

I am willing to do whatever it takes to provide copies of the "Flow" poem to every hospice, hospital emergency room, catastrophic care unit, terminal care facility, and all other places of medical as well as psychological care. Therefore, *I encourage people to freely reproduce the poem on behalf of this and comparable purposes. I am also eager to license its reproduction in all manner of artistic formats.*

I wish to hear from anyone who can facilitate the poem's representation, publication, distribution, and dissemination. I also appreciate receiving accounts of how the poem has assisted others amidst the "froth and bubble" of their own life circumstances.

Reprinted from [www.ChoosingForgiveness.org](http://www.ChoosingForgiveness.org)  
Copies of Noel Frederick McInnis' poem "Flow" are available in card and wall-hanging formats, and can be ordered through his website.

## So May I by Donna Miesbach

I love the peace  
The sweet release  
That comes with evening's hour.  
I love the silent  
Gentle breeze,  
The presence of the flower  
That simply by its beingness  
Its purpose does fulfill  
And brings to  
Sweet fruition  
Our Creator's will.  
So may I, too,  
In some small way  
A gentle presence be  
So that no matter  
Where I walk  
'Twill all be love to me.

Reprinted with permission by Donna Miesbach.  
Following is a message on the home page of her  
website, DonnaMiesbach.com

I believe in you. I believe you have it within you to  
live from your highest and best.

Your soul is as a light within you, guiding you  
upon this, the path of your earthly journey. No matter  
how difficult, no matter how challenging, ultimately  
that journey will be seen as good, for our most difficult  
challenges lead to our greatest triumphs.

You are as beautiful as the farthest shining star.  
You are a child of the light, and the essence of that  
light is love. You are love. As you come to know that,  
as you come to be that, you will find a joy which  
cannot be taken from you.

I believe in you. With all my heart, I believe in  
you.

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*A perennial fixture in Pioneer Courthouse Square [Portland,  
Oregon], the woman locals refer to as "God" scans downtown,  
where friends and followers can always find her. Her ultimate goal:  
Unify the cosmos or center the universe.*

## Supremely being

*'God' moves in mysterious ways, but she's at home  
downtown*

By JOSEPH GALLIVAN *The Tribune* December 7, 2004

Her brown hair is bleached from the summer sun, a  
pale wave working its way out of her system. Her nose is  
still pink from the sunburn. For nearly six months, she's  
been coming to sit in Pioneer Courthouse Square each  
day from dawn to last call.

Usually she's on the left side of the fountain steps.  
Sometimes she moves forward to sit on a manhole, right  
in the thick of the foot traffic.

"She's always here when I get here at 7 a.m.," says Sean  
Kennedy, the brochure coordinator at the Visitor  
Information Center. "If you ask her what she's doing, she  
either says she's unifying the cosmos or centering the  
universe."

Most days the Starbucks crew sees her when they close  
at 11 o'clock. As a feat of endurance, it beats any amount  
of pole-sitting on "Survivor."

She sits quietly, cross-legged, looking out over the  
square. Good posture, bad clothes. A thin woolen overcoat  
over a turquoise dress. Hiking socks and Tevas. When it  
rains, an anorak, and when it pours, a transparent poncho.

Ask her name and she simply states "I am that I am,"  
echoing God's quip to Moses in the Book of Exodus  
(3:13-15).

Locals just refer to her as "God."

Over the course of a day, dozens of people come up and  
talk to her. They share their food with her, sometimes  
bring her clothes and blankets, which she gives to  
homeless people. She'll stand to hug a friend. She usually  
nods and says "Namaste," the Hindu greeting that she says  
roughly translates as "the divine in me recognizes the  
divine in you."

If you ask her age, she replies, "All time is now." In fact,  
any time-related question is greeted with the same  
response: All time is now.

Ask to talk and she'll flip the blanket off her knees and  
on to the cold stone, so you can sit beside her. Some  
people say she sits on a brick marked God. There is a God  
brick, but it's actually at the east end of the square. (Jesus  
Christ is at the bottom of the curved steps, near Jimi  
Hendrix.)

People are friendly to her, she says, "because they're  
me, they're reflections of me, as is everyone."

She says she's spiritual rather than religious. "I'm not  
telling anyone what to do; I'm simply stating the truth and  
if they choose to experience it, that's up to them. The  
ultimate truth: that we are all one, that love is all there is."

Ask her where she lives and she says, "Wherever."  
Nathan Pilger, a self-described street kid who often sits  
with her, says she stays with friends sometimes. She nods  
serenely.

### God has a lot of friends

A middle-aged woman, Norma Messenger, stops by  
most days on her commute.

"I saw her sitting there and was curious," Messenger  
says. "The first time I sat with her, if a thought came up  
I'd just mention it, and she would respond with her angelic  
words."

Does Messenger know her name? "Of course, everyone  
knows her name, it's God. She is God to me, and that's  
enough for me. She opens her heart to everyone who

passes by. She's a beautiful soul. Very happy."

Messenger, an empty nester who moved here from Indiana a year ago and briefly was homeless herself, finds her presence a great comfort. "She wishes for nothing, she won't take money, she is a saint, she is God, she is goodness in our community, and I hope our community recognizes that without judgment."

Finding food is not a problem. "Food is energy, like everything else," she says.

One recent day Tim, a young homeless man just arrived from Berkeley, Calif., was sitting on the step behind her. He explained why. "We're living in a world with no connections between each other, people want to know they're seen, so they come here and stare at each other."

Another close friend, Josh, says many visitors go into confession mode.

An elderly man, James Berger, stopped by with some leftover spicy green beans and rice. He says they sometimes talk about religion. He respects her thinking, while finding it a bit too "new age." Berger then began reading some "prophetic fragments" he had written about the future of the American empire. Berkeley Boy, a street musician, whipped out his mini-disc recorder to capture them, and God was momentarily forgotten. She resumed scanning the square.

At a push, she will sing the Tibetan Buddhist mantra Om Mani Padme Hum ("Rise, Oh Jewel in the Lotus"), an expression of compassion in the universe.

Ask her what strangers want from her, and she replies immediately, "Connection. With themselves, with their divine selves."

She says she went to a university but further probing of her background hits a wall. "I don't do personality questions." She doesn't do preference questions either. Usually.

What's the oddest thing she's been asked?

She laughs. " 'Will you marry me?' I usually say, Thanks for the offer.' " So do guys hit on her? "Most men who come to me with intentions like the one you speak of very quickly realize I am not on this planet for those reasons. I'm here to unify, not to multiply."

People feed her, she says, because "highly evolved beings share everything. The highest form of economy is a gift economy."

It sounds like she's been to Burning Man, the Labor Day festival in the Nevada desert that has spurred many a person to drop out of the straight life.

"I have. Twice." She went from San Francisco, is all she'll reveal.

Does the cold weather bother her?

"The weather *is*. Ghandi walked around New York in winter in a loincloth." She later adds, "Highly evolved

beings are very good at controlling the weather. Since I've gotten here it's been a bit warmer than usual, and it rains mostly at night."

### Guests leave their mark

Recently someone gave her a pen and a blank sketchbook, which has become a sort of guest book. Within three days it had several pages filled with a mixture of thank yous, drawings and spiritual shout outs. For example:

"Follow love that is the pathway that the divine wishes for you. Shoot for the moon, you'll at least land among the stars. Shoot for your foot and you'll hit every time." Signed "The other half of Fabulousness."

A man named Gearhardt Zahn sits down with her, this time under the Christmas tree. Zahn gives her a thick shirt and some pomegranate. He's trying to persuade his brother to meet her but — or maybe because — he's an alcoholic.

"We all have religion," he says. "This is a test for them there religious types."

*... "highly evolved beings share everything. The highest form of economy is a gift economy."*

A lot of things are forbidden in the square — panhandling, skating, Hacky Sack. Security guards from the private Portland Patrol watch her but won't talk about her. No one seems to know her name or where

she came from. A representative from Join, which works to get downtown Portland's approximately 600 homeless people off the streets, declines to discuss her.

According to Kennedy in the visitor center, security guards called county services when she got sunburned, but she was lucid and they had no reason to consider her a danger.

"A few tourists ask about her," Kennedy says. "But mostly it's the locals. I tell them she's unifying the cosmos. The common reaction is, 'I hope she can do it! She may be nuts but in case she isn't, good luck!' "



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*Thank You, dear readers, for your donations and lovely messages of support during our Spring donation drive!*

*Love & Hugs, Jill*

# Daily Word

*God inspires me with divine ideas  
for using my skills and talents.*

Divine ideas that bring me fulfillment are just one of the ways that I receive inspiration from God.

Inspiration comes at different times and in a multitude of ways, but it does come as I remain open to the guidance and wisdom of God. Divine inspiration is an integral part of my life. It may appear as a nudge to complete a single project or as a passion that fills me with ongoing enthusiasm for several endeavors. I may feel the call to make greater use of skills I have already developed or to discover totally new talents.

However and whenever God inspires me, I take action, because I know the result will be something that brings me a greater awareness of God in my life.

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