

The Love of Power or the Power of Love?

The events of September 11, 2001, with the destruction of the World Trade Towers in New York, touched the lives of us all. This event brought us to a crossroad. What did we want to do? Did we want to retaliate with violence and choose the love of power? Or, did we open our hearts and choose the power of love? The US and supporting countries chose violence and war ... the love of power. Which road will you and I take ... individually and collectively?

For the children who lost parents, parents who lost children, those who lost mates, and those who lost friends it has been a time to grieve. Many of us grieve for those who are grieving still. As those who survived shared their stories, some shared how intuition or guidance from within directed their steps. Others tell of outer events that directed them to their survival. For those that passed on from this world, we know they are in a place of great love.

What of those of us who remain? What path do we each choose? Do we choose hatred and violence? A friend living in a northeastern state sent a message expressing her shock that the owner of the corner grocery near her home was beaten. His crime? Twenty-five years ago he came from the Middle East. Reports of violence against those of the Muslim faith or those of Middle East descent are escalating. Let's take a look at how readily fear makes us respond with anger.

Choosing Our Path

Immediately after 9/11, the Dalai Lama wrote a letter to President Bush: "It may be presumptuous on my part, but I personally believe we need to think seriously whether a violent action is the right thing to do and in the greater interest of the nation and people in the long run. I believe violence will only increase the cycle of violence."¹ In a country where Christianity is the dominant faith, are the ideals of forgiveness, compassion and love being swept aside?

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Deepak Chopra was on a flight between New York and Detroit when the World Trade Center was hit. His wife and son were on separate flights to Los Angeles and San Diego. "My body

went absolutely rigid with fear. All I could think about was their safety..." Several hours later he learned they were safe. "Strangely," he reports, "when the good news came, my body still felt that it had been hit by a truck." He realized he was feeling empathy for the trauma of those that were killed or injured in the towers and those who were mourning the loss of someone near and dear. He continues, "And I asked myself. Why didn't I feel this way last week? Why didn't my body go stiff during the bombing of Iraq or Bosnia? Around the world my horror and worry are experienced every day. Mothers weep over horrendous loss, civilians are bombed mercilessly, refugees are ripped from any sense of home or homeland."²

We choose to create more experiences that will harm more innocent people. Have we created a religious and racial war? The white Christian against the brown Muslim. When government allowed the media open access to report on the Vietnam War, public opinion turned against the war and US troupes were withdrawn. Media exposure about every war since has been tightly controlled. This means we are only allowed to view what the government wants us to see and hear. We never see the innocent people or the soldiers that are harmed. Canadian television stations show a more objective view. Some Canadian news reports help explain the hatred and resulting terrorism that has been building towards the United States. On a television news program on September 17, 2001, a correspondent gave one example. He described an incident when a factory in the Middle East, reported to be manufacturing explosives, was bombed by the US. After hundreds of civilians died or were maimed, it was discovered that the US intelligence report was wrong. If this happened on American soil, how would we feel? This is but one example of the possible thousands of innocent people that have been killed that we don't know about.

***What message does the media usually give us?
We are given the impression that our governments through
the United Nations are helping and saving the people of this world.
Are we being fed propaganda, shown truth, or both?***

History Television in Canada aired a documentary about the formation of an American intelligence operation—a precursor to the CIA—in the late 1930's and early 1940's. It was unconstitutional to form such an organization on American soil so the group was secretly based in Canada. A secretary who worked for this clandestine operation revealed that in 1941 the United States government learned of the planned attack on Pearl Harbor a full week before the Japanese planes released their bombs.³ Why was no action taken? Why didn't they order all ships out of the harbor? Government officials knew public sentiment of the time supported the position of the founding fathers of the United States—that the US should not interfere with other country's wars or disputes. They needed to change the minds of the American people. They assumed the attack would instill fear in the hearts of Americans so they would willingly go to war. It worked.

Are we being manipulated in the same way today?

Osama bin Laden was fingered as the leader who was responsible for the terrorist attack on American soil. Was he named as the culprit to give the US government a reason to wage war? Did it make you feel safer when he was named? Did it make you feel safer nearly 10 years later when he was finally reported killed on May 2nd, 2011?

Osama bin Laden's death made no difference to the escalation of war in the Middle East. Do these war initiatives make you feel safer? If so, is our fear worth allowing war and more innocent deaths?

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Fear Begets Violence

And violence begets violence. Is this the direction we continue to choose for our country ... and for our world? Each of us makes a difference in this chain of events ... be it a personal relationship, a work situation, a national issue or a world crisis. The chain reaction stops when one person decides to act with love. Reacting from love doesn't mean letting others run over us. It doesn't mean we don't take action. For example, both Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi offered peaceful solutions. When they were rejected both men demonstrated courage—they stayed the course and eventually brought about the change they sought. Being courageous means a willingness to look at our actions and to take responsibility for our actions. It may mean the need to apologize. It means finding creative solutions.

A colleague shares her lesson:

About a year ago, I received a bill from our government for several thousands of dollars. It was a penalty they assessed my company as they received a payment four days late. My first reaction was to laugh at the collector ... a fine of tens of thousands of dollars for being four days late! My laughter quickly turned to anger when the caller assured me she was serious. When I told her that was ridiculous and unfair, she tried to get me to say to her that I was not going to pay it. I asked her what would happen if I didn't pay it? She told me she would seize my bank account. I forwarded this penalty assessment with a long letter to my local government representative assuming he would take care of the matter. When I didn't hear anything further, I assumed the problem had been cleared up. My mistake. A month later I received another letter with the penalty plus interest. That started a month long experience that, with hindsight, I am grateful for. At the time, however, I had many feelings that didn't resemble gratitude. I verbally abused the government workers. I was angry and they were not helping me to resolve this to my satisfaction.

Finally, I stepped back and took a deep breath. I brought love into the situation by realizing and accepting that this was an experience I needed for my spiritual growth. I asked Spirit why I was creating this experience. What did I need to learn? I sat quietly in contemplation to help bring love into my being. At that moment I accepted that I might need to pay the fine in order to learn what I needed to learn. Coming out of the contemplation, I glanced down at a leaflet for a seminar. The words 'accept the opportunity' and 'spiritual laws' stood out. I took a book from our bookshelf on spiritual laws. I opened the book at random—to a chapter on cause and effect. I read, "There simply is no such thing as righteous anger."⁴ Spirit doesn't recognize any distinction between anger for a cause and anger for no cause. Anger is anger and the spiritual law of cause and effect means we must accept the consequences of our emotions. Or as we sow,

The Choice

A woman came out of her house and saw three old men with long white beards sitting in her front yard. She did not recognize them. She said, "I don't think I know you, but you must be hungry. Please come in and have something to eat."

"Is the man of the house home?" they asked. "No," she said, "he's out." "Then we cannot come in," they replied.

In the evening when her husband came home, she told him what had happened.

"Go tell them I am home and invite them in!" The woman went out and invited the men in. "We do not go into a house together," they replied. "Why is that?" she wanted to know. One of the old men explained, "His name is Wealth," he said pointing to one of his friends, and said, pointing to another one, "He is Success, and I am Love." Then he added, "Now go in and discuss with your husband which one of us you want in your home."

The woman went in and told her husband what was said. Her husband was overjoyed.

"How nice!" he said. "Since that is the case, let us invite Wealth. Let him come in and fill our home with wealth!" His wife disagreed. "My dear, why don't we invite Success?" Their daughter-in-law was listening from another corner of the house. She jumped in with her own suggestion: "Would it not be better to invite Love? Our home will then be filled with love!" "Let us heed our daughter-in-law's advice," said the husband to his wife. "Go out and invite Love to be our guest." The woman went out and asked the three old men, "Which one of you is Love? Please come in and be our guest." Love got up and started walking toward the house. The other two also got up and followed him. Surprised, the woman asked Wealth and Success: "I only invited Love, why are you coming in?"

The old men replied together: "If you had invited Wealth or Success, the other two of us would have stayed out, but since you invited Love, wherever he goes, we go with him. Wherever there is Love, there is Wealth and Success."

so shall we reap. I am always learning to treat others with love. Without realizing it I had made it okay to mistreat government workers because of my beliefs. I was subconsciously blaming government workers for what I perceive as government suppression of freedom and over-taxation—the pilfering of our earnings. I realized I was wrong in treating government workers with anger rather than love.

That night I couldn't sleep. I got up and wrote a letter to the person in charge of the department levying the fine. I took responsibility for my actions and poor behavior. I explained what had happened to make our payment four days late. The letter was honest and written with love in my heart. I sent the letter to each of the government workers that I had mistreated. A couple of weeks later, I got an inner nudge to make a phone call to try and sort out the matter. I had discovered when checking our accounting that the majority of the payment was actually not due until the following month. This would wipe out a big part of the fine. The person, who was reviewing my file as I talked, 'happened' to have her boss at her desk. Her boss was reading my file as well. She asked to speak to me. She told me everything I needed to do to correct the mistakes that had been made. As I made the corrections, I discovered other mistakes that would mean I'd overpaid the tax for the month in question! I called back for advice. Again she was kind and helpful in explaining what I needed to do. She told me that I could give her name to the department that was investigating the fine. I did and it quite simply all cleared up.

Once I opened myself to love and accepted that I may have to pay the fine, the world around me changed. I discovered the errors and Spirit then arranged for me to connect with government workers who would help me.

What amazing solutions might we find on the world stage if we choose to respond to violence with love rather than with fear ... if we act with understanding rather than revenge? Rather than simply lay blame, are we willing to ask: "What have we allowed our governments to do to create these acts of terrorism?" Could terrorists feel their actions are necessary to defend the freedoms of their countries? Could they feel as David fighting Goliath? Shouldn't we ask what we are doing to cause their hatred?

Television, newspapers and magazines keep reinforcing the message that the terrorists are based in Middle Eastern countries and are of the Muslim faith. Television has even broadcast information about a radical sect within the Muslim faith leaving the impression the teachings are those of the Islamic religion.⁵ Would we like it if in their countries, they portrayed the Klu Klux Klan's teachings as mainstream Christianity?

Might we better take the words of a dying man to heart? Morrie, while slowly dying from ALS, said, "The problem, Mitch, is that we don't believe we are as much alike as we are. Whites and blacks, Catholics and Protestants, men and women. If we saw each other as more alike, we might be very eager to join in one big human family in this world, and to care about that family the way we care about our own."⁶

Solve Our Own Problems

The founding fathers of the United States believed that each nation should be free to fight their own internal wars and maintain their own peace. We no longer allow nations the freedom to solve their own problems. Are we being bombarded with news clips in order to manipulate our opinions? Where are the news clips of people in the Middle East who are mourning with us? After 9/11 to sway public opinion, we were barraged with news clips from Muslim countries showing radical religious fanaticism and the role of women as slaves. The role of women in Islamic countries may be difficult to understand today but our grandmothers and women before them would understand. They didn't have the right to vote or an equal position with men. Today we enjoy equal rights because it was women who rose up and demanded change. Should we not be willing to allow others to grow and change in their own time? When Islamic women want change, they will demand it just as our ancestors did. Someone or some nation always has a better way. Does that give us the right to force our ways on other nations?

We can open our hearts to love. We can ask: "What do we have to learn?" Maybe it's time to take responsibility for our nations' past actions on the world stage. We can ask: "What can I do?" What we want to experience, we should provide for others. If we want to heal our own anger, we need to help heal the anger of another. If we want to live our lives feeling safe from attack, we need to allow others to know that they are safe from our attack. If we want to feel respected and accepted for who we are, we need to respect and accept others for who they are.

We can learn to listen to that still small voice within and to trust that Life, Spirit, or God always guides us to be in the right place at the right time.

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