

Why Are We Here?

In the movie *Enemy at the Gates* set in Russia, after fighting for the communist ideal of material equality, the soldier played by Joseph Fiennes succumbs to jealousy over a woman and betrays his soldier comrade. Dying of a battle wound, he says “We tried so hard to create a society that was equal ... where we would have nothing to envy but there’s always something to envy. A smile, friendship ... There will always be rich and poor. Rich in gifts ... poor in gifts. Rich in love ... poor in love.”

This soldier’s experience in life gave him the realization that this world was not created for equality—and so when we set the goal of creating an equal society, it is an impossible goal to reach. On a spiritual level, we all have the capacity to be equal, yet different. Sameness is not a spiritual quality.

So, why are we here?

Our society believes that we are here to make everyone equal, to protect and keep everyone safe, and that happiness equals material wealth. Is this what you believe? And if that is why we are here, why are so many people dissatisfied with life and using anti-depressants? Why are so many youth disillusioned with life?

In the 1990s, the Canadian government conducted panel discussions in major centers to gather feedback about what was needed to create health in our country. As a member of one panel, I was surprised to discover the majority of people believed that health equaled happiness and that material wealth was the answer to health and happiness. Only two of us disagreed. The other was a man who had lived most of his life in a different culture—in a less developed country.

The two of us talked after the session was over. He felt children in less developed countries are happier than children in our society. They don’t have a lot of material goods so they rely on their imagination to create all sorts of games with the simplest of items. At the end of the day, even though they may not have material wealth, they have a wealth of closeness, sharing and love. Everyone in the family is expected to do their part to keep the family operating—no matter what their age. He wasn’t saying it is better to be poor, just that he noticed kids in our society with all their toys, private bedrooms and allowances did not exude the same joy and happiness.

So, why are we here? Are we here to live a safe, comfortable life or are we here to live a challenging, sometimes uncomfortable life?

***Are we here to play it safe or to reach for our dreams?
Which type of life is more rewarding or satisfying and which
life allows us to grow more spiritually?***

Facing fear

Charles, a part-time college instructor, writes about our fears and our desire for a safe, comfortable life. He says, "Securing life has become more important than how that life is lived. Prolonged agony is preferable." He continues, "I see the same kind of thinking [among] students, who choose to suffer the 'prolonged agony' of studying subjects they hate, in order to get a job they don't really love, in order to have financial 'security.' They are afraid to live

right, afraid to claim their birthright, which is to do joyful and exciting work." He feels they need to discover, "... a joy that is dependent not on avoiding pain and maximizing pleasure, but on living rightly and well."¹

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Fear is a condenser; love, an expander. This means that fear can create a world as small as a thimble, while love is able to open us to the fullness of living.”

The Living Word, Book 2,
Harold Klemp

Anne, a former teacher, shared how she was able to motivate a small but very talented class of high school students who were drifting through life. The students were intelligent and came from materially wealthy homes but many in the class were not living up to their potential. As their teacher, she

decided they needed a challenge—something that would give them faith in themselves and their abilities.

Anne asked Spirit what she could do to motivate the class. Surprisingly, she decided to arrange a challenging weekend—a skydiving adventure. During a contemplation, Anne realized this activity would represent leaving behind worldly limitations and opening doors to new possibilities. It took considerable planning, and some negotiating, to get permission from all the parents. The school principal cooperated by ignoring their spring break activity. So off they went to learn to skydive.

Anne and the students returned from their sky diving weekend transformed. Each had faced fear. Each had faced a challenge, and each had discovered unknown inner strength in taking that first jump. They each made several jumps over the course of the weekend. The experience gave them a new perspective on life. They experienced the exhilaration of a challenge and the joy of living life more fully. This experience gave each of them more confidence in themselves and also motivated them to learn more about themselves and life.²

Our youth are a reflection of us. Are our youth not motivated because they don't see meaning in the lives we are leading ... lives with safety and material security our priorities rather than the challenges that come with living life as fully as possible ... with the confidence and happiness that brings?

What stops us from living our dreams? Is it fear ... fear of death, fear of harm, fear of lack, fear of change, fear of failure, fear of conflict, fear of being less, fear of being different, fear of being judged? When we succumb to fear and stop reaching for our dreams, a part of us dies. Life becomes a safe, comfortable, limited existence.

What is the difference?

What is the difference between someone who lives their dreams and someone who accepts less from life? Does the person who lives their dreams not have fear? We all experience fear. The difference is whether we allow our fears to limit our life or face our fears to reach for our dreams.

Tony, a man in Nigeria, watched the behavior of several birds while waiting at a bus stop on a busy highway. A truck loaded with sacks of rice hit a big bump spilling some of the rice onto the highway. There were five birds in the brush along the road—three were chickens. All five birds rushed onto the highway to eat some rice.

The first cars that came past frightened them. With a cackle the hens all ran back into the brush, and the other birds flew away.

Only one hen came back.

She looked at the rice with one eye, and with the other eye she looked at the traffic coming down the road. She looked, she weighed her chances, and she ran right out into the road again.

The cars were coming fast. With one eye on the vehicles and the other eye on the grain, the hen ate a little bit here, a little bit there, dodging in and around all the vehicles. Finally, after fifty cars and trucks had missed her, she finished eating and ran back to the side of the road, very satisfied with herself. She cleaned her beak and



went back into the brush where the others were still digging in the dirt for anything they could find. She had just had a feast.³

One hen reaped the rewards of taking a risk.

Nancy, a university student, lived in an apartment complex landscaped with several streams running through the grounds. In the summer the streams became crowded as young crayfish grew to adults. Nancy describes her experience with one crayfish:

"One summer evening, I heard a strange sound at my door. When I opened it, I was surprised to see a crayfish standing there. He marched across the carpet without hesitation and then stopped to stare at me. I really didn't know what crayfish ate, but I offered him the only thing I had: raw hamburger.

"He proceeded to eat, and as he had his meal, the air stilled around us. I felt we could understand one another. He had been hungry. There was not enough food to feed all the crayfish in the stream. He had left the water to brave the long walk to this house because he knew he would get food here."⁴ One crayfish reaped the rewards of taking a risk.

Lucy worked as a counselor in a prison. While shopping for a birthday gift for her mother one Saturday afternoon, she was feeling lonely. Suddenly she felt "a strange tugging in her chest. Something flew out into the universe. Something set free like a bird from a cage." As she got in her car, she wondered what had happened. She also noticed her car clock said 5:00 p.m.

The next Monday, there was a soft knock on her office door. A huge, muscular prisoner entered and asked, "Could I talk with you for a minute?" Then, he hesitantly asked, "May I ask you a question?" When Lucy invited him to continue, he asked her what she was doing at 5 o'clock on Saturday. Lucy didn't mention how lonely and cut off from God's love she had felt but explained she was shopping for a birthday gift.

He then told her, "I was sitting in my cell reading and suddenly it seemed like you were in the cell with me. Your presence was very strong. Then I heard a voice." Lucy encouraged him to continue. "The voice told me to tell you that you are loved." He had taken a big risk saying this as he knew Lucy could create a lot of trouble for him if she had taken his message the wrong way. "At this moment, Lucy felt blessed and loved. A warmth washed over her and tears came to her face. She realized that Divine Spirit was responding to her cries for love."

Three days later, the prisoner returned to her office with a big smile on his face. He was waving his parole papers. "I didn't tell you the other day," he said, "that the voice also told me that if I didn't give you the message that you are loved, I wouldn't be paroled."⁵ A prisoner opened the heart of another and reaped the rewards by taking a risk.

Our choices

Who are you? Are you a hungry chicken in the bush or a chicken that would risk the traffic for a meal? Are you a hungry, crowded crayfish in the stream or a crayfish willing to risk knocking on an unknown door? Are you a person who remains silent to avoid risk or are you a person who takes a risk to deliver an unusual message?

What do the chicken, the crayfish and the prisoner have in common? They each faced a fear in order to reach for a goal. When we face a fear, we gain more confidence to meet life's challenges ... to reach for our dreams. Facing fears is a step-by-step process. Each step gives us the courage to take another step. Do you face your fears to create your dreams? To live our dreams, we are challenged to grow. Whether we choose to grow determines whether or not we take the journey to reach our dreams.

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References

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