

*"Forgiveness is eternal
and ever available."*

—Ernest Holmes



FORGIVENESS

from Ground Zero

REV. AUGUST GOLD

September 2002, one year since we opened the doors of a New Thought church less than a mile from what many now call *ground zero*. Conceived with the idea of bringing the healing message of love to the people of New York, we opened our doors with enthusiasm and passion. Since then, though, everything has changed around us because everything has changed within us.

The Power of Prayer

It is the morning of September 11, 2001, and planes have just hit each of the two World Trade Towers. Thoughts fly through my mind at break-neck speed.

I go into prayer; in prayer I can turn from what I see on my television screen, listen to my intuition, and discover what the real story is from a spiritual perspective. I turn from the relative to the absolute, from effect to cause, from worldly

facts to a deeper understanding. Somewhere in the center of this dark storm exploding around us all is divine intelligence and eternal peace, and I need to turn toward it.

As a minister for thirteen years, I have never been at a loss for a prayer for my students, clients, and congregants. But now, do I pray for the violence to stop, for those plunging to their deaths from the towers to live, for those trapped to be found safe? Perhaps for the attackers to open their hearts to love?

I pray to God to show me what to pray for. In this very instant, I am led with a calm certainty to my book of prayers.

The Power of Forgiveness

I open the prayer book and the pages fall open to a very specific prayer:

You have no enemies. Everyone in the world is your friend. I forgive all

beings. *Let all beings forgive me.*

I am stunned at Spirit's choice. Forgive? Forgive before I know if my brother is alive? Forgive the men or women who may have killed him? Forgive before I get answers or justice or punishment? These words seem outrageous, and yet I know this must be Spirit speaking to me, because forgiveness would be the last prayer I'd have chosen at this moment.

We had just opened the doors of the Sacred Center for Spiritual Living two days before the attacks. I realize that by being so close to *ground zero*, we can be of more service than if we had opened up in another part of the city. I can see divine order at work; and it is this divine intelligence leading me to "put on the mind of Christ" right here, right now.

So I pray as I believe I am directed: *Everyone in the world is my friend. I have no enemies.* I pray to forgive those flying the planes toward the other tower, flying the planes only God knows where else. I pray that if I/we caused harm to them or their loved ones, that they forgive me, forgive us. I wonder how many people at this very moment on earth are praying to forgive and be forgiven? *Everyone in the world is my friend. I have no enemies.*

The concept of *radical forgiveness* declares that every single thing that happens is purposeful and for our

higher good. This

c o n c e p t

approaches every situation with the question, "How can this experience open my heart and allow

me to bring God's love into the world?" It would have us ask "What is right and perfect here?" This radical teaching says there is no such thing as anything happening *to* us, only *for* us. This means that, on the soul level, there are no victims and no enemies—only brothers, sisters, family, and friends who come into our lives either to extend love to us or to call for love from us.

Radical forgiveness isn't new; it's the teaching of Jesus. Yes, we can forgive our enemies after an accounting has been done. We can bless our enemies after justice and punishment has been meted out. But we fall short when it comes to blessing and praying for our enemies *as* they are.

Everyone in the world is my friend. I have no enemies. I don't stop affirming this until I feel the presence of forgiveness in my body. I know it. I sit in prayer until the miracle happens—not in the world around me, but in me.

The Power of Love

"Love your enemies," Jesus

For more information on Rev. August Gold or the Sacred Center for Spiritual Living, visit scienceofmind.com

The Deepest Prayer

A Religious Science practitioner's experience of September 11th

The main scene from my large office windows included the Twin Towers and the Statue of Liberty at the foot of the Hudson River. On that morning, carrying my briefcase and my juice, I opened my office doors and looked up seconds after the plane had hit the second tower. Colleagues filed in to my office, and we all just watched the events unfold. We saw what looked like people falling to their deaths. When the first tower fell, no one moved or made any noise. When the second tower fell, one of my coworkers yelled "No!" and burst into tears. It became extremely important to call loved ones, to hear their voices, to reassure them that we were okay.

Our building was soon evacuated. The island of Manhattan was closed—I couldn't go to my Brooklyn home. I called a friend who lived about 60 blocks north and asked if I could come over. I walked in a sea of thousands of people, all heading away from the huge black cloud of smoke that had formed. Even though there were so many of us, there was virtually no talking, no noise other than police sirens, fire engines, and ambulances. People were numb—no hysteria, no crying, just silent walking.

As a longtime Religious Science practitioner, I have spent many years using the power of prayer for my life and those around me. But as I prayed and walked alongside these people who had experienced firsthand such a horrific event, I began to pray from a place deep within. An incredible thing happened as I prayed; I felt a profound oneness with the people around me. I felt connected to them, to the ground under my feet, and to the world around me. For hours, this feeling of oneness and deep connection filled my entire heart; I allowed this spontaneous prayer to fill me and radiate out of me to reach out to the world around me. It was the most powerful prayer experience I've ever had.

I will always remember the feeling of oneness as I walked north along 8th Avenue with those thousands of brothers and sisters. I see now that the prayer was being prayed through me. Each morning, as I spend time in prayer and remember how precious each day is, I am reminded that our lives *are* our prayers. And the thought comes to me that perhaps one of the most profound prayers we can pray is very short and to the point: *Dear God, I'm here. Thank You. Amen.*

—Joel Fotinos, RScP

Three Healing Powers

Powerful tools of transformation are available to each of us. By incorporating them into our daily spiritual practice, we are able to transform our lives and bring this transformation to others. We each, then, become the healing arms of God on earth. Try these three healing powers, and see how they work in your life:

1. **The Power of Prayer.** Ernest Holmes taught us the five steps of Spiritual Mind Treatment, an affirmative prayer that brings the reality of the Divine into our life and world right now. The five steps of prayer—recognition, unification, realization, thanksgiving, and release—are five steps of seeing our life and everyone in it with new eyes. Prayer is a calling for us to raise our consciousness and live in the healing, rather than stay stuck in the pain.

Resolve to pray every morning shortly after waking. Use the affirmative prayers in this magazine (beginning on page 1), or daily write your own affirmative prayers that allow you to open yourself to allow God to bring about your highest and greatest good. Keep a prayer journal and make notations of when your prayers are answered and in what way.

2. **The Power of Forgiveness.** In his book *Radical Forgiveness: Making Room for the Miracle*, Colin C. Tipping outlines the way to let go of the victim archetype, open our hearts, and raise our consciousness. This does not mean that those who do wrong should not be held accountable—to do so would be to deny the situation and not transform through it. But in addition to holding everyone in the situation accountable, we must “recognize that perfection resides somewhere in the situation, even if it is not apparent at the time.”

Write in your journal your feelings about a situation or person that you find difficult to forgive. Then close your eyes and allow yourself to breathe deep full breaths. After a couple of minutes, ask yourself, “Is there a new way of looking at this person/situation? Can I see this differently?” Don’t judge what comes up—just write it in your journal. Keep doing this every day for thirty days, and see how you can see the situation with new eyes.

3. **The Power of Love.** Ernest Holmes wrote, “Love is the self-givingness of the Spirit through the desire of Life to express Itself in terms of creation. Love is free from condemnation, even as it is free from fear.” Even in the midst of the darkest moments, love can break through to our soul and help to begin the healing process. Once the process begins, love becomes the call to action, which is to bring the healing power of love to everyone you meet.

Close your eyes and see the love in your heart and in the world. Feel this love. Extend this love to every creature.

—A.G.

instructs us. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you." Why is this practically impossible for us to fulfill? Because we see and mistake those who hate us for "enemies" instead of how Jesus saw them, as our brothers, sisters, family, and friends calling for our love. I now understand that I must put that love into service for the greater healing of the world around me. Otherwise I will not be able to see my true brothers and sisters beneath their disguises; I will see instead enemies, strangers come to harm me. I'll see only the obvious newspaper headlines: that we are attacked by "foreigners"; we need better defense against these "others"; we are victims who were punished for things we didn't do. Without love, we will grow more fearful in a world that now appears more dangerous.

We are being called to pour forth from within our own hearts real, astonishing, mind-altering, life-changing love. This is not the watered-down, sentimental emotion that passes for love on television sitcoms, but rather love as a power greater than ourselves. Not just the love that God gives, but the love that God *is*.

Higher Calling

In this past year, we at Sacred Center for Spiritual Living have

deepened our commitment to uncover the kingdom of God, of love, of heaven that lives within us. We have turned our focus from the fear-based headlines to the love within ourselves that awaits our release. Before, many of us had perhaps settled for conditional love and forgiveness, love with strings, and forgiveness that ends with accountability. But now we have individually and as a community committed to answering the holy call to love one another. This message, this experience of healing, has struck a chord in our city. In the year since we opened our doors, our church has doubled in size, and has had to move twice to accommodate the crowds. Families and friends of loved ones who were directly affected by those events have come to share their grief process with us, and for us to grow together.

We know with a deep certainty, now more than ever before, that God is waiting for us to release the love from within our very own hearts, to return love for hate, to choose love over fear. How do we know? Because in the memory of the events that took place that September day at the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, we can hear the voice whispering to us: love one another. *Everyone in the world is my friend, I have no enemies.* •