

## **Finding Your Spiritual Path** **January 14, 2009**

**Oprah:** Tonight's class number three in our weeklong Best Life Series of worldwide webcasts. We're coming to you from Harpo Studios in Chicago, cold Chicago, and this is going out all over the world in real time. So tonight we're talking about my favorite topic on earth, spirituality. And if you have an inkling that something in your life isn't just quite right, if you're asking yourself, "Is this all there is?" Or if you feel like life's getting the best of you, take it as a sign that you're ready for a new beginning. I think a beginning that can start right now. Just like that. Tonight. (Indicating.) If you saw our Best Life show on spirituality last week, you will recognize the people here with me, Rev. Michael Beckwith is the founder of the Agape International Spiritual Center. His new book is called *Spiritual Liberation*. Elizabeth Lesser is the author of *The Seeker's Guide* and *Broken Open* that was on the show today and also the co-founder of the Omega Institute. And Rev. Ed Bacon is rector of the renowned All Saints Episcopal Church at Pasadena. He doesn't have a book yet. I hear people are calling you after I said that last week.

**The Rev. Bacon:** They are. They are.

**Oprah:** But his beautifully written sermons are available on the All Saints website. So throughout our webcast tonight we are going to be taking questions from you, our viewers. Our phone lines, of course, are open right now. There's the number on your screen, 866-677-2496. And before we begin, let's all take a breath together. Let that go. (Breath taken together.) (Moment of silence.) Just a moment. That's all we needed. So we've received many e-mails asking, "What is spirituality? Is it religion? Is it therapy? Is it new age?" Some people said that the advice that our panel gave that you all were talking about during the show last week really had little to do with spirituality. That's what some people said. But more to do with psychology. And I know, Elizabeth, you have some thoughts about that. What did you want to say to that?

**Elizabeth:** Well, I—I think of our inner life, our soul, as something we come into life with. It's shining, in our hearts. It's always there with us. But as we go through life, this light, which is in the lantern of who we are, our body and our psyche are this lantern around our soul light, gets covered with layers of soot, layers of conditioning. Let's say you had a really difficult childhood and you're this beautiful light that you came into the world with, the stress of your childhood, the anger you might have built up, the fear, the mistrust, it begins to dull the natural light that is inside of us. So when we say we go on a spiritual path, we're not going somewhere else. We're not going to get something we don't already have. We have to find a way to clean the sides of our lantern. And so—

**Oprah:** I love that. We're cleaning the soot off of our lantern. That's a good—

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**Elizabeth:** And psychology is actually a sacred journey if you do it in service of liberating the light. So you're aware, "My childhood makes me perpetually angry," so there's no—you go to church and the minister says, "Be love. You are love." But you're always angry, and it doesn't sync up. But you can spend time let's say with a therapist or a counselor or pastoral counselor cleaning that side of the lantern with dealing with your childhood wounds. Healing yourself.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** And that's a tool. That's a spiritual tool. So is religion. Prayer. Ritual. So is contemplation. Meditation. So they all are part of a holistic spiritual path.

**Oprah:** All right. What would you say, Rev. Beckwith?

**Michael:** I would agree with her. Spirituality is not about gaining anything. It's about letting go of something. She's talking about the soot. She's talking about the distrust, the anger, the worry, the fear. So spirituality is had letting go of the false beliefs, the limiting perceptions, the unexamined perceptions in our life, and asked through prayer, through meditation, through sacred service, through study, through fellowship, you start to little by little let go of that which is inhibiting you from being yourself and you have aha! moments. You have insights, you have revelations into your real nature.

**Oprah:** So what does it mean to be spiritually liberated since you wrote the book *Spiritual Liberation*?

**Michael:** If you are spiritually liberated, that means you no longer run by unexamined perceptions.

**Oprah:** Oh, that's good.

**Michael:** And so you're able to contemplate, see what's running you. Sometimes I have people ask, "Who's driving this bus?"

**Oprah:** Uh-huh.

**Michael:** Is it the unexamined perceptions that I just adapted from the society I'm living in? Or is it my higher self that's running the bus? To be spiritually liberated is to know which one is running the bus and keep giving vent to your higher self, the intuition, the divine guidance, the wisdom that's inherent to all of us.

**Oprah:** I love that: "No longer run by unexamined perceptions." And you, sir?

**The Rev. Bacon:** I love Elizabeth's metaphor because I think that inner light really is the experience of the divine within, and we can access that any time.

**Oprah:** Do—we all think that, right? Don't we all think that the inner light is the divine within?

**Michael:** Absolutely. Yes. It is God.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It is God. It is the spirit. It is the all.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And what I want to emphasize is the—

**Oprah:** The all.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It is the all. And when we are in touch with that, we are in touch with how deeply loved we are and how deeply all people are loved.

**Oprah:** Yes, you know I started maybe 10 years ago in my prayer praying to "all that is God" instead of just praying to God because growing up I had this sort of perception of God as, you know, in the sky with the beard and the judgmental God.

**Michael:** Right.

**Oprah:** And so as I grew on my own spiritual path, I wanted to be open to all that is God.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It is an illusion that we are separate from God, separate from one another, separate from anything else. Spirituality is about the wholeness of our being connected with ourselves, with everyone else, with all that is and with God.

**Oprah:** Can you say that again? Because I do think that a lot of people, even very religious people, see themselves as separate from God. And spirituality is about the connection of the inner light, the lantern to that which is God.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** Above around and through us.

**The Rev. Bacon:** When we are connected with the divine intelligence, which is all there is, we become intelligent and we become connected with all there is. We experience the all-ness, the oneness, the wholeness that God is and that we are inside, all the community of cells within us and with one another and with all the people in the world.

**Elizabeth:** And science—

**Oprah:** So God isn't out there. God isn't out there, but God is out there and in here and all around everywhere.

**The Rev. Bacon:** God is all.

**Michael:** Right. And I think a good analogy is just as the sunbeam is not separated from the sun, we're emanations of God, so we're never separated from the divine presence. We wouldn't exist if we were separated, because there's only one life. And that is the life of God, and that life is everywhere and everything is in that context. So to—to think you're separated from God is really an optical illusion.

**Oprah:** Mm-hmm.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And the good news is we can access that any moment.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** By taking a breath.

**Oprah:** And so isn't— okay. By taking a—because I always feel the presence of God through the breath.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** Yeah, that means you're—

**The Rev. Bacon:** God is the breath of God. The spirit is the ru-ha-ha.

**Elizabeth:** And remember when we did our webcast with Eckhart Tolle and he would say, "Take that breath. And then feel the life in your hands." That's a good place to start. Just feel the pulsing energy of life. And if you were a scientist, and physicists are now talking about this. You looked at your hand under a microscope and you saw the dancing atoms and how there really isn't much separation between them and the air around us.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** And the whole earth. It's— sometimes people think this talk about God and separation and sort of not easy to understand and woo-woo but it's— when you think about it in scientific terms how actually we all are these energy fields of dancing energy.

**Oprah:** Yeah. And if you have any trouble understanding that, Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor's book, *My Stroke of Insight*, the moment she had the stroke in the shower, the brain scientist who had the stroke in the

shower and she realized that the— exactly what you're talking about. The atoms in her hand and all around, "My God, it's all the same."

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, and sometimes—

**Oprah:** My God. (Laughter.) My God.

**Elizabeth:** And sometimes—

**Michael:** Everywhere.

**Elizabeth:** —as a form of prayer or meditation, all I do if I'm feeling disconnected or not connecting with another person, I just take that breath, and I feel that pulsing energy and I know that there's just the thinnest membrane separating us and—

**Oprah:** But that pulsing energy that's in your hands, which we talked so much about with

Eckhart, is also the pulsing energy that's throughout the universe, and that's what we're trying to—

**Elizabeth:** That's who we are altogether.

**Oprah:** In everything.

**Michael:** See we're conscious of it. We have reflective consciousness meaning we can think about what we're thinking about. So we're conscious of this pulsing energy. Whereas this table, it's moving very rapidly, even though it looks solid, it's not necessarily reflecting back on itself. But we are. There was a great scientist that said that "We are the way the stars look back at themselves."

**Oprah:** Wow.

**Michael:** So it's the universe becoming conscious of itself.

**Oprah:** So Robin is Skyping in from her living room. You love all this talk, Robin? I could talk this all day long. I love it. The hard part is living it.

**Michael:** That's it.

**Oprah:** That's it. The hard part is living it. So, Robin, what's your question?

**Robin:** My question is, I left my dream job, which was very lucrative and very high paced, to slow down and have more focus and time with my family. But now that I've done that, I'm feeling

unfulfilled. And my question is, did I make the right choice? Or was I wrong to take steps back in my career?

**Michael:** Well, Robin, what I would say to you is that you're growing and you're unfolding, so I wouldn't look at it as if you made a wrong choice. I would look at it that that was a step in your growth and unfoldment, and I would also indicate that there is something within you. There's an inner authority. There's a higher power. There's a wisdom. There's a guidance. There's an intuition. You can begin to ask, "You know, what is my next step to reveal fulfillment? To reveal the gifts that are within me that need to be expressed." But I think if you spend an exorbitant amount of time thinking you made a mistake, then you're going to inhibit that flow of wisdom coming through you. No mistakes have been made. You're your path of growth and development.

**Elizabeth:** I love that you said you didn't make a mistake. I think that's a big waste of time to think that because it's too late anyway. You've done it. So you're—you're going to put your—your car in forward now and keep going. But you know there's a wonderful book called *Wherever You Go, There You Are*. It's a meditation book, and what it means is that whether you move to a smaller house or a less stressful job, you, Robin, are still going to be there. The same person who was stressed out and not connected with people in your life when you were back in your old life, that's still you. So you've made a beautiful stem toward simplicity and showing up. But now you have to do the next level of work, which is actually the harder work, going within and finding out who you really are so that no matter where you go, your true self is there.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Robin, the only way we can become experienced is by having experiences. And you are becoming experienced on your journey. And just let the feedback come back to you from your heart and from your inner voice. I think you're going to hear us talk about inner voices a lot tonight, and trust that just for the next step. Just for the next step.

**Oprah:** Because maybe when you made the decision to give up that job, that was the right step then. And now you're in another space. And now you need to make another choice because you're feeling your feeling, your inner voice is saying, "This doesn't quite feel this is the right thing for me anymore." and now you make another step. I was going to add that what I believe God wants for us is the abundance that he's given us on earth. And so a lot of times people think, "Oh, I have to give up all the stuff. I don't think you do if the stuff doesn't define you."

**Michael:** Right.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Right.

**Oprah:** You know? I think all the stuff and having a good paying job, obviously I have one—(laughter)—can work—can work for you and with you if you are not defined by it. You see what I'm saying?

**Robin:** Yes.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Robin:** Thank you so much. Thank you very much.

**Oprah:** Okay. Glad that helped you. Thank you. There was one particular comment from our panel last week that launched a very hot debate on our message boards.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Really? What was that?

**Oprah:** Can you imagine what that was?

**Michael:** Something about—I don't know.

**Elizabeth:** Oh.

**Oprah:** I can't imagine what that was. Take a look. Take a look. Good gracious.

**Michael:** You know they showed this on the news.

**Oprah:** Did they?

**Michael:** Bill O'Reilly.

**Oprah:** Oh, really. Oh, my goodness. Was it—

**Michael:** He said, "No comment."

**Oprah:** No comment. Oh, I'm sure we did—

**The Rev. Bacon (in clip):** Being gay is a gift from God. But our culture doesn't understand that. And consequently, the culture sends messages that you ought to isolate. And isolation is the antithesis of what all of us need.

**Oprah (in clip):** Well, you are the first minister I ever heard say being gay is a gift from God, I can tell you that.

**Michael (in clip):** Now you'll hear two.

**Oprah (in clip):** Now you'll hear two. Okay.

**Michael (in clip):** Now you'll hear two. And that has nothing to do—

**Oprah(in clip):** You are the first two ministers I ever heard say being gay is a gift from God. (Live) John from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, is on the phone. Hi, John.

**John:** Hi, Oprah. How are you tonight?

**Oprah:** Okay, go for it.

**John:** Good. I'm glad to be talking with you and everyone else. The question that I have as I'm going through this spiritual reevaluation myself is if you're accepting the Bible as a Christian as the rule of God in your life, I guess how do you come to terms with being able to condone homosexuality and the lesbian lifestyle and yet not feel like you're betraying your beliefs?

**Oprah:** Hmm. Good question.

**The Rev. Bacon:** John, I'm so excited about your life because it's so clear that you're on a journey. You're asking the question about what are the—what are the authorities of my life? And I bet you that the Bible is not the only authority in your life. I don't know anyone, even the—even the most literalist Bible thumpers, who really listen to the Bible only. All of us bring in different authorities of our life, and one of the authorities of our lives has to be our inner voice and our true self. Jesus himself gracefully set aside parts of the Bible. In the Sermon On the Mount, he said, "You have heard it said, 'Love your neighbor, but hate your enemy.' But I say to you—you have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye.' But I say—." Even Jesus had to set aside parts of the scripture when they were not in alignment with the compassionate God he knew.

**Michael:** Mm-hmm.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And that's what's going on with you right now. You are squaring the way you use the Bible and other authorities with what you are discovering in the depths of your heart about the real God of compassion and the God who loves all.

**John:** Right.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I'm with you, my friend.

**John:** Right. And it's been an interesting journey. I kind of share a little bit of the affinity with Oprah in that I think we both came from backgrounds that were—at least my background was very rigid. It was very Pentecostal to begin with.

**Oprah:** Southern Baptist. Southern Baptist, yeah.



**John:** And then I went into the charismatic churches, and then there were some things I won't get into that kind of turned me off to Christianity and church for many, many years. And actually it was about four years ago, Oprah, one of your very good friends, Dr. Wayne Dyer, it was some of his teaching that was the catalyst for getting me back involved in spirituality and searching a path for God.

There were some things that I was taught that I'm still very solid on, and then there are other things that I kind of go, hmm, you know, about. And—and so part of the reason for this question from my perspective is that I think there's a lot of Christian people that follow the Christian path out there that are struggling with, you know, being accepting. And my wife and I have had—over the last few years we've actually had two couples that were lesbian friends of ours and they were great, great people. And I don't doubt that they came into our life, you know, for a purpose to teach me some lessons.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Oh, wow.

**John:** And at the same time, I think that a lot of Christians are struggling with maybe some old line thinking of, "Well, we've got to feel, you know, absolutely judgmental. It has to be this way." And unfortunately, I'm seeing that same attitude on the other side of the aisle, too, in the homosexual community. Not in all sections, you understand, but in some sections. And what I want to be a part of is bringing peace to all this.

**Oprah:** That's a— that's a beautiful thing you just said, John.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yes.

**Oprah:** And I think that something the Rev. Bacon said on a show I did Monday is that you've got to, in your own heart, decide whether you're going to serve the God of compassion or you're going to serve the God of judgment and condemnation.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** Is that— what do you want to say, Michael? Rev. Michael.

**Michael:** Several things. One is that the saying goes that "We're spiritually made in the image and likeness of God." God made us in his image, and we've been trying to return the favor ever since. So we've made a God of these human frailties, angry, judgmental, jealous, and we've projected onto the presence of God all of the human immaturity. But that's not the presence of God. The presence of God is as the Reverend is saying, love and compassion, generosity, all of these wonderful qualities. So we're not here telling people what to think. We're asking people to think. To begin to open up their minds and think and come to touching that inner authority that is within them because the Bible is not God's holy word. The Bible is the inspired word of man about God, you see. And so the Bible is— there are also versions of the Bible. If anybody picks up their Bible and reads it, it will say—

**Oprah:** I was always told the Bible was God's holy word.

**Michael:** Right, but it's actually the inspired word of man. The inspiration of man about God. And if you read the Bible, open up any Bible, it will say "version." "This is the King James Version."

**Oprah:** That's right. That's right.

**Michael:** It's the King James Version of the Bible. It's not the Bible. You can't find the real Bible. All you have are the versions that have been passed down. So people are putting their faith in versions.

**Oprah:** Say that again. The inspired words—words of men about God.

**Michael:** About God.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** That's what you're reading. So at any moment, you know, you have an aha!, you have an inspiration about the presence of God.

**Oprah:** I just had an aha! just then.

**Michael:** You lay it down, you know, it becomes your Bible. It becomes that moment of inspiration. So you compile all of that. It has history.

**Oprah:** Yes.

**Michael:** It has customs.

**Oprah:** And it also has to do with the times. I mean, if we're going to go literally by the Bible, then we would all still be in slaves—well, Michael and I would still be in slavery and it would be, "Slaves obey your masters because—"

**Michael:** We couldn't play football. In Leviticus, it says to touch a pigskin is an abomination. That means you couldn't play football on Sunday. All those quarterbacks throwing the pigskin?

**Oprah:** Well, there's some people who can't because of Leviticus because of that. You see, John, what we're saying. What did you want to say about that?

**Elizabeth:** Well, if you study history, and it's a really good idea to study the history of religions. All religions. Not just Christianity.

**Michael:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** They change over time to accommodate the times. Like Galileo was jailed in the 15th century because he posited that the—the earth was the center—was not the center of the universe, and the sun was. And the church, the Christian church at the time, jailed him because they said in the Bible that man and earth is the center of the universe. Well, we wouldn't do that anymore. That's—we have evolved. And religions evolve with the times, and all you have to do is read your Bible and see the things we no longer take as gospel. But they're in the Bible. So we're evolving now. It's slow. The—the debate now about gays and what was unleashed here the other day on television—

**Michael:** Was revealed. (Laughter.)

**Elizabeth:** Revealed. In 50 years, we'll look back at it and think—

**The Rev. Bacon:** What was that about?

**Elizabeth:** "That was a strange time back then."

**Michael:** Yes.

**Elizabeth:** So we're moving slowly. We have to be both patient—

**Oprah:** "That was a strange time when we people believed that because people were born a certain way then they should be judged."

**Michael:** Right. Right.

**Oprah:** Or they should be stoned or they should be, you know—

**Michael:** Right.

**Oprah:** —treated like women were at one time.

**Elizabeth:** Where we said—

**Oprah:** Like witches.

**Elizabeth:** —"God is love and religion is love, but you're not allowed to love that kind of person". We're going to look back and say, "That was a contradictory message."

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** They'll say, "They were strange, weren't they? They'd say one thing and then do another." Yes.

**The Rev. Bacon:** John, I grew up in Georgia. You're in South Carolina.

**John:** Yes.

**The Rev. Bacon:** There was a very famous pastor where I was a young man who said, "God is a segregationist God." That was a misuse of scripture used to abuse human beings. And we are called to use scripture not as abusive, but as compassionate, healing and liberating.

**Michael:** Yes.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And you are on a path that I salute, my friend.

**Michael:** Yes. Stay awake.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Stay awake.

**Michael:** Stay awake.

**Oprah:** Stay awake.

**Michael:** You look back. Now we're talking about gay people, as Oprah was indicating just a short time ago it was black people.

**Oprah:** Yes.

**Michael:** Before that it was women who were inferior and witches were born. And before that, it was left-handers. If you were left-handed, you were from the devil.

**Oprah:** If you were left-handed and black, God help you.

**Michael:** If you were a left-handed gay person.

**Oprah:** A left-handed and black gay person. Forget about it.

**The Rev. Bacon:** (Laughter.)

**Michael:** There's no way to get in.

**Oprah:** And a woman. Left handed gay—gay black lesbian. Oh, burned at the stake.

**John:** Oh my gosh.

**Oprah:** All right, John. See what you've unleashed here. Thank you so much.

**John:** You're welcome.

**Michael:** Thank you, John.

**Oprah:** Michael from Newport, Rhode Island, wants to jump in on this. Go ahead, Michael.

**Michael:** Hi, how are you?

**Oprah:** How are you?

**Michael from Newport:** Good, thanks. I just want to say thank you. I e-mailed you just to thank you and ask you for you to pass it on to Rev. Bacon. I was completely—I just sat up in my seat and was brought to tears with absolute joy not to just hear it but to know that so many millions of people were hearing it and for homosexuals that needed to hear it, but also for people, you know, that you all were talking about society's evolution, I mean I really think it may have, you know, pushed some things forward. It came out of nowhere for me. I'd never—I mean, I never—you said you were completely—

**Oprah:** It came out of no where for me too. Believe me.

**Michael:** It comes from God.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael from Newport:** I knew it would come but just, you know, the timing was just unbelievable. I was like, "Already?" I just couldn't believe it. I was just—just filled with absolute joy and gratitude. Gratitude that, you know, he was sent there to speak to all those people and to have that be said.

**Oprah:** Well, thank you, Michael. Thanks so much.

**The Rev. Bacon:** May I say one word about that?

**Oprah:** What?

**The Rev. Bacon:** I have gotten a lot of e-mail.

**Oprah:** Yeah, you have.

**Michael:** Me, too, Brother Ed.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And it has been 4 to 1 affirming what went on here.

**Oprah:** Really.

**Michael:** Oh, yes.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It has been amazing. And what I want to bring up is the issue of tears. Most of the people who wrote me said that they were weeping while they were typing the e-mail. My experience is that that kind of tears, those are tears of healing.

**Michael:** Mm-hmm.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And to cry along the journey—

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** —of spirituality.

**Oprah:** Yeah. And tears because I think they were validated by that.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yeah.

**Oprah:** So many people were validated by that.

**The Rev. Bacon:** That's deep healing going on, which is another metaphor for the lantern's being cleansed.

**Elizabeth:** Right. Right.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I'm deeply grateful for everybody who wrote me and told me how liberating that was.

**Michael:** Same here. I was leaving the gym, and these rather muscular guys came up. They were gay. And one of them was explaining to me that his mother called him and said, "I finally understand you." She had kind of cut him off and just that comment opened her up to see her son and embrace her son in a different way.

**Oprah:** Wow.

**Michael:** And that story is repeated many, many times.

**Oprah:** Well, let the healing begin and continue.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Oprah:** Victoria is a mother of five Skyping in from Las Vegas. Victoria, and your question is for our panel?

**Victoria:** Hi. I have children that range from 17 to 1, and I was raised in an organized religion. I've experienced—you know, gone through a few on my own trying to find a place to fit in, and organized religion isn't where I want to go, but I feel like I'm failing my children because I haven't given them a sense of religion but I don't know how—sorry. I don't know how to present them with the spirituality that I think will empower them. So my question to the panel is, besides a book and trying to figure out how to explain the book to them, how do I present this to my children so that they can start their own path earlier than when I started mine? I'm sorry.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Moving.

**Michael:** Bless your heart.

**Elizabeth:** That's so beautiful. I'm so glad you asked it, because there are so many parents out there asking the exact same question. People ask me this all the time. Children ask the big questions.

**Victoria:** They do.

**Elizabeth:** "Who am I? Where do I go when I die? Why did the dog die? Where did he go? And what should I do? And what's the meaning?" And it's so hard when you can't just say, "Okay, we're getting in the car on Sunday and going to church, and that guy will tell you." So it's—you are asking a question for millions and millions of people so thank you for asking it. The first thing I would say, and I really want to hear what everyone else says, is let your children know that you're a seeker. If they know you're seeking, then they'll seek. And that's really the best gift you can give them. Answers aren't—you can't give them answers because you're saying you don't have them. But you can give them the adventurer spirit.

**Michael:** Yes.

**Elizabeth:** You can say to them, "I think about this all the time too. Let's go on this adventure together. Let's read from this book together." You know, there are wonderful books for children, different teaching tales from the Bible, from Buddha, from the Greek myths, and you could have a time every night where you read different stories together and talk about the big issues and let them know that you are someone they can come to with their questions, even if you don't have the answer, and say, "We're going to seek for this together."

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** I think that's a really interesting thing because, you know, I think parents usually, and I think what you're feeling, too, Victoria, parents usually want to have the answer for their kids. They want to

be able to say this is it and this is what we believe as a family. But you're right. It is a spiritual adventure for everybody.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Victoria, I want to say—excuse me.

**Oprah:** Especially when you're a child. Especially when you're a child.

**Michael:** Absolutely. I want to say it's an adventure in self-discovery. As Elizabeth was saying, you don't want to give readily packaged answers, but they will look at your life and how you live your life and the kindness, the love, the justice, all of these qualities as they emerge from you, they will see what spirituality is all about. And the fact that this is emerging from you, that is the presence of God within you seeking to express itself. Just your asking that question is a dimension of the presence of God wanting to come forward.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** And if you continue to walk down that path and ask the questions, the universe, the presence of God, whatever you want to call it, it will answer.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** Because of your sincerity and because of your earnestness.

**Oprah:** It will show itself to you and not, you know, not Moses in a burning bush necessarily.

**Michael:** It will come in a language that she understands.

**Elizabeth:** Maybe.

**Oprah:** Yes.

**Michael:** It will come in her way.

**Oprah:** Yes.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I want to add very quickly, first, I am so grateful for your call. I am so impressed with your mothering and your parenting. Seriously. For you to—for you to respect the—the spirituality of your children.

**Oprah:** It is.



**The Rev. Bacon:** And for you to use the words "I want them to have a spirituality that empowers them." That's the issue.

**Oprah:** That's big. That's big.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Spirituality is about empowering us. Second, a study was made about 60 years ago now about how children have mystical experiences.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And they have—

**Oprah:** You're talking about *The Spiritual Life of Children*? Robert Coles?

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yeah. They have mystical experiences in nature, in the arts and in ritual. For you to take your children and expose—and just be with them on a walk in nature, or to take them to an art gallery, or to flip through a book of art or—or the theater or any kind of ritual and then—it's very

important, and then to ask them what's going on with them and observe them. I had a turning point in my parenting once when I realized that I was trying to lead my children and I was trying to show them the truth, and I realized that I needed to stay a step behind my children and watch where truth was already calling to their hearts and to their true selves and engage them in a conversation and just be a midwife or a facilitator of this thing that's blooming inside of them. I remember your metaphor. Because spirituality is going to blossom. And what your job is, is to be there and to affirm them in having this direct connection with the spirit.

**Oprah:** You get that, right?

**Victoria:** I do. I do. I get that. I—I think I'm just so used to, you know, every religion has a church that they go to, and the spirituality doesn't work like that, so I'm struggling—

**Elizabeth:** There is a loneliness in that. There is. And I think that's—that's a problem, actually, that we will address as this sort of freer spirituality begins to take root in our culture because, as you said on our show last week, we can't do it alone. We yearn for community. We want to help. We don't want to be our—the only teacher of our children. So do you have friends, parents of—of children—your children's friends who share this kind of open spiritual thinking?

**Victoria:** My—my parents have come to—they have a very strong spiritual path. They live in Washington. But most of my friends, honestly, are more in the organized religion, and that's how I've come about experiencing several different religions, and it's just a judgmental path that I don't want to pass down to my children. I'm struggling moving off that path on my own. I would prefer not to have them start that way and then find the right path later, so that's what I'm looking for and I mean I respect

all of you very much just—it's been a long time since I've heard anyone, you know, even like the reverends sort of talk about acceptance rather than God is judgmental, because I've never believed that and I think that's why I'm struggling. And I guess I just need to get out more and maybe look for being more open in talking to people and finding out if they're following religion or spirituality and try and connect on that level.

**Oprah:** And I'm sure that—

**Victoria:** What you said about finding a book and reading that with my children and let them know that I'm seeking and that I don't actually know it, that's sort of a—a relief. I mean I feel like I'm supposed to know it for them. I'm supposed to have the answers.

**Elizabeth:** Most of us don't know it.

**The Rev. Bacon:** No, no, no.

**Elizabeth:** Most of us up here, we don't know it either.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Elizabeth:** We're all seeking. We're more seekers than finding. Human life is about seeking.

**Michael:** Right.

**Oprah:** And in Elizabeth's book actually it's called *The Seeker's Guide*. On page 51, she talks about the old spirituality of authority: "Hierarchy has the authority, the church has the authority,

and then the new spirituality, you are your own best authority as you work to know and love yourself. You discover how to live a spiritual life." And she goes down the list of the old versus the new, and I think there is a new sense of being in control of our spirituality emerging.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And actually it's a very ancient idea. The priesthood of all believers has been in Christianity for a long time, which said you really ultimately are your own priest. You have to listen to your inner voices. One of the greatest turning points in everyone's life is to listen to, trust and obey your inner voices. And for you to do that for yourself as well as equip your kids or empower your kids to do that, they will thank you forever and ever, and you will save them a lot in psychiatric bills.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** I will say I was one of those people who used to go to church every—I grew up, as I was sharing with the last caller, you know, in the South and so going to church every Sunday, Sunday School, Baptist Training Union, Wednesday night prayer service, the whole thing, choir, all of it. And

when I moved to Baltimore, I was in my 20s, and I remember sitting in a church, you know, one of those big churches where you have to get there at, you know, 6:30 in the morning to line up for 8 o'clock service, and the minister was preaching about—it was a really good preacher—and he was preaching about how God—"the Lord thy God was a jealous God and the Lord thy God would condemn us for whatever," and I remember I—I had a spiritual aha! There. And I was in my late 20s, and I suddenly thought, "How can this God who is all loving and all powerful, why would God be jealous of me?"

**Michael:** Right.

**Oprah:** "How could that be? It just doesn't"—it didn't work for me. Something happened in that moment. And prior to that, I was just sort of by rote doing what I'd been trained to do in the church. And that's when my spiritual path began. Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** But if you miss the congregation.

**Oprah:** When I started to ask the questions. Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** If you miss the—the fellowship of fellow seekers and you want that, there are—you're not going to find the perfect church.

**Oprah:** You might. Agape, man. Agape.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It is perfect, isn't it, Michael?

**Oprah:** Agape, come on. All Saints. These are pretty good churches.

**Michael:** I think what she's saying, though, is there are places.

**Elizabeth:** There are places.

**Michael:** That teach this new thought ageless wisdom all over the United States, all over the world.

**Oprah:** How do you find a church like yours? Maybe not with a choir as good, but—

**Michael:** We do have a magnificent choir.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** You know, you can look up the Science of Mind, there's Unity.

**Elizabeth:** Unity Church.

**Oprah:** Unity Churches, yeah.

**Elizabeth:** Unity Churches are all over the place.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** As are Unitarian Churches.

**Michael:** Right.

**Oprah:** By Unity, it means they accept all religions, right?

**Victoria:** Okay.

**Michael:** Unity embraces the teachings of Jesus, but not necessarily from a dogmatic point of view. The same thing with the Science of Mind. It's taking your life—it's a religion that gives you back to yourself.

**Oprah:** Okay.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Victoria, I want to say something very spiritual here. I believe in prayer. And I believe that when you pray and you ask God to lead you to the place for you and your family. And you persist in that prayer. Over time, that it will happen. It will be revealed to you. It may be totally surprising, unconventional, outside the box. It will be—it will come to you.

**Oprah:** It's like a—Rev. Beckwith was saying here. You have to stay awake. It will come to you. Somebody will be talking, you'll be in a conversation, you'll be in the supermarket, you'll be somewhere, you'll see it on the back of a bus, you'll see or hear it on television.

**Michael:** The signs are everywhere.

**Oprah:** It just—it just will show up and it will be, like, "Oh my goodness. There it is. There it was all the time. Aha! Aha!"

**The Rev. Bacon:** It's going to happen.

**Oprah:** Aha!

**Elizabeth:** I want to say one thing before we leave this.

**Oprah:** Okay.

**Elizabeth:** Which is that many, many churches—I don't want us to appear to be judgmental of organized religion.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Elizabeth:** Many organized churches, ones you would not assume, are way more open-minded than we may be giving credit to now. So maybe just go to your—to a few local churches and check it out. Perhaps things have changed some since you were a child. And I just want to not and out be smug about this and be judgmental of all organized religion because so many of the churches—

**Victoria:** No.

**Elizabeth:** —and synagogues—

**Oprah:** Are more open.

**Elizabeth:** —are more open.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And they're changing all the time.

**Elizabeth:** And they are changing.

**Michael:** They're changing rapidly.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Organized religion is changing.

**Michael:** As we were talking about earlier, before the show, there's a teacher for every level of consciousness or every level of awareness.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Right.

**Michael:** And where you are now, you wouldn't fit in that other box. You're now ready to do some exploration and some research into real spirituality. So you're going to find where you fit.

**Oprah:** You don't fit in the condemnation box. And I think that's interesting for every level—

**Elizabeth:** I love that.

**Oprah:** —there is somebody there—

**Michael:** For them.

**Oprah:** —for them for that.

**The Rev. Bacon:** You can tune in to our website and worship with us on streaming, okay? And we've got a good choir at All Saints Church, Pasadena.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, yes.

**Oprah:** I hadn't heard your choir. I hadn't heard your choir.

**Michael:** And I'm having him speak at my church.

**Oprah:** Really.

**Michael:** Absolutely. I asked him to come on a Wednesday night.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Elizabeth is coming.

**Michael:** Elizabeth is coming.

**Victoria:** Can I find those on Oprah.com? Your churches?

**Oprah:** Yes. Yes, you can. On Oprah.com. Thank you. Thanks, Victoria.

**Victoria:** Thank you so much. That gives me such a—I guess a revving of energy that I can actually find that right way. I sort of just felt stuck, and thank you so much for taking the time. And thank you, Oprah, for doing this Best Life Week. It's been amazing to me in many ways.

**Oprah:** Thank you. Thank you.

**Elizabeth:** Oh.

**Oprah:** Thank you, Victoria. So now we have Tracy from Nova Scotia on the phone. Hello.

**Tracy:** Hello. My question is for you. It's more of—I've been reading books like *A New Earth* and books on the law of attraction and positive thinking, and I find while I'm reading the book I'm living a more positive life, and about two or three weeks after everything's great, but then about a month into it I'm back into my old ways and old way of thinking.

**Oprah:** Lose connection, yeah.

**Tracy:** How do you stay connected? How do you not slip off to your old way of thinking and that—that, you know, keeping that positive feeling and keeping, you know, more spiritual like, being more connected? How do you stay present continuously?

**Oprah:** That's the question.

**Michael:** That is the question.

**Oprah:** That is the question.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I want to jump in again. I can't say—

**Michael:** I'll jump in after you.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I'll jump in after you.

**Michael:** No, go ahead.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I can't emphasize community enough. You cannot be a whole person alone. You cannot be a fully alive person alone. None of us can sustain this kind of energizing life that we're talking about here tonight alone. We have to have companions on the journey.

**Oprah:** But doesn't it start with you, though?

**The Rev. Bacon:** It does start with you. And if you rely just on you, without these kinds of conversations, it will wane. So you have to get boosted. You have to have a revival. And there's a good thing about that in terms of the community. I'm sorry—

**Oprah:** The Bible says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name."

**The Rev. Bacon:** Where two or three are gathered. And Jesus always sent people out two by two. Not alone. And Jesus had folks around him all the time, and he had an inner circle of his three best friends. And he would go off by himself.

**Oprah:** And so by community, you mean—you don't necessarily mean you have to go and be gathered with somebody.

**The Rev. Bacon:** No, no, no. Quite the contrary.

**Oprah:** At least you can have conversations for me, you know, it's—

**The Rev. Bacon:** It's the Ubuntu notion that "I cannot be a person without other persons. I have got to be connected with other people."

**Oprah:** So for me, like my chief of staff, the woman who runs my whole office, I mean, she and I are on the same kind of—

**The Rev. Bacon:** There you go.

**Oprah:** —plane alignment and sometimes drive home together and we're talking about the stuff and talking about the day from a spiritual point of view. That's what you're talking about.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Exactly.

**Oprah:** You've got to have somebody else who's in community with you about it.

**Michael:** It's called being around holy people. Keeping your company holy and walking the same direction.

**Oprah:** Yes.

**Michael:** The other thing that I would say to her is this is why we call it a spiritual practice.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Mm-hmm.

**Michael:** So that every day you're practicing something.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yes.

**Michael:** Some days you're going to feel good, you're going to feel high. Some days you're not going to feel good, but you still practice. Just— you wake up every day, you brush your teeth every day. Some days you may not feel like it, but you still do it.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** So when you have a spiritual practice, you wake up, you pray, you meditate, whatever your particular inclination is.

**Oprah:** Give yourself a moment of silence.

**Michael:** Give yourself a moment of silence. Watch your breath. And then what happens is you start to develop a kind of an inner subjective way of being, and you don't beat yourself up when you're feeling bad. You don't go to the other extreme when you're feeling good. It's a practice that, over a period of



time, it would hold a space of inner joy, a sense of well-being, a sense of connectedness, and then you'll become shocked when you're able to hold that joy even when things are going bad. That's when you know that something has changed in you.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** "Things are going wrong? I still feel pretty good about myself. I feel pretty good."

**Oprah:** Isn't that what faith is?

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yes.

**Michael:** It's the substance of things hoped for. It's the real living substance.

**Oprah:** Okay.

**Michael:** Yes.

**Oprah:** Got it. Lizzy.

**Elizabeth:** Well, I love this idea of practice because—and we practice—you practice—even the best pianists who are playing in Carnegie Hall still practice every day.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** And the most at peace, loving, fully alive people still have bad days and do mean and stupid things. And we all do. And practice—spiritual practice for me, my spiritual practices of choice are meditation, which is a very simple practice. It's sitting in stillness because God's spirit speaks to me the best in stillness. Sounds easy, but it's not. Meditation—

**Oprah:** Quiet the mind. Very hard.

**Elizabeth:** Quiet the mind, the minute you try to be quiet, all of your anxieties and voices are there. So learning meditation from a book or a teacher is a great idea. Prayer. For me, prayer is very simple. It's like blowing on that flame inside of me. (Indicating.) I actually sometimes if I'm getting uptight or in a bad mood, I'll actually make that—that movement with my lips, just quietly to

myself. I'll go—(indicating)—and I'm flaming—I'm fanning the flame in my heart.

**Michael:** Mm-hmm.

**Elizabeth:** And it's a little reminder. It can change my mood in a second where things are bad, and I'll just stop and I'll go—(indicating)—and I'll feel the flame burning a little brighter. And it's a prayer. It's a prayer for me.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I want to add a spiritual practice and that's journaling. I think prayer is the core spiritual practice for so many of us. And having a spiritual companion is a very important spiritual discipline as well. But the act of sitting down with a journal and writing about my spiritual life allows me to be in the practice of observing myself.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And life in the spirit is about being able to step behind your thoughts and actions and your ideologies and observe yourself.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** So to step back and observe your spiritual path as it's unfolding on your journal is a very important discipline.

**Oprah:** A good way to journal is to do a gratitude journal. I found that to be the most beautiful.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Oh, yes, yes, yes, very good.

**Oprah:** If you just write down every day five things in that day you were grateful for, it changes the way you look at your whole day, because you're looking for—your whole outlook for the day is to look for what you can be grateful for, you know? And sometimes it's just somebody holding a door. I think, "Better take note of that because I might need that later on tonight. Yeah.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** As my fifth thing. Yes.

**Tracy:** I actually did do a gratitude journal, and I made so many amazing things come true and happen in my life. But then I found myself, you know, something happened and then I go right back into the same way of thinking again. So I think you're right about the practice part.

**Oprah:** It's like developing a muscle and when you stop lifting the weights, you lose the muscle.

**Elizabeth:** And also be forgiving of yourself. What you're talking about, none of us here on this panel, it doesn't sound strange to us. I'm always falling off the wagon and getting myself back up.

**Tracy:** Okay.

**Elizabeth:** The thing is, I get up a lot quicker now.

**Oprah:** I don't know what you're talking about.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Can't relate.

**Oprah:** I don't know what that is.

**Elizabeth:** A sense of humor is a great spiritual practice as well. Laugh at yourself.

**Michael:** Right. Right. Laughing at ourselves. That's good.

**Oprah:** It is about practicing. You know my goal for the year, I always ask, you know, for the universe, God, for something and you have to be careful what you ask for because I remember the

years I asked for courage. I'm not asking for courage anymore because you get all this stuff you have to come up against. God, I don't need courage anymore. Or strength. But what I'm really seeking for myself this year is a closer walk with thee.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Right.

**Oprah:** Just to be more connected, because I think that all of my weight issues and health issues are about being—about allowing myself to feel separated and not remaining in present moment connected to the lantern that you're talking about.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Oprah:** That's really what it all boils down to.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Oprah:** And you feel your pain and your disconnection and your, really, suffering in proportion to how far you are away from that light.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Mine is about making sure or praying or working on or practicing that the core truth of my existence is that I'm beloved. So much trouble in the world is caused by people not loving themselves in the depth of their being. And Jimi Hendrix said, "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, then we'll have peace." And we need to have the power of love inside—

**Oprah:** Jimi Hendrix. I'm going to write that down.

**The Rev. Bacon:** He's a great minister, by the way.

**Oprah:** Really.

**Michael:** He passed on a few years ago.

**Oprah:** Yes, I know. The power of love overcomes the love of power.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Then we'll have peace. Which is true. In ourselves, in our communities, in our relationships.

**Michael:** This peace and self-love I think is very important, and it's not the end game. It's the beginning game.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It is.

**Michael:** And so when we're able to wrap our arms around ourself and really love what God has made, even all of our foibles, then the path becomes smoother. But if we're walking with a sense of sin, the original sin or something to this effect, that we have some kind of fatal flaw that we're incorrect, that we're an accident, then our whole life is looked through that particular lens, and we just run up against all the obstacles that we're creating mentally.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It's got to be the original blessing.

**Michael:** It's the original blessing. Self-love and appreciation is really our foundation to leap into spiritual practice.

**Oprah:** And the way you love yourself, the way you really love yourself is to recognize your connection to the divine.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Elizabeth:** But that's why at the beginning when I was talking about the lantern and about psychology, sometimes it's very hard to love yourself.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It is.

**Elizabeth:** If you grew up in a family or a culture where you were called unlovable.

**The Rev. Bacon:** That's true.

**Elizabeth:** On whatever level it was.

**Oprah:** That's right.

**Elizabeth:** And there's healing that has to happen.

**Oprah:** Because you have to be taught that you're unlovable.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Elizabeth:** But you then have to learn that you're lovable. And sometimes that takes some work. Some healing work. Some psychotherapeutic work. That's why I think this new art and science of psychology, I didn't is really only a hundred-year art and science. It started in the last century—is a holy work. Unraveling the layers of conditioning from your childhood that told you there was something basically wrong with you.

**Michael:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** That can take some people several years or more to get to. And I think it's holy work and I think, as you say, it's the first work.

**Michael:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** It's not the end. The end isn't to become a narcissistic self-lover.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Elizabeth:** But it's to have a ground of love that you then can step into the higher realms and into a life of service. But if you don't start by healing your core original misconception that you are an unlovable person, you can layer on all the scripture you want.

**The Rev. Bacon:** True.

**Elizabeth:** But you don't really ever get it.

**The Rev. Bacon:** True.

**Oprah:** Got that.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**The Rev. Bacon:** That is so true.

**Oprah:** Well said. Thank you, Tracy.

**Tracy:** Thank you so much.

**Oprah:** Thank you so much. Wendy is a single mother Skyping in from her home office in Melbourne, Australia. G'day, Wendy.

**Wendy:** G'day.

**Oprah:** What's your question?

**Wendy:** My question—sorry?

**Oprah:** Yeah, your question. Go ahead.

**Wendy:** My question is what do you think is the biggest evil that impacts our society today?

**The Rev. Bacon:** The biggest evil is dehumanization. It's the root of war. It's the root of retaliation. It's the root of the spiraling cycle of violence that we see. It's the root of bigotry. It's the root of exclusion of—of making people outcasts. And I think that that's—that's what we have to work on. And the way we work on dehumanization is this love stuff. To make sure that the foundation of our soul is being beloved. And my experience is that real love, authentic love, is not about just loving ourselves alone. You don't have to worry about that. Love, when it comes into your life or you become aware that love is the core of your life, then that expands to other people and you cannot stop yourself from loving everyone else. So you become an oasis of peace, an oasis of love and an oasis of honoring the dignity of every human being.

**Oprah:** Don't you really mean, though, ego? Isn't the biggest evil the ego because it's the root of all evil. Isn't it the root of all evil?

**The Rev. Bacon:** Oh, yes.

**Michael:** Absolutely. And the ego is an accumulation of unexamined perceptions that run our life.

**Oprah:** Right.

**Michael:** And what I would add to what Ed is saying is ignorance. When we're talking about dehumanization, we're talking about ignorance that's running our life. People not knowing that they are the light. Not being able to see the light or feel the light or express the light. And through the veil of ignorance, people do destructive things. Now underneath that destruction, sometimes I'll say that

behind every human aberration there is a spiritual aspiration. There is something trying to come through.

**The Rev. Bacon:** That's good.

**Michael:** But it is coming through the veil of ignorance and the ego. But the energy itself—

**Oprah:** Behind every aberration?

**Michael:** Behind every human aberration, there lies a spiritual aspiration.

**The Rev. Bacon:** So true. That is so true.

**Michael:** There's only one power. It's the power of God. And it's trying to break through.

**Oprah:** So what was the human aspiration—the spiritual aspiration of slavery?

**Michael:** The spiritual aspiration of slavery was abundance. Prosperity. Control. I mean, on a positive side.

**Oprah:** Uh-huh.

**Michael:** You see? People were trying to control their life. They were trying to have more. And they did it through a destructive way. They dehumanized a whole group of people. Us.

**Oprah:** Right.

**Michael:** You see. But underneath that, they were trying to control their life. They were trying to have more than enough.

**Oprah:** Okay.

**Michael:** But they were ignorant that they were connected to the divine and they were ignorant that the black people were connected to the divine. But underneath there was a spiritual energy trying to happen. But it was coming through ego and it was coming through the prism of ignorance. Because it can't be God and something else. That would mean that God is not infinite. You see? There can't be God and. There can only be God. And then you're either in it, you're aware of it or you're ignorant of it. If you're ignorant of it—

**Oprah:** So you're in it but you're ignorant of it. I just got it.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I would like to know the spiritual application of this question for you?

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Why is this relevant to you?

**Elizabeth:** Good question.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Wendy?

**Wendy:** No, it was just on a broad level I was just thinking what—to me, I could think of money, power, power being one that I think that seems to be a real problem with our society, and then you can get down on a lower level of things, which is your drugs and that sort of thing. So I just wanted to put it out there and see if you could come up with something that would be one thing, and I like the idea that you mentioned at the beginning about I think you called it the human side and love because I think when it comes down to it, if you have love for yourself and love for other people and love and joy in your life, then that—that does cover a lot of the other areas as well and it eliminates the need for other things in your life such as the drugs and alcohol and that sort of thing.

**Michael:** Absolutely. See those are symptoms. What she's describing are symptoms of an individual that's cut off from the light or is ignorant of their true nature and being. And so they have coping mechanisms, defense mechanisms, compulsive behaviors, all kinds of behaviors that are symptoms. Drugs, abuse, etc. But it's from ignorance. Not being—being unconnected consciously.

**Oprah:** Thank you very much all the way from Australia.

**Wendy:** Thank you.

**Oprah:** Thanks, Wendy.

**Michael:** From Oz.

**Oprah:** Let's go to the phones. Debbie's on the line from Erie, Pennsylvania. Hi, Debbie.

**Debbie:** Hi, Oprah. I was married to my husband for 32 years. And after, oh, about three years ago, he told me he was gay. And I basically lost all my faith in everything and spiritually, how would I—how do I get that back? How do I get back my faith again in anything and everybody?

**Michael:** Wow.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I think the first question is— actually is not about regaining your faith. The first question has to do to make sure you're grieving a huge loss. That's such a significant loss. And that needs to be respected.



**Elizabeth:** Yes.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Your loss needs to be respected, and that's going to take some time. And Jesus said, "Blessed are they who mourn for they will be comforted."

**Oprah:** Yes.

**The Rev. Bacon:** The word "comfort" means to be made stronger with. Come fort.

**Oprah:** Be stronger with.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And you will, over time, receive your power back. I promise you. The faith will come. But it is very important to mourn first.

**Debbie:** Yes. And that's what I'm doing now. It's been three years, like I said. But it's still—it's a big loss, and I still feel very empty and a great loss, you know.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And I—

**Debbie:** In life.

**The Rev. Bacon:** —hate to be a broken record here. What about your support group? Are you in connection or community with one or two or three other people who truly understand and respect your grieving process and your desire to regain your faith?

**Debbie:** No, not really. I—like I go to therapy but—

**Oprah:** One side, yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** That's tough, my friend. It's important to tell some other folks and ask them in. None of us can heal alone. None of us.

**Debbie:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** What I would like to say besides really supporting what Rev. Ed says about mourning and the preciousness and necessity of grief, what you begin to come back and regain—regain your strength, a trauma as large as this and a loss as large of this carries with it the potential with an awakening equally as large and that awakening is about yourself. It's not about anyone else. It's about, first of all, who were you in the marriage? What was going on all those years about you that you didn't know?

**Debbie:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** And then how do you choose again and reenter? And there's so much fertile ground for you to use this as your springboard spiritually into enormous self-knowledge.

**Oprah:** So this is what you're talking about. Out of aberration there's a spiritual aspiration.

**Michael:** Absolutely. And not wanting to in any way inhibit the grieving process, but I think what Elizabeth is saying here, when Jesus spoke and when—he was always talking about consciousness. And so when he's saying, "Blessed are those that mourn," he's saying blessed are those who have had terrible losses. And those terrible losses are paradigm shifters. They allow us to change our thinking. To open us up to new worlds. So she's going to be invited to live in a new world based on this crisis. So you have to go through the grieving process. You have to acknowledge what is lost. You have to acknowledge who you were in the marriage.

**Oprah:** That's so good.

**Michael:** The decisions that you made or did not make. And at the same time, the universe is inviting you to become way bigger than you ever thought you could possibly be.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Amen.

**Michael:** Through this mourning process.

**Oprah:** Mm-hmm.

**Michael:** Blessed are those whose identity is shaken so that they can begin to discover that part of them that can never be shaken.

**The Rev. Bacon:** I—

**Oprah:** Wow, that made my eyes water right there. I got a little tingle.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Let's have a moment there then.

**Oprah:** That's a moment. That's pretty amazing. Pretty amazing. Did you feel that too, Debbie?

**Debbie:** Yes, I did. Definitely.

**Oprah:** I felt it for you. Because it's so easy to get stuck in that space that "He did this to me and how come I didn't know and oh my God."

**Debbie:** Yes. I've been going through that quite a bit.

**Oprah:** Yes. Yes. Yes.

**The Rev. Bacon:** There are groups on the Internet who have a story similar to yours and who are on a journey—

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**The Rev. Bacon:** —who can be your companions in this so that you do have companionship.

**Oprah:** Because when something this—this grave happens to you, and we're not saying being gay is the grave thing. It's that you were deceived all this time.

**Michael:** Right.

**Oprah:** That you were deceived. When something—that means there's an opening here for that much light to come through.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yes.

**Oprah:** Right.

**Michael:** Right. Right. She was living a lie. They were living a lie, and they were holding it together.

**Debbie:** Yes.

**Michael:** So that means not only was he deceiving her, but there were parts of her that weren't even expressing, you see, and now she has the opportunity to discover that, without discounting what she's going to have to go through. You're talking about journaling. That means she's going to actually look at those places. And when you shine the light on stuff within you, you change the energy of it.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Mm-hmm.

**Michael:** And it becomes less dense just by looking at it.

**Elizabeth:** And I'm sure it wasn't a total lie. I'm sure there were many beautiful and wonderful years and gifts that you gave each other.

**Debbie:** Oh, yes.

**Elizabeth:** And you don't—to let go of it now doesn't mean you have to negate it completely. You can be grateful for what you had. Self-investigate how you also created it. Mourn. And all three of those things are an important part of your healing.

**Michael:** Absolutely. Sometimes I teach that when a relationship is over, you do three things. One, you have to accept what is. You have to accept that it is over.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** And not go into wishful thinking.

**Oprah:** Stop resisting it.

**Michael:** "I wish I would have, should have, could have. I wish this had turned out differently. This should not have happened." And secondly, you go over all of the good stuff that happened. You go over all of the lessons that you got out of that relationship. And then third, you forgive. You accept what is, you harvest the good, and you forgive. And your process in those three areas are all individual. They're all individual.

**Oprah:** All right.

**Debbie:** And that's basically what I've been doing. I mean, I—I've accepted the fact that he's gay. I've just—it's hard to accept the fact that he kept it away from me all those years.

**Michael:** Think about—think about what he was going through hiding that from everyone. Being in the closet. Faking—and he wasn't faking the love. Obviously there was love there. He loved you. So let's not discount that.

**Debbie:** Yes.

**Michael:** But just think also about—and maybe you can't do this right now. But the compassion around him for being able to—for not being able to express himself for all those years.

**Debbie:** Yes.

**Michael:** It's tough.

**Debbie:** Yeah. And he—I've already—I've already forgiven him. We are—I mean, we still talk. We are still very close. It's just the loss that I feel.

**Oprah:** And part of the loss is mourning the loss—the life that you now will no longer be able to have.

**Debbie:** Yes. Yes. Definitely. That's what it is.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** But you'll have a new life, and it will be—you can make it. It's your choice to use this to grow in ways that you can't even imagine.

**Oprah:** Absolutely.

**Elizabeth:** And I would imagine several years from now you'll even be grateful that it happened.

**Oprah:** Absolutely.

**Elizabeth:** And you will become ever more yourself.

**Oprah:** Let this break you open, as Elizabeth's book is called, *Broken Open*. Let this break you open and allow you to be spiritually liberated which is also—first *Broken Open* and then spiritually liberated. *Spiritual Liberation*. There you go. That's what I recommend. Really you will see yourself in both books. Thank you so much, Debbie.

**Debbie:** Thank you so. Thank you. Bless you.

**Oprah:** Thank you. Bless you too.

**Debbie:** Goodbye, now.

**Oprah:** I will accept the blessing. Thank you. Our next question comes from Gene in Richmond, California. Gene lost his wife just a few months ago to cancer, and he is Skyping from his living room, and we are so sorry for your loss.

**Gene:** Thank you.

**Oprah:** But grateful that you would want to make this call this evening. And your question is?

**Gene:** I did lose my wife recently to cancer of two years, and we knew our journey was limited due to the cancer. We married with cancer. One of her last requests was that she never wanted to be forgotten. How do I keep her spirit and her memory alive along with continuing my next journey in life wherever it may be?

**Michael:** Can I ask you a question?

**Gene:** Yes.

**Michael:** When you think about your wife, what qualities come to mind? What did you know her as?

**Gene:** She was loving. She was caring. She was free-spirited. Passionate. Lived life every day.

**Michael:** Yes.

**Gene:** She fought a battle that could never be won, and for most of the time, she was very upbeat about it.

**Michael:** Very good. If you want to keep her memory alive, you take those qualities that you know her to be and you live those qualities every day in her name, in her memory. You become free-spirited. You become loving. You become grateful. All of those qualities that you know her to be, you anchor them in your own life in her memory so that whenever opportunities come up, you ask yourself, "Am I living the loving carefree—not carefree life, but a life that is free, that is allowing for these sacred qualities to come forward?" So instead of closing yourself up, you're opening yourself up in her name, in her nature, in her way. So she stays alive but through you.

**Elizabeth:** I think you're already much farther along than most people when they go into a loss like this because the way you asked the question, "How can I keep her memory alive and at the same time move on?" Just understanding that you know you can do both of them. Some people think that "I can never move on because if I do, I'll betray the love we had." And I sense you understand that you can do both.

**Gene:** She was—she did a lot on spirituality readings and how to improve herself, and I keep journals now of everything that I learned from her.

**Michael:** There you go. You're keeping her alive.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Gene, you're doing the right thing. I'm amazed. I think Michael and I went to the same seminary or something. I was going to say the very same things to you. It's tempting to try to keep someone alive through making shrines to them. And that's not, I think, what she would want. That's not how she wants to be kept alive. She wants you to move forward. But she—I think the way to keep people alive, and this is just repeating what Michael just said, is to—and I do this in every funeral I preach. I ask everyone in the church to simply stop and think about why they were attracted to the person who has just passed. And then I say, it is that quality or set of qualities now that you must bring forward because what you are attracted to you have inside you that wants to be brought to embodiment. It's potentiated, but it hasn't reached its fulfillment. So for you now to take the next steps in your becoming those qualities you were attracted to in her will free you and empower you to move forward without having to have shrines that hold you in the past.

**Gene:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** Does she speak to you? Do you dream about her and does she come and speak to you?

**Gene:** I do dream about her, but she hasn't come to speak to me yet.

**Elizabeth:** Mm-hmm. And what do you think if she did she'd tell you what she wants you to do?

**Gene:** To move on and remember me and to be happy.

**Michael:** Be happy. Yes.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And when you are ready to meet other people, you're going to want to make sure it's someone who will also—who will let you always keep her alive. She will always be in whatever relationship you go into, and you want to make sure that that's going to not seem unacceptable to someone. She's always going to be with you. You're never going to lose her.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Because that's who you are. And you want someone to love you for all of who you are.

**Oprah:** And her name is Renee, right?

**Gene:** Correct. Renee.

**Oprah:** I'd just like to speak her name. Speak her name.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Right.

**Oprah:** Gene, thank you for that. Thank you.

**Gene:** Thank you.

**Oprah:** Thank you.

**Elizabeth:** Beautiful man.

**Oprah:** Caroline from New York is on the line. Caroline, hello.

**Caroline:** Hi. Hi, Oprah. I just want to first thank you so much for the series and everybody on the panel because I've been following and watching and listening for so long. So I just wanted to say thank you.

**Oprah:** Thank you.

**Caroline:** And I have a question. I wanted to know. It's actually for the whole panel including yourself, Oprah, what has been your biggest lesson so far and your big aha! moment or a new realization that you really feel has freed you significantly?

**Oprah:** Okay. We'll start with you, Lizzy.

**Elizabeth:** Well, I've had many over my life. In my book, *Broken Open*, I write about the moment in my life when who I thought I was came crashing down, and it was from that moment, which was my divorce, when everything that I thought I needed to be in my life no longer was. Married. I was suddenly a single mother. I had very unstable finances. Before that happened, I thought I needed all those things to be me. And after they were taken away from me and I really was brought to my knees is when I found out who I really was. My strength. My self. And I—I gained an indestructible optimism and a sense of who—who—something that could never be taken away from me because it was me. So I would have to say that my biggest spiritual experience wasn't some sort of illuminated marvelousness. It was my hardest time. It was when I was brought to my knees stripped of my—of my self-image so that my true self-image was revealed.

**Michael:** Powerful.

**Oprah:** Michael?

**Michael:** Yeah. Like Elizabeth, I could probably talk a lot about what opened me up. But I would say the theme would be self-love and appreciation. That I was always—it's always easy for me to give and to share, and I think my path over the years has been to receive and to accept and so there has been this chipping away at whatever wall was there, not good enough, not worthy, those began to disintegrate through spiritual practice and through acceptance and through revelation and realization until I got to the core of who I am, which is good. Which is wonderful. And not in an egocentric kind of way. Just what God has wrought here. So I would say that's my theme over the last 10, 15 years that now I can—I have that within me. I feel good about myself. I feel—I feel good about Michael. He's a good guy. His intentions are high. His motivation is pure. He may make mistakes, but his motivation is pure and his intention is high. So I like who he is. I like Michael. And so that's been chipping away at all the dark places until that—that emerged.

**Oprah:** For me the biggest spiritual big moment was what I was describing earlier, that moment sitting in church listening to the preacher talk about the condemnation and judgmental God and me having that aha! epiphanal moment that how can God be love and condemning at the same time and then starting that path to recognize that God—God, all universal energy, all that is God, really does want me to have my best life and that that is why I'm here. To seek that and to achieve it to the best of my ability in co-creation with the greater good that is God.



**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** That was my big revelation. And so I can accept the abundance that is offered because that's why it's offered to us. Yeah. Yes, you?

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yes, you. I've told many times, and you can hear that on a radio show that I did with Oprah, about when I was 5 years old being alone in a pine forest and being enveloped by love. By light. And realizing that I was the most beloved of all of God's creatures and at the same time that every other creature in God's universe was the most beloved.

**Oprah:** You really did have a Moses on the mountain moment. Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It was an epiphany.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** And it has charted my life. More recently, what is going on with me is to understand the radical nature of that, the truth of the interconnectivity of all of us and of the universe. My favorite quotation maybe of all is from Dr. King from the jail—Birmingham jail. Letters from the Birmingham jail. He says: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. What happens to one directly affects everyone indirectly." Now that is not only a truth, that is a power that wells up and speaks through people. I was not conscious that when we were doing the show last Wednesday that I would say anything about being gay is a gift from God. But those seven words have changed people's lives. And what happened was the unity, the interconnectivity of all of us, the belovedness of every human being was speaking through me. That didn't come from my brain. I didn't intend it. That came out there in that conversation, and something wonderful happened in a lot of people's lives. When you and I become an instrument of the deep interconnectivity of the cosmos and everything there is, miracles happen.

**Michael:** Mm-hmm.

**Oprah:** "By you and I," you don't mean just you and him.

**The Rev. Bacon:** No, no, no, no, no.

**Oprah:** You meant you and all of us.

**The Rev. Bacon:** All of us.

**Oprah:** All of us have the ability to do that.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Absolutely. Every person.

**Oprah:** Not just men of the cloth.

**Michael:** I didn't mean to give you five.

**Oprah:** Not just men of the cloth. Yeah.

**The Rev. Bacon:** No. This is about every—I believe that every person is a minister. Everybody is an instrument. Everyone is an instrument.

**Oprah:** Well, this show for me for years has been a ministry.

**Michael:** Absolutely.

**Oprah:** And that's when the show changed. The show changed for me when it stopped being—so that may have also been a great spiritual moment. The moment I recognized and literally had a meeting and said, "I'm not going to take this—you know, I'm going to take the high road. I'm going to

stop doing confrontational television." And a lot of my sponsors and other television stations in different cities at the time were very upset with me. And I said, "I will either take this path or I will get out of television." So that was a—that was a big moment when I made the decision that I was going to use television for what I believed to be a greater good than be used by television.

**Michael:** Right.

**Oprah:** So that's—that's I think when a lot of things changed.

**Michael:** And that's changed millions and millions and millions of lives.

**Oprah:** Yeah. And changed my ability to stay in it. I wouldn't have been able to stay in it or stay with it. What's yours, Caroline?

**The Rev. Bacon:** That was your true self speaking.

**Oprah:** That was my true self.

**The Rev. Bacon:** That was your true self speaking.

**Oprah:** Yeah. That was my true self.

**Caroline:** I have to honestly say I'm actually furiously writing all your answers down and smiling so hugely because every single thing you say I related to each one of you. I've had all those moments. And, Oprah, when you said that you took the high road, it's like you followed your heart.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Caroline:** As pure as that was. And just the—you're so authentic and that's what everybody resonates with.

**Oprah:** Thank you for that.

**Elizabeth:** You know we use—

**Oprah:** I really was in the moment. I was in the moment. I remember being in the moment.

**Caroline:** It takes courage to do that.

**Elizabeth:** It does.

**Oprah:** I don't even think it does when you're in the moment. When you're there, I didn't think it was courage at all. I just knew that either I'm going to do it the way I feel I can sit in the space and be truthful with people or I can't do it. I have to find something else to do.

**The Rev. Bacon:** It's encouraging to other people, but it's not an act of courage in that moment.

**Michael:** I remember the moment when I said yes to starting Agape and I can remember—

**Oprah:** The church, yeah.

**Michael:** —people coming up to me. One of the—one person came up to me. "What are you doing? You're quitting your job? You have kids. You have a family. You're going to go out and just start this community?" And I remember saying to him, "I have no choice." It was a moment—

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** —where I said yes.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Absolutely.

**Michael:** And that yes was bigger than any no and any maybe.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** And it was bigger than I really don't—I never started a church before. I don't know how to do this. But the yes was bigger than that.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Michael:** And it was—it's in the moment. It's not fear. It's not courageous. It's just—there's no choice.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Right.

**Michael:** This is what the spirit is asking me to do.

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** But you know, Oprah, when our caller said it's so brave to be authentic?

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** It is the most ironic, strange thing that it takes so much courage for all of us humans to be authentic. We spend so much time hiding out from each other.

**Oprah:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** That's why what we're doing here and what you started with the webcasts and the Best Life Week just showing people being authentic is—is a liberation for other people to be so in their life. So the people who are calling in this right now, they'll all go to work tomorrow and be a little more brave to say what's real for them at work and keep the ball rolling.

**Oprah:** That's interesting. I remember when I agreed—you know, the January cover where I have my fat self and my thinner self on the cover, and even my best friend Gayle said, "Oh, that's so courageous of you," and I said, "Well, I don't consider that courageous because I've seen courageous people on my show all the time, and it really just is. It just— it just is." But I have learned this past month that coming out, you know, outing yourself for what is just the truth of who you are, you know? I gained 40 pounds. For a lot of people, that would be hard for them to do.

**Elizabeth:** If you asked me what is evil?

**Oprah:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** I would say the way we hide from each other. And—

**Oprah:** Oh, that's good.

**Michael:** That's good.

**Elizabeth:** And by doing that, we do each other such a huge disservice. Because then you think you have these interactions with people. "How are you?" "I'm great." You're not great. Things are falling apart. And then you go away thinking, "Wow, she's so great. I'm not great. And then you're filled with jealousy and self-loathing, and if we were all just, as I say in my book, the bozos on the bus that we all are with each other and really admitted to each other our failings and our joys, we're just as afraid to say, "I'm great," you know? And we just—we just present one-eight of ourselves to each other.

**Michael:** Right. I call that the—the friction of fictions when we're—when we're not authentic and we're not real, we rub up against ourselves and we create fiction—a friction with fictional characters.

**Caroline:** I love that.

**Michael:** And we're talking about being authentic and real.

**Oprah:** Thank you, Caroline.

**Caroline:** Thank you so much. I wrote down everything you said. Thank you so much. I want to continue watching you.

**Oprah:** Okay, thank you.

**Caroline:** Bye, bye.

**Oprah:** Kimberly from Leona Valley,

California, is on the phone. Kimberly.

**Kimberly:** Hi. Good evening, everyone.

**Michael:** Hi.

**Kimberly:** Well, this past year I have faced a great amount of adversity, and mostly this includes, I think with many people out there, financially my career is at a standstill, which is my passion working with animals. I'm fighting for my home. It's in foreclosure, but I'm fighting, you know, for that. And I—I'm—I'm a fighter. So anyway, that's going on. I've lost my mother in the past two months. My grandmother last year passed away. And my health, of course, is being affected in all this. I am one of those people that, like I said, I'm a fighter. I read. I'm spiritual. But at this point, my question is pretty much my inner light is very dark and how do I regain my strength and hope? I have so many blessings and I'm so thankful for so many things. But I kind of feel like an implosion.

**Oprah:** Implosion.

**Michael:** Breaking open.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Do you want to go?

**Elizabeth:** No, you go.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Kimberly, thanks for calling. I'm going to say this to you because you're a fighter and you're in touch with your power. I don't think I would say it to everybody who would call in about a crisis. I've been saying to myself and to my staff colleagues and everyone I know as a mantra something I read from Rahm Emanuel who is the chief of staff of the President-elect Obama. And he says, "Never let a crisis go to waste." Use that as an opportunity to do something you've always wanted to do but you've never given yourself permission to do. Fighters can hear that and do something about it. Now, one other word. You may feel like you're imploding. But you are a person of power and you know what it feels like to be powerful. And my experience with that kind of power, this is good power. This is not dominating open pressing power. This is liberating, empowering power. When you act on it, it comes back into you in a miraculous way. And I have the sense, I had the sense as soon as you started talking, Kimberly, that you are that person.

**Michael:** Mm-hmm.

**The Rev. Bacon:** So I think that you have the vision to not let this crisis go to waste and to take the opportunity to do something you've always wanted to do and you've never given yourself permission to do.

**Michael:** Right. There is something trying to emerge. Sometimes—I really appreciate the way you answered that. Very powerful. Sometimes I'll say that every problem is a question trying to ask itself and every question is an answer trying to reveal itself. And every answer is an action or a way of life trying to show up. So this problem—

**Oprah:** You need to say that slower. It's a little later for me. Say it again?

**Michael:** You're just waking up from South Africa.

**Oprah:** Yeah. So every problem—

**Michael:** Every problem is a question that's trying to ask itself.

**Oprah:** Okay.

**Michael:** And so the universe is trying to get her to ask a question right now.

**Oprah:** Okay.

**Michael:** You know, she has financial issues. Some emotional issues. So there's a question that's trying to ask itself. There's a quality that's trying to emerge. Now—and so the question has something to do, what is the nature of peace of mind? What is the nature of the gift that's trying to express itself? What is the nature of what's trying to emerge in her life?

**Oprah:** Yeah, it's very hard when people have lost loved ones to say what kind of gift is this? I think it's so awful. We—you know, we resist it because people, no matter what's going on, even if people have been sick, you just—death always just shakes people up. We don't accept it as a natural cycle. Yes.

**Michael:** Right. Change is very difficult for human beings, period.

**Oprah:** Yes.

**Michael:** And so in asking a question like this, she will get insight. You will get insight, and it will come to you in a language and a way that you can understand. You won't waste this crisis. And when that guidance comes as an answer, it will follow with an action.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yes.

**Michael:** Do this.

**The Rev. Bacon:** True.

**Michael:** Here's the path. Walk in it. And so instead of trying to fix the problem, you're trying to open yourself up to what question is trying to be asked here. What gift is trying to be given? What genius is trying to be activated within me? What power, what capacity, is trying to happen? And God speaks to us in our own language. So God is going to speak to you in a way that you can understand it, and you will be moved to become something, as Ed was saying, that you've never been before because this has never happened before.

**Oprah:** Okay. So God speaks in your own language, and it goes back to something you were saying earlier. You have to stay an wage to hear it.

**Michael:** Yes. You have to be interested and stay awake.

**Oprah:** Stay awake. Because the answers come but you have to be awake. I always ask that question, too, of every crisis. What is this here to teach me? That's the first question I go to. What is this here to teach me?

**Elizabeth:** And in this financial crisis now, it's not just yours. And that may be helpful for you, because we have all been in a trance in the late second half of the 20th century and the first part of the

21st. We have been in a trance around money and our economy thinking that it could grow and grow and grow and it would never have to live by the laws of nature, which is out of control growth, is cancer.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** And we're all going through this now. You're not alone in it. And our whole nation and world, because now we're a one-world community, is having to go through this self-examination. How are we going to live a sustainable lifestyle together on this small planet with resources that are running out? We could be about to go through a lot of calamities as a world culture. So I don't know if it helps you at all to know that you are—we're all with you. We are all going to have to self-correct the way we live around our relationship to money, saving, simplicity, scaling back and not experience that as some kind of taking away but more waking up to the kind of lifestyle that is sustainable.

**Michael:** I like what you're saying. On a national scale, we can't let this crisis go to waste either.

**The Rev. Bacon:** That's right.

**Oprah:** Yes.

**Michael:** And it means that we're about to give birth to a whole new way of living.

**Elizabeth:** That's right.

**Michael:** You see?

**Oprah:** We needed this.

**Michael:** Yeah. We have an economic system that's immature and has a hole in it.

**Oprah:** We needed a wake-up call.

**Michael:** You can't keep bailing it out because it's built on scarcity.

**Oprah:** I think I like, Liz, what you said too. It's a trance we were all in.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Yeah. We were asleep. Sleepwalking.

**Oprah:** Stupor. Just like a stupor.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Sleepwalking.



**Oprah:** Kimberly, thank you.

**Kimberly:** Thank you for helping.

**Michael:** This is a wake-up call for you, Kimberly. It's a wake-up call.

**Oprah:** It's a wake-up call. And it's all in your life to grow you to the next level because that's what the universe is always doing. It's growing us up. Growing us up and out and to become more of ourselves. We're almost out of time. But before we go, each of our teachers has some questions we can ask ourselves as part of a Best Life spiritual practice. So these questions will also be in your

workbook on Oprah.com. So, let's start with you, Ed.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Well, I think intentionality is very important in life. Intentions don't go to waste. So I think it's very important to list the intentions that you would like in your spiritual life. My spiritual director teaches me that every time I begin to pray, it's important to write down my desires for that prayer period and then to list the movements of grace that happen during the prayer period. The same thing can happen about your life. What do I want to accomplish in my spiritual life? What are my intentions? Because that will impact your journey.

**Oprah:** Liz?

**Elizabeth:** Oh, I think I remember saying, "Do you want to be right or do you want to be happy?"

**Oprah:** Woo, I love that one too.

**Elizabeth:** And we spend a lot of time, all of us, defending our position.

**Michael:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** We have a defensive stance against life. I'm right. I know what's going on. I know what I need. It's the ego that you were talking about. And it shows up most clearly with the people we love. Our mates. Our colleagues. So ask yourself the next time you're in a disharmonious relationship with someone at work or at home how—why are you so invested in being right? Would you rather hold on tight to that stance? Or do you want to be in peace and joy with this person and this moment?

**Oprah:** Okay. And am I ready to accept this moment on its own terms?

**Elizabeth:** Yes.

**Oprah:** Yeah. Because that's why how—there's so much suffering because people are resisting what is, right?

**The Rev. Bacon:** Oh, yes.

**Michael:** You have to accept what is.

**Oprah:** Your turn. And then do something about it. Go ahead.

**Michael:** First of all, we don't solve our problems. We outgrow them. That's really what's going on. And what I like to always tell people is what gifts are trying to emerge that we've promised ourself that we would set free that have got a little dust on them. We've sold out. We've acquiesced to circumstances. We've given up on ourselves. There are gifts within us. And that at the end of our life, we're not going to be haunted by what we went for. We're going to be haunted by all of the things within us that were trying to come forward that we did not try. We didn't risk. We didn't go for. We didn't activate. We didn't cultivate. There are gifts, powers and capacities, and the world doesn't have anything for us. We are here to be a beneficial presence to give our gift to the world. So we ask ourself, "What gifts are within us that I promised myself that I would give that I need to dust off."

**Oprah:** Wow. So Michael's book is *Spiritual Liberation*. Lizzy has two here, *Broken Open* and *The Seeker's Guide*, and Rev. Ed Bacon has a website.

**The Rev. Bacon:** With good sermons on it.

**Oprah:** With good sermons on there. So if you want to experience this class again or tell a friend who missed it, our webcast, because I believe all of this. I've been reading spiritual books for the past, you know, 25 years now since I had that moment in the church when I thought, "Judgment or love?" Our webcasts will be available on demand tomorrow for free here at Oprah.com. You can also download the podcast tomorrow at Oprah.com. And, of course, on iTunes. Tonight's conversation continues right after this webcast. If you're an *Oprah & Friends* subscriber, tune in on XM 156 and Sirius 195. Elizabeth will be there taking your calls and answering—

**Elizabeth:** And Rev. Ed.

**Oprah:** And Rev. Ed.

**Michael:** I'm going to stop in for a couple of minutes.

**Oprah:** You're going to stop in for a couple of minutes. Be sure to log back in to Oprah.com tomorrow night for Web class number 4 with Suze Orman talking about the trance we've all been in and coming up with a money plan for us in 2009. We'll be taking your calls, answering your questions live. Thanks to Elizabeth Lesser. Thank you, Lizzy, Rev. Ed, Rev. Michael. Thank you very much.

**Michael:** Thank you.

Your Spirituality

**Oprah:** Helping us all to live with more passion and purpose every day. Bye, everybody. Good night. Good.

**The Rev. Bacon:** Good.