

Part 6: *Polishing the Treasure: Becoming Brilliant*

Module 20: Healing and Transforming Unwanted Patterns

Module 21: Forgiving and Releasing into Freedom

Module 22: Cultivating Single-Pointed Courage

Module 23: Living From an Open Heart

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Module 20: Healing and Transforming Unwanted Patterns

*“Perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses
who are only waiting to see us once beautiful and brave.”*

Rainer Maria Rilke

Now that you have conceptualized and charted *My Personal Ministry Character* as well as *My Ministries Guiding Beliefs and Principles*, you probably have a good idea of where in your life experience healing and forgiveness are needed as well as where greater focus and courage will be required to live and manifest your ministry vision with a full and open heart. The next four modules will address these areas.

In the Christian allegory, *Hinds’ Feet on High Places*, Much-Afraid wants nothing more than to leave her family in the Valley of the Fearings and to follow the Good Shepherd to the High Places. As she summons the courage to do so, she finds many lessons along the way. Her first lesson is feeling *worthy*. You see, like us, Much-Afraid is not perfect.

“In the first place, she was a cripple with feet so crooked that they often caused her to limp and stumble as she went about her work. She also had the very unsightly blemish of a crooked mouth which greatly disfigured both expression and speech. She feared that there could be no deliverance from these two crippling disfigurements...”

[And] “There was, however, another and even greater trouble in her life. She was a member of the Family of Fearings, and her relatives were scattered all over the valley so that she could never really escape them. One of her cousins was Craven Fear, a great bully who habitually tormented and persecuted her in a really dreadful way.”

How often we feel that we must be perfect to be enough. And, sometimes we can feel so overwhelmed by our sense of inadequacy that our only prayer is to be relieved of our suffering. Our aching heart just begs to be lifted and carried on the wings of grace to the High Places.

And so it is with Much-Afraid. You may remember from Module 1, early in the journey, when challenges begin to feel insurmountable, Much-Afraid asks, “Will you not take me all the way? When I am with you I am strong and I am sure no one else but you can get me up to the high places.”

But the Good Shepherd declines her request, “Much-Afraid, I could do what you wish. I could carry you all the way up to the High Places. But, if I did, you would never be able to develop hinds’ fee, and become my companion and go where I go.” He knows that Much-Afraid can only become her inner treasure through the climb itself. This very sentiment is also a corner stone of the Buddhist faith tradition – we are each responsible for our own journey to enlightenment

Consider a similar message from one whose name you will recognize...

*“The struggle of life is one of our greatest blessings.
It makes us patient, sensitive, Godlike.
It teaches us that, although the world is full of suffering,
it is also full of the overcoming of it.”*
Helen Keller

In our discussions, we have stressed holding the flight of both birds – to feel deeply the lessons of our humanity and to also hold the wide angle view of our eternal soul, the one who witnesses or watches. Once we have experienced the distinction between the mind and the soul in meditation practice, we have more choice in how we choose to receive the world around us. We know that we can feel deeply and heal our held places because we know they are transient, will come and go, as our deeper Self just looks on. Without the clear experience of these two aspects of our consciousness, we can easily come to feel that we *are only* the deep feelings inherent in our humanity for what else is there?

This is exactly what happens when we are children. Unable to conceptualize the flight of both birds, we only have the knowledge and experience of our human, daily, journey. So, if our environment is hurtful to us, we may come to feel and believe that it is we who are bad, like Jacob in chapter 4, *Seeing with New Eyes, of An Ordinary Life Transformed: Lessons for Everyone from the Bhagavad Gita*.

“Each week, when Jacob’s foster care mother would drop him off he would stomp in calling me names – most commonly, ‘Pig’. I tried all I could do to connect with him. Nothing worked. Then, discussing with my supervisor, she asked me, ‘What are you doing with Jacob that you wouldn’t think of doing with your adult clients?’”

Suddenly, I realized that I had not been allowing Jacob his feelings as I was so intent on making him feel better – on what I thought would help him. Over the years that followed, I would often reflect upon this for my own journey. *Be with the feelings. Be with the truth of your experience. It will not help to make this something other than what it is.* This is why we cannot heal or transform something we won’t allow ourselves to feel. Returning to Jacob, following processing with my supervisor, on the next visit I was ready.

“Jacob came in with his usual yelling, but this time I simply knelt down so we could be eye to eye and said, ‘You’re really mad, aren’t you?’”

He stopped in his tracks and looked at me suspiciously. This was new. I just patiently and thoughtfully repeated, ‘You’re really mad.’

And right before my eyes, he melted. He started to cry and said, ‘Is my mother coming back for me?’

‘I don’t know, Jacob,’ I said as I rocked him in the center of the floor.

‘Am I bad?’ he asked through tears.

‘No, Jacob. You’re not bad.’ I answered. Knowing he liked to draw, I suggested he draw a picture. Over time, we created a game where each week he would name his feelings, draw, act with puppets and create little skits to help express what was happening for him.’”

As I go on to say in the book, can you imagine, when Jacob asked me if he was bad, if I had answered, “Well, if that’s what you think and how you feel, I’m very sorry Jacob but it must be true.” Sounds pretty ridiculous, right? Yet most people feel just this way – that what they think and feel about themselves must be the *truth of who they are*. It is the truth of the human experience but *it is not all of who they are*. *This single awareness has been the most profound in my experience. It has enabled me to do the deep healing work I need to do and still absolutely know that I am an eternal spark of God. Wow!! THIS is freedom – the Truth that sets you free!*

And, it’s about choice. The Good Shepherd also gives Much-Afraid the same *valuable lesson on choice*. When Much-Afraid has come very close to reaching the High Places, her cousin Craven Fear appears to snatch her up and take her back to her family in the Valley of Fearings. He is tormenting her, bullying her, reminding her of all the ways she is inadequate and telling her how arrogant and foolish she is to believe that someone as disfigured as she could ever live in the High Places with the Good Shepherd.

But, recall how the Good Shepherd responds, “Be strong...be strong...and fear not.” Then he continues,

“Much-Afraid, don’t ever allow yourself to begin to picture what it will be like. Believe me, when you get to the places which you most dread you will find that they are as different as possible from what you have imagined. I must warn you, I see your enemies lurking among the trees ahead, and if you ever let Craven Fear begin painting a picture on the screen of your imagination, **you will walk with fear and trembling and agony, where no fear is.**”

Once we have an intimate connection with our eternal, internal, witness, we can suddenly allow our deep feelings *and* also shift our awareness to the One who watches, **where no fear is**. We cultivate this ability in our spiritual practice as we receive and work with the obstacles as they arise. Here we practice cultivating perseverance and stamina for the long climb. In doing so, we start to polish the rust off our hearts as the Sufis say and, in time, cultivate this new perspective or point of view, of seeing – first ourselves and, then in others. With this new heart vision, we can see both the Craven Fears living in us and in those around us. And, looking softly, we also see the eternal Truth hidden deep within our fear. Graciously, now as we practice receiving and releasing the pictures appearing across the screen of our mind, we begin to cultivate the ability to respond from Love instead of retreating in fear. In such moments, we are truly born again and we become a kind of heaven on earth.

Someone said *All the world is suffering and so we dance*. I would add that it is from the depths of our illusionary despair that we cultivate the lightness of step. For how could we celebrate the dawn without the night? So, dance with God we do, *for joy cometh in the morning* as the Bible reminds us. Yet, we do not follow blindly for we have been given the greatest gift of all, free will. Recalling the words of Krishnamurti, *the winds of grace blow all the time*. *We just need to set our sails*. So, we use our will to chart our course and to set our sails and, then gratefully, surrender to the winds of grace. We become the destination and simply enjoy the ride.

And, recalling the Buddha, a joy arises as we get the noble truth that we have all we need to end suffering. Like discovering our glasses cropped atop our head after a long search, *we have all we need to end suffering* and live in our true nature. This does not mean, necessarily, that pain and life challenges will cease. Our karma must be played out unless the sweet winds of Grace intervene. Still, we no longer need the world to be different because we are different. Our heart vision holds a new point of view as *once we were blind but now we see*.

Allow joy to overtake you.
The ecstatic cry to awaken you,
and the Treasure to become you.

Now, let's take a look at what is often a key element in healing – forgiveness.