

Subject: Peace Meditation – Burning Bowl Ceremony

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**Burning Bowl Ceremony
"Releasing the Old & Moving On"**

This evening is a special service, our annual Burning Bowl ceremony. Did you all bring your bowls? We do this at the beginning of every year...we take advantage of this starting line that we call the New Year.

Let's talk about mechanics of this...the burning bowl. Everyone should have an envelope with a small piece of tissue paper in it. And you should also have a larger piece of regular paper...and a pen or pencil. If you don't have these items, please raise your hand.

Works like this...(demonstrate).

Did you make New Year's resolutions? I think most people, even if they don't get into the formality of a resolution, have a sense of new beginnings at this time of year. A lot of us look ahead at the upcoming year and think, "All right. This is it. *This* year, I'm...."

What I want to support us in doing, is to be about a process of newness, very consciously. So we're going to go through a couple of processes where we have the chance to let go of some old, inhibiting ideas and practices which stifle us. And we'll give attention to what this year can bring. We'll ring in the new by realizing that this life is truly filled with blessings that have been awaiting our acceptance.

This evening we're going to look at some doing-ness, you know, as we do some goal-setting, but let me talk to you for a minute about your *being-ness*, which is where it's really at. Your being-ness, the full expression of your life, includes being happy and healthy; being loving, loved, and beloved; being successful; being prosperous, rich, and abundant; being wise, witty, and wonderful; being intelligent; being strong and self-confident; being enthusiastic, enlightened, enriched, edified, and entertained. You deserve loving, supportive relationships, a splendid home, peace of mind, full self-expression, and the total joy of living. Life is to be experienced and expressed, fully and joyously. Helen Keller once said, "Life is either a daring adventure...or nothing."

Big dreams turn on the energy in your eighteen billion brain cells. Those bountiful and probably under-used brain cells are totally available to support you in living a dynamic, exciting, passionate, and fun life.

So, It's a new year. Good time to begin again to bring about all that God has intended for you to have. Let's attend to that.

Letting Go...

The first thing we have to do to accept more Good into our life is to make room for it. You want a new wardrobe? Clean out your closet. Let go of some things. And, similarly, we want to do some spiritual, emotional, and mental releasing. We want to release some things so we can move on.

Two monks took a vow not to touch a woman for one year. They were crossing a river, woman there having difficulty. One monk put her on his back and carried her across. The other monk was furious. Two miles down the road he was still fuming over it. The first monk said, "Listen, the thing is, I put her down two miles ago; you're still carrying her."

Still carrying something that is no longer serving you? Holding on to (relationship that failed, business that failed, mistakes, injustices, wronged, lost opportunity, resentments) sets up a block in our consciousness, so that we are not open to the guidance and illumination of answered prayers. Life is a flow, and just as when we are not giving we restrict the flow, we also restrict it by staying stuck in our anger, fear, ideas, etc. We are spiritually constipated.

(Have them take a deep breath, then take another without releasing the first one.) See, we have to let go of some old stuff before we can accept the new. And you probably know what some of that stuff is for you. Do have ideas about yourself or about life that are limiting? Have you thought that you can't do it? That you don't have what it takes? You're too old, too young, not educated enough, you know *too* much. You're too big, too little. Wrong color, wrong sex? Whatever beliefs you've bought into that do not support your growth, and unfoldment as a spiritual, vital, child of God -- whatever you've thought of yourself that isn't loving, nurturing or kind -- is not true. God knows the truth about you. That you are made in her image. And Spirit did not screw up when he made you. So, those limiting ideas have no validity. I know this is true. Let's release them.

Another major cause of someone not realizing their God-given potential or feeling they haven't attained their goals is unforgiveness. Jesus repeatedly said that you cannot pray aright if you are bound to grudges, prejudices, or bitterness. Forgiveness can dissolve whatever stands between you and your good. Forgiveness cleanses the mind, body, and relationships, and it opens the way for your dreams to come true. Unforgiveness is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

If every day you would take some dedicated time and forgive yourself and others, your life will be graced, and the way will be made clear for your heart's desires to come to fruition.

Instead of clutching those things or people to you, let them go to the divine flow of life. And when you feel yourself stuck on something or someone, say, "I lovingly release you into the hands of Spirit, knowing that Infinite Intelligence shall guide us both into ways of peace, prosperity, and joy." Even if you don't mean it, speak the prayer. Keep affirming the goodness and blessings and perfect right action for yourself and everyone concerned.

David: (After making some mistakes) "Purify me....Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." And Jesus understood about forgiveness and release. His prayer was, "Cleanse first that which is within the cup, that the outside may be clean also."

So, let's do that, right now. Let's give up some of those things that we've been holding that is no doubt restricting the flow of newness into our life.

Meditation

So, let's take just a moment, close our eyes and turn within.... Take three deep breaths, and now ask yourself, "What ideas, resentment, unforgiveness, or opinions am I harboring that is preventing me from moving ahead? What's restricting the flow of good in and through my life? And now that something or someone has come to mind.... Ask yourself, "How am I benefiting by hanging on to this?" Your life is far too precious for it to continue to be poisoned by this. It's okay to take a step forward. And, when you're ready, open your eyes, find the piece of paper, and begin writing. No one is going to read them. This is a private matter.

Now, we're going to come to the burning bowl and bless these on our way so they are no longer our concerns. And, as you burn these old ideas, feel that you are literally letting them go.

Moving On...

Now we're going to move on. Talk about what is in store for each of us for this year. You know, some people think that creating a vision or goal-setting is manipulative, that we're trying to manipulate life. And what I've experienced is that goal-setting or visioning – done with an enlightened awareness – gives direction to our life.

We're talking about making a plan for your life – or at least for your year – one which is in harmony with your talents and abilities. If we don't, we're like a ship without a captain...just drifting about. Herman Melville (author of *Moby Dick*): "To write a mighty book you must have a mighty theme."

Tonight, we're looking at perhaps a short-term vision. Our big goals need to be supported by smaller ones.... This evening's process may be frustrating for you. In the time we have here we can't possibly define a comprehensive life plan, or maybe even a year-long plan. What I hope to achieve, is to share a few ideas with you, get you thinking, and support you in living consciously.

Do you feel passionate about some goal? Do you want to feel that way? Have you set goals before? Change in perspective.... Instead of putting a goal out there, thinking we must strive to reach it. Shift your thinking, your perspective, to feel yourself being drawn *toward* something yet unrealized. But the "something," the goal, is already an idea in Infinite Mind. And so in visioning, we are engaged in a process of accepting what is. Accepting the Good that Life desires for you. This moves us from being driven or pushed to feeling a divine urge within, so that we feel lead, guided, directed.

Burning in the heart of each of us, I believe, is a flame of divine discontent -- that lifts us up, moves us from within. So, we're going to fan the flame this evening by consciously casting for our dreams. We're not being pushed to something -- rather we are following an urgent call of something that draws us. And we're claiming our inheritance. In setting a goal, we are speaking a word of acceptance, and thereby putting into motion all of the creative power of your mind, of Universal Mind.

That dimension of you that is so creative, so powerful – your subconscious mind – is like a willing servant. It never asks why, never questions your choice, but it carries out the orders you give it with unerring precision. What we're doing in visioning is consciously choosing what we want. We're choosing our thoughts and our beliefs,

because each thought is a seed planted in the creative medium of life. Every time you choose and you accept your choice, you set the creative power of the Universe in motion.

So, we're doing this consciously, and realistically. Realistic goals are those you can mentally accept. That you can believe. For instance, if I were to have as my goal, walking on the moon and had no intention of becoming an astronaut, but relied solely on some handmade wings I had built in my garage, I would have an unrealistic goal. A person who has had a poverty consciousness all of his life and sets a goal to be a multi-millionaire in a single bound is completely unrealistic. The law is: that which you can believe in, accept for yourself, and confidently expect, is bound to become your experience.

So, what do you want? Let's take a moment right now and get clearer on this.

Meditation

Close our eyes and go within.... Take three deep breaths, and now ask yourself, "What, do I want? What is it...even though it stretches me, can I believe in, accept, and confidently expect?" In the various areas of your life: relationships, career, financial, special callings, what is there for me to experience that is pulling me toward it? And ask yourself, "If not now...when?" Hopefully, you've let go of some things this evening, and you have a clearer path. Let's go for it. When you're ready, open your eyes, find the larger piece of paper, and begin writing.

Now, we're going to pick these up, and we'll mail them back to you later this year. So address the envelope to yourself, place your goals in the envelope, seal it, and place them in the basket in a couple of minutes. If you want to keep a copy for yourself, go ahead and write it quickly now. Maybe just write a few words to remind you. You can write these out more fully later.

Now, before we hand these in, I want you to feel the power of hearing yourself say out loud one of your goals. So I want you to turn to another person -- someone you did not come here with this evening -- and simply tell him or her one of your goals for ____ (year). I want everyone involved. If you have to walk across the room to find someone, then go get 'em. Tell them confidently and enthusiastically what your goal is. We're going to take just sixty seconds for this. Okay, go!

Okay. Let's come back together. Be sure your goals are in your envelope, and the envelope is addressed and sealed. Ushers, let's pick up the goals now.

Conclusion

Once you've reached clarity, be totally committed to your goals by *acting* on them. Commitment means action. Move forward confidently, knowing that you have all it takes to usher these blessings into your life. Keep believing in yourself and in God within you, and stay with it. Mother Theresa: "To keep a lamp burning brightly we must continue to put oil in it."

You can do it. You have all the power of the Universe because Spirit is within you.

Ernest Holmes: "It is easy to believe that God is perfect, and we must include ourselves in that perfection. To the degree that we subjectively embody an idea, we will see it objectified in our world. Even when the results are not immediately forthcoming, we must still maintain a calm serenity of thought. We must re-light the torch of our imagination by the 'fire caught from Heaven.' We must remain faithful to the vision. It is the realization of the presence of Spirit that is the true power of our work."

Happy New Year and God bless you!