

2025 Initiative: Preparing the Way

Pisces Solar Festival with David Spangler

“The Spectrum of Love”

March 8, 2020

The vibration and energy of Love is the most potent that we can draw into our world, particularly in these days. I'm out here near Seattle in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and just a few miles away from where I live, is what at the moment is being called the epicenter of the Coronavirus, the little town of Kirkland,

As this current crisis moves through the vibratory field of humanity into its physical structure, it certainly is reverberating and setting loose waves of anxiety and fear. This is not the only time that this has happened or certainly not the last time it will. We live in a time when the entire subtle field of the world and of humanity in particular is being subjected to waves of challenge and energy as our species struggles to find its identity as a planetary being.

In the midst of this, there is no more powerful presence that we may invoke than that of love. It's said that love casts out fear and I know in my own experience this has been true. One of the great tasks that we as incarnating souls have set for ourselves in these days is to demonstrate that power of love to not only cast out fear but to replace it with a powerful, creative energy that brings into being the potentials of a new world.

I've been teaching for a great many years from back in the 60s and one of the themes that I've always pursued in my classes is how may we become more loving? Certainly, as we all know in this circle and as I've just said, our ability to bring love into the world is one of the paramount, if not the paramount task that we as incarnated souls have—for the benefit of ourselves, for the benefit of each other, and certainly for the benefit of our planet.

How to embody and express love? This has been one of the questions I've explored and pondered upon for all these many years. Back in 1965, when I began my work as an explorer of the spiritual and subtle realms and as a

teacher—really someone sharing his field notes as a result of those explorations, I had the privilege of having a colleague from the subtle worlds, from the higher frequencies of spirit, a being who I called “John”—that wasn’t his name but it was a name that I liked and we agreed that it would suffice. John became something of a mentor for me and he would use ordinary events in my life as learning moments, as good teachers will do.

One day I was watching the news on television, there came a report of a particularly horrendous act of sexual predation and abuse against a young boy. They had arrested the man responsible and he was being shown on television as he was being arraigned before a judge. I was filled with horror at the act itself, at what he did to the boy. Looking at this man, I felt such a disgust and loathing for him. He looked like the incarnation of a human rodent. He was truly awful to look at.

So, I’m watching this on television and John appears to me and he says “Your task is to love this man.” I said “Really?? You’re kidding me, aren’t you?” He said “No, that is your task and you need to find in yourself the ability to love this man as your brother.”

This took me a long time, it took me three to five months of working with this every day to try to come to a point where I could love this individual. I would keep coming to a point where I’d say “I just can’t do this. There’s nothing lovable here, I can’t find it in my heart to open to him.” John would say “Well, keep working at it.”

Over time, I was able to come to a place where I could not only love this man, but where I felt this deep kinship of our mutual sacredness. At one level, it was a profound lesson in the fact that God does not exclude. In the presence of the Sacred, everything is included, no one is left out. Intellectually, I knew this and I knew that this gentleman was as beloved of the divine as I was, but that didn’t help my own emotions, my own heart. I thought, “Ok, God can love him, but I can’t.” But I came to a place where I was able to do that and it was a wonderful experience.

Years later, when I was teaching a class, one of the participants came up and said, “David, I’m just not capable of loving. So many spiritual teachers tell me that I need to have this unconditional love for my fellow beings and for the world and I’m just not able to do that. So I guess when it comes to loving, I’m a failure.”

I didn’t want this person to feel that way, but I knew that just saying “It’s okay, you’re not a failure, you can love” would not be sufficient; I needed to offer

something more tangible, something that was within the range of what this individual felt was possible.

I got to thinking about my experience and what I'd gone through to come to a place where I could love this sexual predator. I realized in the process, through those weeks and months that it took for me to do that, I actually had gone through a series of stages. I had traveled along a spectrum, a continuum. I realized that in what John had had me do, I had learned more than I thought I had. It's not at all an unusual experience to look back and realize we've learned something that we didn't know we had at the time.

I sat down one afternoon and I put down on a piece of paper all that I could remember of the different stages I had experienced. I added to it out of other experiences I've had, and I came up with what I call "The Spectrum of Love."

Before I go through the spectrum, I just want to say something general about it. Behind it is a very simple idea—that each of us needs a place to start. If I feel I have to start where the gold is, chances are I won't start at all, I will get discouraged.

If, as a runner, I feel that I have to do what an Olympic runner does, that that is the essence of what running is about, I'm going to be discouraged. When I was in college, my first roommate was a fellow who had been the lead runner in his high school track and field team. One evening he said, "David, I'm going out for a run, would you like to come run with me?" I thought "Sure, that would be fun!" I had done a lot of running as a kid and I thought "this shouldn't be too hard." Suffice it to say that before I was even a fourth of the way along the track, he had already reached the end and was heading back and he passed me going the other way. There was no way that I was able to match his speed or his stamina, his skill as a runner. If in that moment, I'd said "That's it for me because I can't run as well as he does," that would have been too bad.

When we think about spiritual skills, we draw inspiration from the great runners, so to speak, from the Olympians of the heart and mind, the Olympians of love. If we say, "That's what loving means, that's what I need to be able to do to call myself a loving person," then we may feel defeated before we even begin.

People need a simple place to start. It's not the same place for everyone and it's not the same place all the time for any of us. I could not run as fast as my college roommate, but I could walk. Eventually, I would get there. That was my place to start.

So, the Spectrum of Love is really about where we start. It's about how we may relate to love without indulging in self-doubt or self-criticism or in comparisons that undercut our ability to grow and to be the loving person that we each can be.

Having said that, what is the Spectrum of Love? Understand—this is purely subjective. This is my take on it and someone else may have a different way of describing this spectrum and have different stages. You may have different stages as you think about it, and that's just as it should be. But here's what it is for me:

The very first act of loving is the simple act of **perception**. This is just seeing that another exists. It's the act of drawing another person or an event or a place into the sphere of our awareness, and that's all. I'm not saying "I'm shutting you out. I'm not even going to see that you exist." The first act of love is just to see the other person is there. I don't have to like them. I don't have to like what they're doing. I may wish them to go away so that we don't have to interact together, and that's okay, but if I do move away, I will have done so having seen the other.

There's a power in just simply seeing another, just as there's a power for us in being seen. How many of us struggle with the simple feeling of being ignored, that we're not seen in our lives, that like the character in the musical Chicago we've become like a Cellophane Man (or woman). So, seeing another, just a simple basic act of seeing them, perceiving them is where love starts.

I can't love someone if I don't know they're there. I can't love someone if I close my eyes to them. I may not be able to marshal any greater feeling beyond that, but that's a place to start. And if I can at least say to myself "I have started to love" just by opening my eyes, then who knows what will follow. As long as I am willing to step forth on that journey to become more loving, as long as I've started, the love will follow.

In thinking about the sexual predator, quite apart from his act, he was a repulsive-looking individual. I can only imagine that in his life, his very physical repulsiveness created an emotional and mental and spiritual condition of frustration and anger and longing and hurt and pain that led him ultimately to what he did. This was not an easy man to look at. That's where the love had to start for me—to see him and not turn off the television, not forget about it, not refuse to look, but to see.

Thus, for me, the first act of love in the spectrum is perception.

The second step, and it follows naturally from the first, is **acknowledgement**. This can be very similar to perceiving—I not only see you, I acknowledge you. For me, the difference is if I see you, I say you exist and the fact of your existence becomes the foundation on which love can be built. But to acknowledge you is to say you have a right to exist, you have a right to be in this world with me.

I would love a world in which predation of any kind, much less sexual predation, was unknown. I would love to be in a world where I didn't have to share it with people who wish to harm others. But that's not this world. And this is the world in which we are tasked to bring love. We may go to other worlds where love is the norm. We may visit or come to exist in other places where harm is not present, where maliciousness is unknown, but that is not this world. This is the world that we have chosen to come to. We came here knowing full well what we would see and what we would need to acknowledge.

Acknowledgement is not the same as acceptance. It is simply saying "I acknowledge that you exist." It's a small step beyond seeing. But if I don't acknowledge that, love has no place to grow from. If I can't acknowledge you, how can I come to love you in more embracing and powerful ways?

I may not have it in me to know how to love—certainly unconditionally, but even with a kind of pleasure or affection—someone in my world, someone who has maybe hurt me, someone who is doing things that are hurting others, someone whose actions I dislike, someone whose beliefs I don't agree with. I may not know how to love that person. But I do know how to see them and I know how to acknowledge their existence and to say "You have a right to be in this world with me" because you're here and God is acknowledging you. The Sacred acknowledges your right to be.

I can do that. You can say "That's not really loving," but it is. If I think of love as the power that creates wholeness, the power that creates connection in the world, then how can I connect with something if I don't see it? How can I begin to build wholeness if I don't acknowledge you have a right to share this world with me? How can we connect?

It's not the love we read about in mystical literature or in the lives of great spiritual beings, but it is a love that can get us started and could begin to heal a great many of the wounds and ills that people experience when they don't feel seen and they don't feel acknowledged. Simple acknowledgement opens

up the possibility of change, redemption, and blessing. It is love in a very simple but yet nonetheless powerful form.

The third stage I call **honoring**. This is just my word for it, but what I mean by it is that I am valuing the dignity of the other person. I'm honoring them as a soul, as a unique being. I'm saying "You have a right to exist and you have a right to be different from me, to be your own unique self." Someone might use a different word for this than "honoring." They could say "I'm giving value to the uniqueness of the individual" or appreciating that person—although that's the next step in my spectrum. But I like the word "honoring," to say that I honor you.

I don't have to approve, I don't have to like, I don't have to cozy up to you and say "let's hang out together," but I can honor you as a fellow soul meeting the same incarnational challenges that I am. You may be doing worse than I in some ways and better than I in other ways. You may have mastered skills that I have yet to master, you may be deficient in skills that I have mastered. But we're all on this journey together and we can honor that.

Honoring, to me, is the right to be yourself. If I say to you "I don't like the way you are, you shouldn't be that way," then I'm not honoring your capacity, your sovereignty to be who you are, even if it's a wretch, because wretches can change. Honoring your sovereignty, your uniqueness and your capacities that you have a right to unfold in the way your soul has chosen opens all kinds of doors for change and unfoldment.

Again, this is not honoring what you do. If you're hurting someone, I don't have to honor that. I don't honor that. But I can honor the soul that is you and in that honor my heart opens to see if there's any way that we can come together, work together, communicate together, share together in ways that will be of benefit and that will take us beyond the place where hurting is felt to be necessary.

Honor, to me, gives way to the next step, which is **appreciation**, as I just mentioned. Now we're getting into the range of emotion of affection and acceptance that generally comes to mind when we think about love. To say I appreciate somebody is a token of value, it is a token of love. Again, I don't have to agree with what you're doing, I don't have to share it, I don't have to do it with you.

Right now in the United States we've been the midst of a presidential campaign and the candidates have different policies and different ways of looking at the future of America and what they'd like to do, but for the most

part they've appreciated each other. They don't agree, but they're open to knowing the other person and out of that knowing, to value them.

If I say I can't love, that seems beyond me, can I appreciate? I can appreciate the effort you're making, I can appreciate the difference you're trying to make in the world, I can appreciate the growth you're trying to accomplish, I can appreciate you as a fellow soul.

For me, appreciation is an acknowledgment that the other person is sharing the great ecology of being, the planetary spiritual commons that we are all part of, and it moves closer to that power of love to connect, to include, and to make whole.

The next step beyond appreciation, for me, is **caring**. This is beginning to feel more like what we mean by love. Now I not only appreciate the object of my love, I feel a sense of wanting to contribute to its well-being. There's some degree of investment now. I care for what happens to you. I care for what happens to the earth. I care for what happens to the nature around me. I care for what's happening in our cities. I don't just appreciate the beauty and the marvel and the wonderment of, say, New York City—it's an incredible human artifact. But now I care for it. I want it to do well. I want its dark places to be enlightened. I want its wounded places to be healed. I want its difficulties to be smoothed. I want its potentials to be realized. I want to do what I can to help. All this gets embraced for me in this idea of caring.

And when I care this leads to the next stage in my spectrum, which is **kindness**. Now we really are talking about love in a recognizable and powerful form. I have a good friend Andy Smallman who has a website called kindnessandy.com. He's one of the people who's at the forefront of teaching and promoting kindness. I know him because he was the creator and headmaster of a school that my children went to. One of the characteristics that he brought to that school and that he instilled in all its students was kindness. I always thought of him as our local version of Mr. Rogers.

When we are freely helping each other, when we are being kind, we know how the world changes around us and within us. We experience it, we can see it happening. Interestingly, I have talked with people in classes who say "I just can't manage that unconditional loving" but they can do unconditional acts of kindness. It all becomes an issue of semantics, a matter of what we name certain things.

Kindness is an outpouring, an outreaching of the heart to another, to the environment around us, to the world around us with the specific intent of

greasing the wheels, making things work better, curing what is ill, helping what is hurt. Kindness has no objective for itself. It's not transactional in that sense. I'm not kind because it's a way of getting kindness back. Kindness flows out because it's a joy and a delight and it's exciting to see and to experience the changes that take place in the world around me when one is simply kind. What could be more loving than that? What could be more conducive to creating wholeness and interconnectedness than that?

One form of kindness, one shape it can take is forgiveness. Forgiveness isn't so much a step for me in the spectrum. It's one of those manifestations of love and kindness which can happen anywhere along the spectrum as far as that goes. But forgiveness is a kindness that helps restore flow when a flow that has been obstructed because of feelings, because of memories, because of thoughts that won't let go of a past hurt or some obstructing emotion. In a way, forgiveness is kindness towards ourselves as much as towards another, to recognize that we have the power to let go of our past and others' past in order that a different more whole and harmonious future may emerge.

The next step on the spectrum for me beyond kindness is **affection**. Now we have that resonance of the heart, the calling of one soul to another that says "I feel a kinship with you, I feel part of you in some way." It might not be as compelling and as deep as romantic love, but affection opens the heart to care for the well-being of the other.

Someone might say "I can feel affectionate towards my friends and my family but I certainly cannot feel affectionate towards people in that other political party or people in that other country or people who are doing things I don't like." That's fair enough. If I experience affection in some part of my life, at least that's a channel through which love is flowing, and like any flowing and powerful liquid, once love flows, it can carve out new channels for itself. A tiny creek of affection can become a Grand Canyon of unconditional love. It may take time, but it won't happen at all if that creek isn't there and flowing.

Affection can broaden. We can find ourselves feeling affection for people we don't particularly agree with. I'm a democrat, you're a republican, or I'm a republican, you're a democrat—I don't agree with what your policies are, but I have affection for you, you're my friend. Affection underpins our friendship and our connections that can transcend other kinds of differences and boundaries.

Affection helps us experience our uniqueness, our individual state of mind and being while not allowing that to become a barrier between us and others.

We can stand in our sovereignty and still reach out with affection to take part in the well-being of others and to collaborate with others.

Affection gives way to the next level—**identification** with the other. Affection opens up new depths of connectedness. Now I find myself having a relationship with people and with the world around me that's deeper than just liking, deeper than just affection, deeper than just saying I honor you, I appreciate you, I care for you. It now becomes an experience of identification, a realization that we are each interdependent, interconnected parts of a larger emerging, evolving oneness.

This is the level of love that so many of the great mystics and spiritual teachers encourage us to strive for. This is the level of love they say is possible and in their lives we see that it's possible, where you can identify with yourself and at the same time you are experiencing identification with others.

This gives way to what for me—at the moment anyway—is the final stage in this spectrum of love, and I call it **holopoiesis**. This is a word I coined a number of years ago and it simply means the impulse or the capacity to create wholeness. If I am being holopoietic, then I am engaging in the active creation of wholeness and that is profoundly what love does.

Each of these moments upon the spectrum of love is in its own way an act of holopoiesis. Each in its own way is an act of attempting to build a connection—at least not denying one or destroying one. Each in its own way is a gesture towards wholeness. But we do come to those moments in our lives, those experiences where we feel so profoundly, deeply, completely at one with everything and we feel in ourselves this unrestrained, unconditioned impulse to celebrate and draw forth the wholeness that exists in our world.

One other thing I want to say about this spectrum:

I have on the wall of my room here a dimmer switch. This allows me to control the brightness of the light on the ceiling. It can go from very dim to very bright. In a way, the spectrum of love is like that. It's a way of talking about the dimmer switch of love. I might only be able to turn that dimmer switch to very, very dim, where the light has just come on and it's not glowing all that much, but at least it's on and I can celebrate that the light is there. Or it can go all the way to the other extreme and now it's so bright that everything is illumined, everything is caught up in the embrace of this bright radiance.

What's important to remember is that if love is a spectrum, we don't have to have the dimmer switch set on the brightest setting all the time. Not that we would necessarily voluntarily say "I'm just going to dim it way down to where you're lucky if I even acknowledge you," but it's that we recognize that in the complexity of our own being, in our own lives, we move up and down this spectrum. I might have a moment in meditation, it might come upon me unawares, one of those spontaneous and exciting and exuberant epiphanies when I'm out for a walk. I might have a moment when the dimmer switch is all the way up and I feel just as radiant as a star and just totally embraced in an unconditional outflow of love. There's nothing quite like that. There's every reason to say "Wow, I would like this to be my steady state, I want this to continue all the time!" But chances are in our everyday lives it doesn't work that way for a variety of reasons. The next day I may find myself with the dimmer switch way down. I may wake up curmudgeonly and out of sorts, and it's all I can do to acknowledge people, much less feel any affection.

The point is to know that we have this spectrum, to know that love is there for us whatever our capacity to express it may be in the moment. Knowing that the totality, the wholeness of love is always there for us, that we live on the spectrum, allows me to suspend that kind of judgment of myself that gets in the way, that diminishes who I am as a sacred being, that detracts from my capacity to love. Instead of saying "I don't know how I can be unconditionally loving, we can say "There are times when I don't know how, but I'm open to learning." And there are times when I know exactly how an unconditional love blazes forth from my heart.

We have this capacity to embody love in the full richness of its dimension and as we do, we will find ourselves steadily, day by day, in little ways and in big ways, moving towards a place of consciousness and embodiment where we really are holopoietic, unconditional, and fully radiant in the love that we bring to the world. This is our destiny, it is what we are capable of.

In reaching for it, we do so by loving ourselves in the process. If we can't love ourselves, our struggle, our moments when we feel we've failed as much as our moments when we feel we succeed, it just becomes that much harder to be consistently and powerfully and openly loving to others. In our hearts, in our souls, we embrace all the world, including ourselves, in this spectrum of love. We work for our wholeness as fully, and deeply, and lovingly, and caringly, and appreciatively and joyfully as we work for the wholeness of those around us.

Let me lead you in a short mediation and then I'll be happy to open it up for discussion and questions for the time we have remaining, and again I want to

say thank you for your kindness in having me here and listening to my thoughts.

Self-Light meditation

Let's take a moment to center ourselves in whatever way we are accustomed to doing so. Let's find in ourselves that openness and willingness to stand in the Light of our being, the holiness of our being, and the holiness and Light of all being.

I would like you to imagine a source of light that represents for you your soul and the sacredness of which it is a part. What for you is the highest source of your life and beingness, your unique incarnation? What for you is the Light of your infinite and eternal soul? Whatever that means for you and however you picture it, I would like you now to imagine that Light, that presence hovering above you.

Because we have evolved as upright beings, our imagination is deeply conditioned by the vertical, and so rather than fight it, let's just go with it and place this Light of the soul above us. Really, it could be anywhere—it could be to the right, to the left, in front of us, behind us, below us—but let's just place it above us for now.

Imagine this sphere of Light hovering above you. Open to this Light pouring down into your body and into your subtle vehicles, into the wholeness of who you are, pouring down into you. Take a moment to feel what that is like.

And now I would like you to imagine another sphere of Light, a sphere of green radiance, a green star if you wish, and this Light is under your feet. It is in the Earth, it is the light of the sacredness of the Earth. Imagine this Light flowing up through your feet, through your legs, into your body, filling your body, filling your subtle vehicles, filling your wholeness. Feel what it is like for the light of the Earth to flow upwards into you.

Now we have these two great Lights: a green Light flowing up from the Earth, a golden Light flowing down from the soul. They meet in the center of your being, they meet in your heart, they meet in your torso, they meet in the centeredness of you and there they blend, the Light of the soul and the Light of Earth, the Light of Gaia, blending together to create the Light of your incarnation, a unique radiance emanating from you as a unique being, a radiance of the relationship of love that your soul has with the world and that the earth has with your soul, the Light of matter and the Light of spirit coming together and emerging to bring into being your incarnation.

Feel this Light filling you, your Self-Light, the radiance of your unique presence in the world born of the love that the earth and the soul have for each other, and thus it is the Self-Light of your own incarnational love, your love for being here. Feel this Self-Light filling your being. As it does, feel the love that emerges from it, the love for being who you are in this world at this time. This is where you are needed, this is where you can serve, this is where your unique gifts of life can be offered to the whole of the world, this is where you can make a difference. This is you as Love.

Let us go forth to carry our love into our work as part of the great community of life that's serving the world at this time.

Q&A

[Questions have been condensed for clarity and brevity]

Q: *How to deal with the complexities of today's divided world?*

A: Humanity sets forth for itself the lessons and the challenges it needs to make its steps forward. Sometimes it does this skillfully, sometimes not so skillfully. Sometimes the lessons are really hard and sometimes not so hard.

I work with something I like to call the 6-foot principle because by 6 feet, I mean it's the sphere around me in which I have direct personal engagement and influence. That's just a metaphor, you realize, because each of us, our influence and the world we can affect may be smaller or larger. It's just an image that if it's within hand's reach, within arm's reach, I can touch it, I can engage with it and I can have an influence. The principle here is that I look at what it is that I can directly influence, because that is where I can bring love to bear, that's where I can make a difference.

If I say there's a lack of love in the world and people are fearful and being mean to each other, certainly that is true, there's no question that is happening. But the next question I ask is what am I doing to contribute to that or not contribute to it? That's what happens within my metaphorical 6 feet. Of course, now with social media, with the internet, in cyberspace, my 6 feet are greatly enlarged. But whatever the domain is in which I have influence, that is where I can exert my embodiment, my expression of the love that I wish to be in the world. That's where I can make a difference.

Obviously, challenges of great scale are at work. Things are happening that many people feel are outside their area of control. At one level, all of this is happening within our control as human beings. It's the sum total of the decisions we're making.

But when I try to grapple with the world at a scale that diminishes me, then I may lose my capacity to engage with my world positively and constructively within the scale that is open to me.

One of my favorite movies is “Brother Sun, Sister Moon,” by Franco Zeffirelli, about the life of St. Francis. There’s a song in it [San Damiano Song] that goes “If you want your dream to be, build it slow and surely, small beginnings greater ends, heartfelt work grows purely...Day by day, stone by stone...” It’s based on the incident in St. Francis’ life in which he went around begging for stones and he and his followers rebuilt this old church stone by stone.

The energy field of humanity is made up of all the energy fields of all the people who are part of it—that’s you and me. I have direct control over what happens within my energy field and what I put out into the world. I don’t know what’s going to be the outcome of that, but if I’m positive and loving and I do what I can to diminish the impact of fear and meanness in the world that I can touch and you do that and everyone does that, then that reverberates out.

There have been some scientific studies about the effect of moods of optimism and pessimism in business office settings. They discovered that someone who has a bright mood, an optimistic mood, is creating a zone of positivity around herself or himself and the effect of that is more far-reaching and lasts longer within the office ecology than the effect of somebody who’s being negative.

It may be that I can find myself in a situation where my actions can have direct influence over a large-scale issue, where I can affect my city or affect my neighborhood, or affect my country. But most of us aren’t in that position. So, what do we do? Do we give up? No, of course not! That’s the whole purpose of the new group of world servers, actually. That’s the rationale behind it—that we hold and stand in the Light and if we are steady, and if we are creating the world we want to live in within the area that we influence, then that reverberates out and affects the world at a larger level. It becomes part of the influence that goes into the mix as well as those influences that are less benign.

Humanity is making up its mind about what it wants to be and the world it wants to live in. It’s an ongoing process and we each have a part in it. None of us is powerless, even though we may not feel we have the power we would like to have in order to work at a world scale. Every thing we do, though, affects the world scale.

Q: What can we do to foster a greater group consciousness that can help expand our individual influence?

A: My particular work has always been with individuals as the starting point out of which groups are formed, but I'm very aware of the multiplier effect, the greater effect that occurs when presence and energy are centered at a group level and radiance proceeds from that group consciousness—that's very important. There are others that work directly with that and have more experience with it than I do. My focus over the years has been on working with individuals but always in a context that that work leads to an ability to work with larger group fields and larger group consciousness.

Q: We're told that the opposite of fear is not courage, but love. Can you comment on how love works to cast out fear on a more practical level?

A: Let me first say that when we say "fear," we want to recognize what kind of fear we mean because that's a word that has many possible meanings. There are times in our life when it's useful and important to be fearful of something in the sense of being aware that there's danger.

But fear in the restrictive sense, in the negative sense, causes energy to constrict, flow is diminished. If I have a flow of life and energy and creativity running through me and I become afraid, it becomes diminished. It's like blood vessels tightening up, constricting and the flow of blood is obstructed. Fear diminishes our capacity to connect. It tends to isolate us. It makes it more difficult to function as a group in a collaborative and co-creative way. It can cause us to come together in a kind of herd fashion, but that's not quite the same thing as co-creating a group energy together.

So fear can have this isolating, diminishing, separative quality to it and love operates just the opposite to that. Love expands our capacity to connect, it opens up our willingness to connect.

There's a very simple illustration of this in the bible, where everyone is afraid of the lepers and they're isolated and driven out of towns and nobody wants anything to do with a leper because they are contagious. Jesus comes and embraces them and welcomes them in and takes them in to his love and does not refuse that connection. By opening to that connectedness, healing takes place.

So rather than saying "love casts out fear," it might be better to say that love opens us up to where connection and engagement and flow are more possible again. It expands what has been constricted. That's how I see it.

Q: In relation to the situation in Seattle with the Coronavirus, what or whom would you advise to embrace in order to counteract the fear?

A: What love would do—and this is in fact happening—is to open up to a greater sense of the community that’s facing this challenge. I can be aware of the dangers that the virus poses and take precautions. Lots of precautions are being promoted like washing your hands and so on.

But we had a situation here a few days ago where there was a run on the grocery stores as people were desperate to get the things they felt they would need if they were isolated. They were buying up food and cleansers and disinfectants and toilet paper and things like that.

The fear was operative there in that people aren’t doing this to say “Let’s make our neighborhood more resilient” or “Let’s stock up so that our community is more resilient.” Instead, it’s “How can I hoard and how can I have what I need no matter what happens around me?”

However, people are recognizing it’s not a very helpful response. On a neighborhood bulletin board that encompasses the large neighborhood of this area I live in, a number of people have been posting the need for kindness and being aware that rather than getting panicky and running out and depleting the shelves of things that are needed, to take just what you need and to help others to find what they need.

To me, that’s a very practical expression of love that counteracts the fear that says “I have to get what I need and never mind everybody else,” Instead it says “Ok, we’re in an unusual situation that poses some risks and some danger, but we can deal with this together.”

We want to understand how our energy interacts with group energy and avoid getting taken over by group thoughtforms. If I go into the grocery store and all around me I feel this energy, this urge to buy and stock up, people are scrambling for things, I need to have the discipline to say I only need that one thing, I don’t need to buy out the whole shelf. That’s an important expression of love too. It’s the ability to say I’m not going to be taken over and swayed by the mass energy that’s moving through the collective consciousness at the moment in that area.

You’ve had these people who are the first responders—a lot of nurses and doctors and paramedics who have gone into these places where the coronavirus has been so prevalent to try to serve people and meet their

medical needs and then have gotten infected themselves. That kind of dedication and that kind of selflessness is certainly evident in the midst of everything else.

There's another factor too that doesn't get talked about very much in our society. There's an effect—I'm fully convinced of this—when a person is open and loving and is feeling connected to the world around them, this has a very positive effect on their whole immune system. There's medical evidence that when we are fearful and anxious it diminishes our immune system so we become even more susceptible to whatever's going around in the environment.

When something arises in our life where we can take an action or we're asked to do something, it comes down to asking ourselves "What is the loving thing to do here? What is the wise and connected and whole thing to do? What can I do that will make a difference? It's also realizing that sometimes it comes down to doing nothing.

My wife and son went through emergency training here because we live in an area that is potentially prone to earthquakes and there can be other natural disasters and human disasters—fires and things. They went through this training that was put on by the city and were told what to do to help if there were an earthquake as kind of assistant first responders before the police, the firefighters, the paramedics and so on could arrive.

But one of the first things they were taught is when to do nothing, when to recognize that action may be needed but they're not the person to give it and they need to just stabilize things until somebody who's more skilled can come. Sometimes the act of love is to say "Right now I need to step back and not put my energy out."

We're not carrying the heavy weight of the world, we're carrying the joy of the world that seeks expression. Let that uplift us.

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