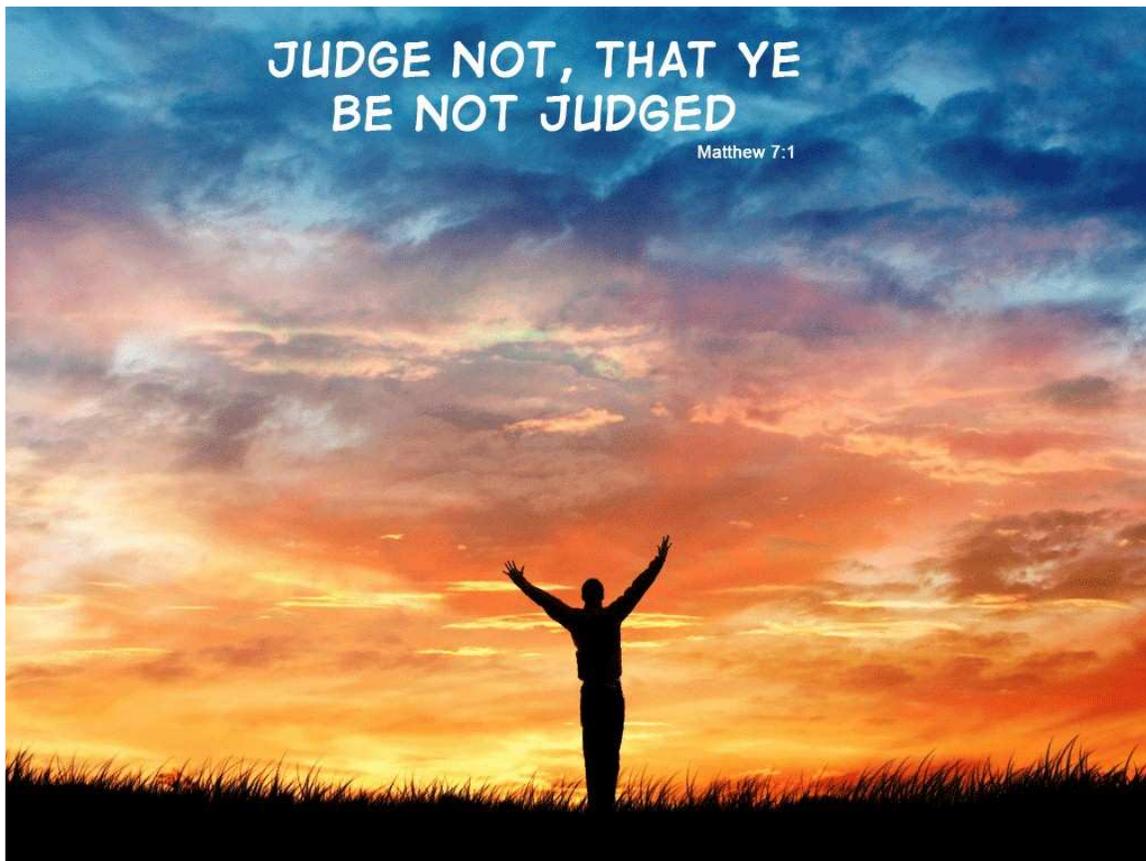


Judgments: Judging Others & Ourselves



A day spent judging another is a painful day.
A day spent judging yourself is a painful day.
You don't have to believe your judgments;
they're simply an old habit.
(Buddha)

One of the most difficult precepts to incorporate into our lives as we travel on our spiritual journey is the one regarding unnecessary judgments. This applies to judging others as well as ourselves.

Many of us know the famous passage from the Bible (Matthew: 7: 1-5) where Jesus says:

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you again.

And why behold you the speck that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, "Let me pull the speck out of your eye; and, behold, a beam is in your own eye?"

You hypocrite! First cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cast out the speck out of your brother's eye.



The following is an English translation of excerpts from a Hindi satsang, January 28 1967, by Master Kirpal Singh, which summarizes His teachings on judging others. The talk is entitled "On Judging Others".

"If we realize that death is certain, then there will be a change in our life. You must remain attentive in meditation. If not, the mind will think of others and judge their actions; criticizing, etc. Instead of the good actions of others, we take their bad actions to be our guiding factor. If you see the bad qualities of others, you will become those bad qualities. As you think, so you become."

"God has said: 'He is my loveliest child who sees me in others.' Thoughts are very potent. You should see the good qualities of others rather than the bad qualities. You must have a sweet tongue; it should not injure the feelings of others. You want to love God, yet you curse others in whom God resides. Injuring the feelings of others is a great sin; it is a sin of the highest degree. If you have to face a person with such bad qualities, get on to one side rather than face him. Analyze yourself and see your own shortcomings instead of seeing the shortcomings of others. Who are you to take out the shortcomings of others? It is easy to seek God, but very difficult to mend yourself. If you realized that God resides in others, would you want to hurt

them? One by one, you should give up your shortcomings. This is why I insist on all initiates keeping a diary.”

“If a man won't give up his evil ways of hurting others, why should you depart from your sweet ways of helping others? If you must observe others, then observe their virtuous qualities. There are shortcomings in all, but also good qualities.”

“Swami Ji says, ‘I will give you a tip; if you want to see shortcomings, then look into your own self; if you want to see virtues, then see them in others.’”

“Listen to what I say, and take heed; if not, you will be sorry and then it will be too late in the day. I have selected the best piece of advice for you. Now it is up to you to follow it. God has given us this tongue to remember Him and not to hurt the feelings of others.” (ruhanisatsangusa.org/judgenot.htm)



In a circular letter entitled “Blessed are the Poor in Spirit” Master wrote:

“Where loving service begins to flow freely from the innermost depths of a heart, that heart naturally gets saturated with the milk of human kindness and becomes meek, as meek as a lamb. Freed from the thorns and thistles of arrogance and pride, one becomes harmless as a dove. He cannot then injure the feelings of others, by thoughts, by words or by deeds. He would ever fear to judge others and make unruly remarks and comments. Judge not others, lest ye be judged and found wanting by the Great Judge. This thought would keep him on his guard.” (ruhanisatsangusa.org/blessed.htm)



In a talk entitled “Let Us Reform Ourselves” Master Kirpal states, “The worst of all the bad habits is to criticize others. One must observe non-injury (nonviolence) even in thought.” (<http://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/reform.htm>)



In the early 1990's, I was a volunteer at a local prison. The inmates and I would meditate together and talk about spiritual topics. The inmates I worked with ranged from a man imprisoned for insurance fraud to an accomplice to murder.

Many of the men were arrested for armed robbery and other serious crimes. They volunteered to attend our group meetings, and they were very receptive to turning their lives around.

At that time I had recently read material written by Ken Keyes Jr. His most popular book is called *Handbook to Higher Consciousness*. One of his books that I used in my meetings is called *Gathering Power Through Insight and Love*.

There is a section from that book that I found very powerful, very helpful, for working on my own habit of judging others, and the inmates also benefited from using the technique presented in the book. The following is the relevant excerpt (modified slightly):

“Behind it all, we always have beneficial positive intentions – even though we may sometimes use unskillful ways to achieve them.

With everyone and everything we relate to, we have a beneficial positive intention: essentially to love and/or feel loved. Let’s look deeply inside to discover that behind every action we have a beneficial positive intention!

Realizing this principle helps us forgive ourselves and others and we begin to heal our separateness. When you fully understand this concept and can effectively apply it to your everyday stream of consciousness, your experience of life will go into a new dimension. The world will appear to change, for after all, the world you experience is the mirror of your mind!

This principle carries the tremendous implication that behind every thought, feeling, and voluntary action lies a beneficial positive intention.

At first this statement may seem outrageous. It’s definitely not what we’ve been taught. One might say, “What about Hitler? Terrorists? The murderers and rapists? Surely their acts don’t represent beneficial positive intentions!” But notice, we didn’t say their acts represent beneficial positive intentions. **Behind their acts they’re always motivated by beneficial positive intentions just like yours – to feel secure, to feel effective, to feel approved of, loved, capable, happy, etc. What they need are more skillful ways to achieve their beneficial positive intentions.** They’re trapped in separate-self ways that don’t work. All of this will become clearer as you read this chapter and begin to use the concept of beneficial positive intentions in your own life.

Formulating Your Positive Intention

Your positive intention is the internal experience that you really want in a particular situation underneath the surface desire. **It is basically an image, thought, or feeling you want to have.** Formulating your positive intention is simple. There are only two things you need to do. Here are the two guidelines we use for effectively uncovering beneficial positive intentions:

1. Make it beneficial and positive. State what you want – not what you don't want. For example, say, "My positive intention is to feel happy," rather than, "My positive intention is to not feel sad."
2. Make it identify a desired internal state. Refer to a sensory-based experience or feeling in one of these three sensory modes:

Visual Mode: "How do I want to see myself?" Your answer could be, "I want to see myself as humorous," or strong, wise, happy, etc.

Auditory Mode: "What do I want to hear inside about myself?" You might answer, "I want to hear inside that I'm wonderful," or beautiful, capable, winning, loved, etc.

Feeling Mode: "How do I want to feel?" Your answer might be, "I want to feel energized," or accepted, relaxed, etc.

You'll notice that there are three sensory-based modes you can choose from, depending on which you access most easily: visual, auditory, or feeling.

Let's apply the two guidelines for formulating your positive intentions. You would avoid "My positive intention is to get a new house," for this does not describe an internal experience you want. And it could lock you into house hunting. Why do you want a new house? What internal experience do you think the house will give you? If you find that your underlying beneficial positive intention is to feel comfortable, you may discover some alternatives that can help you achieve this intention more directly than house hunting (or in addition to house hunting).

The above criteria for formulating your positive intention would also rule out "My positive intention is not to have a crowded house." Tell what you want – not what you don't want. Instead, you could formulate, "My positive intention is to feel comfortable."

The following is a list of possible positive intentions that meet the criteria. As you can see, each one refers to an internal experience. Since it is inside you, as your skill develops your emotional experience can be increasingly under your control. Your happiness will be less and less like a weathercock that keeps whirling around as the winds of life change. **You gradually realize that you are your own creative cause instead of an effect of other people's behavior.** This list is not complete, so feel free to add to it in ways that reflect your own interests.

Acceptable, accepted, accepting, acknowledged, alive, appreciated, attractive, beautiful, calm, capable, comfortable, competent, confident, dependable, enthusiastic, excited, fulfilled, happy, healthy, helpful, humorous, important, independent, intelligent, joyful, knowledgeable, lovable, loved, loving, peaceful, prosperous, relaxed, reliable, responsible, safe, satisfied, secure, strong, supported, supportive, valuable, valued, worthwhile, worthy, and hundreds more.

Good Intentions Behind Harmful Actions

In exploring your mind for its positive intentions, you may need to ask yourself, "What is my positive beneficial intention behind a negative, harmful thought?" **Keep in mind that there are always beneficial positive intentions behind every thought or action. Even when you do things that you later regret or that others condemn, you still are motivated by beneficial positive intentions. The problem is that you may need more skillful ways to achieve your positive intentions.**

Suppose a friend has told a lie about you in order to take a business contract away from you. Let's say your thought right now is that you want to beat him up and knock his teeth in. This clearly is a negative, harmful idea. Now ask yourself, "What is my intention behind this harmful thought?" Perhaps your mind says, "I want to pay him back." This still does not seem like a positive beneficial intention, and it certainly doesn't point to a desired internal state. So ask yourself again, "What is my intention behind this idea?" Exploring inside, you might answer, "It's to feel peaceful." So now we find that inner peace is your positive beneficial intention. Is beating your friend up a good way to achieve this positive intention? Obviously not. At this point you can ask your mind to provide you with new ways to help you successfully achieve your positive intention to feel peaceful.

Begin to notice the positive intentions behind everything people do. For example, a person who robs a bank has beneficial positive intentions – one of them may be to feel (financially) secure. Don't you have this same positive intention? A difference between you and the robber is that you have more skillful ways to achieve your beneficial positive intention to feel secure.

The problem is not “bad” people – it's unskillful programming. Think of the worst murderer you've heard of. Look over the list of possible positive intentions and observe how many might apply to the person you're thinking about. **It is possible to develop compassion toward all human beings – and we can still try to block the unskillful ways they are programmed to use in achieving their positive intentions.**

Misusing this Principle

It is possible to misunderstand the application of the principle and thus be unable to benefit by it. Your programming may tell you, “I just can't see the beneficial intention of someone who rapes and murders a woman,” or “There's enough crime in this world and you shouldn't give people excuses to harm one another.”

Please note that this principle does not furnish a legal defense or moral excuse for aggressive acts that are committed. We all have legal and other penalties to pay when we harm one another. It would be a misuse of this principle to point out to a jury that the defendant set fire to a nursing home because he wanted to feel capable, and he now regrets it and promises to find a more skillful way to feel capable in the future.

One of the benefits of applying this principle is that you gain psychological insight into a person's antisocial or undesired behavior. We desperately need this understanding in a world in which people are frequently unskillful in the ways they try to achieve their positive intentions.

When you judgmentally pigeonhole people as “bad,” you limit your insight and understanding about them. This principle is designed to help you progress from the tunnel vision of separate-self programming to the expanded vision of the unified-self experience. **You can use this wisdom principle to deepen your own understanding, insight, and compassion regarding unskillful behavior – in both yourself and others.** Don't use it to “justify” unskillful acts. People who harm others are victims of their own programming –

and, of course, must live with the consequences when they act out unskillful programming.

You can thus use this principle as an important vehicle to help you in your journey of inner growth. Without it, you might throw people out of your heart – and keep them out. **Knowing that people always have a beneficial positive intention that ultimately generates all of their thoughts and actions can help you increase your emotional acceptance of that person – even though you oppose what they’re doing.**

When you use this principle, it can help your friends, job associates, and family feel that your heart understands them. This may open them to your suggestions for more skillful actions that may really help them achieve their beneficial positive intentions.

Formulating positive intentions can tune us in to the basic goodness of everyone on earth!”



That’s the principle I used with the inmates. I remember in one group session there was a discussion with a man serving time for robbing a convenience store. He explained how he used his ill-gotten gains to feed his family. Another inmate, the apparent alpha male of the group, shouted out to this man – “Then get a job!” This coming from another convicted felon!



This topic reminds me of a great quote by the Beloved Master Kirpal Singh, “Another common desire which you must sternly repress is the wish to meddle in another man's business, directly or indirectly, privately or openly. If you see a case of cruelty to a child or an animal, it is your duty to interfere. If you are placed in charge of another in order to teach him, it may become your duty gently to tell him of his faults. Except for such cases, mind your own business and learn the value of silence.” (ruhanisatsangusa.org/gemsq.htm)



To conclude this topic on judgment, I’ve included a talk I wrote for a Christian friend of mine who attends a Southern Baptist Church. She is quite old and is not the writer she once was. She asked me to write her a talk that she was asked to deliver during a church service. This is the talk:

Judging Others

Today's talk is about judging others and minding our own business. I can't think of another area in life where most of us fail to behave as Christ commanded us when he told us to love one another. Negative judgments of others are like weeds in the garden of our mind, they act as pollutants that destroy the purity of a mind dedicated to Jesus, and they decrease the compassion and love we want to have for others. Negative judgments are like clouds which darken the sunshine of our life.

I looked up the topic of judging others on the internet and there are many articles related to judgments. I'd like to read part of one article to you now:

"Today it seems the most often quoted Bible verse is Matthew 7:1, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Some use it without realizing its true meaning and others, Christian and non Christians, use it to avoid accountability. Hypocrites for example would use it to avoid being challenged in their wrong doing. What does this verse really mean? Does this verse teach that we cannot judge others?"

We see Jesus just a few verses later in Matthew 7:6 calling people "pigs" and "dogs" and in verse 15 "wolves in sheep's clothing." In verse 16 He tells us how to recognize the false prophets, "you will recognize them by their fruits." Jesus would not be telling us how to recognize false prophets if he did not expect us to judge them as being true prophets or false prophets.

Therefore, the answer to our question is that Christians are to judge others. If judging others is unchristian as some charge, we would be unable to have the various levels of government, we would be unable to be a good parent, we would certainly make a poor employer, none of us would be able to sit on a jury and the list goes on."

What all these examples have in common is that they are rightful judgments based on one's legitimate areas of responsibility. Teachers have the responsibility to judge the quality of their students' work and their behavior. It's

the employers' job to judge their employees. Likewise, it is the parents' responsibility to make judgments that influence the well-being of their children.

The key point in judgments is the difference between when something is none of our business and when the judgment is part of our business.

If a fourteen year old girl tells her parents that they are being unchristian when they judge the twenty year old neighborhood drug dealer as an inappropriate date for their daughter, she is wrong because monitoring who dates one's child is part of a parent's responsibility. Judgments in that regard are totally justified and appropriate.

If we see our neighbor at the supermarket with a new outfit and think, "Boy, she looks horrible in that get-up" that is an unnecessary judgment and falls under "What the neighbor chooses to wear is none of my business."

The article continues:

"Christians must use spiritual discernment in coming to conclusions on matters of right or wrong or good and evil. Judgment that judges right from wrong and good from evil is always legitimate judgment for Christians.

If a person is doing wrong and I tell them they are doing wrong I am not judging that person but I am judging that persons behavior. God will judge the intent or motivation."

So the first point I want to suggest is that in making judgments we should put the judgment to the test of "Is this any of my business?" Judgments that we make that are none of our business separate us from others and in a sense throws them out of our heart. That is not a Christian thing to do and we should avoid doing it.

The second point I'd like to suggest is that there is a difference between negative judgments and personal preferences. Negative judgments are about others, as in "he's a jerk", or "she is such a bore". That's a lot different than saying "I prefer being around people who are kind and considerate", or "I don't enjoy listening to people talk about themselves to the extreme."

The same applies to the example of not wanting your daughter to date a drug dealer. This can be stated as “He’s a worthless good-for-nothing bum and I refuse to allow you to see him” or it can be stated as “I want you to have relationships with people who share our values and who are law abiding citizens.”

We all are entitled to our own personal preferences. I prefer butter pecan ice cream over vanilla. That’s different than saying vanilla ice cream is lousy. Everyone is different and entitled to live life and make choices and distinctions based on their own preferences. There’s no harm in that.

What is harmful is judging others because of perceived differences in which we “make them wrong” or elevate ourselves and degrade others. Those are the judgments that Jesus is warning us about, judgments which degrade another human being and in the process elevate ourselves.

If we can incorporate those two suggestions, “Is this any of my business” and “I prefer” statements that don’t denigrate or cast judgment on the other, if we can start to monitor our thoughts and words in this area, we will please Jesus and become a more loving and less negative person.

We can begin by noticing when we engage in negative, none of our business, judgments. Just notice when you do it, what preceded the judgment, how did it make you feel; just be aware of when these negative judgments enter your mind. Watch them, observe them, but don’t fall into the trap of judging yourself for having them!

Negative judgments are a habit of the mind and we are all subject to their arrival. While we can’t just stop this habit immediately, we can stop from dwelling on the negative thoughts and judgments that we observe in our minds. We don’t have to entertain them and give them life by allowing them to multiply.

The same principle of observation applies to noticing when we assign blame to something external to ourselves as the cause of our negative reaction rather than seeing our judgment as an expression of our personal preference.

“It’s horrible outside, it’s too hot” can be changed to “I prefer cooler weather” or “The people who want to cut funding to the social security program are a bunch of heartless morons” can be changed to “I prefer that the government

spend our tax dollars to adequately support programs that help retired people live without hardship.”

“I hate you for being so mean” can be changed to “I prefer to spend time with people who treat others with love and respect - therefore I will not be seeing you again.”

I think this is what Jesus wants us to do, not make judgments about people’s moral worth, that’s God’s domain, but love all people as brothers and sisters under the same God the Father.

We can love someone while at the same time acknowledging that their behavior is outside the bounds of our value system. We have the right and responsibility to choose who we associate with, who we vote for, how we spend our time and money.

It’s helpful to realize that if we had the other person’s background, their conditioning, their life experiences – we would probably see the world much like they do.

We shouldn’t judge people for being different or for acting in a manner we deem inappropriate. We can make decisions in our lives based on our own values and upbringing, our preferences and standards, while allowing the person or event to be just as it is.

Jesus instructs us:

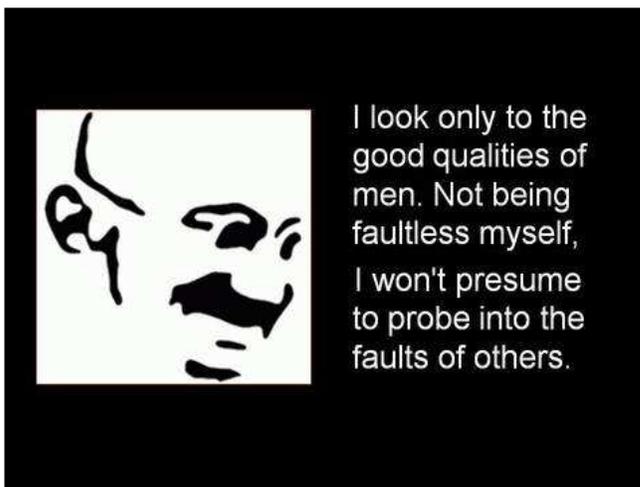
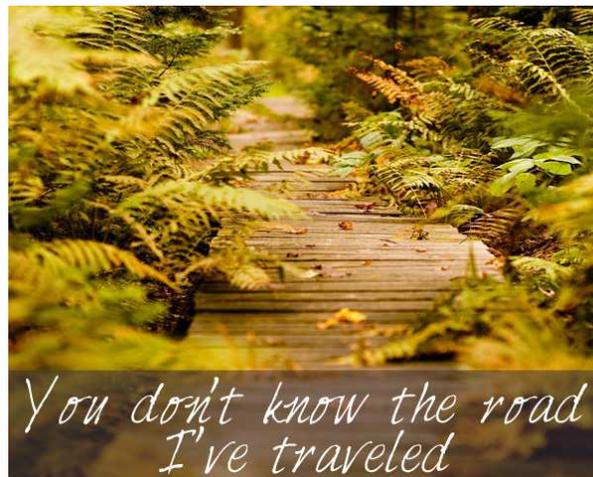
Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you again. And why behold you the speck that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, “Let me pull the speck out of your eye; and, behold, a beam is in your own eye?” You hypocrite! First cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cast out the speck out of your brother's eye.

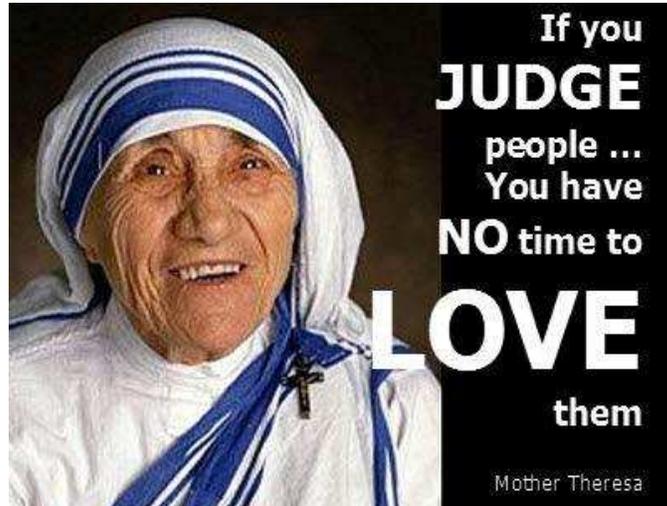
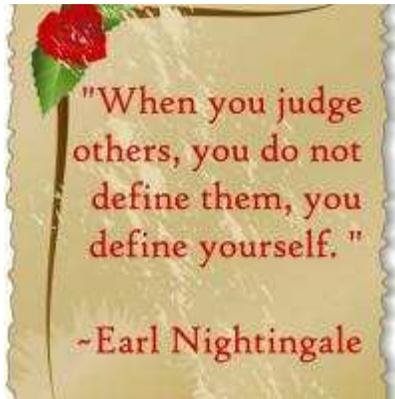
If we examine ourselves we will see that most of our negative judgments are about things that are really none of our business, or as Jesus says “the speck of dust in your brother’s eye”.

Our lives would be a lot more peaceful and Christ-like if we learn to cast a judgmental eye upon ourselves, to be concerned with the plank in our own eye.

I believe this is a very valuable piece of advice our Lord is offering us today, and I'm sure the benefits of taking his advice to heart will be evident in our own happiness in a short period of time.

Amen.





May your soul be happy;
journey joyfully.
(Rumi)

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