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Excerpts from

“THE NON-VIOLENT LIFE”

BY JOHN DEAR

Prayer for a Non-Violent Life --- by John Dear

“God of peace, thank you for being gentle, loving, compassionate, and non-violent! You are so nonviolent that you do not force yourself upon us, but gently call us to your wisdom and way of non-violence. You give us the freedom to do as we will. Help us to do your will of peace, to choose your way of non-violence. Help us to live non-violent lives, to become your holy people of non-violence, to welcome your reign of peace and nonviolence here on earth.”

1st DIMENSION OF NONVIOLENCE

HEALING OURSELVES

Our unhealed inner wounds can breed hatred, resentment, anger, selfishness, misery, chaos and more violence. As we become more and more aware, of what happened to us in childhood, we may begin to have compassion upon ourselves, accept ourselves, and be more nonviolent to ourselves.

We remember that we are wounded victims of the culture of violence and that we are all in recovery. We take time every day to heal ourselves, and patiently let the Healing take its course.

Often our deeply rooted, negative interior feelings are triggered because of what someone else has said or done. These encounters can trigger our childhood wounds, or other unresolved hurts from the past. So we need recognize what is happening now and in the past, realize that we are continuing the cycle of self abuse by beating up on ourselves, and choose instead to give ourselves a break, to let it all go and breathe-in the spirit of peace.

It is important to take time in quiet meditation to ponder our life journey. What violence did we experience from our parents, siblings, relatives, classmates or neighbors? How was this violence part of the larger culture of violence and war? How was our childhood our youth and our growing up influenced by the realities of violence?

If our parents did not shower us with unconditional love, then at some level we likely learned that we are not worthy of unconditional love. We may not know how to show ourselves such nonviolent love.

Psychologists teach us that the first two years of early childhood development may be the most important in our lives. If we were not loved, affirmed, held and blessed then we may find it hard to love and affirm ourselves now. This inner wound can eat away at us. Some turn to alcohol or drugs to relieve this pain, which only makes the situation worse.

We were taught not to affirm or love ourselves, and so we may carry some level of low self-esteem. We likely carry this violence within and go through life feeling miserable. It is only natural that we internalize the violence done to us as children. The unhealed inner wars can breed hatred, resentment, anger, selfishness, misery, chaos and more violence.

As we become more and more aware of what happened to us in childhood, we may begin to have compassion upon ourselves, accept ourselves, and be more nonviolent to ourselves.

And with this conscious self-awareness, the key is to let go of our inner violence, ideally, to give it to the God of peace. We tell ourselves I will not beat myself up. I will be kind to myself. I will have mercy on myself. I will understand myself. I forgive myself. I remember my wounds and then make a commitment to the journey of peace and nonviolence. I choose to cultivate interior peace and nonviolence.

If we can learn to let go of small negative thoughts about ourselves, we will eventually decrease the big negative thoughts about ourselves, and slowly over time, accept ourselves more and more, be more nonviolent to ourselves, and begin to create a place of peace inside. If we treat ourselves as our best friend, as a great person with immense dignity to be honored, respected, and cherished, we will begin to feel better about ourselves.

The first step on the journey of non-violence, then, is to make peace with ourself. To make peace with ourself requires showing compassion to ourself. If we want to show mercy, compassion, kindness and love to others, we have to show mercy, compassion, kindness and love to ourselves.

We can write in a journal and list reasons for gratitude, inner peace and compassion toward ourselves. We can meditate every day on our feelings of love, wonder and joy. We give thanks for the blessings of life and peace within. And we practice showing tender compassion toward ourselves within the light and grace of our non-violent God.

As we care for ourselves, affirm ourselves, and make peace with ourselves, we will feel more empowered to love others and make peace with everyone.

We need to tend to our own healing inner healing and try to learn how to become more nonviolent to ourselves and others. This personal, inner journey is the work of a lifetime, that's what the spiritual life is all about.

Meditation is crucial to the life of non-violence, in that silent meditation we can hear God say to us, "you are my beloved." It is highly recommended to sit alone and quiet in a contemplative place with the God of peace for at least 30 minutes every day for the rest of our lives.

As we take time each day to let God love us in meditation, we begin to experience God as a loving, trustworthy, nonviolent parent. Over time, our knowledge of God changes because we have experienced God, God's love and God's peace directly. We know deep down to our very core that God loves us.

The spiritual practice of daily contemplative peace is good for our own sanity and healing, in this quiet prayer and meditation, as we dwell in the presence of God, and strengthen our relationship with God, God gently disarms our hearts and digs out the roots of war within us. In return God gives us the gift of peace.

Gandhi said to be a person of nonviolence is to be fearless. You cannot practice nonviolence and be afraid. You have to overcome your fears then you can go forward in love and confidence into the culture of violence and war with the message and work of disarmament and justice. Those who embark on non-violence as a way of life come to grips with their fears. We name our fears, recognize them, reflect on them, and let them go. That means, we deal with every possible fear, loss of health, reputation, home, job, money, security, or family, or the possibility of arrest, prison, pain, and injury, and the inevitability of death. We let go of fear and embrace the present moment of peace and the possibilities of love.

Jesus insisted that the only way to live a life of non-violence was to renounce fear. It's much braver, more courageous, to live without fear and wage the struggle for justice without violence. This is a harder, more noble, more fruitful way of life. He shows us that we do not need to live in fear, nor do we need to cooperate with the culture of fear.

Gandhi said possession of arms implies an element of fear if not cowardice. Gandhi spent one hour in silent prayer every morning and one hour in silent prayer every evening communing with the God of peace. Fearlessness is a key ingredient in the nonviolent life.

In the sermon on the mount Jesus forbids fear and he forbids anger.. Anger and fear are the root causes of violence. Jesus is not telling us to repress our anger that doesn't work. Sooner or later that repressed anger will come out. Rather he urges us to deal with it, to channel that negative energy, through forgiveness and compassion into positive constructive work for the healing of others and the practice of creative non-violence and universal love. Channel your energy to heal the wounds you have caused.

All the great peace makers are full of joy, they are not angry people. They laughed every day told many jokes and were known for their joy, even as they gave their lives. Such good humor is the mark of someone who has learned the lessons of the sermon on the mount.

Jesus recommends that we practice sorrow and joy on a daily level. As people of grief and joy we will model the nonviolent life.. In the last century alone over 100 million people were killed brutally in warfare. We grieve for them. Jesus teaches us to become aware of this need to grieve and to make grief and sorrow a conscious, daily practice. And that way we deal with reality, and find strength to go forward in loving nonviolent action. The action we take will come not from anger, but from a place of compassion, from our shared grief.

Long time peace activists take time to grieve and take quiet meditation time regularly to sit and grieve and weep over the suffering and death of the poor and those we have killed, and our treatment of one another and creation itself. They mourn and cry and then having grieved, go forward to work publicly for disarmament, justice and peace. We need to make grief a regular part of our daily meditation. Grief needs to become a way of life for us. Grieve for the thousands of impoverished people in the third world, who die every day. The practice of grief allows for compassion within us to grow and the possibilities of universal love to grow within and among us. If we learn to grieve regularly, as Jesus recommends, we are awakening to our common humanity, expanding our hearts, widening our compassion, and discovering new horizons of peace. We will become like Jesus people of genuine, all embracing, universal love and non-violence.

The good news is that Jesus does not leave us in grief he calls us to rejoice! This too is an inconceivable concept for most North Americans rooted in the angry fearful culture of violence and war.

I hear Jesus urging us to be joyful, to cultivate joy within us, to find joy in our lives. This even as we face the most dire injustices. And we stare down the power of empire and endure the greatest rejection, abandonment, and even imprisonment. We can maintain an inner joy which the forces of death will never take away from us.

If we want to live the nonviolent life, Jesus, Gandhi and the great peacemakers recommend that we let go of fear and anger, and cultivate grief and joy instead. And that way we become more human more peaceful, more compassionate, and more loving.

Jesus taught we have to become like children, if we want to enter God's reign of peace. Children do not use guns, massacre others or build nuclear weapons. They live in the present moment of peace, feel their emotions, smile with love and rejoice in laughter. That's the path that lies ahead for all of us, child like wonder, unconditional love and boundless joy. These are the blessings of the nonviolent life.

We can seek the Spirit of peace, open ourselves to Spirit's presence, and listen for Spirit's word of loving affirmation. We can turn to our higher power, ask Spirit to disarm our hearts and welcome Spirit's gift of peace.

I invite us to take quality time every day in silent meditation with the Spirit Of Love and peace, to get to know Spirit, to let Spirit love you unconditionally, and fall in love with this loving a Spirit.

As we lower our stress, let go of fear, resentments, and anger, re-vital losses and the death of the poor, we make room for joy, we let our hearts widen, we stretch out our compassion to embrace the whole human family. We open our hearts to the spirit and give spirit permission to use us for the work of disarmament, justice, and non-violence.

The Nonviolent life is not an accomplishment, it's a journey, a lifelong, beautiful journey, full of blessings and Grace is that ours for the asking.

2nd DIMENSION OF NON-VIOLENCE

NONVIOLENCE TOWARD ALL OTHERS

“We love other men and women not because we like them, not because their attitudes and ways appeal to us, but because Spirit loves them. Here we rise to the portion of loving the person who does the evil deed while hating the deed he does.”——Martin Luther King Jr.

Let us have no bitterness, no class strife, so that we can build up our strength to work for justice and love. Let us pray together, no matter what our faith is, for each other and for the whole world. —————Dorothy Day

Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount his most salient points were “love for our neighbor” love for ourself, and love for our enemy. Spirit invites us to maintain our inner nonviolence, our relationship with the Spirit of peace, and to go forth into the culture of violence to be non-violent to everyone we meet.. We try to show respect, courtesy, kindness, empathy and compassion to everyone we meet. This leads to a new hope, forgiveness, justice, reconciliation and transformation. And those ought to always be our goals.

Nonviolence begins at home if we are going to be sincerely nonviolent, we have to be extra attentive to our feelings with those around us, and expend extra energy to create a community of non-violence with those around us.. We have to especially be Nonviolent to those closest to us especially those who have hurt us or those we have hurt. The nonviolent response may be to withdraw involvement from a violent family.

We have to shower every child around us with unconditional, nonviolent love, encouragement and affirmation. No more violence, no more yelling, no more put downs. The day is of child abuse need to come to an immediate end, starting with us.

We are more likely to feel compassion for others if we create clear boundaries they are healthy.

We need to help our church become a training camp of non-violence and dwell in the Spirit’s intimate love, deep in our relationship with the community of peace, and feel strength and to go forth into the world of war on the mission of peace.

If we are part of a local peace and justice group, or join a public protest, or even engage in a civil disobedience action, we need to be especially, meticulously Nonviolent.

I am called to become nonviolent to reclaim my true self, and to be nonviolent to everyone I meet, even to love my neighbor and my enemies, to radiate personally the peace I seek politically. The challenge is to enter that awareness now and to use the short time we have left to be as loving, disarming, non-violent and peaceful as possible. Toward everyone. From now on!

Choose non-violence. Practice non-violence. Love everyone around you. Make peace. Even if we can’t reach those Noble Heights, the struggle to be nonviolent is itself a victory for love and the Spirit of peace. It is the only struggle worth pursuing. If we can intervene, unarm and convert others to the truth of love and peace, through our

creative nonviolent action, then we can practice authentic nonviolence. The key in every relationship and encounter is to maintain our non-violence, help others deepen their non-violence, and grow in peace, hope and love. We have to be non-violent and show love to all those we meet,” especially the most difficult.

We can ask ourselves who are the people who triggered our violence, our resentment, and our hatred? Whom do we not love, do we not want to be nonviolent to, how do we make peace with them? Who has hurt us, whom do we want to hurt, whom have we heard, and how can we transform these situations? Who would we really like to get even with? Whether it be our president, a politician, a boss, a parent, a sibling, neighbor, or coworker. Often there’s at least a trace of vengeance lurking within!

What we can do is pray for them, pray over the situation, ponder what’s going on inside them, learn what brought them to their violence, and explore creative, Nonviolent responses. Such reflections will open the new wells of compassion within us, and enable us to show new depths of merciful love and can heal them.

Loving a difficult person nonviolently means first of all putting aside notions of winning. It is especially important, and in working it out, to avoid self righteousness and the kind of moral pressure that humiliates the other side. We have a good chance of finding a way to live in harmony, respecting their humanity while being true to our own.

Most children were hurt growing up and became just functional as a result of being on loved his children. Those feelings of resentment and bitterness and anger toward those who hurt us linger for years after word. Those inner feelings of violence or rage need to be addressed.

How we heal: we need to forgive those who hurt us, and make forgiveness a regular practice in our relationships so that we can cultivate nonviolence within ourselves and among all those we know. We want to give our hard feelings to the spirit of peace, forgive everyone receive Spirit’s forgiveness and mercy of love, and cultivate an interior peace, so that we can maintain peaceful relationships, cultivate new ones, and go forth publicly as true peace makers.

3rd DIMENSION OF NON VIOLENCE

NON-VIOLENCE TOWARDS CREATION AND ALL CREATURES

We ought to listen to the indigenous peoples of the world, who have told us for centuries, that the earth is our mother, and that all creates creatures are to be revered. The earth does not belong to us said a Native American chief. We belong to the earth. In nature I couldn’t help but think of Spirit. There, before that spiritual place of nature, I entered the spirit of peace and quiet, and learned to breathe and be present all over again. The beautiful natural landscape is re-centering. It helps reclaim one’s soul and makes one feel more human.

Spirit is simply too big, too true, too good, too mysterious, too all, too loving, too overwhelming. Only a few mystics can stand before the reality of Spirit. Only if you dare not run away from the truth of Spirit. Only a few seem to open their hearts to the mystery of spirit. Saint Francis of Assisi made the sacred connection between non-violence and creation he prayed, serve the poor, practice non-violence, and walked around saying "Pace e Bene" and goodness to all he met.

Now, on the brink, we need to wake up to the truth of reality, that we are all one, that we are physically united to creation and her creatures, that we need to be non-violent toward the earth itself, and the air and water and all creatures. If we want to survive and live in peace.

www.50waystohelp.com

Here's a quote from Martin Luther King Jr. "An individual has not started living until he or she can rise above the narrow confines of his or her individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity".

There is a global nonviolent movement and Martin Luther King said, "the choice is no longer violence or non-violence. It's non-violence or non-existence."

Non-violence could have worked against the Nazis. It did work in Denmark, Norway and Bulgaria and other pockets throughout Europe. If the German people and chose non-violence they never would've followed Hitler and he would have been defeated.

In the midst of the 20th century's worst horrors the best organized movements of non-violence in history unfolded starting with Gandhi's nonviolent independence campaign against British imperialism, and Dr. King's nonviolent civil rights movement against racist American segregation. What we forget is that these movements lead to thousands of other non-violent movements that are still unfolding today. The anti-Vietnam war movement, the women's movement, the environmental movement, the gay and lesbian movement, the anti-death penalty movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the Brady campaign against gun violence, and other gun control advocates. Over 900 other cases are documented and analyzed on the global nonviolent action database [www. NVdatabase.Swarthmore.EDU](http://www.NVdatabase.Swarthmore.EDU).

On February 12, 2003, some 12 million people marched in over 620 cities on every continent in protest of a war that hadn't yet begun. It was the single greatest day of protest in the history of the world. I was at the protest in Concord New Hampshire at the state house that day for the worldwide movement of peace and nonviolence.. The worldwide grassroots movement of peace grew exponentially that day. This grassroots peace movement needs everyone of us if it is to blossom and bring forth a full harvest. It needs our full-time commitment , our lifelong persistent participation, especially given the gravity of our global predicament.

Unlike violence organize non-violent movements off and fly under the pro war media radar they are slow and they rarely televise bombings drone attacks corporate greed and military lies non-violence remains hard to measure hard to quantify and is emerging gradually..

From the book *Why Civil Resistance Works* by Gene Sharp a statistical study of wars and conflicts the following was revealed:

For more than a century from 1906 to 2006, campaigns of nonviolent resistance were more than twice as effective as their violent counterparts in achieving their stated goals, by attracting widespread popular support through protests, boycotts, civil disobedience and other forms of non-violent non-cooperation these campaigns broke repressive regimes. 26% of violent campaigns did succeed, 54% of non-violent campaigns did succeed.. The book's findings demonstrate that power actually depends on the consent of the civilian population, consent that can be withdrawn and reassigned to more legitimate non-violent movement.

We have long believed that Gandhi and Jesus were right to insist on the method of nonviolent resistance, for both moral and practical reasons, but now the facts are in. The evidence is all laid out in the scholarly report. For this to work each one of us has to get personally involved in the global grassroots movement of non-violence that means you and me and all of us.

PROCEDURES DEVELOPED BY MARTIN LUTHER KING

Martin Luther King's TO DO LIST

1st---nonviolence is the way of the strong

2nd--- the goal of non-violence is redemption and reconciliation

3rd--- Nonviolent seeks to defeat evil not people

4th--- nonviolence includes a willingness to except suffering without retaliation, to accept blows from the opponent without striking back.

5th--- nonviolence avoids not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit

6th---nonviolence is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice.

THE SIX STAGES OF A NON-VIOLENT CAMPAIGN

1st--- Information gathering

2nd--- Education

3rd--- Personal commitment

4th--- Negotiations

5th--- Direct Action

6th--- Reconciliation

THE BIRMINGHAM PLEDGE OF NONVIOLENCE

Hi hereby pledge myself, my person and body, to the nonviolent movement. Therefore I will keep the following:

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF NONVIOLENCE

- 1---Meditate daily on the teachings in life of Jesus
- 2---Remember always that the nonviolent movement seeks justice and reconciliation, not victory
- 3---Walk and talk in the manner of love, for God is love
- 4---Pray daily to be used by God and order that all men and women might be free
- 5---Sacrifice personal wishes in order that all men and women might be free 6S
- 6---Observe with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy
- 7---Seek to perform regular service for others and for the world
- 8---Refrain from the violence of fist, tongue, or heart
- 9---Strive to be in good spiritual and bodily health
- 10---Follow the directions of the movement

In summary meditate! Remember! Walk! Pray! Sacrifice! Observe! Seek! Refrain! Strive! Follow!

Every morning Harry Belafonte asks these questions of himself.

- 1---What can I do today to promote justice, desire women, non-violence and peace?
- 2---What concrete action can I take to help and violence, war, poverty, racism and evil?
- 3---How can I practice creative Nonviolence , Relieve unjust suffering, and help disarm the world?
- 4---How can I help more people become non-violent?
- 5---How can I help build a global grassroots movement of non-violence?

There are a multitude of ways to work for justice, disarmament and peace. We can join local projects against U.S. war-making: nuclear weapons: catastrophic climate change: extreme poverty: the death penalty: gun violence: drone warfare: homelessness, hunger, racism, violence against women: or other forms of violence. We can try to stand In solidarity with the worlds poor and with creation: side with

children of the world, the victims of our wars, those targeted by our militarism, creatures and creation itself. As we reach across national boundaries, we extend the

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global outreach of loving nonviolence and subvert the imperial culture of war, killing and destruction.

The work of the nonviolent activist is movement building, protest organizing, truth telling, and risk-taking.

Some of the peacemakers Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, Cesar Chavez, Desmond Tutu.

The 3 Dimensions of Nonviolence

1---Toward ourselves

2---Toward all people and creation

3---Our participation in the global grass roots movement

It is here we can explore the spiritual side of this life journey.

The Key Ingredients of the Spirituality of Nonviolence

1---Trust the God of peace

2--Open your heart in universal love

3---Conscious mindfulness

Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh has spent his life teaching the ancient wisdom of mindfulness as an antidote to the culture of violence and he recommends:

That we need a collective awakening. Most people are still sleeping. Mindfulness is at the heart of awakening, Of enlightenment. We practice breathing to be able to be here in the present moment so that we can recognize what is happening in us and around us. We all have a great desire to be able to live in peace and to have environmental sustainability. It's time for each of us to wake up and take action in our own lives. If we awaken to our true situation, there will be a change in our collective consciousness. Mindfulness is a key ingredient in the spirituality of nonviolence and peace.

We walk the path of our nonviolent resistance to structural injustice, war, and empire. Like the non-violent Jesus, we enter the struggle, speak out, take risks, engage in nonviolent direct action, and accept the consequences of our public stand, harassment, persecution, estrangement, rest, trial, imprisonment and maybe even death. We even learn with Martin Luther King to use voluntary suffering creatively, as a tool in the nonviolent struggle for justice and peace. Instead of killing others we are willing to undergo being killed, in the struggle for justice and peace: instead of inflicting violence on others, we accept suffering without even the desire to retaliate, with further violence as we pursue justice with love for all people.

Active non-violence offers you and me a way out of the world's mad violence in a way forward into the light and life of God's peace. We have a power at our disposal, a weapon of love and truth, that we are still just learning.

The New Age of Peace will be rooted in the best of spirituality, theology, and morality, the best in all of us, for all of us. As we deepen non-violence in every aspect of life, we herald the coming of our nonviolent world, a world without war, hunger, killings, executions, nuclear weapons, or environmental destruction.

In conclusion

We have emphasized that a Nonviolent life involves three-dimensions.

- 1--Practicing nonviolence toward ourselves, so that we cultivate inner peace and claim our union with the God of peace.
- 2---Practicing nonviolence toward all others, all creatures and all creation, so that love and justice can spread far and wide and creation itself is protected,
- 3---Practicing non-violence by joining the global grassroots movement of non-violence so that more and more of us participate in the struggles to end war poverty nuclear weapons, environmental destruction and all forms of structural violence, and make the inevitable greater breakthroughs for justice and disarmament.

THE PRAYER TO BECOME PEACE MAKERS --- BY JOHN DEAR

God of peace, thank you for inviting me to the life of non-violence, to become a peacemaker, your beloved.

Give me the grace to be non-violent to myself, that I may make peace with myself, welcome your spirit of peace within me, and radiate personally your peaceful presence.

Give me the grace to be non-violent to all others, all creatures, and all creation, that I may love everyone as my sister and brother, and help protect humanity, your creatures and creation. that your reign of peace may be a living reality.

And give me the grace to serve your global grassroots movement of non-violence, that I may do my part to help end war, poverty, racism, sexism, nuclear weapons, systematic injustice and environmental destruction, that more and more people will welcome your wisdom of nonviolence and work diligently for disarmament and justice that your peace may one day be realized everywhere on earth.

Thank you, God of peace, for all the blessings of peace, hope, life and love that you give me. Make me an instrument of your peace, and I will offer you the gift of the nonviolent life well lived, for your greater glory. Amen