

Chapter 3: Learning to Establish Your Own Direct Line

Time spent sitting with a mystic/healer can lead to a relationship where the phone operator suggests you might be ready to establish your own direct line to God. Most phone operators present this information in discussions about how to know God, how to improve one's relationship with God, how to develop infinite compassion, and how to use devotion, prayer and faith when facing suffering and the process of sacred waiting. This information can be presented in writing, in presentations, and through direct experience. It is this information that is the instruction manual for developing your own direct line. It can be found across cultures and across religions. Comprehending the phone operator's instruction manual is an important part of opening a direct line to God.

It is important to know that having a direct line is like being a phone operator. Once you have a direct line you then know how to place a call, and because you have know how to place that call, through experiencing a direct line to God, you should have some of the characteristics associated with being a phone operator. You may only miss using that skill on behalf of others. Doing so is a necessary part of having, and maintaining the effectiveness of, your direct line. The direct line is not for the ego. It is not for the self. It is not to "feel good" or to be "set free". It is not about achieving some pinnacle of personal enlightenment. It is a line of communication that has many characteristics that change the nature of one's relationship with self, relationships with others, and relationship with God. It is about learning to sit in the between.

Having a direct line to God is also much more difficult than using the phone operator for placing a collect call. There is much more personal responsibility involved. There are "bills" to pay, "equipment" to keep in working order, and because you have this "open line" there is the possibility of receiving calls at any time (it is impossible to put God on hold). The training is rigorous. The demands are ever present. The line is seldom perfectly clear (without static) and sometimes when the message is clear it can be as a metaphor, or a sign, that may not seem clear. In addition it is going to be difficult to say to people "I have a direct line to God" or "I have a deep relationship with God that I trust completely and rely on without doubt (although I may doubt myself and others I don't doubt it). After using the direct line it is going to be equally difficult to not say that this relationship is above all the foundation of your reason for being. When you use the phone operator to make a collect call many of these difficulties are not as severe and some simply disappear, because God "accepts the charges" and through the relationship with the phone operator assumes them for you until you are ready to develop your own direct line.

Not everyone can form a direct line with God, but everyone can use the operator for placing the collect call and the emergency call. Some people are not meant to serve as a caretaker of a direct line to God. That is the way it has always been. That is the nature of this type of communication in society. Most people will stay mystic seekers and should be agreeable to accepting that role until they are ready for a new role. But

there are a few people who will add to their role as mystic seeker the role of phone operator by developing the direct line. This means that the process of developing a direct line to God is something all phone operators have faced. Mystic seekers wanting to find skilled phone operators should make note of the process of developing a direct line described below, as it should be evident in the life of the mystic/healer.

The points to consider when establishing your own direct line to God are as follows:

1. Read the instruction manuals.
2. Go through the training process.
3. Understand the concept of “levels” and quality of service.
4. Learn how to know if your call went through.
5. Be able to pay the bill.
6. Maintain regular service of the phone lines and equipment.

Each of these points will be addressed as if you are seeking to establish your own “**red phone**” line to God.

Not everyone will be able to be successful in developing a direct line. Some will try and while trying need to continue to make collect calls. This is the reason that there are phone operators in every culture. They can help us to understand the steps to take when you want to develop your own direct line. It is why there have been phone operators throughout history. We need the phone operator because the steps for developing a direct line are often arduous, and extremely difficult. In addition, the phone operator needs people, needs mystic seekers, to use the service. It is a relationship of mutual soul development.

Read the Instruction Manuals

Improving one’s communication with God has been a topic of so much writing that it would be impossible to summarize it all. But most of the writings focus on a few original “spiritual manuals” (the Bible, Baghavat Gita, New Testament, Koran, I Ching, Tibetan Book of the Dead, Tao Te Ching, Upanishads, Hsiao Ching, etc.). These manuals were written in languages communicating to a certain culture of people at a given time in history. They each offer a glimpse into developing a relationship with the Divine. They are the instruction manuals with which future operators should become familiar. If you seek to have a direct line to God then they are manuals with which to become familiar. Caution should be taken when reading other peoples’ interpretations of the original texts. If you have your own phone operator then discuss the texts, and your interpretation of them as part of your collect call preparation.

Many people have asked to form a direct line of communication to God. Some people have claimed to have done so and their writings serve as the instruction manuals¹ to guide us in our endeavors to do the same. Some people claim to have done

so and their writings are not consistent with the great mystical teachings throughout the ages. Beware of the words from false mystics, as they offer you their manuals, not for communication with God, but for their own purposes.

The writings from mystic/healers and the sacred texts all contain information to inspire you, direct you, and teach you. The information has to be interpreted and integrated into daily life as part of your personal training process. You will filter the information through your own worldview and then apply it according to your own style of acting and thinking. No two people do this exactly the same way. There is training that you can receive to help you understand how you are doing this interpretation and integration. This is training that should help you know how you understand the language of God as it is heard in your mind and expressed in your life. It is training that should be reflective and discursive, not rule enforcing and judgmental.

Going Through the Training Process: Learning the Language of God

Even though you have decided to no longer make collect calls because you know want your own direct line, you will still need to enter the special phone booth (the healing relationship of the between). It is the only place where a direct line can be established. The instruction manuals will only take you so far in understanding the process of sitting in the phone booth. You will need to practice sitting in the sacred healing relationship and you will need feedback on your progress in doing this.

You can read the manuals, learn what a phone booth looks like, learn what a phone looks like, learn about dialing, and read (or hear) others reports of their phone conversations. But, to head toward having your own direct line you must experience entering the phone booth and making the call. This will include processing the event with others (who possess the necessary wisdom, leading to an improved understanding. You will need to seek out training opportunities that will advance your abilities to sit and communicate within the phone booth (although you often do not have to look far, or hard, for these opportunities).

This is often one of the most difficult aspects to seeking a direct line with God. Think of it this way. You must enter the phone booth in order to pick up the special “**red phone**” that offers a direct line to God. The special phone is only located in this phone booth, but there are many “signs” showing us the way to the phone booth. It is likely that as demand for the phone operator services increases so will the signposts. You will need to know how to recognize these signposts. You have to learn how to find the phone booth. Once you find the phone booth you have to sit long enough to pick up the phone, dial the number, and wait for the connection. You can’t listen to all the chatter in the room, watch TV, talk to your dog, cook dinner, and simultaneously try to stay in the phone booth. It is not that type of conversation.

If you are in the phone booth you can’t say, “This is impossible. I can’t stay here.” and then leave hoping to communicate in some other way. Once you initiate

conversation you must stay in the phone booth during the conversation and you must learn to endure (sit with) the experience in order to receive the communication. You should have some understanding of the language of God to hear the communication prior to sitting as it will help you with the event. This is then all followed by processing of the event where the event is interpreted and the consequences are adhered to and the insights integrated into daily life. What is the purpose of sacred communication if it is not to yield life changing consequences? These things must happen if you are to develop a direct line to God. There is no short cut (this does not to exclude you from making an emergency phone call or a collect call).

It may sound simple, but staying in the phone booth for an extended period of time, particularly when facing the consequences that accompany the divine encounter, is quite a challenge for most people. Two critical aspects are 1) sitting with suffering (our own and the other persons) and 2) sitting with ecstasy. Most people need to discover the understanding of these two critical aspects through direct experience. When direct experience is combined with time to practice this sitting in the between, then the mystic seeker is ready to approach the question of having a direct line. Most people need feedback on their progress in learning how to sit in the phone booth so that they can know what, and how, to improve. This is why most mystic seekers need to spend time with an operator. This is the role of the skilled phone operator – in any tradition.

The training one can receive regarding sitting in the phone booth (and other aspects of making the call to God) is done within three different types of relationships: the healing relationship, the support relationship and the habitual relationship. More details about these relationships can be found in my previous publications.² There are many people in the world of helpers (not all of whom are operators, nor do they need to be) who can provide training for you so you learn about these three relationships. There are some helpers who can point out the effects of your concept of these relationships on your attempts to develop a direct line to God (on your relationship with the between). The healing relationship is the one associated with the mystic/healer.

Learning about the sacred healing relationship and training involves learning the language of God. This language takes many forms, but consistent across all domains is that it is understood as a sacred communication and that the language of humankind pales against this understanding:

“For many years I have been intensely aware of the divine as a breathing presence that surrounds me, is within me, and takes me into itself. The breathing presence can be completely overwhelming, or as gentle as a summer’s breeze in the cool of the evening. Whenever I am aware of it there is no mistaking it for something else.”³

It is understood that language cannot express the totality of the sacred communication. But it is also understood that when put in proper perspective language makes its contribution to training the novice. It is understood by mystics throughout the ages that

the language used can take any form, to fit any person, within any situation, within any culture. Such is to be expected from a compassionate and infinite sacredness. Such is to be expected from skilled phone operators.

It is unfortunate that three things are readily misunderstood:

- 1) The experience is the message more than the words.
- 2) When putting the experience into words you must convey your personal interpretation.
- 3) Understanding the interpretation is part of understanding our relationship to God. This is a critical part of the spiritual growth process.

The significance of these three points cannot be overstated in terms of opening a direct line to God and then learning to serve in the role of the skilled phone operator. These three points represent a process that the skilled phone operator engages in daily with self and with others.

Personal interpretation is always a part of conveying the experience into words. In every instance where communication with God is established there is unmistakable message of establishing an intimate healing relationship of oneness with the infinite sacredness. This has to be a consistent theme in the teachings, personal interpretations, of the phone operator. If it is not then it is not consistent with the spiritual teaching throughout the history of mankind. If you see that it is not consistent then you may ask, “Is this truly the language of God or is this more language coming from the person (or from self)?” Personal interpretation does not mean the absence of the basic core features of sacred communication, but rather a portrayal of them written in a language for a new audience. This book, hopefully, is an example of such.

There is an old Tibetan sacred saying: “Knowledge must be burned, hammered, and beaten like pure gold before it can be worn.”⁴ You must assume the personal responsibility to process sacred events. This is the hammering of the gold. You may find help in doing this within the relationships around you. But when you decide to wear it, when aspects of the experience are integrated into your life, then it is because you have done the interpretation and integration work (you have beaten and shaped the gold). A skilled phone operator can assist with this process but it is you who will decide how to speak about it, not only to others but also to your self.

The sacred experience will always contain more information than can be conveyed using words alone. There is always a mystery in the process that cannot be communicated except through direct experience. This is not the same as saying, “you can’t do anything to get ready for the experience” or “I can’t really learn anything from peoples’ words about this experience”. In learning the language of the spiritual path, or the religion, to which you commit your faith, you have also chosen one part of the

training and preparation. The language allows you to communicate with others about some aspects of the mystical experience and to share something of the mystery.

The use of language offers the novice “pictures” of what the journey might look like. It is like looking at a travel brochure before taking a trip. The brochure can give you some idea of what you will see but it will never replace the experience of being there. Communication is an important part of the processing and of spiritual development – for self and the community. A lamp under the table doesn’t provide sufficient illumination. A hot coal by itself becomes nothing useful. There are aspects of the personal experience of communicating with God, or with an operator, which cannot be conveyed with words alone. But it must be shared through dialog and through direct experience.

Mysticism means direct experiences with the divine, a communication with God, and a transformation.⁵ There have been many people who have tried to describe the language of God. They come from all walks of life, all cultures and all religions. A person seeking to understand the language of God also has knowledge of the mystical process that “is the living source of religion itself”.⁶ This is the use of words – to share a description of the journey with others, not as an ultimate truth, but rather as another piece of the map. The ultimate truth is one that is discovered in a personal healing relationship with God. No amount of ritual practice, study, sermonizing, teaching, or good deeds alone can bypass this sacred healing relationship as the entry point (the phone booth) for all forms of communication with God, across all cultures. It is the connection of the one person to the infinite for a moment as witnessed by another within the sacred healing relationship. Words and rituals are simply attempts to share this sacred process.

The words of those who have traveled before us can help us with a map for our own journey, an instruction book on how to use the phone and develop the direct line. But ultimately it is a very personal process. We will need to write our own interpretation of that instruction manual, one that is written in our own personal language (there are infinite paths and one way), written in our soul. We cannot hear the voices of our parents, our preacher, our therapist, our guru, speaking to us as we are trying to open a direct line to God. We need to have a quiet, still mind, centered in contemplation, which is open to a personal intimate Oneness with the infinite sacredness. Words can guide, but they should not replace our seeking to integrate the personal God communication experience.

The Dali Lama stated, “All major religions can help each other. Each tradition has some specialty or uniqueness, which can be very useful for other traditions.” He continued by saying that traditions become barriers when people focus too much on external rituals or ceremonies because then “they neglect the real end of spirituality – transformation within ourselves.”⁷

God is the infinite sacred nature. It is a nature that can be known through infinite means along many different paths. But all paths travel through the between, through

the sacred healing relationship. In that sense there is only One Way. One should not say, “My path is better than your path” or “You do not know God because you do not follow my path”. The stance of “I am right” and “You are wrong” leaves little room for opening the compassionate space between. If people need to condemn others for their methods of seeking God then perhaps they need to return to the sacred healing relationship and sit for a while. If people cannot sit in the sacred healing relationship, or if this is not part of the path they follow, then this should be a point of conversation within that person’s perspective (as known by that person within the context of their journey). This purpose of an infinite number of paths, rituals, and variations in language is not to confuse but rather to offer every human being the opportunity to communicate with God. How could an infinite sacred nature offer anything else?

The personal experience of learning the language of God may also include more than the words of skilled operators. It may include the use of ritual and sacred places. People, helpers and phone operators use ritual and sacred places (along with a culturally appropriate explanation system) to help communicate the mystery of the infinite sacredness. Caution should be taken when becoming involved with a system of sacred rituals and explanations. Be careful that the dogma does not prevent you from entering the healing relationship with anyone you meet. If it does then you may be mistaking ritual for substance.

Unfortunately many people mistake the religious language for the sacred substance behind the language. There is danger when rituals are thought of as “The Way” and sacred places as “The Path”. Instead they should be thought of as a language of communication. It is a language we use after we step into the phone booth to make the phone call. We can learn the language and try to place the call while standing outside the phone booth. But we will always be frustrated by our failed attempts. Florence Nightingale said:

“For what is mysticism? Is it not the attempt to draw near to God, not by rites or ceremonies, but by inward disposition... The way to live with God is to live with Ideals, not merely to think about ideals, but to do and suffer for them.”⁸

It is easy for ritual to become automated, for our thinking about sacredness to become simply thinking, and for our actions to become automated while our being remains unchanged. It is easy to say, “My path is the only path” and to profess that so loudly as to forget to live and to become and to show compassion. Such loud inflexible proselytizing has not been the path of the mystic/healer and should not be the path of the mystic seeker.

There are so many different types of rituals and sacred places (including natural settings) that it is not feasible to mention them all, or necessary to try to categorize them. What is important to know is that since the dawn of man these have been a part of the language used in the phone booth, and in sharing with others the journey. It is a language created by man to help man with entering and interpreting the infinite

mystery. The language is not the phone booth, nor the phone call. You may use to language to help you understand how to enter the phone booth within the context of your own culture and your own understanding of a spiritual life. But the language is not “the Way”. Skilled operators will be fluent in many rituals, many languages of God, in order to be accessible for more people wishing to place that collect call.

In addition to learning the language of God, the training process also involves the “calling” and acceptance of the calling. When you seek to accept the calling it is likely that you will have to endure some sacrifice.

“God does not demand sacrifice. The life of sacrifice is the life we live before we find a higher sense of identity and purpose.”⁹

Sacrifice has historically been the path of those seeking more direct communication with God. The nature of this sacrifice is uniquely linked to that individual’s particular spiritual journey. In general these sacrifices are related to the removal of barriers preventing clear communication with God. They are sacrifices leading us on the path to the empty self and empty desire. If this path of sacrifice is too difficult then you may wish to stay the mystic seeker and use the operator.

If you make it past the initial demands of sacrifice then you will be asked to take the journey of the spiritual warrior as part of your continued training.

“When you ask God to heal your life, He shines a very bright light on everything you need to look at... This process can be so painful that we are tempted to go backwards. It takes courage – this is often called the path of the spiritual warrior – to endure the sharp pains of self-discovery rather than choose to take the dull pain of unconsciousness that would last the rest of our lives.”¹⁰

This is not an easy path and the self-examination process gets increasingly intense as the phone operator continues to improve phone conversation clarity. This is why the spirit of the warrior is called upon.

“Mystics of every race and creed have described the progress of the spiritual life as a journey or a pilgrimage.”

Myths about the warrior’s journey have been a part of many cultures and often are interwoven with their spiritual teachings.¹¹ The story is often about a journey into the unknown, facing the darkness, challenging the “beast”, and changing because of the journey.

The path of the spiritual warrior is not angry. It involves becoming a compassionate being who offers the sacred healing relationship. People will misinterpret this because they do not have a healing relationship foundation upon which to understand. This misinterpretation often then leads to attack, or undue attraction.

The spiritual warrior must do battle with the consequences of these misinterpretations constantly. This is both an internal and an external battle. It is not a battle of attacking others but a battle with the self to find that place of forgiveness, to find the strength to continue in the role of the mystic/healer.

The path of the spiritual warrior also involves an insatiable hunger to know God. This hunger is something the spiritual warrior must face almost daily. Much of the mystic's spiritual development is linked to understanding this hunger and coming to peace with it. The spiritual warrior does not say, "I have the only way" but, instead says, "Let us share the courage to explore the darkness together and in doing so we will find **your** path along The Way". It is a process of burning away the darkness with the light of compassion.

"The spiritual path is the process of cutting through our confusion... in the process of burning out the confusions, we discover enlightenment."¹²

The path of the spiritual warrior is one of balance achieved through a determined quest for clarity, to see through the confusion.

Increased clarity of the self brings with it an increased clarity of human kind. The bond between the mystic's human nature and the nature of humanity becomes like a wound that constantly needs a change of dressing. It requires the courage of a warrior to address this perpetual wound. It takes heroic effort to address it in both self and in our relationship with humanity.

"There is basic human wisdom that can help to solve the world's problems. This wisdom does not belong to any one culture or religion, nor does it come from the West or the East. Rather, it is a tradition of human warriorship that has existed in many cultures at many times throughout history."¹³

We must face our compassion, our relationship with the Divine, and ourselves as part of becoming a phone operator. This requires courage, discipline, patience, and gentleness. Compassion is a necessary part of having a direct line. Consider the following:

Q. How do I get a direct line to God?

A. Through understanding suffering and the sacred healing relationship.

Q. How do I understand suffering?

A. Through understanding your relationship in the between.

Q. How do I understand my relationship in the between?

A. Through experiencing suffering and sacred healing.

Q. How to I experience suffering and sacred healing?

A. Through deep compassion.

Q. How do I develop deep compassion?

A. Through sitting in the between.

If you have been blessed to have a direct line to God then you know the burning desire to share the experience with others. It isn't our sharing that is behind that desire. It is the need to know suffering and to know compassion and to know the sacred Oneness through this. It is not a desire to "convert" or to "save" or to have someone understand the mysteries of your particular religion. It is a burning desire to know the mystical illumination process. It is a burning desire to know and to help with the worlds suffering. This desire is a part of the spiritual warrior's path that will not be denied. The life of the spiritual warrior is not an easy journey, but it is a necessary part of the job description. You may wish to take a different path and decide to stay as a mystic seeker, using the operator for assistance instead of developing a direct line.

The training process is continual throughout the life of the operator. This is because God's clarity of communication is infinitely clear and ours is not. So we continually seek way to improve that clarity. As we seek to improve this clarity we may experience what *seems like* levels of development. As we progress in human development we also progress (hopefully) in wisdom and in our ability to understand the sacred communication process.

Levels and Quality of Service

Let us assume that you have gone through some sacred communication training, you have some understanding of your culture's language for communicating with God, that you have developed some ability to sit in the phone booth, and that you have accepted the path of the spiritual warrior as part of becoming a skilled phone operator. At this point it is important to understand that there is a direct correlation between your abilities within the sacred healing relationship (in the between) and the quality of the phone call (there are emergency exceptions that will be discussed later). It takes another leap in knowledge to clearly understand that you are the phone.

As the phone operator you are one with the phone booth, the phone, the mystic seeker and with the Divine. Because you are the phone, the quality of the conversation is related to the level of your ability to be the phone and to understand the associated consequences. Phone operators are one part of the phone line and the quality of the phone conversation is linked to his/her development as a phone operator. This development is the process of shifting from knowing to doing and from doing to being and is repeated many times throughout the life of the phone operator.

There are many aspects to this spiritual development process (see Appendix) of becoming the phone, and the phone line, as an important part of developing

communication with God. Not everyone develops at the same rate, nor does everyone reach the same point in development during a single lifetime. People just starting in their efforts to have communication with God are often unsuccessful because they have not yet reached a level of development where the quality of service is reliable, free of static, and maintained. This is true of novice operators as well.

Levels of development have been described for the path of the mystic¹⁴ and for the healer.¹⁵ There have been levels of development for the training of healers across a wide diversity of cultures and across culture it has been noted that not everyone reaches the same level of expertise. This is not to say that healing, or communication with God, is equated with some level of development. Having a single event occur is not the same as prepared access. When considering the concept of “levels” in regard to the development of sacred communication it is wise not to use mystical events as rungs in a hypothetical spiritual ladder. The concept of spiritual development pertains to preparation, to consciously maintaining an open line so that sacred communication can occur and be heard.

The levels of development in being prepared for sacred communication can be viewed as levels of skill development in regard to improving sitting in the between and developing the characteristics of the mystic/healer. The levels of development can be viewed as progress toward “static” removal so one can better hear the phone call. This does not mean that one has to be “fully developed” in order to experience healing or any type of sacred communication. Remember that there are three types of conversations – the collect call, the direct call, and the emergency call. Level of development has its most dramatic effect on the process of establishing a direct line of communication with God, on becoming a phone operator.

Levels of development can be applied to the development of compassion, a critical component of sitting in the phone booth. The most consistent feature of mystic/healers and their teachings is the life of compassion. Compassion is something that becomes stronger and deeper the more it is practiced. Compassion is also enhanced through the “rebirth”, epiphany, and healing experiences. Compassion has been here defined as empathy plus wisdom. The development of empathy, to levels of oneness, is described in my earlier publications. Applying this empathy developmental model to the development of compassion suggests that compassion can be developed to a level of oneness. At this level compassion is not something separate from the moment or the people involved, but rather flows through and connects all. The wisdom to know what to do with the holistic empathy experience, as part of a compassionate response, is known at a deep inner level from within the moment of oneness. The progression to understanding this compassion of oneness is part of the definition of being an operator. Understanding the concepts that bring us closer to infinite compassion are continually rediscovered along this journey toward compassionate being.

Stages of development are often described as a linear series of steps, you go through step one before you experience step two, much like learning to play chess. But

spiritual development may not evolve exactly like this because the transformative experience of Oneness is so much a part of the developmental progression. In learning the game of chess we learn the moves, then some strategy, then, with practice and years of hard work, we get a glimpse of what it is like to see the whole board and game in one glance. We are not likely to ever know this whole glance perspective until we have done the work. The difference with spiritual development is that people almost universally describe the transformative experience, the vision of the whole, as being the key to the start of their journey and an indication of the direction of their training. Mystics do not describe the process as some step-by-step hierarchical sequence. “Awakening is at the root of the world’s religions. It unites prophets, messiahs and saints into a privileged elite.”¹⁶ This “awakening” is directly linked to the transformative experience, to our spiritual development, and to one’s role as phone operator in society.

I offer caution to the mystic seeker and the novice phone operator. Do not think of the “awakening” as “I have awakened and you have not. I am better than you.” This is far from compassion, which is a necessary part of the awakening process. The “awakening” only means that you have a message to share and you must share it with compassion or not share it at all. The proper way to approach the sharing is to think, “I have experienced something sacred. I would like to share it with you. I would like to hear about your sense of the sacred. Perhaps in sharing we will both experience growth.” There is no top down hierarchy in the process of learning about sacred communication.

Levels of spiritual development should not be equated with self worth. There are mystic/healers who appear to be developed spiritually. That is the premise of this book. We should know them, and learn from them, to help us communicate with God. This does not mean that we should feel less worthy in their presence. It does not mean that we should be defensive and present an anti-authority stance simply because we perceive the phone operator in a role of authority and power. The problem with proposing “levels of spiritual development” is that they can easily be equated with one person having “power of faith” and another person having “not enough faith” or “not enough love for God”. These crass assumptions can be quite harmful to the mystic seeker (and also painful to the enlightened mystic/healer who senses the suffering behind these concepts).

The concept of levels of development should be applied cautiously to spiritual communication because we are referring to the infinite God. How far do we need to extend our levels of development in order to reach the infinite? How many different developmental paths are there to reach the infinite? How can the transformative experience, which can and does occur at “beginning levels”, be incorporated into the construct of spiritual development? The problem is that we do not develop into a spiritual being so much as we peel away the layers allowing the true being to shine through. If we have a soul, and the soul is infinite, then our “development” is more about removing the barriers to remembering the soul’s journey of oneness with God than it is about levels of accomplishment or improved levels of doing. The only

difference between the mystic/healer and the mystic seeker is that the mystic/healer has removed more of the layers that inhibit compassionate radiant being. In doing this has more instances of direct access to God. But the mystic seeker may also have these direct access experiences and using some categorization of mystical experiences to establish a hierarchical spiritual developmental scheme is probably not accurate.

Another problem with the developmental model is that it proposes that we first we have an awakening, then we go through “purification” and then enlightenment is received.¹⁷ But there is no evidence that mystics or healers have experienced their spiritual growth in this manner. Yes there is an awakening, but it is also transformative and full of enlightenment – and it is often not a singular event in the lives of mystic/healers. Yes there is enlightenment, but it is not a goal attained at the end of a series of trainings but rather the result of constant evolution throughout the course of life. There is also purification, but it is the result of a constant process and not a level that has some end. It is the desire behind the purification that yields success not the act alone. Thomas Merton, monk and mystic, wrote to a friend saying, “Penance is not a deep enough concept if it does not comprehend the special problems and dangers of the present age.... Vastly more important is the complete change of heart and the totally new outlook on the world of man.”¹⁸

Can we go somewhere (desert, hermitage, retreat) and escape from the outer world? Obviously, yes. But our spiritual growth is an inner world journey that we cannot escape from, can’t force to make happen, and can’t artificially stimulate through ritual, or abstinence. There is no single purification event or stage that one passes through to then arrive at an awakened state. Instead, purification can be viewed as a lifelong process of freely choosing to identify, and remove the barriers inhibiting the successful collect call to God. It is something we freely choose to do only for that reason. It is something we will choose to do thousands of times and in many different ways. And it will be something, at times, we will choose not to do.

It should be obvious that not everyone can live in a hermitage. This would not be healthy for society. If we are to live within a community and promote the health of that community then how do we approach the concept of purification? What is important to understand is that purification is not about ritual, habit, escape, tradition, or religion. It is about removing the static so that our communication with God is clearly understood. It is also not about trying to force that removal. There are many problems with forced purification that exceed the context of the book. The proper perspective is one of free choice. You say, “I am choosing to remove this habit (action or thinking) because I know that it keeps me from my communication with God.” You know this because you have experienced it (as different from learning it in study). The teaching of Zen Buddhism and the Christian teaching of St. John of the Cross both suggest that many authors may have not delved deeply enough into the nature of purification.¹⁹ Thinking of it as a “stepping stone” that will bring one to the point of “enlightenment” may not only represent confusion, but a dangerous risk to well being. Yes purification contributes to one’s spiritual growth, but it may be problematic placing purification into a developmental scheme.

If you want to use the spiritual developmental schemes authors have offered than use them with caution. You can reflect on them and ponder the different types of experiences they are trying to categorize in a hierarchical manner. But remember that you can have any of these experiences at any time and that they are not dependent on you having to have had the “lower rung” experiences first. What does change with spiritual development is our spiritual wisdom, our understanding of the experiences. This development of spiritual wisdom may be interwoven with the development of the characteristics of becoming a mystic/healer and with the processes of human development (when properly nurtured).

The development of spiritual wisdom is not the same as having a mystical experience, although such experiences are part of developing this wisdom. This is an important distinction. If we are to develop spiritually it is to become as sages, wise beings whose sacredness is equaled by their compassion (remember compassion = empathy + wisdom). This is the overlapping path of spiritual and human development – the development of compassion. It is along this developmental path that we can improve the clarity and understanding that accompanies any spiritual message. This is the calling of the skilled phone operator.

Knowing How Your Call Went Through – Is This a Sacred Message?

If we are with an operator then we can get immediate feedback about our request to make a collect call. When we seek to have a direct line to God we do not have such human feedback. If we do not have human feedback how are we to know that we have a direct line to God? How are we to know how our “phone calls” are answered? How are we to know that the answer comes from God?

As mentioned previously we need to become clear about the difference between a “calling to serve” and a sacred message that is a response to our inquiry, our phone call to God. The term “conversion calling” should be applied to a very limited set of phenomena – that associated with “death”, “rebirth” and the transformation associated with epiphany. There is also a distinction between the conversion calling and the “time of calling”. The term **sacred message** can be applied to all other spiritual phenomena that are related to knowing God.²⁰ Anyone can receive a sacred message, but not everyone receives messages clearly and without “static”. This is why mystic seekers need operator assistance.

Sacred messages come in a myriad of ways and provide information for us on how to improve our relationship with God. Any manner in which we can receive information is a possible avenue for a sacred message. It is not necessary in this text to categorize or classify all the possibilities. It is important to know that the diversity allows for communication with all peoples across all environments, culture, religions

and temperaments. The clarity of the messages varies considerably from person to person.

In most instances the processing of the message, how we interpret and apply the message, is more important than the actual content of effect (consider examples given in this book thus far). This is where much confusion has occurred. A spiritual message comes through your life to you personally. It is brief, usually not detailed. “Moses go and free your people” or like when I was given the message to leave Boston and go home. There is no elaborate plan behind the message describing exactly what should happen. We all have the potential to receive these sacred messages, but can we access them clearly and then can we process them wisely? This is the responsibility of anyone who seeks a direct line (or claims to have a direct line) to God.

Accessing a sacred phone message involves the following: 1) preparation, 2) the phone booth, and 3) proper processing. All that is meant here by preparation is that you have been through the “conversion calling” and that you are seeking a better relationship with God. You are ready to enter the phone booth without the operator. Entering the phone booth, when attempting to establish a direct line, means sitting in the between. Proper processing is something that is done after you leave the phone booth.²¹ This means that the sacred nature of the message is understood, that it is not confused with one’s personal ideas (the imagination is kept separate), that the message is integrated into life, and that the message becomes part of witnessing and processing events with others.

As stated throughout this book the key to being ready to receive sacred phone messages is to be in proper relationship. All communication with God is filtered through the sacred healing relationship.

“If you have a love relationship with God you have come to know God through experience... Your relationship with God right now reveals what you believe... It is spiritually impossible for you to believe one way and practice another.”²²

In the book “Hearing God”, Professor Willard²³ places emphasis on the necessity of developing the sacred relationship as the foundation for all successful communication. “Hearing God is but one dimension of a richly interactive relationship.”²⁴ The mystic seeker should spend considerable time developing this sacred relationship as part of preparation for a direct line to God.

Being able to sit in the between, in the sacred healing relationship, yields an understanding of God’s nature. This understanding allows us to understand God’s spiritual messages and the answer to that perpetually nagging question of “What does God want me to do?” becomes clearer. The answer can be revealed through sitting in the sacred healing relationship.

Consider the following when thinking about the importance of the relationship as a way of helping you to “know what to do”:

- To know what to do is to be a servant of God.
- To be a servant is to have a deep compassionate relationship with God.
- To be a servant is to understand and obey the spiritual messages.
- Understanding requires a deep compassionate relationship with God.
- Improving understanding requires improving the relationship.
- Improving the relationship means daily practice.
- Success in improvement is shown in all relationships.
- Success is shown in living as a radiant compassionate being.
- Success is shown in improved communication with God.
- Improved communication with God improves being a radiant compassionate being.

Improved communication with God comes from improving your ability to sit in the healing relationship, to sit in the between, with all those around you as well as with the times you try to “call God”. If you have this relationship then “when God starts to act on in your life you will recognize that it is God.”²⁵

Receiving a sacred message always involves a “stirring in the soul”. This concept of a *soul response* is difficult to convey in words. With practice (and proper processing with a skilled operator), soul response can be distinguished from desire, emotion, and imagination. It has similarities to the feelings that occur during the “conversion calling” but not exactly. The sacred messages are messages for the soul and are about learning, growth, and developing a closer relationship with God through free will and through personal responsibility. The “calling” is about awakening to a life with God. Receiving sacred messages is about living the relationship with God. Both can, and usually do, happen throughout the life of the mystic/healer.

Receiving sacred messages with soul response is the consequence of having a direct line to God. This is not to say that the operator has perfect access to that direct line. We have limited access based on our personal limitations. This is another characteristic of sacred messages – they do not happen all the time, and they do not happen at will. Rather they happen as indicators of our current relationship with God and provide directions for how to improve that relationship. They also happen when we are seeking to help others improve their relationship with God. Then they are also understood as containing information to help us with our relationship with God. Accessing sacred messages on the direct line can occur for no other reasons (emergency services will be discussed in the next chapter) than those that are sacred and related to the soul.

You will recognize a spiritual message (again remember I am distinguishing them from a calling) from God because of the following:

- It is an experience familiar to you, similar to your “calling”.

- It is an invitation to improve your relationships.
- It is an invitation to testimony – to bear fruit.
- If obeyed it does bear fruit.

The depth at which you understand these four points, regarding the nature of spiritual messages, is directly related to the depth at which you can live in the between, and share the sacred healing relationship with all living things. This is the path to forming a direct line to God.

When we don't have access on the direct line it may seem as if we are put on "hold" or that we are getting a "busy signal". We are trying to get through, praying hard to get through, but there is nothing but either silence or the busy chatter in our own minds. We might be asking, "Where is God now when I'm really in need?" Or we may be still upset about some harm done to us, or some grievous loss, and ask, "Where was God when I was really in need?" And it may seem that God is nowhere to be found. It may feel like God has left us. This is simply an illusion of the mind.

It may seem hard to believe that the feeling of God being distant is an illusion created from our own perceptions. The turmoil and suffering in life seem so real and it can seem like there is no good reason for God to be so cruel. This is a dialog I frequently encounter with people in intense suffering. If you remember my earlier stories about the darkness, there have been times in my life when I felt God had left me. Yet, I also knew that this could not be possible. It was impossible for me to define God as being everywhere and then also being not here. I knew that my sense of "not here" had to be a creation of my mind. This may seem old fashioned, but I had to believe that God is always present. It is a simple belief that has far reaching consequences. One of those consequences is that our sense of desperation, or suffering, has a greater purpose. It may be that we cannot see that purpose. We cannot hear our own soul response. This distance, darkness and emptiness, happens to every mystic seeker, including skilled operators.

Throughout the writings on the lives of mystics there is mention of the "dark night", "the cloud of unknowing", and "the darkness".²⁶ The term "dark night of the spirit" has also been used²⁷ and Boehme used the term "mirror of darkness".²⁸ The use of the imagery of darkness versus light is common throughout the literature written by and about mystics. During these perceptions of dark times there is knowledge gained of how to sit with suffering, and most importantly how to sit with the perception of an absence of light. Following this sitting with the perception of an absence of light is the interpretation, and for some an application in daily life. Boehme saw daily life, the "outer world" as containing opportunities to see ourselves, our "inner world" in the reflection provided.²⁹

Many types of darkness, "with their accompanying and overwhelming sensations of impotence and distress"³⁰ have been given many names. It is a personal experience that is part of the mystic seeker's journey. There are many ways it is perceived and interpreted. The nature of this perception and the accompanying interpretation directly

affect the consequences associated with the darkness. What is important to know is that the sense of “God has left me” is an illusion.

There are many interpretations for the paired experience of darkness and light that often occur within the life of the mystic/healer. I presented two personal interpretations related to my encounter with such visionary journeys into darkness. Perhaps this perception of darkness is part of the process of “being put on hold”. When you are put on hold it may seem like God has left you. But the line is still open. It has not been severed. Perhaps you are put on hold because you need to discover something about the nature of our relationship with God before additional communications can occur. Perhaps it is a message regarding your limits of thinking to know God (the impenetrable cloud of unknowing, the need to travel the path of empty self and empty desire).

When facing the darkness, either alone as part of the collect call process, the mystic/healer must be dedicated to finding that smallest speck of light hidden in the darkest corners.

“The mystic way must therefore be a life, a discipline, which will so alter the constituents of his mental life as to include this spark within the conscious field; bring it out of the hiddenness, from those deep levels where it sustains and guides his normal existence, and make it the dominant element round which his personality is arranged.”³¹

For the mystic/healer the experience of enflaming that spark, and removing the darkness, is a soul’s message. Many of the soul messages mystics speak of are related to their relationship with God and are expressed in terms of bliss, rapture, love, and infinite compassion. Mystics speak of coming to live within this sacred relationship weekly, then daily, then hourly. Slipping out of the sacred relationship is also part of the process as no one is in perfect union with the infinite sacredness all the time.

Many people who slip into the darkness and its associated confusion do not think of it as a part of the sacred communication process. Instead people often view the darkness as either a trap or something to be treated with great fear or anger. When you see the darkness as a trap then it becomes a trap. When you approach the darkness with fear or anger then the darkness becomes the object of these emotions. When you hold a view of the darkness as a trap or an object of fear and anger then confusion spreads out from these views into your actions and your thinking. Feeling trapped, fearful or angry leads to a confusion of feelings followed by a confusion of thought and action. These confusions are intertwined with each other in a spiral that feeds upon itself getting stronger and stronger. Some people have spent the majority of their lives caught in the whirlpool of confused thinking instead of a sacred message. The way out of its spinning grip is through communication with the Divine and hearing that sacred message. Sacred messages often speak to the soul about the status of our union with the Divine and the times when we are distant from it.

Sacred messages speak to the soul. Knowing a soul's response is the hearing of the message. Learning about the nature of your soul response is the best way to develop a better understanding of the darkness and of the problems facing having a direct line to God. The direct line improves the frequency of sacred messages, but it also increases the intensity of confusion experiences. This is why it is wise to seek out a skilled operator. Skilled operators have learned not only about their own soul response but also how to discern the nature of your soul response. It is the responsibility of the skilled operator to teach people, through direct experience, the nature of the soul response. This then helps people to become more sensitive to the soul response in their own lives, and thus more open to improving their relationship with God.

After we understand the nature of the soul response in connection to the sacred message we are then ready to address the consequences of the message. Consequence does not mean that something bad had to happen. It just means that after receiving a sacred message there will be something you will need to do. This doing may be to simply be patient and wait, or it may be to find help, or to seek out an operator, or to make a serious change in your life. Whatever the consequence you must live your life in accordance with the spiritual message and the soul response. To choose to do differently is to risk additional consequences, and risk the possibility of increased suffering. This is why it is good to seek out an operator. It is the phone operator's responsibility to assist you in understanding the consequences of the soul response and the sacred message.

If we wish to establish a direct line then we will need to understand how to respond compassionately to the consequences of the sacred message. We will need to learn how to tell the difference between the basic content of the message and our interpretation of that message. We will need to learn how to perform self-analysis of our interpretations and to test those interpretations. This process of coming to understand sacred messages becomes a personal responsibility that cannot be changed as long as we are seeking to maintain the direct line. This is the life associated with having established a direct line with God and if we choose to keep using the direct line, instead of making collect calls, then we must be able to face the consequences. This means that we must be able to pay the bill.

Being Able to Pay the Bill

When you agree to establish a direct line to God then you are no longer asking to make collect calls. This means that you have decided to pay the charges out of your own pocket. You are not asking God to "accept the charges". What does this mean that you will pay the bill? It means that you will accept the responsibility of having a direct line and you will also accept the consequences. This includes the following: 1) accepting the responsibility and consequences of being the operator – which is part of having a direct line, 2) accepting the process of entering the phone booth with others and for their development, 3) accepting the responsibility to respond appropriately to

the sacred messages received on the direct line which includes accepting the responsibility of being prepared for God to use that direct line.

Accepting the consequences of being an operator

If we accept the possibility of having a direct line to God then we also must accept the responsibilities that accompany using that direct line. This is the role of the operator. Anyone who has established a direct line will also establish a link between that direct line and other people. This is the nature of the direct line as it is established in the between.

“Many saints and mystics of various ages and traditions had this extraordinary gift; the capacity to read hearts, to discern motives, to understand immediately a person’s spiritual progress”³²

The purpose of this ability to “discern” is not to lay open the naked soul of the person, as one would filet a fish. But rather it is a process of shared knowing that happens within the between and with a deep, almost unfathomable, compassion. It is the process of coming to know the soul’s response. It is an exploration into the journey of the soul. It is the soul’s relationship. Engaging in the soul’s relationship is the personal responsibility every person who seeks to have a direct line to God.

Having a direct line to God means that this process of discerning the soul’s response, or the soul’s current status, with people is ever present in the mystic/healer. It is there as the operator walks to the store. It is there when going to the movies. It occurs at parties and when meeting people. It is there while at work. It is there upon entering sacred sites. It is never absent. This is one of the consequences of being (not just doing) the role of the operator. Humility, compassion and a quite patience must accompany this acceptance of knowing the soul’s relationship or the operator will risk serious consequences that can contribute to personal suffering. This is the nature of having a direct line and why it is better for some people to remain mystic seekers and access an operator.

This discernment accompanies a radiance that has its effects even when nothing is said, and if something is said it can easily be misunderstood by the “feelings” generated from the radiance prior to engaging in conversation. There can be “suffering” involved in this “misunderstood feeling” as sometimes people feel the need to release their inner emotions in response to this radiance. This can result in what appears as personal attacks or strong attraction. It is part of the responsibility of being an operator to know how to addresses these as early as possible. These responses happen most strongly with novice operators and with wisdom the nature of these responses changes. Sometimes it is easier to be the mystic seeker than to endure the onslaught of these attacks.

The operator, having a direct line, not only has discernment but also has a deep sensitivity into the existence of, a connection with, all living beings. Living beings

respond to the presence of the operator (plants, animals, infant children) in a positive manner. Adult humans also will respond, will feel compelled to respond (and sometimes in unpleasant ways). This is the life of one who has established a direct line with God. If one has accepted this role then one must also accept the consequences. It is not an easy path because the sensitivity has with it consequences that must be addressed. If they are not addressed then suffering will increase. It is easier for most people to remain mystic seekers. It is easier to visit the operator and place the collect call than to meet these requirements of maintaining a direct line.

An answer to this sensitivity and discernment might be “just create a wall to protect yourself”. But what would this wall be like? How would I construct it? And what would it be like living behind it? Yes, constructing a wall is a solution but it has consequences that I have found intolerable. For many years, when I fought against my true calling (during the time of calling), I constructed walls. I did this because I could not sit with the suffering or I could not sit with the intensity of the ecstasy. Living behind the walls I found that the distance from myself and from others was jeopardized – even if I was consciously raising it because I thought I needed to protect myself. Walls may be necessary for the beginning student, because the experiences may be too intense to sit with. But once an advanced level of sitting in the phone booth is acquired then removal of the walls should also be considered. If we choose to keep the walls then they are likely to arise when we place the collect call or use the direct line.

Walls also obscure one’s view of the shift in understanding reality – something I termed the shift in perspective.³³ In addition to discernment, and sensitivity (and often accompanying these), the operator, having a direct line to God, also acquired an expanded view of “reality” due to a life of experiencing many moments involving a shift in perspective. I prefer the use of the terms “shift in perspective” and “expanded view of reality” and opposed to alternate reality or alternate state of consciousness. If you had a dream you wouldn’t say to someone, “I slept last night and experienced an alternate reality”. Most people do not think of dreaming as a component of some separate reality, but rather as a part of current reality. So it is also with my communications with God. They are viewed as a part of this reality and are to be integrated into daily life.

This expanded view of reality has been shaped by numerous conversations using the direct line to God. It has been shaped by dramatic healing events, epiphanies, spiritual messages and miracles. “To be a mystic means to perceive the Divine amidst the ordinariness of life, to pierce through the multiple veils of our experience and reach the true heart of reality.”³⁴ It is a sacred view that is tied to the reception of hundreds of sacred messages, many on behalf of others and all influencing the development of the operator. It is not a view shaped by imagination, or drug induced experiences, or “supernatural” (occult) events. Rather it is a view molded by tangible events that transformed the souls and lives of people within the course of daily life. It is a sacred view of reality that must be integrated into one’s being if one is to accept having a direct line to God.

Accompanying this shift in perspective is an unquenchable yearning. The mystic is burdened with an inner quest that never ceases.

“[The mystic] seeks a union with the other reality which they themselves... a reality which heals and makes all things new again. Their yearning is their most distinctive mark and has been called by some a “deep and burning wound”, because it propels them toward the transcendent.”³⁵

Accepting the consequences of this “shift in perspective” is part of the mystics’ role in society because they act as guides for others seeking to discover and understand this shifted view of reality. If this sacred view cannot be accepted then it is the wise mystic seeker who will return to making collect calls.

One component of the “shift in perspective” is that time can be experienced as non-linear. This is when the “gift of prophecy” happens, and it is a common feature of the mystic/healer³⁶ although not a defining characteristic. Inappropriately, some authors have labeled “psychics” (or soothsayers) as mystics.³⁷ I have purposefully not included prophecy as a characteristic of the mystic way because, like ecstatic feelings, is more of a side effect of the process and not a reliable indicator of the path. It is also can be, like the ecstatic feelings, a considerable distraction from the path.

Part of paying the bill is accepting the responsibilities that come with this aspect of sacred communication. This can include a type of “spiritual time communication” that must be handled with the greatest of care and wisdom. This time communication can be part of the experience of entering the phone booth (i.e., something is understood regarding the individual’s future and/or particulars are known about the persons past). It is sometimes full of symbolism and the skilled operator will know how to state the symbols clearly with a minimum of interpretation. Helping the individual to complete the interpretation should follow this. Spiritual time communication also includes links between past, present and future. These links need to be clearly stated as the successful interpretation is often keyed into these links. In addition the individual needs to know what actions should be taken. Spiritual time communication is sometimes not about prediction but about consequences that can be changed if the right actions are taken. Spiritual time communication must be handled with the greatest possible compassion. To do less is to risk consequences, possibly suffering, that will need to be addressed.

Accepting the consequences of entering the phone booth

The biggest part of paying the bill associated with having a direct line to God is accepting the responsibility of helping others to improve their communication. If you have developed a direct line you will be asked to help others. You will not be able to keep the direct line and refuse this responsibility – although there are many ways to fulfill this responsibility. There is no way around this responsibility and to avoid it, or escape from it, will result in consequences, and often those involving personal

suffering. Accepting this responsibility means learning to sit in the between and to share this sitting with others.

The three key points of responsibility for sharing your sitting in the between are as follows: 1) knowing how to sit with suffering, 2) knowing how to sit with ecstasy, and 3) knowing how to be present for each person – to be ready for every collect call request. These are important considerations for the person seeking a direct line to God. The recorded history of mystics, across cultures, has shown that they have had to endure suffering – both of the self and of people around them. They have also had to endure the ecstatic experiences associated with God’s communication. The most difficult times in mystics’ lives appear to be associated with these two points of personal responsibility as well as learning to deal, in a healthy way, with the demands (the phone call requests), and criticisms, from the community.

Knowing how to sit with suffering is a part of the ongoing process of becoming a skilled phone operator. I have briefly addressed this concept of sitting with suffering in my book on the healing relationship.³⁸ There I mentioned the difficulties faced when experiencing a relationship of halopathy (holistic empathy, oneness) with another. Compassion at its deepest levels is also empathy at its deepest levels. It is here that I experience the other as if there were difference between us. We are one and the same in that moment of oneness. Sitting in this moment of oneness with others I experience their suffering as if it was happening to me. This is not a remembering of some event that is familiar to me or related to them through my mental association. This is not a process of equating similar feelings by saying to myself, “I remember when I felt that way.” Rather it an authentic shared experience of the persons suffering in that moment. For that moment I am in the midst of their suffering yet I have not become their suffering.

The difficulties encountered when in sitting within this experience of shared suffering are 1) the contamination effect, 2) the problem of unfinished business, and 3) the need for personal healing. The contamination effect refers to the process whereby my nature, like the chameleon, is changed by the encounter with others. The problem of unfinished business refers to the difficulty faced when someone is “stuck” in suffering and nothing can change that – at that moment. The need for personal healing accompanies extended times spent sitting in suffering and the skill in doing this is a prerequisite for the job. The way we experience each of these three difficulties is connected to our skill in sitting in the between, in the quiet still sacred healing relationship – even while we are experiencing the darkest of others’ sufferings. In addition how we learn to sit in suffering with others directly affects how we sit with our own suffering.

How we perceive suffering and how we know and understand our own suffering directly affects the difficulties of sitting with suffering. The process of knowing and understanding suffering is a deep personal journey. Great caution needs to be taken when making universal statements about this journey. It is important to reflect regularly, and hopefully with compassionate people, on the nature of your personal

understanding of suffering. Answer the following: How do you define suffering? What is its purpose in your life? How do you live with it? How have you healed from it? How can you heal from it in the future? How we sit with others' sufferings is connected to our answers to these questions.

When I enter the moment of oneness I share their experience of suffering, but I also see the path to well being for that person. Some people will agree to take this path and some will remain "stuck". For those who chose to take the path toward well being there is almost always a dramatic shift out of suffering that can be accompanied by ecstasy. Knowing how to sit with ecstasy is a part of the ongoing process of becoming a skilled phone operator.

It may seem strange to some readers that I am giving a warning about the awe and ecstasy of sharing a transformational moment of oneness with someone. But just like there are difficulties sitting with suffering so there are difficulties sitting with ecstasy. These difficulties are as follows: 1) chasing after the "feel good", 2) shifting with the others' shifting, and 3) blocking. Chasing after the "feel good" refers to a focus of action and thought that is directed at the feeling of ecstatic well being that accompanies the healing (or mystical) event. This chasing after takes many different forms and can be quite insipid. Shifting with the others' shifting refers to a process where, because I am sharing the moment with the other, I not only experience the ecstasy but also the others' experience of the ecstasy. Because often others have not developed wisdom in these matters they can shift the ecstasy experience into variations that are not as stable as the quiet stillness of the sacred relationship. Blocking is a subtle phenomenon that happens at various levels of our awareness and it refers to the intrusion of the self into the process of sitting with ecstasy. This intrusion of self creates a barrier and this barrier inhibits the flow of God's communication. Learning about each of these three difficulties is connected to learning about the empty self and empty desire. It is also about sitting in the quiet, compassionate, sacred healing relationship that is the phone booth.

If we accept the responsibility of opening a direct line then we also accept the responsibility of sharing this with others. There are two parts to this responsibility: 1) learning to deal with service demands, and 2) learning to deal with service complaints. Learning to deal with the community demands, or being ready for that next collect call request, is a part of the ongoing process of becoming a skilled phone operator. If we accept the responsibility of the direct line then we also accept the responsibility of doing what we can to meet the demand for access to that direct line. This is the nature of the job. In addition people will have complaints about the nature of the service, especially so in our critical and skeptical culture. Learning to address these complaints in a compassionate manner is also part of the job description.

In addition to the responsibility of helping others, when you have a direct line to God, when you are sitting in the phone booth, you must be prepared to receive a call. We often think of the phone booth as a place where we make calls. Most people who receive phone calls will do so on their personal phones. Remember we defined the line

to God as being a special “red phone” line and that we needed to be in the phone booth to access that line. This is true for both the direct call and the collect call. If we are in the phone booth about to make a call we must be ready for the possibility the God will call us on this direct line. Being ready for God’s call is a consequence of having a direct line.

Accepting the sacred message and doing what is requested

Being ready for God’s call means that 1) we are always attentive and always trying to improve the clarity of the reception, 2) we know what to expect when the call comes in (we have some familiarity with the nature of the experience), and 3) we are willing to surrender to our duty to obey what we hear during the phone call. This is part of the responsibility of having a direct line.

If we have accepted the responsibility of having a direct line to God then we also must accept the responsibility of listening to those messages and responding appropriately. We must also hear the soul’s response and respond appropriately. The spiritual message and the soul’s response are as one yet there is free will to choose your course of action. This is the nature of the between.

If we have accepted the responsibility of having a direct line to God then we are accepting the responsibility of “being the operator”. This includes all the responsibilities that come with the job title and the consequences connected to the characteristics described above. You cannot state that you have a direct line to God, that you are having conversations with God, or that you are getting regular messages from God, without showing evidence that you know how to use the phone. This evidence is in the form of demonstrating that you have become a phone operator – a skilled user of the phone. If you cannot show such evidence then you are not a phone operator. You may be a person who offers support relationships to people. This is important, but it should not be confused with being a mystic/healer. There are many mystic seekers but few true mystic/healers who have access to the direct line.

Maintaining Regular Service of Phone Lines and Equipment

If you wish to have a direct line to God you will need to monitor the equipment and the phone lines to be sure they are in working order. In addition you will need to understand the need for “power” to run the phone lines. To accomplish these service tasks you will also need to access community support. These are the responsibilities of someone who has established a direct line to God.

Monitoring the equipment means that we decide to seek a direct line to God (or profess that we have such a line) we also have the personal responsibility to check to see if the phone equipment is working properly. If we don’t check it regularly then there is the risk that when a call does come in, or when we need to make a call, the

phone could be in poor working order – full of static receiving a barely audible message. This is the responsibility of one seeking to have a direct line with God.

Monitoring is something that needs to happen as often as possible.³⁹ If you seek to have a direct line to God then you should always be ready for the next call. You cannot be ready for the next call if the equipment is faulty. Since you are the phone (the vessel, the lamp on the table) this simply means that you need to attend to self-care and spiritual readiness. This means that you need to practice sitting in the between and then also knowing why, and when, you can't.

If you have established a direct line (even if only for a few moments), and it is something you seek to maintain, then God could try to access that line ANYTIME. The importance of this cannot be overstated. If you claim to have conversations with God, then you also claim to have a direct line and must accept the responsibility. This responsibility means 1) that you are asked to become the operator, and 2) that you are asked to always be prepared to take a call. You are never “off duty”. This is why it is easier to be a mystic seeker and to use the operator services.

The idea of never being “off duty” is connected to the idea of becoming the phone operator, rather than doing the tasks of the operator's job. It is a shift into being a sacred and compassionate being who is ever mindful and ever seeking serenity while living daily life. It is a prayerful state of existence that embraces all living being, regardless of what actions they have committed. It is a perpetual state of readiness, waiting for that possible phone call. This is what a person who seeks a direct line to God is asking to accomplish. This is what mystic/healers accomplish, in some degree, every day, and what they always strive to improve.

In addition to keeping the phone in working order you need to know that the phone service runs on power. The direct line to God runs on power and if we are to use that direct line we should understand the nature of that power. Throughout the history of mystic/healers this power has been given many names (e.g., Holly Spirit, Chi, Ka, Prana). There is no need to argue about the name or its links to organized religion. What is important to understand is that mystic/healers have always reported a connection to this power as part of the service they offer. Understanding the use of this power for the phone line service means to understand what happens when it seems like there is “no power” (like a blackout) and what it means when there seems to be too much power (like lightning hit the phone line). Both extremes, and everything in the middle, can be experienced when providing the service of accessing the direct line to God. There are many consequences to the misunderstanding of power. This is a power of the soul's relationship.

Learning about the quality of our phone and our phone lines, along with the knowledge of the effects of power, is not something we are asked to do alone. Utilizing support services means we cannot do it all ourselves! We need other people to help us. We need support from other mystic seekers, other phone operators and the community. The full nature of support relationship is described elsewhere.⁴⁰ The important points to

note here are that 1) no matter how much skill phone operators possess there are always times when they feel “lost” and need support, and 2) it is the community that uses the operator and the phone lines – it is the community that monitors the quality and provides support. It is the community that requests the services. It is the community that will report on the quality of the services. If the community doesn’t want the service then it will not be used and then there will be no need for a phone operator in that community. If the community uses the services then, if encouraged, they can report accurately the quality of those services. It is also possible for the community to learn how to support the development of these services. It will then be the responsibility of the skilled operator to process that information and make adjustments so that the quality of services improves. In addition, with training, the community can learn to help with equipment repairs. Every phone operator functions better with community support and community support helps every mystic seeker integrate the collect call process into daily life.

Chapter Three Summary and Conclusions

This chapter attempts to take the reader the next step beyond making the collect call – developing the direct line to God. It is also a chapter that presents a discussion of the responsibilities of being a phone operator. If you decide that you want to have a direct line to God then you will be asked to, in some way, serve in the role of the phone operator. This is simply the nature of the process. The various aspects of developing a direct line were described as follows:

- Read the instruction manuals.
- You will need to go through a training process – learning the language of God.
- There are various levels and quality of service but understanding the limits of the “developmental model” requires some skilled discernment.
- Learn to know how your call went through and to understand the nature of sacred messages.
- You must be able to pay the bill – accept the responsibilities that come with having a direct phone line to God.
- Maintain regular service of the phone lines and equipment.

Throughout this chapter it has been emphasized that becoming the operator is an arduous journey. Few people stay true to the role and its responsibilities. This is why there are many mystic seekers but few true mystic/healers. This is not meant as a criticism of those who are mystic seekers, but rather to say we are all mystic seekers who have something to learn from each other.

In addition the information in this chapter can serve as a guide for those who wish to become phone operators. When you are seeking a direct line to God you are also accepting the responsibility to address our progress with empty self, empty desire, compassion and, oneness with the divine. This knowledge about progress is not the

same as the construction of a spiritual developmental model. It has no hierarchy yet it is still information that can guide you in your quest for a direct line and your success with the collect call. Knowing what types of difficulties the mystic/healer faces in the role of the operator can help you to facilitate smoother phone communication when sitting with the phone operator. Let us hope that we can all learn to sit in the phone booth, pick up the phone, and make that call to God. We can start by learning from skilled operators.

End Notes and References Cited

To locate the reference go to the reference list and look up the authors name and the year of publication.

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- ¹ Harvey, 1996.
- ² Hoisington, 2002.
- ³ Teasdale, 1999, p. 226.
- ⁴ Trungpa, 1973, p.17.
- ⁵ Teasdale, 1999.
- ⁶ Ibid, p. 11.
- ⁷ Kamenetz, 1997, p. 3-4.
- ⁸ Dossey, 2000, p. 343-44.
- ⁹ Williamson, 1993, p. 182.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p.134-35.
- ¹¹ See Campbell, 1988 and Ford, 1999.
- ¹² Trungpa, 1973, p.4.
- ¹³ Trungpa, 1984, p.5.
- ¹⁴ See Appendix.
- ¹⁵ Hoisington, 2002, see also Chopra, 2000, and Teasdale, 1999.
- ¹⁶ King, 2001, p. 209.
- ¹⁷ See Appendix.
- ¹⁸ Forest, p. 154.
- ¹⁹ Merton, 1967.
- ²⁰ Caution is to be exercised here because not every ecstatic event is associated with a spiritual message from God.
- ²¹ With practice one learns to live in the phone booth with greater frequency.
- ²² Blackaby & King, 1994, pgs 8 & 18.
- ²³ Willard, 1999 – published previously as “In Search of Guidance”.
- ²⁴ Ibid, p.10.
- ²⁵ Blackaby & King, 1994, p.63.
- ²⁶ King, 2001.
- ²⁷ Roberts, 1985, p.9.
- ²⁸ Weeks, 1991, p. 180
- ²⁹ Weeks, 1991.
- ³⁰ Underhill, 1999, p. 393.
- ³¹ Underhill, 1999, p. 55.
- ³² Teasdale, 1999, p. 24.
- ³³ Hoisington, 2002.
- ³⁴ King, 2001, p. 248.
- ³⁵ Sinetar, 1986, p.7.
- ³⁶ Cornell, 2001, Ghezzi, 2002.
- ³⁷ For example, Perez, 1991.
- ³⁸ Hoisington, 2002.
- ³⁹ The nature of this monitoring changes with the shift to being.
- ⁴⁰ Hoisington, 2002.