

# Introduction



This life is such a mystery. At least it *feels* that way. There's so much to figure out, so much to know about, so much to understand. And then, when you finally do understand it, there seems to be so *little* to figure out, and there's no mystery at all . . . .

I'm describing to you my own experience before and after my conversations with God. Those dialogues told me everything I needed to know about life, and helped me to understand so much of what I didn't understand. And when I put those exchanges into a book and people all over the world began reading them, life changed for many of us. The messages in what became the nine *Conversations with God* books had an enormous impact on millions of people in many cultures because they made everything so clear.

Perhaps predictably, I was soon asked to elaborate on that original material, to address more extensively what I had experienced, as well as what I had come to discover *through* my experience. I decided to take the information in the three thousand pages of my original dialogue and explore it more fully, topic by topic. The book you are now holding is a result of that decision.

This text is a re-issue of material that I published more than a decade ago, in three separate volumes. I believe that information to be seminal, pivotal, and vital to any real understanding of how to *apply* the wisdom in *Conversations with God* to our everyday lives. I have brought the material together under one cover here because, while the three original small volumes were helpful, to be sure, I see on reflection that *taken together* they lay out an entire course for living well; first, for living harmoniously and lovingly with others in our immediate circle, then with ourselves and our work, and finally, with the World Entire.

If ever there was a time for such a course to be laid, this would be it. The world is hovering on the brink of its next major evolutionary convulsion—a giving birth, as futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard would put it—a full-scale creation of a new way of being human. And while I don't consider myself to be an

expert on sociological or spiritual development within our species, I do believe the guidelines offered here to be among the most useful, the most practical, and the most effective tools that anyone could ever find for producing a better life. I feel that way because I am not the source of these guidelines. The messages here emerge solely from the *Conversations with God* dialogues—and I consider those exchanges to have been direct interactions with the Divine.

You do not have to agree with me on that point, however. As I have said often in the past, it is not necessary to believe that I spoke directly with God (we are all doing this every day, by the way) in order to gain benefit from this material. All that is required is an open mind and a willingness to simply see if the ideas here have any value. Use them, *test them out*, in on-the-ground situations.

That's what I invite you to do. I encourage you to take a look at what's being said here about the three aspects of our lives—relationships, livelihood, and our interactions with the world at large—and see for yourself if anything here makes sense; if *any* of it is workable, practical, and beneficial.

Of course, I believe that it all is or I wouldn't be placing it before you, much less inviting you to spend any serious amount of time exploring it. So here you have it: the three

thousand pages of dialogue in *Conversations with God* reduced down to a few salient points and a few very direct observations about how to render them functional. I trust that you will find this deeper excursion into *Conversations with God* spiritually enticing, personally exciting, and wonderfully useful.

Part One

*Living and Interacting with Others*



# *Introduction*



Relationships are the most important experience of our lives. Without it, we are nothing.

Literally.

That is because, in the absence of anything else, we are not.

Fortunately, there is not a one of us who does not have a relationship. Indeed, all of us are in relationships with everything and everyone, all of the time. We have a relationship with ourselves, we have a relationship with our family, we have a relationship with our environment, we have a relationship with our work, we have a relationship with each other.

In fact, everything that we know and experience about ourselves, we understand within the context that is created by our relationships. For this reason, relationships are sacred. All

relationships. And somewhere within the deepest reaches of our heart and soul, we know this. That is why we yearn so for relationships—and for relationships of meaning. It is also, no doubt, why we have such trouble with them. At some level, we must be very clear how much is at stake. And so, we're nervous about them. Normally confident, competent people fumble and fall, stumble and stall, crumble and call for help.

Indeed, nothing has caused more problems for our species, created more pain, produced more suffering, or resulted in more tragedy, than that which was intended to bring us our greatest joy—our relationships with each other. Neither individually nor collectively, socially nor politically, locally nor internationally have we found a way to live in harmony. We simply find it very difficult to get along—much less actually love each other.

What's this all about? What's up here? I think I know. Not that I'm some kind of a genius, mind you, but I am a good listener. And I've been asking questions about this for a very long time. In the 1980s, I began receiving answers. I believe those responses have come from God. At the time I received them, I was so impacted and so impressed that I decided to keep a written record of what I was being given. That record became

the *Conversations with God* series of books, which have become bestsellers around the world.

A small group of about forty people gathered at a home just outside San Francisco, California a few years ago to explore with me more deeply what those books had to say on the subject of our relationships with others. I shared with the group all that I understood about the material on relationships that appears in the *Conversations with God* dialogue and answered questions as they came up. The synergy of that afternoon produced an electrifying experience, resulting in an open flow of wonderful wisdom that, I am happy to say, was captured on videotape and audiocassette—edited versions of which have since been made available to the public.

What you will find here is a transcript of that event. I have made a few tiny edits in order to update it to my present life circumstance, but no substantive changes have been made. Thus, the material reads in a much more free-flowing—and, I think, more stimulating—style than text that is written for the printed page. And because this book format is not limited by time and production constraints, we were able to include here material not found in the original video or audio versions, which necessarily had to be shortened for production reasons.

Essentially, what God tells us in *Conversations with God* is that most of us enter into relationships for the wrong reasons. That is, for reasons having nothing to do with our overall *life purpose*. When our reason for relationships is aligned with our soul's reason for being, not only are our relationships understood to be sacred, they are rendered joyful as well.

Joyful relationships—ah, yes. For far too many people, that phrase sounds almost like an oxymoron—a self-contradicting, mutually exclusive term. Something like *military intelligence* or *efficient government*. Yet it *is* possible to have joyful relationships, and the extraordinary insights in the *Conversations with God* books show us how.

Here are those insights, as I have received them and understood them. I share them with you here in humility, straight from the Take It For What It's Worth Department, with the hope that if even one comment opens a new window—or throws wide a doorway—to greater happiness, you will have been served.



Hello, everyone. Welcome to the room. Nice to see you all here.

The subject of the moment is human relationships, this thing with which some of us have so much difficulty. No one, I understand, in this room, but some of the rest of us have had some difficulty with this topic. And as you know, if you've read any of the writings that have come from my pen, I'm among those who have had some considerable difficulty in relationships—in making them work, and making them last, and really, in causing them to even make any sense in my life.

I've never really understood, until these most recent days and times, what makes relationships work, and what their purpose is in my life. And the reason that was true for me is that, in the main, I found myself getting into relationships for all the wrong reasons.

By and large, I got *into* relationships with an eye toward what I could get *out* of them. And I'm not even sure I was willing to admit that to myself as I was getting into these relationships. I mean, I probably wouldn't have articulated it that way, because I didn't want myself to know myself. I wouldn't have said, "Gee, what is it I'm trying to get out of this?" I wouldn't have phrased it that way. I probably wouldn't even have conceptualized it in that way. But I noticed that's what I was up to, as soon as I stopped getting out of the relationship what I imagined that I would. In the moment that I stopped getting out of the relationship what I imagined that I would, *I* wanted to get out of the relationship.

And that's the pattern that I saw myself running through the largest portion of my adult life. I got out of relationships from which I did not get what I wanted. Did you follow that? And I got *into* relationships after I got out of other ones. Very quickly. So, I was a serial monogamist. Just one relationship after another, after another, after another, seeking and searching for that right and perfect mate who could, at last, fulfill me. Who could maybe see who I really am, and bring me to a place of happiness.

Now, I was willing to make a fair trade. It wasn't that I wasn't willing to show up in certain ways that could cause me to be attractive to another. Quite the contrary, I knew how the

game was played. And after a few failed relationships, I even began to know, or to think that I knew, what it was that others were looking for in a relationship. And so I worked very hard to provide that for them—as my negotiable goods, see. I learned, for instance, to sublimate certain parts of my own personality that I discovered, after a number of failed relationships, were not attractive to other people.

I'll give you one example, a silly one, but it's one that sticks with me because of its silliness, I think. I was with one lady for a while, and I thought she was going to be the love of my life. In fact, she *was* the love of my life during that time of my life I was with her.

So, I was in this particular relationship with this delicious lady. And I was deeply in love. And we went to the theater one night, in one of our early excursions into the outer world, the world of social stuff, you know. And so there I was at this play. And it was a comedy, and I began to laugh.

Now, I happen to have a very raucous, uproarious laugh. When I laugh, the whole room knows that I have laughed, unlike most of you, who aren't laughing very loudly at all, at any of this.

When I laugh, I really have this whole-feeling laughter. And it's just been part of me. I didn't design it that way; this is just

how it is. Okay. So, here I am, and I'm roaring. Now, the players are, of course, loving it, because it's generating other laughter, and the room is becoming very alive. And so the actors are thrilled that in the audience they have what they call, as an actor, a live wire. "We've got a live wire in the house tonight."

So, I'm always welcome in places where there are performers, because I'm a real live wire. But the lady that I was with, and with whom I was so desperately in love (and I use that term advisedly—I was desperate *about* my love for her)—the more I laughed, the smaller she got. I can still see her to this day, sitting in the seat next to me, trying to disappear. And during intermission, she said, "Must you laugh like that?" And I remember thinking, "Like what?" because I wasn't even consciously aware, you know, of what I was doing; that my laughter was causing her embarrassment. That it was, as we used to say as teenagers, spotting her out. That she felt somehow on the spot because of this guy she was with who was laughing in that way.

And I remember my deep desire to do whatever it took to keep her in the room. You know what I mean? I mean, figuratively, to keep her in the room of my life.

By the way, I should say, as an aside, I spent most of my life trying to keep people in the room. I would do almost

anything. Just stay in the room. Stay in the room. Don't leave the room. What can I do to keep you here? What part of myself can I set aside to keep you here? It's of no matter. I'll set it aside. All that matters is, stay in the room of my life.

And I can't tell you the number of tap dances that I did—and not even to my own music. You put the music on, and I'll dance the dance. And I did that on this particular night at the theater.

Now comes act two, and I'm in the audience. And here come a few funny gag lines, and this is the action you're getting from Neale . . . ha . . . [sputtering] . . . sitting there trying to stifle my laugh. By act three, I had it down. By act three, I had turned “ha, ha, ha, ha” into a quiet “hee, hee . . .” And for several years, that's how I laughed. I used to laugh what I called a non-laugh, until somebody said: “Is something wrong with you? Are you okay?”

I was in a workshop with Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross once, and she caught me at that. She called my number. She said something funny, and I was out there in the first row. She said, “What's the matter with you?”

“Nothing; I thought that was funny.”

She said, “Why didn't you let that out?”

Anyone know Elisabeth Kübler-Ross? Very heavy Swiss accent. I became close friends with her. I wound up working

on her staff. Let that be a warning; some of you may be on my staff before the day is out.

And she said, “Why don’t you let that out?” Or, in her Swiss accent, “Vy don’t you let dat laughter out?”

And I said: “What do you mean? I was laughing.”

She says: “No, you weren’t. Why don’t you let that laughter out? And while you’re at it, why don’t you let the pain out as well? The pain of holding in *Who You Really Are?*”

So I was aware of what needed to be traded, or what I thought needed to be traded, to keep you in the room, you see. I was not unaware, and I was not unwilling. So, I did what I thought it took to keep the room filled. And that was the great puzzlement for me, because here I was doing what I thought it took to keep the room filled, and the room kept on emptying anyway. They kept on leaving anyway, until I finally found myself screaming: “What do you want? What does it take to make a relationship work?”

And I didn’t even catch the act. I didn’t even see that I was, in fact, trading this for that. I’ll tell you what: I won’t laugh like this if you don’t cough like that. See, I won’t eat like this, if you don’t forget to put the toothpaste cap on the tube . . . like that, or whatever it is that we were trading. And the trades were much larger than that, I’m afraid.

And so, I wound up in this kind of a trade arrangement, you know. And on the 14th of February, I searched and searched for a card; but I couldn't find one that said, "I trade you very much." "Gosh, do I trade you. And I'll trade you forever." But I was, in fact, playing trade. And again I knew that I was playing trade when the other person stopped trading me what I thought they were supposed to give me. That was our quid pro quo arrangement: I'll give you this, and you'll give me that. And when I stopped receiving what I thought I was supposed to receive, I left the relationship. Or, in some cases, when they stopped receiving what they thought was implicitly theirs, what they thought I was going to give them, they left the room.

And that's how I discovered that I was into relationships for all the wrong reasons, that I was somehow searching for that treasure, that negotiable currency that I could have which would be large enough to keep everyone in the room. What aspect of myself could be so attractive, so undeniable, so magnetic, that no matter what, you would stay in the room? And I didn't understand, until I had lost yet another in a series of important relationships, what was going wrong.

Then I had my extraordinary conversation with God, in which God said: "Neale, Neale, Neale, you clearly don't see what's going on here. First of all, you're in a relationship for

all the wrong reasons. You're in a relationship for what you can get out of it. And you're willing to trade all right. But you see it as just that—almost a business transaction. And you don't understand the purpose of a relationship. And the purpose of a relationship has nothing to do with what you think you can get out of it, and everything to do with what you choose to put into it. But not putting something into it as a *means of extracting from it what you wish to receive*, but simply putting something into it as a means of noticing Who You Really Are.

So, what you put into a relationship, be sure that you put into it authentically. And never deny, for one moment, the real you. And if the real you isn't sufficient or attractive enough to keep that person in the room, then let them leave. Because someone will come into the room of your life who will find the authentic you attractive enough. And when they come into the room out of their response to your authenticity, they will stay because you don't have to keep your act going in order to keep them in the room, you see. And so the tap dance can be over.

And that changed everything for me in relationships. It shifted the whole paradigm of my experience, because at last I understood what I was doing there.

I also understood that relationships are the most important single experience we could possibly create for ourselves. And that in the absence of relationships, we are nothing. Without you, I am nothing at all. You probably knew that when you walked in. You sat down; “Without me, Neale’s nothing” [laughter]. But it’s true. Because without you, I’m nothing at all [pointing to different people]. And without you, I’m nothing. And without you, I’m nothing at all. And that is true, because absent the experience of relationship, we are not. In this relative experience, I can only be who I am in relationship to something else in my experience. I mean, experientially, I can’t know a thing about myself unless you’re in the room.

And I was given an interesting illustration by God that allowed me to notice how this could be true. God said to me: “Imagine that you were in an all-white room, totally white: white floor, white ceiling, white walls. And imagine you were suspended in that room, as if by magic, so that you couldn’t touch anything, just dangling there, like so many Christmas ornaments, without even a string attaching you to it, just suspended in mid-air. Here you are in this sea of whiteness. And imagine that nothing else exists at all. How long do you think that you would exist in your own experience?” And the answer came up for me: “Probably not terribly long, not very long.”

Because, in the absence of anything else, I am not. Not in my own experience. I mean, I am that I am. But I can't *know* that I am. I can't experience that I am, except in relationship to something else. So, I can't know anything about myself.

Yet, if somebody were to walk into that room of whiteness, and just put so much as the tiniest speck of ink on the wall, to the degree that I could see that speck of ink, that little black dot, to that degree suddenly I exist. First of all, *over there* would exist, and *over here*. Because the dot would be there, and I would be here. I would begin to define myself in relationship to that other thing. In this case, the dot on the wall. I would imagine that I am the thing called . . . Maybe I would utter a word that sounded like "big-g-ger."

I might even have the audacity to say, with regard to the dot on the wall, that I'm "sma-a-arter." Sometimes I don't think that I'm very much smarter than the dot on the wall, but generally speaking, I imagine that I am. I may be faster, or slower, or "this-er" or "that-er," you understand, in relationship to the dot.

Put a cat in the room, and suddenly I have much larger experiences of myself, because that which is also in the space is much larger than the dot on the wall. So now I begin to conceptualize all kinds of things about me. Maybe the cat is softer than I am, but maybe I am older than the cat, or whatever. You see, I

start conceiving of myself in my own experience, based on who and what is around me. Therefore, relationships—I'm talking now in the realm of the relative, in which we exist in physical form—relationships with other people, places, and things are not only important, they are vital. And in the absence of our relationships with everything, we are not.

And so I begin to understand the reason that relationships exists at all: my relationships with this table, with this glass of water, and with those of you who share this time and place with me. And it is out of my relationship with you that I not only know myself—but here comes the trick—not only do I know myself out of my relationship with you, but I literally *define* myself as well. That is to say: I define and, in that sense, *re-create who I am* in relationship to Who You Are.

Here comes an interesting twist. Ultimately, I cannot re-create myself as anything that you are not. That is to say: I can only see in me what I'm willing to see in you. And that which I fail to see in you, I will never find in myself, because I don't know that it exists. Therefore, I cannot find the divinity within me until I seek, discover, and recognize (that is to say: know again, to *re-cognize*) the divinity in you. And to the degree that I fail to recognize and to know the divinity in you, to that degree I cannot know it in me, nor can I know

any good thing about myself. Nor any bad thing either, for that matter. For nothing can exist over here that does not exist over there. And the reasons for that are multitudinous; not the least of which is, there is only one of us in the room. There's no one else here. So, we find that relationships have a unique place in our life, not just an important place—if I can use a twist of words—an irreplaceable place. I mean, you can't replace it. There's nothing that you can replace relationships with that will bring you what relationships bring you, because relationships are the only experience in life that brings you an experience of yourself in life. And we are talking here about not only your relationships to people, but also to places, and things, and even events—even your relationships to the occurrences of your life.

We all have relationships to the circumstances and the events of our lives. And it is out of our relationships, which are entirely self-created, that we experience, announce, and declare, express, fulfill, and become who we really are.

Once we understand the sacred place that relationship holds in the experience of all of us, we hold the experience of relationship as sacred in deed—not just in thought, not just in word, but in *deed*. And the deeds we do around relationships begin to change dramatically.