

From Loss to Love

...a true story of surrender and growth

By Doris Pratt, Ph.D., O.M.

On a warm fall day in 2010, my husband Joe stood on the deck, watching me get into our car. We'd kissed goodbye and it was time for us to let go and for me to get to work.

I realized he would stand there indefinitely, so I waved him inside the house. He went in, and I backed out of the driveway. I got about two blocks away, burst into tears, and pulled over. I sobbed hard, letting the tears flow.

And at 2:00 that afternoon, Joe surrendered to federal authorities. He officially became a felon.

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This is our story about the process of surrendering to a life of growth, staying sane alone while facing huge challenges, finding inner strength through connecting to God's constant love and the help of loved ones, and being aware of, and open to, synchronistic guidance.

Surrender

Joe had owned a medical products firm in the late 2000s, and started paying kickbacks to certain product buyers. He was in his late 50s, and wanted to be rich and successful fast. But these buyers, whose palms were being greased by several firms, worked at federal medical

organizations. What Joe didn't know was that there was an FBI sting operation in the process of cleaning this up.

So at 6:30 A.M., December 15th 2009, a loud knock on our door brought seven FBI and NCIS agents into our home. We were questioned separately in our pajamas for over five hours. Then a ten month legal process ensued whereby Joe was sentenced to 64 months for federal bribery.

With good behavior, he would be home in four and a half years. The day my husband surrendered, I was bereft and in total shock, mental and physical. I needed to carve out a single life for myself, a daily coping routine, right away. How would I make a life without him, get my act together? I soon found out there were no felons' wives' support groups, no government help for the extreme stress of an "innocent spouse." I had no local relatives to turn to, and the nearest close friend lived outside Washington, D.C.

I slowly learned to manage and I worked hard, increasing my work hours. I gradually surrendered to this new life. At some level I knew I had chosen it. I had come to accept Edgar Cayce's reading 262-3:

"Not my will but Thine, O Lord, be done in me and through me. Let me ever be a channel of blessings, today, now, to those that I contact in every way. Let my going in, my coming out be in accord with that Thou would have me do, and as the call comes, 'Here am I, send me, use me.' "

This was our second marriage to each other. We had met as teenagers in 1965, fell right in love, but were too young to accept the responsibilities that such a deep love requires. We were both children of alcoholic fathers. Though our Vietnam Era elopement proved unsuccessful, later in life, we rediscovered and remarried each other. And though devoted to each other, things were still a little "off."

Decades had passed between our marriages, and some of the same issues from before resurfaced. Under the pressure of making this second marriage work, Joe took bad risks to be a “good provider.” I was too trusting and hopeful to question any business problems or conceive of any improprieties. How could Joe put our future and our life together in danger?

Beginning the first year he was away, I began a long series of weekend trips to his prison in New Jersey, and early on it was clear he was in a much worse situation than I could ever be. Only a convict can know what prison life is like: the total lack of freedoms, the constant indignities, living with declining health and poor nutrition, crippling disappointments, complete surrender of any control, and the violence and insanity of the prison system.

Joe came to accept that the person he had been created the life he was in. And that acceptance changed him. Prison life humbled him, his surrender made him honor his life and marriage, and declining health forced him to respect and nourish his body. He was moving from victim to victor. So it took me about a year to forgive him, first putting aside my outrage, then my self-pity and lastly my anger. I surrendered to whatever was the greater Plan for both us.

Staying Sane

“Be kind, be gentle, be patient, be longsuffering, for if thy God was not longsuffering with thee, what chance would you have?”
E.C. reading 5081-1

How would I live through the next four and a half years? I found ways to stay on course: I lived from one prison visit to the next, from one 15 minute and 18 second phone call to the next.

We started writing letters, but eventually switched to emails. Joe was responsible to pay for both calls and emails out of his commissary account.

I worked harder and harder, even working in several departments in a day. I had emotional “rough patches” and dealt with them by getting counseling. I worked with four different counselors during that time, going deeper as time passed. I had loving conversations with some of Joe’s family, especially my stepdaughter, who encouraged me to stay strong and committed, and his cousin who’d recently been widowed. They became my core family too.

I tried to take very good care of myself to counteract the intense stress. Television became my companion. Judy and Gwen on the PBS NewsHour updated me during dinnertime. Certain shows were my weekly friends. Black and white British films from the ‘30s and ‘40s were my favorite. Music quelled my mind, and gave it a nice place to retreat.

But eventually the continued stress began to win and my body developed stress infections, because I was in Type A mode too long and too often. A dental abscess spread to my cheek; I needed oral surgery and a dermatologist.

I got dizzy at work periodically, nearly fainting. I had an increase in cardiac arrhythmia. Driving exhausted was sometimes problematic. I had yet to learn to be gentle and patient with myself, or how to de-stress, stop worrying to enjoy the experience of relaxing.

I began to see that in living alone, I was living in fear, and sometimes in terror. I was limiting myself in what I could do, or be willing to accomplish. I set up “safe” boundaries with rules attached: my creative outlets of painting and writing were shelved. My body’s breaking down seemed more than I could bear. At this rate, I worried I wouldn’t be able to endure a few more years of this being without Joe.

Inner Strength

“Be not overcome with those things that make for discouragements, for He will supply the strength. Lean upon the arm of the Divine within thee...”
E.C. Reading 254-87

God and I have been on good terms most of my life. I always felt I had ‘one foot here and one foot on the Other Side,’ and so I strengthened my link to my Creator and my “Spiritual Team” on a daily basis. I thanked God and my Team throughout the day with small thanks when things went right, and small requests when I needed help. I began to remember I wasn’t alone, and this blossomed into some very interesting synchronistic experiences.

I slowly got stronger and braver. And I liked that. I liked living with me.

I started making friends with some neighbors, even though I had kept to myself before. In daily challenges, I became more “out there” and got tougher and more candid. I hired a roofer, an electrician, a carpenter and later a plumber, plus numerous unreliable handymen. I learned that if I didn’t take care of something, it didn’t take care of itself. One year, this included a burst water pipe on Labor Day night. And I dealt with it.

By focusing on the immediacy in my own life, I let go of worrying about Joe’s path, trusting that God would take care of him. Of course this trust was well-placed. Dangerous situations that arose in Joe’s imprisonment amazingly cleared up, with the right people showing up for Joe at just the right moments.

About this time, we began a series of emails which continued until his release. In April of 2013 I shared my insights:

“...Take a step back and look at how you're looking at these guys' [prisoners'] stories. Remember that place is a Karma Cleansing Depot. Before you feel too sorry for them, remember

how you realized being there was a GIANT wakeup call for you. ...you thought you could somehow "cheat" the system, or the rules didn't apply to you. Keep in mind these guys have these bank accounts too. I honor their soul commitment in taking on this humongous wakeup call, just as I learned to honor and respect YOUR process. NO ONE is a victim there, not even me. It's all choice.

...in your life when an integrity choice presented itself to you, you often made an inappropriate one concerning money, authority, self-worth; ...Disdain for others starts with self-disdain. These guys have years, decades, of this too. ...Honor that. Keep that in your heart all the time. Honor these guys' courage. ...There are reasons how and why those guys got there. You want to help them? INSPIRE them. Share your story. Tell them about your wakeup call. Tell them about your cheating bank account. What goes around comes around. Keep your thoughts clear and your heart honorable and loving...

Don't fight what's going on around you, especially in your mind. ALLOW it. Allow the rocks to hit your boat in your river. You're indestructible. I learned a lot recently about the concept of allowing. There are reasons for what happens that we aren't yet knowing."

And later...

"Here's a private challenge for you: You love me so much: 1. because I'm easy to love, and 2. because in your heart you see yourself in me, as so loving. You want to be like me, but you already are. I know that. Just allow it.

Now take that love and see if you can't apply it to others who aren't so easy to love. Ms. L.'s probably easier to love, because she's on your side. But those who are harder to love, just have smokescreens in front of them to hide. Behind that they are like me (even C.)

I've stuck with you because I know who you are and I've seen the cloud you've been under. I honor your process, your path.

I love you closer than within an inch of your life. Someday you'll see we are one."

I was now able to help Joe more with his giant wake-up call because there was more of me available.

Synchronistic Guidance

"Be happy—be in the attitude of ever being helpful to others. These will bring that peace within that is the promise from Him."

E.C. reading 1968-7

During the time Joe was away, I experienced many coincidences, so much so, that I started to interpret their message to me. When I was on the right “path,” things would work out fortunately and quickly so. For instance, if there was someone I needed to connect with, I would run into them in a store. I ran into a lot of people, some after I had been thinking about them. And I knew why.

If I had a series of negative experiences, I would see a pattern that told me to make some changes. This was true with my Toyota “car-ma” and the previously mentioned unreliable handymen. I learned to rethink and adjust my path.

Sometimes I got a gentle warning of something challenging to come. In retrospect I’d realize I’d been warned, but hadn’t accepted it. I learned to maintain an open mind.

And if I stayed away too long from Joe, God would nudge me. As a Libra, I read my horoscope often, and one day I received:

“Someone aches when you leave and thrills to your every return. Knowing that you have such a hold on this person’s emotions, it would be wrong to stay away too long.”

One of the fun parts of this Synchronistic Guidance was what I began to call “Money from No-where.” I was on a tight budget, so tight it squeaked. I’m naturally frugal, so when money was needed for something big I would file that need away in my mind. I’d forget about it, but I trusted in my Creator and my Team. And it would either show up in a totally unforeseen way, like a forgotten tax refund or class action settlement, or the need for it would lessen.

Over time, I trusted the system and went with the flow. I often felt “in tune.” I felt the power of being in God’s hands. I came to understand and appreciate, over those four plus years, the long term significance and spiritual value of the Work Joe and I had done, both separately and as a

couple. We influenced people's lives with our deeds, and by staying strong, committed and deeply in love.

I believe we receive this Synchronistic Guidance daily, if we choose to be open to it.

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Joe has been home over two years now. It took us a while to adjust to married life again. We've needed to heal our bodies from prolonged stress, his with severe rheumatoid arthritis and mine with cardiac abnormalities, under the care of the late Dr. Peter Schoeb, and Dr. Carl Nelson.

There's no question the entire experience has deeply benefited us. We're closer now, more loving of ourselves and others, more mature in becoming ourselves. We're honest with each other, with the threat of censure or punishment gone. "Getting in trouble" is now a joke between us. Unconditional love is blooming in our hearts.

And we trust in a greater Plan. We've had time to examine the meaning of it all, and what we've gained through this significant Karmic release for both of us.

The story continues for us: I've had an exchange of letters with former President Obama just days before he left office, a wonderful, poignant experience for me. Joe and I are both researching ways to be of service in areas we enjoy, and the promise of the future feels exciting.

But our deeper love has been the greatest gift of all.

Doris Pratt and husband Joe Cafiero are Life Members of A.R.E. Doris is a metaphysician ordained in the Order of Melchizedek, who received her M.A. from Empire State College and her Ph.D. from the American Institute of Holistic Theology. A former A.R.E. staff member, she founded Life Center for Metaphysics in New York, and was a former columnist for the A.R.E Northeast Region.