

April 2, 2020

Dear Friends,

At the end of my letter on Tuesday I mentioned briefly that we are powerless, and I would like to expand on that a bit today as we prepare for yet another weekend of lockdown and isolation. It took me many years of life and experiences of loss, heartache, and anxiety to begin to truly understand the concept of powerlessness, but once I got it, it changed my perspective forever. I imagine that we all are feeling a tremendous amount of powerlessness by now in this Corona crisis, we certainly have experienced powerlessness in our losses and grief as well. Although it sounds like a negative - 'powerLESSness,' and although it sounds like something important is absent, - that we are somehow 'less' because of it, I believe that it is quite the opposite. Powerlessness is unfortunately often mistaken for weakness, but it is actually a feat of strength. Admitting powerlessness involves leaning into our deepest feelings, trusting and relying on community, on others, and surrendering to the things we can't control. This takes courage and strength.

To be honest, I strongly believe that power is an illusion. The illusion of power is strong and addicting, but it is nevertheless an illusion. When it comes down to it, we really are powerless over almost everything. Most of us, if not all of us, cling to the things that we perceive we have power over- but it is in letting go of the illusion that we can grow and become liberated. It's quite interesting that the key to salvation, or enlightenment, or nirvana or whatever you want to call it in just about every religion on the planet is surrender, or letting go. Whether it is in letting go of the ego, as in Buddhism, or Jesus letting go of all power on the cross, or the Israelites letting go of the illusions of idolatry or lack of trust, it is in the 'letting go' that we are in fact liberated – set free. Quite often, unfortunately, the illusion of power can only be broken by personal, painful loss, crisis or tragedy. Too often 'surrender' comes at a great cost.

Powerlessness does not mean being helpless either. It is not about lying down or giving up. It is about surrendering to that over which we truly had no control or power in the first place; we aren't giving up anything because we didn't have it to begin with. When we let go of the things we have no control or power over, it can free us up to understand and accept the things or situations which we can change. It can allow us to be in touch with our true self and the truth of life itself.

So why am I going on about this today? Well, COVID19 has put us all, everyone, those in power and those with none, on the same playing field. We are all vulnerable, we are all at risk, and it is due to something over which we have little control. This is one of the reasons I love the Serenity Prayer. This prayer is really a mini-meditation. And it's a meditation on powerlessness. In accepting 'the things we cannot change' we receive a reward and that reward is serenity. In finding the courage to change the things we can- and making those changes little by little, we receive the same reward- serenity. It certainly takes some wisdom to know the difference, and often this wisdom is what comes at that great price we pay due to our losses and pain. It seems that wisdom also often comes at a great price. But let's not miss out on the reward. We who are grieving have put in the time, the pain, the anxiety, and we have felt the sadness, the brokenness, the heartache and sorrow. Should we not allow ourselves to reap the benefit that can come from all this anguish? The prayer I say over and over to myself is: "Let go and let God." In the letting go we can experience some serenity, some peace, some relief. We need to

remember that letting go is not about losing, it's about being open to what truly is and not fighting it nor resisting it, but rather embracing it and letting it be. It's about acceptance. Someone I deeply admire recently said, "We need to experience powerlessness to truly understand and appreciate the power within us all: the power to choose, the power of love and the power to feel."

We are powerless over all our losses. We are powerless over COVID19, we are powerless over the economy, and we are powerless over where this is taking us. Maybe, just maybe, we can let all that be ok, to be exactly what it is. If we try to maintain the illusion of power it could very well make us sick. This is no time to get sick. Right now our goal is to try as best we can to try to stay healthy and find some serenity in the midst of all the chaos. There is serenity to be had. Just let go and let God.

***God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.***

Peace and Serenity, Kevin