

Defining Moments

and prayers to guide them

by *Brandon Kneefel*

**LOVE
ADDICTION
GRIEF
HEALTH
BODY IMAGE
PURPOSE
MONEY
CAREER
SEX**



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www.BrandonKneefel.com

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Brandon@BrandonKneefel.com

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Dedicated to Team Breathe and Inspire Spiritual Communities

Intro:

Most of us have been there. The most primal prayer one can say, “Dear God, Help!” Often times that’s the only thing we know to say. Often times it’s as if life has muffled us in our direst moments. Often times the very moment we need to rise, we feel as if we sink. I want to help you change that. I want to show you how to gain some verbal power and transform your world through your conscious discussion with the world beyond. Sound woo woo? Good. Take a moment to set aside what you think you know about prayer.

Now, I normally wouldn’t call myself a reject, but I’m also no longer interested in “facing reality” or accepting the status quo. So I am a reality reject. I’ve been a reject of reality my whole life. Fun fact: I was suspended from every school I went to growing up. Rules haven’t really been my thing. Doing things as they have always been done, yea, over that, too. Reality works just fine for most of the population, but there are those of us who simply feel too deeply. I am always amazed by those people who never had issues falling asleep or waking up in the morning. There is a lot going on in the world around us, in our families, our communities and the broader landscape of life; there is also a world occurring inside of us, and if we aren’t careful, we allow the external world to affect our inner world entirely too much. This book will tell you how to reverse that equation and allow yourself to reject reality for a chance to create the life and world beyond your wildest dreams.

Change is possible. I am a “reality reject.” I went 26 years before I realized that I could ultimately be well. “Being well” means to me that I am not addicted to drugs and alcohol, that I am self-supporting, and I am lifted above my depression and anxiety more often than not. It happened because I realized that I was surrounding myself with people and words, patterns and habits that were slowly but deeply reforming my mind. When I realized once and for all that my salvation was not outside of me, that no one could save me, but that I could be saved in my humility, was powerful change possible. I went from a promising student and leader in my community to homeless and keeping my black Hefty bags of belongings in the basement of a dive bar in West Hollywood, CA because I was convinced that my reality was out of my control.

Now for the mushy stuff: At the heart of this book, it is writing on prayer. Prayer that is unlinked to any specific religion or body of thought. It’s a testimony to the inter-faith effectiveness of using one’s mind to call up the divinity in our own experiences. But what is prayer? Prayer is our communication to that which holds us at our highest. Prayer is a conviction of goodness prevailing. Prayer reorients our mind to find the positive. Anyone can pray effectively, regardless of religious or spiritual leanings. This piece of literature is a battle cry, waging war on the negative landscapes of our minds that seem to pervade the societal landscapes of our times. There are limiting beliefs we have about ourselves and circumstances that are only possible because they exist collectively in society—body image, relationships, mental health, wellness and economic situations. We’ve been seduced to believe thoughts like, “heavier bodies are less attractive,” “it’s difficult to become wealthy,” “people with mental illness can never be happy without prescriptions,” and that, ultimately, “things will probably never change.”

But here’s the deal: things are always changing. There is a gravitational force for things to depreciate, of course. Muscles atrophy without exercise, bank accounts deplete without work

adding monetary value to them, and relationships deteriorate without the actions of service and love. We live in a three-dimensional world, and three-dimensional actions are required. Effort is not the enemy. Things are always in motion, it's our job to direct that motion in our favor. What is ultimately our favor? The highest favor is in alignment with the greatest good.

Prepare yourself, I'm about to quote the Bible: Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:25-34 verse 33, King James Version). When Jesus refers to the Kingdom of God, he was not referring to the afterlife, but the invisible. Jesus was saying, seek first those intangible and priceless variables, that are available to you at all time, which is "his righteousness" or better said, puts you in right-mindedness. This isn't a conversation about good versus evil. Jesus is saying, let your life be lead by spiritual principles and be of sound mind, and all will be well.

"Kingdom of God" means the qualities that enrich our life that are not of the earth or material. The Bible refers to these as the "fruits of the spirit": love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

It's impossible to attract into your life the good that you are wanting, if you aren't able to receive. The "righteousness" refers to soundness of mind. Righteousness means to be "righted." If a ship was off course, it would need to be righted, it wouldn't need to add anything to its journey before then because all would be wasted. What if a ship was off course and let down more sails, this is wasted effort, because the "Kingdom of God," meaning spiritual principles (or in this case a rudder) are the only things that can right the course.

What is Prayer:

Prayer is not an outward call so much as it is an inward summoning. Prayer does not ask God to intervene, but asks us to light a spark of inspiration inside of us. Prayer is not to change our world, but to shift our perception, that we may see the world more clearly.

Noble traditions, religions and faiths have sought to understand how we can most effectively communicate with the Divine. We pray to God, gods, the Universe, our Highest Selves. We pray to that which we don't understand and pray for things we believe are in our best interest. However, prayer is always in our best interest when the prayer connects our mind to a higher plane. Deep prayer transcends the time and space we live and can heal lives, hearts, and souls. Prayer is a tool and is total in its utility. Prayer when performed effectively reorganizes our lower-level or primal thoughts and creates a path through whatever challenge we may face. Prayer works because in order for us to reach the Divine, we must speak at the level of the Divine, so we must use our words to draw forth the proper images and feelings that will direct us into a higher-minded, God-consciousness.

There are many ways to pray, but in the end, prayers can be divided into two categories: prayers of gratitude and prayers for help. To best serve ourselves, ironically, it is essential not to pray for ourselves solely—unless it be of benefit to the world. I've tried to pray for things that I believed were best for me. The prayers were seemingly unanswered until much later:

From the age of 12 to 14 I had one single prayer every single night, "Dear God, please make me straight." I prayed this prayer over and over into a pillow of tears. It was a prayer I often screamed into my blanket or punched into the head-board of my bed. It was a prayer I kicked into the wall. Sometimes it went like this, "Dear God, please let me wake up not liking boys." When I would open my eyes the next morning, I would recall my thoughts about my current crushes, and, of course, my feelings would remain. I was devastated. The power of prayer did not belong to me, not in my most needed moment. If prayer could not fix my defect, what good was it. If prayer could not make me the person that was accepted into my Evangelical Christian faith, then why bother. God may be listening, but he didn't care. I had this prayer and in it being unanswered, I writhed in pain twisting in my blankets at night, face steaming red with anger and hurt mixed with disgust in myself.

I survived this unanswered prayer, I tucked the notion of praying it away for a few years. I accepted it in the sort of way that one might accept a looming and untreatable disease or deformity. It wasn't until I was 18-years-old and living in Dallas, Texas that I met a few other young gay guys struggling with their sexuality and faith. I was farther along in accepting myself than they were. I had made progress. It occurred to me that I could believe still that I was innately wrong, but looking at them I could not believe the same was true for them. I could only see that surely God must love them as they are. And if God could love them as they were, God could love me without reservation. I thought back to all the times I tried to pray away my

gayness, and for the first time I was grateful that it didn't work. My greatest shame would now be my greatest asset in connecting with other humans. When I asked, "Dear God, please make me straight" God replied over and over, "I sent you to love yourself as you are, in that, you give permission to others to do the same."

A prayer is an opportunity to channel into our physical experience the greatest good for all. If you are not receiving what you are asking, what you are asking for may end up blocking your good.

How to do Mind Treatment?

I use “Affirmative Prayer” and “Mind Treatment” interchangeably as my expressions of effective prayer. We affirmatively pray by summoning the greatest part of us, by calling this Divine experience of us into our earthly situation. Affirmative Prayer is Active Prayer in that it requires concentration, and the clarity of your intent informs what our physical essence receives. Strong, declarative words spoken aloud are often advised when practicing Active or Affirmative Prayer. Affirmative prayer calls to mind that which is the greatest hint of us. We often require affirmative prayer when we feel low, and the magnificence of us can feel so far away, so we choose deliberate words like “I, still, am powerful in this lull,” “there is an undeniable knowing that I rise higher each time I feel down,” or even, “I draw up my mind to my soul that exists as my perfection unchained.”

Affirmative Prayer is effective so long as it rises something in us. It isn't so much the words that you say, but the feeling that comes from what is consciously being considered. Many people struggle with organized religion because it may feel static and rote to them; many prayers are repeated over and over and the meaning is lost. The aim is to renew these prayers in your heart so that the belief overcomes you.

Having prayer for many occasions in our lives is useful in that it gets us specific enough to evoke a change of heart. Below are some of my favorite topics to pray about and more specific prayer organized under each topic. Some days it's our jealousy surrounding a partner and sometimes it's the walls that separate our romance that need to be realigned. In viewing these prayers, may your heart open to your own language that allows you to speak most effectively to the Source of who you are, your Highest Self, the All-Knowing that is a part of God and is also completely *of* God.

Whatever you are needing to know and say can be said through prayer. While a prayer must speak to you and be deeply personal, I have provided a list of prayers for all events and emotions of our lives.

In whatever you are feeling or are concerned with, find the affirmative to it: in sickness, affirm wellness; in poverty, affirm prosperity; in loneliness, affirm unity. If you have not yet made yourself uncomfortable in your verbalized declarations, then you have not left the cage of your comfort zone and will often not have a new experience until you, well, allow yourself to have a new experience.

Many times we know the words, but until we evoke the feeling, until it wells up from the base of us and moves throughout our body as thoughts manifest to energy, we may not experience a physical change. By pairing the mental action of thought with the physical and aggressive action of proclaiming in tongue, we may often shake doubt and inconsistency from our energy field. And so it is.

How to Change Your Mind?

Changing your mind is easy. You practice noticing the thoughts that make you feel good and not paying attention to those that make you feel bad. Here's the deal, society is sick. We are misaligned and in the misalignment, we believe that things like politicians, pharmaceuticals and money are our salvation, it is our responsibility to notice that which lift us up and deny that which bring us down. Literally, if someone is trying to feed you negativity, you respond: "Thanks for your input, also I am not interested in any scenario where this isn't ultimately working out for me."

How is this not naivety? How is this not denial? It's as simple as choosing. We can choose to watch the good unfold and increase the good feelings inside of us, or we can choose to focus on the bad, believing that giving more attention to what we don't want will suddenly make it go away. That's insane. Again, reality is for suckers. Be a winner. Define your own moments.

How to Change Your Life?

Here comes another Bible quote, I can't help it, they are so effective!

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). Word and heard!

For a long time, I dreamed of castles in the sky. I hoped my life would suddenly be different than it was; that maybe all I needed was my "break." Aside from being depressing to others, this mentality kept my dream life away from me, because it left my ability to direct my life out of the equation for a happy destiny. More so, this mentality kept me blind to the the idea of my internal life—thoughts and feelings—was the most important thing in changing my life. All in all, I could easily change a circumstance, but the results of that change would be simply circumstantial. If I wanted to get a good life, I had to get good with my life, the one I had in the moment. All this time I wasted waiting on myself...how embarrassing!

One of the most dramatic things to go through in my life was getting sober. Quitting the booze wasn't the hardest part, it was adjusting to my interactions with others, especially in times of conflict, without having a drink to look forward to, that made my early days of sobriety close to unbearable. Honestly, I often drank so that I could tolerate people more. Though I loved people, I was often irritable and angry and would take it out on others if I was dry.

For me, sobriety meant starting over. I was functioning at the level of the mind that clearly involved blind-spots. Several years after I had gotten sober, I noticed I looked back a list of all

the things I wanted in early sobriety. I had those things and more, but I could never had predicted the route I would have taken to getting there. It was outside of my realm of thinking; it was beyond me. It was beyond the reality that I was experience, so screw reality—something better is waiting.

The only thing I was doing consistently to bring about that change was checking in with myself and others to see if I was taking the next right indicated actions. These next steps taken blindly add up to a quality of faith that is unshakeable. When faith becomes unshakeable, you create a mentality that does not tolerate conflicting ideas. Meaning, I could not believe that I was useless if I had done many useful acts because I asked others what to do and trusted that it would work. There was less and less evidence of my uselessness and more evidence of my usefulness so I started becoming more interested in my usefulness and it ended up growing exponentially.

This faith also directly effected my finances. In my drinking days I'd think, "I'm gonna save X amount of dollars," and I'd quickly allow my mind to wander into the realm that made this goal impossible, "I have to pay for school," "my car needs repairs," "rent is going up," and suddenly any money saved would be gone. *A Course In Miracles* says that we have become entirely too tolerate of "mind-wandering." This means that we have cast our wishes and visions and then take them back every time we doubt. It's as if we've ordered our food from the server at a restaurant and because it's taking longer than expected or came from a direction we weren't expecting, we tell the server to cancel our order.

God Letter:

A God Letter is a tool to access infinite wisdom in our most troubled times. These can also be Letters to Your Higher Self if you aren't down with the whole "God" thing. In terms of prayerful discussion with the greater part of us, that is God, fewer tools are more useful than writing. If we are seeking clarity, writing in black and white prevents the loop that can happen when our minds get stuck on obsessive fears or impulsive decisions. I have used God letters when I am lost, confused, hurt, and frightened. I have used God letters in guiding me through relationships, promotions, career shifts, friendship struggles and finances. My mentor taught me how to do a God letter so that I could begin to practice intuition and connection with Truth.

With a pen/pencil and paper or notebook, begin by pausing and saying a prayer to set aside any doubt or barriers to divine wisdom. Make sure you have at least 15 minutes of quiet uninterrupted space so that you can relax and receive. Then write at the top of a piece of paper (it's better hand-written) "Dear God," then proceed with your issues, requests, questions or story. When you feel that you are complete in emptying your concerns, flip the page over and write at the top "Dear Son/Child/Daughter or your name" (whatever feels most appropriate) and write... It may feel strange at first but the answers will begin to rise through you. Do not worry about grammar, structure, spelling or clarity, just write until you feel the lights go on.

When you are complete, say a prayer of gratitude and, if you're comfortable, read the letter to a trusted friend or mentor. The reason it is sometimes useful to read to someone else, is the same reason it is important to write it down: it draws the experience out of you and allows you to connect it into physical form; it allows you to unite the mental, physical and spiritual and with a trusted friend, it brings it to life and makes it right-sized. In our minds, issues can feel too small or big, and when brought to light, we see them for what they are.

I wrote a God Letter while on the reality show "Finding Prince Charming" (I actually wrote dozens) to shake faith back into me when all seemed doubtful. Robert (Prince Charming) was consistently giving attention to two of the other guys and it seemed like I didn't stand a chance. I knew this could only be true if I believed it to be true. Here is the letter:

Dear God,

Today feels like it's getting more and more difficult. I literally don't know what to do. I rarely feel like I don't know what to do. Dear God, what do I do? How do I continue on this journey with all that I have seen? With all the connections I've seen Robert make with other guys? How do I become genuine without spoiling anything bigger? How do I get honest without living in fear? How do I watch other people receive when I can't figure out why it isn't me? How do I lift myself from victim mentality? How do I direct joy into the experience? How do I not get swallowed by acts and words around Eric and Robert and Chad and Robert and the loudness that all of this is?

Dear Son,

This is the moment that you practice choosing happiness over and over. Happiness is the choice you must make and when you are joyful in spirit, you are not directed by others' words or actions, but lift the whole process to its holiest state. Transcend, breathe, play, transcend. Hold space when the air is shifty. Breathe love into others. Do not close your heart—let pain pass through. Remain open and remember that all that you've ever wanted and received was once unseen and unheard, but known to you.

PRAYERS:

Now that you have a glimpse of what Mind Treatment can do, I have some language around some areas that we all struggle with. In the greater themes of life, I have written some prayers that you may call upon anytime you feel misled by illusions of the world. I don't have these prayers because I am an advanced spiritual being, I have them because I have needed them. Most were written for me, directly related to my experiences. You may use these prayers in any part, change them to suit your situation or just hold them to your heart.

Prayers work because of our ability to shift our physical state. Standing up, shouting, swaying, allowing life to move through you is a form of prayer. Things change, life is forth ward, the Universe has your back, and we are absolutely the most creative beings in the Universe, let the good unfold and don't you dare tolerate the thoughts that would allow you to drift back to the old ways of being. Forget reality and get your life! And so it is!

Emotional Wellness

For many of us, emotional and mental health are as fickle as the weather. As early as I can remember, my life has felt less like living and more like surviving reality. This can be a reality for many of us who suffer from mental illness, trauma, or addiction. Further, there is an air of numbness among us. We idolize the high-octane lifestyle while desiring peace. The thing is, whatever you talk about, read about, think about is what you are interested in. We can say we are interested in peace and happiness, but when we watch the news or choose careers that pull us from that, we are dismayed.

Imagine the one thing you want more than anything; it could be anything like happiness, comfort, peace, love. Now imagine yourself truly living in that desire. What is the distance between the current you and the joyful you? Or the peaceful you? Or the you that's living a life that feels true? For many of us, there is a great distance. Now, imagine what is preventing you from reaching that version of yourself; it could be anger, fear, low self esteem, self-hatred. Which part of you is controlling your life more? These are the thoughts that we allow to take priority in our mind, which then direct our life. Even more upsetting to the spiritual or religious-leaning folks is to know that whatever is closest to you is your current God. It's what you trust most, what you have faith in and what you allow to direct your life.

The goal is to recognize that there are parts of us that want to convince us that there is anything to fear, there is external evidence for us in the news and in the break-room conversations at work. We have convinced ourselves that discussing all the things that can go wrong is more legit than discussing all that can go right. We honor fear fantasizing and laugh in the face of affirmative thinking. We entertain thoughts like, "what if my business fails," or "what if he leaves me," and are more comfortable in this head space than, "what if my business changes the world," or "what if this is a happily ever after." We are spending precious energy fantasizing

anyway, we are having conversations about things that aren't real or have not occurred, we might as well talk about life only in a way where everything is always working out for us.

I love this idea of breaking away from the parts of us that maybe served us at one point, but now are harming us. It's essential to know that there are parts that we can let go of, and our pain doesn't always have to be pathologized, that we can know that we were born perfect, whole and complete and that our greatest journey is unlearning the lessons of the world. This is possible and it's for you.

Addiction

Dear God,

I have come to the end of my mind. I have no ideas left. I am stuck. I am obsessed with _____ (input whatever addiction seems fitting: a man, relationship, food, sex, alcohol, crystal meth, shopping, gambling, etc). I'm fine one moment, then all of a sudden I am struck and I cannot pull myself from the thought--it overpowers me.

Please direct my mind to higher ground. Bless me with the willingness to walk in the direction of help and love and life. I want life. I want to live happily and easily. I know that is possible and it is possible for me, but I am unable to do it alone. Deliver me to those who you'd have me help and who would help me and, in that, may I be deliver from my affliction.

I ask for you to lift the temptation from my mind and give me the willingness to choose life over my addiction, if just for this day, hour, moment.

Amen

Anxiety

Dear God,

It feels as if the air has been stolen from me. I am afraid. I am frustrated. It seems as if all my efforts fail. Lift my mind above the fray of material life. Rest my mind in the stillness of you, God. Bless me that I might fully realize the power of this moment. Gently wade me in the waters of peace, that they may wash over me and I may be renewed to know that I need do nothing in the moment. I need not change anything. I need not figure anything out. I simply need to acknowledge that all is made good the moment I recognize that I am home in you. And so it is.

Amen.

Sadness

Dear God,

I am sad. In my sadness, it seems as if I can't do anything. I find myself staring off and I feel so useless. Remind me that this is okay. Remind me that there is a finite amount of tears to cry and moments to be still in and it isn't forever. I offer to you the pain and any dramatizations that prolong the pain. I offer to you my judgments about the emotions I am having, their length and intensity. I offer to you my fear about how others are responding to me during this time. I am love. I emerge in love and I know that you have brought me this moment to deepen my experience in love. Thank you, God, for the ability to feel.

Amen

Grief

Dear God,

I am numb. I move in and out of deep sadness and immobility. Everything feels gray. All aspects of my life are coated with a haze that I can't shake. I feel like I am drowning; while others going about having deep meaningful experiences, I struggle to just have breakfast, to pick up the phone, wash my face. I feel so pathetic. How can I go from here?

Dear Child,

You have offered me your everything and you have accepted all experiences in life and, in that, you have burdened yourself. Know that your depression is not wrong or bad, but protective. You feel deeply. You are deeply sensitive and therefore deeply powerful. You have gone so long allowing the energy of others free access to your being, that, for now, you need to close off. You've given in spirit and in thought and it's time to retreat. You will be cleared and free when you know that all choices made in love most begin with self-love. There is a hum to your depression, listen to it. All you need to do is listen. And so it is.

Finances + Prosperity

It's a revelation to be reminded that wealth is objective and is not a tool wrestled between good and evil humans, but a source like air, that if I close myself off with judgment, I could be pridefully deprived. I found out that often times my prosperity was directly related to the energy drains in my life. Where was I suffering from clogged drains? Easily, having an unforgiving attitude was one major area that required some Drano. As soon as I began to forgive others, my energy was free to move again. Actions often required me to prove that I had actually reached a place of forgiveness and actions were required to definitely prove that I had faith. Faith was significant in drawing about any changes in my life that I couldn't yet see.

When I was in my first year of being clean and sober from drugs and alcohol, it was as if my life was getting worse. Tangible evidence says I wasn't doing well: I was living in my friends living room, I was single for the first time in years, I was making minimum wage whipping up protein shakes and I had no money. I couldn't see a way out. Thankfully, I had an amazing guide direct me to right thinking. In this, my faith was tested. I remember I was making probably \$150-200 a week living in Los Angeles, CA in 2012. For comparison, average rent in my area was \$1,200-1,300 a month for a studio. I couldn't see how I would ever be able to get back on my feet, but my mentor suggested I start making payments to every person and institution I owed money to. This seemed impossible and didn't make much sense. Shouldn't I make sure I can pay my bills and support myself before I give money back?

In the realm of the invisible, where energy can be manipulated in our favor at any moment, it is vital to go into alignment with our principles. This integrity allows the universe to right itself around us. Within a month of beginning the financial amends, I had landed a job, my own place to live and a brand new life, making more money than I ever had, in a field that lifted me up. Faith was built for me by daily prayers. On your journey to prosperity, it is my wish that you see the invisible luxuries of life and manifest the comforts of this world.

Receiving

Dear God,

I am in awe of how the world spins in my favor always. Thank you. Thank you for the miraculous unfolding. I don't always see what is working out for me for that, may I be okay with not knowing what anything is for...but knowing my role. My role is joy. My purpose is happiness and in that I remain open to receive. When I believe I know anything I find my reception closed off to all that is good. May I receive joy by remaining a receiver for it, but broadcasting to the world. And in my receiving may the flow continue unobstructed, using me to my greatest good. And so it is.

Giving

Dear God,

Thank you for always reminding me to turn back to you. I sometimes fear that when I give, I will lose. But as I remain still I know that when I give, I must give from a trusting source acknowledging that whatever I give rides on the wings of blessing and how powerful it is to demonstrate to the Universe that I am expansion enough to send forth good.

Financial Strain

Dear God,

I feel as if I have done all that is asked of me. I feel like I have played by the rules and done my best, and still I fall short. I can't seem to break free of the financial strain. Remind me, Dear God, that my work is love and my employer is you. Reveal to me the wealth that exists beyond financial fear. Allow me to step away from the realm of the material so that I may access your abundant glory once more. It is there for me, it is always there, I am divinely wired for ease and blessings. My ship is righted and I am back to shore where the illusion of lack cannot harm me. Thank you, bless me that I might be a blessing.

Amen.

Love + Relationships

It is not the Divine's wish to see you happy and whole *and* single. It is not the *Source-of-All-that-Is*' will to see to it that you become okay with being alone so that you can tolerate being alone. It is God's will that you be joyful and have all that you want, but the crux is in seeing first that all that you want is inside of your heart. You have never felt more loved than when you believed you were loved, you have never felt more worthy than when the self-worth rose up inside you before anyone else recognized it, you were never so attractive and desirable than when you were on fire about your own life, your own heart, your own journey and the depths of your enfolding. It is not the Divine's will that you be alone. And the Divine insist that *you know you*, that you know the Divine being in you, know the God of you, uniting with the Spirit in you before you link to other lights on the circuit. The Divine will is that you draw from an eternal well inside you for love that may be poured onto your mate and they may do the same onto you instead of you reaching and drawing from his or her well.

I was on a reality TV show, the first ever all-gay dating show called *Finding Prince Charming*. In order for me to make it out alive, I had to get real about who I was really in a romantic relationship and who I was trying to be. There is often a distance between the love we think we are giving and the love the other is actually receiving. In preparing my mind to focus on developing a connection with Robert, despite his clear interest in the other guys, I wrote God letters and did affirmative prayer. Doing these practices eradicated doubt from my mind, even when there was material evidence to the contrary. Below is an actual letter that I wrote to shake doubt from my mind:

Dear God,

Things seem so clouded today. I felt "off" and scared in this process for the first time. I feel like I can't tell the true from the false. I feel as if Eric and Robert have something completely separate from the rest of us. I feel like Robert is withholding and closed. Eric told me that they bonded over information that know one else knows, that seems like a game-changer. I feel as if Robert says generic statements and fears getting close to me. I fear I will give him all I have and he not be ready or he not know how to receive. I fear that he's hoping this experience just ends and he can move on. I fear that this isn't my love story.

Dear Son,

I have used you to your most vital potential. I have spoken through you and you have told Robert and others things when you least expected because I inspired them. You have been a great messenger, know that. Now it's time for you to once again relax into the love and joy of this adventure. It's so big and beautiful and if you knew how it would unfold you'd cry 1,000 tears of grace and in review you'd know that unfolding was the absolute power of faith and courage and adventure. You can love Robert. It's okay. Love him. Open your heart so wide that he can't help but rest in the space you've made from my thoughts. Be big and bold. Hold him and kiss him and tell him how powerful and beautiful and perfect he is and may he remember this love and the truth about him, not because he needed convincing but because we enter heaven two-by-two—

and beauty is best witnessed together.

Basically, use words to direct spirit, your energy, and change the course of our lower thought forms.

Finding My Soulmate

Dear God,

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for the gift of knowing my soulmate. I know this person to be true and I know the electromagnetism of my heart, when vibrating at the pulse of your infinity and glory, will physically draw to that experience into the three-dimensional world. Any other way is not possible. I know that anything I feel in my heart and physical being, the arousal, the tenderness, the inspiration, the joy, the expansion, the trust and loyalty and commitment. I have summoned these qualities from within and thus see them throughout my life. It is here. The peace of unconditional love is here. The undeniable knowing that I have fit perfectly within myself—the source of me—reminds me that I am now available to join wholly again. Amen.

Using Relationships

Dear God,

I thought relationships were a choice I had to make, but they were gifts I had to receive. I thought they were a show I had to present, but they were candid moments I had to relax into. I thought that a relationship was something to cling to, but instead, you revealed that they are the energy that freely dances around me that lifts me up when I am calm enough to let myself be in it. May you remove from me any limitations I have about who is right for me, who I need to “protect” myself from, what I need to reveal or conceal. I release to you, Divine Creator, the rocks I have confused for treasure, gently take them from me and allow my relationships to shine on me that I may know the light in myself.

Rejection

Dear God,

I find it so hard to put myself out in the world. It seems as if anyone I am interested in is not interested in me. Some people make it look so easy to find and join with someone compatible, but

it constantly feels like a challenge to me. Please take my fear of rejection. I know that in the realm of eternity that rejection is not possible because I cannot ultimately be separated from any of your creations. In those moments when it feels as if someone I had hoped to grow closer to does not want to be with me, remind me that I am not my flesh and bones, I am not this ego that speaks to me, I am not my work or bank account, that I am a spirit free and the only time I feel rejection in my heart is when I reject myself. I am available for my perfect match and my perfect match is available to me. I know that I am being love, even in these moments of apparent rejection, and because of this, I am instantaneously attracting the blessed relationships of my dreams. Most importantly, I release what does not belong to me. May his journeys direct him to a deeper understanding of love and may this space expand our love for each other. And I declare this to be true: rejection cannot exist the moment I see my past relationships as guideposts pointing me to the truest version of myself, where I am finally able to give and receive the love that you intended. Thank you, God. Amen.

First Meetings

Dear Divine Creator,

There have been many encounters in which I have tried to manipulate thinking it was for the best. There were many people I wanted to know even if it wasn't meant for me and there were many people I tried to avoid that you would bring to me for a miracle. As I go out from here and actively try to connect with men that I hope might be a match for me, please keep my ego at home, keep my mind wide open and use the connection for your highest good. Help me to have clear vision untainted by expectations that I might summon the highest purpose for the encounter and healing may occur.

Sex + Intimacy

Sex and intimacy have had humans stumbling, probably since the beginning of time. We want sex, we fear sex, we make it mean too much, we make it mean too little, we have too much of it, or not enough. We want closeness and avoid sex. We want sex and avoid closeness. We can't seem to connect and it hurts.

For most of my adult life, I wouldn't have thought that I had sex problems. I would have assumed I was restrained and picky, but I didn't see that as an issue. I did not realize that I was closing off and often withholding sex as a way to withhold connection. Seemingly, as soon as I was intimate with someone, the attraction was gone, and I thought it was them. I was rigid and restrictive and I judged myself harshly. Further, I managed my need for intimacy and sexual satisfaction by watching pornography and "taking care of myself." The truth is, porn is not bad, but I used it to block off my true desires. I used it to keep my real emotions and urges at bay. I used it as a way to be independent, so I thought, but like so many people I isolate. I was refusing true connection, or better yet, the opportunity for true connection.

I found that it was okay to close myself off for a moment, but when I was ready to join with another, I needed to forego the pornography and masturbation. This cleared the energies and allowed me to be in a receptive place, firmly planted in reality with sexual energy—intact--as guiding instincts. We all have different challenges surrounding sex and intimacy, we have different bottom lines to ensuring our sexual and emotional health, but it turns out that no one is immune to these concerns—at least no one I've met. I offer prayers for some of the barriers to sex, but feel free to bend them to your own circumstances.

Most importantly, it is my hope that you see sex as a gift. It is something to honor and respect and is something that can move us emotionally and deepen connection to ourselves and others, and, at the very least, as soon as you recognize your struggle, may you feel comfortable inviting God or love or Spirit into your sexual experiences, that they may be elevated and used for their highest good.

Opening Up

Dear God,

I have been closed for so long that I don't even know where the entry point is. I want to open up so badly to him/her, but I fear that I will shut down. I offer to you, God, any fear that I may have around letting someone in. I know that opening my heart is not only courageous but healthy. I

know that harm cannot come to an open heart, and that it only hurts when I begin to close again. Let me take this one moment at a time and rest in the goodness that exists between him and me. May my love and compassion for him open all areas that I've closed within myself, areas that I have hid away or hid behind. Love is the great equalizer. Nothing is lost in my venture to present my full self and I do so on the wings of angels, for you sent this relationship to me as a great and powerful blessing.

Amen

Connection

Dear God,

It seems like one moment we are connected and the next we aren't. I can't seem to get on the same page as my loved one. God, unite us under the law of love. Remind us that in our diverse opinions and desires, do we see each other's exotic beauty. Allow me to see past what he is saying and doing and listen to what he is meaning. Allow me to dismiss the angry that might exist between us and reach right for the empathy—that we may see each other, available and innocent. Inspire me to breathe again in unison with my love, to still the moment so that our gestures and dreams and possibilities for each other are not the same, but aligned and complimentary and in our alignment with each other, may we affect great harmony in the world around us.

Amen

Physical Intimacy

Dear God,

It's as if I am triggered by the physical intimacy. I love my time with him/her, but I can't seem to dismiss the urge to flee. Take my fear of intimacy. I place it on the alter and any anxiety or grief that surrounds sex and physical touch, may it be transformed and used for good. In my loving relationships I am safe in his arms, his touch, and his presence. I am powerful and my sexual desire is good. I am innocent in my want for physical connection. The pleasure, the sensation and arousal is blessed by you and is a great gift, I know, and should not be used lightly. I will honor my sexual experiences and, God, I invite you into the bedroom that the connection might

be blessed by your presence. Allow us to deepen our expression of your love, and so it is.

Amen.

Career + Purpose

There is no work that is below me. There is nothing I can spend my time doing that is wasteful if my heart is open and miracles are available. There is nothing that I need worry about when I know that I am the employee of the Divine Creator and my work is on the spiritual plane whether it is serving food, counseling clients, selling cars, creating websites. There is no hierarchy of spiritual employment, there is simply the alignment with the Divine in my heart allowing me to stay in joy. I am not serving anyone when I run a non-profit in fear; I am better served to do less direct work with a soft, open-heart. And to the extent that the joy ripples from me to others throughout my day, is the work worthy. The work isn't worthy by what it produces in the material world, but in what it vibrates in the vaster, deeper, unseen Universe in and of us.

What my LinkedIn won't tell you about me is that in 2012 and 2013 I worked at a smoothie shop making chocolate, vegan, extra creatine shakes for my peers for \$9.00 an hour. This shop was in the heart of West Hollywood (a.k.a SoCal Gay Mecca), and in the preceding years, I had worked for many exciting LGBT companies doing work that I was passionate about. But life circumstances required me to hit rock bottom and get some stability and humility in my life. Every day I would serve people that I knew from my past lives. These acquaintances would ask how I went from activism and writing to pouring their chocolate and banana protein concoction on a Sunday afternoon. I didn't quite have the answer. I felt stuck, but was prideful. I felt hope and fear. But mostly, I was not ready for my dream jobs...and that's the point.

I stayed at this job longer than my friends thought was necessary. It was truly my first sober job and I was trying to make as little mistakes as possible in my delicate early stages of recovery. I was keeping it fairly simple and doing "inside work" to become a stable and sane person. I was becoming the person that I was wanting to be and I knew that once I was this person it felt less like a goal and more like a daily practice, I wouldn't have to force opportunities, they would arise because like attracts like. *I also knew that I couldn't get from the gutter to the penthouse, and actually stay, without some serious housecleaning.* I had to get better. I had to be better than I ever was. It wasn't about the right opportunity or timing or luck. It was about my readiness.

I also knew that if I couldn't be happy in this job, if I couldn't find gratitude and joy and grace, then I would not be ready for anything else. I knew that I could not make an idol out of my career or it would be the every-elusive chase. If I left this job bitter and unhappy, I would attract a similar work opportunity until I learned and lived the lesson.

The lesson was this: I knew I could not make my work more than it needed to be, and I knew I could be the fullest version of myself sweeping a shop store as I could be running an empire, and, in fact, the empire would be the icing. The "cake" would be the sweeping and it would be the ability to cheerfully take direction from supervisors younger than I am. The "cake" is in not crumbling under the weight of debt and never seeming to make enough money for bills or living

on my friend's couch. The "cake" is handing my peers their favorite post-gym fill up, while looking them in the eye and wearing an honest smile. This would be the foundation, this would be the elimination of fear and pride connected with power and prestige *and*, incidentally, this would prepare me for great works beyond my wildest dreams.

If you do not have the career you want, prepare yourself to be the person that could withstand the greatness of your dream job. Do not just focus on "doing" but the "being." If you are not loving the work you do now, you've missed the point—getting to the place where you can love the job you have does not mean you're stuck there, instead it primes you for the next thing. It allows you to be clear and inspired enough to never miss the right opportunities.

The following mind treatments are to take you into the workday interviews, and mind-space to create the career you want.

Greatness

Dear God,

It feels as if I continually miss my stop, and that you are sending clues and signs and signals pointing me to a life you hope I would live. I do not know why I feel so undecided and stalled, but I do know that this stillness can be used for your glory. I want to live a great life and do great things, being used up, but I want to do your will more. Please let them meet, let a life of greatness and big assignments be met by my clear mind and your divine will. And when the fog still feels heavy, I promise to live with faith and trust that you always know what's best and what's best for me is your greatest design. And so it is.

Purpose

Dear God,

Sometimes it seems as if I am directionless. I am to do good and be useful, but sometimes I fear that I have missed the mark. Please take from my need to impress others, to be "something" in this world, for prestige or power, so that I may be clear enough to listen to your loving guidance. Lift from my mind any obsession to figure out my path so that I may serve in the moment. I know that my ultimate role is joy and if I am in that, I am more powerful than any earthly position that could be offered me. My joy instantaneously reshapes the world around me because being in joy

means I am in spirit. Amen.

Daily Work

Dear God,

Today I am grateful for the work I have, though I know there is more for me. Sometimes this desire for more gets in the way of the roles I have right in front of me—to serve. I offer up any claim to any role, position, or prestige in this world. I hand over to you my desire for power and material wealth, not because it is wrong, but because it is distracting. I know that wealth and abundance are possible for me, that I can instantly manifest because I am a God-child, but more than anything, I want to feel the extension of the divine in my daily work. Remind me that my work (office, restaurant, firm, store) is a temple, all who come across my path throughout the day are there for a blessing, remind me every morning I rise that I do this work in my heart and mind and not in the world, and from this space, do the circumstances transform me. Place me in the line of fire, that I might meet your children with love and compassion. Shift my gaze that I see the eternity in the ordinary, and inspire me that I may be an inspiration today. Amen

Guidance + Direction

There is always a part of us, the center of us, that is the unaffected programming of God. There is a deep well in us that God stored away for us to draw upon when clarity and healing is needed. Affirmative Prayer will allow you to access these reservoirs, but it requires enough faith from you to know that, first they exist and second that they are there, lovingly, for you. God's will for you is simple, to love. A Course in Miracles says that our only role is happiness and God's will for us to be in God, joyfully. Moving from this place, you move from your center and can never misstep.

Getting Out of My Own Way

Dear Divine Creator,

My head is full of my own ideas. These ideas have the ability to manipulate and take me from your path. Dear God, please sweep through and brush away the cobwebs of pain. Rinse out the stench of judgment or lack and leave me empty. Leave me empty to invite you and your angels in over and over, that I may be inwardly rearranged to be a servant to the glory of heaven. Which is and ever will be your highest call for me. Whisper often, make room, the Spirit is available to take the wheel. What a heavenly gift that would be. Amen.

Clarity

Dear God,

There is such clarity available to me. I find that there are times when I can see the ocean from my room, the stars from my mind, and the pathway from my heart. Thank you for living in me as an intuition that when there is a barrier, I may pause; when there is someone needing me, I may take notice; and when there is fog, I am being asked to rise out of the mist. Clarity reminds me that I never have to stay in a state of confusion so long as I am willing to learn. May your sight, see through me, seeing me through life. Amen.

Guidance

Dear God,

Today may my heart, head, hands and feet lead me into your realm of miracles, where my best anticipations do not even compare with what is to be. And so it is.

Direction

To All that Holds Us at Our Highest,

I understand that it seems like there are more problems than solutions. I understand that I do not have the web of past, present and future to glance at, and you do. I understand that fear exists when self-reliance fails me and I do not want to rely on myself, but I crave direction.

I cannot turn a blind eye to the things I have seen and heard and I do not know how much is my part, where to go with information and what to invest in the good, while not feeling mired in victimhood. Victimhood may look like feeling I'm the only one who is paying attention or that I cannot fix a problem. But there is a solution. You do not create problems, you do not provide puzzles without the answers nearby. I pray that you direct me to my most humble, courageous, honest, calling, that I may do your bidding.

I pray that I do not worry about how, because you know how. I pray that I do not worry about who will care, or help or listen—that's none of my business. But I do pray that you keep me close to your side so that I may walk along this path, trickling ideas sprung from your mind, blessing the road, not because I travel it, but because you walk before me—leading me.

I pray that you keep the burn of passion and willingness to grow and deepen in me. Help me to know action as the purest form of love on earth—keep it in my belly that I may not go a day without thinking of your highest calling and your highest resolution here on earth. I ask humbly to be used, may I be in your plan and may I remember, always, that it is yours and I am but a servant. Amen.

Health + the Body

The body exists as three-dimensional evidence that our minds are creators. The body is the gift from the Divine for us to practice miracles in healing and forgiveness. The body is a reminder that we can manifest illusions and delusions to the extent that we believe we are separate from each other, from God. And we are here not to deny the pleasures of our bodily experiences but to notice the ways in which we are able to evoke an alignment that feels good and true. Our life is a creation and each thought we have leads us down a path to our body's unfolding. Be open to treasure the body as a representation of how powerful we are in laying thoughts down into form.

There was a period a few years ago when I was getting sick and staying sick for longer periods at a time. It was frustrating and was affecting my finances, work, relationships and overall self-esteem. I lived a clean lifestyle, ate well and exercised regularly, yet, as soon as people in my life got sick, so did. The metaphysical text *A Course In Miracles* gave me a new understanding of illness. It equates illness as a result of one's unforgiving thoughts. And "unforgiving thoughts" are any thoughts that would see myself or others as anything other than blessed and innocent children of God.

"I have forgotten what I really am, for I mistook my body for myself. Sickness is a defense against the truth. But I am not a body. And my mind cannot attack. So I can not be sick" (A Course In Miracles, Lesson 136).

Sickness aims to separate. First it would separate one's mind from their body. Then it would separate one's mind from their Self and God by asking you to identify with either your body or your mind.

This particular year it was only March and I had already been sick three times. This last time I wasn't ill like the other times. My body was fatigued and in pain, but something occurred to me, misery and illness do not need to go hand in hand. I could feel well and be miserable and I could feel ill and be joyful. So I was. I was joyful. Then something else happened, I thought about forgiveness as a tool for healing. And I thought about where I was withholding forgiveness for myself. Where was I not letting myself off the hook?

Well, the truth was, during my darkest days my dangerous behavior brought sadness and fear to people very close to me, who stood by me and were the most important people in my life. I had not forgiven myself for that, yet, because I had not asked for their forgiveness. As I sat in my room, aching and coughing, I picked up the phone and immediately made an amends to both of them. Through tears and honesty, my brother said, "I had been waiting a long time for this." He had been waiting. I had to believe forgiveness for my actions were possible before I could even ask for it. In that, I wasn't immediately healed, but I could breathe again. I could see myself as invulnerable, because God does not will us ill, it is only our minds that side step the healing that require medicine. I don't get sick like that anymore, and I believe in my goodness first and foremost, as I hold this for you, too.

Health + Faith

Dear God,

I trusted that goodness would be trumped by physical logic. I trusted that if someone was sick then they will stay that way until it passes or they take medicine or they die.

I didn't trust or listen to the logic of the Spirit, which reminds me that we stay sick when we believe that we have to do or not do certain things in order to enter heaven. Heaven is available when I trust that I do not need to provide healing if I remember that God would never will me sick.

I didn't trust that doing God's work would be the panacea. I am exceptional as a child of God and to the world in direct proportion to my knowing this and understanding that at any moment anyone, ANYONE can be as exceptional.

I trust that I can't stray from my holy destiny if I walk with my Source. I trust that everything else is my ego getting lost.

I trust that God offers me humility to stay connected to his divine brilliance. There's no other way to reign then under the light of the Spirit, in the name of my brothers for our God.

Pain

Dear God,

There is pain trapped in between breaths. Sometimes it is so deep I barely know it's there until it deteriorates whatever it imbedded itself in. I do not know how to release this pain without you. For so long, I believed ignoring it would work. I believed looking at it would make it grow. The truth is, it only looks bigger because I will look at all of it. And then it can transform before my eyes. But I can't do it without you. I can't see it without fear without you. And you won't do so without my permission. Not because you can't, but because the miracle is in the choice. I choose to see through your eyes. Take this pain, rinse it from my bones. Shed the tears from my eyes. Let me weep, not from pain but relief. Let me not be afraid to wail as the water breaks through the acidic shield and burn through my blood, purifying my body as my mind is returned to my perfect soul. Loved. Untarnished. Unwavering in your stillness. Amen.

Wellness

Dear God,

There is a spring of wellness deep within me; this I know. You have designed the human body to heal and the spirit to transcend. I am well—despite the illusion of sickness or weakness, injury or upset. I am whole, powerful and healthy. I am being breathed by something beyond me and my heart beats in sync with the Universe. It is well with my soul, the eternal source of me. Direct my attention, God, to the parts of me that are infinite, the spaces in which you live, that I might remember that I am holy, whole. Amen.

Body Image

Dear God,

I want to feel love for myself, but the way I see myself physically blocks me from experiencing this love. I can't seem to accept certain qualities of my body, my weight, my shape. Sometimes I even feel disgusted by myself. I know this isn't self-love. I lay before you my body-image, the way I see myself, may you transform it in my eyes. May I see myself as you created me, perfect, whole and complete. I see my willingness to eat foods that make me feel good, to do exercises that awaken my spirit and help life move through this physical gift that we all wear. Remove from my mind what I think I need to look like, and instill in me the feeling of divine energy, flowing, connecting, a heart that beats and sends our signals, a subconscious that feels the world around me and is always working out for me, and a mind that knows how to heal itself with a shift in perspective. These are the loving gifts that you gave me that cannot be taken away, added to or subtracted from, that is, in essence, infinity—I am blessed and immortal and so it is. Amen.

Moving On + Beginning Anew

Moving on and beginning anew can never be separated. To the extent in which we open ourselves enough to release that which we cling to, does our ability to receive heighten. When we no longer believe that our pain (anger, fear, sadness, disappointment) serves us, do we allow ourselves to turn our face to that which is good, available, holy and pure.

Our cells replace themselves dozens of times in our lifetime. We are completely renewed by our subconscious reorganizing. The order of nature is to turnover and begin again. The ocean has an ebb and flow that requires it to draw back on itself in order for it to move forward again, and it is this powerful motion that allows life to flourish inside of it. And so, it is too that we would start over, crash and burn, crumble and rise, as an essential quality divinely wired into our DNA. We are beings from consciousness itself and our limps and lacerations are not signs of a stagnant mortality but of a malleable everlasting.

Each time something seems to fail in our lives, it is not where we were wrong or even wounded, it's where the divine contract with our souls insisted on an unearthing—a tilling to plant a new seed to grow, expanding the very nature of our existence, never taking from it. Thus, disruption does not become the foe, but the friend that reveals the immortality of the larger part of us, that which remains when our cells have turned over for the last time. Then the boundaries between us cease, and we are here together awakened from a dream.

Reimagining My Life

Dear God,

May you use my prayers to cast a spell unto my mind, eliminating any thoughts of wrongdoing or self-harm. May my perception be cleared of any blockages to abundance and love. May you bind my mind from any thoughts that would hinder great goodness from myself and others and unravel the golden threads of miracle-mindedness, divine oneness, peace and prosperity. Weave my soul, which is purely you through the corners of my mind and body burning away any pain or mistakes, transforming all to joyous use. And so it is, because it is already done.

Cycle of Life

Dear God,

Lately my mind has been so occupied with the things I don't have that I miss the things I do. I want a bigger life but I resist the courage for it. I want the perfect mate but I resist the boldness required to become master of my domain and lover of myself. I pray that instead of receiving some self-determined objectives that you direct me to where you'd have me go. Show me the people you'd have me know. Remove the barriers that arise in my keeping me from the castle in the sky.

Divine Creator, what I think I want is irrelevant, instead, I pray that you constantly fill me up, and use me up, that I might know the profound joy and peace, effortlessness and love of being a messenger of you and worker of miracles.

When to Act

Dear Divine Creator,

In heaven we need do nothing to experience love because it is all there is. Until we reach heaven, Divine Creator, I know that experiencing love requires action. As long as we see ourselves as bodies and moving separately, we must act to connect.

Please show me, in each moment, what action you would have me take that would produce the greatest result of love. Help me to do this, stand between me and my ego, me and my pain or connection with illusion and introduce love as an act of forgiveness. Forgiveness, not for what I think someone did to me, but for believing that they were unloving. How could I know?! How dare I pretend to play omniscient role. All I can do is bless and act as if the love is all I see, and perhaps, sooner than later, that's all I will see. Please keep me willing.

I know there are times I want to hold onto the idea that I am separate and I have tasks and I have missions to meet or accomplish or I will not get something I deserve or lose something I believe I have, but remind me—especially in those moments—that the most important, the most potent and everlasting thing I can do is to know that my only role is for me to turn inward and release the projection of embracing to the soul before me, that a miracle may occur and my sphere of influence might expand toward peace eternally. Amen.

Starting Over

Dear Divine Creator,

Thank you for the past. Allow me to hold onto that which serves me and release the rest. May I be comforted in knowing I may start over at any moment, that I may come back to you in wholeness, and love each time I remember that starting anew means committing to the plan that I will let the divine unfold the path, people and places for me. Amen.

Grief + Loss

I wasn't sure I knew what grief was for most of my life. Of course, I had lived through traumatic situations, but it was as if I had never actually experienced the grief of it. Sometimes grief is a luxury of the privileged few. Sometimes sadness feels like it is only available for those who have enough time to pause and reflect and wallow. Those who live day-to-day can hardly address these emotions, and I recognize that. As someone who experienced homelessness for months on end, I know that survival required me to dismiss sadness. I could easily use anger, but sadness asked me to stop for too long. Of course, once my life got settled a bit, I was able to start finally dealing with all the hurt. In June 2016, the largest mass shooting in US history occurred at a LGBTQ nightclub on a Latin night. I wasn't alone in the amount of tears that I shed from a distance. This was a national and global experience of grief, but it was also a personal permission to finally grieve the pain of hatred that I felt for being who I was.

Less than two months later, I fell for a man on national television. The emotions I felt in experiencing that were heightened due to the circumstances and in this experience, I felt grief again.

It had been eight weeks and in each week I felt more joy and more connection with Robert. While many of the others seemed to unravel, I thought I had a leg up because I was staying grounded through the process. I felt as if others were descending and I was ascending, but the summit would not be the Holy Grail I'd imagined. The last 48 hours were probably the most painful 48 hours of my life. It began with the rupture of my Achilles' Tendon. It happened on camera and became a frustrating distraction and storyline.

It was the day of the final elimination. I didn't want melodramatic bouts of tears and certainly didn't want to sob in self-pity. I wanted to be centered and realistic through the process, while also opting to find love. Of course this seemed improbable. I tried my hardest to steer the ship from thoughts of pity and confusion, but I was unclear and shaken and Robert saw that. Getting ready for the night, I struggled to put on my tuxedo and get ready for the last Black Tie Affair in which Robert would decide between me and my friend. It was the first Black Tie Affair I'd get ready for alone. I limped to the shower and let half my body drape over the edge, the water falling down, pinning me to the floor. It was the first elimination ceremony where no one would smile and help me with my tie. The first elimination where no one was around for me to dance with, hug or give a knowing smile. It was also the first time I truly needed help getting ready.

When I arrived to the destination. I realized that I was alone and it was almost all over. The next day I'd be thrust back into reality, heartbroken or in a whirlwind. I limped up to the archway where Lance stood. I was sweating and exhausted—even at night the temperature was pushing 100 degrees. I wasn't thinking clearly and had just teared up in the pre-BTA interview because of all the uncertainty and because I hadn't cried yet, truly cried, and Robert and Eric had both cried in my presence earlier. It was all over now, if there is anything in me wanting out, might as well let it out, I thought. I was screwed. I thought I was falling for Robert. I was legitimately

falling for him and nothing was able to put brakes on that. I was devastated by my current physical and emotional state. I had not fallen for someone in this way in almost a decade—was that insane? I forgot what it felt like to be afraid of losing someone. I forgot the pain and obsession of wanting someone so badly. I forgot it all. Until these final moments. I knew that whatever the outcome, I wanted to remember this night. I looked to the starry desert night to convince myself that this was just a small moment in time. I wanted to finish this journey as I started: joyful and grateful, but one decision from Robert—I knew—would disarm me immediately. I wondered, when did I give that power away?

Robert came out and greeted Eric and me. I swayed on my crutches in pain and wanted it to be over. He was going on and on about his relationships with both of us. Suddenly he began crying and as he turned to me, the tears fell harder and faster. My gut kicked and my heart stopped. My breath was caught in my chest and suddenly I heard him say “I think we are on different paths.” I wanted to crumble. I wanted to crumble and crawl away. I also wanted to hear him, but my mind wanted to walk off before tears came and the crying made it impossible for my body to move. I wanted to ask four hundred questions that I knew could only be answered to my satisfaction with time, not words. I held so tightly to my crutches and scooted them toward him and hugged him. I told him that it was an honor to know him.

I had told Eric earlier that one of us would end the night with love and the other with grace. Grace was my only option now. I hugged Robert once more, he took my tie and pulled my necklace out of his pocket and gave it to me. My hand was shaking. I couldn't figure out if I was waking from a dream or falling into a nightmare. And I slowly limped away, in my tie-less tuxedo, crutches and cast. I crumbled as soon as I got off set. I unraveled and the 10,000 tears I held in came out. That night after I crawled back and forth from the bathtub to my bed, my hands were too sore to use crutches and I was too shaky to stand, I cried myself to sleep. The next morning my broken heart woke me up. I couldn't shake what was happening and all I could do was wait for the cameras and mics to ask me about my experience. The tears took over once more and I had to kneel over my bed as I violently cried out all the pain and prayed. As I wept I wondered, how does this stop and why did it even matter that I practiced spiritual tools? I remembered that everything was always happening for me...I had to believe it now, if ever, right? I begged for miracles. I declared that I didn't know what anything was for and I rode the wave. Heartbreak? That's new, I thought.

And in those final moments, I had to truly, agonizingly live by what I had been talking about. I could no longer do, do, do for different results, I could only be. I literally could not “do” my way out of this pain—I was sequestered in a hotel room, under contract, in a cast. I was locked in. The choice was not mine, but who I was being during this process was. I had to face rejection and be honored for the process. I had to walk through heartbreak and still love the person before me, not because I was holding on but because I was ready to let go, not of love, but of suffering and pride and pain. Letting go is easier when you are left open. I wasn't going to let myself close. Not in that moment. I knew closing would only prolong the pain and destroy the good in the moment. My future went blank in one moment and I had to summon hope and courage and compassion, not because I wanted to be a saint, but because I wanted to make it out of the situation sober and sane.

If you accidentally left your front door open and a rhino ran inside, would you then close your front door, for fear that it would get out? Of course not, you would open the door, and gently try to steer the rhino to the front of the house and out the door. If we know how to protect our homes, why don't we know how to protect our bodies and psyche? *My pain from the rejection was not because I had opened my heart, but because I tried to close it.* It hurt because I wanted to play with the situation and I allowed myself to wander into someone else's mind and motives, relationships and choices. And in this wandering, I found justifications for anger and sadness and those justifications are the doors and locks to trapping in the pain.

I had to quite literally notice the painful thought, "He chose Eric and I won't have him in my life, not the way I dreamed," and allow it to pass right through me. I did this by relaxing the part of my body that was tensing up when I thought about it, my stomach, chest, shoulders and neck, and I had to breathe into that area and allow the thought to rise up and out. I did this while saying, "everything is always working out for me," dozens of times. I did it through sobs and gasps for air, but sooner than later it started passing through and I started softening and I was able to remember the love I had for them. Then self-pity thoughts, "I'm a pathetic mess who has an embarrassing injury, a cast and crutches and gave his heart away on TV and now has less than what he started with," would slip in and I'd do the process all over again. But it wasn't just a process to distract myself or even comfort myself--it was super painful—it was a tool that would exorcise the pain. I'd breathe, open, release; I'd get deeper and deeper. I was opening more and more doors of my heart and soul that now I had courage to let the pain out, pain that seemed to be old and rotten. I was letting all the fear out.

After a few hours of being trapped in my hotel room doing this process of crying and releasing, the talent team got me and escorted me through the hotel lobby. I interviewed for a few hours then I came back to the lobby and I sat for a moment to rest as my foot and hands hurt from the injury and crutches. Suddenly one of the talent coordinators stood in front of me to block my sight-line. I looked around him and saw Eric walking toward me. He looked at me hesitantly and I waved him over. I sat him next to me and gave him a deep hug. We talked and I asked him to be happy and be good, he didn't stay long but I felt good about seeing him. The pain was drifting away. I could have held onto it. I could have grabbed it back and sought sympathy and used it for myself, but there comes a time when we realize that suffering is a choice and it's only present when we believe we have a use for it. I didn't want to suffer; I no longer wanted to use it. I wanted to be happy and loving and I was going to do my best to get there.

Shortly after my interaction with Eric, I was exhausted and laying down sideways in a Hawaiian style wicker chair in the middle of the lobby, resting my body and mind and trying not to go into a negative headspace. Out of nowhere Robert appeared before me. The talent coordinators looked like mother hens about to swoop in, but they stood down when they saw my reaction. I couldn't help but smile at Robert. I couldn't help but be happy to see him and I couldn't help but still be honored by this journey. He honored me by coming and talking to me, as a gentleman, but in that moment, I realized that I had honored the process by not closing my heart and always being available for wherever the unpredictable but undeniable spirit of an open, daring heart could bring me. I honored the process by letting the grief pass through as soon as it came up.

I hope in all areas of life that we experience loss and sadness, we can practice letting the

emotions rise up and out.

Lost love

Dear God,

There was a story in my mind of him and I, but the story seems to be over. When I think of him no longer being in my life, my heart freezes and my stomach drops. Dear God, catch my tears before they fall. Sit with me in the stillness when I am alone. Remind me that I have not lost love, I have only closed my heart to it. The pain is not in loving someone who is no longer my partner, but in believing that we could ever be truly separated. There were moments when his words and gaze alone elevated me to a clearer perspective of the world, this is not lost. Our relationship, like us individually, is growing in the invisible. God, show me how to love him even more deeply, possibly deeply enough for him to belong to another, deeply enough so that all I remember of our relationship was a love that grew us, deeply enough that I need nothing from him but his own desire to follow his own path, wherever that may lead. And so it is.

Amen

Losing A Loved One

Dear God,

Be with me now as I have lost. In knowing that nothing is permanent, I still miss (_____) now. It seems unimaginable that I'd be without _____. There are times I can't breathe. There is so much I want to avoid just to not remember who I lost. Lift my mind from thoughts of time and space, so that I may know the presence of my beloved, always. Draw closer to me that I might be more attuned to hear the echoes of my dear loved one through you. Tune me to the frequency of heaven that I may not miss a thought, forget a memory, or miss an opportunity to see (_____) in the world in and around me before we are reunited in similar form once more.

Amen.

Grief

Dear God,

I'm grieving. I'm in so much pain, there are times where it feels like I can't breathe. I'm stuck in a nightmare and images just come to mind and seem to steal the peace inside of me. I offer up what I think I know about the loss of _____ (relationship, loved one, purpose). Dear God, take all my memories and stories around this topic and transform them. Crack me open even more so that the pain can exit and the peace can enter. Give me the power to keep my heart open so that I don't lock in any harmful thoughts and feelings that are not meant for me. Help me to remember the world as you created it, to remember me as a child of the divine and to know that nothing is permanent except the infinite of your expanding, miraculous and mysterious power of love.

Amen

Trauma

Dear God,

I have spaces and places within me, within my body and mind that have shut down to life. Sometimes it rages in me and sometimes it feels as if the switch has been shut off permanently. I don't often know how to be in the world, how to respond or what to say. Often, I feel as if I am dishonest in the way I pretend to be okay. There are parts of me that see life as painful and lonely, relationships as empty and purpose as non-existence. This is not me. This is not the truest version of me. There is within me wisdom and power. There is no learning needed of me, but a reminder of who I've always been. There is nothing that I need to do to change what happened to me, aside from understanding that all can be undone in the eyes of an eternal God. From the perspective of heaven, all past, present and future collide to shape an idea of who I am by the amount of love I allowed myself to receive and the forgiveness that passes through me, unto me and those in relation to me equally. I am blessed by the depth of my experiences because it is precisely where I am imperfect that others can grasp onto in their darker moments.

And so it is. Amen

Society + the World

Each problem of this world began with an idea in the mind of one person that believed separation from man and God was possible. Then another believed this. Then relationships were broken. Then another, and families fractured. Then groups joined to believe that anyone, any other group, any nation can be separated from God. Then another group believed this. And borders were drawn.

What has also occurred is a collective belief that those in God's favor are in a minority. Matters of state are matters of the heart because matters of state are made in the name of God and God truly lives in our core; we are powerless in our separation of God but we are willful in our denial of this connection. Prayers for the world must begin with a knowing that God begins from each of us and to the extent that we may see God in any other, does our freedom to be peaceful lie. We've found too much faith in error and in ideas of sin, and far too little faith in that which is good. We make an art and science of focusing on the mistakes of our brothers and take for granted the wholeness that is always what is left, thus we shrink each other's wholeness in our eyes.

We made idols of defense, enlarging our illusion of attack to defend. An open heart meaning access to the Truth of God; an open heart meaning that there is no stranger in the neighbor, no enemy in our brothers; an open heart meaning there are no walls, borders, languages, religions, or barriers that can separate us as a species; we share one maker, one heart and mind, thus, when we injure, we share one wound.

What will rejoin our world is not in believing in one God, but in knowing that any Divine Creator that can be understood and encapsulated by man and his theologies is still far too small. The peace that surpasses understanding *is* God. It is not our ignorance that separates us, but our arrogance. Let us be whole in our quest to understand each other, and in that interchange, God will surely be revealed.

The World

Dear God,

I am not willing to turn my eyes to the construction of separation when the world wails in agony over differences. I am not willing to guard my life against a neighbor. I do not stand in isolation barring myself against false enemies, but stand on the front line inviting the world to shine forth in its diversity instead of hiding from one another's shadows. I cannot blame my brothers who have turned on another when my mind sees them as insane. I will not fall victim to the spells of defensiveness until I've done all I can to retrieve connectedness. I will not presume to identify differences in my neighbors until I am willing to see our similarities.

I hold the world in the invisible: Muslims, Christians, Jews, orthodox, non-practicing, those injured by religion, those who've found grace and wisdom in their faith, progressives, Buddhists, conservatives, peace-loving, those in fear, racists, activists, fundamentalists, extremists. I hold them in a collective understanding that there is nothing to fear, no suffering to defend, nothing to guard against, no monsters across the seas, no spies in our cities, nothing that cannot be renewed and made pure once we've purified our murky lenses. I hold them in knowing that as powerfully as they can appear, surely that which exists for their benefit eclipses all.

This is truth because it has been the nature of humanity since we began, love always wins. How do I know? Because humans live on. Movement always ends in uniting closer, conflict always breeds deeper communication and the good prevails, not because this is a fairytale, but because this is reality and the truth is that that which is destructive, by definition, can not support itself; the tsunami recedes and earth rejuvenates, the tornado stills and the ground is rebuilt, the fire fizzles and the ground is purified.

Destructive beliefs are not the antithesis to constructive beliefs, but one small step in the powerful and wondrous unfolding—an unfolding that is not done, not yet complete, but one that we are rocketing to as a peaceful, unified final destination before we are lifted into a new realm. Our lights shine on, purer and truer. Life and relationships are clearer, cancerous beliefs radiate into nothing and the whole is left with an undeniable clarity of purpose. And so it is.

Global Fear

Dear God,

It would appear that the human race has a great enemy. It is one that has pit us against one another; has driven us into division and war; has left us forsaken in poverty and famine and asks us to see the worst in each other—this adversary is fear. We've hurt each other, your children, in your name for fear's sake.

May we remember that fear is not creative and thus is not of you. Fear of one another is unfit for the children of God, because in order to hold such a delusion in our mind, we must begin by fearing ourselves. Heal us. Amen.

Light of Peace

Dear God,

I acknowledge the light of peace that exists in all of us. I acknowledge this forever-flame that has no end. I acknowledge that the darker the night, the clearer the light. I am acutely aware that this light is indomitable. The peace in the light is the unwavering foundation in our society—where we return in comfort and quiet. The light of peace is not fragile or temporary, but bendable, potent and complete. It is only our inability to turn and tune our minds that we miss this peace; but we are always re-routing ourselves back to it, because it is the only direction we can move; it is the stable lighthouse to our weary ships in the night. It's in us and is sparked in every newborn and passed between one another when we transition from this world to the next; it carries the stillness of our heart that lifts us up and out of our shadows as we assume an indestructible knowing. It cannot be tampered with. The dark does not challenge it, for the darkness exists for it to serve it. It cannot be lost on us for more than a moment. It rises in us thrusting us in and over, above and beyond, one and all, from misstep to miracle. And so it is.

A Creative Beginning

Our moments are defined by us. The world spins, the wind blows, the world wars, and plants grow, and yet our moments are still defined by us. We are greater than we know. There's no other option but greatness. The very notion that we are able to dream of worlds beyond means we are divinely capable and, dare I say, required to evoke them. We are extensions of the infinite. All else seems small when this is considered. Yes, we are stardust. Yes, we are physical components turned into chemical reactions, turned into biology, turned into movement. And more, we are the source of thought. It begins and ends in us, not because we are all, but because we are in all. If you're accepting what is before you as all that there is, then you neglect the idea of inspiration, intuition, love, knowing, and all the powers in this world that are intangible and invisible and, yet, are the only things that truly exist.

I shouldn't be here. I was institutionalized when I was a kid—like, legit psychiatric ward with white padded rooms--because no one could figure out what was “wrong with me.” I didn't just end up at an adolescent psych ward, it was two years in the making. Two years prior I had started anxiously pulling out my eyelashes, eyebrows and head hair. After all my eyelashes were gone, my parents took me to doctors who medicated me. The medication did not subdue the hair-pulling disorder, but did make my behavior more erratic. It was basically two years of hell for me and my family, so I was institutionalized as a last resort.

I remember knowing so much, believing I knew so much, and yet I couldn't figure out how to be accepted by the world. I was so agitated that I could no longer relate to the world and the world could not relate to me. I sat in the room on suicide watch and I was 11-years-old. I had a two-inch foam mattress to sleep on and I was allowed my books. The lights were always bright and behavioral technicians (orderlies), nurses and therapists would walk past my room and peer through the window to check on me. I didn't know how to “pass” this test so I'd do anything to make myself not look anymore crazy than they thought I was. I really wanted to sleep and cry all day long on this small rectangular pad, but that would be the surest way to get my stamp of insanity, so I'd read and try to look as normal as possible when they'd walk by my room. I didn't want to be there, but I didn't know where I actually needed to be instead.

A few years later I came out of the closet, and my Evangelical Christian parents saw this as one of the worst possible scenarios. I was not just sinful, but defective. From there, the Christian counseling and calls from pastors begin. I would eventually be disowned for my parents' inability to see that gay was good.

In 2008 I was in the back of a cop car probably eight times and woke up in jail three times and by 2011 and into 2012 I was homeless due to my addiction to alcohol and cocaine and my overall inability to cope with the world around me.

In 2016 I went on a reality TV show and was filmed 24/7 in a deeply emotional and volatile environment and somehow I was able to stay centered and focused. What happened between 2012 and 2016 doesn't seem so remarkable on the outside, but more in what occurred inside me as a direct result of changing my mind about the people and world around me.

Every single day is your new beginning. Create. Let go of the ideas you've held onto so you can finally grasp the life you've always wanted. Reject anything and everything that weighs you down and turn your mind to that which lifts you up. Practice this moment by moment, day by day and be changed.

A Final Prayer: Thank You.

Thank you to my Inspire Spiritual Community family. Thank you Rev. Jesse Brune-Horan for teaching me the power of prayer.

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May your lives be blessed with joy and love always. And so it is because it is already done.