IF

A Bridge Between Heaven and Earth

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A story of love and hope

An invitation to wonder and spiritual growth

IF — What if…?

For everyone who longs for a world in which we meet one another with greater love.



The atmospheric images inside this book were created with AI.

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The path through IF

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Part 1 — A story of love and hope

To the reader

There are moments when we feel we have something to pass on. A memory that lives on. An experience that has changed the way we see. Our love for someone we miss. And, above all, the hope that what we have lived through might mean something to another person.

It is from that longing that I write IF.

In these unsettled times, I see how much we need peace, understanding and people who truly listen to one another. Behind many harsh words lies sadness. Behind a closed manner there may be someone who has been disappointed too often. I know the weight of difficult years. Yet the wish to keep seeing the good, and to contribute to it, has stayed alive in me.

This book is my way of opening a door. Towards another person, towards our own inner life and towards whatever might exist between heaven and earth. To me, spirituality means knowing that we are connected with something that reaches beyond our separate lives. It lives in our questions about the soul, about life and death and about

the meaning of our encounters. It lives just as much in the way we treat someone today.

Unconditional love lies at the heart of IF. My belief that there is no such thing as coincidence, and my interest in cause and effect, run through it like threads. I tell these stories from my own life and from the meaning these experiences have come to hold for me. I describe the unusual events as I remember them; the spiritual reflections express my faith and my hope.

You are welcome to read this book simply as a story, at your own pace. In Part 2 you will find thirty-three spiritual themes to explore further for yourself. Part 3 opens the way to the stories, videos and sources on the IF website. There is no need to hurry. A thought may need time to find its place in our lives.

My wish is that you feel welcome as you read. That something in these pages gives you courage, gently touches a memory or allows you to feel wonder again. And that each of us, in our own way, may carry some of that warmth onwards.

When we open a door with love, we also give someone else the courage to step inside.

1 Two letters that lived on

Around the year 2000, I put my first thoughts about IF on paper. I gave them a title of just two letters: IF. To me, that English word means: what if? The papers were later lost. I searched for them but never found them again. Yet IF lived on within me.

Perhaps you know that feeling. A thought stays in the background while you work, care for your family and follow life's unexpected turns. Sometimes you scarcely think of it for months. Then an encounter or a memory brings it close again. That is how it was for me with those two letters.

One of the thoughts that started it all was: what if we were to look at the world from an entirely different point of view? I felt how easily we grow accustomed to the limits of what we know. Beyond those limits, so much remains to be discovered.

Today the words what if have taken on a warmer meaning for me. What if we could understand one another better? What if the love we give continues to work beyond what we can see? What if saying goodbye to someone dear gives our bond a different form? What if,

even in a difficult time, we can do something that helps another person feel hope again?

In the years that followed, life changed me. I built, I lost and I had to begin again. I met people who placed their trust in me when my own trust faltered. I had to live without my son Marco. His place in my life has remained, even in the silence after his death.

So I now write IF with the heart of a man who has much behind him and still wants to pass something on. My curiosity has stayed with me. So has my need to understand. But I feel ever more clearly what I want to use all of this for: to help greater humanity grow.

In My Life I wrote about my family, my Italian roots, my work and the people who shaped me. IF grows from that same ground. Here I give more space to the spiritual meaning of what I experienced. To me, the person who builds a business and the person who looks towards the stars are one and the same.

I love the image of a window. When you open it, your home remains familiar, but fresh air comes in. You hear something you did not hear before. You see further. That is how I hope IF may be read: as an invitation to bring your own life with you while allowing something new to enter.

Sometimes a dream waits for you for years, until your heart is ready to welcome it again.

2 The love that carries us



A hand that stays.

Whenever I try to name what has carried me most deeply through life, I always come back to love. To the care of my parents. To Dorina and our family. To Marco and Michael. To my grandchildren, my relatives and the people who stood beside me in difficult moments.

Love has worn many faces in my life. Sometimes it was simply there in the care of everyday living. Sometimes its meaning only became visible when someone was no

longer there. And sometimes it arrived unexpectedly from someone who reached out at just the right moment.

To me, unconditional love is one of our deepest spiritual callings. A person remains worthy of our attention when they are struggling, making mistakes or unable to find the words for what is happening within them. Usually we see only a small part of what someone carries. I want to keep trying to meet that hidden person.

I do not always succeed. I too have been hurt, reacted too quickly and held expectations that another person could not fulfil. That is why I write about this as someone who is still learning. Love asks for patience, especially when patience costs us dearly.

It also asks for honesty. Sometimes caring for one another means stating a boundary, seeking help or stepping back from behaviour that keeps causing pain. The other person's dignity and our own dignity both belong within love. No one has to lose themselves in order to be loving.

In my conversations with others, I noticed how deep the longing for acceptance runs. People could speak at length about their problems, yet underneath it all the same question often surfaced: may I be here as I am now? Is there room for my sadness? Am I still worth something when I cannot manage to stay strong?

The answer I wanted to offer through my presence was simple: your life matters. That answer gains strength when we make time for it. Staying seated a little longer. Answering a message. Daring to speak the name of someone dear. Inviting a person to finish their story.

For me, the path towards a more loving world begins there. In our everyday contact, we practise what we hope for all humanity. The person beside us already gives us the chance, today, to make a little of that hope real.

Unconditional love reminds us that every person is more than their most difficult moment.

3 The child who could float



The freedom to wonder.

My earliest memories of the invisible began in my childhood bed. I did not yet know the words spirituality and consciousness. I was a little boy, perhaps five or six, perhaps a little older. I no longer remember my exact age. But the feeling I experienced then has stayed vividly with me.

When I lay in bed in the evening, my body seemed to grow lighter and lighter. I felt as though I were floating

above it. I could see my room, my bed and myself lying there. It happened several times. I recognised the feeling that came before it and sometimes tried to bring it back.

I was not afraid. To the child I was, it felt like a game. There was lightness, freedom and a deep calm. During one of those experiences, I also remember an older woman. She did not speak. I did not know who she was. Her presence felt peaceful and familiar.

Only much later did I discover that other people spoke about out-of-body experiences. In some of their descriptions I recognised something of what I had experienced. Above all, the peace continued to touch me. That memory had lived within me all those years, long before I found a name for it.

When I think back to that little boy, I feel tenderness. He did not need a learned explanation in order to wonder. He experienced the world with the openness that sometimes comes so naturally to children. They can lose themselves completely in a moment that an adult immediately tries to put in order.

The meaning of that memory has grown with me. It fed my interest in consciousness and in the possibility that our existence reaches deeper than we experience in daily

life. For me, it became a first opening towards the spiritual questions that would later stay beside me.

Perhaps you too carry an early memory like that. A moment of unusual closeness. A dream that continued to feel warm. The silence of a landscape in which you felt you belonged. Such moments may seem small, but they deserve a place in the story of our lives.

The child within me has remained throughout the years. Between working and caring, between grand plans and difficult times, somewhere there was still that ability to grow quiet before something I could not fully grasp. I am grateful that life has not taken that sense of wonder away from me.

Keep something of the child within you who can still wonder without fear.

4 A glimpse of peace



Room to breathe again.

After the crisis of 1981, I had to begin again. During the day I searched for solutions and tried to stay strong for my family. In the evenings, the worries came home with me. During that period, I had an experience in my sleep that I have never forgotten.

It began with an explosion. In that experience I saw my body fall to the ground several metres away. Yet I felt no

pain. At that same moment, a calm came over me unlike anything in my ordinary life.

I felt I was outside my body. From above, I saw people coming towards me. I saw doctors trying to resuscitate me. I wanted to say that I was all right and that I was above them. I called out, but no one heard me. When I tried to touch them, my hands passed through them.

Then I began to fly. I moved freely above the world. The sky was intensely blue, the grass an exceptionally clear green. There were colours I had no names for. Everything felt alive and pure. I experienced a happiness in which the worries that occupied me during the day had no place.

Eventually I returned very gently to my body, as though a feather were drifting slowly down. Then I woke. I cried because the feeling of peace had been so profound. The reality of my difficult life was still waiting for me, but now I also carried the memory of that extraordinary calm.

That is how I remember the experience: something that happened at night, felt real and permanently changed my outlook. I tell it as part of my inner life. It was not a confirmed physical death or resuscitation in my everyday reality.

What has stayed with me ever since is the strength I drew from it. At a time when so much had collapsed, I had felt something of freedom and peace. It did not make the practical problems any smaller. But it did help me turn towards life again.

For me, that experience took on a spiritual meaning. It nourished my hope that our reality might be wider than the heavy moment in which we find ourselves. Something can open within us that allows us to breathe again, even when the road ahead is still long.

I have never found that peace again in quite the same way. Yet its memory remained within reach. Sometimes that is what carries a person: knowing that they once experienced light, and that because of it they can still take another step today.

A glimpse of peace can live on within us long after the night has passed.

5 There is no such thing as coincidence



Where paths through life meet.

There is no such thing as coincidence. Those words return whenever I reflect on my life. For me, they express trust: our encounters and experiences may be part of a connected whole that we only gradually begin to recognise.

I believe there is a reason for everything. Yet I do not have an answer to every why. Some events leave me empty-handed. Above all, I want to be careful with

another person's grief. My belief gives me a way of looking and living; it does not give me the right to explain to someone else why they had to endure something.

Sometimes I only understand an encounter years later. Someone says something that seems simple at the time. Life moves on. Then a difficult period comes, and that very sentence turns out to have stayed with me. Someone who crossed our path only briefly has left something we can lean on later.

In my own history, I think of the help I received after the crisis of 1981. Medardo Maseroli offered me support when I badly needed it. Alongside that practical help, his advice has stayed with me: never lose your credibility. Those words reach into the person you want to remain, especially when life comes under pressure.

When someone believes in you at such a moment, something changes. For a little while, you see yourself through eyes that recognise more possibilities than you can see yourself. Another person's trust helps you find your own trust again.

That is one reason why I treasure meaningful encounters so deeply. I experience something of spiritual connection in them. We touch one another's lives in ways whose full reach we usually do not know. Sometimes we are allowed

to receive. Sometimes we can become that unexpected helper for someone else.

Asking what an encounter might teach me brings me closer to attentiveness. Who is standing before me today? Which story am I barely hearing because I am too absorbed in my own thoughts? Where is life asking me to pause?

I do not want that attentiveness to become a constant search for hidden signs. An ordinary encounter has value of its own too. Trusting that there may be a connection helps me, above all, to remain present and gratefully receive whatever crosses my path.

IF — what if today's encounter later turns out to have been a turning point? Then I want to meet it with an open heart.

Sometimes the answer to a quiet question reaches us in the form of another person.

6 The sky above Liège

There are memories that keep their sharpness through the years. One takes me back to Liège, at the end of a working day. I was driving to see my brother Mario, who lived on the third floor of a block of flats. It was sunset, around half past five.

About five hundred metres from his home, I saw four round objects through an opening in the clouds. They stood side by side in a row. To me, they looked like metal discs. The setting sun was reflected on their undersides. I also thought I could see shapes that resembled openings or windows.

I heard no sound. I stopped the car and kept looking. To make sure I was awake, I even slapped my own face. The four objects remained visible. My astonishment was so great that the world around me seemed to fade into the background.

It felt as though it lasted about twenty minutes. When I moved, the objects seemed to move with me. I saw movements that struck me as unusual, with sharp changes of direction. Then, in a fraction of a second, they were gone.

The next day I looked for reports in the newspapers. I found none. That deepened my wonder. I was left with a sight that had made a powerful impression on me and for which I had found no explanation.

About a month earlier, at home, I had noticed four round stains caused by different products. Afterwards, their resemblance to the four round shapes above Liège struck me. I experienced that connection personally; I have never been able to establish whether there was any real link between the two events.

This memory has a place in IF because it belongs to my life. It increased my interest in the unknown. I cannot say exactly what I saw or where it came from. The silence, the shapes and my astonishment have stayed with me.

When I speak about it, I hope above all for the same human openness that I want to offer others. A person should be able to speak of an unusual experience without being immediately reduced to that one experience. Behind their words stands a person with an entire life.

For my spiritual search, this event remained a window on the unknown. It made me look upwards again. The universe fills me with wonder, but also with humility. Here, we share a small earth. That awareness alone can invite us to care more gently for it and for one another.

Those who look towards the heavens may also love the earth and the people beside them.

7 The pyramid and the dream of building



Building with light and trust.

The pyramid has always drawn me. Its broad base rests upon the earth and its tip points upwards. In that shape I recognise something of my own life: the need to build something tangible, together with the longing to see further.

In Lummen, that interest took visible form in the Glass Pyramid. Through my work I wanted to show possibilities, connect technology with imagination and

create a space where people could see what an idea might become. The pyramid belonged to my life as an entrepreneur, but it also touched my inner world.

Marco was part of that world. We shared a curiosity about technology and new applications. We could talk and debate a plan for a long time. Not every conversation was calm. Sometimes it was precisely the difference between our thoughts that brought something new into being.

So when I think of the Glass Pyramid, I see more than a building. I remember a time when our ideas found one another. Working with your son gives a project a meaning that no balance sheet can fully express. Something is being built outside you, while something is also growing between two people.

Not everything I built has survived. That hurt. A business carries years of effort, hope and responsibility. When it disappears, it feels as though part of the world in which you were at home disappears too.

Yet as I look back, I discover that the human meaning lives on. What we learnt, the courage we gathered and what we experienced together still belong to our story. I try to preserve that value when I think of a chapter that has closed.

The pyramid also became a spiritual symbol for me. Its base recalls the people and responsibilities that support us. Its tip recalls our longing for insight and connection. We need both. Anyone who wants to grow must also care for the ground beneath their feet.

I bring that image with me into IF. I hope to build a bridge between the tangible events of my life and the meaning I have come to recognise within them. What I want to pass on above all is the courage to keep building what has human value.

Perhaps the most beautiful form of building is the care with which we help someone else rediscover their own strength. In that way a dream can stay alive even when the original building is no longer there.

What is built with love between people leaves traces that reach beyond stone and glass.

8 The quiet voice and the language of numbers

Some decisions begin with a calm feeling that cannot yet be put into words. An idea touches something within me. An encounter brings trust, or perhaps the need to listen a little longer. I call that quiet inward movement intuition.

It has often accompanied me in my work and in my conversations with people. I have learnt to notice what may remain hidden beneath words: a hesitation, a glance, the way someone falls silent. Attentiveness helps us receive more from one another.

For me, intuition also has a spiritual side. In silence I can feel more clearly which choice accords with my conscience and with the love I want to give. The question that helps me is this: am I acting from love now, or am I letting myself be led mainly by fear?

I have learnt to take time when a feeling matters. A first impression can deepen through conversation. An inward unease can lead to a good question. In this way, feeling, experience and careful thought each find their place.

For many years, numerology too has been a language through which I looked at people and the paths of their

lives. With my date of birth, 5 June 1948, adding the digits 5 + 6 + 1 + 9 + 4 + 8 gives the number 33. In the numerological symbolism I worked with, 11, 22 and 33 held a special place. I associated them with intuition, building and service. In them, I recognised themes that also returned in my own life.

The number 33 touches me through the meaning of love and responsibility that I give it. Helping people has remained present in different forms: first in my technical and commercial work, and later increasingly in personal conversations. The number helped me find words for that.

For inner disposition and possibilities, I sometimes use the image of a spiritual DNA. Each person retains their freedom, their own history and their ability to make different choices. No calculation can contain that whole person.

Over the years, I prepared numerological analyses for hundreds of people. I never asked for payment. Often the numbers opened the conversation, but the real encounter began when someone spoke about their life. Then a face emerged from behind the date.

For me, that remains the value of every spiritual language: it can help bring us closer to ourselves and to

one another. When someone looked at their life with a little more gentleness after a conversation, something precious had happened.

The deepest meaning becomes audible when we meet the person behind the words and the numbers.

9 Marco and the love that remains



Love remains a light upon our path.

When I write about Marco, my son's whole life comes with me. His ideas, his enthusiasm, the conversations in which we challenged each other and the dreams we

worked on together. My love for him embraces all those memories.

On 27 August 2009, my world changed. His death brought a silence that no new plan could fill. I missed my son, and also the person with whom I could share so many thoughts. A father searches for words, but some kinds of absence remain greater than the sentences he finds.

Yet Marco has remained part of my life. I feel our connection when a memory suddenly comes close. When I recognise something of him in his daughters, Chiara and Laura. When I write about what we experienced together. Love has changed its everyday form, but my heart has continued to carry it.

We regularly went to Scherpenheuvel together. There, we would light a candle. In that simple gesture, hope and closeness came together. A flame is small. Yet it can carry an entire inner world: what we hope for, whom we miss and what we quietly entrust to life.

Later I received two handwritten texts through a medium. They came to hold a deep personal meaning for me. I felt touched in my connection with Marco. That experience belongs to my spiritual path. I keep it with the tenderness with which a person preserves what has carried them through grief.

I often feel that Marco helps me with my writing. Our shared curiosity echoes in my memory. In my faith, our bond can reach further than what I am able to make visible. That gives me comfort and courage to continue this work.

When I speak about him, I want to keep seeing his life in all its richness. He was a son, a father, a brother, a friend and a person with plans. His story deserves space. Photographs, videos and memories can pass something of him on to those who knew him, and to those who come to know him through our words.

My love for Marco also makes my love for the living more important. Michael, my grandchildren, Dorina and the people around me each have their own irreplaceable place. I want to give time to those who are here today. To say what can be said. To listen before a conversation can exist only in memory.

If IF opens a door to the question of whether love can live beyond a farewell, then for me that door begins here. With my son. With the longing for him. With the hope that helps me keep loving.

Those we carry in love remain part of the road we travel onwards.

10 The people who opened their hearts

Looking back, there must have been thousands of conversations over the years. About numerology and spirituality, about loss and love, about experiences someone had not dared to tell anyone. Often it began with something small. A date of birth, a question, a short message. Then came the story of a life.

Those encounters took place in many settings: during activities, in a café, on a walk, over the telephone and later through the internet. I attended many spiritual gatherings and helped organise them myself. People with very different beliefs crossed my path.

What touched me most was the trust. Someone dared to speak of something that had long remained hidden. I knew I had to treat what was entrusted to me with care. Those people's names, secrets and pain belong to them. But I do carry the lessons that listening gave me.

I learnt how often a person needs presence. We readily search for the right advice. Sometimes help begins before that: letting someone finish speaking, bearing the silence and taking their sadness seriously. When a story is finally heard, room can open up to begin thinking ahead again.

My own loss was present in those conversations too. Speaking about Marco helped me keep his life close. Dorina and I had different needs in that respect. Where I sought words and openness, she found her own way. Two people can carry the same loss and still need different paths.

That difference taught me how important it is to be careful with judgement. We can know someone intimately and still not fully know what their inner world is like. Sometimes love asks us to leave space where we would dearly like to find agreement.

Photographs, videos and stories about Marco led to new contacts. Through them, the digital world took on a human meaning for me. Someone seeking recognition emerged from behind the screen. A message could become the beginning of a conversation that would never otherwise have happened.

I hope IF may hold something of that space for encounter. A place where we can arrive with our own story and meet another person with attention. Differences in belief can remain while understanding grows.

For me, the spiritual meaning of this is profound. When we truly listen, we acknowledge something of the worth

of another life. That is a form of love available to us afresh every day.

Sometimes hope begins the moment someone feels that their story is welcome.

11 What we set in motion

Throughout my life, I have come to believe ever more deeply in the law of cause and effect. I also call it the boomerang law. What we send out into the world sets something in motion. Our words, intentions and actions leave traces, sometimes further than we ourselves can see.

I recognise a spiritual responsibility in that. A human being lives in connection with other people. What I do touches someone. What that person takes from it may, in turn, travel onwards. In this way we are part of a greater whole every day.

My father left Italy to build a future for his family. The consequences of that choice reach into the lives of my children and grandchildren. My mother passed on care and perseverance in everyday life. I carry something of that with me when I try to care for someone else.

Help that we receive can also continue its work. Someone stands beside us in a difficult period. Years later, we recognise another person's need and reach out. We know from experience how much that can mean. What we were given finds a continuation.

I believe there is a deeper connection, even when I cannot see the whole pattern. At the same time, I do not want to burden anyone with this belief. Illness, loss or injustice must never be used to tell a person that they deserved their pain. Someone who suffers needs closeness.

For me, cause and effect asks above all for attention to what I can contribute today. A humiliating word can keep hurting for a long time. A sincere apology can begin a process of healing. A promise grows stronger when we fulfil it in small acts.

In my professional life, I learnt how precious credibility is. Trust grows when people see that you do what you say. The same is true in family life, in friendship and in our daily conversations. Goodness gains strength through repetition.

When I have made a mistake, the possibility remains of setting something new in motion. I can take responsibility, listen to the consequences and try to do things differently. In that way, a difficult event need not keep producing the same pain endlessly.

So IF also leaves me with a practical question: what do I want to help grow today? If I hope for greater love, I can begin with the way I answer. If I long for peace, I can

make my own words less harsh. My influence is limited, but it exists.

The love you pass on today can travel further than you will ever know.

12 The long road to forgiveness

Forgiveness sounds simple when we speak of it from a distance. In a wounded heart, it can ask for a long journey. I have known disappointments that kept returning to my thoughts. The question of why someone had treated me that way could take up more room than I wanted.

Gradually I began to feel how much strength old pain can continue to demand. What had happened could no longer be changed. Yet it kept entering my day again. I longed for peace while still replaying the event within me.

For me, forgiveness began with the wish to loosen that grip slowly. The sadness could be acknowledged. The anger had something to tell me too. I did not have to pretend to be kinder than I felt. Honesty with myself proved a beginning of gentleness.

That includes allowing boundaries to keep their place. To me, forgiving someone does not mean having to give them the same power over my life again. Sometimes distance remains necessary. I can protect a boundary and still hope that my heart will not be ruled by bitterness forever.

I also had to become gentler towards myself. I have made choices that might have turned out differently. I have persisted too long, trusted wrongly or failed to see a possibility. In hindsight, the past looks clearer than it did at the moment when we had to live it.

Taking responsibility helps me move forward. Condemning myself endlessly is more likely to keep me trapped. When I acknowledge what I want to do differently and act on it today, a painful lesson finds a human continuation.

In a spiritual sense, I see forgiveness as making room for love. Sometimes very cautiously. A memory that burns less fiercely. A conversation that can grow calmer. The possibility of meeting someone new without immediately burdening them with blame for an old disappointment.

I think of the unsettled times in which we live. How often does misunderstanding grow because old wounds keep finding new words? Every gesture that interrupts the chain of humiliation, even briefly, has meaning. Sometimes it begins with someone saying: I want to listen, even though this conversation is difficult for me.

No one has to hurry along that path. Love cannot be forced. But the desire for reconciliation, within ourselves or with someone else, can already be a first opening. In

that I recognise hope: we can slowly learn to carry differently what we can no longer change.

Forgiveness can begin as a small space in which the heart can breathe again.

13 Wonder opens new windows

My interest in the unknown has taken many forms. Ancient pyramids and megaliths drew my attention. Stories of Atlantis, Lemuria and hidden worlds stirred my imagination. I wanted to read, compare and understand why such subjects touch people so deeply.

In an ancient structure I also see the people who must have stood behind it. Their cooperation, their knowledge and their longing to raise something meaningful. They died long ago, but their work still makes us stop and look. That awareness makes me humble.

Stories of lost worlds also touch a longing I recognise: the longing for harmony, for a society where knowledge goes hand in hand with wisdom and people feel part of nature. Their historical and spiritual meanings each call for their own way of reading. In IF they have a place as subjects that have nourished my curiosity.

Writers and thinkers have opened windows for me too. Jules Verne sent the imagination travelling. In Dante, I am drawn to the image of an inner journey through darkness towards light. For me, Giordano Bruno belongs with the courage to think widely. What touches me in such encounters with a book is the space a thought can create.

I also read and listened to material about spiritual figures such as Edgar Cayce, Jozef Rulof, Giorgio Dibitonto and Pier Giorgio Caria. Their varied stories came my way as I explored my own questions. I name them here as part of my reading journey. Every author carries their own ideas and takes time to get to know.

Study can have a warmth of its own. You read a page because you want to understand a person, an experience or life itself more deeply. You place a thought beside what you have lived through. You discuss it with someone from a different background. Slowly, your outlook gains more room.

That is why I also want to offer a guide within IF. Curiosity may go further than reading my story. Anyone who wants to know more can choose a theme, seek out an original text and quietly explore the meaning a writer gives their words. A good conversation can be as enriching as a book along the way.

Love remains my measure. A thought that helps me live with greater care and understand someone else more fully has set something valuable in motion. Wonder grows richer for me when it brings us back to life and to one another.

A new insight gains warmth when it helps us live with greater love.

14 Hope for the world we share



Towards the light.

I hope that IF may be, first and foremost, a story of love and hope. The times in which we live can feel unsettling. There are so many voices, so many images and so many reasons for concern. That is precisely why I want to make room for what can bring people closer together again.

The longing for a better world readily finds expression in grand words. In my own life, it begins again and again with an encounter. Can I listen to someone who thinks

differently? Can I set my judgement aside for a moment? Can I put something right, thank someone or let them feel that they have not been forgotten?

I know how difficult that can sometimes be, especially with those closest to us. Within a family, words reach deep layers. Old habits can seem stronger than good intentions. There too, love remains a path that asks for attention. We learn it in the midst of life, with all its imperfections.

Unconditional love, my trust that there is no such thing as coincidence, and the law of cause and effect come together for me at this point. I believe that we are connected. That our encounters can carry meaning. That what we do has consequences. From that faith, I want to try to give goodness more room.

That hope does not demand a constantly cheerful face. Sadness may exist beside it. A person can cry and still love. They can be tired and still accept a hand. Sometimes hope is very small: calling someone today, getting up again tomorrow and giving the next conversation a new chance.

I think of my children and grandchildren. What do I want to leave them? Alongside the stories of my life, a trust that humanity keeps its value. That there are people who want

to help. That a difficult period does not erase every possibility. That they are loved.

IF once began as two letters on paper. Today those letters carry much of what I have lived. The child who wondered, the entrepreneur who kept building, the father who misses his son and the listener who was allowed to receive so much trust all come together in this book.

The door remains open to what life may still teach us. In the next part, thirty-three themes await anyone who wishes to explore further. My deepest wish goes with you: may whatever warmth you receive here find its way to someone else.

The world we hope for can find a small beginning today.

Where someone chooses love, hope finds a place to grow.

Part 2 — A guide to spiritual growth



The story has brought us to love, wonder and the questions that can deepen a human life. Now I invite you to discover more for yourself. The following pages offer words, examples and ways into the spiritual world. You can read them in order or begin with a subject that speaks to you at this moment.

This guide includes thirty-three themes, divided into five sections. First we turn inwards. Then we explore love as a way of life, meaning and connection, the relationship between the visible and the invisible, and some ways in

which spirituality can take form. The subjects touch one another, but each opens its own window.

By the spiritual world, I mean the dimension of existence that people experience in their relationship with the soul, the divine and a connectedness that may reach beyond what is visible. One reader encounters it in faith, another in silence, an unusual experience or love for someone dear. This guide makes room to explore those paths. My own starting point remains the love that helps us live more humanely.

You do not need to have had the experiences in my story yourself. A spiritual path can begin with a longing for peace, an encounter, the beauty of nature or the question of how to live with greater love. Further reading, conversation and quiet reflection can also form part of that path.

A free and attentive journey of discovery

In this guide, personal experiences, spiritual traditions and research meet. A faith narrative tells us what people hold to be true and what sustains them. A testimony describes what someone has experienced. Research tries to answer a particular question through a stated method. Each calls for an appropriate way of reading. In this way

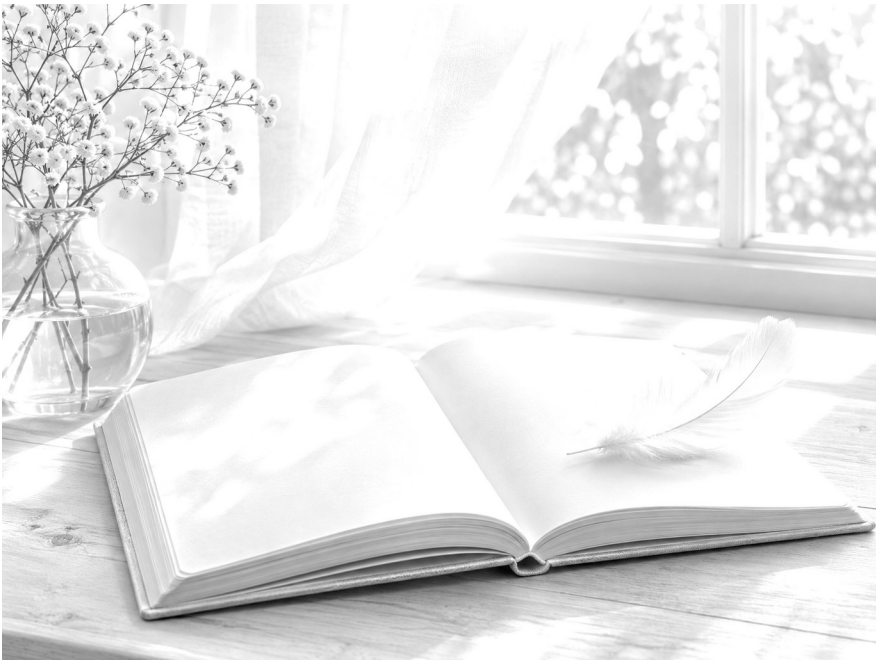
we can remain open while also taking care with what we pass on to one another.

The examples are imagined situations from everyday life, intended to make the themes recognisable. They do not belong to my personal life story. Choose what suits you in the exercises. If silence brings unease, you can return to a walk or a familiar conversation. Spirituality may support you; when health questions arise, appropriate professional care remains important.

At the back you will find sources and directions for further reading. The numbers in square brackets refer to them. You can also read the guide without pursuing that further study. Above all, keep the freedom to grow quietly, with respect for your own background and for that of the people you meet.

An open door invites you to take a step yourself, at your own pace.

Getting to know your inner world



Listening to what lives within.

We can spend years occupied with what happens around us and still find little time to pause over what lives within. In this first section, we return to that inner world. We begin with attention and self-knowledge before moving on to intuition and dreams.

These themes call for a gentle approach. You do not have to improve yourself before you are allowed to begin. Restlessness, tiredness and distraction also belong to the life you bring with you. Inner attention becomes fruitful

when it helps you be present in that life with greater clarity and care.

1 Silence and meditation

Silence gives us the chance to notice what is usually drowned out by busyness. Meditation adds a deliberate practice of attention. Some forms focus on the breath, a sound or a text. Others invite us to notice thoughts and feelings as they come and go. The NCCIH overview describes different approaches; Plum Village shows how attention can be practised in ordinary life. [1, 2]

An empty mind is not a requirement. When you wander and notice it, you can simply return. In a spiritual experience, silence may also make room for prayer or for the feeling of belonging to a greater whole. What you discover there may gradually take shape.

Two examples

Someone sits down for a moment before the day begins. At first he thinks only of his appointments. Then he notices how much tension he is already carrying. By noticing it, he decides to begin his morning a little more calmly.

A woman reads a short spiritual text. She stays with one sentence for a few moments. The words do not change

her day immediately, but later they help her answer more patiently.

An invitation to explore further

Take a brief quiet moment with a clear beginning and end. Notice what asks for your attention and gently return to what you have chosen. Anyone wishing to study further can compare two forms of meditation: what is the attention directed towards, which tradition does the practice come from, and what purpose does that tradition give it? Keep your first introduction simple.

In silence, you may meet yourself without having to prove anything.

2 Being attentively present

Being present means making conscious contact with what is happening now. We feel how we are sitting, listen to the voice before us or taste what we are eating. Mindfulness gives this a form of practice: noticing where our attention is and bringing it back gently. Plum Village connects that attention with walking, eating and listening, among other things. [2]

This theme differs from meditation in that it can unfold anywhere in the day. A familiar action becomes visible again. That can change our encounters too. We notice

sooner that someone still has something to say, or that we are already preparing an answer while they are speaking.

Two examples

During breakfast, someone puts his phone away. He notices how often his hand still wants to reach for it. The simple choice to stay seated makes room for a conversation with his partner.

A grandparent listens to a grandchild. Instead of quickly filling in the story, he asks another question. He discovers something he would have missed in a more hurried conversation.

An invitation to explore further

Choose one ordinary action and give it your full attention. Then choose a conversation in which you deliberately wait a moment before responding. What do you notice in yourself and in the other person? You can read more about attentive listening and explore how presence differs from having to be constantly available. Rest and boundaries can also be attentive choices.

Full attention lets another person feel that their presence matters.

3 The breath as a resting point

The breath is close at hand and travels with us. That is why many attention practices use it as a resting point. You notice its natural movement without having to make it bigger or deeper. The body does not have to achieve anything. The simple awareness of breathing in and out can be a place to return to. [1, 2]

In spiritual language, breath is sometimes connected with life force. For a first introduction, you can begin with the concrete experience: what happens when you briefly stop letting the day sweep you along? Meaning can grow from that attention.

Two examples

Before a tense telephone conversation, someone lets his breath come and go naturally for a few moments. He notices how tightly he is holding his shoulders and sits more comfortably. Then he chooses his first words.

After a busy walk, someone sits on a bench. She feels the support beneath her feet and looks at the trees. She only needs to notice that she is here.

An invitation to explore further

Briefly feel where the natural breath is most noticeable. If that does not feel comfortable, direct your attention

towards sounds or your feet. In further reading, explore the difference between attention to the breath and techniques that actively change it. In this guide, calm observation is enough; intensive breathing techniques are not part of this first step.

Sometimes a gentler response begins with the space you give yourself for a moment.

4 Mindful movement and yoga

A spiritual path can also be explored through movement. While walking or doing a gentle exercise, you notice how your body feels and how your attention changes with it. Within different traditions, yoga includes more than postures alone; the relationship between movement, breath and inward attention deserves an introduction of its own.

The body does not have to reach an ideal image. A suitable movement respects what is possible today. You can also sit and attend to a small movement, or simply notice how you stay in touch with your surroundings during a walk. Anyone beginning a new form of movement can take time to seek appropriate guidance.

Two examples

After a busy morning, someone walks a short familiar route. He notices that it becomes easier to put his thoughts in order as he feels the ground beneath his feet.

A woman chooses an adapted yoga class. She discusses her abilities beforehand and discovers that following her own pace matters more than matching another person's posture.

An invitation to explore further

Choose a gentle movement that suits your abilities. Notice how effort and rest alternate. In further reading, explore which tradition a practice comes from and what purpose it is given. A carefully chosen teacher makes room for questions and adaptation. You do not have to force your limits to move with awareness.

Your body deserves the same kindness you would offer someone dear.

5 Self-knowledge and inner growth

Self-knowledge grows when we learn to recognise our habits. What gives us strength? When do we withdraw? What expectation do we bring into a conversation? It also concerns qualities we easily take for granted: loyalty, humour, patience or the courage to begin again.

Here, spiritual growth finds a very human foundation. Those who better understand what moves them can choose more consciously. An inward discovery becomes visible when we deal differently with a recurring situation. Insight need not be harsh. You can look honestly and still remain kind to the person you are.

Two examples

Someone notices that he often offers help too quickly. Behind his generosity is also the fear of disappointing someone. He begins to practise asking first what is needed, then considering what he can give.

A woman considers herself impatient. Looking back, she sees that her sharp reactions come mainly on evenings when she is exhausted. Caring for her own rest thus becomes part of caring for others.

An invitation to explore further

Describe a recurring moment in ordinary words: what happens, what do you feel and how do you respond? Then look for an exception when things went more easily. What helped then? A trusted person may offer an additional perspective. In this way, self-examination becomes a conversation with life in which your possibilities remain visible too.

Getting to know yourself may be an act of kindness.

6 Intuition and inner knowing

Intuition is a feeling that sometimes appears before a fully formed line of reasoning. Experience, attention and memories can come together within it. In a spiritual approach, people also speak of inner knowing or guidance. Those words express how they understand their experience.

A helpful way of relating to intuition gives the feeling time. You can listen to what arises and then ask a question, gather information or let a night pass. In that way the inward signal keeps its place without becoming a command. Learning to recognise inner calm can also help us notice when fear or a strong desire is speaking alongside it.

Two examples

A colleague says that everything is going well, but then falls silent. You sense there is something more. You ask whether he would like to talk a little longer and leave him free to accept or decline.

A new plan excites you, but a small unease remains. You examine one aspect more closely. Whether the plan then goes ahead or changes, you have used your feeling to act with greater attention.

An invitation to explore further

Write down an impression before you know the outcome. Describe the concrete signals you noticed too. Later, look back at what proved right, what turned out differently and what you learnt. In further study, you can explore how different writers distinguish intuition from impulse, fear and wishful thinking. Its fruit may be greater clarity and humanity.

The quiet voice is better understood when it is given time and attention.

7 Dreams and dream images

Dreams bring us into a world where images, feelings and memories can meet unexpectedly. Sometimes a dream fades at once. Sometimes it stays with us for years. In spiritual traditions, dreams may be read as occasions for insight, encounter or reflection. Their meaning depends in part on the tradition and on the person who dreams.

A gentle first approach begins with your own associations. A house may evoke safety for one person and confinement for another. A fixed dictionary therefore does not tell the whole story. The tone of the dream also deserves attention: did you feel freedom, longing, joy or fear?

Two examples

Someone dreams of his childhood home. As he writes the dream down, he notices how much he needs a sense of security during a period of change.

A woman dreams of someone dear who has died. She wakes feeling comforted. She keeps that experience with love and tells someone she trusts what touched her so deeply.

An invitation to explore further

After waking, write down a few images and feelings. Ask what connects them with your present life. Place an author's interpretation beside them and consider where it helps you, without limiting the dream to a single meaning. Important decisions deserve firmer ground than a dream alone. The experience can, however, open up a subject that asks for attention.

A dream can give words to something that still lives quietly within us by day.

8 Spiritual awakening

Spiritual awakening is an expression for a change in how someone experiences themselves and existence. The longing for meaning, connection or the divine may grow stronger. What once stood at the centre sometimes finds a

different place. That process can develop slowly and need not involve an impressive event.

The concept gains its value in the change as it is lived. Does someone become more attentive, honest or sensitive to others' needs? That is where deepening may become visible. A spiritual path makes no one more valuable than anyone else; it invites us to take part more consciously in the same human life.

Two examples

After moving home, someone notices how much he misses his old relationships. He begins to divide his time more consciously and discovers that connection matters more to him than constantly collecting new impressions.

A book leads someone towards meditation. At first, it is mainly the experience that is new. Later, she notices that the real practice lies in patience during an ordinary family conversation.

An invitation to explore further

Ask which values are shifting in your life and what gives you support. Read a testimony about inner change and pay particular attention to what follows in everyday life. Keep rest, familiar contacts and ordinary responsibilities.

A development that deeply unsettles you deserves support; you do not have to carry it alone.

Growth becomes visible in the care with which we take part in life again.

Love as a spiritual way of life

Love takes different forms when it becomes a way of life. Compassion helps us meet another person's suffering. Gratitude makes visible what we receive. Forgiveness can create space around old pain. The search for meaning brings us to what we want to contribute. In the following themes, each of these movements receives its own attention.

The spirituality of these pages takes practical form in our contact with others. There may be attention for yourself too. A person who wants to give needs rest and support. Love grows where we care for the possibilities and limits of life.

9 Unconditional love and compassion

Unconditional love acknowledges a person's worth even when their behaviour is difficult or their life takes a different course from what was hoped. Compassion adds the willingness to see their suffering and, where possible,

offer care. Love and wise discernment support one another: closeness may go hand in hand with a clear boundary.

Many spiritual texts place love at their centre. In the Christian First Letter to the Corinthians, its meaning is connected with patience and kindness. You can read such a text as an invitation to explore how love becomes visible in your own actions. [3]

Two examples

A child makes a mistake and scarcely dares to speak of it. A parent honestly addresses the behaviour while making clear that the child remains loved. In that way responsibility finds a safe place.

A friend keeps returning to the same sadness. You listen, but also notice that you are growing tired. You say when you can make time again and, if needed, help him find more support.

An invitation to explore further

Choose a relationship and ask what acceptance means there in practical terms. What could be said more clearly? What would help the other person feel seen? Then read a spiritual text about love and turn one thought into a

manageable gesture. The deepening lies in the attention with which you actually make that gesture.

Love becomes tangible when a person can keep their dignity in our presence.

10 Gratitude and receiving

Gratitude directs our attention towards what we are given. That may be help, trust or simple presence. It also reveals how deeply a life is supported by others. Behind something that seems obvious often lies the effort of someone we scarcely notice.

This is a different movement from having to find the positive in everything. We may acknowledge that a day was hard and still receive one good moment. It is precisely honesty that gives gratitude warmth. In a spiritual sense, it can become an attitude in which we no longer look at existence only through what is lacking.

Two examples

Someone thinks back to a former teacher who gave him confidence. He writes a letter to say how that encouragement has continued to work in his life. What was received is now spoken aloud too.

After a difficult day, someone notices how much a telephone call helped. She does not need to make the rest

of the day look brighter in order to keep that one moment with gratitude.

An invitation to explore further

Look at one daily convenience and ask which people contribute to it. You can then make a thank-you concrete: name what someone did and why it mattered to you. Anyone wishing to explore further can notice the difference between gratitude freely felt and pressure to be grateful. Sincere gratitude leaves room for your whole experience.

What is received with attention takes deeper root in our lives.

11 Forgiveness and inner freedom



Room for a new beginning.

Forgiveness concerns our relationship with what has caused pain. It may mean that the desire for retaliation gradually takes up less space. Reconciliation is a further, separate possibility: the other person's attitude and trustworthiness matter for that too. This distinction helps us deal carefully with wounded trust.

The path can begin with acknowledgement: this happened, and this is what it did to me. An honestly stated boundary can be part of that path. Forgiveness has

no fixed deadline. Room for love may grow at a pace that also respects your safety and dignity.

Two examples

After an old disappointment in business, someone no longer wants to distrust every new contact. He keeps clearer agreements and tries to judge people afresh by their own behaviour.

Two family members decide to have a conversation. Each acknowledges part of the pain. Full healing has not yet come, but the tone becomes less hostile.

An invitation to explore further

Ask what you need today to live a little more freely: acknowledgement, distance, support or a conversation. You can write a letter that stays with you. When reading a text about forgiveness, consider whether it also allows for boundaries and for the time healing requires. Gentleness may grow slowly.

Your heart may grow lighter while you continue to take care with what you have learnt.

12 Grief and love that keeps seeking a place

Grief can take a different form again and again. There are days when the absence is sharply present, and days when a warm memory comes to the fore. A date, a scent or a

song can unexpectedly open something. Each person's bond and circumstances make the experience personal.

Spirituality can offer words for hope and for a connection that endures. A simple ritual can also help give love a place. In conversation, it is valuable to ask what someone themselves experiences. An imposed explanation can diminish what they are trying to express.

Two examples

A granddaughter asks how her grandfather used to laugh. The answer stirs a sad memory, but also brings joy because something of him is being passed on.

A man wants to walk alone on a birthday. His sister would like to share a meal that day. They agree to call each other later and leave room for their different needs.

An invitation to explore further

Gather one small detail about someone you miss: an expression, a habit or a gesture. Consider which form of remembering feels right today. In further reading, you can seek stories that give the loved one's life more room than the farewell alone. Receiving support also belongs to the path of love.

A name spoken with love finds a place among us again.

13 Meaning and service

The search for meaning concerns what makes life worthwhile for us. Sometimes there is a clear direction. Sometimes it must be sought anew after a change. Service can offer a way in: you discover that something you can give has meaning for someone else.

The scale need not be large. Passing on a skill, caring for a place or giving time to a person may be enough to feel a sense of direction again. It helps to consider what truly fits your abilities. A contribution becomes more sustainable when it also leaves room for you to receive.

Two examples

A retired craftsman helps a younger person with a practical problem. He notices how satisfying it is that his experience can still be put to use.

Someone has little energy for large activities, but can regularly telephone a lonely acquaintance. That small arrangement becomes a familiar resting point for them both.

An invitation to explore further

Write down what you enjoy doing, what you can give and what is needed around you. Look for where those three meet. After a while, explore how the contribution feels:

does it bring meaning, does it fit your capacity and can it grow? Spiritual service gains value in a real encounter, without requiring you to exhaust yourself.

A fitting gesture can give direction to two lives at once.

14 Nature and connection with the earth

Nature can open a spiritual experience by making us feel part of a larger web of life. A forest or an open sky can awaken silence. Caring for a small garden can call forth the same attention. UNESCO describes how knowledge of nature, memories, spirituality and worldviews may be interwoven within communities. [4]

Alongside that wonder stands the question of how we treat the earth. Connection becomes concrete when we care for what surrounds us. Encounter and learning may be part of that too: listening to people who know a landscape and understanding why a particular place matters to them.

Two examples

Someone regularly walks past the same tree. Through the year, she notices changes she used to walk past without seeing. The familiar place helps her be more consciously present.

A family picks up litter during a walk. The children discover that enjoying a place and caring for it can belong together.

An invitation to explore further

Choose a nearby place and visit it at different times. What changes in the landscape and in your attention? Read something about its history or about the people who care for it. You can also explore how your own family tradition speaks of nature. In this way, wonder finds a place beside knowledge and responsibility.

Care for the earth gives our connection a visible form.

Discovering connections and meaning

People look for connections. An encounter may take on a special place in hindsight. A number or a recurring image can awaken something within us. In this section, we explore some of the languages through which people try to understand that meaning.

The trust that there is no such thing as coincidence lives in my personal story. Synchronicity, numerology and karma each give words to connection and meaning in a different way. Learning their distinct meanings enriches the journey of discovery and creates more room to speak about them with one another.

15 Synchronicity and meaningful encounters

Synchronicity is associated with the work of Carl Gustav Jung. The concept concerns events that coincide meaningfully for someone without an ordinary relationship of cause and effect explaining the connection. Jung explored this as a distinct idea about connectedness. It helps to learn that original meaning before using the word for every resemblance. [5]

For the person experiencing it, the meaning can be deep. An inward question seems to meet an unexpected answer. Such a moment may give rise to gratitude or a new step. Its value need not lie in collecting ever more signals; it can also emerge through what the encounter opens in our lives.

Two examples

Someone thinks of an old friend and receives a message from him that same day. The coincidence touches him and becomes a reason to give time to the friendship again.

A woman is seeking direction after a change. In an unexpected conversation, she hears a thought that helps her name what she already felt. It gives her the courage to explore a possibility.

An invitation to explore further

Describe what happened and why it touched you. What change followed? Then read an introduction to Jung and compare his concept with your own belief about coincidence. Both can deepen your attention while retaining their own place. You do not have to find a hidden purpose in every moment.

An encounter gains depth when we attend to what it opens within us.

16 Numerology as a symbolic language

Numerology connects numbers with character, possibilities and questions about life. Different systems exist, with their own calculations and meanings. In study, it is therefore useful to begin by understanding one method well. In this guide we approach it as a symbolic language for self-exploration and conversation.

Recognition in a description can be a beginning. You may discover, for example, a tension between care and freedom, or between dreaming and building. It then helps to connect those words with your real life. In that way, the person with their experiences and choices remains present behind the calculation.

Two examples

A calculation is associated with responsibility. A reader asks where caring brings him joy and where he takes too much upon himself. That conversation yields a more concrete insight than the label alone.

A recurring number reminds someone of a loved one. It becomes a personal sign of remembrance and a reason to pass something good on.

An invitation to explore further

Choose a method whose calculation steps are clearly explained. First check the calculation, then read the meaning. Find a recognisable example from your life, but also a situation that differs. What does the language help you see? Numerology need not promise a fixed future in order to open a conversation. Let it make room for your possibilities and your freedom.

A symbol can shed some light while you continue to walk your own path through life.

17 Karma and cause and effect

The word karma is used in different religious traditions and receives its own interpretation within each. In a Buddhist text such as the Nibbedhika Sutta, intention

behind action is placed at the centre. Thinking, speaking and bodily action thus gain an ethical meaning. [6]

That offers a starting point for study beyond the idea that everything immediately comes back to someone. You can ask what nourishes an action: care, greed, fear or compassion? The teaching then invites a more conscious way of living. How a tradition understands consequences across a wider existence must be read within that tradition itself.

In ordinary life, we can also observe part of cause and effect: a promise builds trust, and a sharp remark can change a conversation. This provides a practical starting point alongside the broader spiritual meaning. Ask what you intended, what you did and what effect it had on the other person. Responsibility then becomes a practice of acting with greater care.

Two examples

Two people offer the same help. One mainly wants to make an impression; the other asks what is truly needed. The visible gesture looks similar; exploring their intention opens another layer.

Someone wants to win an argument and notices how much harshness this brings out. He tries to change his

aim: to understand what went wrong and clearly state what he needs.

An invitation to explore further

Read a short original text about karma and note how the writer connects intention, action and consequence. Compare it calmly with your own understanding of cause and effect. Use the concept to attend to your own choices. Another person's sadness or illness calls for care and must never be burdened with the label of deserved punishment.

Every conscious choice offers a possibility to bring more care into the world.

The visible and the invisible

The following subjects touch on great questions of life: what consciousness is, what people mean by the soul and how they understand unusual experiences. Hope for continued existence also finds a place here. These subjects can stir much within us, especially when they touch on loss or a personal experience.

Each time, we begin with the concept and with what someone tells us. Then there is room for different ways of understanding and for further inquiry. You do not have to induce an experience to explore these subjects. Listening,

reading and comparing quietly can already open a window.

18 Consciousness and the soul

Consciousness concerns experiencing itself: that there is something we see, feel or think. The question of how this inner experience relates to our body and to the world occupies different fields of study. Spiritual approaches add questions about our deepest identity and connection.

A first exploration can stay very close to home. A thought arises and disappears again. A memory changes our mood. At the same time, we experience a coherence in our lives: this is me, with a past and with longings. The meaning we give to that deserves quiet reflection.

In spiritual traditions, the word soul offers a distinct answer to questions about the deepest nature of a human being. In Hindu explanations, for example, we encounter atman: the true, spiritual self. [8] Such a concept can open a conversation about who we are most deeply. Its meaning is best learnt within the tradition from which it comes.

Two examples

During a walk, someone notices that he has become completely absorbed in a worry. When he looks around again, his own attention also becomes a source of wonder.

An old photograph brings someone back to an earlier phase of life. Much has changed. He wonders what connects the person he was then with the person he is now.

An invitation to explore further

Choose one question: what do I mean by consciousness, or what allows me to recognise myself? Read a philosophical explanation and a spiritual reflection, and note which question each tries to answer. Research into consciousness around resuscitation offers a particular, much narrower perspective; the sources at the back help you consider it separately. [7] The broad question of who we are continues to make room for several forms of study.

Wonder at our own existence can make us more attentive to every other life.

19 Near-death experiences

After a life-threatening situation, people sometimes describe unusual memories: clarity, peace, an altered

sense of time or images that came to hold great meaning. The circumstances and descriptions differ. In study, it matters to distinguish a carefully described testimony from a general statement about all experiences.

Research such as AWARE II examines memories and measurements around resuscitation. It is an example of an attempt to investigate such questions systematically. The study does not establish proven continued existence after irreversible death. [7] Within that limitation, there remains room for the meaning an experience acquires for someone and for further questions about consciousness.

Two examples

A survivor says that after his experience he places less importance on possessions and wants to give more time to his family. A listener asks how that change takes shape in everyday life.

A reader recognises the peace being described, but sees that his own intense dream arose in a different situation. He preserves that resemblance without making the circumstances the same.

An invitation to explore further

Read a testimony alongside a research report. Note the circumstances, the memory and the consequences for

later life. Which questions can the research answer, and which remain outside it? Your attention need not diminish the personal experience. It helps you listen carefully and give hope an honest place.

An experience at the edge can help someone embrace life again with love.

20 Out-of-body experiences

In an out-of-body experience, someone feels outside their own body or perceives themselves from another position. The term first describes the experience itself. Some people understand it spiritually, for example as a temporary experience of a broader consciousness. Others seek an explanation in processes surrounding perception and sleep.

The personal meaning can be profound. One person remembers calm above all, another astonishment. My childhood memory of floating is such an experience. Anyone reading a testimony can first attend to what the storyteller themselves experienced and what has stayed with them.

Two examples

A man remembers seeming to see his room from an unusual viewpoint around the time he was falling asleep. He notes how it began and what he experienced.

A woman recognises a feeling of lightness in a testimony. During a conversation, she notices that other details differ. Both the recognition and the difference are given space.

An invitation to explore further

Gather several descriptions and notice the context: sleeping, being awake or a medical situation. Distinguish the experience from the interpretation the storyteller later gave it. When writing down your own memory, you can indicate which details are clear and which have faded. You do not have to induce anything yourself; attentive reading is enough for an introduction.

Listening to an unusual experience begins with respect for the person telling it.

21 Life after death and enduring connection

Hope for life after death has a place in many paths of faith. It may be connected with God, with a spiritual world or with the soul's continuing development. Those who explore further discover that the images and

meanings vary. It helps to read a source within its own tradition.

Alongside that question of faith stands a human experience many people recognise: someone can remain deeply connected with us after a farewell. Memory, love and spiritual hope may be interwoven. For me, that connection has Marco's face. For you, another name or a memory of your own may come close.

Two examples

A woman finds comfort in the expectation of one day meeting her loved ones again. She tells how that faith helps her treat her present life with greater attention.

Someone feels close to his late father when he hears a familiar piece of advice in his mind. He keeps that closeness and tries to pass on something of his father's care.

An invitation to explore further

Ask what you hope for and which tradition you would like to get to know. Read an original faith text and a personal testimony, attending to the difference in their purpose. Talk with someone who leaves you room to search for your own words. A comforting experience can

have value without becoming a compulsory answer for everyone else.

Love gives us a language for keeping closeness when ordinary words fall short.

22 Reincarnation and rebirth

Reincarnation and rebirth refer to beliefs in which one life forms part of a broader continuation. They are often mentioned together, but do not mean the same thing everywhere. Hindu explanations discuss the relationship between atman, karma and the cycle of birth and death. [8]

For an initial study, it is valuable to learn a tradition's words before combining different stories. What is thought to continue? What does liberation mean? What place do present actions have? Such questions make the subject richer than curiosity alone about who someone might once have been.

Two examples

A reader discovers that, within a tradition, the idea of several lives is connected with care for all living beings. That brings him to the question of how he treats others today.

Someone hears a story about an alleged past life. She reads it with interest and also looks for how the concept of reincarnation is explained within an established teaching.

An invitation to explore further

Choose one tradition and look for an accessible explanation of its concepts. Only then compare it with a second approach. Write down where the similarities and differences lie. With personal stories, remain cautious about firm conclusions concerning yourself or others. The thought of a wider existence gains a human meaning when it deepens care for this life.

However far our questions reach, we can already act with greater compassion today.

23 Mysticism and experiences of unity

Mysticism is used, among other things, for experiences of deep connection with God, the divine or existence as a whole. Someone may describe the ordinary distance between themselves and the world feeling different for a moment. The language relates to their background and to the meaning they give it.

An intense experience can make a deep impression, but the path afterwards asks for attention too. How does the

connection received find a place in life? Greater patience, care or humility may be the most precious continuation for someone. The extraordinary moment and ordinary action need not stand apart.

Two examples

Before a landscape, someone feels small yet deeply held within the whole. Later, what remains above all is the desire to care more gently for the surroundings.

During prayer, a woman feels an unusual closeness. She struggles to find words for the experience, but notices that in the following days she listens more attentively.

An invitation to explore further

Read a mystical text within the tradition from which it comes. Notice how the writer approaches words, silence and what follows in everyday life. You can also describe a moment of connection of your own without making it greater than it was. Finally, ask which small action fits that experience. In this way, wonder finds a place in your life.

What is received as connection can be passed on as care.

Deepening your own spiritual path

In this final section, we meet forms through which people practise or imagine their spirituality. Some belong to a clear faith tradition. Others are used in different movements. Their meaning becomes easier to understand when you ask where a practice comes from and how the people who follow it speak about it themselves.

You do not have to try everything. A quiet choice can bring more depth than attempting many things at once. Keep your freedom, ask ordinary questions and notice how people treat one another. A warm, honest encounter helps keep a spiritual path human.

24 Prayer and contemplation

Prayer gives words or silence to the relationship with God or the divine. It may be grateful, questioning, searching or full of longing. Here, contemplation means quietly staying with a text, an image or a question about life. Both can become forms of inner attention, with their own place within a tradition.

For a believer, the meaning often lies in the relationship itself: entrusting oneself, listening or feeling supported. An answer need not come immediately. A set text may

help when one's own words are missing. A personal sentence may feel closer when something very concrete occupies us.

Two examples

Before sleep, a man names the people he is worried about. That quiet gesture helps him give his concern a place.

A woman reads a few lines from a spiritual book. She chooses one thought and takes it with her during her walk, without trying to work it out completely.

An invitation to explore further

Find a prayer or text that fits your background or curiosity. Read slowly and notice which words touch you. In further study, explore how prayer and contemplation are distinguished within that tradition. You can also speak with someone who knows the practice. A sincere question and a simple moment of attention can be enough to begin.

What we speak in trust need not sound grand to reach deep.

25 Rituals and remembering our ancestors

A ritual marks something that matters to us. It gives form to a beginning, a farewell, gratitude or connection. Some rituals have been passed down for centuries. Others arise

within a family. Their repetition can help us give fresh attention to a memory or a value.

Remembering our ancestors also places our own lives in a wider context. We receive names, habits, stories and possibilities from those who came before us. Not every inheritance is easy. Alongside gratitude, remembrance may therefore also ask for room for what was painful. A carefully chosen ritual need not smooth over that whole history.

Two examples

On a special day, a family prepares a dish that a grandmother used to make. While cooking, they pass on stories that might otherwise quietly disappear.

Someone places a flower beside a photograph and takes time for a memory. He chooses a form that suits him without having to do what others expect.

An invitation to explore further

Ask your family about the origin of a familiar custom. What did it mean in the past, and what does it mean now? Then choose a small gesture that preserves something essential. With a ritual from another culture, it helps first to learn from people for whom it belongs to their living tradition.

A memory gains a future when we pass it on with attention.

26 Music and mantras

Music can evoke a memory, give sadness room or awaken a sense of connection. In spiritual communities, sound takes form in singing, prayer and repeated texts, among other things. A mantra is a sound, word or short text repeated in a spiritual practice. Its meaning and use are learnt within the tradition in which it is practised.

For a first introduction, you can simply listen. Which feelings, images or memories arise? That attention does not have to produce anything exceptional. The difference between listening alone and singing together can also be an interesting subject for your own exploration.

Two examples

A familiar song takes someone back to an encounter from years ago. He decides to tell his children the story behind that music.

A group sings a simple text. One participant notices how listening and attuning together creates a feeling of closeness.

An invitation to explore further

Choose a song and listen to it once without doing anything else. Note what touched you. Anyone wishing to learn

about a mantra can explore which tradition it comes from, what the words mean and what guidance belongs with it. Distinguish the personal experience of sound from promises about a physical effect. The first already has a place in life in its own right.

Sometimes a melody brings us back to a love we could not find words for a moment before.

27 Chakras and energetic symbolism

Within certain spiritual and yogic approaches, chakras are described as centres of subtle energy. The images and explanations differ. An accessible introduction can begin with the symbolism: how are safety, love, speaking or insight, for example, connected with these images?

That language can open a conversation about how someone feels and what asks for attention. It helps first to understand the words being used quietly and clearly. In this guide, a chakra is not a medical explanation for a symptom. It is a concept from a spiritual framework that can be studied as such.

Two examples

The image of a firm foundation leads someone to ask which people and habits support him. He discovers that regular contact with a friend means a great deal to him.

The symbolism of the heart invites a woman to reflect on giving and receiving. She notices that accepting help is harder for her than offering it.

An invitation to explore further

Choose one source that clearly names its tradition and concepts. Describe what it means by energy and how the symbolism is used. Then translate one image into an ordinary question about life. You do not have to establish an invisible condition within yourself. A clear conversation about trust or love is already one possible fruit of that exploration.

An image becomes helpful when it brings us closer to an honest question about life.

28 Reiki and careful attention

Reiki is an approach in which a practitioner holds their hands lightly on or above the body from a belief about life energy. People may seek such a session as a moment of rest or spiritual attention. It helps to know beforehand what actually happens and what meaning the practitioner gives it.

Research has not demonstrated the supposed energy, and a medical effectiveness of Reiki has not been clearly established. [9] That distinction leaves room for

someone's personal experience of calm without turning it into a treatment effect. Appropriate healthcare retains its place.

Two examples

Someone asks beforehand whether touch is involved and says what feels comfortable. The practitioner respects that choice and explains the session calmly.

A visitor feels relaxed after a session. He describes the experience as it was and continues to consult his healthcare professional about an existing complaint.

An invitation to explore further

First read a factual description and ask practical questions: what do they do, what is promised, and can you stop at any moment? Then compare how a practitioner speaks about life energy with what a research source can substantiate. For a spiritual introduction, clarity, respect and freedom are valuable starting points. You do not have to undergo anything in order to learn more about an approach.

Care gains warmth where your boundaries and your questions are welcome.

29 Crystals and meaningful objects

Stones and crystals attract people through their shape, colour and origin. Some spiritual movements associate them with energetic meanings. They can also acquire a very personal symbolism, as any other cherished object can.

A first exploration can make those meanings visible side by side. What does someone say about the stone itself? What belief do they connect with it? And which memory do you bring to the object? Personal value is not proof of a healing effect. It can, however, explain why something simple gains a special place in our lives.

Two examples

Someone keeps a pebble from a walk with his father. When he sees it again, what comes close above all is the memory of their conversation.

A woman puts a small object on her desk as a reminder of patience. Sometimes it helps her pause before answering a difficult message.

An invitation to explore further

Take an object you already own and describe what it means to you. Anyone wishing to know more about crystals can study their geological properties separately

from the spiritual meanings given to them. You do not have to buy anything to explore symbolism. Finally, ask which value you want to keep alive in your actions through the object.

A simple object can gently keep a precious memory in view.

30 Angels and spiritual protection

Angels have their own place in different narratives of faith. Within Catholic belief, they are described as spiritual beings, and their protection forms part of that faith. [10] This gives a clear context to words that are also used more loosely, for example when someone calls an unexpected helper an angel.

For a believer, trusting in guidance can bring support. For someone else, the image opens a conversation about care received. It is good to ask first what someone means. In this way we meet the experience and faith language of the storyteller without immediately fixing them in our own words.

Two examples

A believer says a prayer to his guardian angel before beginning a difficult day. It helps him feel less alone.

Someone calls a neighbour an angel because they offered practical help at a hard moment. Here, the word expresses gratitude for a human gesture.

An invitation to explore further

Read a text about angels from an identifiable faith tradition and ask what role they have there. Alongside it, write down what protection means to you. Where do you receive concrete support today? Spiritual trust can go hand in hand with accepting help and taking ordinary precautions. Someone who feels supported can also stand beside another person.

Protection received can invite us to become a caring presence ourselves.

31 Astrology and the birth chart

Astrology symbolically connects the positions of celestial bodies with character and questions about life. A birth chart develops this for a particular moment of birth. There are different schools, with their own concepts and interpretations. Anyone curious can begin with that language and with the way a writer uses it.

In an initial exploration, a description may prompt reflection about yourself. It helps to make recognition concrete. What fits your experience, and what differs?

This leaves room for your own history and for the choices you can still make. A symbolic interpretation is not a fixed prediction.

Two examples

Someone reads about initiative and asks why he is postponing a particular step. He finds the answer by looking at his circumstances, wishes and concerns.

A conversation about a horoscope brings a woman to her need for rest. She explores how she might organise her days differently without letting the description determine that decision.

An invitation to explore further

First learn what a source means by its concepts. Then choose one statement and look for both a fitting example and one that differs. What does that conversation give you? Keep decisions about health, money or relationships connected with concrete information and your own freedom. The introduction may remain an opening for reflection.

No description closes off the possibilities of the life still ahead of you.

32 Tarot and archetypal images

Tarot cards carry images that are read in different ways. They can also be used as a starting point for reflection or conversation. By archetypal images, we mean here figures and situations in which people recognise recurring themes of life, such as a journey, hope or a new beginning.

Historical museum sources show that tarot also has a history as a game and that spiritual applications developed along their own path later. [11] That distinction makes study interesting. What did an image mean in its original setting? What does a contemporary reader add? Each question offers a different way in.

Two examples

A card showing a traveller prompts someone to ask which step he has long wanted to take. The image helps him put his longing into words.

A woman sees a star on a card and thinks of a person who gave her hope. The conversation then turns to what that support still means today.

An invitation to explore further

Look at one image. First describe what you see, then the associations that arise. Next, read something about the

image's origin and the interpretation an author gives it. Use it to open a conversation; the card does not decide for you. Its value may lie in the question of your own that becomes visible.

An image can illuminate a question while you keep the freedom to choose.

33 Sacred places and ancient monuments

A chapel, an ancient stone circle or a pyramid can touch us through its form, history and the meaning people give it. Sometimes a place belongs to a living faith tradition. UNESCO also describes religious and sacred heritage in terms of its spiritual meaning for communities. [12]

During a visit, different layers may meet. There is what is historically known about the place, what believers experience there and what happens within you. Attending to those layers enriches the encounter. The place also belongs to people who preserve and use it; their relationship with it deserves respect.

Two examples

Someone sits for a few minutes in a chapel and thinks of the generations who voiced their hopes there. The silence gains a human depth through that thought.

At an ancient monument, a visitor wonders how people built it. She reads the information on site while also keeping her own feeling of wonder.

An invitation to explore further

Choose a nearby place that speaks to you. Find something about its history and, where possible, its current meaning for the community. During a visit, notice what you perceive and what you personally feel. You do not have to travel far or expect a special experience. Sometimes a familiar place already helps us be more attentively present.

A place becomes a window when we dare to pause there with attention.

Further study with an open heart

Perhaps one subject has come close to you while reading. You can begin there. Choose a question that touches you and give it time to grow. A spiritual path of your own does not have to resolve every difference between traditions; it can deepen through attention to what you read, experience and carry into your actions.

From interest to deeper exploration

Begin with one subject that truly touches you. Make the question small enough to set out with. What does

meditation mean within this tradition? How does a writer use the word soul? What changed in the life of someone who described an unusual experience?

Then look for a source that makes clear who is speaking and from what background. An original text, an explanation from a faith community and a research report each have their own purpose. Read a suitable passage and write down in your own words what you understand from it. Often you will naturally notice where you want to ask further questions.

Comparison can then open new space. Read a second approach and see what it adds. A difference need not become a conflict. Sometimes the same word is used for a different thought. Sometimes an idea touches something you already know from your own life.

A small notebook for your own path

A notebook can quietly hold your exploration together. You can keep a sentence in it, describe an experience or note a question. For a text, record the author, title and the part you read. That way, you can later find what touched you and see how your understanding grew.

With an experience of your own, a simple description helps: what happened, in what circumstances and what did it mean to me? That meaning may change with life.

When you read back later, you can see what has stayed and what has found a different place.

Ask too what this exploration does in your ordinary life. Have you begun to listen more attentively? Do you dare to receive help? Is there more room for a kind answer? A spiritual interest gains depth when it stays connected with today's people and responsibilities.

Learning through encounter

A conversation can help where reading alone becomes too narrow. Seek people with whom you can ask questions and still keep an opinion of your own. A trustworthy encounter makes room for your pace, ordinary boundaries and life outside the group.

You may set a source aside and return later. You may be moved by a thought without immediately wanting to follow an entire teaching. In this way, depth grows from attention rather than haste. The door to the spiritual world remains an invitation to take part in life more consciously.

What you learn may quietly take root in the way you live.

Sources and paths for further reading

The numbers in the guide refer to the sources below. They offer original faith texts, explanations from a tradition, historical context or research. The author, institution and title help you find a source. In the digital edition you can click the source description. Many texts are in English; a browser translation can help with a first introduction.

1 Meditation and mindfulness

NCCIH, Meditation and Mindfulness: Effectiveness and Safety. An overview of different practices, research and points to consider. Relevant to themes 1 to 3.

2 Attention in everyday life

Plum Village, The Art of Mindful Living. An explanation from its own Buddhist practice tradition, including breath, walking and being present. Relevant to themes 1 to 3.

3 A faith text about love

First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13, through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. A Christian text to read quietly and connect with the question of how love becomes visible in our actions. For theme 9.

4 Nature and culturally held knowledge

UNESCO, Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. About the connections between knowledge of nature, traditions, memory and worldviews. For theme 14.

5 Synchronicity in Jung

C. G. Jung, Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle, Princeton University Press. The original work behind the concept; the publisher's page provides the bibliographic starting point. For theme 15. This concerns Jung's approach, not an established law of nature.

6 Karma and intention

Nibbedhika Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya 6.63, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu through Dhammatalks. An original Buddhist text in which intention in action is central. For theme 17.

7 Research around resuscitation and consciousness

Sam Parnia and fellow researchers, AWAreness during REsuscitation II: A multi-center study of consciousness and awareness in cardiac arrest, Resuscitation, 2023. Scientific article about memories and measurements around cardiac arrest and resuscitation. For themes 18 and 19. The abstract is available through PubMed; the research circumstances deserve attention when reading.

8 Getting to know Hindu concepts

Hindu American Foundation, Short answers to real questions about Hinduism. An explanation from its own faith background of atman, karma and reincarnation, among other subjects. For themes 18 and 22. An introduction to a diverse tradition.

9 Reiki and research information

NCCIH, Reiki. A description of the practice and the state of research. For theme 28. The source helps distinguish personal experience from medical effectiveness.

10 Angels in Catholic belief

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 328 to 336, through the Holy See. An original faith source about angels and their place in the Catholic tradition. For theme 30.

11 The history of tarot imagery

Victoria and Albert Museum, A history of tarot cards. Historical context for cards, images and changing uses. For theme 32. The museum source offers a different perspective from a contemporary spiritual reading.

12 Sacred places as living heritage

UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest. An explanation of religious and sacred places and their meaning for communities. For theme 33. The context helps give attention to history, faith and personal experience in their own right.

Part 3 — Discover more on IF

A book can keep you company in the quiet. Sometimes a page also awakens the wish to hear a voice, follow a story further or discover a new source. The IF website makes room for that. The eight starting points in this part help you choose what suits you at this moment.

Open the camera on your phone or tablet and point it at the code you choose. Move close enough to have just one code in view and tap the notification that appears. You do not need to take a photograph. If you are reading the digital edition, you can also click the title in the panel. The online content requires an internet connection.

The website has its own structure. Look for a subject by name, as its numbering may differ from the order in this book. From the overviews you can continue to the individual stories, themes and people. You can also find the home page at tussenhemelenaarde1111.com.

Let your interest set the pace. You do not have to look at everything. One story or one thought may be enough to set something in motion. The book remains a journey in its own right; the website opens additional windows.

Discover more · 1 and 2

Point the camera at one numbered code.

1 · IF — a meeting place

Stories, spiritual themes, people and inspiration come together here. Through the menu you can also read or listen to the online book, find a moment of light or get in touch.

2 · From stories to deeper understanding

Follow the connections between personal events and their spiritual meaning. A starting point for further reading around the experiences and questions in Part 1.

Discover more · 3 and 4

Point the camera at one numbered code.

3 · The 33 spiritual themes

Choose a subject from Part 2 in the overview. The themes offer explanations, examples and further sources. Select the title of the subject.

4 · Love, loss and forgiveness

A gentle starting point for absence, enduring connection and the path towards forgiveness. For anyone wishing to pause further with the love that continues to carry a life.

Discover more · 5 and 6

Point the camera at one numbered code.

5 · Spiritual people and their work

Discover the pages about spiritual authors and storytellers, with videos and further links. This section also includes categories for playlists, inspiration and events.

6 · My own spiritual videos

Listen to my own words about the subjects that occupy me. The videos add a personal voice to the stories and reflections of IF.

Discover more · 7 and 8

Point the camera at one numbered code.

7 · My Life

My wider life story: my family, Italian roots, work and the people who shaped me. Here you can also discover my other books.

8 · Dai di Più

The inventions and projects from my working life. This website shows the tangible side of the curiosity and longing to build that are also present in IF.

A door that may remain open

At the end of this book, I would like to sit beside you again for a moment. After all the words and concepts, there is still a person reading, with a life of their own, memories of their own and people dear to them. That is where I want IF to stay close.

Perhaps one subject has stirred your curiosity. Perhaps a memory arose that had long been quiet. Perhaps what you felt above all was a need for rest, or for a conversation with someone who understands you. Whatever you take with you, I hope these pages have given you a little warmth.

The story, the guide and the windows towards the website belong to the same bridge. First I shared what I have experienced and what has carried me. Then I offered words and starting points through which you can explore further for yourself. The path that grows from them belongs to you.

When I look back on my life, I think of people. Of my parents' care, of Dorina, of Marco and Michael, of my grandchildren and of so many others who found a place in my history. I also think of those who entrusted me with

their sadness and their trust. Their presence lives on in what I want to pass along.

Missing Marco remains part of me. Beside that longing lives gratitude for who he was and for what we shared together. When I write about him, I give something of that love a place among the people of today. I hope that your loved ones too, present or missed, have been allowed to come gently close within these pages.

I believe we are more connected with one another than we realise in daily life. That an encounter can carry meaning. That what we do in love has consequences, even when we cannot see what follows. From that trust, I want to keep choosing understanding, forgiveness where it can grow and the courage to give goodness another chance.

We live in a time when much can trouble us. Yet I also encounter the other side: someone who keeps listening, a hand that offers help, a person who dares to give trust again. Such gestures are real. They give me hope for the world we can shape together.

Perhaps we can begin today with one person. With a telephone call put off too long. With a kinder word. With the willingness to ask how things really are, and to stay for the answer. Sometimes we can give. Sometimes it is our turn to accept an outstretched hand.

For me, spirituality finds its warm place there: in wonder at existence and in the care with which we take part in it. Whatever we believe about heaven, here on earth we can already give one another something of belonging and safety.

IF — what if we meet one another with greater love?

Then something begins in today's conversation. And perhaps the other person takes something of it into another encounter. In this way, a loving gesture can travel onwards, from heart to heart.

I wish you room to keep discovering, people with whom you feel welcome and the peace to follow your own path. May light come where things are difficult, support when you are tired and joy in the small moments life still gives us.

Thank you for walking a little way with me.

Growing in connection and awareness.

Warm wishes,
Renato Rossi

May the love you have received here become an open door for someone else.