

THE THIRD HEAVENLY MEETING

*Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work
a day in your life.*

- Denis Waitley

Jack performed his tasks with new enthusiasm. One night after falling asleep he found himself in a familiar place. He greeted Saint Peter.

- Hi there, Peter. This is becoming a pleasant habit. Why are you wearing a bathrobe?
- Hello again, Jack. It is an early morning, isn't it? How are you?
- Much better than before, thanks for asking. Can we move to a relaxing place again?

In an instant they were sitting on a small hill overlooking green and yellow fields. Far away, Jack saw a river and huge, snowcapped mountains. Hundreds of colorful butterflies fluttered in the sky. Peter again wore his regular robe. Jack commented:

- What a great landscape. Just like in Yosemite.
- Isn't it? But we are still in Heaven. Enjoy the scenery, Jack. So, did you perform the tasks I gave you?
- Yes, and they turned out quite interesting.
- What observations did you make while performing your listening task?
- I found this task challenging, too. But I noticed that most people enjoyed telling me about themselves. Always when a topic came up that was interesting to the people I was talking with, their eyes lit up with enthusiasm, they relaxed, smiled a lot and gave a vivid account of their interests and what was going on in their lives. Some people I talked to wondered about my sudden interest in them.
- What interests you makes you enthusiastic. On the other hand, most people are not used to someone being truly interested in them, someone who would listen to them genuinely and empathetically.
- People who know me are wondering why I'm no longer talking incessantly and actually seem to listen to them. It's been a positive experience, though.
- When a person cracks the code of the first floodgate, it won't go unnoticed.
- I'm not that far with the code-cracking process yet.
- By the way, do you still remember the first insight?
- Sure, I remember it. The first insight is that I have a soul and it is the true me. I've made one decision, one change in my life related to this.
- Good. What is it?
- I decided that I'll no longer even glance at tabloid newspapers and gossip magazines. I won't be missing out on anything if I don't keep myself updated on the gossip of the private lives of celebrities. But it's difficult to ignore tabloids because their headlines jump out at you around every corner.

— What a fine decision. Your everyday path is indeed strewn with shrill and colorful headlines whose information value and contribution to a person's well-being is as good as zero.

— Or even negative.

— Exactly.

— People flip through these negative messages dozens of times per day.

— No wonder negative thoughts are etched in people's minds.

— I will read news from some newspaper. That will be enough.

— I am sure it will. What did you think of your second task? What kind of an experience was the retreat?

— I finally did as you said and withdrew into solitude. Rose was quite confused about my behavior. She, of course, was afraid that I would resort to my old habits again and become reabsorbed in selfishness and that "bubble" of mine. But apparently I managed to convince her that the retreat was positive and necessary.

— By the way, how has your wife been relating to you lately?

— A couple of days ago she complimented me and said that I've changed a bit — for the better. And that I spend more time at home and make an effort to listen to her and attend to her needs. She even noticed that I'm doing things around the house more on my own initiative. I've noticed that we argue much less than before. When we do, I don't let it get out of hand. I try to bite my tongue to prevent myself from blurting out my opinions without thinking first. And the silent treatments have decreased.

— Sounds great. Where did you spend your retreat?

— I spent three days at Mii Amo Spa. At first I had doubts about going there because, as you know, relaxing and being idle are not my thing. But it turned out to be an excellent destination for a retreat. And it's breathtakingly beautiful and tranquil.

— How did your retreat go?

— I have to admit that the beginning was very hard. I was doubtful about the whole thing. My thoughts wandered. The first afternoon I felt miserable, nearly unbearably so. I was very close to giving up. Even though you'd told me not to, I packed a couple of detective stories in my rucksack. I took one of them in my hand and was about to crack it open. But then I remembered my promise to you, so I tucked the books deep into my backpack and didn't touch them any more. I went out and climbed on the rocks for a while. Then I sat down to admire the view. Being outdoors calmed me down a little.

The evening went moderately well, even though all kinds of murky thoughts bombarded me. I also thought about what we'd discussed last time. I was recalling the past. I was thinking about the ego and its intrigue as well as presence. That night I slept like a baby, at least 10 straight hours. That doesn't happen very often.

— Do you know why people usually fear loneliness? They know they will be in bad company.

— That's right!

— The first day of solitude is hard for many because repressed past experiences, unfinished business of all kinds and things that have not been done properly come to the surface. The person realizes how he really is and how his life is. You need to let the difficult thoughts and feelings surface first. Only

after that can the mind gradually calm down and be tuned to the frequency of the soul. If you feel exceptionally depressed or anxious, a retreat can do more harm than good. It is worth waiting for the right moment.

— I'm sure you're right. The following day I thought through the questions you gave me and wrote down my thoughts. Your questions were very good but difficult.

— Posing certain enlightening questions during a retreat helps establish a connection with your soul. Did the questions help you gain insights?

— Do you want me to go through them one by one?

— That's fine with me.

— So, you asked me to think of what I want to do, learn and acquire for the rest of my life. I've already acquired so many material possessions, I don't intend to invest in those on a large scale anymore. But the part that really made me stop and think was the desire to spend the remaining hours of my life quite differently than I have in the past. I want to develop my empathy skills and my ability to take the viewpoints of others into consideration. What I want to actually do, I don't fully know yet.

— You have your own purpose in life.

— Do I? What is it?

— We will get to that in a minute. It has to do with the second insight.

— What I know is that I want to rebuild my relationship with Rose, my children and my grandson. I want to spend more time with them.

— That's great.

— The next question was interesting, too. You asked me to act as a scriptwriter and to think of the rest of my life as a movie. You asked me to write down, in present tense, the highlights of the rest of my life, the stuff that will be a pleasure to reminisce about during the last moments of my life. This task helped me to get a picture of what I want to do in the future. After thinking for a long time, I finally managed to pin down the following five highlights:

1. Rose and I rediscover our love and it lasts the rest of our lives.

2. I re-establish a connection with my children and spend great moments with them and my grandchildren.

3. I find some meaningful new things to do.

4. I am fully present at every moment, concentrate on every person, thing and situation.

5. I hit at least one hole-in-one.

— Wonderful highlights! The fifth one is probably the most spectacular.

— Heh, perhaps not. But it's a good challenge for me. The most important items are, however, the first three. I want to spend more time with my loved ones. And I will do my best to get close to Rose again.

— A fine decision. It is important to cherish your relationship every day. The ego can throw a relationship off track. Too many people get married and live in a relationship to satisfy their own needs.

One often hopes that the spouse would make one happy. Or would block the black hole and make one whole again. In the frenzy of love, the partner seems perfect at first. By and by the ego makes many people see lots of flaws in their spouse and look at him or her through ever more distorted lenses. Many attempt to change their spouse to correspond to their own desires.

— I've realized I can't change another person. The thrill of that first year of love vanished into thin air. It was replaced with fault-finding and complaining, with a lot of quarreling.

— Many take their spouse for granted, and underuse small but meaningful gestures such as embracing and caring words such as "I love you." Love is more than a feeling. Love is a choice and must be chosen each day. When you choose love every day, it will last.

— I realize I need to be devoted to my relationship every day. And my ego needs to be tamed. People can be so impatient.