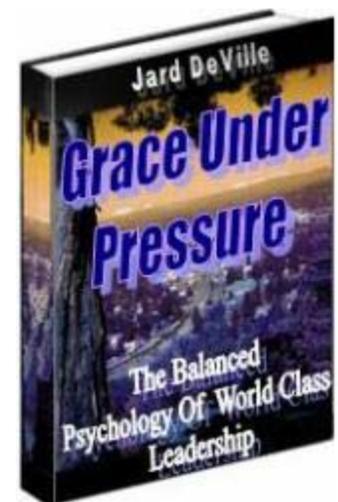
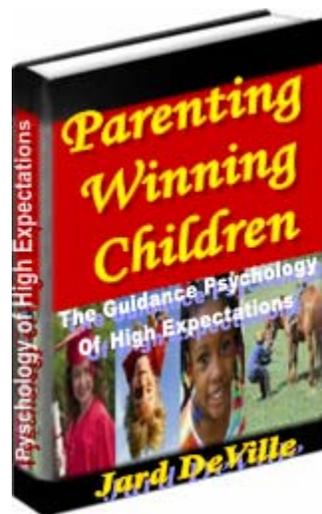
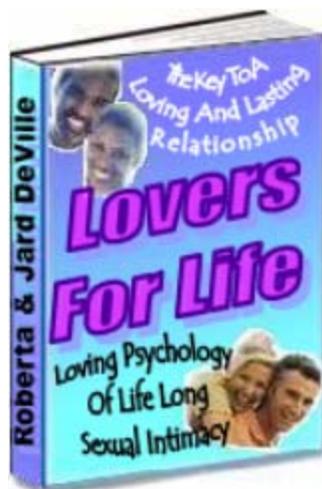
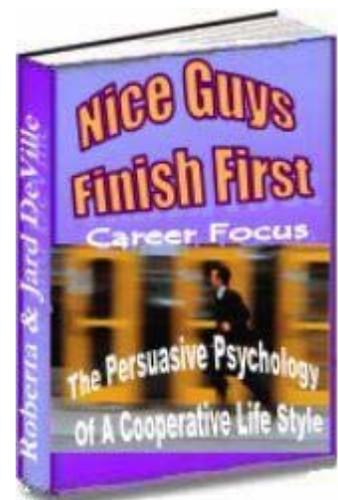
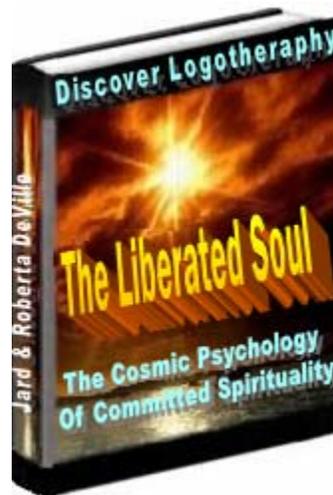
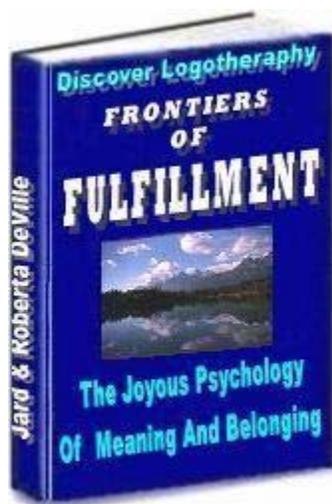


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## *The Joyous Psychology Of Meaning And Belonging*

*“For ten thousand years suffering humanity has been laboriously climbing a vast black tower of ignorance, superstition and narcissism. And when some of our scientists finally reached the top, they found a colony of philosophers and theologians awaiting them in God’s sunlight.”*

*Viktor Frankl, Logotherapy Founder (In a private conversation.)*

### ***ABOUT STARS AND SOULS***

We, Roberta and Jard DeVille want to discuss with you what event is obviously the greatest natural event of all time and eternity. It is nothing less than awe-inspiring, mind boggling and humbling to realize that in the beginning there was only -- *hydrogen!* Nothing else existed within the Cosmos for countless eons after everything exploded into reality during the first nanosecond of the Big Bang. In fact -- there was no Cosmos as we know it today. The universe was absolute chaos for an eternity and then, slowly but with irresistible force, gravity sucked the swirling hydrogen clouds together into gigantic glowing globes that grew so dense and so violent that they cooked off as incredibly vast and powerful nuclear furnaces. Stars were born, lived, died and were then reborn in incalculable numbers. We have trouble wrapping our minds around that initial concept alone, for there are more stars in our Milky Way galaxy alone than grains of sand on all the beaches of Earth. And incredibly, there are up to three or four hundred million galaxies across the cosmic void. Perhaps you are beginning to understand what we feel when we use the term *mind-boggling*, with our statement that this is the greatest story ever told, that God the *Cosmic Creator*, the *Seminal Spirit*, the very *Author of Existence*, can be welcomed as a loving companion in our lives.

The primitive stars in each island universe, such as Andromeda or the Milky Way, spewed off immense clouds of radioactive stardust that is still being transmuted through cosmic alchemy into the hundred or so elements needed to form more sophisticated stars and their planets. Much as uranium is changed into plutonium within a nuclear reactor, simple hydrogen is transmuted into new elements within the blazing nuclear globes. Then, as radioactive stardust spewing away from each star is compressed through gravity into even more generations of stars, this star stuff is transformed still more into all the matter needed create and sustain life. God's incredible process of *continuous creation* of the Cosmos and its contents including ourselves, continues forever on this divine scale, for astronomers now have incredible photographs of developing stars popping off like strings of firecrackers along unimaginably long columns of hydrogen that has evolved into stardust. Every day -- yesterday and today and tomorrow, hundreds of millions of tons of this star stuff drift down to earth, growing our planet about an inch in diameter every million years. And if that seems slow, it is only because you haven't yet caught sight of God's schedule!

Jard has often wandered in awe under the stars in the clear, dry nights of the New Mexico desert, trying to picture what the universe is really like out there. And finally, after half a century of study, he only thinks he understands the Cosmos. He really doesn't. No one does although astronomers and cosmologists are learning more and more about existence. There is nothing simple about this cosmic alchemy that culminated eventually in the meta-universe in a time frame our flea-bitten, snaggle-toothed ancestors couldn't possibly understand. Indeed, how can we ourselves describe a worm hole that may open into a multi-dimensional parallel universe in an alien space-time continuum? Or explain a cosmic singularity, a black hole of ultimate density in which time and space cease to exist? Of course, the time span and the distances of the Cosmos are much too vast for our limited human frames of reference to comprehend. We are like people watching a movie in which each frozen frame lasts longer than our lives. The universe only appears to be static because we don't live long enough to see much of the show. This apparent lack of movement confused our ancestors, especially bewildering ancient theologians and philosophers who tried to understand the Cosmos in relationship to God without any real understanding of science to shape their legends.

*Unfortunately, many individuals, denominations and bureaucracies have frozen that illusion of rigidity into their traditions and ideologies where it causes great harm when circumstances shift and they and their reluctant organizations must adapt enthusiastically or perish.*

According to researchers Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, Alan Guth, Stephen Hawking and others, the Cosmos seems to function beyond normal scientific principles as we understand them -- in a metaphysical or spiritual manner. Nothing shows this better than research into the origins of existence -- *cosmology*. God has always functioned on an eternal time scale and that in itself causes many of the apparent conflicts between science and religion. We believe, while Islam, Judaism and Christianity originated in Eastern mysticism, the time has come when we must weave Western empiricism in with the metaphysical in order to keep our faith from becoming sterile and absurd. Of course, we understand that many souls within human religions have clung to concepts that are obviously impossible myths used by our ancient ancestors to explain events they couldn't comprehend. Today, thoughtful persons can better understand nature's laws -- but only through long study for which few persons have the time. The laws of life are not simple and very few things are what they appear to be to our unaided senses. And worse, our understanding of nature through science keeps changing because of new knowledge. And if there is anything we humans hate with a vehement passion, it is abandoning once and for all - anything we learned while growing up! We do like our knowledge plain and simple, without any shifting ambiguities to confuse us. As Voltaire wrote, most men and women think only enough to confirm their prejudices!

To Isaac Newton, matter behaved much as billiard balls that bounce off of each other. Obviously, billiard balls still bounce, but now, after Niels Bohr's quantum mechanics insights, matter is better perceived as waves of energy, as sub-atomic particles behaving much like minute electronic solar systems whirling in constant motion. In short, most of the *apparently* solid desk on which we work, is space and energy, as empty as the long parsecs between the great spiral galaxies. If Jard could align his molecules with the desk's empty spaces, he could ease his fist right through the wood. Of course, that would probably set off a nuclear explosion that would destroy southwest Minneapolis! In other words, the skeptic who says show me God and I'll live a life of faith, hope and love is much like a physicist who rejects Bohr's quantum studies because he or she doesn't understand them.

*Jard perceives the emerging of countless proto-universes, each one probably teeming with life, as God's vast existential vision of what was and is and forevermore shall be.*

Bohr saw existence much the same way in his brilliant research. Around 1910 in Berlin, he teased his friend Einstein, saying;

*Albert, you must stop telling God what he's thinking. And you must stop telling the people what you're telling God. You're scaring the hell out of them.*

The Cosmos isn't some vast clockwork mechanism ticking ponderously along as Newton thought and most persons still assume.

*Actually, energy, time, space and matter fuse in a metaphysical manner which reveals their essential other worldly nature and that is what Einstein was saying with  $E = mc^2$ .*

If you look far enough back in time through astronomy, you find yourself peering right into the face of God doing a hands-on operation of the first magnitude. When Jard was teaching for years in the Executive Development Conference at the University of Arizona, he made a significant discovery. When he openly confessed his spiritual faith, it was as if he were giving several other professors permission to reveal their own. They discussed their own beliefs and he eventually discovered that the astronomers and cosmologists working at Arizona's Kitts Peak astronomical laboratory, outnumbered psychologists, economists and other earthbound scholars by two to one in the faith communities of Tucson. Like Jard, they were filled with awe by the magnitude of the Cosmos, and being intelligent scholars, connected the facts of reality with the Cosmic Creator.

We realize that the processes of creation are incredibly complex but God puts no premium on ignorance in any form. God is indeed the seminal *Lord of the Cosmos* but to ignore natural processes as revealed by scientific research in the name of faith, is to deny God's methods used in shaping and using matter and life to great and majestic purposes. Through rigorous study, it has become obvious to all except the most obtuse or reactionary persons, that the *Cosmic Creator* didn't wave Merlin's magic wand or snap some mighty fingers once and for all in creation that is eternal in and of itself. The universe can be seen as virtually a living and growing organism that reflects the nature of its Creator. We believe that denying the existence of God's *continuous creation* processes through which the Cosmos matures is as close to heresy as one can get. Roberta and Jard both bow in awe when we catch glimpses of creation and we devoutly worship God the *First Cause*, the *Ultimate Personality* of the Cosmos.

Here now, are two incredible discoveries that should really make you question any primitive or ideological assumptions about your life and place in the scheme of things.

**FIRST** -- Despite sounding manifestly impossible, in the beginning -- minute bubbles of matter, smaller than the period at the end of this sentence, contained enough hydrogen to form vast spiral galaxies with countless stars that expanded exponentially for billions of years. Wow! These cosmic bubbles of ultimate density flowed out of God's heart and mind to form the island universes in many complex dimensions. They are not only isolated from each other in space but also within time. While we experience the three dimensions of length, breadth and height, plus time, there actually are from twelve to sixteen more dimensions that we cannot see. They must be identified through mathematics. There is no way to get from one galaxy to another even if we could travel faster than light. Sorry, all you Trekkies (Star Trek). We also enjoyed the adventures of James Kirk, Jean Luc Piccard and Captain Janeway in the *Star Trek* sagas, but it just isn't going to happen in the real Cosmos. Not without mastering some exotic principles of nature we haven't even glimpsed yet.

**SECOND** -- If those minute galactic bubbles erupting into island galaxies aren't beyond human comprehension, try to understand a vastly more complex process. The poisonous radioactive elements and compounds spewed off by the stars, the few dollars worth of chemicals that form your body and mine, are transmuted into thinking and loving persons who once brought to life, perpetuate their species. Roberta says that she has trouble understanding a flea, to say nothing of the way children are conceived and programmed genetically to grow to adulthood with seldom a glitch. And she had three of them -- children, not fleas!

No wonder many cosmologists say that the Cosmos appears metaphysical in nature rather than simply a solid physical entity. It appears to transcend its own laws in complexity, seems almost to live and breathe as if the personification of its *Creator*. No doubt they are right. We, the authors of this course, certainly cannot accept the spontaneous appearance of life within the Cosmos, without accepting the creative existence of the *Seminal Spirit*.

*We can't believe for one moment that the appearance of living creatures across our earth and sea and sky is the result of blind chance. There is unimaginable intelligence and knowledge, vast wisdom and limitless power behind the creation of that eerie looking, green-glowing stardust -- and that entity is the God who enters into a covenant relationship with every human who connects contritely and commits his or her life to spiritual growth and generous service to humanity.*

We humans are here because God's deepest passion has always been life -- life in every nook and cranny of our world. From the mountain peaks to the depths of the seas, life of every shape and style emerges constantly through *continuous creation*. Life seems to ooze out of the very pores of Mother Earth. The six or eight billion year old record of fossils in the rocks is staggering in volume and complexity. When Jard and Roberta were in graduate school at the University of Cincinnati and he was teaching science at Saylor Park School, he'd occasionally take the kids fossil hunting with picks and hammers along the creeks that carved passages through the chalk bed of the vast, primordial Mississippian Sea. The limestone deposits are hundreds of feet thick, composed of the skeletal remains of creatures that look like everything from worms to trilobites and one or two inch long beaks of prehistoric squids. During one spring plowing season, a local farmer uncovered a giant squid's beak over four feet long. Even the professors at the University of Cincinnati had trouble estimating how long its arms must have been. Perhaps, one of them finally ventured a guess, tentacles of sixty or more feet!

As anthropologist/priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin expressed so brilliantly, life in the universe is no accident -- no one time collision of random factors that led eventually to humankind's appearance on this lonely planet. Rather, life's forces of free radicals and electricity are bubbling continually throughout the Cosmos, under enormous pressure to burst through every seam on every viable world, into existence in every decent environment. Of course, as children of the stars we simply cannot boast that God created the Cosmos for us alone, when one small planet around an insignificant yellow sun would have been quite enough to meet our needs for millions of years.

***Here now is our crucial point about cosmic origins, about stars and human souls in our search for satisfaction and fulfillment.***

*When God's process of Continuous Creation produced our species through cosmic alchemy, through continuous creation or the evolution of species, we inherited the metaphysical nature of God and the Cosmos from which we came. No other species became so self-aware, with spiritual yearnings that go far beyond our physical and psychological needs. We are the only philosophical species. Like no other creatures -- we know that we know. We think constantly about thinking and must find consistent spiritual sources of meaning and belonging with those who love us during our lives. If we fail at this, we surely go spiritually bankrupt or as psychologists and sociologists write, existentially alienated.*

We ponder being alive, wondering who we are, why we exist and where we are going. After making a bad choice and receiving punishment, no dog or cat lays awake agonizing over what a bad thing it has done. To think about good and evil is a human concept. So is success and failure. It is our intelligence, a vital part of the *spiritual unconscious* of which Viktor Frankl wrote, that actively seeks more than bread and circuses, more than power, possessions, prestige and pleasure. We live within the physical and through the psychological. But we dare not neglect our philosophical or spiritual needs or we wither and blow away much as rootless tumbleweeds vanish in a windstorm. We absolutely must find a sense of purpose and feelings of permanence for our lives in order to become satisfied with ourselves. We don't want to be like the confused souls of whom Eunice Tietjens who wrote, metaphorically in blood about human fallibility, during the desperate years of World War I. We paraphrase --

*I have too many selves to know the one.  
In too selfish a schooling was I bred.  
Child of too many cities that have gone  
Down wicked crossroads of evil schemes,  
And before too many altars have bowed low  
To light holy fires to self-proclaimed gods.*

Obviously, the secular society in which industrialized, computerized and globalized humans currently find themselves makes it difficult to see beyond the many temptations of an acquisitive life-style. Until we connect consciously with God by developing purposeful and permanent covenant relationships, we remain finite individuals at risk, trying to navigate our fragile little boats on a desperately complex voyage that stretches from infinity to eternity with very little security while traversing the void. And it is from this confusion in an age of incessant change that the many existential frustrations of our era come to bedevil us!

Fortunately, God, the *Continuous Creator* and *Lord of the Cosmos* in whom we live and move and have our being, is the all-powerful and all-pervasive spirit who knows, understands and loves all persons. In other words;

*God loves you and all of your loved ones, although multitudes of souls inadvertently shut God out of their lives until they are unhappy, frustrated and in desperate spiritual straits. They fail to deal wisely with the psychospiritual needs that we have all inherited from the Lord of the Cosmos and continue seeking fulfillment in places and activities in which it cannot be found. Then, with their souls wounded, they clutch at any number of self-defeating solutions in a futile search to find meaning in activities and places where little love and acceptance is offered to them. As Karen Horney wrote so perceptively, 'Many neurotic and frustrated men and women will do anything to be loved -- except to become loveable.'*

God's obvious passion is life -- life beyond understanding in every nook and cranny of Earth and probably beyond our limited vision to populate the entire Cosmos. Astronomers have now identified more planets beyond our solar system than within it. We believe that God connects with each person through the written and the living word, through the Scriptures and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. God also speaks to humans of reality within the ever-maturing, ever-enlightening knowledge of the different scientific disciplines. We do indeed understand this --

*The universe throbs with God's passion for life; life under intense pressure to burst through at every seam in every viable environment, on every developing world. This is no little fly-by-night operation we are invited to join but the very purpose of existence! God's passion is why there is something on this ball in the void, rather than nothing at all and we are invited to join in the celebration with the Lord of Life.*

There are spiritual requirements, however. If we foolishly reject a conscious connection or just ignore God through ignorance, we are missing the most crucial element of satisfaction. For the health of our souls, we must meet our cosmic needs through the *Seminal Creator*. Only when we become consciously spiritual beings can we say with the old Swedish hymn:

*Children of the heavenly Father  
Safely in his bosom gather;  
Nestling bird nor star in heaven  
Such a refuge e're was given.*

*Neither life nor death shall ever  
From the Lord his children sever;  
Unto them his grace he showeth,  
And their sorrows all he knoweth.*

Despite the quarrels of some fearful persons within formal religion and academic research, there never has been any real conflict between spiritual wisdom and scientific knowledge. There is nothing that should cause spiritually minded persons to cower in the stagnant backwaters of research, education, the arts, commerce and government. Of course, science considers the *how* of cosmic creation while religion deals with the *why* of our extraordinary Cosmos.

### ***SAMPLE SELF FOCUS***

*Why do so many contemporary persons have trouble seeing God's footprints throughout the Cosmos spread so magnificently around us?*

*Why would any fragile and finite person, navigating through the Cosmos, try to prosper without appropriating for oneself the incredible knowledge, wisdom and love obvious in its creation?*

## ***FAITH'S REWARDS***

Although it is difficult for secular-minded skeptics to believe that fulfillment and joy is found through a spiritual life-style, we really can prosper in many ways through faith, hope and love. This can now be seen through a large body of medical research. Psychiatrist Raymond Moody, some years ago, researched and wrote the amazing book called *Life After Life*. In it he described scores of experiences through which persons from all walks of life died clinically and then were called back through heroic medical procedures. Multitudes of persons, perhaps as many as several million, including Roberta who bled to death during the birth of our third child and was revived miraculously, went through the now famous tunnel to the light on the other side of life and then returned to complete earthly missions. The life after life experience has become too common to deny, although some scientists legitimately debate its cause. However, most researchers see it as a real event. From time to time we catch glimpses that existence isn't all over for us with the death of the brain and body -- some aspect of our soul seems divine and linked forever with the God who summoned us into existence. We suspect the human race has been experiencing this for a long time, which would account for the elaborate Egyptian celebration of life after life during the ages of the pharaohs.

We can also verify the power of prayer and faith in our lives as believers after connecting God. Professor of Cardiology Randolph Byrd of the University of California Medical School in San Francisco studied some 400 patients at San Francisco General Hospital over a period of several years. They were in the Cardiology Unit with massive heart attacks or severe chest pains that required serious treatment. Dr. Byrd conducted traditional double blind research in which neither the health care professionals nor the patients knew which half of the sufferers were being prayed for - in addition to the best care the hospital could offer them. Their names were sent to church groups around the Bay area for regular prayers. The two hundred control patients received the precise same medical treatment but without consistent prayer. The results were spectacular, far beyond statistics, almost beyond belief!

According to Larry Dossey, M D, who has written *Meaning And Medicine* and *Healing Words (The Power Of Prayer)*, the group being prayed for reacted precisely as if the patients were being given a miraculous new medication. The 200 being prayed for, although taken at random in a double blind, had far fewer deaths, required less surgery and were soon put on a much milder medication schedule. They healed more quickly than the control 200. Dr. Dossey reports that had any new drug been so effective, it would have been hailed world wide as a modern medical miracle. Dossey cites some one hundred thirty research studies which show that prayer heals and how it is connected with the temporal area of the brain's right hemisphere! We can call this telepathy or communicating with God or whatever, but the truth is; When we pray for you with love, compassion and concern, knowing we are connected with God, something good happens to you! Also -- the other way around when you pray for us.

From the day Jard learned that his innocent nephew on Death Row in an Arizona prison was receiving an appeal hearing, he and his family and friends prayed that justice would be served, that the judge would see the State prosecutor's biases and errors and release David. What happened at the hearing? Within forty-five minutes the judge threw the conviction out as being without any merit and sent David home with his mother and father. When we connect with God -- we also connect much better with each other and it can be a fulfilling relationship! David's vindication was a tremendous victory over evil and bigoted men and systems through prayer.

### ***SELF-FOCUS SAMPLE***

*Do you know anyone who returned from the other side?*

*When have you seen sincere and loving prayers work miracles?*

### ***ABOUT BELIEF***

The operative word in the all-time favorite gospel song, *Amazing Grace* is *believed*; to believe God's great spiritual revelation to humankind. Some years ago, the story goes, a college pre-med student told her professor of New Testament Studies that she could no longer believe the Bible, that it was filled with impossibilities such as the virgin birth, the calling forth of Lazarus from the tomb and the resurrection of Jesus. The professor smiled benevolently and explained.

*Mary Ellen those are the little issues, the starter beliefs to get you moving in the right direction. If you think those are odd, wait until you find that God is calling you to come for communion and to believe that the big and rugged, scary-looking black man kneeling beside the altar rail is your brother in Christ. And that you are being called to leave your prestigious medical practice to serve as a poor clinic doctor to the Hottentots of Africa. That you are to take up your cross daily and follow Christ in simplicity as the Shakers taught rather than buying a new Mercedes coupe every other year. That's what you shall find almost impossible to believe!*

Of course we both see the Bible as a spiritual and historical library, written from many perspectives by a great many different authors from different times and places, with many views of God. It has never been a scientific document and anyone who reads it with that mind-set, is ignoring its true value. He or she shall have to engage in all kinds of convoluted assumptions about knowledge and wisdom. Of course, there are inconsistencies in every religion's scriptures. For example, St. Paul seemed to believe that as soon as a Christian dies, he or she goes immediately to be with Christ in heaven. He said that for himself to die is to be immediately present with the Lord. On the other hand, St. John seems to be saying that the dead Christians shall sleep in the earth to be resurrected only on the day of judgment. He talked about the last trumpet call when the graves shall open and the dead in Christ shall rise. And we cannot be sure how much the editors and rewriters of the earliest texts, over several centuries as they were creating the

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