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[The Eight Pillars of Joy]

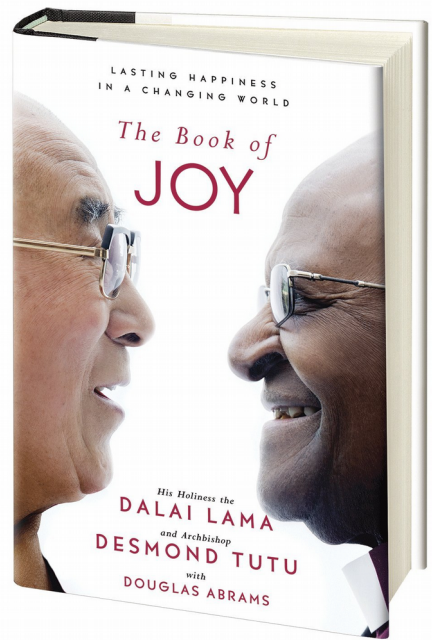
8. Generosity: We Are Filled with Joy

Celebration: Dancing in the Streets of Tibet

Departure: A Final Goodbye

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"I've sometimes joked and said God doesn't know very much math, because when you give to others, it should be that you are subtracting from yourself. But in this incredible kind of way – I've certainly found that to be the case so many times – you gave it then seems like in fact you are making space for more to be given to you.



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Generosity is often something that we learn to enjoy by doing. It is probably for this reason that charity is prescribed by almost every religious tradition. [...]

Generosity is so important in all of the world's religions because it no doubt expresses a fundamental aspect of our interdependence and our need for one another.

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Generosity is not just about the money we give. It is also about how we give our time. In the happiness literature there is a great deal of research on the importance of having a sense of purpose. Purpose, fundamentally, is about how we are able to contribute and be generous to others, how we feel needed by and of value to others.

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"So it's not the wealth and the status. These are neutral. It's our attitude. It's what we do with them that is so important. We said it on the very first day: When you become so inward looking, so self-regarding, you are going to end up a shriveled human being."

in Buddhist teachings there are three kinds of generosity: material giving, giving freedom from fear (which can involve protection, counseling, or solace), and spiritual giving, which can involve giving your wisdom, moral and ethical teachings, and helping people to be more self-sufficient and happier.

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If you build the real concept of working together, and the profit is shared together, then real harmony develops. This is what we really need now. Harmony among the seven billion human beings.

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We have been brought up to think that we have to obey the laws of the jungle. Eat or be eaten. We are ruthless in our competitiveness. So much so that now stomach ulcers are status symbols. They show just how very hard we work. We work hard not only to supply our needs and the needs of our families, but we are trying to outdo the other. We have downplayed the fact that actually our created nature is that we are made for complementarity. We have become dehumanized and debased. As Martin Luther King Jr. Said, 'We must learn to live together as sisters and brothers, or we will perish together as fools.'

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You need other people in order to be human. [...] A person is a person through other persons.

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An entire generation has been brought up with a certain mentality, with a certain way of life. So when we think about the future, how to build healthy humanity, we really have to think about how we create a new generation of citizens with a different kind of mind-set. Here education really is the key. Christianity has wonderful teachings, so does Buddhism, but these teachings and approaches are not sufficient.

"Now secular education is universal. So now we must include in formal education of our youth some teaching of compassion and basic ethics, not on the basis of religious belief but on the basis of scientific findings and our common sense and our universal experience. [...] Today, I think many human beings... have too many negative emotions like greed, fear, and anger dominating their minds.

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remember that you are not alone, and you do not need to finish the work. It takes time, but we are learning, we are growing, we are becoming the people we want to be. It helps no one if you sacrifice your joy because others are suffering. We people who care must be attractive, must be filled with joy, so that others recognize that caring, that helping and being generous are not a burden, they are a joy. Give the world your love, your service, your healing, but you can also give it your joy. This, too, is a great gift.

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The quality they both have, perhaps more than any other, is this generosity of the spirit. They are big-hearted, magnanimous, tolerant, broad-minded, patient, forgiving, and kind. Maybe this generosity of the spirit is the truest expression of spiritual development, of what the Archbishop had said it takes time to become.

as we have accepted ourselves, our vulnerabilities, and our humanity, we can accept the humanity of others. We can have compassion for our faults and have compassion for those of others. We can be generous and give our joy to others.

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When we practice a generosity of spirit, we are in many ways practicing all the other pillars of joy. In generosity, there is a wider perspective, in which we see our connection to all others. There is a humility that recognizes our place in the world and acknowledges that at another time we could be the one in need, whether that need is material, emotional, or spiritual. There is a sense of humour and an ability to laugh at ourselves so that we do not take ourselves too seriously. There is an acceptance of life, in which we do not force life to be other than what it is. There is a forgiveness of others and a release of what might otherwise have been. There is a gratitude for all that we have been given. Finally, we see others with a deep compassion and a desire to help those who are in need. And from this comes a generosity that is "wise selfish," a generosity that recognizes helping others as helping ourselves.

Celebration

stories of children escaping Tibet, arriving in India – with the suffering of families being separated

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Quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupery: "True happiness comes from the joy of deeds well done, the zest of creating things new"

the image of Tibetan endless knots comes up a couple of times – signifying the impermanence and interdependence of all life and the union of wisdom and compassion.

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Death, as the Archbishop had reminded us, is inevitable. It is the way life should be. A beginning. A middle. And an end. It is this cycle that makes life precious and beautiful. However, it does not make the sorrow any less for those who lose one they love.

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If we think we want to get joy for ourselves, we realize that it's very shortsighted, short-lived. Joy is the reward, really, of seeking to give joy to others. When you show compassion, when you show caring, when you show love to others, do things for others, in a wonderful way you have a deep joy that you can get in no other way. You can't buy it with money. You can be the richest person on Earth, but if you care only about yourself, I can bet my bottom dollar you will not be happy and joyful. But when you are caring, compassionate, more concerned about the welfare of others than about your own, wonderfully, wonderfully, you suddenly feel a warm glow in your heart, because you have, in fact, wiped the tears from the eyes of another.

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I think as long as we human beings remain here, there will always be some limited violence, as there is with all animals. But serious violence, mass killing, war, this we can eliminate if we have the proper vision and method. I think, certainly, it is possible to achieve a world without such sorrow.

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Queen Mother in conversation with Dalai Lama reflects on 20th Century – the concept of human rights and self-determination have lead to a better world

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Human beings, through wider contact and more education, are becoming more mature. It takes time, and we must take the long view.

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It is clear that the only way to truly change our world is through teaching compassion. Our society is lacking an adequate sense of compassion, sense of kindness, and genuine regard for others' well-being. [...] We must promote basic human values, the inner values that lie at the heart of who we are as humans. [...]

Just to pray or rely on religious faith is not sufficient [said the Dalai Lama].

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Archishop Tutu's blessing:

Dear Child of God, you are loved with a love that nothing can shake, a love that loved you long before you were created, a love that will be there long after everything has disappeared. You are precious, with a preciousness that is totally quite immeasurable. And God wants you to be like God. Filled with life and goodness and laughter – *and joy*.

God, who is forever pouring out God's whole being from all eternity, wants you to flourish. God wants you to be filled with joy and excitement and ever longing to be able to find what is so beautiful in God's creation: the compassion of so many, the caring, the sharing. And God says, Please, my child, help me. Help me to spread love and laughter and joy and compassion. And you know what, my child? As you do this – hey, presto – you discover joy. Joy, which you had not sought, comes as the gift, as almost the reward for this non-self-regarding caring for others.

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From the Dalai Lama

I hope this book will leave you with more hope and a sense of greater responsibility rooted in genuine concern for others' well-being. [...]

from various quarters, with a common effort, and a vision that things about humanity, we can achieve unity and harmony with a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, with the oneness of humanity. [...]

When the larger systemic problems are addressed, then the smaller problems will also be solved quite easily. So all of us, spiritual brothers and sisters, have a special responsibility, have a special role to make clear that the ultimate source of a meaningful life is within ourselves.

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[The Archbishop and Dalai Lama] had warned us that we cannot pursue joy as an end in itself, or we will miss the bus. Joy comes, rather, from daily thoughts, feelings, and actions. And they had told us repeatedly the action that gets us on the bus: bringing joy to others.

Questions for reflection:

1. How might you have responded to the childrens' stories of escape and loss?
2. To echo the question asked of the Queen Mother, "do you feel the world is becoming better, worse, or staying the same?"