

# The World Doesn't Need to Be Saved

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*Byron Katie*

I have looked down the barrel of a gun pointed at me, and never for an instant was I afraid. Fear is the story of a future. How could I know that he would pull the trigger? How can I know that an environmental catastrophe will happen, or if it does happen, that it will be a bad thing for me, for you, for the planet? Once you understand this, and begin to live in reality, not in your unquestioned thoughts about reality, life becomes fearless, loving, and filled with adventure and gratitude, whatever the nonexistent future may bring.

Fear is not possible when you've questioned your mind; it can be experienced only when the mind projects a story into the future. The story of an unquestioned past is what we continue to project as a future. If we weren't attached to the story of a past, we would notice that we're already living in the future, and that it's always now, and now is always good.

The war with God – which is another name for reality – always sees catastrophes looming, whether these are planetary or personal. It's a very painful way to live. But when you question your mind, thoughts flow in and out and don't cause any stress, because you no longer believe them. And you instantly realize that their opposites could be just as true, or even truer. Reality shows you, in that peace of mind, that there are no problems, only solutions. You know, to your very depths, that whatever happens is what should be happening and you know what to do. If I lose my life or my children or the whole planet, I lose what wasn't mine in the first place. It's a good thing. Either that, or God is a sadist, and that's not my experience.

In the meantime, I go about my business as if there were no life and no death (and there isn't). My home is powered by the sun, my Segway is powered by my home, the car I drive is a Prius, I'm careful about recycling. I vote for people who say they are concerned about global warming and have a record to prove it. I give money to environmental causes. I am fearless, worry-free, and I do whatever makes sense to me for my good, which is for the good of the whole. "Get solar panels," the mind says, and there is no possible reason not to do it, since all thoughts have been tested by inquiry. "I can't afford to do it"? "I can't afford not to do it" was truer. The panels are installed, my electric bill was minus \$23 this month, and at some point I will have put back all that I have used, and more. This will match my existence: all traces gone, a grateful life given back to what it came from.

I once worked with a large group of environmentalists. These were people who had committed their lives to saving the planet. They were living with a great deal of anxiety, even terror, they said – an enormous burden on their shoulders. But many of them had open minds and were willing to question the thoughts that were causing them so much stress. I helped them investigate thoughts such as "Something terrible is going to happen," "I need to save the planet," and "People should be more conscious." They discovered how these thoughts were driving them crazy, and how the thoughts have various opposites that might be just as true or truer.

After a few hours of intensive inquiry, I asked them to imagine the worst thing that could happen: a full-scale environmental disaster that wiped out humanity. They shared their fears and gave a lot of

graphic details. Then I asked them to turn the thought around, to find the thought's exact opposite: "The *best* thing that could happen is a full-scale environmental disaster that wiped out humanity." I asked them to give me three reasons why this statement could be as true as, or truer than, the original. And these brave people really were able to go there: "It might be good for some endangered species not to have people around." "It would be good for insects." "We wouldn't be pumping and mining the life blood out of the planet." "It would be good for the rainforests." "Who knows what intelligent species would evolve if we were gone?" And there were many more ideas like this.

Inquiry is grace. It wakes up inside you, and it's alive, and there's no suffering that can stand against it. It will take you over, and then it doesn't matter what experiences life brings you, "good" or "bad." You find yourself opening your arms to the worst that can happen, because inquiry will continue to hold you, safely, sweetly, as reality does, through it all. Even the most radical problem becomes just a sweet, natural happening, an opportunity for your own self-realization. And when others are experiencing terror, you are the embodiment of clarity and compassion. You are the living example, the match for reality.

One of the things you discover when you question your mind is that the world doesn't need saving. It's already saved. What a relief! The most attractive thing about the Buddha was that he saved one person: himself. That's all he needed to save; when he saved himself, he saved the whole world. All his years of teaching – forty years of apparent compassion – were just the forward momentum of that one moment of insight.

I don't order God around. I don't presume to know whether life or death is better for me or for anyone I love. How can I know that? All I know is that God is everything and God is good. I call this the last story.

Reality is kind. Its nature is uninterrupted joy. When I work up from the dream of Byron Kate, there was nothing left, and the nothing was benevolent. It's so benevolent that it wouldn't reappear, it wouldn't recreate itself. The worst thing could happen, the worst imagination of horror, the whole planet could be obliterated, and it would see that as grace, it would even celebrate, it would open its arms and sing "Hallelujah!" It's so clear, so in love with what is, that it might seem unkind, even inhuman. It cares totally, and it doesn't care at all, not one bit, not if all living creatures in the universe were obliterated in an instant. How could it react with anything less than joy? It's in love with what is, whatever form that may take.

As you begin to wake yourself up from your dreams of hell or purgatory, one by one by one, heaven begins to dawn on you in a way that the imagination can't comprehend. And then, as you continue to question what you believe, you realize that heaven, too, is just a beginning. There is something better than heaven. It's the eternal, meaningless, infinitely creative mind. It can't stop for time or space or even joy. It's so brilliant that it will shake what's left of you into the depths of all-consuming wonder.

If you have a problem with people or with the state of the world, I invite you to put your stressful thoughts on paper and inquire, and to do it for the love of truth, not in order to save the world. Is your thought true? Can you absolutely know it's true? How do you react – what happens – when you believe that thought? Who would you be without it? Then turn the thought around: save your own world. Isn't that why you want to save the world in the first place? So that you can be happy?

Well, skip the middleman, and be happy from here! You're it. You're' the one. *In this turnaround you remain active, but there's no fear in it, no internal war. SO it ceases to be war trying to teach you peace. War can't teach peace. Only peace can.*

I don't try to change the world – not ever. The world changes by itself, and I 'm a part of that change. The world changes through me, as the mind changes. I'm absolutely, totally, a lover of what is. When people ask me for help, I say yes, I teach them how to question their stressful thoughts, they begin to end their own suffering, and in that they begin to end the suffering of the world.

*Violence teaches only violence. Stress teaches only stress. If you clean up your mental environment, we'll clean up our physical one much more quickly. That's how it works. And if you do that genuinely, without the violence of fear in your heart, without anger, without condemning corporations as the enemy, then people begin to notice. We begin to listen and notice that change through peace is possible. It has to begin with one person. If you're not the one, who is?*

I'm open to all that the mind brings, all that life brings. I have quested my thinking, and I've discovered that ultimately it doesn't mean a thing. I shine internally with the joy of understanding. I know about suffering, and I know about joy, and I know who I am. Who I am is who you are, even before you have realized it. When there's no story, no past or future, nothing to worry about, nothing to do, nowhere to go, no one to be, it's all good.

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