



THE SILENT QUESTIONS A Spiritual Odyssey by Doug Marman

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EXCERPTS

EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER ONE:

The Silent Questions

There are questions that haunt my life, and when these questions arise they come quickly like a cliff's edge suddenly before me; and I must stop to say: Whoa! Where am I going?

Yet sometimes they surface during trying times of great futility when life spreads out like a vast barren desert. I look through the stifling heat waves to the endless horizons and ask: Why am I here?

They are somehow there in my moments of success when all other things have been forgotten and they make me wonder. They come like a vigilant shadow to weep with me when my world looks forlorn and empty. They slip through the meanings of my dreams and shape them.

What lies beyond death? What is the meaning of life?

These are questions I do not look for nor ask out of a curious whim. In fact, I am uneasy in their presence.

But Who am I? They make me stop and look and listen, like that great humming sound we call silence. Why must these questions do this? Why must they make me stop and wonder?

I do not know. Yet I do know that somehow I must ask them. Perhaps it is my quest to ask.

What is the purpose of my life? Somehow these have become the most important questions of my life, and only my life can be their answer.

These were some notes I wrote in a journal some 25 years ago after my search had begun in earnest. I sensed that I was involved in something significant, but I could not explain what it was. It somehow defied being reduced down into words.

It was almost as if I had discovered that it was not I who was asking these questions at all, but that life itself was the asker and my life was somehow the answer.

It was at this point I began to see a great truth: Trying to solve the silent questions, trying to figure them out was the wrong approach.

I had searched through volumes of books in science, philosophy and religion. I had read hundreds of theories and beliefs, but I finally saw that I had been looking in all the wrong places. These teachings were not giving me real answers. They were more like trumpets blaring great sounding concepts, but such noise only drowned out the silent questions.

It now seems to me as if most people try to bury these questions in a thousand different ways because the inner call is too unsettling.

Like many others, I started looking for a new world view, a new belief system, because I thought that would be my answer. But in fact the silent questions came not to offer an answer, but to shake my world and my beliefs.

I remember standing outside one clear night looking up at millions of stars, each a sun with a solar system of its own, spread throughout the endlessness of space. I could see the insignificance of everything I knew. However, something within me had changed. After following the call of the silent questions, I came to realize that something within me was in touch with those stars. I was not something separate, but was connected. My awareness was not limited to a mere body. Therefore some part of me could understand this infinitude.

No theories or beliefs could give me that. Rather, it was something I was remembering. It was something I somehow already knew, like finding a map within myself that had been there all along.

In 13th Century Persia, a Sufi mystic and poet by the name of Jalal al-Din Rumi said this:

There is one thing in this world that must never be forgotten. If you were to forget all else but did not forget that, then you would have no reason to worry. But if you performed and remembered everything else yet forgot that one thing, then you would have done nothing whatsoever.

It is just as if a king sent you to the country to carry out a specific task. If you go and accomplish a hundred other tasks but do not perform that particular task, then it is as though you performed nothing at all. So, everyone comes into this world for a particular task and that is their purpose. If they do not perform it, then they will have done nothing.

This is the message of the silent questions.

But what is this one thing? Rumi never tries to answer that. How could you ever answer such a thing in words? The silent questions don't come to be answered by some simple formula. Yet how many times do we search for tablets from God where the plan is all etched out?

So, I finally began to see that the questions came to ask me why I was here. They came from some hidden memory, reminding me that there was more to life and I was more than just a creature roaming the earth. It was the opportunity to *know* that drew me on to follow the silent questions.

It was only after my life began to pivot upon a new fulcrum, when my world began to shift direction to follow a new course did the underlying significance of the silent questions begin to reveal itself. However, the adventure began long before this. First came the years of searching and doubts.

EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER THREE

I had imagined my life as being under my own free will. I thought I had been making my own decisions. But now I began to have the feeling that my choices were not completely my own. Of course, I knew that our lives were influenced by the culture we were raised in, but now I was seeing it differently. Now I realized that the world itself, or something even larger than the world, was expressing itself through the lives of the people. I had been unconsciously playing a role in some larger drama beyond my own awareness.

I felt perplexed. But this wasn't something I could solve by thinking about it. You can't solve the question of your own Self by intellectual reasoning. I was going to have to learn what this meant by living it. But what was it that I was living? It seemed much larger than anything I had known before.

Visions like this one would come upon me suddenly during that time and bring with them strange feelings and images I couldn't remember from anywhere else. Then they would end just as unexpectedly. It was hard to let these stories hang in the air like they did, with unfinished endings and unanswered questions. But I had no idea what should follow. They just seemed to exist this way, like intercepted transmissions without a conclusion.

One day I sat down to brush up on a little writing. The keys of my typewriter had been silent too long. I thought I would warm them up a bit. I was expecting nothing, yet suddenly realized I was listening in on thoughts from around the world. I put down the words as they came into my awareness. Bit by bit, unfolding before me, I found a story crossing time and space.

Simultaneity

The sound of the flute came from over the hills. All my sheep, every last woolly, grew quiet and raised their heads. Otherwise, I wouldn't have heard it with all their constant bleatings and racket. It was a soft sound, yet haunting. Its direction...hard to reckon... perhaps from the hermit's cave...or from the northern hill. It could have even come from the forest. The wind might have carried the sound from anywhere.

* * * * *

I hear the call of the mountain god. The sounds of Bird and Monkey go silent and Earth trembles beneath my feet. I know the call, and shed my skin like Snake. My spirit dances with Wind and laughs in Dream. I smell Jungle Flower in all the air.

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As I recall, we were in the conference room, the five of us, that is. Jackson was getting a beating from Tuberillo for blowing the last deal, when we heard this noise. It sounded like the whoosh of wind.

"Frank," I said, "your window's blown open!"

Frank jumped for his office door, expecting a whirlwind of papers to swear at, but everything was quiet. I don't know why, but it seemed awfully funny. Tuberillo had the biggest laugh. Frank just smiled. We didn't get much work done that day, but we had a pretty good time after that just shootin' the bull. I think it was one of the nicest days I had with ol' Tuber, because I saw he was a real person, too, under his gruff exterior.

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I don't take much with memories, schedules and shit like that. Get it? I say live life day by day. Ya spend your mind on a clock and ya lose it. Get it? But that day there, yeah, it was a high one. I was jammin' with Johnny and Slips. I play drums. We were movin' nice and smooth. Slips had some far-out riffs, when Johnny – like that – drops out. Johnny's face kind of lights up strange, like he was hearin' somethin', and I get these weird shivers up my back. Next thing you know, we're playin' a new hit. Just like that! It blew our minds.

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Oh, yes, I remember. I remember it well, for that was the day when the wind became soft, and the desert grew quiet. My thoughts turned calm, like smooth waters. Spirit Eagle called to me, but the sound came into me roaring, until death took me. My body slept, but my sight awakened. And I must see the hunting grounds, and I must feel such freedom, and I must know such secrets that leave me hollow now, until death may come again.

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God winks and universes quiver. IT's voice rolls forth, the Sound, and all Soul is touched, all time, all space. What can be simultaneity but the touch of ECK?

What a strange experience, to be able to witness all of Time and Space in an instant!

I knew that whether this story was literally true or not did not matter. I had already learned that lesson, so I didn't even try worrying about whether this was True or False. But the odd thing was that when I tried to find the meaning behind this experience or to understand the feelings and emotion of what I had just written, as I did during my Second Initiation, I found my previous tools failed me. I could not see behind the veil.

Apparently, this inner experience was not woven from a fabric of imagination. It was not just a metaphor. This was some kind of reality at a different level.

As months passed by, I realized that the ground rules had changed again. The lessons I had learned couldn't unlock the mystery I was now facing. In fact, I sensed that there was no way to figure out the meaning of this new state of consciousness. I was simply going to have to live it to know what it really was.

This turned out to be the only course of action that worked. I would simply experience and observe. Gradually I became more familiar with this new dimension of life. Like getting to know a friend, the more time I spent with it, the more I began to recognize it for what it was.

I was becoming connected to something that reached across time – something that was a part of the very causation of reality. However, I was not prepared for dealing with all the new feelings and thoughts that began flowing through me. As a result, I suddenly found myself with all kinds of problems. I began struggling with a whole range of inner troubles and conflicts, but I couldn't separate out which ones were my own or what I was picking up from the world.

EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER FIVE:

Even though the path of publishing spiritual writings seemed to be strewn with land mines of vanity and delusions, still there was this growing necessity in me to create Truth as I knew it. Not a World Truth, or an Absolute Truth, but just to create as a way of manifesting truth.

Underlying this all was the realization that everything I thought I knew about the spiritual path was vanishing before my eyes. It no longer seemed real anymore. All the principles of the path were but temporary doorways, not the eternal truths I had once thought.

The silent questions returned once again, and I asked inwardly what was real? What was the path? What did it all mean? Now I realized that it was for me to create the answers. It was for me to establish what was real and to manifest it for myself. There was nothing outside of Soul to lean upon any longer.

So, the answer for my own spiritual growth was to write and try to put into words some trace of Truth; to create and manifest Truth as a writer. I needed to do this for Soul.

It had to be Truth I believed in and it must also be universal. It had to reach to the core of Soul, and could not be separated from life as if it were something external. I needed to express

some essence of Self-Realization, and it must be hidden just as all Truth is hidden within Life.

The exercise of trying to create such a truth through writing became my spiritual practice for the next few years. It leaves an interesting record to study, but more importantly at the time it became something that filled me with a deeper understanding of the spiritual teachings than I had ever known before. With every choice of words, I learned something new about the path I was manifesting within myself. Writing became both an act of self-recognition and an act of creation.

At first what I wrote was simple. I wanted to show Truth as it lay hidden within life all around us. Something that could only be seen by looking closely and listening carefully.

Following is the first piece I wrote during this period.

The Coins of God

The coin lay there, half covered with dirt, far from where its owner intended it to be. The coin had taken its own path, setting itself free from the course of mankind, and now lay abandoned and tarnished with age. Its face bore the image of another time, another civilization, as if some bit of knowledge had been forgotten and lost by the world.

Waiting...perhaps for a new generation, a new age when it would be understood and valued for what it was.

Someone had a plan for this coin, but the coin had escaped that plan. Now it lay there closer to reality, closer to itself, surrounded by the silence. Unseen and alone, the coin now belonged only to God. The rain, the sun and the earth – only these know where the coins of God lie.

Coins have long represented an image of wisdom in my dreams. Therefore, lost coins from another time were to me like ancient truths.

However, this coin was also a symbol of something more: It was a reflection of Soul. We are all like forgotten coins that only belong to God. We are only truly known by God.

In a way, all of our life is symbolic of inner realities and inner truths. Our everyday life can be interpreted like a dream, because the things that enter and leave our daily experiences are also reflections of greater things.

Therefore, the spiritual teaching is something that can hardly be described. It remains hidden and yet is revealed by self-awareness. It contains paradoxes because it is both universal and yet unique to the individual.

I was learning a new language – this language of formless spiritual teachings.