

**Saturday, April 5th, 2008**  
**Everyone's Books**  
**Brattleboro, VT**

**Talk and Book Signing: Alice Gardner, *Life Beyond Belief: Everyday Living As Spiritual Practice***

[Beginning of Recording]

**Alice Gardner:** I want to invite everybody to be a part of this; to not keep me in the spotlight anymore than feels right to us all. I am perfectly happy to sit here and talk for an hour but to do that isn't really living that life beyond belief fully because really we all bring so much to this room. It is not about me at all. I am happy to tell you a little bit about my spiritual journey and what has brought me to write a book and what not but the value of whatever I have to offer from my life is in how it touches all of our lives and our collective experience. So speak up when you feel moved to speak up. Please don't hold yourselves back.

I was a slightly unhappy kid in rural Connecticut. That was where I started. For whatever reason I always, from as early as I can remember, was on this track of, "What's going on here with this life business?" (Laughing) I am not sure what caused that but I remember way back to the first day of Sunday school, being sent to Sunday school. All right, finally somebody is going to tell me what is going on. I was a seeker. I was a what five year old? When do they send kids to Sunday school? Pretty early; but I was disappointed by Sunday school I didn't get that. I didn't get to share in any way anything that I could understand until at 15 I ran into Khalil Gibran the prophet on my parent's book shelf. And that was a description of a spirituality or a description of God maybe or something that I could go with. And in a way that was a good starting place to talk about because it wasn't really contained in any religious path. It was just kind of an open way of talking about life and how life works. This has been a theme. I have explored all different things like Zen Buddhism and Upasana and I was really into Kundalini yoga for a while. You know I have done all of these different things but when it came time to being a joiner I always kind of got go. I always have steered away from being this or being that in terms of this kind of thing. So it is interesting to look at that process in hind sight and see that it has created a way to talk and write about this kind of thing that is universal. This isn't about what set of rules we go along with. It's about how we live and how we are; in our homes, in our families, in our work places. That is a universal thing that is not contained in any universal tradition or system at all. It is about how to be fully here as human beings and stay connected with what we truly are in a spiritual sense. And at the same time how do we live that? So this kind of trajectory has- I can look back at my path and see that something has kept me along these lines as I have played with various spiritual teachings and listened to different teachers and what not.

When I was in my late twenties I went to the Findhorn Foundation; which was a really interesting place to live. I went for a week and ended up staying for seven years. I married the printer in Findhorn Press and had a couple kids before coming back to the Brattleboro area. Besides the family the thing that came with me from that experience was their way that they access the "high self" they would call it back in those day. You know I am talking late 70's early 80's.

The whole community of Findhorn was established by Ilene Caddy going into meditation, in the public bathrooms actually, into meditation. Asking God questions and God was answering her. She was writing down the answers and her husband Peter would go to work and make it all happen. From that attunement to the divine the whole community developed. By the time I got there it was 400 people and they were world famous.

They taught me to some extent how to access this kind of information and I was able to take that with me when I left. So I had decades of this ability to ask any question and to kind of just light a candle, go quiet, and write down an answer. It wasn't telling you do this, do that. It was just giving me a higher perspective on everything. So accumulatively over the years it was this amazing education in that enlightened perspective. But I wasn't the enlightened one. I was the one with all the questions and this higher self or whatever was the one that knew all this information.

So Somewhere in the late 80's early 90's the guidance actually told me, "You've got to stop doing this guidance stuff." Because it said that the illusion that I was the ignorant one (Laughing) asking questions the one who didn't know, est. being supported by the form guidance of asking questions getting answers as if from elsewhere. I could feel that it wasn't from elsewhere but I was still clearly living as the one who didn't know. (Laughing) So I was told, "Stop asking questions. You need to accept the fact that you're the one that knows the answers." I was totally stymied by that. I had no clue where to go with that. So I kind of just didn't pay attention to it. I mean I had been through styles in my spiritual life of coming up against this awareness that you can't get there by trying to get there. You know? We have all banged into that one right? So I would cycle through, Oh that again, and I would just like try to think about something else. So in this case when I was asked to be the one that knew the answers and I had not the faintest idea how to do that. I just kind of turned away and got busy raising kids.

It wasn't until about eight years later that I read something. I have always been a reader. I love books. I read something that clued me in that I was always either in the past or the future and I wasn't in the present. So in my usual manner of research, I went to amazon.com and I typed in living in the present and up popped Eckhart Tolle along with a bunch of other books. I bought a few of them but I don't even remember what the other ones were because Eckhart Tolle's book was just so amazing for me to find because, particularly, it appeared to me to be coming from the same source that my guidance had been coming through. That just riveted me. I wanted that so much. I wanted that guidance that I had already been not accessing for eight years to be coming from somewhere else it just became centrally important. I read this book with this absolute focus.

It wasn't just the felt source of it. It was also that there was more information. Something really clicked for me about the way he describes the mind made self is one thing over here and then who we really are the presence and the whole way... the general situation being a mistaken identity to put it very simply. You know? It was like maybe I had been told that about a hundred times but it landed somehow when I read the Power of Now.

I was so alive and excited about this that I decided that I had to go see him in retreat. I had

trouble getting in. Already he was very popular back in 2002. So I finally got in on a very long waiting list and went to Omega Institute October 2002 and spent 5 days sitting in his presence along with 450 other people and had no personal relationship with him at all. Never have then or since had any personal conversation with him at all and yet something shifted there where this thing that my guidance had asked for 8 years before was handed to me on a silver platter and I knew it. It just... I was sitting in the other seat. It has just been the most interesting experience since then because unlike Eckhart Tolle I have not had my ego vanish. He says his is pretty much gone and I believe him. You can just feel it in his presence. Mine hasn't; but what has happened is the identification was broken at that point in some way. So what I have got is an awareness of who I am and an ability to see that presence in the world around me; while at the same time my mind is over here making a big noise about things just like it always has.

So I was really confused at first by this experience and thought that I needed to find a new way to live. All my ways to live had been removed in some strange way and I didn't know how to live anymore. Yet, I was totally able to show up on the job and they didn't even fire me. I could still function. It was interesting because my felt experience was that I was something else than when I had gone over to that retreat. That something, the identity, had shifted internally and that felt like life was totally new and totally different than life had been previously. Then I went back to the people that I worked and was friends with and there was not a recognizable change. So I was very confused. I thought, "How do you live now? And "Am I still going to be able to do everything?" And nobody could even tell that anything shifted. It's just obviously something inside. I kept looking for new instructions in how to live and I never got them.

It has just been five years of gradually getting used to the sense of life is living already. I just have to show up and see what happens all the time. It is so different. It is like before I was directing it with this mind made self, with the egoic structures, I was deciding what was going to happen and I was trying to make that happen using whatever resources, particularly mental ones that were available to me. Going for whatever it was that the ego had decided was necessary or desired. So with that whole structure removed and an identification with something completely else it was a matter of just getting to the egoic structure and the whole bundle of mental frame works around living and how to do it and what's going on. Those were just a bunch of noise over to the side that wasn't actually relevant to the flow that wanted to happen.

This trip and my move to California rolled out in the most amazing way. I never even decided to move to California. It just kind of happened to me. It is kind of like living life instead of being the engine at the front of the train you are kind of there hanging onto the caboose with one hand, you know, with your feet flailing out behind. You just go along with what it is that wants to happen all the time. That is how I like to see it.

The religions would encroach this in spiritual wording. The Christian way of saying the same thing would be, "letting go and letting God". But if you are not inside the Christian frame work and you're not inside other framework either how do you say this stuff? How do you talk about what is going on? That's kind of the way that I have come to talking about and thinking internally is, "Well what wants to happen now?" So here we are in a circle. What wants to be said? Just showing up for that to happen; it is a funny inside out upside down way of living compared to the old way.

One characteristic of it seems to be that the spectrum of possibilities for what can occur in this life here has broadened enormously. I can see now that in my old way of living that I had been holding almost like blinders on my life as to these few pathways are what is possible for this life based on this life's history and personality and characteristics. A few narrow things are possible in terms of my future. When I now am able to see that that is something that I was doing with my thinking and that that isn't a reflection of how life really is. All of a sudden the spectrum of possibility for what can occur just falls open. It is so interesting because okay in this moment there is an incredible spectrum of possibility for what could happen from here. So I chose one option. One thing happens. I say whatever I say. Then in the next moment the spectrum of possibilities is just as open. It doesn't narrow. It just changes all the time. So just showing up and asking, "What is it that life wants? What wants to happen right now to this person?"

One thing about learning to speak in front of groups is, it's actually kind of a good example of this whole way of living, that I have to actually be willing- in order to be comfortable doing this stuff that I am doing lately in relation to the book with the possibility that life might want me to make a complete fool of myself. Life might want me to have a senior moment and not be able to find the words to say what I want to say. That might really happen. That might be the best possible thing to happen because then, you know, I have to be willing for that too in order to keep that spectrum open. As soon as I say, "Well anything but that." Then all of a sudden the blinders come in again and I am in control instead of being a portal for life to have a way in to this down here form level.

**Guest:** How do you keep your ego of your mind from interfering? Does it still try to and you signal "I don't need you to do that"?

**Alice:** Yeah. It is busy all the time doing its thing. It's just a matter of not believing what it says.

(Laughter)

**Alice:** Seriously.

**Guest:** Has it quieted down with time?

**Alice:** Yeah, I guess a little bit but now a huge amount. It seems to be my particular path to work with it as opposed to lose it. So I notice that not so much ego; which is just the identity that mind builds. The mind itself, the rational faculties, that we have as humans are an incredible gift. We have only kind of taken a wrong turn in using those rational faculties to create an identity that isn't so. Maybe it would be fair to say that my mind is still going on about everything but it is not creating an identity in the same way. It is just doing what minds do. That is kind of what I say to myself when it gets noisy and I am tempted to buy into something. It's like, okay, mind is just doing what minds do at the moment. Then that space opens up that Eckhart somehow opened up for me in that retreat. Just the space where mind... it's a great tool. It's a fabulous amazing thing. But it's got boundaries where beyond which it's not useful and we have been using it way outside those boundaries to try and do things like answer the big questions of life. "Who am I", being the biggest if you ask me. So it can't really go there. It can't do that.

**Guest:** Is there a sense that it doesn't need to be in control? I mean does it say, "I want to plan. I want to be in control?" Is there a sense of that? You don't need that function?

**Alice:** Yeah, for me it is always making noise about, "well I better be in control because" and fear is it's biggest weapon. So if it can get me to buy into being afraid for some reason then mind gets back in the driver's seat. But ever since that retreat with Eckhart, call it a blessing or a curse, I watch it doing that; where as before I was in it more.

**Guest:** I was struck when you talked about what an impact Eckhart had had on you and he had the same impact on me to when I read him the first time.

**Alice:** Yeah

**Guest:** And I saw what seemed like an interesting explanation for that; that quite often when you read you gather information and you say, "Oh, it wasn't that interesting." "I agree with that." "I disagree with that." But in Parabola a few months ago there was an article on what they called Lectio Divina where when they read any kind of sacred text it was actually a ceremony and it had a discernible effect. Much like some churches teach sacraments. That when you read works like that, and there aren't too many, that it actually has an effect by the very act of reading it.

**Alice:** Yeah, Eckhart talks about live words. Or may be that is Adya. Somebody talks about live words. Eckhart's words are alive in some way that other books, a lot of them not all, are coming from the mental structures but there is some kind of an ability that Eckhart seems to have in my opinion where the words are able to come from a deeper place. They're a translator from a message that is coming from something deeper than the rational faculties.

So my book happened in this environment that I have been talking about. It just kind of happened. I didn't decide to write a book. I didn't know I was going to write a book. I had taken a class where I was writing a bunch of papers and when the class was over I kept the writing periods because it was obvious to me that this was my creativity. The book just fell in my lap basically in those spaces that I had set out and the table of contents just came through as is pretty much. The rest was filling in the chapters one by one. There was a period of a lot of editing that was kind of a hard work phase. The book came I would say through right brain. You know, it was just there and I just wrote it down. The editing was very left brain and laborious. The title is probably obvious right?

**Guest:** I've just got a quick question. When you had your awakening experience at Omega, did people appear different to you in some way? I mean when you saw people did you see them differently?

**Alice:** Yes, everything not just people. Objects, chairs, cup, it all was totally different and that was why I was so mystified that I didn't appear different because everything looked very different. The difference being that I could see the life force in everything, if you will. There was this kind of aliveness that was just radiating out of everything and so looking at a cup and deeply just being there and holding a cup was enough to produce tears. It was just so incredible. The cup

was so incredible and everything appeared that way. It was overwhelmingly blissful at that time but confusing at the same time.

**Guest:** Yeah, I remember when you came back from Omega actually.

**Alice:** Do you? How cool.

**Guest:** Yeah, we were standing in the copy room and you were talking about it. You were saying, “Wow”. Things changed there. You really got in that space.

**Alice:** So this is like 2 days after.

Guest: Then you showed the video series of Tolle.

**Alice:** How on earth...

(Loud background noise)

**Guest:** Then you were heading out to California just shortly after that. I was just curious as to - you know that seemed to unfold relatively easily. There were some logistics when you got this job, living across from the university, you know, things were kind of rolling along – but I was wondering what was your experience moving out to California? Did you carry this along with you? This spirit of watching things unfold?

**Alice:** Absolutely, the unfolding drove the whole trip. I never decided to move to California. It was so mind boggling. I don't know if I ever told you this story but the synchronicity around suddenly having an apartment in California and then coming back from an event out there thinking “ Oh my God. Am I moving to California?” because I had impulsively put money down on an apartment then I came home and I thought “Does this mean I have to quit my job? Sell my house? What does this mean?”

Is that deafening? Is there any way we could shut the noise off.

**Guest:** We can, just it'll keep getting colder in here. It's the heater. I'll turn it off. It will have to cycle then it will stop.

**Alice:** Do you have a microphone? (Laughing)

So one day I was driving to work in the morning and I was stressing out over the pros and cons of moving to California. Doing it all in my head, you know, because my head was still on top of me. It was still there and it was making a really big noise about this one. I'd been here for 20 years living in the same house and being very settled. I would have basically been all set for life if I'd stayed in Green River, in terms of finances. So I was listening to a teacher named Adyashanti on a tape deck in my car and Adya started talking about something that went sort of like, “ You don't have to make decisions in the same old way” “You will either go to California or you won't go to California.” It was this huge release. It was like. “Oh my God” I just let go of

this whole pros and cons bit. I just dropped it. I thought I don't have to decide. I will either go or I won't go, how simple. I felt so happy. I walked into the office and I walked into the situation with Sean where within two hours I had quit my job. (Laughing)

They were happy. They weren't mad at me. It worked it totally worked. Then I had a couple of months to rent my house. I happened to rent my house to a couple who fell in love with it and begged me to sell it to them; which made it kind of easy because they loved it so. The whole thing just happened. I got up there in a twinkle of my eye. It was like, "Okay, I guess I am supposed to be in California now."

I had and still have the most beautiful little garden apartment there, tiny but in a household of spiritually oriented people that own the house and lovely garden, right on campus at Stanford. It was just like how could I be so lucky.

I can walk out my door... I am right in the middle of a well populated area that is the Mecca for spiritual seekers around the world really. ...and at the same time I can open walk out my door for a 2 hour hike in the hill sides sprinkled with oak trees. You know how California is like that. Right out my door because Stanford has all this open land. Yeah, I arrived into that situation thinking, "Wow". I couldn't have put that together if I had tried. So it illustrates in that way the spectrum of possibilities open up. If I had with my head started to try and put together a plan to move to California it could have taken me years to have been so well situated. And here it was as if the red carpet had been rolled across the Great Plains there and all I had to do was get on it.

This trip has felt a bit like that to, quite frankly. It is interesting because I never know what thing it is that I am doing that is the important thing. That is part of the way that life hasn't replaced the loss of the strategy of living with a new strategy. There isn't that. I also don't really know as I allow myself to be moved in this way what thing it is that is the significant thing. I thought probably the Oprah show was the significant thing in Ohio but in hind sight it's not at all obvious that that's true. It could have been something totally unrelated to that but it's just that the Oprah show had to get me there. Who knows?

So everybody already understands the title of my book... if you know anything about the Tolle work?

**Guest:** What is it?

**Alice:** "Life Beyond Belief" But the subtitle is an interesting development. Do you want to say something about "Life Beyond Belief"?

**Guest:** Well I'm not sure I fully understand what you mean by that.

**Alice:** Okay. Well it's of course a play on words. Being something beyond belief is something really wonderful, but it is also the understanding that there is a way of living that is not about this bundle of idea that we have called who we are. That we have thought of as who we are up to this point. So letting go of all the beliefs, particularly the ones about who we are then there is a life beyond that.

You know that life moves. It is not a matter of you drop all this stuff and you're in nirvana and you never have to do anything again. It is about actually living this stuff down here in the nitty gritty of busy modern lives. Where we go to work, we raise kids, and we have family issues and all that stuff bringing this new way of living into those things.

So that is what the book is about more than awakening, really. There are a lot of books about awakening; but, what I found, there was a lack of was books where regular people were sharing: What is this experience after that realization of who we are? What comes then? What do you do then? I kind of looked for that kind of help when I was here in rural Guilford. I looked wherever I could for companionship in that process and found it to be hard to find out there. So the book is that for others if I know what I am doing at all in that; which is questionable of course. Who knows what it is for? In another way I don't know. It just happened.

The subtitle "Everyday Living As Spiritual Practice" was something that developed as I wrote it. I had no idea that that was going to be a major theme in the book when I wrote out the table of contents. It emerged as the chapters built on themselves. What it is about is that what I notice now about living this life is that our everyday circumstances and thoughts and feelings and whatever it is that our everyday lives are bringing to us. So often we've misunderstood and thought that these circumstances in life and what not are an impediment to being spiritual people. Especially when the circumstances are uncomfortable and we react in some way or we look at what's happening and we say, "Oh dear, that is proof that I am not enlightened." Further proof that I am not spiritual enough and that I have to do something else in order to improve myself.

So the main point that came through the book as it was being written was that these are not that at all. It is only our mental activity or over activity if you will that causes us to misinterpret these things in that way. When really what these circumstances and events, and re-activities and what not are, is pointers. Life has decreed in that moment that we are ready to see something about ourselves. So if we can meet whatever is happening in our everyday lives with openness, without the assumption that it's the wrong thing and that it should maybe something else then we can begin to explore what it is pointing us towards in ourselves.

Say if we react badly to our teenage kid doing something this could be an invitation to see something about our selves in our internal workings, the conditioning in our mind made self, if you will, some particular piece of it is causing us to be reactive in that particular situation. In the old way we would have been completely focused on fixing that darned teenager. Right?

But now we can work with this internally in a way so that we clear it up in ourselves and so what I see is that life is a huge set up for each of us to awaken using the circumstances of our everyday lives to do so. It is such an incredibly complex set up that we never could have done it ourselves. We never could have thought it through. We are all put together so differently in terms of personality, ego, and our early history. The way that the mind is constructed is so very different with each person so naturally there is going to be a different kind of a process that it takes to unwind that bundle of ideas. We can't figure that out. We are just not smart enough. The mind just can't do that. But life knows how to do that in the same way that it knows how to balance our endocrine system and keep the heart beating and all this stuff. We couldn't be controlling

that if we tried, focused out whole life energy on it, it is to complicated. The same with this life can do this and life is inviting us all the time into this process of clearing up whatever these interferences are to our living who we really are. This one that we really are is already here we have just covered it over with what I am calling interferences. With layers of conditioning and these layers get cleared up by meeting life as it is with all its warts; with an acceptance instead of a rejection. When we reject what we are getting in life it keeps coming back. Has anybody noticed that? We get repeating patterns. If we can meet these things fully as they are being brought to us as the gifts from live even, and especially, when they are not what we really would have wanted to see.

One of the things that really struck me in the retreat with Eckhart,; we had ...It was October and in the middle of the retreat a huge storm blew through and I was sleeping in my tent so it was kind of earth shaking, huge winds, and heavy pelting rain. So people were dashing from where ever they slept. You know, running to the meditation hall. Eckhart got up there and he said, 'This was a wonderful metaphor that we could all be using.' He said, 'Its one thing to be present on a sunny day. It is very pleasant and it is relatively easy. But when the storms come, real storms or metaphorical storms, to be present in the midst of that takes you much much deeper.' Boy did I hear that.

I remember driving home from there. I was catching a cold. I had ongoing sinus stuff so catching a cold was an extremely uncomfortable thing to be getting into. Oh, I hate colds. Yet, I really heard it when Eckhart said that about meeting the storms. It was obvious that to be catching a cold as you are walking away from an Eckhart Tolle retreat was a gift. I think that that was the first moment that I was able to really see that; and to see that this was here. Resisting it was rather futile. Take vitamin C and hope for the best but to be thinking that it was the wrong thing would have been an immediate exit from the huge gift that had been given to me there. Some how in the long run I think that cold was a huge help to me for allowing this shift to be a permanent one.

I remember people ask me when I got home and started talking about this, "Well do you think it is going to go away?" I would puzzle and all I could come up with is, "I can not imagine where it could go."

Because the sense of is that this is reality with a capital R peaking its way out from under the mental covering. That I had laid over it for my whole life; so where could it go?

The wonderful thing about being with people now is that as I am not so attached to my bundle of ideas about life it is much more easy to be with people because the essence of people as my own essence or presence is more prominent in my inner world the outer world seems to change to reflect that and the experience of people is being able to see how fully awake all of us are. And just the incredibly unique ways that we all shroud that, some people more thickly and some people not so much. But to see what is behind it is a beautiful experience.

So if there is any message it is that we all are awake. It's not through any particular activity that we get to live that except through a subtraction of the interferences to that.; that we are so energetically throwing up all the time including spiritual pursuit.; which can be just one more

layer that mind is throwing over this incredible one that we are. It seems very clear to me that that a shift moment such as I had with Eckhart is not a necessary ingredient of the process by any means.

We're all different and we all get unwound in different ways. Some of us through a momentary shift like that. Others it could happen in your sleep and you could wake up one morning and not even notice the shift for a while, and it could be a subtle thing. I noticed in my life that the processing of the layers of conditioning, that I write about quite a lot in the book, preceded the shift anyway. It wasn't like a clear cut up and out and then learning how to live it. It was the learning how to live it first. It was a seamless process somehow. I was lucky to be open enough so that Eckhart's openness shifted me in some way. But that in no way means that that is the way for anybody else at all. Everybody has their own way. None of us can know for each other what that way is. So I just offer this is what happened to me and I just want to make sure that nobody thinks that therefore that's what their process should look like because that would be an error.

**Guest:** Alice as I listen I hear many themes of the Buddha and yet I don't hear anything about Buddha. Yet, as I listen I don't know if it not something that has been in your spiritual path. I think Adyashanti obviously has had a strong Buddhist underpinning but it's just curious as I hear...I can almost hear my self sitting in my meditation classes saying some of the same things which flow out of Buddhism. So I am just wondering, is Buddhism there in some way? Or you don't know the connection between what you're saying and what Buddhism is saying.

**Alice:** Through out my whole life as a spiritual seeker I have always tried staying clear of being a something. So I have never been a Buddhist, although I started with Buddhism back when I was 19.

I remember being riveted by some Buddhist writings back then when I first heard about this enlightenment thing. It was like, "That's for me." kind of reaction. I was after it like a hound and a fox. But I don't call myself a Buddhist. Adya was a Buddhist. He had extensive Zen Buddhist training and he is my teacher. So I am sure that you hear Buddhist sounding things through that vein in a way. I think there is that in the book. Some People say it is rather Buddhist but it has a forward by a Christian theologian interestingly. Which surprised me very much but that is just what happened. Adya talks about his Buddhist training quite often but what he says is that when he woke up he woke up out of Buddhism and he went to his Buddhist teacher at that time and he said to her this is bigger than Buddhism and she said, "Yes, you are right." So he doesn't call himself a Buddhist either.

My impression that all the religions are in different kinds of coded messages and symbols and what not bringing us to this evolutionary development, if you will.: were these minds that are such incredible tools have for how many thousands years dominated our sense of identity and caused us to be living this conflict ridden egoic earthly existence. So Buddhism and Christianity and Sufism and all the different religions have been using dogmatic methods and training and strategies and agendas and rules, and all those kinds of things that appeal to the mind because that is what there was to work with.

At this point in history there seems to be, amazingly, an opportunity for ordinary people to come

to the point where the mind is sidelined and the one that we all truly are becomes the center of the self...that word doesn't work very well...the center of who we are.

**Guest:** I think after you reach that point and then you go back and read both Buddhist teachings and Christian teachings then you understand them but when you are using them to try to get there they don't work. That is very true.

**Alice:** Well they work for some people. It is like each of them seems to be kind of made for certain type or a certain cultural background. So whatever works is kind of my sense of things. I have a great love for the Buddhists way but I also see that there is a way that the Buddhist get rigid about what they are doing and shoot themselves in the foot, so to speak.

**Guest:** Yeah, I wasn't talking about Buddhists. I was talking about the Buddha.

**Alice:** The Buddha himself. Oh!

**Guest:** To me I don't particularly get involved with...the religions build around figures and what I am more interested in is in that, as I hear you, I hear many of the teachings of the Buddha in very much the same language. So as I hear I am wondering...I mean I don't hear it from a Christian perspective although I had a Christian perspective. More from at least what I know about Buddhism it seems...

**Guest:** Could it be that it's universal and the fact that it is universal. I mean a Christian might say I hear Christ. I mean it's universal.

**Alice:** That is what the forward is saying actually.

**Guest:** Is it?

**Alice:** The forward is saying that this man that spent his life teaching ministers, Andover Newton, is saying that the experience that I am talking about in the book is universal enough. He is able to see it and he quotes the Bible this is the Christian terminology for what she is talking about. But he also studied world religions enough to be able to say that it is also the same for other religions.

So I wanted Eckhart Tolle to write the forward. I tried really hard to get him to talk to me but he wouldn't. He is too popular. He hides. He gets 20 books a day, one of his office people told me, in the mail. So when I heard that I gave up.

**Guest:** Get the Dalai Lama.

(Laughter)

**Alice:** This friend that I met from SIT...your remember Jerry Hanspicker he was that counsel guy that got brought in for a year; well he and I have stayed friends. Right? So I wrote to him for an endorsement and he wrote me 3 pages. I wrote back and said, "Jerry this is not an

endorsement this is a forward.” He said, “You want a forward? I will fix it.” That is what happened when the book was already to go except no forward.

So it is interesting because the forward seems to open the book up to the open-minded side of the Christian side of the community; which is a large group of people.

I got an interesting phone call a couple of weeks ago from a pastor, who had found it on the internet, who had a prophetic church. He had to explain to me what that meant. I did not even know. There was a church of 500 people down in rural North Carolina and this man was in the midst of waking up big time. He was trying to take his church with him. So it was causing a schism and he was on the hot seat. He, for whatever reason, was deeply touched by the book, by the humanity of it.

That’s what people are telling me; that I am not kind of standing above people and telling the Truth with a capital T and this is it. Listen Up. It is coming from a humanness too so this is the value of me running these two tracks all this time. So that I can be in the midst of all the human foibles that we all run into and to also have a foot in this other world and be able to talk about that. So people are telling me that it is important for them because it is so human.

**Guest:** When you follow those conversations and you have had a lot of different types of conversations now and books; I don’t have all the background. What are some of the different kinds of moments that give you joy in seeing conversations working, dialogues working? What kinds of things happen that you would just like to count?

**Alice:** Well in general what is most wonderful is when people speak from a deep place there is this way where people can come from their true self and the words just spill out from that deep place. It has such a different feel to it then when we talk from up here. So any kind of meeting from that place, even if it is sharing difference, is a wonderful exchange time. It is a feel and the whole life is kind of going by feel. Does it feel...Does it have that deep aliveness to it. To do this or to do this? You know, just feeling into that and moving toward the aliveness, the wholeness.

**Guest:** There are signs to as you go along. I mean you have to figure you haven’t made decisions in years. I just, you know what I mean. But it is clear. Sometimes it is not until the last moment but it is just, then it is clear. And things work out and become as they do.

**Guest:** Alice Do you have a daily Meditation practice?

Alice: Not any more. I meditated for years and I didn’t get any where with it, kind of. I just got to listen to monkey mind. (Laughter) What I do now though is that when there is a situation; something charged now can very much pull me into believing my thoughts. So when that is going on I stop in the midst of whatever and just be there. You know, I have been talking about showing up. It’s kind of like the tendency to go off into the reactivity or fear or all that is a way of not showing up. I just kind of stop and come back. So that can look like meditation.

But somehow what I was calling meditation for all of those decades, I had an idea about what it was supposed to look like that was dominating it. It wasn’t looking like that and it was

frustrating. It wasn't going anywhere and it was feeling stuck. So now when I am just stopping anybody could look at me and say well she is meditating. All I have to say about it is I am not doing I am just stopping. Instead of calling it meditating, somehow that helped me. Now other people can call it meditating and make a regular practice and be disciplined and that works for them; but for this construct it didn't work. It kind of constricted me. I was going to try and do it right. It wasn't being right. Then there were moments when it was right but those those moments were gone.

Always when I got up off my cushion and went out to meet real life; then whatever... I remember actually years ago there was always some bliss there when I would do this meditation I would get into a blissful state but it didn't seem to affect my state when I was dealing with issues out there in the world. So it wasn't a back and forth flow so much and that back and forth flow was what was important. I could see it. It was like what you do in your closet at home, so to speak, when your eyes are closed has to come out there into the activities of living for it to have real value. That was my sense.

**Guest:** Can you give me an idea of what that look like? You're saying that you're...when you're not doing...when you are stopping ...when you are being.

**Alice:** Sometimes it is not visible outside. It is an internal stopping.

**Guest:** And is this something you...

**Alice:** Other times it is actually sitting on a chair closing my eyes.

**Guest:** So, for instance, through out your day is this something that you do at certain times?

**Alice:** Yeah, a lot of the content of the guidance period of my life was around "life is a meditation". Not separating it out. Being in the midst of things and meditating there. So it didn't look like sitting.

**Guest:** The only thing that meditation does for me is it seems to slow down my mental processes enough so that things become more beautiful. You know?

**Alice:** Well then that is working for you. Don't let what I say discourage that is any way.

**Guest:** Yeah, if I don't meditate for a few days then it's almost like the failures of life are coming. All these reactions of life kind of creep in. It makes life more and more uncomfortable and so the motivation I have to meditate comes out of knowing what it feels like when I don't, you know, rather than try to be a good this or that. A friend of mine is an artist. He's a stone sculptor and I have never really had much artistic skill but he and I sometimes will just marvel at the simplest things. So that's really cool.

**Alice:** Every little thing is this incredible miracle. When you take out all of your ideas about it, it is just amazing that we are sitting here doing this. All the things that led up to sitting here: your parents getting together, on down. Life is an incredible miracle and it is such a shame when we

override that with thinking that it's not right some how. There is a lot of thoughts about the world situation not being right and I have to wonder if this perspective that came through kind of on the personal level in the book applies equally on the world stage. Collectively we have come to this point where things look pretty bad out there. Can that be a collective turning point for us? To break through to this kind of territory that I am talking about happened in my life.

I mean what did it take for Eckhart? It took for him getting to the point of suicide. When all of a sudden he let go of that whole world of ideas being reality and moved into the life as a miracle experience. And woke up and heard the birds singing for the first time in his life.

Could that be happening collectively on our planet? You know? That is an interesting question. In which case we can look at all the antics of George Bush and all the rest of it as being exactly the right thing. (Laughing)

If our uncomfortable experiences in our personal lives can be the right thing pointing us to what we are ready to work out: could the war in Iraq also be that for the collective body of humanity? And the possibility that we might annihilate ourselves if we don't... What did Eckhart say? "Evolve or perish"

**Guest:** I haven't read the second book yet. In fact, I think he actually says it in there doesn't he.

**Alice:** I think he does. I find it really amazing to have Eckhart stepping forward at this point in this world situation and having a personal preference that we not annihilate ourselves. (Laughter) I would say Adyashanti doesn't care but Eckhart does.

**Guest:** That is funny.

**Alice:** I find it encouraging.

**Guest:** You know, I kind of think that when I see little kids, they have a basic or raw awareness of the world. They are always drawing rainbows, flowers, and things like that. And we're all little kids at one point. So I think deep down we know what that is.

**Alice:** With that direct perception when a kid sees a flower for the first time, that is available behind all the thinking that we do that is still there.

Somebody sent me a birthday card last week. "One of the greatest things about being old" it says on the front "is that you get to keep all of the people that you have been all along the way." And there is this picture of this little kid with the brightest eyes you ever saw in the world. Isn't that the truth?

**Guest:** Shall I do this up front?

**Guest:** No

**Guest:** I have to go.

**Alice:** When are we supposed to disperse?

**Guest:** Whenever feels right. We have been taping this. Anyone who would like to get the MP3 emailed to them you can leave me your email.

[Cross talking]

**Alice:** I forgot to say to people, come visit at [wideawakeliving.com](http://wideawakeliving.com) that is my website. There is a lot of support material. There's a free monthly newsletter. [Wideawakeliving.com](http://Wideawakeliving.com) and there is a blog now so that you can talk back.

**Guest:** Thank you so very much.

**Alice:** Good night. Thanks for coming.

**Guest:** Yeah, I will make sure to contact you some time.

**Alice:** Great

**Guest:** I love the way you talk to us. I think it is so accessible. I think we have all had these experiences through out our lives but then the way you explain it; it's kind of like the sun come out and your who you are and then the clouds kind of cover it over again.

[Cross talking]

**Alice:** We've all had glimmers.

**Guest:** That's how we all got here. You know it was that kind of openness.

**Guest:** Great talk

**Alice:** Oh, thanks for coming.

[Cross talking]

[End of recording]