

Living Everyday Life as Heaven on Earth

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I experience heaven on earth everyday; an incredibly beautiful, peaceful, and holy place all around me where problems dissolve into joy, people appear resplendent, and the everyday world is transmuted into a timeless and enchanted wonderland. I know I'm not crazy because I'm a clinical psychologist. And, as an ordained interfaith minister with a doctorate in ministry, I know what the mystics from every tradition have told us for centuries: heaven on earth is already here when we're awake enough to see it! It is real and you can find it, too, but you have to learn how to see again.

"What's he talking about?" you ask yourself. "The kids are driving me crazy, the commute headache hammers me daily, my boss never lets up on his ridiculous demands, and household bills are piling up again. Everyday feels so difficult. Where would I find heaven on earth around here?"

So let's start with what heaven on earth is. You've actually been there before, many times, but forgot. Perhaps one of these questions will help you remember what it was like:

- Think of the happiest time in your life. A first love? The excitement of pregnancy? A new career? A huge success? How did you feel? How did the world seem in that moment?

- Have you ever been astonished by the beauty of nature: an incredible sunset, magnificent landscape, or a timeless moment enraptured by the sounds of birds, running water, or wind in the wilderness? In that spell of enchantment, how did you feel? How did the world seem in that moment?

- Can you remember one of those times when your mind stopped by itself and everything suddenly became quiet and still? You're just sitting there listening to the clock tick or watching dust motes flow in the light streaming through the window. Outside of time and completely removed from the freight train of everyday life, how did you feel? How did the world seem in that moment?

- Have you ever found yourself in a church, temple or other holy place peacefully absorbing its deep holiness and tranquility? How did you feel? How did the world seem in that moment?

- In the midst of intense athletic exertion, have you ever experienced that amazing "zone" where everything flows effortlessly and you accomplish so much more than expected? How did that feel? How did the world seem in that moment?

- Have you ever had a close call with death – maybe a potentially fatal accident or medical procedure – and afterwards felt an utterly unexpected sense of joy and freedom? How did you feel? How did the world seem in that moment?

Qualities of Consciousness Associated with Perceptions of Heaven on Earth

In each of these experiences, the perception of heaven on earth was leaking (or breaking!) into consciousness. Of course you didn't realize this and probably concluded that this extraordinary moment was "just" related to what was going on at the time. What if you could stay in that consciousness a bit longer? Let's see how.

From your answers to these questions, notice that the experience of heaven on earth actually represents a shift in consciousness that changes how you experience the world? This shift has the following characteristics:

- The mind becomes quiet. The inner world of racing thought and fantasy, with its focus on "me," "my" problems and all those "to do" lists grows silent and peaceful. This stillness soon surrounds and fills everything.

- Attention moves to the immediate present, no longer focused on past or future events. Shifting from conception to perception then has the interesting effect of waking you up.

- As sensory perception increases in the present, you start to see what's actually around you and discover the world's spell-binding beauty and perfection just as it is.

- In this consciousness, a quality of holiness gradually

emerges. The world seems filled with a presence that is aware, awake, patient, and loving, and noticing this presence awakens further wonder and amazement.

- A deep and natural sense of bodily joy arises and you realize that happiness is actually a natural state unrelated to events.

- With the mind at peace and joy in the heart, activities now flow effortlessly and you are one with tide of being.

The Three Most Common Barriers to Finding Heaven Here

Why don't we see heaven on earth more often? The most common reasons are:

1. Fear and worry. When you worry and fret about problems, distressing thoughts prevent you from stopping to really see what's around you. Instead you're living in a fear-driven mental world completely removed from the presence of heaven.

2. Disbelief. Was disbelief your first response to my description of heaven? Did you immediately want to discount the possibility of heaven on earth by reciting all your objections? Disbelief prevents us from even considering the possibility of stepping into the divine world.

3. Compulsivity. Instead of stopping to see where we are really are (or exploring the consciousness described above), we rush on to the next problem or worry. Driven by compulsivity, we rarely stop to smell the roses, which is where the doorway to heaven lies.

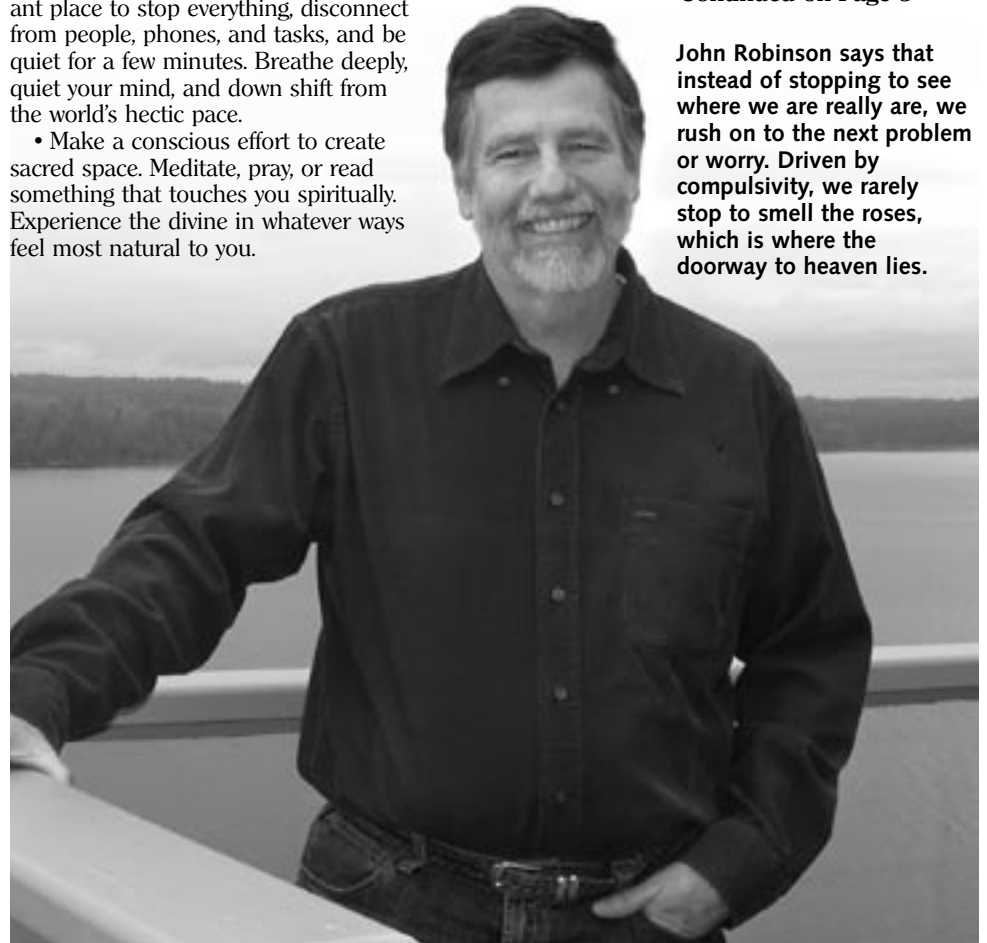
Learning How to See Again

If you want to start seeing heaven in your everyday life, here's one way to start shifting from conception to perception:

- Now stop thinking, heighten awareness, and begin examining the world as it is, without the need for names, ideas, judgments or beliefs. Just look at whatever is around you and see it as if for

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