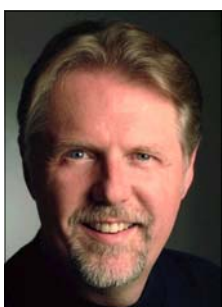


The Unbroken Circle: Spooks and Spirits, Wisdom and Support by Alan Seale



This morning in meditation I asked what I was to write about for the November newsletter. As if someone on the other side was just waiting for their cue, I immediately began hearing from the ethers the country gospel song, "Will the Circle Be Unbroken." Not a song I'm particularly familiar with, I went online to find the full lyrics and further clues about what it was I was being asked to write.

The lyrics for this song were written by Ada R. Habershon in 1907, the music by Charles H. Gabriel. However, it is A. P. Carter's (of The Carter Family of country gospel musicians) arrangement that made the song famous. It was the title song of a Nitty Gritty Dirt Band album in 1972, and has since been recorded by many country and Christian gospel singers.

The chorus of the song is:

Will the circle be unbroken?
Bye and bye, Lord, bye and bye,
There's a better home a-waiting
In the sky, Lord, in the sky.

The song goes on to talk about family members leaving this life for the next, and the hope that we will all be together again someday on the other side.

It strikes me that there is a much bigger message for us in these words, particularly relevant now for

two reasons. First, there are two festivals that we celebrate right at the end of October and beginning of November: Halloween in the pagan tradition, and All Saints' and All Souls' Days in the Christian tradition. Both of these festivals in their own ways celebrate the unbroken circle between the physical and spiritual worlds.

The second reason is that we are in the midst of extremely volatile global economic conditions that invite us to completely transform our relationships to money, time, and power both systemically and individually. So what could we learn about how to best navigate these challenging times from the "unbroken circle" and the ideas behind these two festivals?

Let's begin by looking at the two festivals. Halloween, the older of the two, has its origins in the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sah-wain) 2,000 years ago. The Celts lived in what is now Ireland, the United Kingdom, and northern France. They celebrated their new year on November 1st, marking the end of summer and the beginning of winter. They believed that on the night before the New Year, October 31, the veil between the worlds of the living and the dead was lifted. In their belief, this allowed not only for spirits of the dead to visit the earth, but for the Druids, or Celtic priests, to predict the future.

In the 7th century, Pope Boniface IV of the Roman church designated the first day of November to be All Saints' Day, a day to honor saints and martyrs. Many scholars today believe that this was the

pope's attempt to replace the Celtic festival of the dead with a related, but church-sanctioned holiday. In Middle English the Christian celebration was known as "All-hallowmas," and the night before became known as All-hallows Eve. It is actually from this term that we get our present-day name "Halloween," even though the ways we celebrate Halloween are rooted in the Celtic tradition, not the Christian. In the 11th century the celebration of All Souls' Day was added on November 2nd to commemorate the lives of all people who had gone before us.

While the season is rich in lore and practice, and is sacred in both traditions, I invite you to consider a more expansive view of what they each celebrate. Both ancient and indigenous wisdom traditions as well as modern-day quantum science speak of a web of energy that connects everything. In the quantum realm as well as in the realm of consciousness, linear time and space do not exist as we know it in this three-dimensional realm. In the quantum realm and in consciousness, everything exists as pure energy that is "non-local," a term used in quantum science indicating that something exists everywhere in time and space.

If something exists everywhere in time and space, then theoretically we have access to that energy from anywhere. The truth is that what the Celts thought only happens on the night before their new year – the lifting of the veil between the worlds – is actually possible for us all the time. The circle between our present, our past, and our future, is whole and complete. The circle between us, those who have gone before us, and those who will come after us, is whole and complete. The circle between who we are and what we know, and the knowledge and wisdom of the past *and of the future* is whole and complete. It is truly all one big circle. It's our awareness of that circle that gets broken. The circle itself is what makes it possible to tap into a bigger picture, to access wisdom and guidance from those who have gone before us, and to see the possibilities of our future. From there we can choose which possibilities we will steward across the bridge from the unseen world to our physical reality. It's up to each of us to step into that unbroken circle and hone our intuitive skills. The veil between the reality of pure vibrating

energy and the reality of fixed physical form is but a puff of smoke for those who choose to walk between what we consider to be two worlds.

Judi Neal, organizational consultant and founder of the International Center for Spirit at Work, calls those who choose this path "edgewalkers" (www.edgewalkers.org). In her wonderful book by the same name, she speaks of many characteristics of those people who could be called "edgewalkers": innovative, cutting-edge, pioneering, creative, revolutionary, just to name a few. Yet a fundamental quality that edgewalkers possess is the willingness to stand in at least two worlds at once, walk between them, and access the riches from them all. I use the word "willingness" instead of the word "ability" because that ability in some form is available to everyone. The key is being willing to go there – being willing to hone your intuitive skills to the point where you can in fact walk between worlds.

When we are willing to walk between worlds, we can call on those who have gone before us to stand beside us as our allies and supports. We don't need to have personally known those people. Their energy, wisdom, and knowledge are very present in the greater consciousness. And, though this might seem a little more far-fetched, the energy, wisdom, and knowledge of our future leaders is also present now in the consciousness. It just vibrates at a different frequency than where we have been or where we are now. But that doesn't mean it's not available to us. With some practice, we can also access that information.

So how do you learn to stand in more than one world at a time, and ultimately to walk freely between them? You can begin by being willing to explore the possibility that you could actually do this. You must suspend whatever judgments or beliefs you have about intuition and the ability to access other realms of consciousness. As you begin to allow yourself this possibility, you will probably realize that, in fact, you actually walk between worlds all the time but just never named it as such. When you dream, fantasize, or engage your imagination, you are walking between worlds. When you have a gut feeling about

something or a hunch, you are walking between worlds. When a voice inside speaks loudly and you know instinctively you must pay attention, you are walking between worlds. Acknowledging this and opening to the possibility that there could be more available to you opens the door.

Then some practical steps can help as well. A great place to start is a walk in nature. My good friend and frequent facilitation partner Devin Wilson created a simple but beautiful exercise that we often use in workshops and coaching to help participants begin to intentionally lift the veil.

Standing in nature, close your eyes and take a few moments to allow your breath to find its own natural, steady, even rhythm. Then imagine the breath coming up from the ground into your body as you inhale, and as you exhale allow the breath to go back down into the earth. After a few breaths in this way, shift to imagine the breath coming in through the top of your head, down into the body as you inhale, and then as you exhale the breath releases back out the top of your head.

After a few moments of breathing in that way, imagine the breath coming up from the ground, entering your body from the earth below and traveling up through your body and out through the top of your head. Then again after a few moments, reverse the breath so that you imagine it coming in from the heavens, down through the top of your head, traveling down through your body, and going out through your feet into the ground.

Next, imagine the breath coming up from the earth into your body and going out through the top of your head while at the same time coming in from the heavens through the top of your head, down through your body and out through your feet. Continue breathing in this way for a few moments, feeling the breath moving in both directions at the same time.

Now imagine breathing in and out through every cell in your being, as if your body was a dynamic pulsing and vibrating breathing system. Every cell is constantly taking in and releasing air and energy. As you continue breathing in this way, you may begin to feel that the boundaries of your physical body disappear and your energy system and the energy systems around you begin to merge.

Finally, you might experiment with the mantra, "My breath is the breath of the universe; the breath of the universe is my breath." As you inhale, silently say to yourself the first part, "My breath is the breath of the universe." Then as you exhale, silently say the second part, "The breath of the universe is my breath." After a few moments, open your eyes and begin walking, continuing to say the mantra in rhythm with your breath. After a while, let go of the mantra and begin looking at everything as if it was pure vibrating energy. Begin to perceive everything as flows of energy. You will find your own discoveries and realizations as you practice this, and the veil between the worlds will begin to lift for you.

Meditation and reflective practices are also important tools for learning to walk between the worlds. My first book, *Intuitive Living: A Sacred Path*, contains over 60 exercises and tools to help you develop these skills. Paying attention to your intuitive feelings about decisions and choices will also help open the door. Too often when choices and decisions are upon us, we assume a position of "I don't know" when, in truth, most of the time we already know deep inside. We just have to take the time to drop into our inner guidance and discover the answers that are waiting for us.

Why is walking between worlds important for us in these challenging times?

The Law of Polarity, one of the Hermetic Laws of the Universe, tells us that nothing can exist without its opposite. Therefore, a question cannot exist

without the answer also being present somewhere in consciousness. A problem or challenge cannot exist without its solution also being available. However, the problem and its solution usually do not exist at the same level of consciousness or in the same "world." Therefore, if we are to find the resolutions to challenges, solutions to problems, and answers to questions, we must often cross over to another level of awareness. We must be willing to walk between the world where the challenge exists—a world we usually know very well—and the world where the resolution lives—a world that may feel completely new to us. Indeed it is through this approach that we can move beyond just trying to resolve conflicts or solve problems, to creating new realities—new economic paradigms, new relationship paradigms, new understandings of the best use of power. When we walk between worlds, we have a much greater perspective on all of life, and live with much greater sense of grace and ease.

In this season celebrating those who have gone before us and lifting the veil to step beyond our three-dimensional realm, consider how you might expand your own awareness of the unbroken circle. How can you practice walking between worlds? Imagine how your life might be different if you had access to more than you can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell with your outer senses. Being "edgewalkers," to use Judi Neal's description of walking between many worlds, is a critical key to moving beyond our current challenges, and to reaching our greatest potential as individuals and as a global family.

Many blessings,

Alan

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Soul Mission Profile— Loyal Christian Benefit Association

Insuring a Conscious Approach to the Cycle of Life



The Loyal Christian Benefit Association (LCBA) was founded by a group of eleven women in Titusville, Pennsylvania over 118 years ago. They were frustrated by the fact that women,

at the time, were considered uninsurable. They all knew of experiences in their families and community when a woman died, often in childbirth, and the family was suddenly left without a mother and the significant financial hardship that came with that. These forward-thinking women recognized this as a social justice issue and part of our country's history of sufferance. But more importantly, they decided to do something about it.

For years, LCBA provided insurance benefits to women who were often unable to find insurance coverage elsewhere. And in the 1960s, the company expanded its coverage to include the entire family, responding in part to the increasing prevalence of interfaith marriages and the children of those unions.

The company is understandably proud of its heritage and record of service. However, as LCBA moved into the new millennium and dealt with changing demographics and personnel, they felt it was time to get a clearer understanding of who they are now. Just over a year ago, another group of eleven forward-thinking people (the LCBA Leadership Team) met with Alan for a 2-day retreat to discover their soul mission - *LCBA honors the sacredness of life's transitions.*

Since then, they have continued to work with Alan to refine and implement this mission, including sessions with their employee base and Board of Directors. The results have been nothing short of miraculous. As Eileen Lydon, the Vice-President of Administration, says, "LCBA was founded specifically to help others in need, and although our mission was never lost, we now have a renewed commitment and excitement about LCBA's purpose and meaning." Steve Brockwell, the Vice-President of Marketing concurs: "We've been given the gift of focus. Not that we did not have a sense of focus before, but that sense certainly wasn't singular or united in nature." "Yes," Eileen continues, "on a daily basis we view our Soul Mission as the filter through which all of our decisions must pass. It has become part of the fabric of LCBA. Referring to our Soul Mission is part of our everyday language. It is referenced in our written internal communications, it is visually displayed on our walls, it is used as the template for our reporting to the Board of Directors."

Johnathon Pape: Many thanks to you, Eileen and Steve, for participating in this interview and to all of LCBA for sharing their story with our readers. Can you tell me a little more about LCBA?

Steve Brockwell: We actually came up with a statement to describe ourselves to others who ask "what is LCBA?" or "what does LCBA do?" so that, regardless of how we each actually articulate it in the moment, we are all saying the same thing initially. We had this statement printed in a business-card-sized format and gave one to each of our 40 employees to keep in their wallet/purse as a reminder if/when needed. The statement is:

"We are a life insurance provider with a conscience: a not-for-profit fraternal benefit society looking ahead to the needs of tomorrow's world. We reinvest our earnings in our members and their communities."

Eileen Lydon: We don't call ourselves a company – we are a member based association. This is an important distinction because the nature of being a fraternal benefit society – we aren't a commercial carrier – means that we answer to our members

instead of stockholders. We are a not-for-profit organization.

JP: So what is the difference between a fraternal benefit society and a commercial insurance company?

SB: Fraternal Benefit Societies operate under what is called a Common Bond. That can be whatever you establish yourselves to be. Ours happens to be Christianity. To be part of that group, you have to describe yourself as a member of that group.

JP: And who is your member base?

EL: It's a little different now, although the factor of uninsured families is certainly coming back in. However, now a great deal of our work is with people facing end of life decisions.

SB: We offer a variety of products to help people with that life transition on a pre-need, as opposed to at-need, basis. This means serving families who want to plan ahead to pre-fund funeral arrangements and to protect other family members from financial and legal burdens when the need arises.

EL: We have members that are spread out across the United States, but our primary area is in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New Jersey.

JP: How has knowing the Soul Mission of your business and living it changed LCBA?

EL: The impact of this "knowing" has been most significant. All LCBA employees are fully grounded in knowing who and what LCBA is and what she is here to do. It has given us an ease in communicating who we are. Before we had many separate parts; each part could tell you who they were, but it was often hard to connect the dots. If you asked me who and what LCBA is you'd have gotten one response, and if you asked someone else you'd get a different response.

SB: Each department held onto its own purpose and often conflicted with one another, making it impossible to really achieve success.

EL: It's been wonderful how the common language has arisen.

JP: *This seems to go so much deeper than branding. So it's not just about the face that you put onto your product or organization for the public, but also how you show up with each other and with yourself. What are some specific ways that knowing LCBA's Soul Mission has come into play recently in your day-to-day operations?*

EL: Our Soul Mission has been our filter for large and not-so-large decisions this past year. As we defined our annual plan for 2008 it was evaluated against our Soul Mission. As such this now impacts our actions literally every day. And here at LCBA we now not only use our Soul Mission we also use the Manifestation Wheel as our tool for planning. As we work through the houses of the wheel we repeatedly verify that we are in alignment with our Soul Mission. Our Soul Mission is just simply always with us.

SB: We use the Manifestation Wheel in full or amended version to plan all of our most important projects and initiatives. The wheel model really places our intention front and center and does not allow that intention to get lost in activity.

JP: *I know that you recently hired a new President/CEO. How did knowing your Soul Mission help you in that process?*

EL: We had done so much of our work in *Soul Mission * Life Vision* that it was incredibly easy to communicate who we were to the candidates.

SB: We had come to a point where we found our alignment internally and we were looking to align someone from outside our culture with that. We did our best to communicate that to candidates – and got some interesting feedback from people that were coming in to interview. We had transformed ourselves and we understood that, but we *really* understood it when we explained it to the candidates. The “October surprise” was realizing how knowing LCBA’s Soul Mission had changed each of us personally. The other surprise in the process was that during the search, one of our current employees decided “I can do this” and put his hat in the ring. He went through the entire process that everyone else did, and was ultimately selected to lead us.

JP: *What is LCBA currently manifesting and how does it relate to Soul Mission?*

SB: We are bringing our sales efforts that were formerly divided into one common cause in a way that actually ends up diversifying our product offerings. And we are seeing those offerings more clearly for what they are and what we want them to be in the way that we present, sell, and support them – as objects of social outreach. This is completely changing the way we view and deliver “fraternal benefits.” Again this keeps all aspects of who we are focused on and conveying our care and passion for “honoring the sacredness of life’s transitions,” in particular the “end of life” transition.

JP: *As LCBA has encountered challenges, doubts, or setbacks, how has knowing who you are at the soul level gotten you back on track?*

EL: In this past year we not only conducted a national search for a new President/CEO, we re-defined our market, established a new subsidiary, and passed new bylaws with significant changes to our governance structure. Without the knowledge of our Soul Mission this year would have been a very different experience. With this filter we have completed these tasks with a clear sense of direction – of knowing what the next right thing to do was. It makes an amazing difference in the process, the outcome, and the experience of purpose and meaning for LCBA’s employees.

SB: We have derived enormous comfort from knowing ourselves at the soul level particularly as we face the economic challenges of this current economy. We are confident in our market and our chosen methods of meeting its needs. We carry forward a mindset of abundance in the face of very real challenges.

JP: *What is the most important thing you've learned about LCBA since claiming its Soul Mission?*

SB: We have learned that our Soul Mission and the decisions it is driving bring us closer to the original intention of the women who founded LCBA as an aid to one another in times of personal loss and

challenge than any other iteration of our being over the last 118 years.

JP: *What has been the greatest challenge to living LCBA's Soul Mission?*

SB: Keeping the associated new language and new insights gained from our exercises in alignment front and center as we move ahead. For instance, being mindful to keep social outreach activity, communications, sales activity, and income, as well as other financial and accounting matters all framed in the context of our Soul Mission. This needs to be intentionally and repeatedly reviewed and stated rather than allowing it to fall into the category of something assumed and understood. This reviewing and re-stating has often changed the tenor and outcome of commitments and conversations subsequent to finding that Soul Mission.

JP: *How have you worked to find the gift in that scenario and transformed the energy around the challenge?*

SB: It's much like simply slowing down on the individual level to breathe and notice our own being, and how that awareness then affects our doing. Keeping our Soul Mission intentionally front and center in a frequently spoken manner slows us down collectively and centers us around that common cause again, so that even if we disagree on actions, we do so amicably because we realize that the vision we share together is solid.

There's something else that I think is really important in this process and I would highly recommend to anyone embarking on this journey. We had a great internal champion in Eileen. She really believed in the process and was vigilant in keeping the language and the process alive. No one else in this company could have done that like Eileen, and it has taken us much further down the road than we could have gotten without her. Eileen is there to remind us of the language of our soul mission and to say "How does this align with our mission?" or "Hey, let's put this on the Manifestation Wheel." That is so important for keeping the momentum strong. Develop an internal champion if you don't already have one.

JP: *Yes, and thank you for reminding us all - even on the personal level - that vigilance in LIVING your soul mission is critically important. Is there anything that you would you say to an organization that is considering working with Alan to find its Soul Mission and create a clear vision of how to bring that mission to life?*

EL: Working with Alan is an investment in your organization's future. The same consideration and budget planning should be used in deciding to work with Alan as your organization would for any other investment.

SB: Do this! Open your mind and take that leap of faith to trust the process. You will find it more pragmatic than you expected and more profound than you hoped.

To learn more about LCBA, please visit www.lcbalife.org



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