

# Becoming Love

## Elizabeth Jameson

So let me just share here the opening slide, if you will. I don't have a lot of slides, I promise. But just as a place to start: if you are here for *Becoming Love*, mystical Christianity, ancient wisdom, lived experience—that's what we're here to talk about.

What the format will be is this: I'll do a little intro, invite a quick question from those who are willing to share, and then I'll do a little bit of teaching so that you can get a better sense of what this is about. After that, I'll give you some time to integrate—so a little journaling time for those who like a quick touch base. We'll put you in small groups if you want that. I know people have differing opinions about that. Then we'll come back for Q&A, because there may be things you're really interested in that I haven't touched on, and I want to make sure to address as much as I can.

It's a big amount of content. So I'll do my best to give you a sense of it, and then we can close with that Q&A to try to address anything else.

Okay, so I thought it might be helpful to actually start with a little bit about me. Who are you here with? What is my story and my background?

In a nutshell, I grew up in the Episcopal Church—cradle Episcopalian, as we like to say. I had a very lovely childhood in many ways. But when I was 12, my dad died very tragically and suddenly, and it prompted a lot of questions that were not what most people my age were dealing with. He died by suicide, and someone actually said to me—well meaning, I'm sure—that it was all part of God's plan. I remember thinking, *what?* How can that come out of someone's mouth? I remember thinking, that's not okay. I don't believe that. That's not true. But I was 12 and didn't necessarily voice that.

I did have extended family who were very evangelical, charismatic, so I kind of moved into that space for a while. I went to a very diverse school—ethnically, religiously, economically—which gave me a different perspective altogether. I went from more emotionally engaged, traditional ways of engaging religion to very intellectual ones. I lived in different parts of the country and was exposed to different ways of understanding the tradition.

Eventually, I felt called to be a priest. In the Episcopal Church, that's a mutual decision—the community has to say yes as well. I went to seminary, three very intense years. Actually, my canon law professor from seminary is on this call. How amazing is that?

I went deep into parish ministry for a very long time, but I was always kind of on the edge of the inside, knowing that this was an expansive way, not a narrow path. One of the things that came to me was a book by Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*. It is a stunning book. I later did a series on it—I'll talk about that at the end if you're interested—but it affirmed this expansive, contemplative wisdom way of understanding what the Christian path is at its heart. I'll come back to that in just a minute.

That led me to the Living School, which Cynthia Bourgeault, Richard Rohr, and Jim Finley founded. I attended from 2016 to 2018, and I brought that right into the parish. I learned it as I shared it. It was really an enlivening time. People were drawn to it, as I was—this sense that there's a whole harmony that has always been present in our tradition.

Whether you identify as Christian or not, I didn't hear most of this growing up—this contemplative, mystical way, this path. It's not that it wasn't there; it was that it was a very subtle harmony. This has become what I'm passionate about sharing, because it's really a path of transformation of consciousness, not simply a set of beliefs about someone or a community.

Then that beautiful wisdom I so loved and loved sharing was followed by a series of tragedies in my own journey. I had a traumatic brain injury and had to step out of parish ministry altogether and go on disability. My world narrowed dramatically. Then my youngest died at the age of 18, after a prolonged struggle, also by suicide.

I had to discover the hard way: is this path really trustworthy? Not trustworthy in the sense of "can I affirm that it's true," but is it trustworthy enough to hold the worst nightmare coming true? Is it strong enough to hold when the world falls apart.

What I discovered for myself is that it is not only trustworthy enough, but so powerful that it moved me into living from a joy not dependent on circumstances. That says a lot when your world has shattered. It really is that powerful.

So that's a little bit about my story, and why I've dedicated my journey to helping others walk this path and learn about it, if they're interested in going deeper. This is really an opportunity just to hear a little bit. At the very end, I'll talk about ways you might engage with me or with others. If you're not interested, I'll say, "Okay, the official part is done." No one needs to hear anything they don't want to hear.

My invitation to you is to open to your own curiosity. You don't need to affirm or believe anything I say. You could end this call and say, "That was interesting, but that's not for me," and that would be okay. I affirm you in that.

If, on the other hand, this really speaks to you and you feel something opening or inviting, I invite you to go further with the journey in whatever way feels right. There are many ways in. I do offer things, but there are many ways, and I'm happy to share them. Really, it's an invitation to listen deeply, perhaps be surprised, and not fight anything you already hold dear. This isn't an either/or—it's a both/and.

So let me pause for a minute. I may pause the recording for this part, just so people feel free to speak. You can unmute and share very briefly—because there's a lot to do today and more time later—but just briefly: what's the best thing you think about Christianity? What is beautiful, meaningful, or life-giving for you? And if you have one, what's the rub? What's the discomfort—what doesn't sit quite right?

You can do one or the other, or both. I invite us to pause and share a word or a phrase, and to listen. If someone else says your thing, that's okay.

I am not here to convince anyone of anything. I'm here to share what speaks to me and what has made a huge difference in my own journey. I'm not here to change anyone's mind if they're really in a good place with how they understand things.

Both traditional, inherited ways of understanding Jesus and this faith and this path are legit. They're there—in Scripture, in the tradition. And so is this other way. So this is really just an invitation to curiosity.

Of course, Jesus was Jewish, and they were much better—and still are—at making room for difference. Much of Scripture has very differing opinions about things, and we conflate that into thinking there's only one right answer. That's simply not true. If you look closely at Scripture, there are a lot of differing ideas about almost everything.

So let me begin by saying, first and foremost, this is an understanding where Christianity is learning to live inside a different pattern of consciousness—one Jesus embodied and invited others into. Christianity is learning to live inside a different pattern of consciousness, one that Jesus embodied and invited others into.

This beautiful beehive—which is a symbol of wisdom—is in the baptistry of the church where I was baptized. It's just a reminder that imagery matters too.

This is, first and foremost, a path. That's not how I understood it growing up. I understood Christianity as a set of beliefs about Jesus, a set of ways of being together in community. We were rooted in Word and Sacrament and community and tradition. But I remember, as a child, someone saying to me—and you may have seen this too—that between me and God was this big chasm, uncrossable except by the cross.

They had a little pamphlet that showed me the cross going from me to God, with Jesus on the cross as the bridge from me, in my sinfulness and separation, to being one with God—which meant being able to go to heaven when I died. That was sort of it, in a nutshell. That doesn't mean that's all the church offered, but that is a very distinctive memory I have of someone trying to help me understand what this tradition really meant and how to be okay.

Even though I had been baptized, they were clear that I needed to be baptized by the Holy Spirit for it to count—that I had to make that additional step. And that it was because I was sinful. God was kind of—my words, not necessarily theirs—angry, and would only let me cross that bridge through Jesus's death on the cross and his resurrection.

Again, no judgment there. That's just how some of my experiences were.

What came to pass for me was recognizing that this path felt limited. It had premises I didn't necessarily agree with—namely, that I was bad and God was distant. That wasn't my experience.

I felt connected to God. And it didn't give me a way to live other than inside a set of rules—here's what good people do. It felt flat.

So let me say the alternative is this transformational path of consciousness.

If you look back at the Aramaic—which is what Jesus would have spoken, and we do have ancient Aramaic texts—there's a sense that what Jesus was saying was simply: *follow me*. He didn't say, "worship me." He said, "follow me." Do as I do. Live as I live.

There's that line—"I am the way, the truth..."—I'm not getting it exactly right in this moment. Some people hear that as: if you don't believe that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, then you're not included. But that understanding is not how Jesus lived or spoke or invited people.

Jesus was interested in changing minds and hearts, and in helping people live from a more connected, spacious way of being.

So instead of the bridge idea, Jesus talked—125 times—about the kingdom of God. Over time, that came to be understood as something you enter when you die. But Jesus actually spoke of it as something you can live in here and now. And the way you do that is by becoming awake—eyes to see, ears to hear—waking up to who you really are.

Let's be real. Jesus didn't walk around with a sign saying, "Son of God, going to die on the cross and be resurrected." Jesus just engaged with people. And what people experienced in encountering Jesus was a wide-open aperture. They encountered the divinity of all that is as love, with nothing hindering that love, light, and presence.

Some people were drawn to him—the crowds, the healings, the restoration to community. Others were angry and rejected the fact that love and light could be given so freely, outside the bounds of what was sanctioned by the powers that be. Jesus was clear: this love and this light are for everyone.

The kingdom of God is a state of consciousness. When you live in this shifted consciousness—what I might call today Christ consciousness—you live from the inside out. That peace that passes understanding. That joy that passes understanding. It's how you can love the other as if they were you, because in this consciousness, you are already living in paradise. You are living in the kingdom of God here and now.

That is what Jesus was inviting people into.

If you look at the early followers—this isn't something everyone knows—the crucifixion was not primary for the first 900 years after Jesus's death. Instead, the dominant imagery was paradise here and now. Even though they were persecuted, even though life was hard, they had caught something. What they recognized in Jesus, they were able to live.

Living this way gave them a strength—much as Jesus had—to go through hard things without being undone by them. Their suffering did not impact them in the same way it might have if they had not lived from this changed consciousness.

Consciousness—and so their focus was on following Jesus, on living with this trust that Jesus had. That shift in perception is called *metanoia* in the Greek. *Metanoia* is often translated as “repent,” but repent in our inherited understanding has often meant something like, “Oh, I’m terrible, I need to do something better to get back into good graces.”

What it really means—and this is harder—is to turn around, to see differently, and to live differently.

To get to the heart of what *metanoia*, this change of perception, really is, we have to go all the way back to Jesus’s worldview, which is quite different from ours. Jesus was Jewish, and he spoke Aramaic. Both Hebrew and Aramaic are Semitic languages, and Semitic languages are very indigenous. They’re very connected to the earth. They’re very embodied.

I remember in seminary, when I first took Hebrew, noticing that Hebrew has many, many words for dry and arid, because they lived in a place where there wasn’t much water. Whereas our language has many words for water—lake, stream, rivulet, all of that—but not nearly as many for dry and arid. Our language shapes our worldview.

Jesus’s whole worldview was quite remarkably different from the Greco-Roman understanding. In a quick nutshell, Greco-Roman thought—which we’ve inherited a lot of, and which Christianity has come through on some level—is very either/or. It’s black and white. Something is or it isn’t.

In the Semitic worldview that Jesus would have been steeped in and would have spoken from, everything is a continuum. Light is a continuum into dark. In those days, you didn’t walk into a dark room and flip a switch—light came slowly, and darkness came slowly. Every bit of darkness has an element of light in it. Everything inside is connected on a continuum to what’s outside. Male and female are on a continuum.

So when we hear some of what Jesus says, we hear it through a lens like, “I’m talking about my neighbor,” but in the Semitic worldview, you’re also talking about the neighbors within you—the parts of you—as well as the people outside. There’s much more depth and nuance. Even the words themselves have layers and layers of meaning, rather than a single black-and-white definition.

This shift is a little bit like Newtonian physics versus quantum physics. Most of us grew up with Newtonian physics—we can see it, we can understand it. If you drop something, it’s going to fall every time. But our world today also includes quantum physics as a reality. We may not understand every bit of it, but we know it’s true.

Our theology, though, has largely stayed in a Newtonian framework without realizing there’s much more mystery and depth at work in the same way.

I name this because part of the challenge of learning this worldview that Jesus invites us into is letting go—at least a little—of the worldview we hold so fast. For example, I seem to be over here. You all are over there. We're different. We have different thoughts, emotions, and experiences. It's very clear that we're not the same.

But in Jesus's worldview—in this kingdom consciousness, this Christ consciousness—that is both true and not true. Because we're also all part of the one reality of all that is.

In Jesus's understanding, there was what they called the *naphsha*—the personality, the person. The part of us that's born in time, dies in time, and has a limited perspective. That is real. I was born at a certain time. I've had particular experiences. So have you.

But I am also *ruha*—spirit, soul, an eternal being. And in that regard, I am part of *alaha*, or God, all that is.

What happens in following Jesus in this way is that you bring these together in your heart. You can hold both: I am limited, I've had particular experiences—and I am spirit. I am soul. I am eternal. I am one with all that is. And therefore, all of us are part of this oneness.

For those of you who live in Colorado, you know when you see an aspen tree, you think it's just one tree. But we know it's actually one organism expressing itself in many trunks. And the mystery is even bigger than that.

That's the shift of consciousness being invited here.

Is that big a difference? Am I going to live as a solo individual, buffeted by life, out for myself, trying to stabilize that way? Or am I going to live from the reality of oneness—with all that is, with nature, with other people, with God?

Instead of the bridge image I talked about earlier—this chasm between me and God—in Christ consciousness we wake up to the fact that we are all in God. We are all God. As Meister Eckhart says, *we are not God, and we are not other than God either*.

What we're being invited into is waking up to both the humanity and the divinity of who we are. Jesus didn't come to fix a problem after the fact. He isn't a cosmic fix-it. He shows us how to live as a full human—fully embodied, embracing our limits just as they are—and also recognizing that we are light. Light moving through us, being present.

So let me pause for a minute. Are there clarifying questions? Are there things you'd like to ask just to be able to go on?

How are people feeling? Is this familiar? Is it like, “Yep, you're not telling me anything new”? I know for some of you it is familiar—you've been working with me for a year. For others I don't know as well, is this like, “Yes, this resonates, let's keep moving,” or is this different?

So where does this go? How does this path—how do we live it?

A big piece is practice, as opposed to “I’m going to say certain things and then I’m in the in-group.” This really is about practice. It’s about how I don’t just think about being more loving, but how I let love come through me.

I’m thinking again of that wide-open aperture, which I really love as an image. Because often it’s easy to let fear or doubt or needs kind of close that aperture. Rather than the light shining through and holding me, I can feel my own—*oh, I’m afraid, or I don’t understand, or I won’t have enough, or I’m not enough*. All of those are ways that the wide-open aperture of who I am as a human being can get closed, and less light comes through.

On the other hand, I can point to times when I really drop into this trust that I am both limited and eternal. I can drop into the trust that I am held no matter what. And when I feel that, I can feel the aperture opening, and the light and love of God just come through without being hindered.

And I can point to people, right? People in whose presence I can relax and go, *oh yeah, there it is*. There’s more spaciousness. And I can also be in the presence of someone where it’s like, *oh*, there’s a threat, there’s an angst—and it closes in.

So what are some of the practices that help us live this way?

Probably the biggest one is called *kenosis*—K-E-N-O-S-I-S. It’s a Greek word. Kenosis.

In this understanding, there is the Trinity. The Trinity is this overflowing of love. The primal source spills out into the Word, the second person of the Trinity, which then flows back into the source in this eternal love. So you get this kind of waterfall effect, or a circle of love.

Because God so loves, it’s like that love can’t be contained, so it spills out into creation. Some people call that the first kenosis—the first letting go. Not clinging to divinity as separate, but spilling out. That’s how we have creation, the Big Bang: love bursting its bounds and pouring itself out.

Meister Eckhart, whom I love, talks about this as God’s *Gelassenheit*. It’s not that God is lazy—Eckhart was German—but it’s more like God is loose with God’s own being. It’s like, *whoosh*, here we go. I’m going to invite everything in. I’m going to manifest in everything.

So the first incarnation is the Big Bang—love becomes bodied, bodies forth in all that is. And the second incarnation, as Christians understand it, is Jesus, who comes to show us how to wake up to what was already there: the presence of divinity in us and in all that is.

How do you stabilize and live in this?

Jesus empties himself—this kenosis. It says in Scripture that he emptied himself to become human, not holding himself apart as divinity saying, “You’re on your own,” but spilling out, emptying himself even unto death. And that’s really the invitation: how do we walk through life loving with a wide-open aperture, but not clinging, not gripping?

That's the art.

Mary Oliver, in a poem I love, says to love like your life depends on it. But when it's time to let go, to let go, to let go. How do we not withhold love, and how do we not cling to what is?

I'll use the example of my story with B, because it's a big example.

In the last year or so of B's life, B suffered a lot. And in that journey, I realized the limits of what I could do. I couldn't carry B's burden. I couldn't take it away. I couldn't fix it. I did everything I could, but I knew I was limited. There was only so far my love could reach.

At some point, I realized that as a particle self—this *nafsha* self—as a mom, it was agonizing to witness what B was going through. It was terrifying to imagine life without B. I couldn't breathe when I thought of that.

But because I'd been on this journey with the mystics and this way of understanding, I also knew that in addition to being mom and child in our small self, our limited human self, we were also part of the divinity of all that is. In my soul journey and B's soul journey, we were connected before this lifetime, we would be connected after this lifetime, and we are connected even now.

Of course, I wanted to cling to B in this lifetime. My preference was that B would grow up, live a life, do all the things. That's what I yearned for. But I could also recognize that my clinging—my needing that outcome in order for me to be okay—was actually putting more pressure on B than B could hold. And it was denying the reality that we are not only these limited beings.

So in really trusting this transformational path of consciousness—the larger one, one with all that is, eternal self, one with God—that larger holding held my small self and enabled my small self to let go of expectations about how this would go.

While I supported B, I also recognized that I didn't really know what B's path was in this life. None of us do. We barely know our own—we're still learning that. And so part of what I did was to recognize that B was doing B's work, even if it wasn't the work I wanted to have happen. I let go of pinning my well-being on how B's journey would unfold.

There was a spaciousness then, and a love that trusted we would remain connected no matter what happened. And when B ultimately did die, as heartbroken as I was, the connection of love between us has remained incredibly strong. B comes to me in all kinds of ways—I won't go into that—but hits me on the back of the head with a blackbird and is very much present, even in absence.

While I will always miss hugging B and having B live and grow and be part of physical life, the potency—the power—of this Christ consciousness and this transformation is recognizing that we are more than this life. We can live this life more fully when we're in this kingdom of God consciousness, but our well-being is no longer dependent on certain things happening or not happening. And that's very powerful. That's very freeing.



This is the shift that Teilhard de Chardin talked about as the next phase of evolution—center-to-center loving—where we aren't only seeing each other in our limited roles, but in this larger context. And therefore, there is no ground to hit, if you will, because even B, in death, dropped into ever greater love, as did I.

This next evolution of consciousness is our learning to trust—so deeply—that we let go of our judgment about whether something is the way we want it to be or not. We love what is. As another practice, we love what is. We stop fighting reality, because what is *is* God. What we want to be true is often an illusion, and God is not in that.

When we drop into, *this is my reality—how can I love it, even if I don't want it?* something opens. It's another form of letting go, where we discover a buoyancy or a joy that's not dependent on anything. That's what we're being invited into.

So the practices include letting go—just noticing, *what am I clinging to?* Maybe I'm clinging to how I want someone else to respond. Maybe I'm clinging to wanting a certain diagnosis, or a certain good thing to happen, or for something bad not to happen. Our minds are very good at having opinions. Can I hold those a little more lightly and make room for mystery?

Letting go. Loving what is. And then gratitude was the other thing that was so powerful.

Jesus gives thanks as his last act, even knowing he's going to be betrayed. He takes the bread and gives thanks. He takes the wine and gives thanks. In the Greek, the word *Eucharist* actually contains joy and grace. And this isn't saccharine joy. It's not a Pollyanna gratitude that pretends everything is fine. It's finding gratitude even in the hard—and that is very powerful.

During those nine months of B's real struggle, I started numbering my gratitudes, being very concrete. *What am I thankful for?* Sometimes it was the coffee in my mug. Sometimes it was very hard to name anything. But as I did that, I got to a thousand—literally a week or two before B's death. And after B's death, that gratitude held me. I wasn't trying. It just kept welling up.

Even though my world had imploded, there was also an ability to notice where the grace was, where the love was, where I could give thanks.

So let me pause again. I've shared a lot. And I want to say clearly: this is not spiritual bypassing. This isn't pretending things aren't hurtful or hard. It's learning how to hold the both/and—the density of life and the love that's present when we live in this wide-open-aperture way.

As we do this, even in the smallest ways in our own lives, it actually expands the capacity of the world to do this. I use this example a lot—those of you who've journeyed with me know it—but when one person broke the four-minute mile, people all over the world started doing it, even though they didn't know each other. We are that linked in consciousness.

So even if it's just me making these choices in my little life, it actually builds the capacity for this way of being across the world. And as you may be aware, our world is in great need of a shift in consciousness.

Yes, there are ways to do that out in the world. But doing it *in*—learning to live and stabilize in this way—has far more impact than we might ever imagine.

So let me pause. I feel like I've given a lot. If you want to take a minute for journaling, or silence, or if you're ready to engage in some questions and answers—let's just let it be what you need it to be. Give yourself a chance to notice what's landing, what's opening, what's resisting. Then we'll come back together as a larger group around that. We'll just pause for a minute.

Are there questions? Are there things that are inviting you deeper, or causing resistance? Are there things that would be helpful to name or talk about again? I could go on and on, but I wanted to make sure I'm addressing what you all are interested in.

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## Speaker 2

I will say a couple of things, if we have some time.

This is so much my belief about the way to be in this world. When I hear you speak, it's like, *yeah, yeah, absolutely*. And I did not grow up trusting God. I grew up with two alcoholic and drug-addicted parents who took me to church to look good. So I didn't come from a place of thinking, *oh, I can always trust that there's someone there*.

It's always been a struggle for me to trust in the way that I want to, and that's been my spiritual journey for many years now. I started centering prayer in 1982—it's still my journey. I know it's real. I know it's there. It's always been there, even when I didn't believe it.

What's going on now in the world—I find it very difficult to hold both sides. I want to be in a place of not being angry or frustrated, of accepting people whose worldviews are different from mine. But there also has to be a balance between that and speaking out—saying what you see as truth and real.

So I guess that's where I am, in that juxtaposition. And I wonder how you've done that, Elizabeth, and how long it took you to get where you are—after your daughter's... your child's suicide—and before. Because I also have a child with mental health issues, and we do this roller coaster a lot.

I've been in Al-Anon for years because of my family, and now I'm still practicing that because of my kiddo. It helps, but it's hard.

When I hear you talk about this—which is probably why I'm drawn to these groups with you—I feel that sense of, *yeah, you do know this. You've been there. You've done it. You've held onto this*. And I'm really glad to be here.

I'd love to know more about how you came from where you were to where you are now—whatever you're willing to share.

## Elizabeth

Well, first, I'll say: grace. There's a lot of grace.

Someone placing *The Wisdom Jesus* into my hands—following these wisdom teachers—has been incredibly meaningful. If you're interested and want to explore more, I would say Jim Finley's *Turning to the Mystics* podcast is... I mean, some of you already know it. I could listen to Jim Finley—and I did—during some of the hardest years. I listened over and over again.

There's also a lot of trial and error, right? It's, *okay, I get it now—but not in this scenario. Or, I get it here, but not there.* Jim would call it a lot of slippage. And a lot of grace. A lot of saying, *okay, I'm doing the best I can.*

How we do anything is how we do everything. So how do I love myself in the ups and downs of this? In the *I don't quite have it the way I want to, but I feel drawn to it—there's something here.*

Another Jim-ism is *don't break faith*. Don't break faith with your awakened heart. When you have those moments—on a hike, in a conversation, reading something—those moments where everything falls into place and you know you're one with all that is... don't break faith with that when you can't remember it later. Don't break faith with the fact that it was real. That is the most real thing there is.

For me, a big piece was learning to embody love for myself, because that wasn't how I was raised. Letting myself be where I am. Following the teachers who spoke most deeply to me—Cynthia Bourgeault, Jim Finley, Meister Eckhart—going deeper and deeper, following wherever I felt, *there's something here.*

And then playing with it: *How do I feel when I think this way versus that way?* This connects to loving what is, which I learned from Byron Katie. She was so helpful to me. She says, don't argue—just notice: *If I think this thought, how do I feel? If I think that thought, how do I feel?* And it becomes clear—why would I keep choosing a way that makes life more difficult?

So some of it is just these practices, over and over again. Grace for myself when I don't get it. And community.

I found that I increasingly wanted to be with others who were asking these questions, trying to stabilize in this way of living. That's part of why I do soul coaching. It's part of why I offer these groups. Some people here have been journeying with me for over a year now.

It's because this is a way of life. It's learning to stabilize in it. It's not just *do I understand it or can I get a good grade.* It's a way of living.

And it really helps to have others in community—to reflect together, to learn together, to practice together. Maybe later, if some of you who've been on the journey want to speak to that, we can make space for it.

For now, I want to open it up again. Other questions? Other thoughts? What would be helpful at this point?

### Speaker 3

I'm having a hard time controlling myself to wait until the end, so I'm just going to say this quickly. I tried to figure out how many of your classes I've taken, and I think it's at least five—but I'm not sure—and the retreat, of course. I love the readings, I love the teachings, the pictures, the music, the poems. But it's the people in the classes—the other classmates.

I've thought about this a lot. I want to say they became friends, but then I realized, no—they're brothers and sisters. They're my chosen family. I feel so close to all my fellow travelers in the classes we've done. And you have a real gift, and you share it so well. The way you've dealt with your losses has helped me so much in dealing with my own.

### Speaker 4

I have a quick question. As I was journaling, I was trying to recognize what it is that I need to let go of. I think I have an idea, and there was some freedom in that—letting go—and then it opens you up to figuring out, *well, what is?*

For example, with my marriage—letting go of wanting it to be a certain way. I'm wondering about that transition: from recognizing what to let go of, so you can focus on what is, and then drop into gratitude for what is. It feels like the letting go phase is what I need.

### Elizabeth

The letting go *is* the hard part—and you named it beautifully.

Part of it is getting clear about what you're really clinging to. The clearer you can be, the easier it becomes. Sometimes it really helps to talk with someone. Sometimes journaling is powerful. Sometimes it's listening to your dreams, or slowing things down.

I often say: slow it down. Take the situation that caused that *ooh*—that tightening. Where was the moment everything constricted? If you can revisit it slowly and say, *okay, what's really happening here? What's the sticky place?*

For example, with B—there was a time when B was in the hospital, in a locked unit. It was the pandemic. I was terrified. I truly thought we might have already lost B. I was gripping, because I couldn't live with that. I couldn't live with that.

Doing Byron Katie's work helped a lot. She has these questions and turnarounds, and I was able to see that the place I couldn't get past was: *How would I live without B in this life?* Journaling through her questions—she offers a lot for free, and I highly recommend it—helped me see something.

I was wanting B to do B's work. But B was doing B's work, because whatever B was doing was, by definition, B's work. What I realized was that *I* had work to do. I needed to learn how to love without needing things to unfold in a particular way.

That's very powerful.

If you think about it, most of us grew up in a world of *I'll love you if...* If you're good to me. If you don't disappoint me. Even when we want to love freely, there's often a subtle undertone—what we'll get, how it will make us feel. If we're honest, it's messier than we think.

So part of the work is surfacing that—bringing it into awareness. Of course I wanted B to live. But part of it was also that I didn't want to hurt that much. I couldn't imagine surviving that pain.

As I did the work, I came to this: I loved B so much that I wanted B to know they were loved no matter what happened. I didn't want whatever time B had left to feel pressured, or like they were disappointing me, or that they had to do it differently.

What I wanted was for B to feel seen and understood—to know this was a really hard journey—and not to carry the burden of my expectations. That's what I tried to offer.

Am I perfect at it? No. It's a journey. But that's how I try to love people now. *If that's where you are, that's okay. I can still love you.*

Sometimes I still need to journal or talk it through: *Why am I irritated here? What's the rub?* Often I discover I've projected onto someone else something that's actually mine to work with.

Now, I want to be clear: I divorced my first husband. I don't have to live with toxicity. I don't have to receive someone else's unhealed wounds. So I'm not saying it's always on us.

What I *am* saying is the only person I can truly influence is myself. That's where the freedom is. I can live from an interior place of freedom, or I can be dependent on what's happening outside me—what someone thinks, what someone says, the diagnosis, the good, the bad.

That's the choice.

I don't know if I answered perfectly—I meandered a bit—but let's take one more question, and then I'll share a little about next steps. And if this was all you needed today, that's great—no pressure.

## **Speaker 5**

First, yes, I'm interested in what more I can do.

At the beginning, when you were talking about Greek terms and names, I was ready to jump ship. And then you talked about your child. I have a son battling terminal cancer for the last couple of years. I've lost a beloved son-in-law, and my husband of fifty-some years earlier on.

I'm just so angry. I have so much to be grateful for—I had liver cancer this year, gallstones, one surgery took care of it all. The oncologist said, “You’re amazing. You’re fine.” He said, “Can we talk about you and not your son?” But I can’t.

They dropped the research that was helping my son. I operate from fury. And I’ve got to stop.

### **Elizabeth**

I hear you. Thank you for sharing that. It is a lot. The pain, the anger, the fear—those are real. We don’t skim over them or pretend they don’t exist.

What we *can* do is come alongside ourselves in them. How can we be with others who can help us allow those feelings to be present without letting them be the only thing present.

I want to honor that, and then I’ll come back to this more fully.

### **Speaker 6**

I was wondering—how does this approach help with the very real things that come with grief? Flashbacks, lack of sleep, waves of grief. How does this help with those?

### **Elizabeth**

That’s a really helpful question.

I’ll compare it to my dad’s death. I didn’t have the resources then. I didn’t have the support. I didn’t know how to deal with it. I remember laughing at the reception afterward and saying, *I’m laughing because otherwise I’ll cry*. My best friend from second grade told me her parents said, “Don’t bring it up—it’ll make her sad.”

So I felt very alone. I tried to push those feelings away. I tried to excel, to manage, to keep going. And I ended up depressed. I ended up shrinking. Those big feelings smothered my life in ways you couldn’t see from the outside.

With Bee, it was very different. Someone wise said to me—when I told them there was a period where I couldn’t feel Bee’s presence, and that felt like another layer of grief—I texted, *My grief is making it hard to feel Bee*.

They wrote back: *Oh, love. Your grief is Bee holding you close*.

I took that deeply to heart.

Now, when a wave of grief comes, I go toward it. I put on Bee’s music. I hold Bee’s stuffed squishmellow. I look at pictures. I cocoon myself in what I’m feeling. I don’t run away or hide. Sometimes I don’t want to go there—and then I realize, *oh, that’s what’s happening*.

When I honor it, it rises all the way up and over, and it doesn't smother me. I listen. I give it space. I love myself in it. It sucks—and it doesn't stick in the same way it did earlier in my life.

If you're angry, allow yourself to be angry. Go outside. Yell. Throw rocks. Let it out. A friend once took me into a basement under construction, gave me wine glasses, and had me throw them against the wall. The first one, I was tentative. The second one—I was all in. It was one of the most freeing things I've ever done.

The first question is: *what's the kindest thing I can do for myself right now?* Do I need companionship? To journal? To cry? To rest? To rage? What is the real need?

When we honor that, we live more openly. We're not trying to manage everything on top of everything else.

And I do believe that for me, it was a grace that I wasn't doing any work during the grieving of Bee, because I had space to go rest when I needed to, or go cry when I needed to. And we don't always give ourselves that.

So do what you can to give yourself that. It doesn't matter how long ago it was or what it was like—if it's still there for you, then whatever you can do to honor it is important.

So again, if you feel like you've had enough—if you just wanted to hear a little bit—that's great. If you would like to know a little bit about what I do, I'll share, just to give you ideas. And again, there's lots out there. I'm not the only one doing this, and some of my favorite teachers are still teaching. But I weave a lot of very different threads together.

You've heard more of the contemplative, mystic-Christian strain, but I also pull in poets, artists, and I've come to recognize that astrology has powerful wisdom. Of course, it's in Scripture, but we separated it out and demoted it. It actually holds tremendous wisdom. And I'm one of those people who—if it's true, if it's wisdom, wherever it comes from—I'm interested.

So if you do continue with me, I'm pretty expansive. That doesn't mean you have to be—it's just the way it comes through me.

Let me share my screen for just a second, and I promise this won't be too long. It's just if you're interested.

So I do retreats, circles, soul coaching. I write reflections. My Substack—if you don't know what that is, it's an app where you can write and post, and if you sign up you'll get an email when I post something. If you go to Broken Open Substack, you'll find that.

My website is [ebjameson.com](http://ebjameson.com). Although it's a longer story, an ancient name has come back to me—Elizabeth Lightfoot Jameson—so you may come across that. If you do, don't be surprised. I'll say more about it if I move that way.

I'm doing a free offering now on Second Sundays, starting in February. And if there are enough people in Estes that I may do an online option and then, on a different day, do an in-person. If you are in Estes and you'd be interested in a regular monthly free circle, let me know. For now, it'll be hybrid—an opportunity for a little teaching, some small-circle work, and conversation.

*Wisdom Jesus Foundations* is based on Cynthia Bourgeault's book. A friend and colleague of mine I led a six-week series—some of you were part of that—and I have it as a fully passive option on the website if you want to do it on your own time. It was quite a bit of teaching. I recommend getting the book to go with it. We bring in a lot of our own to augment what she's talking about, and people found it helpful to have the commentary and conversation.

*Mystical Christianity*: I have a six-week Mystical Christianity series, but I wasn't sure I had enough people who would be interested, so I came up with a modified three-session offering called *Intro to Mystical Christianity: A Living Introduction, hybrid, starting January 22—3 Thursdays from 11-12:30pm MT*. I will do the six-week one at some point—this is just a next step. I'll send out a little something after, if you're interested in the three-week version or the longer one. Eventually I'll have both.

And then I don't think I have it in here, but I also have *The Inner Alchemy of Wisdom*, which I probably should have included. It's a longer, bigger program if you're really interested in transformation. It is on my website. It's an 11-week series, and it has a retreat in it. I do it hybrid, because some people can't come or that doesn't work for them.

We did this fall—I did a hybrid retreat last summer, and then I did this as a 13-week series. I'm modifying it a little bit. There's a way to do it monthly and get a more passive option with four or five live sessions—that's there is a **monthly Companion Circle, all online, option and there is a smaller Core Circle option that meets weekly and includes the retreat**. We do a lot of readings, teaching, and embodied opportunities—from SoulCollage® to movement. This is a powerful, alchemical offering.

The retreat is here in Estes, May 28th to the 31st. It's a bigger investment and commitment, but if you're interested in growth... a lot of the people who did it last fall are returning, because it's really learning to stabilize in this way of life. You just keep going deeper.

*Broken Open is my Substack*, offers people a way to sign up for and receive free posts (you can receive them as emails or look on the app or a browser). If you choose to be a paid member, you get 20% off of the programs I offer.

**Soul Coaching** is one-on-one work in three- or nine-month containers for deep 1-1 work. If you're interested, just let me know and we can do a complimentary session.

I feel like I just threw a lot at you. Mostly I'm here to say: there are a lot of different ways to engage, if that's appealing. And there are also, as I said, many teachers out there—Jim Finley, Cynthia Bourgeault, and others—who have beautiful offerings. So I'd say follow where your heart leads. When you notice, *something opens here*, that's where you follow. There's no wrong way to do it.



And I'll end with this: your life is your best teacher. Your own journey has in it everything you need. It helps to have support to mine your journey, and your own circumstances are the very best way for you to engage this transformation of consciousness. Working with where you are is the most powerful.

Any questions about all of that? As I said, I'll have a little survey to ask what was helpful, and also to let you know about some of these things that are available. And mostly, I just hope today was a gift. That was my hope—that it would support you in your own journey.

**Speaker:** So I do have a question. Can you just tell us: is soul coaching the same thing as spiritual direction, or are they different?

**Elizabeth**

That's a great question. It's a little bit more—it's a deeper companioning, and the container is different. It's twice a month, not once a month, which is usual for many spiritual directors.

And it's really for people who are ready to go deeper with this in their own lives—if you're feeling, *I want this. I want to learn how to live this.* It has deep listening, and I also bring in tools that are useful, or ways of seeing. So it includes some life coaching as part of it, as well as the deep spiritual listening.

What's been stunning for me is to witness—(I get teary)—people's growth in *Inner Alchemy of Wisdom* and in soul coaching. It's a privilege to witness how people can go deep with this in their day-to-day lives and see the difference.

Some people do soul coaching and Inner Alchemy, and some people do just one. It's really: what do you feel you're ready for? Where are you in your own journey?

**Speaker** Yeah, that's very helpful. Thank you.

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**Elizabeth** Any other questions?

Before we close, thank you for gifting me your time and your presence. It really is beautiful to see your faces, to hear your questions, and where you are. Thank you for being willing to engage your own journey—in whatever way that is—to be love in the world. We need it.

I encourage you to follow your heart, and just know that everything you need will be there for you. When you start to ask, it will come—because you're being drawn. We think we're initiating, but we're really responding to the love that is yearning to be made manifest in our lives and in this world.

So first and foremost, I thank you.

And let's just take a minute—maybe even hold our hands up, if you don't feel too uncomfortable with that—and send love into this circle, all who came. Feel the I AM Presence among and within us, breathing the love that's already here. And then, in your mind's eye, turn that love out into the world. Allow that love to radiate across this planet.

We are part of an awakening happening in real time. And you know it by the resistance—the flare-ups of the old ways that are desperately trying to prove they're still relevant. And they're not.

This work we're doing—work that people across the globe are doing—is what's happening. So as we unleash that love, knowing it comes back around, with grace I send you off and thank you for who you are.

Thank you. Elizabeth, thank you. Elizabeth, thank you so much. Thank you.

You're all welcome.

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**Speaker 4** Thank you all. I look forward to getting to know the new people and returning with my sisters later.