

Peace  
of Heart

Reflections on Choices  
in Daily Life

Marc Foley



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In gratitude to my friend  
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## Foreword

When Rabbi Joshua Liebman was a young man, he made a list of the things that he believed would bring him happiness. The list was extensive; it included, among other things, love, health, and fame. Liebman shared his list with a wise old man who replied that his list lacked an essential ingredient for happiness — Peace of Mind. Without it, explained the old man, a person can never be happy because even if he possesses all the goods of this earth, without peace of mind, he would possess them with an unhappy heart.

But how can we achieve peace of mind? We can only experience it truly when we have true peace of soul: when we are in right relationship with God, our neighbor, and our deepest self. Let us explore how small practices and daily choices can foster true peace of soul.



Staying Rooted in  
God's Presence

One



# The Great Principle

“The great principle of the interior life lies in peace of heart,” writes De Caussade. “It must be preserved with such care that the moment it is in danger, everything else should be abandoned for its re-establishment.... The reason for this is that peace and tranquility of spirit alone give the soul great strength to achieve all that God wills.”<sup>1</sup>

We lose our peace of soul when we lose our awareness of God’s presence. It is re-established when we re-center our mind upon God. There are many means by which we can accomplish this task. For example, we can simply close our eyes for a moment and focus on God’s indwelling presence; we can look at a picture or read a saying that re-centers our mind upon God, or we can repeat a favorite line of Scripture or poetry that we have committed to memory. What practice helps you to return to the Shepherd and Guardian of your soul?



# Where Will You Live Today?

2

Our mind is a vast universe of thoughts; our consciousness an endless stream of images and emotionally laden ideas that we cannot stop. We cannot shut down our fretful minds, but we can choose what ideas we focus upon. An old Chinese proverb says, "That the birds of worry and care fly over your head, this you cannot change, but that they built nests in your hair, this you can prevent."

The wisdom of the proverb lies in differentiating between what we can do from what we can't do. To expect that we can stop worry from circling around our minds is unrealistic. In fact, trying to stop it only makes matters worse, for we give power to the things we resist. Attempting *not* to think of something is to focus upon it. Try to be at peace with this reality.

But we are not powerless. We can prevent our thoughts from building nests in our

hair. That is, we can choose what thoughts we dwell upon. We can brood upon past hurts and injuries or allow our minds to run wild with worry about every fearful possibility that the future may have in store for us. Or we can gently focus our mind on God's Eternal Presence dwelling within us, realizing that we can never be alone, never separated from the One who loves us. "The mind is its own place," wrote John Milton, "and in itself can make a Heav'n of Hell and a Hell of Heav'n."<sup>2</sup> What place will you live in today?