

PS 24 Marianne Williamson PROGRAM 27 Min Aug 11-17.mp3

John [00:00:01] From KBOO in Portland Oregon and the Pacifica Radio Network this is Progressive Spirit progressive spirit dot net. I'm John Shuck. Seven of her 12 books have been New York Times best sellers. Four have been number one on that list. You've seen her on Oprah, Larry King Live, Bill Maher, Good Morning America, and Charlie Rose. You can watch her live each Wednesday on live stream through her Web site Marianne dot com.

[00:00:30] Now she's hit the big time. Marianne Williamson is my guest on Progressive Spirit. Her latest book is *Tears To Triumph: The Spiritual Journey from Suffering to Enlightenment*. She's with me via Skype from New York, New York. Welcome Marianne Williamson to Progressive Spirit.

Marianne Williamson [00:00:44] Oh you're welcome.

[00:00:45] When I was contacted by your publicist about Tears to Triumph the first thought that went through my mind was Marianne Williamson, she's the one who said "Our greatest fear is not that we're inadequate. Our greatest fear is that we're powerful beyond measure." And I've used that quote and now I get to talk to you about it. So I have two questions. Why is our greatest fear that we are powerful beyond measure? And is there a connection between that thesis and this your latest book Tears to Triumph?

Marianne Williamson [00:01:16] Well the paragraph that you mentioned begins "Our deepest fear" is from my book A Return to Love. And that book is subtitled reflections on the principles of A Course in Miracles. So the principle itself that we're more afraid of our life than of our darkness is from the course and the course is a psychological training. It's not a religion or dogma or doctrine but it's based on universal spiritual themes and the spiritual theme there is that it is our spirit that is the fundamental truth of who we are not our bodies. Our bodies are like a suit of clothes and identifying with the spirit seems frightening to us because the physical eyes can't see it and the physical ears can't hear. The physical senses don't perceive it. The physical hands don't touch it. And so the ego mind which is the mind that attaches us to the belief that we're just bodies is constantly warning us not to go there. Everything from it's a fantasy to you'll go crazy. It's crazy territory. But the real crazy territory is what happens mentally and then materially as a manifestation of this when we over identify with the material plane. So what we fear is what we should be embracing and what we should be fearing is what we are embracing. And that is this very limited construct that all we are as bodies and all that's going on in the world is the material.

Now when you ask me what is the relationship between that and *Tears to Triumph*, there is a direct relationship because when we do identify ourselves only with the mortal plane we are actually mis-creating with our thoughts because our consciousness at a fundamental heart level knows that this is not who we are. Who we are is love. Who we are is beings of love we have a purpose on this earth and that is to love each other. When we identify only with the material plane we dissociate from that other worldly transcendent function and we move into mental dimensions of chaos and randomness and within that we suffer. This is why Buddha said life is suffering. It's the meaning metaphysically of Moses delivering the Israelites from the Pharaoh who is that internal slave driver. It's the meaning of Jesus suffering on the cross. Suffering on the trials and tribulations of the material plane. So yes the tears that we cry are all due to the fact that we are misperceiving who we are and misappropriating our own mental forces and basically living

in a kind of spiritual blindness not in touch with who we are, not in touch with any sense of an otherworldly or transcendent identity, which makes us completely fractured in our relationships with the rest of the universe with the earth and with each other. The way out of that. The journey out of that is the spiritual path and that is the Return to Love. It is the return to the realization that we're not here to fight each other we're to love each other.

John [00:04:23] You know I so appreciate the inclusiveness your spirituality as you just mentioned. You draw from spiritual figures such as Jesus, Moses, Buddha, *A Course in Miracles* many others. Can you talk a little bit about your own journey not just your path to become a successful author and lecturer which you are but who or what gave you the nudge or permission to find your spiritual voice, your authentic voice?

Marianne Williamson [00:04:47] Well I'm Jewish and within Judaism there is a great social justice component. *Tikkun Olam* to repair the world. So I think I'm not someone who had to get over any childhood programming. My childhood programming set me up for what I think is a very healthy spiritual perspective that we are of God and that God has expectations of us. And that those expectations are that we use our minds and use our life force the way it is intended to be used. So when I, whether it was *The Course in Miracles* or activism on the external planes all these things were comfort zones for me and are comfort zones for me because my basic spiritual or religious upbringing supports both the notion of trying to be who God would have us be as well as the notion that we are here to do as God would have us do.

John [00:05:54] Many of those listening who have had severe losses also have high we might call B.S. detectors. There are a lot of preachers and self-help books out there a lot of it is simply trite, in my view. My wife and I lost a son four years ago to suicide and we're not alone in that there's the loss and grief of the human journey through this veil of tears is intense. So when we see a title like *Tears to Triumph* we think OK what does this author know about tears that can help us trust her when she talks about triumph?

Marianne Williamson [00:06:27] Well first of all my condolences to you. It's it's very kind and modest of you to acknowledge that others have suffered. But, realistically you have suffered. I don't think there is a sword to the heart greater than your so I am sorry. I have lost both my parents. I have lost my sister at a young age. I lost my best friend. I have lived on this earth and I think that while situations such as yours are extreme in terms of the cruelty of the situation, I think that everyone, if we live long enough, experience the layers of disappointment and sorrow that come along with life. So I think that that's really what I'm speaking to is that the current trend of medicalizing situations that are within the spectrum of normal human suffering is a very dysfunctional reaction.

So I have had in my own life the normal disappointments of break ups and failures and losses. I've also had two periods that were definitely what would be called clinical depression. And I've worked very up close and personally with it with people who have been going through catastrophic situations over 30 years of that. So I mean you could say about anybody who writes about anything, who are you to write it? It's really not about me. It's about whether or not any of the information that is in my books might be of help to somebody.

John [00:08:08] If you're just joining us on Progressive Spirit, my guest is Marianne Williamson who has written *Tears to Triumph: The Spiritual Journey from Suffering to Enlightenment*. You write "psychic pain like physical pain is there for a reason. It's not an

illness but it's a messenger." Talk for a moment about the role of grief. And you mentioned medications earlier. Are we missing the sacred path of grief by overmedicating?

Marianne Williamson [00:08:34] We sure as heck are. Humanity would not have survived for many, many, many, many thousands of years were we not imbued with a capacity to take a hit. And this is true not only physically but psychically. In the physical immune system--because of the immune system--without which we know that we cannot survive. Because of it we're able to process quite a bit of injury and disease, integrate it and heal from it. Well the same is true psychically.

Heartbreak did not just stop you know. I mean, did not just happen, did not just start you know. The audacity of the pharmacological and pharmaceutical industries. This suggestion that somehow we've discovered some new disease. This is hardly a new disease. Human catastrophe and the ability to psychologically and emotionally endure--it is not something new on the scene. There's no blood test for depression. It's not like leukemia or diabetes or something like that. So psychically we are imbued with an immune system as well and grief is the bulwark of the psychic immune system. If you and I were in a car accident let's say and we had bruises on our body it would be understood that it was going to take a while for those bruises to heal. And when we go through emotionally and psychologically catastrophic situations it's going to take us a while to heal. The heart is bruised.

Now when I was growing up it seems that the culture gave greater acknowledgment to this. If someone went to a catastrophic situation and you certainly know this. It, it was a mainstream understanding that it would be at least a year before the mother or the father or the husband or the wife, someone would lost someone dear and close to them would even be themselves again. But we have taken these dictates of a business model and so imposed them on every single area of our lives that if we're not up and like you know making it happen within three months there is this suggestion that something is wrong and perhaps we need to be in treatment, which really is just code for 'on pharmaceuticals'.

Now this is not to judge people who have gone through extreme situations at all but there are people on pharmaceuticals today, on antidepressants who are not experiencing extreme situations and definitely are not experiencing mental illness. You know mental illness like schizophrenia or bipolar. Then the conversation around psychotherapeutic drugs is clearly legitimate. But people are having them thrown at them these days and particularly by the way, most of the subscriptions are from gynecologists to women. Now a gynecologist is neither a mental counselor nor a spiritual counselor. And the fact that women feel things so exquisitely, that we are so sensitive, and that we are so heartbroken when life is not as it should be is not our weakness. It is our strength. It is it is necessary for the survival of the human race that someone is not okay with mistreating children. That someone is not OK with the world being not as it should be. And so the last thing we need is docile women. The last thing we need is to be short circuiting the experience of our grief or numbing our psychic pain. These are very disturbing times. Would we be better off if the abolitionists just hadn't been so upset? Would we be better off if Susan B Anthony hadn't created so much drama everywhere she went?

John [00:12:24] That's great. I and you know even, not to talk about me but actually your book kind of opened that up to talk about my own experience of speaking with a counselor afterward. I knew I didn't want medications because I wanted to experience the sacredness. I didn't want to lose whatever I might gain from this loss.

Marianne Williamson [00:12:48] Exactly. Exactly. And sometimes you know the stars are always out there. But we see them at night. And there are seasons of life and that is a natural ecosystem. And to have gone through something as, you know full tilt catastrophic is what you and your wife went through, Nature knows how to absorb that but it's going to be a process as you would certainly know. And within that it is sacred because it is the way of nature. And within the way of nature is where we find God and where we find the lessons to be learned and where we find our faith and really no one can speak to that more powerfully than you can having gone through it. But I know in my own experiences less catastrophic than yours but still deep and deeply painful, I have certainly seen that. I have learned through my own dark nights of the soul lessons like contrition and humility and gratitude and atonement for my own errors and I learned not to take treat life like a joke because it's not one, and I learned that other people's feelings matter at least as much as mine do. I learned how important it is to show up for life as an adult and to try to practice as much mercy and compassion and forgiveness towards others as I have felt God show towards me.

John [00:14:17] You mentioned Susan B Anthony. You know it's for speaking out or the situations of the world, so yes we should be passionate and upset about the social injustices in the world and you describe yourself as an author, a speaker and an activist. And there's a tendency among many spiritual leaders to kind of bypass the social conditions that contribute to suffering and think that the spiritual life is strictly internal. But you write in your chapter a culture of depression that we are depressed collectively. How do you see that connection between the personal and the collective?

Marianne Williamson [00:14:55] Politics is just one more area of human endeavor and human relationship. And if spirituality applies to anything it applies to everything. So when you say that many spiritual leaders bypass it. When you actually talk about my colleagues who are the leaders in this field, they are not apolitical necessarily at all. I know these people behind the scenes. I don't they're not an apolitical bunch. They do not in the cases where they do not bring it into their work. Because that is their decision not to. And that is not for me to judge. That doesn't mean that they themselves aren't as active on these issues as anyone else's.

Now there is a trend among the population of the modern higher seeker which definitely does what you're talking about. But I don't think that that's led by the most successful leaders in this field. I have to say and sort of defense of my colleagues. I think that there is this poppycock out there, this faux spirituality that has denial confused with transformation. That thinks that you get rid of the darkness by not engaging it, by ignoring it. But that simply... There is no serious religious or spiritual tradition that gives anyone a pass on addressing the suffering of other sentient beings. So that silliness is out there but no one I don't think it's led by the main writers and speakers in this area. And it's simply something to be challenged.

It's kind of ridiculous actually. You know somebody would say to me the other day he said "Well I went to a spiritual counselor and she really made me focus on self-love." And I laughed. I guffawed. This idea that spiritual love is self-love. No it's not. Spiritual love is love for all living things. That's spiritual love which is the ultimately the only way to love yourself because at the deepest and highest level of spiritual realization we realize this that is who we are. We are each other. So the idea that self-love is the essence of spiritual love is an example of what you're talking about. This this ego concocted appropriation which most organized religion is actually of the spiritual themes meant to deliver us used to imprison us further.

John [00:17:21] Well said. Let's talk about the opposite end of that. What is the danger of a lot of political activism without attention to the spiritual?

Marianne Williamson [00:17:30] Well I wouldn't so go so far as to call it danger. But as Gandhi said, "The end is inherent in the means." That's a real big important principle of nonviolence. If the vehicle is not nonviolent then the product of our efforts, if the vehicle meaning my consciousness is not nonviolent then the product of my efforts will not be nonviolent. Everything we do is infused with a consciousness with which we do it. So in that sense an angry generation will not bring peace to the world. So what I learned as a student of these things is that the guns I had to get rid of first and foremost were the guns in my own head. You know you see it in today's political climate. All these people who are quote unquote hating the haters. Well if you're hating the haters you are a hater.

There's an internal as Martin Luther King said, "We need a quantitative shift in our circumstances and a qualitative shift in our souls." It's both/and. So from a perspective of Gandhi and of course Gandhian principles--Martin Luther King went to India. He studied those principles he brought them to the United States for application to the civil rights movement in the 1960s. It's very much about clearing our hearts of violence. Not only as well as ridding the world of violence but knowing that we will not be able to rid the world of violence if we don't read our own hearts. So it's a both/and and I take that very seriously in my life.

John [00:19:13] Marianne Williamson my guest on Progressive Spirit, author of *Tears to Triumph: The Spiritual Journey from Suffering to Enlightenment*. You talked earlier about *A Course in Miracles* and you talk about *A Course in Miracles* through your book. Talk about just miracles themselves. Many people think that a miracle kind of means magic but in your chapter on forgiveness you write for example that "there is a way for us to find peace in our hearts regardless of someone else's behavior and that itself is a miracle." What do you mean by a miracle?

Marianne Williamson [00:19:43] A miracle as defined in books like *A Course in Miracles* is a shift in perception from fear to love. You know the fundamental metaphysical precept is that thought or consciousness is the cause of all manifestation in the world which is very connected to what you and I were just talking about. So when my thoughts are loving they affect the world one way and if my thoughts lack love they affect the world in another way. Because every cause is followed by an effect, my choosing how I think is everything. So a miracle is when I choose to bless rather than blame. I choose to forgive rather than withhold forgiveness. I choose to atone for my own errors, make amends for them, seek to make restitution, as opposed to refusing to look at my own part in the problems that have occurred. It's the choice to live in the present rather than attach to either past or future.

So the miraculous mind and the miraculous mindset that is the crux of the journey we take out of darkened consciousness to enlightened consciousness is that journey from thoughts of fear to thoughts of love and every thought that is not one of love is a thought of fear. And when we are thinking without love, we are using the mind in a way that it was not created or intended to be used, which then casts us into these regions of chaos and randomness that we see reflected in the world in war, and poverty, in environmental degradation. As Gandhi said, "The problem with the world is that humanity has lost its mind." And that's also why Martin Luther King said, "The political desegregation of the American South is the political externalization of the of the goal of the civil rights movement." He said, "But the ultimate goal is the establishment of the beloved

community." Because what he knew is that, yeah, you can desegregate the South. But the fact that there is segregation is itself a symptom rather than a cause. The cause is racism and that is an internal reality. And so only the establishment of the beloved community, the purification of consciousness, will root out the problem on the level of cause so that these symptoms will not continue to simply morph and reappear.

John [00:22:27] Many people are now secular, spiritual perhaps but not religious, perhaps a bit suspicious of too much God talk and what you write is so valuable on so many levels and you're not bashful about using the "G" word. Can you talk a little bit about for secular people what God is for you?

Marianne Williamson [00:22:46] You know, I honor the way AA talks about God as you understand him. You know a lot of people say, "Oh Marianne why do you use that word?" Well as I mentioned my I don't have anything to get over from childhood in that on that level. It's the idea of using that word, and it could be any word to describe a higher power a power that is beyond the thought system that the world prescribes. That is all loving and all powerful. It doesn't matter whether you talk about it in religious or spiritual terms or completely secular terms. There is one truth with a capital T. It is spoken in many different ways. And by the way words themselves are at best but symbols. You can talk about the hero's journey. You know the hero's journey is just a secular statement of the spiritual journey. You know everybody is on a spiritual journey just some people, most people probably don't know it. All this spiritual journey means is living our lives moment after moment and ultimately circumstance after circumstance forming lesson after lesson and becoming more loving people and suffering until we do. It's as simple as that. You don't have to use religious language, you don't have to use spiritual language. But I think we all have to use the language that is comforting for us. When people say to me, "Marianne, if you just didn't use that word you know more people would listen to you," And I feel like what am I, you know, once you start changing because you think your audience wants you to change and all that stuff, then you undercut your own innocence which undercuts your own power which is like what are you doing this for?

John [00:24:25] Right on. Cuts your own authenticity.

Marianne Williamson [00:24:29] Yeah, I remember one time I was in a conversation. This was many, many years ago, where somebody had told me, "Marianne, just don't use God words so much." And I was having this long conversation with somebody. I was trying to explain some concepts to them and the person looked at me. "You mean God? Is that what you mean to say?" [laughter] I'm not even going to try, because this person looked at me like I was crazy. "You mean God. Why don't you just say God?" [laughter]

John [00:24:54] Final question. Who are we?

Marianne Williamson [00:24:59] We are love. The body is just a suit of clothes around us, books like *A Course in Miracles* say. The Course says that we are ideas in the mind of God. Our physical being is not the ultimate truth of who we are and the idea that we are ideas in the mind of God is an extremely powerful idea that God is love and we are extensions of that love. And *A Course in Miracles* says your physical body is not the beginning of your life but a continuation. The end of your physical life or your death is not the end of your real life but a continuation. And to the extent to which we identify as only mortal beings we will be sad because the material plane is not the source of our happiness. And to the extent to which we make that enlightened conversion from self identification to -- I mean from body identification to Spirit identification, we do begin to

embrace the real "I" and the beauty there is that on that level, there is no place where you stop and I start. So the ultimate "we" is the ultimate "I" and that's why the only source of happiness is the giving and receiving of love and anything else will keep us trapped in pain.

John [00:26:11] My guest has been Marianne Williamson on Progressive Spirit, author of *Tears to Triumph: The Spiritual Journey from Suffering to Enlightenment*. Thank you so much for this book and for spending time with me today.

Marianne Williamson [00:26:23] Thank you so much. I'm honored to have been here.

John [00:26:25] Find her web site Marianne dot com. You've been listening to Progressive Spirit. Find links to podcasts and more at progressive spirit dot net. Progressive Spirit is available on Soundcloud, Podomatic, Itunes, Stitcher or your favorite podcast app. Progressive Spirit is heard each week on stations through the Pacifica Radio Network. Progressive Spirit is produced at KBOO in Portland Oregon. I'm John Shuck. Be well.