A Thousand Names for Joy: Living in Harmony with the Way Things Are by Stephen Mitchell

In her first two books, Byron Katie showed how suffering can be ended by questioning the stressful thoughts that create it, through a process of self-inquiry she calls The Work. Now, in A Thousand Names for Joy, she encourages us to discover the freedom that lives on the other side of inquiry.

Stephen Mitchell—the renowned translator of the Tao Te Ching—selected provocative excerpts from that ancient text as a stimulus for Katie to talk about the most essential issues that face us all: life and death, good and evil, love, work, and fulfillment. The result is a book that allows the timeless insights of the Tao Te Ching to resonate anew for us today, while offering a vivid and illuminating glimpse into the life of someone who for twenty
years—ever since she “woke up to reality” one morning in 1986—has been living what Lao-tzu wrote more than 2,500 years ago.

Katie’s profound, lighthearted wisdom is not theoretical; it is absolutely authentic. That is what makes this book so compelling. It’s a portrait of a woman who is imperturbably joyous, whether she is dancing with her infant granddaughter or finds that her house has been emptied out by burglars, whether she stands before a man about to kill her or embarks on the adventure of walking to the kitchen, whether she learns that she is going blind, flunks a “How Good a Lover Are You?” test, or is diagnosed with cancer. With her stories of total ease in all circumstances, Katie does more than describe the awakened mind; she lets you see it, feel it, in action. And she shows you how that mind is yours as well.


Byron Katie is a "lit" woman of the California desert who in the 80s was extremely unhappy and hard to get along with until one day she woke up enlightened and has been dedicating her life to helping people ever since.

Her self-help method dubbed The Work and referred to by herself as inquiry is a step-by-step self-examination and forgiveness strategy that allows people she would called confused to clarify hurting thoughts about themselves and turn them around to be helping thoughts. Her most famous book is probably the description of her method "Loving What Is" but she has also done another called "A thousand names for Joy" which she did with her husband who has done a translation of the Tao te Ching. He decided to read each of the 81 aphorisms of the Tao to her and record her free-associated take on each of them. It makes for very interesting reading. Here are a couple of samples of her non-dualistic outlook:

Seamless, unnamable,

it returns to the realm of nothing.

Ultimately, what is real can't be seen or heard or thought or grasped. You're just seeing your own eyes, hearing your own ears, reacting to the world of your own imagination. It's all created by your mind in the first place. You name it, you create it, you give it meaning upon meaning upon meaning. You add the what to reality, then you add the why. It's all you. The original is wiped out in the wave of the new, which is already old. Thought deletes anything out-side itself

Mind is so powerful that it could take the imagined fist and beat it against a wall and actually believe that you are the person whose fist it is. Because mind in its ignorance is so quick to hold its imagined world together, it has
created time and space and everything in it. Mind's ability to create is a beautiful thing, unless, as the terrorist that it often is, it has created a world that's frightening or unkind. If it has, I would suggest questioning the nightmare. It doesn't matter where mind begins to question itself "It's a tree'--is that true?" Or "I am'--is that true?" The world that mind has created can just as easily be de-created. It goes back to where it came from anyway. Your attachment to it is the only suffering.

Mind can't comprehend "nothing," the absolute, that from which everything flows, the original non-world. To name it "nothing" makes it untrue. It's not "nothing," because it's prior to words. "Nothing" is not only frightening to the world of mirrored thought--it's incomprehensible. Mind becomes frightened when it considers being what it was born from, since that can never be controlled or known. Without identification as a body, mind is left to die, and death never comes for it. What never lived can never die.

Eventually, mind discovers that it's free, that it's infinitely out of control and infinitely joyful. Eventually, it falls in love with the unknown. In that it can rest. And since it no longer believes what it thinks, it remains always peaceful, wherever it is or isn't.

19

Throw away holiness and wisdom, and people will be a hundred times happier.

You are the wisdom you're seeking, and inquiry is a way to make that wisdom available whenever you want. My experience is that there's no one with more or with less wisdom. We all have it equally. That's the freedom I enjoy. If you think that you have a problem, you're confused.

God's will and your will are the same, whether you notice it or not. There's no mistake in the universe. It's not possible to have the concept "mistake" unless you're comparing what is with what isn't. Without the story in your mind, it's all perfect. No mistake. Strangers used to hear about me and show up at my front door (this was in 1986), and some of them would put their palms together and bow and say, "Namaste." I had never heard that before--people don't say "Na-maste" in Barstow, the little desert town where I lived. So I thought they were saying, "No mistake." I was thrilled that the people coming to my door were so wise. "No mistake. No mistake."

There's a perfect order here. "Holiness" and "wisdom" are just concepts that separate us from ourselves. We think that there's some ideal we have to strive for, as if Jesus were any holier or the Buddha any wiser than we are right now in this moment. Who would you be without your story of yourself? It's stressful to have ideals that you can achieve only in the future, a future that never comes. When you no longer believe the thought
that you need to achieve anything, the world becomes a much kinder place.

Sin, too, is a concept. Think of the worst thing you ever did. Go into it as deeply as you can, from the perspective of the person you were at the time. With the limited understanding you had then, weren't you doing the best you could? How could you have done it any differently, believing what you believed? If you really enter this exercise, you'll see that nothing else is possible. The possibility that anything else could have happened is just a thought you have now about a then, an imagined past that you are comparing with the real past, which is also imagined. We're all doing the best we can. And if you feel that you've hurt someone, make amends, and thank the experience for showing you how not to live. No one would ever hurt another human being if he or she weren't confused. Confusion is the only suffering on this planet.

I was once walking through the streets of Dublin with a Catholic priest who appreciated The Work and did it on a regular basis. We came to a cathedral, he invited me in, we walked around inside the cathedral for a while, then he pointed to a little booth and said, "This is a confessional. Would you like to step in?" It seemed important to him. I said, "Yes." So he stepped into his cubicle, and I stepped into mine, and I thought, Hmm. What do I have to confess? I searched and searched, and nothing came. Then, through the little window, something did come: he began confessing to me. Later, outside the cathedral, we applied the four questions to each imagined sin and turned it around, and he said that a great weight had been lifted from him.

Everyone is doing his job. No one is more valuable than another. The things in the world that we think are so terrible are actually great teachers. There's no mistake, and there's nothing lacking. We're always going to get what we need, not what we think we need. Then we come to see that what we need is not only what we have, it's what we want. Then we come to want only what is. That way we always succeed, whatever happens.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price: