

## Knowing and Not-Knowing at the Same Time

Written by Nirmala  
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*Someone contacted me with the following questions:*

Can or does God answer prayers? If we ask, will we receive? Also, you have mentioned 'many lives'. If you don't actually 'know', as you said in the blog about What happens when we die', then where does the theory of many lives come from? Thank you.

*Here is my response:*

Thanks for your very good questions. There is no simple formula as anything is possible. We may or may not receive an answer to our prayers and requests, although in a sense, we always do even if the answer is different than what we wanted. My sense is that the divine intelligence, or God, takes into account what we ask for and what we want but uses its infinite wisdom and perspective to determine what we will get.

It is similar to the way we might care for our children or pets. Ideally, we would never neglect their real needs, but when it comes to their specific wants and desires, we may or may not give them what they want. Responding in the most loving way would mean taking into account their desires and giving them what they want when it is possible, healthy, and appropriate. Delaying or denying their wishes might also be part of loving them. The child doesn't always like or understand the parent's bigger and wiser perspective. While growing up, I was never very happy when my mother wouldn't let me eat ice cream before dinner, but there was actually a good reason for it!

As for what happens when we die, I hold all perspectives lightly. The biggest truth is that I don't know for sure what happens when we die. That being said, within that big mystery of not-knowing, are many possible perspectives about what happens when we die. My own sense is that all perspectives have some truth to them, including reincarnation. However, no perspective contains all of the truth. Reincarnation raises as many questions as it answers: Who or what reincarnates? Where are we in between reincarnations? Can you "remember" future lives as well as past lives?

Holding perspectives lightly can even allow you to not know and to know something at the same

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time. You don't need to hold onto either knowing or not-knowing. And you don't need to limit yourself to one way of knowing versus another. Why limit yourself to one perspective or another? Why take a permanent position about anything, including the fixed position of "I don't know"? Life doesn't seem to limit itself to the ideas and beliefs we have, and it also doesn't limit itself to the known or to the unknown. It dances in and out of all of these experiences.

I hope this helps make it clearer why I sometimes contradict myself. Putting anything into words immediately limits and distorts the actual truth. Sometimes in order to speak more of the truth, you have to contradict what you just said. If you can hold all of it lightly, then you can benefit from all of it without being trapped by any words or beliefs. Words don't contain the truth, they just point to it.