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**THE POWER OF ASKING**

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Dr. Montagna: I want to start with opening words from a man named Emmett Fox who, if we lived during the first third of this century, was kind of the Billy Graham of the time, except that his brand of evangelism would even by today's standards be considered very liberal-religious, in the sense that he aimed for the pragmatic sense of, how does one function well in the world, as the basis of his religious belief.

Anyway, here is a selection from one of his books called Inner Power. Have You Seen the Leopard, it's called.

The circus came to town for one evening, and little Johnny's father took him to see it. His cousin in New York had written him glowing reports of the show, especially of a big spotty leopard in a

cage. His mother, his aunt, his uncle and his big sister all gave him dimes to spend. He got a whip and a flag and a cowboy hat, popcorn and lemonade.

They sat close to the ring and they saw everything that happened in the Big Top, and then he went outside, and his father took him to see all the side shows, right down the alley where all the animals were. When he left the circus, he was so tired he could hardly keep his eyes open. His father remarked: "Well, you certainly had a good time." The child replied, "Yes, Daddy, I certainly did, but I didn't see the leopard."

When they arrived home his mother said, "Did you see all those great elephants?" And he said "Yes, Momma, I did. But I didn't see the leopard." His uncle inquired, "Did you like that wonderful trapeze performance, high up in the air?" "Yes, Uncle, but I didn't see the leopard."

His sister said, "Didn't you love those beautiful horses galloping around with clever people on their backs?" "Yes, I certainly loved them, but I didn't see the leopard."

Often we pass through the world like little Johnny and the circus. We get many good things out of life, but there is some particular thing that we really want; and yet we manage to miss it. We put off getting it; we don't ask for it; we don't do it; we let unimportant obstacles stand in the way. And then when the end of the road comes, in spite of all that life has given us, we haven't seen the leopard.

There really isn't much use in seeing the whole circus if you haven't seen the leopard.

I notice as I stand here I have a heavy feeling about me. Not the way I like to feel when I am speaking. When I was sitting there I was thinking that actually, when I find myself having to ask someone for something I feel anything but powerful. I don't know how you feel.

One of the things, as we started projects in this community is that we notice that we need to know more about asking in order to be effective than most of us know and need to know, maybe, in our lives as we have them.

You'll see what I mean, at 1 o'clock today if you went to the Events Team meeting you would hear people talking about the fellowship dinner we had, and the harvest festival coming up, and the winter festival, New Year's Eve Party; and

you possibly would get excited enough about it so that when people decide, "Well, who is going to help make it happen?" you'll volunteer for something.

The moment you do that, you're entering asking training. Because how good an experience you have directly depends directly on how good you are at asking. The job actually is quite easy, could be quite enjoyable and satisfying; but if you recall what it was like the last time you had four people to dinner at your house, you have some idea of what it feels like to have 150 people for dinner.

*Getting the job done is easy when we know how and enjoy asking.*

If you know how to ask, it turns out to be easy. But if you don't, it's like taking a walk in an avalanche: You discover that few hands make heavy work.

Think about, for a moment -- I want to begin this, ask you to think about how good are you as an asker? I have a little test here you can give yourself; you can decide if you're a 1, 2 or 3 level asker. That's like black belt, brown belt, that type of thing.

Decide if you're a 1, 2 or 3, which of these describes you best:

[1] I ask because I like the experience of asking.

[Laughter.] A lot of you.

*Do you enjoy the experience of asking?*

[2] I ask when I have to.

[3] I don't ask even when I have to.

Now, if you're a 1, we're having a meeting at 1 o'clock, and we'd like you to conduct a training session for us. But if you're a 2 or 3, what I want to do today is talk about (1) what I mean by the power of asking, and (2) three steps that I think lead to more effective asking.

*Why ask when you can command.*

Why are we talking about asking when we could be talking about commanding? In the everyday world of work/family/politics we hear a lot more about the power of commanding than we do about asking. But when you look at commanding, you can see that commanding is actually very limited compared with the power of asking.

To command, you have to have control over the whole environment. You have to have a lot of control to command somebody, because what you have to do is you have to make it easier for people to give in than to take all the other alternatives they might take.

In order to do that, in order to cut off all those other alternatives, you need to have a lot of consequences. You have to think out all the alternatives and cut them off with a consequence.

Then the kind of things that you have to do in order to keep control is to reward behavior, and stop it if it's not obedient. You have to refuse people raises and promotions, you have to fire people, you have to be nasty to people sometimes being a little hysterical to scare them a little, or sometimes being really withdrawn and cold, intimidating. And sometimes you even have to leave people and say "Well, I'm going to stop being your friend, if that's the way you're going to be."

You have to hit people, hurt people's reputation, you have to put them in jail. In order to be commanding, you have to be a person who knows how to make offers that other people can't refuse. So commanding can be very powerful in the material world. It can get you influence, it can get you money, it can get you fame; and there's no doubt that commanding can do that.

But we don't live just in a material world. With the -# 750 -of our life is in fact our spiritual world. At the We Net luncheons we talk about all the ideas and techniques and things that have -- things that we have to learn that flow from the new management theory that recognizes, revolutionizes management by recognizing that

the spiritual nature of people is really what's at work, at work.

It's called more popularly 'no more carrot, no more stick.' Meaning that coercion, whether they be rewards like carrots or punishments like sticks, those kinds of coercions do not outperform asking. Because asking elicits that independent motivation inside of a person, and today good management needs people, people's spirit; not just their body.

So when I say spiritual world, I mean something rather concrete. I mean spiritual in not any kind of obscure sense but in the most obvious sense. For example, if you've been here before in this room you know that this room seems very different from one Sunday morning to another, depending upon what we're talking about and doing here. Or you may have been here at a time when we were dancing; music blasting, it was dark, people dancing all over -- a very different spirit in this room.

If you just spend the day here today, early in the morning some of us were here doing Tai Chi, and then parents and teachers and kids came in, and they formed a big circle, and they were singing and dancing and telling stories. Very

Commodities  
has limitations  
material

The Power  
of asking !!  
Spiritual

different spirit. And now we're here. At 1 o'clock we're going to have a memorial service here. The spirit changes.

The other sense of spirit is something that a person gives off. It's the unique flavor that each personality has. Some people are generous, sweet and caring and you can feel it being with them. They're good-spirited, you might say.

Some people are hard and hostile and insensitive. Mean-spirited, you might say. Some people have a certain confidence and enthusiasm about them that is just contagious. Some people seem to feel real scared; low energy. Kind of a depressed spirit. And if you're with them for any length of time, you start feeling low yourself. And some people are music and smiles. It's just a joy being in the same room with them. There's a spirit of people.

Now our spirit starts inside of us, in the form of feelings and thoughts and actions and certain harmony between them, but it broadcasts out through our behavior and our ideas and our feelings; it broadcasts out and infects the people around us. Our spirit radiates outward until it becomes our relationships; and ultimately relationships form groups which have cultures, and each culture has a different



spirit to it. It has their own beliefs and habits and ways of treating people, and how individuals are regarded, and that spirit can be encouraging, it can be discouraging, it can be bombastic, it can be refined. It can be Italian! or it can be quiet. Nationalities have different spirits.

Wherever we stand in the material world, whether you're rich or you're poor you're always standing in a spiritual world of the relationships around us, the society we live in; and that spirit affects us as we affect it.

Now commanding fails to elicit the best on the spiritual level in our friendships, in our family, in our workplace. It is the spiritual level that determines the quality. One who commands, however, never receives fully, because when you command and order and give someone no choice you don't get the experience ever of someone freely giving to you. That affects your spirit.

When you're in command it means that all the bodies around you have to be under control, and that's exhausting, it's lonely, there are no partners. When you're commanding, what's the response of people to be commanded? They rebel, they get angry, they get afraid of you, they withdraw, become unavailable -- that's the spirit of what happens when you

command.

So commanding does not work in the spirit world that we live in; but asking allows you to experience a partnership, people freely giving. Faith that people give, in care, that comes from an asking relationship, creating a much stronger spirit inside and among us.

This may sound very reasonable. Does this sound reasonable? Make sense? So if it makes so much sense, why do I hate asking?

Do you prefer asking or being asked? When you think you're asking too much, do you feel dependent? Or that you owe a favor and you prefer to get even, so you feel free of it? "I don't want the burden." Do you hate getting "no" for an answer? In fact, does it hurt and feel a little rejecting?

Do you avoid asking -- I mean, do you like to set up relationships which are no-ask agreements? You know: "I won't ask anything of you, you don't ask anything of me, and we'll be good friends." You can have a lot of friends like that; no trouble, no mess.

I want to propose here a three step approach to asking that I think avoids these difficulties. Step one will

be love your needs, step two will be choose what you want, and step three, ask with respect.

Step one, love your needs. I'd ask you to do something in your own mind for the next minute or so. I ask you to say something to yourself, and notice particularly what voices, feelings you hear in your mind in response to this thing I'm going to ask you to say. Notice whatever inner dialogue might occur.

Ask you to say this: "I love my needs." "I love my needs." Say it a few times. Did you hear a debate, a #naysayer in there? A critical or doubtful or negative voice also answering? Screaming, maybe?

So why do I hate my needs? Well first, unmet needs hurt. Unmet needs are like hunger pains; you just want them to go away.

We hate our needs second, because very often we don't know how to ask and it feels very frustrating and dissatisfying to have needs. Lose my sense of confidence if I can't meet my needs.

Third, unmet needs undermine our self-esteem, our confidence, because if I start out with a thought of "I need" I can easily go to "I lack." And then to, "Something in me

is lacking." So I don't like my needs; they're very upsetting.

Fourth, unmet needs make me feel like a vulnerable child. When I can't ask, I depend on handouts that people just spontaneously give to me. That's the only way I get, is when people give to me. When the only I can get is when people give to me because I don't know how to ask, I start being dependent upon those people who are willing to give to me easily and freely. And when I start feeling dependent, I start feeling very vulnerable to being cut off and going back to my hunger pains; and that dependency makes me, reminds me of being a child, and as a child I feel powerless and don't like it, so let's just tune out all needs; I hate them.

How do we love our needs? Why should we love our needs? Well, the how is to regard and accept our neediness as an important part of our nature, which I'll talk about in a minute; but to regard it like a baby. A baby just to be cared for, our needs need to be cared for just like a baby needs to be cared for.

But it's recognizing that "I am no longer a child" even though in any given moment in my mind, if I pay attention to myself, I may have some childlike senses of

dependency in relation to the world, I am not a child. I am not my needs, either. I have needs.

As a child, I could not take care of myself. I didn't know what I needed as a child; children don't know what they need. They don't know how to get it -- they can't even get the basics; food and shelter they can't have to take care of them. No wonder there's a great sense of dependency in children; it's real. It's not so real in us as an adult. We can take care of ourselves, and we now know more about what we need. Children don't know what right foods to eat, what plugs to put their fingers in; they don't know anything about what is good for them. We know a lot more.

Some of us know a lot more than others, but it's information that we can learn, just like everything else. But as an adult I know what I need more and I'm able to take care of myself. As an adult, I can love and care for my needs. I am capable of identifying a feeling as a need. I can tolerate deprivations. I don't have to feel so desperate as I did as a kid. I can tolerate deprivation.

I can allow for alternative sources. I can look for alternative sources to get what I need. My getting what I need or not does not determine my self worth. As a kid, I

might have thought myself worthless whether my environment gave it to me or not. But as an adult I can know that my self worth is based on the fact that I am one of those beings who are creative and loving. It's natural to me. It's natural for my brain to create; it's like my liver purifies my blood.

It's natural for my being to be loving and reaching out. That's what my self worth is based on, my choice to perceive myself, to believe that. So I don't need to have it proved from outside. The ultimate expression, however, of whether or not I'm experiencing my own self worth is if I experience my needs as an important communication, as an important natural urge. If I can experience my needs that way, then I'm affirming my self worth.

The adult is able to meet needs in this way as a child cannot. An adult voice comforts the baby voice in me. The adult voice comforts the baby, saying "Relax. I'll take care of us. Go to sleep. I have the power to meet your needs."

Sometimes children need that kind of talking. When Nancy and I are driving sometimes we find that Mary is worrying about if I'm going to turn down the right street or

something. She's not driving the car; she doesn't need to know. And Nancy often tells her, "Relax. We'll take care of getting there, feeding you and clothing you. You don't have to worry about those things. Relax." Sometimes kids need to know where they can relax, and that voice inside of us also needs to know, "Relax, I can tolerate feeling this need, and I'll figure out how to get it met."

That's how we love our needs. To love our needs, the adult voice has to appreciate, has to explain the importance of needs to the child. It's the child who is afraid of the need because he doesn't know how to get them met. The adult knows that without needs, we'd all be vegetables. Needs are our longing for well-being. It's a longing for the things that will give us well-being that need to be understood.

Our needs are the yearning in us that is the source of our vitality. Our needs are what motivates us to engage the world. To respond to our need for shelter, we build our homes and our castles. We respond to our need for love by loving. We make friendships and families. We respond to our need to create by having some inspiration in our work. We respond to our need for purpose by taking on challenges that

wisen us up.

I'd like to just pause for a moment for you to be with your own thoughts to complete this first step. Try again saying "I love my needs" and when you hear that other voice, say something comforting: "I will take care of my needs." And try experiencing "I love my needs."

Step one is loving your needs. Step two is to decide what you want. Decide what you want to ask for in order to satisfy your needs.

I'd like you to in your mind choose somebody and choose something that you might want to ask of that person. Think about something that you want very much from somebody. Dare to ask for something really important; because I'm not going to ask you to do it. I'd just like you to think it along with me and at the far end you can decide whether you want to do it or not.

So let's start out with a real biggie. Now to find what this thing is, you might just ask yourself, you know "What do I want" and notice what thoughts come up. But if something doesn't grab ahold of you right away, you might start noticing complaints coming up; and of course if you unwrap that complaint, inside of it you find a want,



something that you want and are disappointed and are complaining that you're not getting. So pull out that want, and maybe that's it. Or maybe you might imagine how you wish it was, and maybe you'll find in that a want.

Some of us have had very discouraging childhoods. You know, "Don't ask." "The answer is no" was predominant. So we at an early age gave up asking ourselves what we want, and so when I ask you to ask for something that you want you may find a blank screen. Meaning we're just out of the habit of identifying what we want. It's not a functional behavior, so we stopped doing it.

So we need to really kind of open up our channel to figuring out what we want. So it requires some experimentation, remembering what other people want and checking out, "I wonder if that's it?"

Anyway, take a moment, and however you do it see if you can find something you want from a particular person.

I just had the thought of us sitting here in a room, all of us, 150 of us, all of us asking for what we want here, thinking about it. I was thinking, "Boy, if we all went out and get what we want, it certainly would have a big influence on a lot of people." But that's a side thought.

What I wanted to say was, the important consideration in Step Two is to choose something that is gettable. Something that actually would be satisfying if you get it, to make sure we're wanting the right thing.

Now to be sure that your want is worth wanting, you kind of have to look inside of it to see if at its heart there is a need. Because if there's no need to be satisfied in your want, obviously even if you get it, it won't work.

Now there are two kinds of false wants that don't have a need to satisfy inside of them; two categories. One is addictions, and the other are demands. Addictions give something but take something away, and then leave nothing positive behind. Addictions tend to respond to a yearning in us by somehow dulling it or sidetracking it.

Quite literally, smoking inhibits, dulls our feeling. The urge to have a cigarette might be seen as simply a strong feeling, a variety of types, and literally what's happening by smoking is it desensitizes, it quiets down the sensations in one's belly so that feeling goes away -- replaced by a little stimulation.

Alcohol frees up the spirit. Now, our everyday life might have a certain rigidity to it, or a personality

might have a certain rigidity to it that doesn't allow a certain freedom. What the alcohol does is it satisfies that urge for freedom by dulling away. Not disappearing, not transforming, not changing; just temporarily dulling away. No strength, no learning comes from that.

Food satisfies a whole variety of hungers: I feel a hunger, and I'll satisfy it. Pleasure in one's mouth is, can be very distracting from other things, and it's so much easier. The older I get, the more pleasure I get from eating; it's terrific.

TV. Passive control. Passive control, getting something without giving anything. At the end of a hard day, I love that passive control. I sit there with my remote - bap! bap! bap! bap! -- I never watch more than three stations at once. Less than, it's boring. Bap! Bap! What control, what passive entertainment!

Drugs. They get you to feel whatever harmony, whatever joy, whatever up or down you need to feel. Responding to something one wants; anxiety -- you know, like pain in my arms to say it's broken -- anxiety is saying something "something's upset in here. Something needs to be paid attention to." Instead of paying attention to what need

is under there, I can dull off with drugs.

Promiscuity, looking for pleasure without -- as a response to the need for an intimacy. Work could be searching for a need to experience one's own self worth. We do it by trying to externally prove how valuable we are. Again, not addressing directly the needs. Addictions all do that. They are false wants, because even if you do them you don't get any, you don't satisfy what's in there. They're a dulling or a sidetracking.

Demands are also false, because they don't satisfy any true need. A need has many ways it can be met. You know, an expression of appreciation can come in a touch, can come in a word, can come in a gift and come on in many, many ways. A want is just one of the faces of a need. But in the demand, there's always a one way or else quality; there's no asking in it.

A demand masquerades in us as if it's power. Let me describe to you a powerful person: "I want what I want when I want it." "I don't want to have to ask." That's how powerful I am. "I want it now, I want it now." "I want it only from you." "I want it all the time." "I want my way." "I want to be always the boss."

But the power in that has a certain desperation to it. Consider that same description as more apt for a baby, for a child. I mean, who is it that can't ask, doesn't ask, and just screams out and you have to figure out? It's the child who does that, the baby. Who is it that can't wait: "I have to have it now." "I can only have it from you." It's the child, not the powerful adult. The need to always be first -- that's the child, not the powerful adult.

Demands are not an adult need; they come out of our child self, and they don't satisfy. Demands enslave; it enslaves us in a war in which people are withdrawn from us, rebelling from us because their self-esteem doesn't like the barrage of our demandingness. They enslave you, knowing that you're never being given to. They enslave us because they may put out a lot of psychological energy, and they don't pay off.

How do you know if your want is based on a real physical, emotional, spiritual need? It's easy. We experience it. We experience it when we are feeling a real need, wanting a real need, because we feel pain, deadness, loss of opportunity, frustrated potential when we're pursuing a want that has no need.

Let me list some real needs, as recorded, studied by -- virtually everybody has looked into it since Maslov. The kind of list that would look like this:

People function best and feel best when their need for food, clothing and shelter and safety is taken care of. Food, clothing, shelter and safety. A real need is to belong, and to be independent, to be able to take care of one's self, to be cared for, to be cared about. To express creativity, whether that's climbing steps or climbing a success ladder. To feel intimate and loving, to have physical touching, exercise, pleasure, to have purpose, to feel good about oneself, to serve.

A want has to have a need like that somewhere in it. Take a minute and think about your want again and see if it comes from such a need.

Step Three is asking with respect seven times. Now, asking works in a spiritual world where commanding fails, because it enhances both parties. Asking establishes a you-I-count relationship. But why seven times? I like to kind of get in quick with a yes or no, and then kind of get out fast. You know, I find that once is hard enough and -- I mean, wouldn't seven times be pushy?

Well, pushy is as pushy does. Asking requires first recognizing the other person's absolute right to say no, and knowing that you're going to ask seven times allows both people to consider fully before agreeing.

We do a whole series of asking workshops for a variety of reasons, and we were doing a \*\* training one, and Pat Ostro, in the beginning of it, introduced this I-you-count, I-count idea, and said that she thought that before we asked somebody, we should do a meditation; and she explained it this way:

She said when you have slipped into a frame of mind other than you-I-count, what happens is that when you think the other person counts, you're just bowled over by any kind of doubts or uncertainty they have. You can't take any stand to represent yourself if you think the other one counts and you don't. Their power is just exaggerated in your eyes and yours is diminished. You can't stand and be eyeball-to-eyeball with them; you're intimidated. So you can't really ask anybody anything when you feel that intimidated.

On the other hand, when you are I-count and the-other-doesn't-count, you tend to steamroll. You don't hear

who they are and what they want. You steamroll. And that either develops resistance in some people, so that you're in a battle or worse, people agree and what's left is bad feelings and you just wait until next year.

So when we ask with respect, it means first being very explicit about the absolute right to say no. What that means is, our relationship is not on the line here. My self esteem and your self esteem is not on the line here. I'm simply asking, and what it means that I'm asking is I'm asking, and that's all. Nothing else rides.

That is the first thing that is necessary for respect. The second is something we call here R=QA. Which means simply that questions and anxieties need to be taken seriously. Rather than seeing someone's questions and anxieties as merely resistancing, your asking; rather than just seeing them as resistance, take seriously and find out what the questions and the anxieties are.

We're giving a person a new idea here, something that comes from our mood, not where they are. So they are undoubtedly going to have some thoughts about it. Let me give you an example of a woman who says to her husband that "I want you to love me more."



What reaction do you think does that cause in a man? Well, it causes panic in me. I don't know about you men, but#. Usually, though, I just disappear. The question there is, I mean what does 'loving me more' mean? I don't know that I know how to love somebody more. And that's a valid question.

The woman might answer: "Well, you could hug me more." "Oh, I can hug you more." That's getting a little bit more concrete, but I don't know that I'm such a good hugger. That's just an anxiety question. There has to be some reassurance: "You're a good hugger. Good enough for me."

Then the man might think more and think about, well, I mean to express love -- I mean really love -- I mean you might have to hug for three hours, and my arms will get tired. So we come to another question that, I don't know, could take a couple four or five years to get to, in which the man is just running, running, running, to avoid three hour hugs. Or his failure to give a three hour hug.

But the question comes out and he finds out that three to five minutes would do quite nicely. It's like "Oh, that. Sure, I can love you more. No problem."

Unless we ask over and over again and get out all the anxieties, all the questions, we never get to a true yes. Of course on a practical level, the kinds of things we need to ask each other -- to have a New Year's Eve party here or whatever -- there are specific things that a person needs to know in order to truly say yes. They have to know the vision of "Why are we doing all of this thing?" We have to know what some of the goals are, we have to know the plan of how it's going to happen, and what my job is going to be, what kind of agreements do I have to keep, and who is going to support me?

If I don't know all that information, I really can't. What am I saying yes to? I may be saying yes to "I like to help" but I'm not saying yes to doing what you want me to do unless I have that information, and it takes that seven times to get at that.

Seven times asking means saying: You count enough that I'm going to listen and respond. And I count enough, because during all those steps of asking, at least for me, while I'm asking, I have all my own doubts and questions: Do they really want this? They're probably not going to do it right anyway. It's more trouble than it's worth. What am I

doing asking?

There's a whole series of my own questions and anxieties that I need to be paying attention to; or else I won't be able to continue peacefully.

Let me conclude with ~~the fact~~ that you can do for yourself. I like tests, don't you?

How do you know whether you're asking right? Well, you can really feel the difference. If you can feel the difference between cruelty and caring, then you can feel the difference between good asking and bad. Good asking feels relaxed, respectful, there's a kind of exploratory negotiations aspect to it. There's a lot of receptivity of what the other is saying or doing. There's a caring, a reaching out quality to it. And at the end you feel satisfied and you feel powerful.

When you're out of step, when you're on the path that leads to cruelty, it feels demanding, you feel a lot of rejection, you start feeling desperate, you feel victimized and perhaps vengeful. In the end, you feel frustrated, defeated, and that's even if you ~~get~~ what you want, you don't feel satisfied. The difference, I think, is pretty strong.

It's helpful to know, though, that when you're being cruel or when someone else is being cruel to you, you need not beat yourself up for being cruel, nor need you punish the other person for being cruel. What's much more efficient is to remember that beneath the cruelty is a need that didn't get expressed clearly, and has become very desperate and demanding. If you can find that need and address that need directly, then the cruelty just disappears.

By becoming practitioners of good asking, I think we become people who are more nourished, more satisfied, more confident of taking care of ourselves, more able to get what we want, both spiritually and materially. Now, I appreciate the amount of interest that there is in this group for this question of asking.

The next time you have to ask, let me suggest that you start by remembering how good asking feels. Remember the last time that you successfully experienced asking somebody and getting it. How did that feel? Pretty good. And also you might want to remember how good it feels being asked. That if we give asking its due it has a lot of pleasure for both sides, and it has a lot of power of both sides.

So may the power of asking be with you.

From Emmet Fox: True wishes have wings and will  
bear you to your heart's desire.

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