



Remember the book, *Conversations with God*? In it, Neale Donald Walsch asks questions and God answers. I think I perused it, never bought it, and I have my own questions so I wasn't incredibly interested in Neale's dialogue. However, in the waning days of 2015, I heard the word "oracle" read in church. I understood an oracle as a crystal ball, a place or person to go to for answers, or even something intergalactic. Because I did not know exactly what it meant, I looked the word up and learned that an oracle is a person, a medium, with great wisdom or prophecy communicating with a deity; *someone who has conversations with God* according to one online dictionary, with a message that is typically ambiguous or obscure.

As 2015 passes and we look forward to new beginnings, maybe an oracle is exactly what we need – someone with great wisdom and a message from on high. Not an evangelizing politician or the latest viral sensation posting on social media. Not self-indulgent ministers or street corner prophets. Nor do we need palm readers or fortune tellers pulling fate from lifelines or crystals. An authentic oracle, someone God talks to, receiving good and pure guidance and passing it along to each of us. But this would beg the question, whose god would that be? A Jewish Yahweh, Islam's Allah, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Satan as god, Buddha, Krishna, Vishnu, no God at all?

At the movie theater, just days before Christmas, I watched the latest release in the Star Wars series, *The Force Awakens*. I am not a fan or devotee but went to the show as a part of a family Christmas outing - a Regal Cinema adventure in Greenville. At its heart, I learned Star Wars is based on a struggle in a faraway galaxy between darkness and light, and the use of those powers, or the Force, in either selflessness or violent aggression toward other beings. In our "real" world, the struggle is to get past terror, hate, and prejudice. Our planet keeps turning and tilting sometimes in the shadows, sometimes at the break of dawn, and we have been and most likely always will be, at war in some corner of the Earth.

For a long while, the only Christmas ornaments on our tiny tree were a glass angel and a sparkling gold, miniature Eiffel Tower. The angel was a small gift to my Mom from Grayco Hardware after a long day of running errands. The Eiffel Tower was a gift to myself. I noticed it as I wandered around K-Mart store shelves in a kind of daze of holiday wonder at the new and unfamiliar ways to decorate a Christmas tree. When I saw France's most famous symbol sitting between Santa's, elves, and nutcrackers, I harkened back to the days of terror – in France's café's and night clubs, then to San Bernardino, to Boston and 9/11, and then to the hate-filled killings at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. I wanted to honor the dead. I wanted to remember innocence. I want love to surpass evil. We hung the Eiffel Tower on our tree.

Is there an oracle somewhere in our world today? Aren't we all talking to a God of our choice or making, a Higher Power, questioning why, where next, how, and when? Whatever our faith or beliefs, can't we look to one another for mercy, kindness and compassion? After all, isn't our immediate environment – the bus, the grocery store, the airport, the bank, the pharmacy, the post office, the gas station, at work, at home, in the gym, from our cars – the first and only place we can truly make a difference? I have wondered how I would react to the open end of a gun barrel. I would probably beg for my life or go speechless and I wonder if I truly understand that every single day is a gift, no more, no less.

These questions are too big for me and I have no other answer than the idea that we have to turn to one another to see the face of God. Credible source or not, Wikipedia summarized Walsch's chats with God as follows:

1. We are all one.
2. There's enough.
3. There's nothing we have to do.
4. Ours is not a better way, ours is merely another way.

Whether or not Walsch or you or I agree with these points, it is interesting to note that in a recent interview when asked how does he 'open up' to God these days, Neale stated, "I am reaching out to touch others.... When I reach out and touch others...I reconnect immediately with the divine presence."

As Americans, we have big challenges facing us in this election year. We need to define ourselves in fresh ways. We need to be unified. We need resilience. We must stay close to compassion and mercy for one another. We have to hope, hold on to our freedoms, and be

open to the poor and needy.

Maybe we are oracles to one another. Whatever we believe, we are the channels of optimism, of peace, and of understanding. In our galaxy, being awake and aware of our own personal power, we can choose light and be a force for good in our world, our community, and our homes.

Oracle – someone listening and talking to God – a voice of wisdom, recognizing and interpreting the obscure and ambiguous messages of our time, making sense of the noise and filtering through it all to deliver small moments of love and joy to one another in the New Year. You are an oracle and so am I. Each of us can be visionaries and a light for one another in the darkness. My hope for each of you is a brighter year ahead than the one we are leaving behind.