

# Living with Enlightenment

A JOURNEY OF LOVE

*Brad Laughlin*



CORELIGHT

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*To my beloved Leslie*





# Preface



## SELF-DISCOVERY

When we believe we are the ego, or personality, we miss out on so much. We limit and compartmentalize everything and end up believing that our spiritual life is separate from everyday life—from our work, money, relationships, sexuality, body, nature and the world. Yet it is possible to adopt a different perspective. We can integrate all aspects of worldly life into our spiritual journey and discover that our worldly life *is* our spiritual journey. The intention of this book is to support this integration.

The commitment to know the truth of who we are leads us on an extraordinary journey of discovering, evolving and becoming our own inner divinity. The journey is the path of Self-discovery. *Self* with a capital *S*, as opposed to *self* with a lower-case *s*, implies the essence that we truly are, beyond the confines of the ego—not something separate and outside of us, but within us.

The word *ego*, so closely linked to *personality*, *identity*, *role* and *self*, will be used interchangeably with these terms throughout the book. It is made up of our thoughts, feelings, memories, habits and physicality. Using the ego's lens, we create a frame of reference through which we view, interpret and construct both ourselves and our world. This lens, or mirror, reflects our constructed world back to us. For many the

surface is equated with the reality. For a growing number, this is not sufficient.

## TRANSPERSONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

My personal journey of Self-discovery over the past thirty years has been an amazing and unanticipated adventure. I have not only received more inner fulfillment and spiritual wealth than I ever could have imagined, but also I have been given more rewarding work, more material abundance and a more intimate, fulfilling relationship than I had ever hoped. My life partner, Leslie Temple-Thurston, and I have lived and worked together for the past twenty-five years and share an intimacy and love that is deep, ancient and abiding. Our unconventional love relationship is at the heart of the story you are about to read.

In 1993, we co-founded the non-profit organization, CoreLight, based on her teachings of non-duality, unconditional love and spiritual enlightenment. We have co-taught retreats and workshops worldwide and have co-authored books which have been translated into several languages. Tens of thousands of people have attended our events, and over a thousand have trained in our courses, from which a deeply committed base of teachers, healers and change agents have realigned their lives in the principles of non-duality and unconditional love.

I began writing this story as a self-healing exercise because in the past few years Leslie has started to experience memory loss. While grieving the gradual loss of my beloved, I have found writing the memories of our time together to be a profound support—a kind of *transpersonal autobiography*, if you will. In telling the story it is possible to fully embrace it, release it and recognize that we are not our memories. Memories—whether painful or pleasurable—are aspects of the egoic self, which is not who we truly are. Ultimately this process

is about transcending the personal self and awakening the awareness of Self.

We learn who we are through our relationships with everyone and everything we encounter in the cosmos—transpersonal experiences. Because my relationship with Leslie was critically important in my journey to Self, she is featured as the central character here.

Each chapter offers a personal story, illustrating transpersonal truths. While these are stories of Leslie's and my personal adventures, they contain universal motifs, which transcend the personal, offering themes that apply to all. Just as our story is unconventional, everyone else's journey is also unique, and this exemplifies the universal principle of unity in diversity—one of the primary experiences we all incarnate on Earth to have. Together the stories form a map, navigating a conscious path to realization of the Self.

## THE SPIRITUAL WARRIOR

At this pivotal moment in human evolution, Leslie's and my unwavering objective has been to train a corps of spiritual warriors to enter the new paradigm of heart-centered consciousness. This involves moving beyond feelings of victimization and escaping from polarized thoughts and behaviors. When enough people step into love and unity consciousness, our fragile blue planet, poised on the brink of catastrophe, will experience unprecedented healing and transformation. The purpose of this book is to facilitate that shift in each of us and to support readers in finding true balance and peace in life.

An emerging balance between masculine and feminine is integral to this paradigm shift and will be explored throughout the book. As the new era of balance is birthed, we create greater peace, healing and harmony, both inwardly and in the world. This process involves

opening the heart—weaving generosity, compassion and love into the tapestry of our world.

As courageous spiritual warriors, we move forward, choosing balance and love—feeling love, expressing love, receiving love and becoming love—and then putting our love into action.

## NOTE ON FORMAT

In this book I have made extensive use of dialogue, rather than reported speech, to communicate interactions between myself and others—primarily my discussions with Leslie. In so doing, I hoped to bring an intimacy and immediacy into the text so that the reader could hear, not only my voice, but the voice of significant others. Although I have followed the style of dialogue used in novels, I have not used quotation marks. Instead, the dialogues are in italics. The reader's attention is also drawn to the fact that important teachings are indented and boxed.



# Acknowledgments



First and foremost, I thank my beloved Leslie for providing me with the map, the compass and the inspiration for my journey. Your light and love, my dear, have touched each and every page of this book. We are in an eternal embrace which nourishes my soul.

I would like to acknowledge my editor, Mae Naude, who so wisely and lovingly helped midwife this book. Her brilliant insights and compassionate guidance were invaluable sources of inspiration. Finding common threads in my stories, she helped weave the many themes into a holistic tapestry. I will always feel grateful to you, Mae, not just for your impeccable editing skills but also for your nurturing friendship through enormous challenge.

My gratitude also goes to Andrew Harvey for his inspiring mentorship and loving friendship over the past few years. You made this version of the book possible.

A simple thank you is not a strong enough way to express my gratitude to two dear friends and soul sisters: Kellyann Conway, whose saintly nature and devoted care have made writing this book and continuing CoreLight's work possible; and Lina Berntsen, whose enlightened perspective and loving friendship planted the "writing seed" and nurtured me through the most difficult chapter of my life.

I extend deep and heart-felt appreciation to all of my friends who generously volunteered to read, and reread, the various drafts, and to Jenny D'Angelo for inspired proofreading and encouragement. Your honest feedback and astute discernment helped shape so much of this work. Thank you for your time, courage and insight.

I am indebted to every character mentioned in this book and to all my dear soul friends, named and unnamed, who have been such radiant sources of love over the years and who have supported me on so many different levels.

Boundless gratitude goes to the entire CoreLight community, past and present—big-hearted donors, enthusiastic volunteers, dedicated employees and others. Without your generosity and devotion this book and CoreLight itself would not be possible. You are too numerous to mention here, and you know who you are. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Last but certainly not least, I thank my parents, Jim and Sandi Laughlin, for the beautiful, nurturing, empty beach nest in Naples, Florida, and the extraordinary gift of quiet alone time to write and begin a journey of healing.

# Prologue



## THE END OF SEPARATION

We are at the end of a great Age. The 5,000–6,000-year cycle known as the Age of Patriarchy is completing now, and a new paradigm of heart-centered consciousness is birthing. At this pivotal moment in human evolution, we are moving out of what many call a system of separation.

The system of separation—what it is and how to transcend it—is described in detail throughout the book. For now, suffice it to say that it is a system characterized by imbalances such as: tyrants vs. victims, haves vs. have nots, and superiority vs. inferiority, to name just a few. These polarities reinforce and exacerbate the self’s erroneous belief that it is separate, autonomous and disconnected from the whole—from other people, nature and the Earth. Our connection, humanity and love are diminished. The resultant feelings of isolation, powerlessness, despair and meaninglessness bring further imbalance, and a negative feedback loop ensues.

In seeking a way out of this trap, we have tended to project our own power onto charismatic leaders, politicians, celebrities, religious leaders and gurus. Of course, this idealization reinforces our sense of powerlessness and helplessness, which we secretly resent and hold against them. We set them up for failure by hoisting them onto pedestals built on the shaky foundation of our projected veneration and then, when

they fail to live up to our expectations, we self-righteously depose them. By finding balance and owning our own realities, we move from the old paradigm to the new.

## THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP IN THE NEW PARADIGM

In the old paradigm the teacher was venerated, and the students projected their power and authority onto the teacher, abdicating their own responsibility. The relationship was characterized by a superior-inferior dynamic in which the teacher assumed the role of the powerful, all-knowing authority, while the students were required to be obedient, passive and sponge-like. The path of learning was rigid, linear and formulaic. It trapped us in a limited paradigm, encouraging conformity and a disempowered, myopic worldview. Because of this imbalanced dynamic, the word *teacher* has taken on negative connotations, and some have thrown the baby out with the bathwater by rejecting the need for any teacher at all. This is an unfortunate and short-sighted reaction because it is the nature of, rather than the notion of, teaching that needs changing.

In the new paradigm the teacher-student relationship is more balanced, reciprocal and egalitarian in nature. It is more about sharing information, encouraging students' leadership and empowering their personal authority. Teachers and students walk the path together, acknowledging that we are all learning and growing. The journey is dynamic, fluid and circular. It is a *process of becoming* rather than a *destination or a goal*. While teachers have a certain level of subject mastery enabling them to speak with authority, they are not perfect and don't have all the answers. At times it is okay for everyone to be together in the unknown, in uncertainty and in formlessness. This fosters humility and wisdom in the teacher and empowerment in the students. As soon as the teachings become dogmatic, rigid or predictable, they lose their value.

In the new paradigm there is no rulebook. The rigid rules have changed into flexible principles that keep responding to a changing reality in search of a dynamic balance. Teachers can point the way and offer tools, guidance and inspiration, but students think for themselves, listen to their hearts and follow their own inner truth. In this new form of the relationship, we are all moving towards the knowledge of who we truly are—our own authentic Self.

## THE NEW PARADIGM OF THE HEART

There are many names for this Great Turning. Some call it shifting from the third dimension (or third density) into the fourth dimension (or fourth density). Astrologers call it the end of the Age of Pisces and the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. For the purposes of this book, it will primarily be referred to as moving out of the system of separation (or duality) into a new paradigm of heart-centered consciousness.

This is not a swinging of the pendulum to bring about ascendancy of one side of a polarity; it is a balancing between the masculine and feminine, between the mind and the heart and between spirit and matter.

When we begin to live in balance, we birth a new world inside us—a world characterized by unity consciousness. Qualities of the heart, such as tolerance, respect, compassion, love, forgiveness, peace, non-violence, generosity, gratitude and wisdom, are genuinely valued. This is true power—the power of the Self.

In this new paradigm of the heart, we use power in a non-polarized way. We do not project it onto authority figures and indulge in power games with tyrants, saviors, rebels and victims. Those games have brought us to where we are now—corralled at a cliff edge.

There is a way out. It is a path many are discovering. It is walking the middle way, the way of balance between the extremes, the way of opening the heart. It is the journey of the spiritual warrior.

This change is upon us now. While many still have both feet in the system of separation—the world of either-or, black-and-white and right-and-wrong—some are starting to lift one foot and move it forward into the new paradigm. Many others already have the front foot firmly planted in the new paradigm, have lifted the back foot and are shifting their weight forward. When enough of us start living the new paradigm, it will be birthed in the world. The tide is turning. The wave has momentum.

What direction are you choosing in your life and in the decisions you make?

Why not choose love?

# Table of Contents

Dedication	v
Preface	vii
Acknowledgments	xi
Prologue	xiii
<b>Part One</b>	<b>The Quest for Meaning</b> . . . . . <b>1</b>
Chapter 1	Following the Heart . . . . . 3
Chapter 2	Moving from Religion to Spirituality . . . . . 11
Chapter 3	Building Your Light . . . . . 22
Chapter 4	Who Am I? . . . . . 39
Chapter 5	Love and Generosity . . . . . 48
Chapter 6	The Power of Your Thoughts . . . . . 59
Chapter 7	Truth and Humility . . . . . 72
Chapter 8	Synchronicity . . . . . 79
<b>Part Two</b>	<b>Awakening to Non-Duality</b> . . . . . <b>85</b>
Chapter 9	Non-Duality . . . . . 87
Chapter 10	The Witness and Polarity Processing . . . . . 100
Chapter 11	Clearing Worthlessness and Shame . . . . . 110
Chapter 12	Squares . . . . . 119
Chapter 13	Samadhi . . . . . 131
Chapter 14	Relationships and Intimacy . . . . . 142
Chapter 15	Sexuality . . . . . 161
Chapter 16	Work, Money and Living in the Flow . . . . . 171

<b>Part Three Putting Love into Action</b> . . . . .	<b>189</b>
Chapter 17 South Africa and the Spirit of Ubuntu . . . . .	191
Chapter 18 Love in Action . . . . .	206
Chapter 19 Greased Grace . . . . .	221
<b>Part Four Remembering</b> . . . . .	<b>231</b>
Chapter 20 The Resurgence of the Feminine . . . . .	233
Chapter 21 The Power of Pilgrimage . . . . .	248
Chapter 22 Piercing the Veils . . . . .	268
Chapter 23 Moving Beyond Victim Consciousness . . . . .	282
Conclusion . . . . .	297
Epilogue . . . . .	303
An Invitation to Readers . . . . .	307
About the Cover Art . . . . .	309
Seeds of Light . . . . .	311
Image Credits . . . . .	313
Endnotes . . . . .	315