

## ***Understanding that everything happens for the best***

One of the most helpful understandings you can gain on the spiritual journey is to know that everything always, always, always happens for the best. Not necessarily for the short-term best of getting what you want right now, but for the ultimate, perhaps unknowable, best. This understanding gives you the great blessing of optimism. Because your thoughts are so powerful in creating your experience, optimism is a great and magical force for creating and experiencing a fulfilling life. Optimism is the spoonful of sugar that makes even bitter medicine go down more easily.

Here's a story that may help you to stay optimistic and remember that truly, everything happens for the best:

Once upon a time, there was a king, whose prime minister had a habit of saying, "Everything happens for the best." Whether someone gave him good news or bad news, his response was the same: "Everything happens for the best."

This oft-repeated phrase irritated the king a bit, but not enough to warrant action. However, one day, the king cut his hand on a wineglass that had shattered. It was a rather serious cut that was bleeding profusely and certainly prone to infection in those pre-Neosporin days.

When the prime minister arrived at the King's quarters to prepare for that day's hunting trip, he saw the king's bandaged finger and said, "Well, sire, you know, everything happens for the best."

This statement really made the king angry. His finger was throbbing with pain, and this idiot who was supposed to be a wise prime minister was repeating the same insensitive line. How dare he!

The king decided to teach his prime minister a lesson. He had the guards take him to the dark dungeon of the castle, where the lowliest criminals were kept. Not only would the prime minister have to miss the magnificent hunting trip, but he would also be sitting alone in a cold dark cell from morning until night. "Let's see him say 'Everything happens for the best' to that!" grumbled the king.

Later that same day, the king was hunting in the deep forest, when suddenly his party was overtaken by a large group of local natives who didn't know or care who the king was. As the invaders began to surround them with poisoned arrows drawn, the king's party began to scatter out of fear. "You just can't get good subjects these days," the king thought as his "protectors" abandoned him in their fearful flight. If only the prime minister had been there, he would have surely helped rescue the king — but he was back in the castle, sitting quietly in a dark, stone cell. The kidnappers surrounded the king, bound his hands and feet, and carried him off to their stone temple, intending to offer the king as a religious sacrifice.

The king didn't understand what the group was chanting; however, when they tied him to the stake and began rubbing sticks together to get a spark, he quickly got the picture. The natives began decorating the king with colored dyes as a kind of gift-wrapping for their gods, when they noticed his bandaged finger. One of the men unwrapped the cloth and inspected the cut. Then he yelled out something that made all the preparations stop.

It was considered disrespectful to offer a defective offering to their gods. If they offered this man with the bleeding finger, their gods would be displeased and would hurl wrath upon the land. The kidnappers angrily put down their instruments and released the king by cutting the reeds that were tied around his hands and feet. The king's heart was pounding as he ran as fast as he could away from the tribal village. The royal servants spotted him and carried the king back to the caravan, where he was fed and soothed.

As the king lifted the third leg of turkey to his mouth, he suddenly remembered his prime minister. Oh my. He had said that everything happened for the best, and here it was true. It was the cut on the king's finger that had saved his life. The king felt terrible. He had locked up his friend and confidante in the grungiest dungeon cell. The king put his food down and commanded his men to return their caravan to the castle at once.

The king ran down to the dungeon, and with great remorse, approached the prime minister. The king told him the whole story. "O, prime minister, I was terribly wrong, and you were right. Everything does indeed happen for the best. If not for that cut on my finger, I would be a pile of ashes right now. O prime minister, can you ever forgive me for locking you up in this hellish place for so long?"

The prime minister looked at the king, paused for a moment, and then spoke. "Everything happens for the best."

The king was shocked. "How can you say that? Without good cause, I have locked you up in this awful, rat-infested cell. If you had been with me on the hunt, you surely would not have abandoned me as the others did. I wouldn't have had to go through that whole ordeal!"

"Yes, my king," the prime minister agreed, "I would surely have stayed by your side. But remember, I do not have a cut. I would have been the perfect sacrifice!"