



Episode 18: Stephen Post—God and Love on Route 80

Thursday, November 14, 2019

- 00:00:00 [music] You are not moving, you are being moved.
You are not singing, you are being sung.
You are not praying, you are being prayed
Prayed at the speed of love.
- 00:01:10 Janet Conner: You are not moving, you are being moved. You're not singing, you're being sung. You're not walking, you're being walked. You're not running, you're being... that doesn't work in grammar, does it? You are not praying, you are being prayed. This is for me, still, having said this now for a couple of years, this radical, radical idea, and that's why I think I have to repeat it to myself every single day and at the opening of this show every single time.
- 00:01:45 Because this concept changes everything, absolutely everything, that I am not making these choices. And everything that our patriarchal culture teaches us, set your goal, follow the goal, keep moving, one foot in front of the other, everything changed in my life when that prayer came through. I'm not praying, I'm being prayed.
- 00:02:12 And if I had to choose between the two, I'm going with I am not praying, I am being prayed. And it requires a complete relaxation, a complete letting go. I'm not in charge. The Divine Feminine is in charge, and she is creating this life in and through and as me. I'm Janet Conner, and although I didn't choose to be a *Prayer Artist*, I was awakened in the middle of the night. And it was kind of like The Annunciation.
- 00:02:42 "Guess what? You are a *Prayer Artist*." And I think we're all *Prayer Artists*. And you, the listener, have arrived in perfect timing—I call it speed of love, speed of love timing—to this the 18th episode, 18th episode in this brand new podcast, *Praying at the Speed of Love*. On this podcast, which I really had no choice. I had to create it.
- 00:03:15 I know most of you have been listening to *The Soul Directed Life*, and you were mad at me for closing *The Soul Directed Life*. But it was non-negotiable because I am not creating this radio show, it is being created in and through and as me. And it's very clear that what the world needs now is conversation about prayer, real conversations with real people about real prayer, original prayer.

- 00:03:44 Original prayer is both very, very, very, very, very, very, very ancient and brand new, right now, in this moment. As long as it's mystical prayer, and that's the only prayer I'm interested in. Mystical prayer where everything is one, connected, indivisible from original love, original source. Call it the divine, call it whatever you want. In other words, this is prayer long before and way beyond the tiny, pukey, little, scrunchy box that patriarchy has stuffed it in.
- 00:04:29 This is the great joy of my life. I love exploring the true nature of prayer. It's sacred. It's delicious. It's sexy. It's alive. It's love vibrating through your body. That's what prayer is. It's the vibration of love. And love is our theme today. Actually, I think love is the theme in all the conversations and in everything I write and in everything I do. But in this, episode 18, we are taking a very deep dive straight into the true nature of love with Stephen Post, founder of the Institute of Research on, of course, Unlimited Love, and author of an adorable book I treasure, *God and Love on Route 80: The Hidden Mystery of Human Connectedness*.
- 00:05:29 In this conversation, there is something waiting. There is something waiting for you. You don't know it, but there is some nugget of love floating in the air right now, waiting to enter your heart and transform your life. So let us begin this conversation on love, listening to the voice of the Tibetan bowl, as she sings her song of love, calling us to open our invisible ears—you know those ears, if you have ears to hear, your invisible ears—that we may hear what wants to be heard.
- 00:06:16 [the bowl rings]
- 00:06:31 Janet Conner: While she keeps singing her love song, which she will sing and sing and sing, I want to tell you just a wee little bit about Stephen Post. We're going to let him tell his story. The whole book is his story of love and prayer unfolding in this wild, wild ride on Route 80 from New York to San Francisco and back again. But there are just a couple things I think you might like to know about him before we get in the car and start getting on Route 80 with him.
- 00:07:06 First of all, he's the best-selling author of a book you probably have on your shelves, *Why Good Things Happen to Good People*. He's also the author of a book that you might not know about, *The Moral Challenge of Alzheimer's Disease*. I did not know about this book, but it was designated a medical classic of the century. That'll get your attention. I said, "What? What?"
- 00:07:35 It's a medical classic of the century according to the British Medical Journal. He's the director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at the School of Medicine at Stony Brook. He has a PhD from the University of Chicago Divinity School, and we are very blessed that he's taken an hour out of his life to join us from his medical office at the university. Welcome, Stephen.

- 00:08:03 Stephen Post: Thank you, Janet. Thanks for having me.
- Janet Conner: Oh, excited to have this conversation with you about this glorious book. Now, this podcast is a little different. I trust you're going to have all kinds of wonderful interviews about your book on lots and lots of radio shows. But this one is about prayer, personal, intimate, very real conversations, and I always ask everybody the same question: how were you taught to pray as a child?
- 00:08:35 Stephen Post: When I was a child, I lived on a lonely street, West Islip Lane in Long Island. There were no kids around to play with, but there was an old man and an old lady, the Mullers, across the street. And I would go over there with my wagon, and I would help them rake leaves. I would shovel snow. We had a wonderful relationship, and they were deeply prayerful, not in the kind of routine way that I experienced with my family, very rarely I might add, but just in this incredibly beautiful, deep, improvisational way of praying with tears and heart.
- 00:09:22 And it just made me feel like I was in the presence of this wonderful, divine energy. And it absolutely shocked me, but that was how I learned to pray. We used to pray, by the way, we went clamming together, Mr. Muller and I. And we would get out on these flat deck clamming boats, and he would pray this deep prayer, I mean, unbelievably deep because he was so close with this higher presence. And he would ask that we be guided so that we could find the clams.
- 00:10:01 And we always were there in the clam beds, and he would say, "The Lord finds the clams. You have to dig them up [laughter]."
- 00:10:11 Janet Conner: Oh, the fisherwomen and fishermen are listening to this. But yes, right? That's this surrender, this communion with the divine, instead of... I mean, you probably were taught, as I was taught—I was raised Irish Roman Catholic—you say the Our Father, you say the Hail Mary. I mean, there's lots and lots and lots of prayers that are in that box. It's not that they're bad prayers, but they're... I don't think my...
- 00:10:43 The only time my mother did what you're talking about, and to be honest, we laughed at her, is that she would call on Archangel Michael to help her find a parking space. Now, it is a little disturbing, but somebody would pull out and she'd pull right in and look at us and go, "See?" But other than that, it was just say the prayers as they're written. So looking back the Mullers gave you, really, an essential gift on what prayer really is, right?
- 00:11:20 Stephen Post: Yeah, very much so. And Mr. Muller taught me to be a good carpenter. We used to burn in these little pine planks biblical verses like, "God loves a cheerful giver," or, "Tis better to give than to receive." And we would varnish them, and then we would nail them around the trees because he

lived in a wooded area. So if you went down the pathways, you'd see all these verses here and there, and sometimes we did Robert Frost as well.

00:11:49 So it was absolutely incredible, and that was an act of prayer. He was teaching me these beautiful verses about love. "God's love never fails." He always said, "Human love fails but divine love doesn't." He was kind of pessimistic about human nature separated from the divine. And he had a huge influence on me.

00:12:13 Janet Conner: So this is adorable. In your book, constantly, every chapter, there are these quotes, these sayings. That's the signs. So you're giving us these beautiful, short, rich, evocative... and you can't help but stop and think about them. You're being Mr. Muller in your book. You're giving us the signs.

00:12:42 Stephen Post: Well, I'm glad. That's great.

Janet Conner: See, this is so adorable to me. Eighteen conversations now. I did not expect this when I started asking people, "Tell us about your prayer life." I was simply kind of interested in is there some kind of evolution? From the very first conversation—and you've now confirmed it, this is 18 for 18—there is something in that early prayer life that becomes the seed, and here we are in our 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s and that seed is now an oak tree.

00:13:23 And it floors me every time. The other thing I'm noticing—this is true of everybody so far, I think so—that they lived in nature, quiet trees, flowers. So I don't know if there's some kind of mystical connection. I unfortunately grew up in the city of Chicago with like one tree in the front yard, so maybe this is why it's been quite a struggle for me to finally find my mystical life. But thank you for confirming, 18 for 18 now, and thank you to the Mullers.

00:13:58 Stephen Post: Oh yes.

Janet Conner: Thank you, Mullers.

Stephen Post: Yes.

Janet Conner: You do a lot of adorable things in this book that kind of make you go, "What? What?" So the first thing that made me go, "What? What?" was you call yourself the boy. The boy did this. The boy did that. The boy got in the car. The boy was wondering about this. The boy went to school. Tell us about the boy.

00:14:18 Stephen Post: Well, when I was really a boy, I went up to a private prep school in Concord, New Hampshire called St. Paul's. It was an Episcopal school. It was all boys at the time, and I loved it up there because it was so naturalistic. The trees in the autumn were incredible. Everybody there was playing ice hockey, and I never went to the ice hockey games.

- 00:14:48 I thought they kind of combined wanton violence and a whole lot of whistles. But I was out reading spiritual classics on the paths in the hills and behind the library, and that was really key to me. And when I was 15, I actually had a recurring dream which recurred six times over about a year.
- 00:15:17 And I wasn't a dreamer. I didn't know if I even believed in dreams. Maybe they were just the product of anxiety or some such thing. But it was an interesting dream because I'd wake up. It would be very early in the morning, and I wasn't quite sure if I was fully asleep or awake. And I saw this really thick, silvery gray mist. Couldn't see very far through it, but it was leading me on a road to the west.
- 00:15:50 And then I looked to my left, and I saw the rough outline of a blonde-haired youth, kind of stringy blonde hair, and he was leaning out over a ledge about to jump. And then the mist dissipated and I saw the face of a blue angel. It was a feminine angel with a very empathic feminine voice, and it said to me, "If you save him, you too shall live."
- 00:16:29 We had 8 o'clock required chapel every morning, and I would go early and I would just meditate on this dream for a half an hour or so when it occurred maybe every few months. And I wasn't sure it was just my mind desperately making something up that was maybe meaningful. I wasn't sure. Maybe it was the result of dyspeptic hot dogs. Who can say, you know?
- 00:16:57 But I had a wonderful sacred studies teacher who knew Alan Watts, and this man was named Rod Welles. And he was a Yale Divinity School grad, and he really took my boy spirituality seriously. I was the boy because we had a cross-country coach there named Señor Ordonez, and he called everybody the boy Smith, the boy Jones when we're jogging through the woods and up the hills.
- 00:17:29 He, by the way, would smoke Players cigarettes down at the base. He was not really a good example for us. But my brother had been there before me, and so he was already the boy Post. So I just became known as the boy, and so a lot of people referred to me as the boy. I mean, that was it. And I kind of liked it, and Rod Welles liked it because it was kind of Jungian and that sort of child within idea. And Rod Welles understood that there was something in me that was a little different than most of the people up there.
- 00:18:04 I think that's kind of true. Even his wife, Julie, who still lives in Vineyard Haven, she's now well into her late 70s. I asked her to write a little blurb for the book, and she said, "I always thought you were very different, unsophisticated in certain ways, and I loved that about you. And I thought you would either fail miserably or succeed uniquely." And I still see her. Actually, I'm going to see her in about a week and a half.
- 00:18:33 Talk about a mother figure. She's very spiritual, and we're going to have a lot of fun. But the dream... so Rod loved it. And he took me down from Concord to

New Haven. So that was the first time I'd ever been to New Haven, Connecticut, and I was in a class there talking about my dream. There were about a dozen or so divinity students there, and the director of the class was a fellow named James Dittes, who was a very well-known psychologist of religion with an interest in kids.

00:19:08 So I told him my dream, and they asked me about it. And I said, "Well, we all read about Emerson's Over-Soul up there in New Hampshire. Everybody thinks it's beautifully written, but I may be the only person who actually believes it." I would say, even back then, I don't believe we have just individual minds. I think there's this one more universal mind, and we all have it as a gift and we participate in it. But that's why we're connected in the unusual ways that we are.

00:19:37 And they said, "So did the dream make you do anything unusual?" And I said, "Yeah. I applied to Reed College in Portland, Oregon," which no St. Paul's kid ever did in history. They all went to these east coast places. But I said just because I had a sense that there was some kind of a road to the west. I didn't know where it was going, but there was a little bit of a pull.

00:20:00 Janet Conner: So I think we're ready to get in the car with you. You want to take us on Route 80?

Stephen Post: Well, this is an amazing story. I was 17 and it was the summertime. And Rod had gotten me a job in the Bronx tutoring kids because I'd done that in New Hampshire, in Concord. There were a lot of French Canadian families out in the wooded areas, and I loved tutoring. It was very gratifying for me, and it kind of felt like I was following the angel's suggestion.

00:20:33 And my mother and father, my dad was the president of W. & J. Sloane's department store, which was a furniture store on 5th Avenue. And my mom and my dad said, "You cannot do this in the Bronx because it's too dangerous," and we argued for like two or three days about this. And I said, "It's not that dangerous," but I couldn't make any progress. And then finally they said, "Look. We're not going to cover you for Swarthmore," which is where I was supposed to head, "If you insist on this."

00:21:01 So I finally relented, and I said, "Dad, now, where am I going to work this summer?" Well, Dad knew all the factory owners in greater New York, people who made chairs and tables and desks and lamps and lampshades. He said, "I'll get you a job in Bill De Bono's lampshade factory in Patchogue." Oh my goodness. So I spent two weeks driving... Dad had a second-hand, very second-hand gray Mercedes 190, which I think he actually bought so he would look pretty good going up to St. Paul's or something like that.

00:21:33 And I would drive that to the lampshade factory in Patchogue, and I worked between two really huge, very nice Italian women. And I literally cut cardboard

for those two weeks. And Bill De Bono would be around the factory with his cigar, supervising me. And after two weeks, it was over. I'd had enough. So with my copy of Siddhartha in my pocket and my classical guitar and 50 bucks, I drove out on a Friday night to Westhampton Beach, which is like a bit further east. And it's kind of a hangout.

00:22:05 I had a friend out there, Livy, and a gal friend and so forth, and about 11:00 at night, I decided, "I'm going to follow the dream. That's what I'm going to do. I'm not going to go to Swarthmore. I'm not going to become another poli-lawyer, or investor. I'm going to just follow the dream because I don't know what else I want to do. There's nothing I really prepared for and like, and I want to follow the dream." But there was also the push. There's like a pull, but a big push because of the acrimony at home. And I was not going to cut anymore cardboard.

00:22:38 So I drove that Mercedes. I drove it west on the Sunrise Highway. I drove it through the Midtown Tunnel. I drove over the George Washington Bridge. And I'd never been over the George Washington Bridge, and almost immediately there's two big signs. One says 95 South. Well, there was no south in the dream, right? But the other big sign says Route 80 West, and I said, "I'm going on west."

00:23:07 So I drove west, and about 5:00 in the morning, I had said second thoughts. I thought, "Okay. I'm going to do a U-turn over the midway of Route 80," it was near Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, "And I'm going to go back and everything will be safe and sound. My reputation will be untarnished." Just as I was thinking that way and losing faith in the dream, something very uncanny happened. I call it an act of synchronicity.

00:23:37 Cars back in those days, Janet, they had something called a generator. They don't have them anymore, but when the generator breaks, the whole thing dies immediately, the lights, the engine, everything, totally gone. It was shocking. And it was phenomenal that I could just manage to coast over to the shoulder on the right because it was a stick shift and I was just in neutral. And there I was. It's like 5:00 in the morning. I look. All there are, there's hundreds of miles of wheat fields.

00:24:06 There's no telephone booths. There's nothing. So I did what a young guy would do because our executive function's not very well developed anyway, but I was just following the dream. And the whole thing was a prayer because I'm not making this journey up. I'm following the journey. I'm responding. I'm not making it. And so I took a piece of paper out of the glove compartment, and in pencil I wrote—this became part of my family legacy. It's in the book actually—"To Henry A.V. Post, 44 Davidson Lane East, West Islip, New York, 516..." no.

00:24:48 "To the Pennsylvania State Police, please return this car to Henry Post, 44 Davidson Lane, West Islip New York, 516-669-5655. From his son Stephen, who

no longer works in the lampshade factory." Well, that was terrible of me. This is partly a confession. I mean, I'm just partly saying you can do good things in life and have awkward beginnings. But anyway, so I had my guitar.

00:25:18 I had my money, my 50 bucks, my Siddhartha. I immediately stuck my thumb out, and this big, huge, bright, white truck came along. And a guy flung the door open and he said, "My name's Gary. Where you headed?" I said, "I'm going west," and he said, "Where west?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Well, jump in, and I can get you to Grant Park." So he, actually, he was very prayerful. He was like Mr. Muller. He just improvised these really deep prayers like, "Dear Lord, please take care of this boy on the highway. He's all alone. He could get into trouble. Encourage him to call his mom." Stuff like that [laughter].

00:26:00 And I got to Grant Park. I said goodbye to Gary. I hung out for a couple of days. Played Villa-Lobos and Tarrega on the benches. There was actually a kind of a sit-in march there, so there were a lot of people around and I actually made some money. And then I fell in with a group of hippie folks, and we drove west in their van because they were going to San Francisco. Okay. So we got to Nebraska because Route 80 goes through Nebraska, Omaha and then Lincoln, right?

00:26:32 And when we were just east of Lincoln, one of the gals said to me, "You really ought to call your mom." And I said, "Okay," so they pulled over. And I called collect, and my mom answered, "Oh my god, you're alive. We can call up the Pinkertons." And I said, "Mom, why did you call the Pinkertons? Didn't you get my note?" That was horrible. She said, "We got your note. We got the car. It's back here. Dad had it towed. It's in the shop. Where are you going? We should've let you work in the Bronx after all."

00:27:12 I said, "You're right, Mom. But, anyway, I'm going west now, and so do you have Cousin George's address?" Because my cousin George had done a couple of tours of duty in Vietnam. He was a Chapel Hill grad in Chinese Studies, a very good psychologically-minded guy. So she gave me his address, 4 Chenery Street. That's in the Mission District of San Francisco. And, anyway, few days later, I wind up at George's door. I slept on his floor for the summer. There was a Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist temple down sort of on Market Street near Chenery.

00:27:45 And I fell in with those folks, and we chanted, "*Nam myoho renge kyo, nam myoho renge kyo,*" which was very prayerful and very deep because you had the beads and all the people and the dynamic and the energy. And it was just beyond time and space and reality. It was really mystical. And there was an old Japanese guy named Gus who'd been interned during the war in Hawaii, and he became my mentor. And he would follow me around.

00:28:15 And I played Villa-Lobos in Hispanic restaurants. I made pretty good money. I was never going to college—I didn't think so—but I got a bad draft number. And

I called the Reed people, and I said, "Look, I know I turned you down, but you need to make a spot for me," which they did. And then here comes the great act of synchronicity that shaped my whole life. So 7:00 in the morning. It's early. There's Gus, Cousin George, a bunch of people from the temple, and they're saying goodbye to me because I'm going to Oregon.

- 00:28:48 And then they gave me, I had to pay a few bucks for it, a *Gohonzon*, which is a Japanese scroll. And it's got symbols of like the one mind, constant love, loyalty to the mystery, and such things, and Gus explained that to me. And it was a very sacred moment. Then I put it in my backpack, and I took the bus with my guitar.
- 00:29:18 And I took it to Golden Gate Park. And I walked across the park, which is a pretty long walk, and it's kind of winding. And then I actually went up on the Golden Gate Bridge. And it's really early in the morning, and it was so misty, I couldn't see more than about maybe three or four feet in front of me. So I was walking on the left-hand side of the bridge. There's a pedestrian walkway there.
- 00:29:45 And then there's a kind of a railing that at that time was only about waist-high at most, and then on the other side of the railing is a ledge. So I got to the middle of the bridge in that big huge span, and I heard some shuffling to my left. And I looked and there, believe it or not, was the face of a youth with stringy blonde hair, leaning out.
- 00:30:13 And I looked at him and my words were... empathically, because it was a feminine dream, empathically I said, "I truly hope you're not planning to jump." And this guy lashed out at me defiantly, and he started quoting Macbeth, Shakespeare. "Life is an empty nothingness," and he was really intense. And I said, "You know, I feel that same way. I guess I could be out there with you, and you could be here with me. We're about desperate detours. We're both trying to grow up."
- 00:30:47 And he introduced himself, actually, as Harry, and I said, "You know, it sounds a lot more realistic when you're out there on a ledge about to jump than when we were doing it at Memorial Hall in Concord." And we struck up this dialogue, and I said, "Look, Harry. I can't tell you how these things happen because I had this dream two years ago, and 3,000 miles away, so it doesn't make any sense. But I kind of think that maybe I'm here to talk with you."
- 00:31:23 And he just thought it was nonsense, and I said, "Let me tell you," so I told him about the dream. I told him about Rod Welles. I told him about going to Yale Divinity School. I told him about the car. I told him about the argument. I told him about Bill De Bono. I told him about the Lewisburg exit. I told him about calling Mom from Lincoln, and I said, "I honestly think that I really may have been somehow guided here in ways I never would anticipate to just be talking with you."

- 00:31:59 And he was like totally spellbound. And I said, "Look. I have something that I can give you, and if I give it to you, it's going to turn your life around." That's what I said. And so I said, "Here it is," and I pulled the *Gohonzon* out of my backpack. And I said, "This *Gohonzon*, they tell me, the '*Nam myoho renge kyo*' people say it gives you good luck the rest of your days." And I said, "I'm not even supposed to give it away because if I give it away, I get bad luck. But I want you to have good luck."
- 00:32:31 So I said, "If you come over the railing onto my side, I'm going to unscroll this, and I'm going to explain it to you." And he actually quietly, somewhat reluctantly, stepped over, and he stood next to me. And I explained some of the symbols to him about the universal mind and consciousness and all these kinds of things, and I said, "Look. You have to make me a promise. If I give this to you, you have to go down headed south on the bridge, walk across the park, get the Market Street bus. I'll give you some money. Take it to Chenery Street. Take this note..." I wrote him a note to my cousin George. "This is Harry. He needs a shower. Let him sleep where I was sleeping on your floor."
- 00:33:27 George was the superintendent in an apartment building, part of the Vietnam Vet subculture. "Take him down to the temple. Let him meet Gus. Look after him for me, okay? And make sure he stays away from drugs." And so Harry and I, actually, we said a little bit of a chant *nam myoho renge kyo* into the wind. Now, suddenly, the mist was diminishing. We waved goodbye. I went north. Harry went south. And as I was walking north on the bridge, I thought I never knew if this dream that I had had when I was 15 was just something that my crazy mind cooked up because I had too many demerits and was raking leaves in the sun.
- 00:34:17 And I recognized the subjectivity of meaning, like we're all looking for meaning and we're kind of desperate meaning-making machines as some people say. But I wasn't sure if there was any objectivity to the dream, but I felt there was a little bit. And I actually felt at that time, as I walked down the bridge, that I had discovered that there was this universal mind because 3,000 miles and two years, that doesn't make sense in normal space-time.
- 00:34:46 So I got down to the end of the bridge, and I put my thumb out. And this old farmer's truck came by. A guy opened the door—there are a lot of trucks in my journey—guy opened his door. He said, "Where you going?" I said, "Oregon." He said, "We can get you most of the way. My name's Dwayne Dill, D-I-L-L, just like in dill pickle, and this here is my wife Dorothy Dill." And she said, "Hi, boy," and I got in there and they got me most of the way up north.
- 00:35:12 But I felt like somehow my whole journey was set up by some higher consciousness than my own mere awareness and that it was all part of a prayer and that it would guide me. And I've never given up. I love Eleanor Roosevelt's quote, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

Somehow on that bridge, I believed in the beauty of that dream, and that's the whole story of my life. I mean, there's a lot more to it, but that's how it started.

- 00:35:52 Janet Conner: Well, and it's all in *God and Love on Route 80*, and it's like a Spielberg movie. I mean, there's just the next scene and the next scene and then this happened and then that happened. So the dream said, "If you save him, you too shall live," but there's a lot more than saving that one boy on the ledge. That wasn't the end of the story. The story continues, right?
- 00:36:25 This message from the blue angel was like the proverbial onion, revealing more and more and more, right?
- 00:36:38 Stephen Post: Yeah. I've just followed it. I never made my life. I think it's like almost insanely arrogant to say, "I made my life," because if you look at it just descriptively, we are on a journey, and we respond to the people who are placed in our path. Hopefully, we respond thoughtfully and with love and kindness, and we just have to be open to surprises. And when I was up at Reed, like in the book, I tell the story of the motorcycle.
- 00:37:08 And I'm sitting in the coffee shop. It's about 9:00 at night, and this guy with a black leather jacket comes in. And he says, "My name's Andy. I've got a brand new Harley Davidson Shovelhead." That's the fastest motorcycle of the day. Now, it's late January. It's a little slushy and cold. It doesn't snow, but it's slippery. "Who wants to go for a ride?" And I, like a fool, said, "I'll go." So I went out the door, and I jumped on this thing.
- 00:37:36 And Andy, who was really pretty blitzed I learned soon, went 140 miles an hour within like two minutes. He went through every stop sign, every red light in Portland, and then he swept down south on the Pacific Coast Highway, basically, 101, for an hour. He hit 180, and I was screaming. I thought I was dead. I was crying. I felt this was the end of the line. He was like yelling into the night, into the rain, and lo and behold, he did this U-turn over the midway.
- 00:38:11 He drove back the same speed, and he dropped me off exactly where he picked me up in front of the coffee shop, which was a miracle. And I got off the motorcycle, and I staggered. I mean, I had no sense of balance, and there was a ravine with a bridge over it that went over to the dormitory I was in. And now, mind you, it's 11:00 at night, so it's 2:00 in the morning in New York where my mom is. And I never picked up the telephone. There was a payphone on the wall of the common room.
- 00:38:41 I never answered that, but I did give my mom the number so she could call me in an emergency. I just step across the threshold, and the phone starts ringing. And I feel kind of pushed a little bit toward the phone. I pick it up. I say hello, and it's my mom and she said, "Oh thank God. You're alive! I just had this incredible premonition, this dream. I was sweating. I thought you were dead. Are you

okay?" And I said, "Well, Mom, just barely," and I explained what happened. And she was mystical enough to say, "Well, it's amazing that I had that experience," and we sort of agreed that there was a mystery to mind and consciousness that we couldn't define in terms of local biology and cells and tissues. There was a mystery to it, and we were connected—

- 00:39:26 Janet Conner: That story really just stopped me because I've had that experience. I have had that experience on two occasions, two people that I loved, in the middle of the night. Why is it always the middle of the night? Because if it were the daytime, you could actually make a phone call. No. Middle of the night and I knew, but I couldn't say why I knew that both of them were dying. And the second time it happened, it was my own son.
- 00:39:57 And I knew, and I knew that I knew. And I also knew there was nothing I could do about it, so I prayed like I have never prayed. So I read your story, and I go, "Wait a second. This is my story. I know this." Now, my son did not die. You did not die. But I'm wondering if this... yes, there's the universal mind, but there is something about a mother, the woman's body.
- 00:40:30 Because it isn't a mental... I don't even think this knowing is in the heart. The body knows. Now, maybe there are stories about this happening to fathers and brothers. Maybe. But I had exactly the experience your mother had. So now, have you heard other stories like this in medical school?
- 00:40:56 Stephen Post: Yeah, I have. So it wasn't my dad who called me. He was just sleeping like a log. It was my mom who called me, and I'm kind of interested in this. There's this guy named Sheldrake who writes about morphic fields and the energy of closeness and love. And I think that there is something about the relationship between a mother and a child that is so unique. It's the closest thing we have here on earth to truly divine love in a bodily form.
- 00:41:33 So yeah. And in fact, there was a British scientist who is credited with discovering the idea of brainwaves, and he was just sound asleep. But his daughter had a dream that his son had been killed in the battlefields of World War I, and she woke up her dad that night and told him. And she was sweating and fearful, and it turns out that that was the case.
- 00:42:02 And so her dad thought there's got to be something going on here that we don't fully understand. Yeah. I think there's a special connection there, and if you look at some, there have been some population studies, some surveys done, and it's generally moms and sons. Even, I knew Sir John Templeton very, very well, and he was one of my mentors. He was an investor. He was a Rhodes Scholar, and he went to Israel before it was quite the nation of Israel—it was about 1946 or so—and got in some trouble because he was living with a family and they were surrounded by some agitated people.

- 00:42:44 And he wasn't sure he was going to get away. And his mother back in Franklin County, Tennessee had a premonition and a dream. And she woke up, and she ripped up all of—he became Sir John Templeton—ripped up all of his correspondence. And so Sir John and I would share this story about the premonitions of our mothers. They called Sir John the Tennessee Mystic, even though he was technically a Presbyterian. But there's definitely something going on here that we don't understand, but it's very deep. And I fully believe your experience.
- 00:43:19 Janet Conner: Well, so what's interesting in listening to all these stories is, yes, the mother, that connection, but also that they're always at night, dreams, waking up. Well, that's the theta brainwave state. And here you are mentioning that this guy who's responsible for... and my entire life is about basically learning how to expand and maximize the time in the theta brainwave state, that in between, not asleep, not awake.
- 00:43:51 And that's when I'm awakened and I hear, "*Prayer Artist*." Surprise! And once I sort of figured out that's what's going on here, I go to bed with a yellow pad of paper, and I am awakened several times at night. But so I'm just coming out of delta and touching that theta brainwave state, and I write whatever I hear or see. Every book, every idea, this radio show, absolutely everything happens either wakened in the night in the theta brainwave state or first thing in the morning.
- 00:44:24 I call it morning theta. And I try to teach people to do this. Don't get out of bed. Just lie there. Just lie there because as you're coming up out of delta, if you jump out of bed, you're in the alpha and beta brainwave state. There's no intuition. There's no outrageous synchronistic dreaming and downloading. So I've trained myself. People who know me know do not call this woman, have nothing to do with her until practically 2 o'clock in the afternoon because I'm open.
- 00:44:57 So I'm lying in bed. Then I come downstairs and I take whatever came in the night or whatever came in morning theta, and now, I dump it on a page in deep soul writing in divine dialogue with, for me, the Divine Feminine as Sophia. So it would be fun to get those brainwave thingies that you can put on your head. I have a feeling that I'm walking around 80% of the day in the theta brainwave state which is why it's just *poof, poof, poof*.
- 00:45:25 But you're making me think about all this because your stories with your mother, my mother, the stories you're telling us, they're women and they're at night.
- Stephen Post: Yeah. That's very, very deep and also, in my opinion, true. So I am an early riser. I kind of drive my wife a little nuts sometimes. I'm always up about 4:00, even 3:30 sometimes. And I don't really get up. I just sit down very quietly, and I used to read a lot about the Kabbalistic mystics in the Jewish tradition.

- 00:46:07 And they believe that very, very early twilight moment was so key. It was the best time for prayer and meditation because when you wake up, as you're describing, you don't really have a sense of time. You're not locked into chronology. The Greeks call that Kairos, like divine time. And you also don't have much of a sense of where you are. You could be in Cleveland.
- 00:46:36 And, originally, if you go before the Big Bang, all there was... well, we had original, infinite mind beyond time, beyond place and space, just infinite love. And that's where it all came from. So if you're in that kind of state of being that early on, before the day is locked onto you, then you can pray deeply. Your prayers can be pure.
- 00:47:09 They can be heard. They can resonate with the divine essence of love, and you can really prime yourself for the day. So that's what I do. I did that this morning. I kind of know the key people I'm going to see over the course of the day. I work in a medical school. I've got a lot of people to see, but I know the people who are really in need. Some want a little forgiveness. Some want some compassion. Some want some creativity, some mirth. I kind of think about them a little bit in my mind and prepare myself to encounter them in ways that are consistent with love.
- 00:47:49 But I totally believe that that happens better for me when it's early in the morning and I'm really just kind of out of sleep but not 100% out of sleep. I think that works, and it's much better than, say, at 4:00 in the afternoon taking a half an hour to meditate.
- 00:48:08 Janet Conner: And you know where I got another confirmation of this? I'm very interested in death. What an exciting topic. And so every year in a row on my previous show, I would devote the month of October to death, and so I would have lots of people come on the show who had had or written about near-death experiences. Well, lo and behold, there's a woman who has had three near-death experiences herself. She's now written seven or eight books on it, and her culmination book, she's interviewed over 4,000 people, including over 400 children, that have had near-death experiences.
- 00:48:46 And I'm just flipping the pages and reading, and this is all so interesting. And I turn the page, and she lists the 21 repeating, recurring attributes—might not be the right word—of people, children and adults, that have had near-death experiences. I'm looking at this list, and I go, "Check, check, check. Wait. What, what, what." I have absolutely every single thing on that list except allergies, and I went, "Wait a minute," because I haven't had a near-death experience.
- 00:49:16 But one of these, it's like the third or the fourth bullet, is awake and in this state between 3:00 and 4:00 AM. Now, I don't look at the clock when I'm awakened in the middle of the night. It's dark, and the whole thing, you can't stay in the theta

brainwave state if you flip a light on. So I can't tell you for sure that it's always between 3:00 and 4:00, but I bet it is.

00:49:47 And so now I know from a little, just a little tiny bit of reading, that this is also the time when the waves of the earth, the Schumann waves, are a little bit closer to the surface. So exactly what that connection is, I don't know, but come on. 4,000 interviews with people that have had near-death experiences, and they are hypersensitive between 3:00 and 4:00 AM? So call it theta. Call it a near-death experience. Call it prayer. Call it mysticism. Call it whatever you want.

00:50:18 There is something real that really does, as Rupert Sheldrake would tell us... we are connected in a field. Call it the morphic field. Call it the field of life. Call it the field of love. Call it whatever you want. There is something so holy. So you're up. I'm lying in bed but being awakened, but it's still around 4:00 AM.

00:50:44 Stephen Post: Yeah, yeah. And that experience early in the morning, it is special and I can't define it. I think you're doing a lot better job at that than I could do. But I feel primed for the rest of the day. I do believe that our minds and hearts affect quite literally the world around us, but also, in a practical sense, I'm more able to cope with the external stresses of the day because I centered myself early on.

00:51:15 Because, otherwise, I'm just as likely as the next guy to fall full-breasted on the horn because someone in front of me had the audacity to slow down at a yellow light, you know? I mean, all the pressures on Long Island, Long Island Expressway, give it a try. It's just crazy. So you have to work very hard. We live in an age of anxiety. De Kooning was right about that. Sartre was right. It's an age of incredible anxiety, and young people have huge anxiety levels and depression levels.

00:51:51 And there's something really wrong with the pressures that we're imposing and that we are self-imposing. And the only thing we can do is turn inward to the light. And the best time to do that is early on. Don't wait. Don't just get in a routine and brush your teeth, take a shower, get in the car, drive to work, and yaddi yah and think it's going to happen because, by then, you're so caught up in chronology. You're the captive of time, and you can't break through. So do it early.

00:52:26 Janet Conner: So I don't know that very many people are listening to this show between 3:00 and 4:00 AM. They could be. But even though it's probably daytime, because we always pray together on this show, is there a meditation, a prayer, an invocation, anything that you would like to do with us so that we can maybe have a little taste of the 3:00 to 4:00 AM experience?

- 00:52:57 Stephen Post: Yes. Well, I do have a meditation, a kind of a mantra that I live by and that shapes all my aspirations. So can I invite the listeners to participate?
- Janet Conner: Absolutely. This is our favorite thing because there is no other, as far as I know, there's no other podcast, no show where we get to pray together. So yes, we're in your hands, your heart. Lead us wherever you want.
- 00:53:40 Stephen Post: So close your eyes. And breathe deeply. Be aware of your breath. You're relaxed, and it's really early in the morning. There isn't even any twilight outside. It's just really, really early. The dawn has not yet broken.
- 00:54:17 And say to yourself, "I am one with your infinite mind of pure unlimited love, fully healed and fully healing, secure, peaceful, kind, creative, prosperous, guided. I am a point of light."
- 00:55:19 And then you can think about these words in relationship to the nearest and dearest, the people you'll encounter over the course of the day. And visualize their love needs and how you can interact with them in a way that will bring them to a higher peace and a higher level of love themselves.
- 00:55:59 And that's what I do. I would just, I think, leave it at that right now. But that's how I actually think about it. And then I think about my son, my daughter, my wife. I visualize them. I think about all the audiences I'm going to see on a given day, small and large, just dyadic and then whole crowds, and I think about all the healers I'm going to encounter.
- 00:56:31 Because I've been teaching for 35 years, University of Chicago, Ann Arbor, 20 years Case Med Stony Brook. I encounter healers all day long and I interact with them. And I'm kind of a pastor to the healing world and to all the students, and we teach compassionate care and how to interact meaningfully. And it's just this idea of priming yourself early in the morning.
- 00:56:59 And then I know, today, I even have a class tonight from 6:00 to 8:30 on compassionate care, and we're reading some great stuff about wounded healers. And I know how I want to interact with this group of about 13 students. In the morning, I'll see their faces, and I'll get an intuitive sense of what they're experiencing. You just always want to be using that early period sort of betwixt and between sleep and wakefulness to connect at these deeper levels because, otherwise, it's very hard to live meaningfully.
- 00:57:40 It's very hard to be on the journey. I mean, it's easy. My whole life's been on Route 80 in one way or another. You have to work at it inwardly. And sometimes you struggle but also remember, and I like to say this, that life is an expanding canvas. There are very real, difficult things that happen in our lives. It's like a

Jackson Pollack picture. He would throw just a bunch of gunky paint in the middle of a canvas on the floor.

- 00:58:13 But as he expanded it outwards with all these incredibly bright, energetic lines of pure beautiful color, it became a thing of beauty. So on Route 80, there's no canvas that cannot be expanded.
- 00:58:30 Janet Conner: It just struck me. I've been reading the book for a while, but it just now with you saying it... because I feel like one of the love languages that the universe has for us is numbers, numerology, Pythagoras. I mean, everything in the end is some sort of ratio, some kind of numeric vibration. So just now, I don't know why I didn't think of sooner, but I didn't, you said Route 80. Now, what is the eight?
- 00:58:59 It's the infinity symbol. And then what is zero? It's the divine. It's the limitless. No wonder it was bloody Route 80.
- Stephen Post: Oh, there you go! So you're ahead of me on that, but that's great.
- Janet Conner: But it just now... because I find numerology, the numbers are like this little secret kiss and they go, "Oh, you finally noticed." I mean, come on. It's the title of your book. Your whole life is on... it wasn't Route 95, right?
- 00:59:30 Isn't this a hoot? I mean, it is the most perfect as above, so below, right? The human and the divine. It's just this outrageously gorgeous number, and then it's multiplied by a gazillion with the spiritual power, the mystical power of the zero.
- 00:59:48 Stephen Post: And all my life, the big jobs I've had have all come somehow or another along Route 80. So even when we left Cleveland 11 years ago to come, I drove east on Route 80 over the George Washington Bridge to Stony Brook. I was in Cleveland. Every place I've been, it's been an 80's spot. And even in San Francisco, they have signs that say Route 80 East and that's the Bay Bridge, you know? I knew that eight was the symbol of new beginnings. Just on a slightly mirthful level, do you know what the zero said to the eight?
- 01:00:29 Janet Conner: Okay. What did the zero say to the eight?
- Stephen Post: Nice belt [laughter].
- Janet Conner: Okay. Wasn't expecting that either. This is such a hoot, and this is what happens, listeners, reading this book is you think you know what it's about. You think and then the next thing happens and then the next thing. And then he gets in another truck on Route 80 and the next adventure happens. And there's all kinds of adventures that we haven't had the time to talk about.
- 01:00:58 You have to get the book so you can read about the dialysis patients. You have got to get the book so you can read about dementia. And we won't go into the

whole story but, once again, just like I knew my son was dying, just like your mother knew you were in that kind of danger, I had exactly the same experience with dementia. Dementia is not, not, not, not, not what we think it is. And my mother, once again, interesting mother, she, completely demented, can't see, can't hear, suddenly has this profound conversation with my sister and brother as we're saying goodbye.

- 01:01:35 And we just kind of went, "What, what, what just happened?" So everybody will get these incredible nuggets. They're all Mr. Muller's signs. You turn the page and there's another jewel and another and another. So I guess we have to take his trees and put them on Route 80. Here's the sign, and here's the next sign, and here's the next sign. So the guest always brings us a gift so that when people come to janetconner.com/18, they go to the Show Notes page.
- 01:02:06 I will have that beautiful prayer. I wrote it down while Dr. Post was talking, so I will have that prayer. I'll have all kinds of fun things in the Prayer Action that all the listeners can do. But it's Stephen Post that puts something in the Prayer Bag, so when people click on the Prayer Bag, what's in there?
- 01:02:26 Stephen Post: Oh, well, there's a chapter from the book in a PDF format, and it's the biggest prayer of my life. I mean, in a real nutshell, I'd taken my daughter to St. Paul's. She got in but she decided she didn't want to go there. So we were hanging around Cambridge—this is like 1996, '97—and I went to Harvard Chapel.
- 01:02:58 And I prayed for, number one, an institute to study not just human love but this incredibly powerful spiritual love that sometimes feels like it invades our consciousness. Like you just wonder, "Where did that come from?" And people have that experience, and they report that experience. It's not that it's... it's irresistible. It's not something that they want to resist, but it just comes into their consciousness in a shocking way.
- 01:03:31 And, suddenly, they realize what it is to love people just because they are cherished in this powerful sense. And so I prayed for that, and then I prayed for an endowed chair at Harvard Divinity School that would study science and religion and love. And so, years later, okay now, 2001, I get a fax. Sir John didn't like emails. He was too old for them, but he loved the fax machine.
- 01:04:03 And he faxed me and he said, "Can you start an institute for the study of research on unlimited love, up to \$8.9 million?" We did that. And then, 10 years later, I accompanied Dick Watson's wife to Harvard Divinity School because he endowed the Richard T. Watson Chair on Science, Religion, and Love. So we have to wait sometimes, but if you're pure and you stick with it, it'll come to pass.
- 01:04:32 Janet Conner: What an incredible story about prayer, the outrageous, glorious... when it's a prayer of release, of use me. Not give me. But use me.

There isn't anything that can't... things happen that you couldn't make up, you couldn't ask for, you couldn't plan in a million years. And all of that is at janetconner.com/18. This is our 18th conversation, and if you ever forget the number, it doesn't matter.

01:05:06 Just come to janetconner.com and click on the [Podcast](#), and you'll see all of the guests. So when you come to the Show Notes page, there'll be a little bit about Dr. Post, links to not just his website but the unlimitedloveinstitute.org, lots of information about this beautiful book, *God and Love on Route 80*, a transcript. I am so grateful to Maureen Carter in Ontario, Canada who creates the transcripts for us.

01:05:36 It's one of the great gifts that we're able to give all of you because I know I say listeners. You're not listeners. You're part of a community that is *Praying at the Speed of Love* and, of course, when you click on Prayer Bag #18, you'll get that beautiful, incredible, powerful love story. And then come and join us at the *Praying at the Speed of Love* Facebook community.

01:06:02 We'll all share our experiences with Route 80 and the Muller's signs and everything else that we discovered on this beautiful conversation. So I have a wee thank you for Stephen Post. It's a prayer that I received last March, "The Speed of Love."

01:06:30 It's always amazing to me that I read somebody's book. I have this conversation, and sometimes it happens while we're having the conversation, I go, "Whoops. Wait a second. I have to read a different prayer."

01:06:40 "The Speed of Love"

Are my prayers light?
They are infused with light
written in Light
by the Hand of Light

When you read them
read them out loud,
slowly and see
if you can feel the Light

The Voice of Light
vibrates in your heart
it opens your pores, expands your cells
so you can hold more Light

That Light is alive

It clears the eyes of your soul and you see
what wants to be seen
It awakens the ears of your heart and you hear what wants to be heard

The Light of Love is somewhere in these letters
but I didn't put it there
It moved in on its own
at the Speed of Love

Light travels very fast
186,000 miles a second they say
Love travels even faster
because it doesn't travel at all

I love and you are loved
in the same moment

I move and you are moved
I can't tell who moved first

I forgive and you are forgiven
before either of us can take a new breath

I change and you are transformed
you change and I am transformed

I pray and you are prayed
We are prayed
We are prayed together
at the Speed of Love

01:08:23 Timothy Frantzich's Voice: This conversation in the mystic with *Prayer Artist* Janet Conner has been rated L.

01:08:33 [music] You are not moving, you are being moved.
You are not singing, you are being sung.
You are not praying, you are being prayed
Prayed at the speed of love.