



The Gift

7-Days of Asking Program

Plan for the week

The **7-Days of Asking** program was inspired by “The Gift” given by Silo in his speech at the Inauguration of the first Park of Study and Reflection, La Reja, Buenos Argentina on May 7, 2005.

It has been developed by members of The Community of Silo’s Message in New York City, Buenos Aires, Santiago, Amsterdam and Athens. The first version was completed in March 2020. This latest version was revised on April 2, 2021.

The Message is a simple and profound spirituality based on the writings of Silo. This experiential path is open to all those who wish to explore the sacred in themselves, others, and the world around us.

Silo’s Message is divided into three parts: *The Book* - The Inner Look, a meditation on meaning and non-meaning in life; *The Experience* – guided experiences in the form of simple ceremonies, capable of producing spiritual inspiration and positive changes in daily life; and *The Path* – reflections and suggestions about personal, inter-personal and social life.

Silo’s Message has reached the hearts of hundreds of thousands of people around the world from different cultures, beliefs and walks of life. Participants form small communities and typically meet once a week to carry out experiences that are heartfelt and transformative. These weekly meetings work hand in hand with the Principles of Valid Action which can help transform our daily life.

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Illustration Rafael Edwards

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The Gift of Asking

Silo first referred to "The Gift" as a brief moment of meditation in his speech at the dedication of La Reja Park of Study and Reflection, Buenos Aires on May 7, 2005:

"...And since in some celebrations people exchange presents, I would like to give you a gift. Then, certainly, it will be up to you to decide whether it merits your acceptance. It consists, in fact, of the easiest and most practical recommendation I am able to offer. It is almost like a recipe from a cookbook, but I trust that you will be able to go beyond simply what is indicated by the words...

In some moment of the day or night inhale a breath of air, and imagine that you bring this air to your heart. Then, ask with strength for yourself and for your loved ones. Ask with strength to move away from all that brings you contradiction; ask for your life to have unity. Don't take a lot of time with this brief prayer, this brief asking, because it is enough that you interrupt for one brief moment what is happening in your life for this contact with your interior to give clarity to your feelings and your ideas.

To move away from contradiction is the same as to overcome hatred, resentment, and the desire for revenge. To move away from contradiction is to cultivate the desire to reconcile with others and with oneself. To move away from contradiction is to forgive and to make amends twice-over for every wrong that you have inflicted on others.

This is the appropriate attitude to cultivate. Then, in the measure that time passes you will understand that what is most important is achieving a life of internal unity. This will bear fruit when what you think, feel, and do go in the same direction. Life grows thanks to its internal unity and it disintegrates because of contradiction. It happens, then, that what you do does not simply remain inside of you, but also reaches others. Therefore, when you help others to overcome pain and suffering you make your life grow and you contribute to the world. Conversely, when you increase the suffering in others, you cause your own life to disintegrate and you poison the world. And who should you help? First, those who are closest to you – but your action will not end with them.

Learning does not stop with this 'recipe.' Rather, it begins with it. This recipe says that you have to ask – but who do you ask? That depends on what you believe. It may be your internal god, or your guide, or an inspiring and comforting image. Finally, if you don't have anyone to ask, you will also have no one to give to, and so my gift will not merit your acceptance."



7-Days of Asking Program

How the Program works

The program is a process that consists of the practice of Asking individually twice daily and three meetings via zoom with all the participants:

- Introduction
- Interchange
- Interchange and Synthesis

A different Asking is introduced each day together with a reflection and an inspiring phrase which will be sent the day before via WhatsApp.

Recommendations before beginning

1. Review the video of The Gift <https://youtu.be/XpZ-LD0nZWQ> or read the text "The Gift" (page 3) and review the Plan for the Week.
2. Review the practice of the Asking and the relax.
3. Ask yourself:
 - What is your interest in doing this work?
 - What obstacles might you have to overcome (i.e. lack of time, forgetting, noise, doubts, confusions. etc).
4. When to ask?: What are the best times to set aside? Have it clear what times you will do your practice, once in the morning and the evening.
5. Reflect about who you will ask. Silo says, "This 'recipe' says that you have to ask – but who do you ask? That depends on what you believe. It may be your internal god, or your guide, or an inspiring and comforting image." (Other examples include: the higher self, the creative universe, the goddess the sacred or for some it is the "something else" that one intuits or feels but can't define. Whatever fits with you. Also feel free to experiment and go discovering.)
6. It's important to take notes. Choose a method such as a notebook, computer or phone. Each night you will receive the info about the Asking for the following day.



The Practice of Asking

Begin by taking a few moments to settle into oneself. If it helps, take a couple deep breaths or do a prior relaxation (see page 6).

Meditate on what you want to ask for.

Take in a deep breath of air, and direct it to your heart... Press the air into your heart... Gently press your hand over your heart... Make contact with whoever you are asking (your internal god or goddess, your guide, an inspiring or comforting image) ... Ask with strength for the fulfillment of what you are asking for... Ask with strength, with your inner voice, or out loud...

Repeat the Asking three or four times, without stopping in between.

In the simplest and most sincere way, ask with strength, ask with faith.

Whatever you are asking for, it is helpful to have the image of the asking being fulfilled.

Connect as clearly as possible with whomever/whatever you asking.

This is an intimate relationship with yourself. Go as deep as you can.

When you finish... take notes about your Asking.

Write down your experience and what you asked for, also any observations, discoveries, comprehensions, difficulties, etc. Everything is important. As you go gaining experience you will find how we grow from everything.

Note: In Spanish, Silo called the Asking the "bocanada." The literal translation is a "mouthful" or "gulp" of air.

Relaxation

Here's a helpful method to *relax quickly and to connect with body, heart and mind*:

Say these phrases to yourself internally or out loud pausing briefly between each phrase.

My mind is restless...

My heart is troubled...

My body is tense...

I relax my body, my heart, and my mind...

If you need more time, here's a longer version

My mind is restless

But is it really restless?...Is that true?...Not true?...And in what way is my mind restless?...What is the concern in my mind at this moment?..... Could we not quiet it down for a few moments?.... My mind is restless.

My heart is troubled

Is it really troubled? Or is it very calm?....Is it accompanied by a kind of shallow breathing?.....By a kind of subtle fright?.... Is my heart troubled?.... Can we make a little effort to get into a softer situation?

My body tense

This is easier....it's easier to locate these tensions....easier to locate but not to soften... In the muscles.....or more internally?the tensions that you know well.....or others?.....there are particular tensions in each one of us...my body is tense...where?...I examine this thing of 'my body is tense'...I attend to this for a few minutes and get closer to myself...

I relax my body, my heart, and my mind...

Day 1: Ask for oneself

Begin with a brief meditation about what you are asking for. Today we are asking for ourselves.

The Asking implies two moments: one in which we meditate on what we truly need, and another moment in which we ask for the fulfillment of these needs.

In Silo's speech we find the following: "...In some moment of the day or night inhale a breath of air, and imagine that you carry this air to your heart." How do I bring this breath to my heart? I take in a deep breath of air and I keep concentrating it, pushing the air "toward the inside of my heart." I can place my hand on my heart and feel my heart beating. I can go concentrating my Asking, repeating it with my "inner voice" or out loud, concentrating the Asking in my heart. It is recommended that this be done briefly with intention.

Inspiring phrase

You must be very clear about this: You are not at war with yourself. Rather, you must begin treating yourself like an old friend with whom you must now reconcile, for ignorance and life itself have driven you apart.

Day 2: Ask for your loved ones

For us, the Asking is a transforming attitude and a procedure through which we can clarify our needs and concentrate our energy on the achievement of our aspirations. Obviously, "my needs" are not limited to my own personal situation but also extend to my "world," including my loved ones and all those whose presence exists within me and who contribute to the shaping of my internal world.

This Asking highlights a mechanism of "best wishes" or "good intentions," with which we often express ourselves almost spontaneously. We say, "Have a good day," "Happy birthday to you, and many more," "I hope your test goes well," or "I hope everything turns out well," etc. It is clear that in this ceremony the "Asking" is done with a good mental disposition, where the emphasis is on intense affective registers. This "Asking" for benefit for others, performed in the best conditions, places us in a mental position where we are predisposed to give needed help; moreover, it also improves our mental direction, strengthening in us possibilities of communication with others.

A very important point to consider in relation to the "Askings" is to carry them out so that others can overcome their difficulties and reestablish their best possibilities. There should be no confusion about this. Let us consider an example. One might assume that in the case of someone who is dying, an Asking for the recovery of their health is the most appropriate thing, since we are trying to diminish the person's pain and suffering. But we must be careful how we focus the Asking, because it is not a question of asking for what is best for ourselves, who want to keep that person in good health and close to us. The correct Asking should aim at what is best for the dying person and not what is best for us. In this situation, where we are emotionally attached to that person who is suffering and dying, perhaps we should also consider that the person may wish to leave that situation, reconciled and at peace with him or herself. In this case, the Asking is for "the best for the affected person" and not what is best for me, who wants to hold on to that person at all costs. So, in Asking for others I must consider what is best for them, and not for me.

Inspiring phrase

Carry peace within you and carry it to others.

Do not imagine that you are alone in your village, in your city, on the Earth, or among the infinite worlds.

Day 3: Ask to move away from contradiction

I believe you will know how to distinguish a difficulty, which is welcome for you can leap over it, from a contradiction, that lonely labyrinth that has no exit.

Every contradictory action that you have done in your life, whatever the circumstances, has the unequivocal flavor of internal violence and betrayal of yourself. Why you found yourself in that situation will not matter, but only how—at that precise moment—you organized your reality, your landscape. Something shattered then, and changed your direction. And this, in turn, predisposed you to a new rupture. In this way, all contradictory actions orient you toward repeating them, just as all unitive actions seek to reemerge later on.

In daily actions difficulties are overcome, small objectives are achieved, little failures reaped. Whether pleasant or unpleasant, these acts accompany daily life like scaffolding accompanies a great building; it is not the structure itself, but it is necessary if it is to be built. It does not matter what material this scaffolding is made of, as long as it is suitable for its purpose.

Inspiring phrase

To move away from contradiction is the same as to overcome hatred, resentment, and the desire for revenge. To move away from contradiction is to cultivate the desire to reconcile with others and with oneself. To move away from contradiction is to forgive and to make amends twice-over for every wrong that you have inflicted on others.

Day 4: To be thankful

“To be thankful” means to concentrate these positive moods and associate them with an image, with a representation. If you have previously linked positive states in this way, you can, upon finding yourself in a difficult situation, evoke that representation, and along with it will arise the positive quality that accompanied it earlier. Furthermore, since this mental “charge” has been increased through previous repetitions, it is capable of displacing the negative emotions that certain situations impose.

Inspiring phrase

Whenever you find great strength, joy, and kindness in your heart, or when you feel free and without contradictions, immediately be internally thankful. When you find yourself in opposite circumstances, ask with faith, and the gratitude you have accumulated will return to you transformed and amplified in benefit.

Day 5: Ask for reconciliation with yourself and others

The reconciliation we seek may have to do with accepting the frustrations we have lived through, admitting our failures, acknowledging our mistakes, weaknesses, or deficiencies. It is also related with incoherent actions that we may have done, provoking suffering in others, and with mistreatment by others that has hurt us deeply. This process can also allow us to reflect on the mood of hopelessness at the grave world situation, so charged with violence and intolerance, so that we can change our look, betting on the process of humanizing the Earth and the liberation of the spirit.

Inspiring phrase

When we are able to understand that an enemy does not live in our interior but rather a being full of hopes and failures, a being in whom we can see in a short succession of images, beautiful fulfilling moments and also moments of frustration and resentment. When we are able to understand that our enemy is a being who also has lived with hopes and failures, a being that has had beautiful fulfilling moments and also moments of frustration and resentment, then we are placing a humanizing look over the skin of monstrosity.

Day 6: Ask for your life to have unity

Then, in the measure that time passes you will understand that what is most important is achieving a life of internal unity. This will bear fruit when what you think, feel, and do go in the same direction. Life grows thanks to its internal unity and it disintegrates because of contradiction. It happens, then, that what you do does not simply remain inside of you, but also reaches others. Therefore, when you help others to overcome pain and suffering you make your life grow and you contribute to the world. Conversely, when you increase the suffering in others, you cause your own life to disintegrate and you poison the world. And who should you help? First, those who are closest to you, but your action will not end with them.

Inspiring phrase

Contradictory and unifying acts accumulate within you. If you repeat your acts of internal unity, nothing can detain you.

Love the reality you build, and not even death will halt your flight!

Day 7: Ask for what I truly need

I meditate internally on what I really need. Of course, “what I want” and “what I would like to happen,” are not the same as “what I truly need.”

Here, the context of the expression “what I truly need” is very clear, and also to whom one asks, and each person carries out this Asking in their own way.

The “procedure” of Asking has to do with concentrating this wish in our heart. It is there, in our heart, where we connect with the Force. That is where the energy is, produced by the strong feelings so intimately intertwined with our real needs and capable of spurring their fulfillment. It is in our hearts that we find the Force capable of meeting our real needs.

Inspiring phrase

Remember the best moment of your life and you will comprehend that always had to do with giving without possession.

Synthesis: When you finish the last day, make sure to gather your notes and make a synthesis of all the things that were of interest to you. This will definitely help later as you progress. Also include your Askings!

Participate in the final Interchange and Synthesis, a few days after the week is completed with those friends who carried out the program.

