

EPISODE 174

LW: When we start to delve deeper into these more esoteric philosophies, it's really easy to pick those apart and look for evidence at the surface level to discount or discredit this idea that we're all one. Okay, well, if we're all one, then why are people killing each other? If we're all one, then why is there so much suffering in the world? Who would choose to be sex trafficked if reincarnation was an actual thing, or if spirits were an actual thing, or if karma was an actual thing, who would choose to have some of these really horrible experiences? Who wouldn't want to be a billionaire and be comfortable and have a mansion and fleet of Ferraris and chauffeurs and assistants and all of the things that we now equate with success in our society?

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:54] LW: Hey, friend. Welcome back to the Light Watkins show, where I interview ordinary folks just like you and me who've taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose, or what they've identified as their mission. In doing so, they've been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many other people who've either heard about their story, or who witnessed them in action, or people who have directly benefited from their work.

Today, we have a solo episode where I am going to talk about the power of story. There was an incident that happened to me when I was just a young child that made me realize how powerful stories are. I want to share that experience with you in this episode, but I'm also sure that similar things have happened with you, as well. Maybe as a child, or as a teenager, or as a young adult, you bought into a story that as a mature adult, you now are able to question.

When we realize that we've been misled by a story as an adult, the tendency is to discount or even reject all of the stories as BS or fake news. But the other way we can go with it is we can use stories to empower ourselves and to begin creating the type of life that we ultimately want to live, because scientifically speaking, there's this thing called the placebo effect, which is really just a story.

It's reported to be, get this, 40% effective, which means that merely believing that something is possible even without any evidence, physical or otherwise, that it's actually possible, will make it 40% more likely to happen, which is crazy, but that's the power of story. By the way, we don't have a choice in whether we use a story or we don't use stories, because everything is a story. It's like what Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can, or whether you think you can't, you're right, because it's a story you're telling yourself."

We can even make the argument that the reason you're doing whatever you're doing today, work-wise, relationship-wise, personally, is because of a story you've either told yourself or a story that you bought into about how people like you with your dreams, with your goals, with your desires, should be spending their time. I'm doing the same thing, right? No one is immune to the power of story, but when we become aware of this power, we do get to choose which narrative fits our dreams and desires.

Then from there, we can hopefully start to tell ourselves different stories, more aligned stories, stories that serve us and help us to become the best version of ourselves. That's what I'm going to be talking about in this episode. We'll do a deep dive into the subject of story, and through that exploration, maybe, hopefully, you'll be in a better position to upgrade whatever story you've been using in your own life to serve you in the best way possible. All right? Let's get into it. We're going to talk about the power of story.

[EPISODE]

[0:04:13] LW: Hey, everybody. We're back with a solo episode. Just me. No guest. Just me sitting here in my living room in Mexico City. As always, I want to set the scene to start with. As you may know, I was on a meditation teaching tour these past couple months. I got a chance to teach meditation in Los Angeles, in Austin. I was in New York, I was in London, I was in Cabo. By the way, I never go to Cabo in July. It's way too hot, but the teaching experiences were as meaningful and deep and rich as they always are, and it's something that I don't take for granted, that I'm able to do something like that and help to transform people by giving them these tools that I've been able to benefit from for many years now. So, deeply, deeply grateful for that.

In today's solo episode. I want to talk about the power of story. Over the years, I've been evolving my own teaching and giving less information and telling more stories, and seeing how the power of the story leads to a greater degree of retention in the people that I get a chance to work with. If you just tell them a story about how someone has experienced a mantra, or the practice of meditation, or metaphor related to the practice.

I oftentimes talk about the metaphor of swimming as it relates to how to navigate through your mind. It's just a lot easier for people to grasp onto the concept that they should not fight their thoughts. Instead, you want to operate in concert with thinking mind in the same way that when you're in the water, you don't want to fight the water, because when you fight the water, you will drown 100% of the time.

One of the reasons why people feel like they're drowning in their thoughts while meditating is because they are fighting the mind. It's a whole adage of what you resist will persist. We spent a good part of the training just talking about the nature of the mind and accepting the thinking mind as a correct outcome of the meditation practice, etc. So, when I get into the swimming analogy and I tell a couple stories about my own personal experiences of learning how to swim when I was in my 30s and things like that, people get it a lot easier, and you can see the light turn on in their eyes.

I'm always reminded of, "Oh, okay, I need to tell more stories. I need to tell more stories." But it goes a lot deeper than that. That's what I wanted to talk to you all about today, because we're all telling ourselves stories all the time. If you're having lots of difficulty in your life and lots of suffering in your life, there's a good chance that a lot of that suffering is the direct byproduct of the stories you're telling yourself. If you're having a more positive, optimistic outlook on life, that's also a direct outcome of the stories that you've been conditioned to tell yourself.

I want to look at that today. I want to start by talking about something that happened to me when I was like seven or eight years old. As you may know, I'm from Alabama, from Montgomery, Alabama. My mom is actually from Chicago. Every blue moon, we would go to Chicago in the summer to visit her family. The most direct path to Chicago from Montgomery, Alabama is to take Interstate 65 north. That takes you through cities like Birmingham, Huntsville, I believe

Nashville, and then up through Lexington, Kentucky, and then Cincinnati, and then Indianapolis, and then Gary, Indiana, and eventually you arrive in Chicago.

The whole thing was like, I don't know, I think it's like a 12-hour drive. If you left at eight o'clock in the morning, you get there by eight or nine o'clock at night. Anyways, we're on one of our family vacations, driving our family car, which is a light green Chevrolet Caprice classic. It's my mom and my three brothers and I. I can't remember where my dad was at the time, but it was just us driving up there. This is not the most exciting part of America, I-65. For the most part, you're passing fireworks outlets; you're passing strip malls, Dairy Queens, and things like that. Lots of Bible quotes on billboards.

The trip started off pretty uneventfully. As we made our way through Alabama, through Tennessee, and eventually getting into Kentucky, we started seeing these billboards for the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln. Every couple of miles to be another billboard, do you want to go see Lincoln's birthplace is coming up in 10 miles, take exit number, whatever, exit 50. Then a couple more minutes. The birthplace of Abraham Lincoln is coming up in three miles, exit number 50.

My mom decides to pull my brothers and I to find out if we want to go see Abraham Lincoln's birthplace. Now I'm not necessarily a history buff at seven or eight years old. I obviously, am familiar with Abraham Lincoln. He was described as one of the greatest American presidents. He was the president who created the Emancipation Proclamation. He was credited with freeing slaves, etc. And when I'm imagining Abraham Lincoln's birthplace, I'm thinking log cabin. Everybody knows Abraham Lincoln grew up in a log cabin. He had to chop wood. He read by the fire. Came from very humble beginnings, etc.

I'm thinking, okay, well, his birthplace, I didn't know it was in Kentucky, first of all, but it must be in the middle of the woods somewhere. It's interesting that they were able to preserve his log cabin after all these years. Maybe it would be interesting to go and see Abraham Lincoln's birthplace. Meanwhile, the billboard is still coming two miles, exit 50. So, we took a family vote and we decided that we were going to go see Abraham Lincoln's birthplace. We get off at exit 50 and we're driving, and I'm expecting us at some point to have to go off road to go into the middle of the woods to see this birthplace.

At the very least, it's like some national park situation where they chopped down all the trees that were surrounded and you just see this log cabin with a little bit of a parking lot that you have to park in and then walk over to it. To our surprise, we get closer and closer, there's these billboards directing us to Abraham Lincoln's birthplace. When we get to this parking lot and in the parking lot is this big box retail looking structure. Like a Lowe's or a Home Depot or something like that, like there's nothing. There's no woods. There's no trees. There's no nothing around that's rustic. It's all just pretty modern stuff, almost like a strip mall.

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We pull in, there's not many cars in the parking lot, and we park and we get out and we go up to the front of the building. There's this little ticket booth and someone is at the ticket booth selling the tickets to Abraham Lincoln's birthplace. It's like tinted glass, so you can't really see inside. We pay the little, whatever, \$7 to \$8 a person to go into Abraham Lincoln's birthplace and we open the door as if we're walking into a TJ Maxx or something. We go into this big structure. It looks like almost like an airplane hangar or something. We walk in and in the middle of this big gigantic room is this log cabin that has velvet ropes, cording it off, so you can't go inside of it or anything like that. You can go right up to it and you can look at it, but you can't go inside of it.

We walk up to it. We have our little brochures in hand and you can look inside and you can see there's like an axe, there's a little desk, there's a little bed, there's a little fireplace, right? There's some wood that would go in the fireplace. They have all the little artifacts from Abraham Lincoln's adolescent years or whatever. It's a log cabin. It looked like it was pretty well-kept. They were pretty well-kept log cabin. Then there's this tour guide, the person that comes over and he starts telling us all the backstory of Abraham Lincoln, and how he was born in such and such year, and he lived in the woods and da, da, da, da, and this is the axe.

I have always been naturally super curious, more so than just the average person who may hear some information and just think, "Oh, that's interesting." I want to know the backstory of all that information, as evidenced by the interviews that I do on this podcast. I'm asking the tour guide, "How is this log cabin so well preserved, after all these years. It's been over a hundred

years? First of all, how did you find and identify the log cabin? Then how were you guys able to preserve it so well?"

After a little bit of digging, come to find out the log cabin was so well preserved, because they had just reconstructed the log cabin and put it inside of this warehouse, because I was thinking initially, okay, they built the warehouse around where the log cabin actually was. They go, "No, this is not actually the location of the log cabin. The log cabin was actually located 15 miles away in these woods, but it was inaccessible, so we brought it here. We took it apart and brought it here." I said, "Oh. Okay, it's interesting. So, these are actually the logs that were used and you guys just took it apart and then reassembled it like Legos." "Well, actually we got logs from the same woods that Abraham Lincoln's log cabin was in, because after all these years, as you can imagine, the thing deteriorated and wood does not last so long in the wild. We did our best to represent what the cabin would have looked like back at Abraham Lincoln's time."

I'm looking, I go, "What about the axe and the little spectacles and the little chimney? Is that a part of the original structure?" "Well, actually no one ever discovered the original structure, so these are all replications of what Lincoln has described in his biography, and his books, and what we've been able to put together as historians." So, to cut a long story short, nothing in this museum was actually real. It wasn't actually from the original birthplace of Lincoln. The whole thing was a story. I'm not saying that they made it up. They based that story on historical facts.

Obviously, if Lincoln is the president, people are going to know a lot more about his life and some regular person's life who wasn't president, but the way they originally presented it was a lot different from what it actually was. This is the value of asking questions. This is something that I, again, I've been obsessed with over the years. For those of you who were getting my weekly newsletter, which I'm no longer doing, because I've merged all my newsletters down to one newsletter, but for a few years, I was putting on a weekly newsletter and to open each of my newsletters, I would start with this little riddle.

The riddle would be just something that we're all familiar with, but it has an interesting backstory, something like clouds, right? What's the backstory of clouds? Oh, actually, the average cloud weighs a million pounds or the average cloud is actually a mile and a half long or the cloud stone exists above a certain height in the sky, things like that. So, I would give the facts first,

and then at the very bottom of the newsletter, you would see the answer to whatever the facts were describing. Through that process every week, week after week, of just choosing a subject. I would just choose it based on what I was naturally curious about.

During the leap year, one year February 29th, I would go, "Okay, that's interesting." How long has that been a thing? How did it come about? I would look up the backstory. It would always be shocking how arbitrary some of these things are or they were based on some political agenda, or they were based on just something that wasn't as serious as we may think people were when they created these kinds of ideologies or philosophies or concepts or rules that we now look at in regard as the truth, the absolute truth or fact. Even before the newsletter one of my favorite board games, because I used to be in the board game industry. This is a game called Boulder Dash, which is based off of this other game called Dictionary.

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The way you play Dictionary. This is really interesting, is you have an actual dictionary and there's one person who goes through the dictionary, this is a party game. One person's going through the dictionary and they find a word that seems like this obscure word that anybody, they would have no idea what the definition of the word was. Then everyone would write down the word and then you would create a definition of the word, but the definition you came up with would be a definition that you thought that other people would believe was the actual definition of the word.

Then the person who found the word would write down the real definition. So, at the end of the round, everyone writing down their definition, the only person who knew the real definition would read out all of the definitions. If someone voted for your definition as the real definition, then you would get points and the first person to get whatever 15 or 20 points would win the game, but it's really a game about telling the story through using a definition. It's one of my favorite games, because it's just fun to come up with stories based on these words.

Now, if someone studied Latin, they would have an unfair advantage, because they would know that this root word means this or the etymology of that means this. So, they would be able to understand what the true definition was, but even still, what I found was that even if you tried to

make your definition sound like an actual definition – ironically, the people who – how should I put this, who were not as studied and who would come up with these just the silliest definitions, a lot of – it's surprising how many votes they would get.

Anyways, again, Boulder Dash was an extension of the Dictionary game. What Boulder Dash did was it introduced other topics, so they would have movie titles. They would have dates. They would have laws. Then they would have words. So, they would give you this random movie title and you would create the synopsis of the movie, what this movie is about, and see how many people would vote for your synopsis over the actual synopsis, what the movie is about. It's almost always completely different from what you think it would be. Same with laws, they would say what the law was and then like Ruby's law and then you would create a summary or synopsis of what you were restricted from doing in accordance to Ruby's law.

You would say something like, “Oh, Kentucky law passed in 1902, forbidding people from using a toothbrush and a truck at a baseball game.” Just something completely random like that. Everyone else would come up with their synopsis and then people would vote and yeah. Usually, the actual law was something completely ridiculous like that. You could just, it just helps you see how, again, how arbitrary things are in our little society.

Going back to my weekly newsletter, one of the most interesting riddles that I ever came across was this, the Gregorian calendar, or I forget what it's called the Julian calendar. Was this the one where Julius Caesar, basically when he was in power and during the Roman Empire, he revised the whole calendar. I think he added something like three months to the calendar, because it was only nine and a half or 10 months prior to that. People had their birthdays and they had delivery days and appointments and debts being owed at a certain time. All these things just went completely haywire for a year. They called this the longest year in history. It was like 420 days or something like that.

My facts could be completely wrong, but yeah, it was a longer year than usual. That's the calendar that we all now live and swear by today. That hasn't always been the case. When we think about astrology and zodiac signs and stuff like that, based on the year you were born of the month. All of that really just started relatively recently in human history. The fact that time was a construct that was invented by mankind when the railroad system became a thing at the

turn of the 19th century, because before that, there would be differences in time from city to city, from town to town, even within the same region. So, that's when time zones were actually created.

Before that, nobody cared about time zones. Very few people knew when their birthday was. It's just interesting, because now, it's like we're such sticklers for punctuality and for time. We may imagine that that people have always been this way. This has always been a thing, but actually, it's a relatively recent invention of humanity. Even things like sunset and sunrise. We look at the sunset and we think, "Oh, it's such a beautiful sunset. The sun just went over the horizon." Or sunrise, "Oh, my God. Look, the sun is coming up. It's so beautiful." But actually, that's also a story that we tell ourselves. It's not true.

The reality of that situation is we are spinning away from the sun at 1,040 miles per hour. Then we're spinning back towards the sun at the same speed on our planet, on its axis. That's what's giving the illusion of the sunrise and the sunset. The point is that everything is a version of Lincoln's birthplace. On the surface, it's like, okay, this is what it is. This is the story we're telling ourselves, but upon closer inspection, it's not exactly what we thought it was. It's not to say that that's a bad thing, necessarily, because the point of Abraham Lincoln's birthplace for whoever created that.

It was probably some entrepreneur who decided, "Oh, there's a market opportunity here. There are people who are interested in historical figures. Lincoln was born close to here. Let's just create something, so we can open up this museum. People will pay \$8, \$9 to come in and see what Lincoln's birthplace would have looked like back in the 1860s or 1850s or whatever the hell he was born." So, the point of it was to educate. It was to educate. It wasn't an archaeological find that I originally thought it was. It did give a sense of what those log cabins would have looked like back in those days, right?

Granted, it was isolated in this big box retail looking structure, but yeah, the idea of educating and giving a sense of the size and the scale of a log cabin, it achieved its goal, but if you start asking deeper questions, then the whole thing can actually fall apart. But it's not bad or good. It's just a function of asking deeper questions. That's what life is like in general. We go through our life. We're on this planet.

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Again, the planet is spinning faster than the speed of sound. It's flying around the sun at hundreds of thousands of miles an hour. The sun is flying around the solar system at like 2 million miles an hour or something. There's a lot of movement that's happening. Here we are sitting here thinking about whatever we're thinking about bills, conversations, the relationship that we're in. Is it going to work? Is it not going to work? So and so is suffering for this for that reason. I need to help them out or all of our worries, all of our ideas for ourselves, how we define success in our life.

That's all mostly based on surface level, understanding of things. A linear projection of what we think life is all about, which is we're born. We have these experiences. This or that shaped my perspective. Now I'm an adult and I'm trying to figure out how to navigate life and relationships and my health, my wellness and my bills and my job and my kids and making sure I have, I'm financially stable and I have things set up for the future. All of that is very legitimate. Then we have deeper truths that can sound a bit more esoteric in nature, meaning it doesn't really have roots in reality. Things like the idea of Déjà vu, something that has happened before that I'm now re-experiencing.

I get this feeling that I've been here before. I've heard this thing before and there's no scientific studies that can prove definitively that Déjà vu is a thing, because then we'd also have to explore ideas like past lives, and ideas like reincarnation. Then ideas spirits, spiritual experiences and this concept of oneness, like we're all connected below the surface level of life. There's this inherent connection that we've all read about in books like, *The Power of Now* and Deepak Chopra books and Eckhart Tolle books and Wayne Dyer books. When we start to delve deeper into these more esoteric philosophies, it's really easy to pick those apart and look for evidence at the surface level to discount or discredit this idea that we're all one.

Okay, well, if we're all one, then why are people killing each other? If we're all one, then why is there so much suffering in the world? Who would choose to be sex trafficked if reincarnation was an actual thing or if spirits were an actual thing or if karma was an actual thing? Who would choose to have some of these really horrible experiences? Who wouldn't want to be a billionaire

and be comfortable and have a mansion and fleet of Ferraris and chauffeurs and assistants and all of the things that we now equate with success in our society?

I'm not presenting myself as someone who has the answers to all those questions, but what I have done and what I do encourage other people to do, and this is what my teaching, my primary teaching really has been about is, well, first of all, exposing yourself to these different philosophies and ideologies or what we call now truths, exposing yourself to these truths. As you consider them, whether you read about them, whether you hear them in a talk. One of my favorite pastimes when I first moved to Los Angeles in early 2000s was listening to Alan Watts talks on the radio.

There'd be certain radio stations late at night. I would play Alan Watts lectures. I always found those to be quite profound. They were profound for me, because the things that he was talking about resonated. In other words, when I heard them, I felt more hopeful. I felt more expansive. I felt more loving towards myself, as well as towards humanity. That's what it means when a truth resonates. A lot of these deeper spiritual truths, the reason why we're still talking about them thousands of years after they were first elaborated upon from the early stages and the gurus, who mainly lived in Central Asia, where we now call India, is because upon hearing them and considering them and contrasting them against your real-life experiences, they can make you feel more hopeful about your life.

When someone says a truth, like everything is happening for you instead of just to you, so that breakup that you went through, that breakup is happening for you as well as to you. Then you may ask yourself, well, what do you mean by that? How could me experiencing this heartache be happening for me? Why would any higher intelligence want me to suffer in this way? How was that helpful? Because now, I can't work properly. I can't attend to my basic needs, because I'm thinking about this thing that didn't happen. I feel like I'm just a shell of myself in this period of time.

There's two things that are happening simultaneously. There's a thing that's happening to you that is indeed making you feel smaller and more contracted and doubtful about yourself. Maybe you lost your confidence, because that thing didn't go the way you thought it should go, but then we have to ask ourselves, "Okay, what part of me was so heavily identifying with this situation

that if it didn't go the way that I wanted to go, would create such fragility in my perception of myself?" We could make the argument that if that remains the case, then I'm always going to be reactive. I'm always going to be fragile. I'm always going to be super sensitive to these kinds of things. Therefore, I'm always going to suffer.

The other truth is that, well, maybe who and what I truly am is a lot bigger than the person I'm in a relationship with. The only way to really embody that is to go through these moments of heartbreak and have to pick up the pieces, and have to put it all back together, and have to find a way to keep moving, and have to learn my lessons, and have to get stronger, and have to access more of my potential. Through doing that time and time again and letting literal time pass and seeing how actually time does heal the wounds that I originally felt. I do feel a bit stronger and I do feel a bit wiser. I'm able to look back and see how, oh, okay, I was giving away my power to this person. That's one of the reasons why I fell apart so much, is because I was completely disempowered. I didn't have strong boundaries for myself.

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So going in the next situation, I'm not going to have such a loose relationship with my boundaries. I'm going to be a lot stronger when it comes to that. You're able to do that successfully in the next several relationships. Then other things get exposed. So, then you start to see, because now you're looking for the lessons. You're looking for the ways that this situation is happening for you, not to you, because now you have language for it as a result of reading about it in these various spiritual teachings.

Again, the fact that they're resonating makes you more aware to look for it. So, that's how those two realities can exist in tandem with one another. This is happening to me versus this is happening for me. If you look at the biographies of people historically who've lived on earth, who you've admired the most, you can see that play out in everyone's life. There are things that were happening to them that just objectively are very bad things, horrible things. People getting assassinated, people getting crucified, people getting shamed, shunned, ostracized, castrated, hung. All kinds of crazy stuff, shot. Yet, they were also able to be profound examples of truth. As Gandhi called it, being the change that they wanted to see in the world.

You could make the argument that if they weren't so effective, they would not have had such a backlash in the society that they were existing in. They were able to use a lot of the backlash to get stronger, to strengthen their message, to become more prolific, more profound, and more authentic, more authentically themselves. You don't get to leave planet earth without some of that suffering. You could say that you have some suffering in direct correlation to your degree of authenticity. The degree to which you question the stories, the cultural stories that we've told ourselves so much that we all now believe that it's the truth of reality.

Even though if you dig a little bit deeper, it's hard to see how it actually matches up with anyone's direct experience. It reminds me of the study of the monkeys. They had the five monkeys in the cage. They hung some bananas at the top of the cage. Naturally, monkeys like bananas, so as the monkeys would climb up, there was this ladder toward the bananas. They would hose all of the monkeys that were still on the ground with freezing cold water. They started to make a connection.

Every time somebody climbed up the ladder, everyone else would get hosed down with this freezing cold water. Naturally, when one of the monkeys began climbing the ladder towards the bananas, the rest of the monkeys would tackle that monkey and drag them back down to the floor, so they didn't get hosed in that freezing cold water. They kept each other in check. Then one by one, they started replacing the monkeys. They would replace one monkey. The new monkey would see the banana, wonder why the other monkeys weren't touching it and that new monkey would start climbing the ladder, and the rest of the monkeys would tackle that monkey and start beating the crap out of them. Then they replaced the second monkey and that second monkey would go towards the banana and the other four monkeys, including the one new monkey, would grab that second new monkey, pull them down, beat them up. This kept happening as they replaced the third monkey, the fourth, and then then ultimately the fifth monkey.

Now, you have all new monkeys, none of them had ever been exposed to the cold plunge, but they're beating up, whoever's climbing up the ladder towards the banana. They don't even know why. I think that's a really accurate metaphor for how a lot of our truths are in society, where we have these truths that we just don't really question. Some of them can cause a lot of harm. I was talking to someone the other day about the homelessness epidemic, particularly in America and

how – I was asking her, we talked about homelessness and how bad home, I said, “Okay, let's say the president of the United States commissioned you with coming up with the solution for homelessness. What would you do?”

She started thinking about it. She started giving some ideas. I would educate people. I would introduce more healthy food into the homeless environments and things like that. It's not that her answers were right or wrong, but I think it's easy to just say, “Oh, yeah. Homelessness is horrible.” But when you start asking yourself the question, well, what would I do if I was the one in control of homelessness? What kind of solutions could I come up with? It's not as easy. It's not as easy as pointing out the problem, because the real problem may not have anything to do with homelessness. I'm not saying this is the real problem, but just as an idea of what if the real problem was capitalism? What if the most extreme form of capitalism did the only outcome of that is a divide between the haves and the have nots? What if that breeds things like the condition of homelessness?

If that's the case, then what do you do? You can put a band-aid on homelessness, but the real root cause is the cultural conditioning around capitalism, around how can I make things as cheaply as possible, scale them as widely as possible, as quickly as possible, even if it means destroying the environment, even if it means global warming, even if it means the destruction of the family unit? Because profit becomes the God, if you will – the religion of capitalism. It's all about profit, making profit, making more money than you're spending at the expense of whatever is standing in the way of that. The people who are making the most profit are the ones that influence the legislation, the laws of the land, which of course will support their profit-making methodologies.

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Then you have a police force that helps to protect property owners, that helps protect the people who are most successful at the capitalist game. That may unfairly target people who can't afford to represent themselves in the court of law, which again, is not a stretch to make that assumption, but that's what's happening. As a result, you are continuing to break apart the family unit. As a result, there's no safety net if one member of the family may struggle with mental health or may start to behave in a more short-term way, just need to get their short-term

basic needs met, and in which case they end up doing something that is considered to be illegal.

If you ever have gone through the court system, you know that legal and illegal are really just, again, stories. It comes down to which attorney can tell the best story to get their client off. There's a correlation between how much money you can afford to pay an attorney and the quality of the story they're going to tell based on evidence. The more money you can pay, the better the story your attorney can tell. If you're having to deal with a court appointed attorney, then you're probably not going to get a very compelling story. Instead, that attorney is probably going to persuade you to take a plea deal, which means that you're going to have to admit guilt to perhaps something you didn't do, but it's cheaper to do that and spend some time in prison than it is to spend money you don't have trying to fight the other side.

Again, it comes back to capitalism. Funding police departments and funding politicians, whoever's donating to which politician is the one that gets the most influence and what laws and regulations are being reinforced in that particular area, etc. etc. etc. It's all stories, okay? Again, we can hear this and go, "Oh, man, that sucks." We live in this world where people tell these stories that lead to things like homelessness. But the reason why I think it's good to understand this, is because if we are experiencing any degree of suffering in our lives.

One of the first places that we can look is not at the economy, not at whatever strife is happening out in the world, but what stories are we telling ourselves about these things? What stories are we telling ourselves about the economy, about what's possible and what's not possible for ourselves? Then we have the agency to expand upon whatever stories we need to tell ourselves that will help to empower us to be able to do more of the things that we ultimately want to do in the world. One of the oldest stories that we tell ourselves that can stop our potential or contract our potential is the story that starts with two words. I can't. I can't. I can't run a marathon. I could never start a business. I can't. I'm too old. I'm too this. I'm too broke. I don't have enough connections. Those are stories. Those are stories that we tell ourselves. It ends up putting a self-imposed limitation on that potential.

When it comes to the spiritual stuff, the karma, the reincarnation, this is happening for me, not to me. All of these kinds of things that may annoy us, follow your heart, follow your intuition, your

heart knows what your path and your purposes, etc. etc. You're obviously going to get contrarians who are going to question those things and go, "How do you know that? That's not true." You need to just make as much money as possible, so that you can be as secure as possible, because that's how you win in this world. It's not that one person is telling the story and the other person isn't. We're all telling stories. We're all repeating things that we have now believed to be true based on cultural stories that are being told by the people we're exposed to.

The invitation here is not to reject the idea of the story, because it's all story, but to adopt the stories that empower you the most, right? When you hear certain stories and you see what resonates and what doesn't resonate, which of those stories do you feel most empowered by? In other words, when you consider an ideology of philosophy, a tenant, perhaps of a religion like, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." You consider that, how does it feel in your body? How does it feel in your heart? How does it feel in your bones? Does it make you feel more expansive? Does it make you contract? Do you feel more hopeful and optimistic? When you hear that tenant, do you feel more pessimistic? Do you lose hope, right?

Again, for those of us who are more science minded and we think we need to have evidence for everything. There isn't a whole lot of hard evidence for things like reincarnation, for things like the idea that we're all one, for things like everything is happening for us not to us or that you should be the change you want to see in the world. There's no scientific studies that says that these are absolutely the case, but they're also, as far as I'm aware, there's no scientific studies that discount these things and says, this is not the case, because no one on the earth in a body can say definitively that there is a spirit world or there's not a spirit world, whether that everything is happening for you or that everything is only happening to you or that everything is connected or that everything is random, because no one can say definitively that it's one way or the other. Then we get to choose for ourselves which story we want to buy into, which one empowers us the most, at least for this season of our life.

Making that conscious choice, it puts us on a different trajectory to one where we're just moving along in agreement with the stories that everyone around us has bought into, because you're either, doubling down on your story of how things are or you're defaulting to someone else's story of how things are or perhaps the cultural story of how things are. Again, I'm not saying this to insinuate the cultural stories are inherently bad. There's some good in everything. That's a

story. The story of there are no bad experiences. There are only experiences that are either useful or not useful and it's up to us to find what's useful in an experience and leave the rest of it behind.

All right, that's a story. That story for me personally, empowers me. It's something that I try to be aware of as I'm out and about in the world doing my thing, where someone else may have the experience. The same type of experience that I'm having and they may find themselves getting offended. The reason they're getting offended is because they're telling themselves a story that this person or this company or whoever shouldn't be doing the things they're doing and they should know better, and why is this happening and blah, blah, blah. That's a story you're telling yourself.

Here's the thing with some of those more negative stories where we may find ourselves getting triggered. What that does is it yanks us right out of the present moment. Getting emotionally triggered, getting reactive, feeling angry, upset, fearful, etc. can take us right out of the moment. In which case, we're now somewhere in the past or we're somewhere in the future and we lose access to whatever else is happening in the present moment. Mainly, what we're grateful for. If we can reverse that or at least practice this idea of taking what's useful, leaving the rest behind, then it makes us grateful in the moment for what we find to be most useful.

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Then the other stuff, we don't have to give it any of our attention. We don't have to get any of our purpose, but it allows us to stay present. There's value to that, because being present, again, it's not an intellectual decision, like you can't sit around and go, "Okay, I'm going to be present right now." Because if you're always thinking about being present, you're probably the least present person in the room. It's when you're completely absorbed in what's happening right in that moment. That's the person that is the most present and that presence needs to be cultivated.

The way you cultivate it is through gratitude, being grateful for what's happening, being grateful for what you can use now in the moment or for what you can find is useful and without letting the other stuff distract you all that much. That's the value of present moment awareness. That's

the value of adopting the stories that allow you to be most present in whatever you're going through right now.

That's the takeaway from this solo episode is that when you're out and about in the world today, don't try to be present, just be grateful, just be grateful for what you're experiencing, and just know that if what you're experiencing is causing some degree of suffering, the way you can lessen that is you can tell yourself a different story about what's happening. And you're going to have to keep repeating this again and again and again in order for that story to really lock in and to become a default mode.

Again, it doesn't mean you're going to stop having emotions and stop being triggered. That may still happen, but the frequency of which you get yourself triggered and reactive will start to lessen with time of telling different stories. Again, there's no such thing as a story-less life. Even if you hear this, you go, "Oh, this is all nonsense." That's a story. It's a story that you've bought into. That's fine, but just know that it's a story and that you can refine the story as much as you want.

You don't have to believe the stories that I believe. You don't have to tell yourself the stories that I have found to be most useful for me. The invitation is for you to tell the stories that empower you the most to be the best version of you. When you think about, what is the best version of me look like? Okay, the best version of me is someone who's compassionate, someone who's generous, someone who's patient. I like the idea of giving people second chances. I like the idea of seeing the best in other people.

Okay. So, then what story would allow me to live in those ways? What story would I have to tell myself? Well, one story is that we're all connected. Everyone is an extension of me. Spiritual concept sounds great on the surface. Very hard to actually embody that in real world, but that's something that I can strive for, because when I strive for that, then I'm able to give people second chances, because I see them as just like me, just having a harder time with that particular circumstance. I'm able to be more patient when I see someone as an extension of me. I'm able to be more generous. I'm able to be more compassionate, etc. etc. that's a worthwhile pursuit is in doing whatever we have to do to reindoctrinate ourselves into these new stories of what we feel will empower us the most.

We all get to do it. One visual, and I talk about this in my book, *Travel Light*. I think it's in the principle, Freedom of Choicelessness, which is the last principle of the book, just before the conclusion. I talk about envisioning the end of your life, your funeral and the eulogy part of the funeral and having people come up one by one and saying what they appreciate about you when they look at the totality of your life. For those of us who've been at funerals, who've heard eulogies, no one ever talks about, "Okay, this person got so many bonuses. They made so much money. They drove these cars." No one talks about that. No one mentions that. No one cares about that.

What people talk about is the fact that you gave them a second chance, or you helped them to stay positive in a dark situation, or you were there for them in a way that no one else was there for them, right? When you think about that, and you think about what you would want people to say about you at the end of your life, then that's an indication of what your most authentic self actually looks like. So then, what stories would you have to tell yourself in order to embody those values, in order to express those qualities in every action of your life? That gives you a greater sense of intention when you go out into the world today, because you can ask yourself, okay, either this action that I'm about to do now is an alignment with those values that I ultimately want people telling stories about me one day, or it's not an alignment.

If it's not an alignment, then you give yourself the freedom of choicelessness. It's not even an option. Doing that thing is not an option. You don't want somebody telling a story about you related to that particular experience at the end of your life, then you don't do it. It doesn't matter how glittery it looks. It doesn't matter how many people are going to follow you. You don't do it, because that's not an alignment with what you see for yourself in your most authentic expression. No one's saying that this is easy work. It's definitely challenging to restrict yourself in these ways, but it's also more powerful, because once you start to embody this stuff, you become more and more entrenched in your own authenticity, it actually becomes freeing.

That's why it's called the freedom of choicelessness. It starts with, again, the stories. The stories that we tell ourselves. So, play with that and see what comes up. The stories that you tell yourself today don't have to be the stories you tell yourself for the rest of your life. That could be just the story for this week, this month, this year, the season of your life. Then as things evolve,

and you have deeper understanding of what it is that you're here to do, then your stories also must evolve as well, so that you're not operating from outdated belief systems.

Again, this is happening with all of us. It's not just you, but you're just taking a more conscious approach to the whole thing, which again, gives you the ability to stay present as much as possible. That's the payoff from all of this. Having a fluid relationship with your stories helps you stay present. Being present helps you see things that you probably wouldn't see otherwise about yourself, about others, about life in general. That is what reduces suffering in life. All right, so take that, enjoy it, play with it. We'll be back next week with another interview for the podcast. Thanks so much for being so receptive to these solo episodes. I really appreciate it. I'll keep them coming.

[OUTRO]

[0:55:40] LW: Thank you for tuning into my solo episode on the power of story. Of course, I'll put links to anything that I mentioned that is searchable, as well as a full transcript of the episode in my show notes, which you can find at lightwhikens.com/podcast. If you've enjoyed my podcast and you're thinking to yourself, wow, I'd love to hear Light interview someone like dot, dot, dot. Here's how you can help me to make that happen. Leave a review. The reason I'm saying that is because I'll reach out to my dream list of guests all the time. Some of them will accept and a lot of them won't accept. That's because of the politics of podcasting.

When you have a podcast like mine that's still in its building phase, even if it's impactful, even if it's inspiring, if it doesn't have at least say 1000 reviews, then that tells the gatekeepers who are screening podcast invitations for their client that this podcast is not going to be worth their client's time and attention to come on as a guest, but if it has over 1000 reviews, then that sends a message that, "Oh, this podcast has a very engaged audience." It's going to be well worth the time and attention of that potential podcast guest to come on and share their story. That's the metric. That's why you always hear podcast hosts say rate and review the podcast. Rate and review the podcast.

The irony is it only takes 10 seconds to rate the podcast. All you do is you look at the screen of your device, click on the name of the show, which in this case is The Light Watkins Show. You

scroll down, pass those first few episodes, and you'll see a space with five blank stars, click the star on the right, and you've left the five-star rating. Of course, if you want to go the extra mile, I wouldn't be upset with you. Just write a one-line review of what you appreciate about this podcast. That will significantly increase the chances of me being able to get whoever I can onto this show. We can have a profound interview and I can share with you and you can be inspired.

If you want to watch these interviews on YouTube, if you want to put a face to a story, just go to YouTube and search Light Watkins Podcast, you'll see the entire playlist. If you didn't already know, I post the raw, unedited version of every episode in my Happiness Insiders online community. There are 1600 participants in that community, all working on their happiness from the inside out, which is why it's called the happiness insiders. Go to thehappinessinsiders.com, not only will you have access to the unedited versions of the podcast, but you'll also have access to my 108-day meditation challenge, which has an 80% completion rate, as well as other challenges and master classes were becoming the best version of you.

All right, I look forward to hopefully seeing you back here next week with another story about someone just like me, just like you taking a leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. Until then, keep trusting your intuition, keep following your heart, keep taking those leaps of faith. If no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you. Thank you. Sending you love, and have a great day.

[END]