

## Peace Begins with the Heart

*I of the Storm for Teens* by Jane Simmons is a book that shows one how to find peace in troubling times. It shows the reader how, by turning to the heart and listening to God, everyone has the ability to change their world and spread peace. This book is, essentially, the beginning of a journey for the heart.

In the first few chapters, Simmons starts out small, showing us how we are all connected through God by using an apple tree as an analogy. She asks the reader this question: “Who have you come here to be?” The reader then learns that everyone on Earth has come here to make the difference in the world, and that making the difference does not require doing some extraordinary task or being known around the world. Being the difference starts inside one’s heart, and everyone was born with all the tools needed to make the difference. Simmons then goes on to explain that one needs to awaken to his or her true identity, the “Divine Spark” of the One Presence and One Power that is within all of us. The reader learns that no matter how long one searches for happiness outside this Presence, he or she will never truly be happy, because true joy comes from that Divine Spark inside. The author continues to expand on this inner wholeness by exploring the meaning of peace. She explains at the end of a story about peace, “...peace does not mean being in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or turmoil. It means being in the midst of all those things and still feeling the serenity that is always in your heart.” The reader then learns that one’s inner peace is the “I of the storm”. Simmons tells her audience that they can always be at peace by looking within their hearts to Presence of God that lies there.

As the book progresses, Simmons explains one of Jesus’ teachings: “Agree with thine adversary quickly”. She explains that this means to work things out with the “enemy”. We must recognize the Christ Light in that person. The author continues by explaining that judgments are never made against a person, rather, they are made *for* the person so he or she can see through another where the heart connection with God has been lost. She then introduces four steps taught by Jesus to find the wholeness within: “Love your enemies; bless those that curse you; do good to them that hate you and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you”. The book then explains each of these steps, and how we must shift our perspective to see things the way God intended us to.

In the middle of the book, Simmons introduces “the four winds of conflict”: separation, misperception, competition, and defensiveness, as well as the “I of the storm” for each: communion, principle, purpose, and the power of non-resistance. The next few chapters are spent on these ‘winds’ and their counterparts, and how each relates to our heart connection to our wholeness and God. The reader learns that though things may seem separate from oneself, everything is one because everything is connected through God. The book also explains that “Purpose is the universe’s intention, through each one of us, to be the Presence of God”, and we must learn to look, lead, and love with our hearts to be the way of God, as opposed to being in the way of Him.

To wrap the book up, Simmons shares a moving story with a message that relays the importance of keeping in touch with God. She then speaks of the importance of taking “authentic action”, that is, to act genuinely with God’s purpose. The book ends by summarizing what has already been said, and Simmons quotes Gandhi, “My life *is* my purpose”, and reminds us that “...every word you speak, every action you take is a message about who you are”.

Many lessons about life can be learned from *I of the Storm for Teens*, but the most prominent and important is that one must connect to his or her heart to seek God and discover who he or she has come to this Earth to be.