

# The Freedom of Detachment

## Joseph T. Bismark: Awakening from the Dream

By Josephine Gross, Ph.D.



***The Great Way is not difficult  
for those who have no preferences.  
When love and hate are both absent,  
everything becomes clear and undisguised.  
Make the smallest distinction, however,  
and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart.  
If you wish to see the truth  
then hold no opinions for or against anything.***

*These are the opening verses of a poem written in the fifth century by the third Zen Patriarch. They also point to the philosophy Joseph Bismark lives by, in business and in life. Paradoxically, detachment from likes and dislikes is precisely what makes him extremely successful.*

*Joseph's journey started rather unconventionally, when at the age of 9 he left home to live in an ashram in the mountains of the Philippines until he was 17. Since then, he has actively pursued an innate thirst for knowledge, becoming an accomplished yogi, bonsai master and martial artist.*

*In his early thirties Joseph encountered a network marketing leader who would become his business partner and mentor. Together with several other partners, they founded a network marketing company that grew into a global conglomerate of businesses, for which Joseph is presently the Managing Director.*

*A philanthropist at heart, Joseph remains a firm believer in spiritual growth acquired through meaningful service to humankind and devotes a significant part of his time to the activities of RYTHM Foundation, the company's corporate social responsibility arm.*

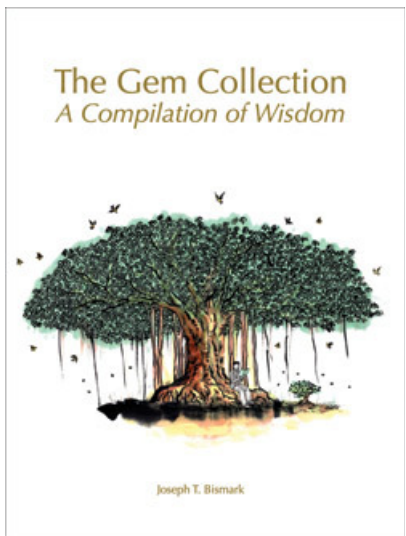
*Author of The Gem Collection: A Compilation of Wisdom and the Gems of Wisdom blog, Joseph resides in Singapore and Dubai, from where he oversees his company's business operations. — J.G.*

### **Being an accomplished teacher and spiritual practitioner, how did you become interested in network marketing?**

I was introduced to the business in the early nineties, when the first American network marketing company to open in the Philippines launched there. Several of my friends tried to recruit me, but I politely declined.

I didn't like the idea of pushing and trying to sell things, especially if my livelihood depended on it.

Eventually I signed up with one friend and agreed to buy the products, just to get him to stop pestering me. But this friend kept coming back and telling me he wanted to introduce me to an



Presenting at his company's annual convention in Malaysia in 2010.



At the office of the Group Managing Director in Singapore.

Indian couple he had recently met. He said they were vegetarian and doing quite well in the business. I kept putting off the meeting, until six months later I finally invited them to my house.

That's how I first met Vijay and Uma Eswaran. All through dinner I was careful to steer away from the topic of network marketing because I didn't want to be recruited. But Vijay didn't bring up the business. Instead, we found a lot of commonalities: we both had studied the Bhagavad Gita, we had read many of the same books and adhered to similar philosophies.

We got along quite well, so Vijay asked if I could coach him to lose weight. I was used to waking up at 5:00 a.m. to take a walk around 6:00, so I said, "Sure, why don't you come and join me in my morning practice?"

As he started coming on those early morning walks, he still didn't mention his business. Instead, he began poking into my life. For instance, he would ask, "What is your plan for the next ten years?"

I was 32 at the time and hadn't thought about the future very much. I was a simple person, living day to day, happy with my car and my home.

At one point, Vijay asked, "What happens if you break your leg? Who is going to take care of your kids?"

I felt a little unsettled and slightly annoyed by these questions I'd never asked myself. I hit the ball back to him and asked what he was doing with his life. Vijay said he used to be a corporate executive, had a Masters in economics and a Masters in business, and that he'd left the corporate world to have more time for himself.

When I asked how he was accomplishing this, he simply said, "Through network marketing."

I didn't bother asking any further because I thought I knew what network marketing was—the whole pyramid thing, selling to your friends and all the negative stories I'd read about in the newspaper.

### **What made you change your mind?**

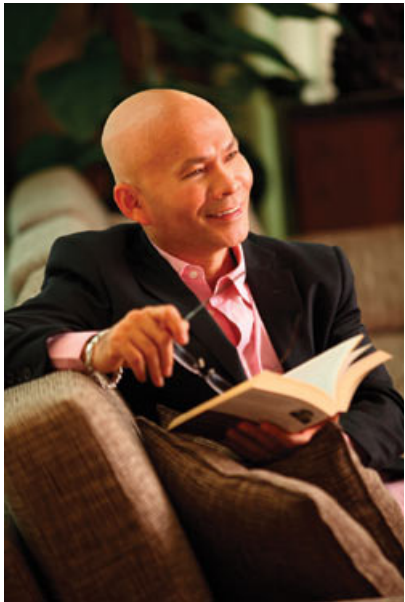
After six months, I finally asked, "How does this network marketing work? Can you teach me? I may want try it. I need additional income."

My tone was a bit arrogant, so Vijay said, "I don't think it's for you."

I grew a little anxious and said, "No, I'm *really* interested." Vijay said, "I don't think so. You've known for six months that I'm in network marketing and you never bothered to ask what it was."

"I *really* want to know what it is all about," I insisted. "I just had negative ideas about it because I have a friend who lost a lot of money."

Eventually Vijay invited me to his home for a presentation. To my



At his office in Singapore.

surprise, there was almost no talk about the products. Vijay simply showed some circles and numbers. Later I attended a formal business presentation, and I must have looked bored (I'm not a numbers person), because Vijay took me outside after ten minutes.

"Forget about what you saw inside," he said. "Just think about this. Once you do this business, six months from now, you'll be walking down Ayala Ave [the banking district of Makati City, Philippines—*ed.*] trying to figure out at which bank you should be opening an account."

I was still skeptical, but Vijay continued to paint broad pictures in my mind of who I could become and what I could achieve in network marketing.

Next, he invited me to come and speak to his group once a week about health and wellness.

"I could pay you 25,000 pesos," he said, "or you could build a network. Imagine being paid one cent a day, and having that double every day for thirty days."

I started computing in my head, and even on the sixteenth day the sum wasn't impressive, but I figured out that by the thirtieth day, one cent doubled would actually yield \$5 million!

This was the first time I understood "the power of two," and it created kind of an explosion in my mind that really sparked my imagination. It was the beginning of my enlightenment in network marketing, and that was the day I decided to join the business.

### **How did you get started, and what were your early learning experiences?**

I started inviting some friends to my house. Vijay gave me a projector he was no longer using and he came over to do my first presentation. The second time, he let me know he was going to be late. I tried to remember the information he had covered, and he showed up at the very end to close the presentation.

The third time, he simply told me he couldn't make it. I had a room full of people, and instead of getting nervous, I told myself that if I made a mistake, no one would notice.

I love to present, so I started giving presentations everywhere, all day long, seven days a week. In six months, I had built an organization of 7,000 people.

"Japa, you need duplication," Vijay kept saying, and I thought, "What the heck is *duplication*?"

I felt great being the star in front of the room, knowing all the answers. But soon I could no longer accommodate all the requests from my downline and their downlines. My team members were sitting back, waiting for me to come and present.

Reaching the point of exhaustion, I finally put a stop to the situation. I simplified my presentation and got rid of the projector—an expense most people couldn't afford—and started using a marker and paper. I decided to give no more than three



At his vacation home south of Manila, Philippines.



*With his horse in Dubai, U.A.E.*

presentations for each new recruit.

About seven months into the business, my commission check dropped drastically. My company had been frontloading, and new companies with better plans had opened up in the area, so a lot of people moved on. Some of my leaders who had left even tried to recruit me. I felt deeply disappointed and hurt.

"Where's their loyalty?" I thought, and I told Vijay, "I'm not doing this anymore. I trained 7,000 people, thinking this was *my line*."

Vijay said, "This simply shows that you have not built deep. How many people do you think I sign up? I invested six months building a relationship with you before I recruited you."

He asked me, "How much time did you spend with the people you brought in? Do you walk with them in the morning? When they find a new company, they can easily walk out on you. Why are you not leaving me, even though you know there are better companies out there?"

### **Ouch! What a painful lesson.**

No kidding. I decided next time I would build more slowly and focus on developing long-term relationships rather than just bringing in the sale. I would be more selective about who to sponsor and start training people properly.

Instead of running after my team and trying to motivate them, I would let them come to me. I realized I needed to communicate my passion and vision to them clearly, so they could develop their own excitement and I would no longer need to motivate them.

More network marketing companies opened up in the Philippines, and as competition grew, I felt the pressure of needing to educate myself about the different compensation plans. As I became more experienced, Vijay and I formed a consulting firm called the V-Group. We developed profiles to analyze different network marketing models, and companies would hire us to share our findings and teach neophytes what they should look for when joining a company. We also developed generic trainings on how to create duplication.

In the meantime we were keeping an eye out in case we might come across the ideal company to get involved in. One day we stumbled upon an American company out of Houston that had come to the Philippines, and after careful examination, we decided to join. This time we would be wearing two different hats, leading the field as well as serving on the Board of Directors.

### **What attracted you to joining the corporate team?**

It dawned on me that a network marketer eventually has to become the CEO of his organization. As a leader, you cannot build a solid network without securing the house of your downline. You need to shelter those people by securing a company that will truly serve them by ensuring timely commission runs and product delivery.

In my first company, I had been no more than a serial number in the system. The corporate team didn't care about me, even though I was bringing in millions of dollars worth of sales. I didn't have the kind of leverage field leaders should have.

When joining this new company, Vijay and I liked the idea of a Board of Directors composed of field leaders and company executives, so there would be that much-needed balance between corporate minds and networking minds.

Joining the corporate side was another learning experience. While networkers are responsible for bringing in sales, company leaders are managers of funds. It's healthy to learn that balance. Sometimes I hear networkers criticize their corporate leaders or make fun of people who have jobs. I used to do this myself, but I don't anymore, because I realize corporations and employees are a

necessary part of business. It's immature for networkers to create this mental battle of us against them.

### **We can all be enriched by embracing a more inclusive perspective.**

Indeed. I believe network marketing is not only about selling a product or representing a company. The philosophy of network marketing can be applied to all business. Most successful professionals, in network marketing or other fields, are excellent networkers in how they lead others and solve problems.

A president of a country is a networker. I know doctors and lawyers who show the network marketing spirit when they speak to their clients and patients. They love to duplicate themselves, they teach people what their profession is all about, they love to share what they know.

There are other doctors and lawyers who may be good at their profession but are not successful, because they are lacking this network marketing principle. They keep to themselves and don't engage others. They don't know how to relate to people or share ideas.

No matter what profession you are in, I would suggest you learn network marketing principles, because that is going to help you to be the best you can be. Even if you have a job, you've got to sell to your boss, you've got to sell to your colleagues. For me, that's what network marketing is. It's not limited to the network marketing profession.

Even before I joined network marketing, I already had this networking spirit. I loved sharing ideas with friends. People would attend my classes and seek out my company. I was poor at the time, but I didn't identify with my condition. I had friends who were rich. Knowing how to deal with all varieties of people helped me tremendously in business.

### **How did you develop this character trait?**

I learned at an early stage how to speak the language of emotion and how to make friends. My teachers taught me it was more important to understand than to be understood. I learned to put myself in others' shoes and be appreciative, tolerant and forgiving.

Because of my spiritual background, I also look at life a little differently. I don't easily get frustrated, because I know I am not in control of anything. Let's use the example of eating. The most I can do is put food into my mouth. The process of digestion has nothing to do with me. It takes place naturally, so the only effort I have to make is to take food, put it in my mouth and chew. After that, whether I get indigestion, whether I get proper nutrition and things like that, that pretty much takes place without me.

I look at work the same way. I know that success or failure is not dependent on me alone but on many other factors. You and I could be doing business in the same place, at the same time, and you might be even smarter than I, yet you fail and I become successful in the same business.

Someone may have all the degrees and be a financial failure, but another person who doesn't have any degrees could be very successful financially. We've all seen this happen.

So what is the key to success? There are many variables that are out of our control, including the people we meet and the prospects who join our business.

I didn't plan to meet Vijay.

I always tell people, as much as I could share with you my experiences of how things are done, your success and failure is not because of what you *do*.

### **So what's the secret?**

If anything, I would say the reason for my success was that I didn't care whether I became successful or not. I wasn't hoping to become a company founder or managing director. I simply focused on what I needed to learn and do to build my network, and I took whatever came. The next thing I know, I'm running a company. Okay, thank you very much. All this happened because of the

experience I had gained and my desire to share that experience with others.

I believe there's no need to struggle in business. Whatever is going to happen, will happen. If a dollar is not meant for me, I am not going to get it, not matter how hard I try. But if that dollar is meant for me, no one is going to take it away, and it's going to come to me on its own accord.

### **Talk about stress relief!**

Many leaders in network marketing are so worried about their team members leaving them that they don't want their people to meet other networkers. How can they sleep at night?

There's nothing worse than building a business under the pressure of "When am I going to make money?" or "When am I going to get the car?" or "When will I have this or that?" If you can't enjoy the process, what is the point?

My attitude when I started networking was, whether I'd make the bucks or not, it was great because I was constantly learning. I was excited. I was meeting a lot of great people, and I was gaining with each person I met, because I saw them as assets that would mature.

In the beginning, Vijay was an asset I had not yet realized, but the time I invested in becoming his friend paid off—and I'm still withdrawing on that asset.

If I lost a million dollars today, I would not mind, because I know I have a thousand friends who would lend me a hundred dollars to start over. That's the power of helping people and building strong relationships.

What's a million dollars? You could lose it any time. Nobody *owns* money, so why would you invest your happiness in it?

Money is like a mistress. She never stays with anyone forever. Nobody gets to control her, although many try.

If money were a person, I wouldn't invest in a relationship with her or trust her. I would remain detached: if she comes, fine. I'll enjoy it, but I don't get elated. And if she goes, I'm not going to be devastated.

I look at business the same way. Everything is temporary. We get lost in our dreams, but we know that the very nature of a dream is, when we wake up, it's over.

We are all chasing a dream, for this car, for that house. When you have one million, you want two million. What does it all mean? Enjoy the dream, but don't build your life on it. Instead, try to understand the nature of what is real.

### **Once we awaken from the dream, what's next, and how does it lead to where we want to go?**

From that place of awakening to the truth, we can proceed in doing what we need to do, and our life becomes an offering. Once we are no longer attached to any outcome, we are free to live a life of service and responsibility. It gives a totally different perspective.

It's difficult to be attached and be successful at the same time, because success entails a lot of risk-taking. Most people are risk-averse because they are attached to being comfortable.

I used to do an exercise as part of my trainings where I would ask people, "What's more important for you, *security*, *comfort* or *wealth*?"

Most people would prioritize security as number one and comfort as number two, leaving wealth as their last choice.

Therein lies the problem, I would tell them. I choose wealth first, and I'm willing to risk my comfort and security. The paradox is that if you make wealth your priority, comfort and security naturally

follow. I will do whatever it takes to be wealthy. If you prioritize security first, then how can you achieve wealth? It's impossible. Choosing wealth and taking risks requires detachment, which frees you up to serve a bigger cause.

The real destination of a networker is to become a person who deeply cares for others, and that's the reason we take the time to build relationships. In caring for others, you automatically have to give up selfishness, and you start to be concerned about what *they* need. This includes teaching them and going through the pain of having to explain something over and over again. Sometimes it means addressing an issue and confronting the person, and you have to give up caring whether or not you will still be friends.

**Even building strong relationships requires a form of detachment.**

Yes, in order to genuinely care for somebody, you cannot be concerned about how the results will affect you. You are simply committed to their awakening process and helping them see the truth that will set them free.

[www.networkingtimes.com/link/bismark](http://www.networkingtimes.com/link/bismark)

## STRAIGHT TALK

Post your comments or opinions about this article.

\* Questions directed to the author(s) may not necessarily be answered on this forum.

**There are 0 comment(s)**



---

<< Previous | Contents | Next >>

We appreciate your feedback. Write us at [our helpdesk](#).

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Return Policy](#)

Copyright © 2011 Gabriel Media Group, Inc.