

The Partners Within

Personal and Spiritual Growth

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INTRODUCTION

The Origins of Spirituality

Although the origins of spirituality may not be scientifically known, philosophers have long speculated that it started many millions of years ago when early hominoids were first becoming aware of the life-giving powers of the sun. When our current species evolved some two hundred millenniums ago, we certainly must have wondered about the mysteries of life, death, nature and a divine universe.

The earliest archeological evidence of modern human's religious practices goes back for well over a hundred thousand years. According to cave paintings, ceremonial artifacts, personal decorations and myths, people must have long believed their world was closely connected to a divine. Many a legend describes people needing help and gods would appear for them. Our spiritual traditions are one long testament to this connection. From the pre-writing traditions of Abraham and Moses, to the ancient Greek world in Homer's Iliad, down to St. Paul on the road to Damascus, humanity's heritage is one long conversation between the human and the Divine.

But today, it is harder to feel that bond. We may still want to be servants of God's plan but our modern world races ahead with high technology, space flights, complex issues with international governments, and the fierce competition that exists between all citizens to prosper. No wonder many people equate gods with fantasy, legends or myth.

Yet humankind remains a species in search of the Divine. The question is: how do you nurture a connection with some form of God? While spirituality may feel distant, it is real. Its power of love emanates in all things. It was in all things before they were made, and it will remain after they cease to exist. It is the eternal power of the God/Divine, a generous, generative power that seeks to help us love more, and better.

The need for a connection to a greater love is what makes us human. Most of us struggle when we need advice or help. Does God listen to us when we pray? How will you call the Divine into your soul? It seems that one defining condition of all human life is the need to feel for a presence beyond the reality that our senses perceive: the spiritual. In order to get to the spiritual side of these questions we need to look beyond the immediate surroundings of family, friends, community and/or nation. Perhaps the spiritual world has never been so challenged by the philosophies of "reality" as it is today. Yet in order to recover the ground between you and the Divine, you must first ask yourself, unequivocally, what it is that you feel inside of yourself when you ask the question, "Am I alone?"

The Role of Institutions

The vast majority of people, everywhere in the world, are raised to believe in some form of God. Therefore, the most common answer to the question of "Am I alone?" is a resounding "No!" This is usually brought about by a faith-based belief system taught by their family, clan or church. For many of us, however, the God of the churches is an impersonal god; a deity closely guarded by the doctrine of the religious institutions. That is where the question "Am I alone?" becomes more challenging. If we feel that God is theirs and not ours, we may feel cut off from the power of God. For the people who may still believe in God but are not so sure about their inherited religion, they may give an answer to this question as "sometimes." This is a typical response in America today: We continue to believe in spirituality, but are skeptical that God listens to every one of us, individually.

Finally, others will forcefully reject all institutional teaching and simply accept the human reality that surrounds them.

What is clear in the range of answers to the question “Am I alone?” is that there is no single answer. And in a democratic, free and global society this fact rings more clearly each day. Within the global village that exists in almost any American town, there is, no doubt, a wide range of divergent belief systems: Christian, Islamic, Judaic, Hindu, Buddhist, Agnostics and more. Even among the devoutly affiliated, you would be hard pressed to find people side by side in the same pew who would answer the question, “Am I alone?” exactly the same.

It is one of the great tragedies of our day that so few of us feel connected to a power greater than our own—a power greater than our human will of self-determination. Indeed, in the everyday world of modern life it is hard to feel the presence of spirituality. Many philosophers, scholars and poets have speculated on the lack of presence of God in modern life. Some have suggested that science killed God, or that modern politics separated Church and State, thus diminishing God’s role in civic life. Others feel that modern technology has separated people from the rural, agrarian lives where people felt that God provided for their needs with a bountiful harvest. Clearly, in contemporary times, maintaining “the faith” has evolved from being an obligation to being a choice.

While belief in God, or the spiritual energy of God, is held by nearly all of humanity all across the globe, the interpretation of daily reality and the acceptance of belief systems are matters that individuals decide for themselves. You could be told from the age of two that God is watching you and sitting in judgment, but odds are you will come to your own conclusions about God and whether God is listening.

What we see from these scenarios is that the relationship between the world and the Divine is one of people’s most personal beliefs. And, as there is a wide variety in the degree of acceptance of faith-based belief systems, how this question is answered is often fundamental to almost everything that people do in life. It is reflected in how they act, how they think, what they want from life and love, and what they believe. The result is that people appear to live in different worlds from each other when they make decisions based on their “faith.” Little wonder that real world outcomes range from nations dominating nations to clerics advocating terror and murder in order to further their philosophy. Why is this?

There is no single answer to this question, of course, because each person defines their reality. Everybody needs to negotiate their boundaries between religious instruction and personal significance. But many of us with a traditional Western background have, I find, simply stopped praying. Why? Because many have lost a spiritual sense that we are truly talking to God through the repetition of standard acts of prayer. The problem is that it is too easy to become absorbed in only the talking of the prayer—or to be limited to the words of ancient traditions—obscuring the ability to listen. For many of us, our mantras have evolved from “Give us this day our daily bread...” to “If it is going to be, it is up to me.”

So why must our idea of God be so ancient? In the above examples, God is an old-fashioned idea, a symbol of a “belief” at best. Perhaps the problem is that our notion of this Divine is so ancient. Indeed, many modern believers would scoff at any claim for spirituality that did not actually physically manifest as a person in the period costume of Ancient Judea. And there are some who will remain steadfastly determined that when Jesus returns to Earth, he will be returning to save the true believers alone.

Though the age of miracles seems to have been put on hold, we should not forget that the message of Jesus was one of liberation: “I say unto you ask, and it shall be given you; seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened for you.” (Matthew 7, 7). Or consider: “Listen to me! You can pray for anything and, if you believe, you can have it, it’s yours!” (Mark 12, 22-4). Jesus called for you to liberate your mind by seeing the “God within,” the holiness of God made within you. To

accept the message of Jesus is to see the Christ within you, to see the Divine possibilities of your own life.

Talk and Listen

Unfortunately, the instructions of many of the Christian churches, and other orthodox practices, endlessly articulate how to talk to God but they spend little or no time in developing a method for listening to God. But because we are all unique individuals, with ever-changing wants, needs, times and circumstances, no one creates in us the highly personalized experiences of spirituality but us. Our ability to hear a God power depends upon our ability to talk and listen to ourselves first. We are the only one that can explore our uniquely personal strengths and weaknesses. Then, through the use of our “partners within” (outlined in Part I below) we will feel the power of our own personal God/Divine. So in order to feel that we are “not alone,” each of us has to accept that the love of God is real. Then you simply immerse yourself in the spirituality of love and let it guide you with your concerns and goals. It will help in profound, life-changing ways.

Most of the churches of today continue to offer people an excellent opportunity for practicing a faith. Most of us know that there is a difference between right and wrong and almost all religions excel at upholding the proper moral code. They offer core competencies for the social side of the human race. Their moving rituals do an outstanding job of celebrating community, holidays, holy days and the Sabbath and they are unrivaled in their role of sanctifying life’s passages. If you are already attending or adhering to the faiths of one or more of the classic religious traditions and, if their message of pure love continues, there should be no need to change your commitments. The ideas offered here should only be complimentary to your practices, not an alternative.

The Philosophy

The personal partnerships of *The Partners Within* create the grounds to link the concepts of the “me,” to the “you,” and importantly, to the “we,” or all of humankind. Gaining a more inclusive sense of this whole is an evolving concept and a critical step to our future success.

Throughout our prehistory humanity was limited to the circles of trust that included families, tribes and religions. In more recent times, we have expanded our trust to include villagers, city-states, corporations, nations, human-rights and the rule of law. Today we need to continue to modernize the image of the whole of humanity in order to stabilize our relationship to our only home, the Planet Earth.

With a global population destined to multiply to nearly ten billion by the middle of the 21st century, our species is testing the limits to the amount of natural resources we can consume. The accelerating global economic boom is creating an exponential demand for decent land, air, water and energy that could overwhelm supply and challenge our global reality. The human race walks a fine line between trust and doubt. But the historical cycles of boom and bust need not be inevitable. All we need for sustainable growth is a global awareness of the fact that we are all equally responsible for our actions and that we need to be equally involved in our future. How we deal with these upcoming challenges will require a personal and spiritual growth of what is right for all of Earth’s life (see Part II’s Global Spirituality). Our salvation and prosperity depends on it.

In the United States we see this in the narrow-minded pursuit of competitive advantage over other nations that compelled George Bush II to reject the Kyoto protocols. But the United States isn’t the only nation that is pursuing industrial growth with little to no admission that everyone on planet Earth needs to breathe the same air. Politicians, bureaucrats, corporations and everyday people need not let the complexities of international accords stop them from this necessary recognition. This book uses the spirituality of a partnership between a self and selfless love that

knows no boundaries, an unconditional love that simply wants what is best for all. The very success and prosperity of the human race depends on it.

The solutions for this global reality start with the premise that the vast majority of people everywhere believe in some form of a “higher power” that created and maintains the mysterious universe that supports us all. More recent studies support this premise. One study located a potential “god gene”: a genetic sequence that occurs in nearly all individuals who identified themselves as believing in a “God.” Also, world-wide public opinion polls taken over the past half century consistently show over ninety percent of the world’s population believing in a power greater than the human one.

To believe in a higher power is the first step; feeling a connection to that power is far more difficult. Complicating humankind’s journey is the fact that the world has so many diverse versions of “God.” In fact, only about one half of the world’s population believes in the Western definition of a “Heavenly Father,” or an all-knowing and all-powerful God. Contrast this with the Eastern hemisphere’s beliefs that include multiple varieties of the Divine. Here, we see many regional variations such as Brahman, Nirvana, Dao, the Divine Spirit and more. Accordingly, this book is using the contraction of “God/Divine” to represent a global variety of spiritual beings.

We continue to see many living churches and temples providing avenues for the spirituality of love, peace and global awareness. However, most of the Western based belief-systems evolved alongside the evolution of monotheism: the belief that there is only one God. But just because writing began to catch on with some of the Middle Eastern elites of a few thousand years ago, it doesn’t mean that the beliefs of those earlier times are any more relevant than the beliefs of today. Further, I would argue that the very basis of monotheism may be in conflict with our global reality, as it depends on the rejection of all other forms of the Divine. Yet the spiritual legacy of Abraham, Jesus and Mohammed also taught us that God is love, and that our role is to love and trust God. This unconditional love is open to all but the love of life need not be limited to God. It also needs to be a love for ourselves; the other people involved in our lives, as well as for the intricate web of life that supports us all.

In addition, we need to be aware of the many pros and cons of the human race. The philosophy here helps us see that, although each of us has an infinite variety of strength and weaknesses that we all need to deal with, we also have free will and therefore what we do with our lives is entirely up to us. And because we are socially dependent on others by nature, we naturally want to get along with one another. This means that the vast majority of us want to “do the right thing.” Unfortunately, we don’t always know how.

Further complicating humankind is the differences between thinking about problems and learning how to solve them. When someone is asked to “think about” something, the response is usually to consider what they have learned in their past. This is easy to do, but the more challenging task is to learn a new way of thinking in regards to an idea or problem. We are generally slower to “learn” something new, particularly as we age.

Another major challenge to humankind is its predisposition to limiting its loving potential to whatever it finds lovable. It is true that people are quick to turn negative toward anything they don’t understand or that they find strange or offensive. “Like likes like” as the poet Joel Felix would say, and is less fond of “others.” And most of us do not like uncertainties and mysteries. We have a tendency to provide answers, regardless of whether they are right or wrong, and are reluctant to admit when we really “don’t know.” Finally, social scientists have shown that, on average, humans are pretty good at knowing and trusting up to about one hundred and fifty people in their social circles. But when we get involved with groups much beyond this size, particularly with people on the other side of the world, it is easy to simply dismiss them as “foreigners.”

Personal and spiritual growth addresses all of these considerations. It suggests that we need to learn a new awareness of our three major choices in life: 1) what is right for ourselves, 2) what is right for the other people involved in our lives, and 3) what is right for the rest of the people in this world. Almost all of us almost always want to do the right thing for ourselves and the other people we know, but dealing with the rest of humanity is far more complicated. This book is designed to help us learn what is right for all three of these potentially harmonious yet frequently conflicting choices, the differences between the “me,” the “you,” and the “we.”

So in order to build common ground toward global belief systems, a spirituality that works for all people working toward global stewardship, I propose using a universal understanding of the God/Divine. First and foremost, it is love, pure and simple. It is an ideal love, a love that wants what is right for all. It is a perfect parental love that knows to boundaries. It is a self and selfless love that exists everywhere in the world’s wisdom traditions. It is a love so pure, it shows us the way to learn right from wrong, good from bad, love from fear, and trust from doubt. It is the Eternal Light from the beginning of the universe which continues to resonate in every cell of our bodies. Finding this love that exists within us all is what the “partners within” are all about. After all, we are but a single species sharing a single planet and we are all dependent on one another for our very survival, freedom and prosperity.

And where might this spirituality of love come from? From a factual standpoint, nobody knows. It could come from inside of ourselves as we all have the abilities for both personal and unconditional love. Or it could come from the people that surround us. Social evidence suggests that the benevolence of decent people everywhere can be contagious, resulting in the collective goodwill of humanity expanding its circles of trust. Or it could come from some larger mystical force that is more powerful than anything the human race is capable of, maybe the God/Divine or perhaps a Pure Love that exists somewhere in the universe. Readers should feel free to decide what works best for them. Personally, I would suggest using all possibilities.

The powers of Pure Love—and its companion of Pure Light—are so great that they *only* want what is right for you, the other people involved in your life, as well as all of humanity. They enable us to see and act in ways that were too obscure to have been seen before. They inspire us to heal the many diverse challenges of human life. They partner with a global spirituality that assists us in transforming an “us versus them” mentality to a belief that respects the fact that “we are all in this together.” And ultimately, they offer a conviction that each and every one of us is responsible for what belongs to us all: our only home, the Planet Earth. The salvation of the human race depends on it.

So how do we bring a practical application of spirituality and pure love into our lives? This book uses partnerships between Western style introspection and classic Eastern meditation techniques. These partnerships employ the universally accepted theory of brain specialties by bringing together your “thinking/talking” skills with your “listening/learning” skills. By partnering these two skills together with the spirituality of love, you develop a whole-brain basis for creating a channel to a spiritual wisdom far greater than your regular conscious thoughts.

This is all it takes to bring yourself into a state of harmony with your world and thus you begin to hear the answers that your highest powers have to offer. It lights your way and answers you back. It energizes your life by inspiring compassion and respect. It is achieved by opening yourself up to the most cherished partnerships of all: the partnerships between you, Pure Love and all of Earth’s life.

Part I of this book, “Personal Growth,” focuses on introspection and its uses for acquiring the self-understanding so vital for personal growth. It starts with the major dualistic challenges of humankind and many readers may want to start with these aspects right away. Others may want to

read through to Part II, which concentrates on meditation. But first, I would recommend mastering the use of introspection in order to gain a better understanding of who you are and what you are doing with your life. Then, by developing the spirituality of pure love as the energy for balancing your dualities, it guides you to a new understanding and appreciation for yourself and the rest of your world.

Part II, "Spiritual Growth," offers a more in depth use of meditation and its relationship to global awareness and global spirituality. It starts with the power of a duality between your brain and mind that, coupled with the imagery of three-word meditations, leads to a better understanding and use of the four functions of the infamous body, mind, heart and soul.

Part III of this book, "Perspectives," supports the basic message that you can help yourself to be a healthier, more loving and creative individual. This growth is needed throughout our planet but it has to come to us one by one. Ultimately, we will find comfort and security in the realization that we are but a single species sharing a single planet and that we are all in this life together. And by using the evolutionary and loving techniques of the partners within, together, we can make this a better world for all.

As we bring more love into our lives, we magnify our sense of feeling loved. We expand the excitement and joy of being truly alive. We become empowered to love and act in the spirit of good will for ourselves and for all of Earth's life. The God/Divine is still with us and touches our everyday lives. In the words of 14th century Florentine poet Dante Alighieri, "God is the love that moves the sun and all the stars." We need only to seek it and listen.