

Spirituality & Community

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www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

Robert Frost: The Road Not Taken

Maybe ...

Tracy Phernetton

Amazanga

The Spiritual Art
of Erez Sitzer



The Spirituality of Jesus

As Told in Matthew

The Dance of Judgment

Judge Stanley Peele on Judging Others

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Who We Are

www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

Origins

Spirituality & Community was founded in late 2003 by Kurt Venables to communicate with others who share an interest in spirituality and an appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.

Mission

We are dedicated to the spiritual development of our members and promoting spirituality and appreciation for the rich array of spiritual beliefs the world provides.

Foundations

Spirituality & Community is a magazine and online community for those seeking answers to life's deepest questions. We hold closely these fundamental truths:

- To find true happiness, one must open his or her heart to the pure goodness that lies deep within. We call this pure goodness the Good, the Light, and the Lord within.*
- The process of opening one's heart is a lifelong journey, which we call Spirituality.*

We distinguish between spirituality and religion. *Our focus is spirituality, which we view as an inner search for happiness and fulfillment.* We are concerned with what lies within the heart. In religion, metaphysical and supernatural concepts are inextricably linked to spirituality, and you will find such religious concepts discussed here to the extent that the writer believes them to be entwined with spiritual topics. However, you will not find material written for the sole purpose of asserting, denying, or debating supernatural religious phenomena, whether they be associated with traditional religions or new age religions. Examples of such phenomena might include the existence of God, reincarnation, or extraterrestrials. It's not that we don't consider these to be worthy subjects; it's just that we believe that spirituality, the inner journey, is important in its own right, and that is our focus here.

We believe that true spiritual development depends upon a genuine appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs. Among our highest values is open-mindedness. We do not require or expect others to accept the particular beliefs of any one of us. We believe that as we develop such an appreciation for diversity, our perspective shifts away from an "all or nothing" concept of spirituality, an approach that supposes that one must either wholly accept or utterly reject a particular set of spiritual beliefs. This perceptual shift allows us to view the beliefs of others from a fresh vantage point, take from each set of beliefs that which rings true, and synthesize a personal spirituality that makes sense for each of us. *We believe that spirituality may best be defined as a personal journey towards true happiness and spiritual fulfillment and that the beliefs of others serve to guide each of us on our own journey.* Our goals are the personal growth of each and every member and the promotion of spiritual values and respect for individuality.

We believe that when we view the spiritual beliefs of others with our hearts, we see truth shine through. Truth shines all around us if we know how to see it. The truth we see in the spiritual beliefs of others guides each of us. It is in this vein that we wish this organization to be viewed. ***Through Spirituality & Community, we reveal our most intimate beliefs. We sincerely hope that some will find some truth within them, and we wish you only the best on your own personal journey!***

What We Do- Opportunities for Exploring Spirituality and Communication

Spirituality & Community produces a magazine and encompasses an online community. Both aspects serve as the basis for bringing together those who share our aspirations and beliefs, to meet each other and exchange ideas. We provide many opportunities for exploring spirituality and communicating with others:

- Spirituality & Community magazine***
- Features on the site***
- Online chats***
- Retreats*** (as interest arises)

The magazine is based on a Reader's Digest® type model. It is comprised primarily of reader submitted material. It is the primary mechanism for a member to both explore spirituality and communicate his or her ideas to others. Features from the past several issues are also posted on the site. When interest is sufficiently high, we will hold chats online. An eventual goal is to organize retreats in major metropolitan areas to allow participants to meet each other and discuss issues face to face.

Membership in Spirituality & Community is free and may be withdrawn at any time. The magazine is also free. Level of participation in any aspect of Spirituality & Community is strictly voluntary.

The organization and site were launched only very recently. Currently, membership is very small- We are in growth mode right now. ***If you would like to join, please visit our web site and click the Join Us! link.***

Spiritual Soup

By Kurt Venables

Spirituality: The Journey

Last issue, I introduced the idea that spirituality was a unique search for knowledge. Yet, *spirituality is much more than merely a passive search for knowledge; it is an enterprise of interwoven knowledge and action.*



Spirituality is an introspective search for happiness, which involves action to remove the negative emotional barriers that smother that pure goodness that lies deep within our hearts. As described in the last issue, spirituality is a unique search for knowledge of self. Perhaps the first epiphany one experiences is to grasp the ultimate goal of life (of human life), to realize that the sole goal of the human mind is to maximize happiness. A closely associated realization is that as happiness is an emotion, inner factors have more to do with happiness than external ones. Perhaps the second critical epiphany is that opening one's heart to allow the goodness within to shine throughout is the key to achieving true happiness. One discovers that the path to happiness lies in cultivating feelings of goodness, which I call the Good or the Light, by overcoming the negative feelings which impede the Light. Challenges to be met along the way include overcoming arrogance, close-mindedness, insecurity, and issues with self-esteem.

I regard spirituality as a journey. Spirituality is a search to understand self, a quest for happiness, and this quest requires action to achieve the goal. Spirituality is not a one step search for knowledge, but neither is it a two step process. Spirituality is an iterative process- knowledge enables action; emotional progress sets the stage for further insights. It's like taking steps on a journey.

“Spirituality is ... like taking steps on a journey. Knowledge is the right leg, action the left.”

Knowledge is the right leg, action the left. One may take the first step with the right leg, but without the left, one doesn't get very far. The following step with the left leg puts one in a position to take another step with the right. In this way, one makes progress on the journey.

The Spirituality of Jesus

As Told in Matthew

(King James Version)

Chapter 5

¹⁴ Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵ Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

³⁸ Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

³⁹ But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

⁴³ Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

⁴⁵ That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

⁴⁶ For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

⁴⁷ And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

⁴⁸ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Chapter 6

¹⁹ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in



“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them”

heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

²² The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

²³ But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Chapter 7

¹ Judge not, that ye be not judged.

² For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

³ And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

⁴ Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

⁵ Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

¹⁵ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

¹⁶ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

¹⁷ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

²⁴ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

²⁵ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

²⁶ And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

²⁷ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Chapter 13

³ And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

⁴ And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

⁵ Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

⁶ And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

⁷ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

⁸ But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

⁹ Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

²³ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Chapter 18

¹ At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

² And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

³ And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The Dance of Judgment

By Judge Stanley Peele

Abe was talking to me about a local problem in the criminal justice system; one that had been in the headlines recently.

“Power does not equate to superiority.”

"I'll tell you what is happening here!" he said, "This guy has fouled up, he is in the wrong; I would not trust him any further than I can throw a piano; he needs to be kicked out right now!"

"Don't be too quick to judge," I replied.

His eyes widened. "Oh, you know something about the case, don't you?" he asked.

"Not much," I replied.

"Well then, what's your point?"

"It's philosophical. I try not to judge people," I replied.

"Har, Har!" he exclaimed, "Not judge? Not judge? That's a laugh! You are a judge, yet you try to tell me not to judge?"

"Glad to give you something to laugh at. Now, let's see if I can explain this. A few weeks ago, you fired a member of your crew, didn't you?"

"Yep, replied Abe.

"OK, now, if someone else calls you, asking for a recommendation about him, what will you say?"

"I will recommend that he not be hired, because he will not show up on time, and this throws the crew back, lowers morale."

"After he gets on the job, how hard does he work?" I asked.

"He works hard, works like a horse."

"Then wouldn't you tell him that your man works hard?" I asked.

"Well yeah," said Abe.

"My suggestion is that when you fire a person, that you should not do so from a high position, a position where you are of the opinion that he is a lesser person and that you are a greater person. It should be as equals. A person who can not show up on time is unacceptable to your crew, so you feel you have to fire him. But you do not have to judge him as a person. Do you see?"

"It sounds impossible." he said.

"Agreed," I replied, "But well worth the attempt. Let's put the shoe on the other foot. Let's assume I am holding court and a man is brought before me and pleads guilty to serious charges. I sentence him to prison. Does this make me superior to the defendant? Of course not. No more than Pontius Pilate was superior to Jesus when he sentenced Jesus to death. The prisoner and I are equal. He made his choices. I made my choice. Power does not equate to superiority. Might does not make right."

I continued, "A few weeks ago, while visiting in the hospital, I saw a lady who I had known as a judge. We greeted one another, then she introduced me to a man who was sitting next to her. I had not recognized him. She said, ""You will remember him because he used to have an alcohol problem and wound up before you in court."" Then I remembered him. I had given him jail time."

"Then the man spoke up and said, ""Yes, I remember you. You're OK, you just did not know any better.""

Abe smiled "Pretty funny. I get it. He does not judge you, eh? And I think I get your point. You are saying, **Judge not that ye be not judged.**"

"That's close," I replied, "But my idea is to take that statement another step. **Judge not that ye be not judged** implies that the reason you should not judge is that you shall, in turn, be judged. So, it is a simple give and take: do it so you don't get hurt; it is self-preservation."

"There is another reason not to judge." I continued. It is because that is who you are. That is your nature. It is your nature to be kind to others, and not to judge them. Thus, you fulfill your inner nature, and bring joy to yourself and to your neighbors."

Abe looked at me for a few seconds in silence. Then he said, "Judge, you won't do. You are diagonally parked in a parallel universe!"

"Oh? You think so?" I replied.

"Yes I do. You are as odd as a dancing bear!!"

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Remember Who You Really Are

By: Tracy Phernetton

Maybe The "Dumb Guy" Is Not So Dumb, After All

I took the time on January 28th, 2004 to sit and watch the State of the Union Address, given by America's 43rd President, George W. Bush. I was determined to be objective and open-minded while I listened to his annual speech. Honestly, without conscious cognition, I anticipated a well-designed testimony of the unexplainable crusade Mr. Bush and his associates have implemented since 9/11.

Throughout the speech, I observed the traditional up and down cheers and applause from the peanut gallery (a.k.a.: Congress). When all of sudden, my ears attuned, and my eyes focused on the president's disposition, as this came from his mouth, *"Americans are doing the work of compassion everyday-visiting prisoners, providing shelter for battered women, bringing companionship to lonely seniors. These good works deserve our praise; they deserve our personal support; and when appropriate, they deserve the assistance of the federal government. I urge you to pass both my faith-based initiative and the Citizen Service Act, to encourage acts of compassion that can transform America, one heart and one soul at a time."* (Applause)

Once my shock subsided, I immediately saw a glimpse of hope. As a former apprentice of a Minnesota State Representative, and studying Political Science in college, compiled to my present shift in consciousness, I was able to see something new.

So many times, I have sat in New Age circles and engaged in heated



"Once my shock subsided, I immediately saw a glimpse of hope."

conversation concerning our political structure. And more so, in regards to President Bush. With all the enlightened analogies, spiritual experiences, and cutting-edge peace discussions, you would think that the focus would stay "peaceful," and "loving." Instead I have sat in a Spiritual-based group that went from advocating beliefs like, "There is no right and wrong," "No one is wrong given their model of the world," and "Everyone and every thing is perfect in Gods' world, *as is.*" And then just minutes later, I hear the tone of enlightenment change into impatient frustration and sarcastic blame; "Bush is the joke of humanity," "If only he had one brain cell," "It is Bush that got us in this mess."

Someone please tell me where the Peace and Love is in that? And with all the enlightened information, and wisdom we are all thinking, talking, and writing about; where is the personal application?

So in my *own* diluted sense of judgment that had unconsciously wore on my perception, I was actually dumbfounded to hear such simple, peace-full ideas coming from the "dumb guy." Mr. Bush also addressed the fact that church and state, being the separate entities they are, did not matter in his proposal. He then emphasized the important distinction of "Religion," and

“Faith-Based,” and invited ALL denominations, and believers to unite, and invited Congress to praise, support, and consider the foundation where service comes from.

I am not by any means campaigning for George W. Bush. I am however lending the opportunity to you to see past the current bias swelling in the New Age mind on Mr. Bush. It is important to know he is not the enemy. If anything, at times he can be a contextual field for some. A contextual field is the source for our relative experience. “Without knowing who I am *not*, I can not then know who I *am*.” So keep that in mind when you see George W. Bush as the “dumb guy.” If you were not able to “see” that in him, then maybe, you couldn’t then know who you *don’t* want to be.

With even that said, I still have to applaud the “dumb guy” in his efforts to unite Faith-Based groups. I decided to investigate more on The Faith-Based Initiative, which is available on the White House website. Here is just a glimpse of some of the content you will find written in this unique plan;

“Our strength is in the hearts and souls of American citizens, people from all faiths, all walks of life-whether they be Christian, Jew, or Muslim, or Hindu, people have heard the universal call to love a neighbor just like they’d like to be called themselves. There are some whose problem can only be solved when a brother or sister puts their arm around you and says, ‘I love you; what can I do to help you.’” –George W. Bush

I understand that the response to this may be a hesitant confusion. Since you could argue that the President is not practicing this in our worldly affairs. I believe the significance is in the *actuality* of these types of principles emerging from the White House, let alone, the President. It is groundbreaking, and in truth, going against the grain of political escapism.

With the passing of the Harmonic Concordance, and various movements in our Spiritual Evolution, I, as a practicing intuitive, have seen what has been referred to as our end, on this planet, as really our beginning. ***Conflict before Clarity***. There must be a planetary purging if we are to give birth to the New Earth. I saw clearly during the Harmonic Concordance, that if you turned on the mainstream media to view the status of the world around you; you would see destruction, demise, and a quickening of the downward spiral. However, I see that this is necessary, and all the “evil archetypes,” and “dumb guys,” are actually the covert angels aiding this acceleration of the shifts.

On January 28th, I saw the not a chance, turn into a possibility. With statements and initiatives like Mr. Bush is presenting, and the responses of being taken by surprise rising up from the historians, political analysts, and commentators. I will be the first “New Ager” to go out on a limb. Maybe, just maybe, George W. Bush will be the seed-planter for future revisions of the political system in relation to the Spiritual movement sweeping this planet. And if just one of you sees this for what it is; *an alternative perspective*, then maybe, just maybe we can begin to offer our enlightened awareness experientially, and even include the “dumb guy” in our intent to Love unconditionally.

To find out more about this Faith-Based Initiative, go to www.whitehouse.gov.

Tracy Phernetton is the founder of ALL PRODUCTIONS and is currently co-producing a documentary titled, “You Said You Want a Revolution...” She continues to present workshops about “The Myth of Dying.” Her new book, “Letters From Michael; A Communication From the Flip Side,” is due out in 2004. Visit the website www.lettersfrommichael.com or contact her at flipside76@charter.net or (952) 953-7130.

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Amazanga Art

By Erez Sitzer

In 1995 Erez Sitzer traveled into the Amazonian rainforest. Beneath its rich canopy, guided by native elders, Erez discovered a world of beauty and mystery, a world that would inspire his direction in life as an artist. He was given the name Amazanga, meaning `spirit of the forest`, a word expressing for the indigenous people the complex intimations that coexist between people and plants, between dancing and dreams, between evolution and the vast skies above. It is these intimations that evoke the images and meaning in Erez`s work. For more, visit www.amazanga.com.



Of the Earth



Through the Sun



Voices

Robert Frost

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

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