

ARTICLES & FEATURES

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February 24, 1997

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From bookstores to summer camps to medical conferences, the word *spirituality* is on many people's lips. Understanding what it is and how it affects our lives has become a major quest for men and women of all backgrounds. As Harvey Cox, noted Harvard theologian, says in this week's News & Trends, "The change in the mental climate is something quite remarkable."

Because of this, we thought it would be helpful to explore not only some definitions of what spirituality is, but also what it does. One author tells about her experience of white water kayaking and the relation she saw to spiritual progress. Another explains how peace from painful memories can be gained. For one man and his family, gratitude as a spiritual quality is found crucial to their obtaining a new home. And when a wife felt at odds with her husband's perfectionism around the house, a deeper spiritual love proved to be the answer.

Also this week, in response to a special conference for young people being held in the Boston area, we asked parents and children to share with us their thoughts on spiritual education, what it means to them and how it helps them in their daily lives. The result was a kaleidoscope of ideas and accounts of healing.

Enjoy!

"Emerge gently from matter into Spirit"

Lynn G. Jackson

ABOUT a year ago *The Wall Street Journal* carried an article that caught my eye. It was called "The Healing Power of Prayer Is Tested by Science." The headline stood out to me because many people I know, including myself,

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rely solely upon prayer for healing. We naturally expect it to heal and have not been disappointed in the results. Whether it has been studied and tested by the physical sciences or not, the fact is that prayer heals.

It's one thing, however, to say that prayer works and that you've been healed through it; it's another thing to rely upon prayer if you're new at it. Yet for the individual yearning for a systematic approach to healing, the spiritual understanding of prayer offers surcease from suffering, pain, disease, sin. It offers surcease because the unfeigned desire to go deeper than mere matter-based theories to Spirit-based understanding doesn't go unanswered. In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy writes, "The world must grow to the spiritual understanding of prayer" (p. 10).

What is this "spiritual understanding of prayer"? Is it merely intentionality, meditation, or remote healing? Is it mental manipulation of energy or the power of suggestion? No. Christian Science reveals prayer to be a deep, conscientious, practical understanding of God and His creation, man. This understanding is effective because it acknowledges God to be all-power and all-presence, thereby precluding any other supposed substance or power.

Science and Health shows how to gain this spiritual understanding. It states: "Emerge gently from matter into Spirit. Think not to thwart the spiritual ultimate of all things, but come naturally into Spirit through better health and morals and as the result of spiritual growth" (p. 485). Many figures in the Bible offer examples of this natural spiritual growth. Moses, for instance, throughout his life grew into a deeper understanding of God. The same is true for Paul, Daniel, Noah, Joseph, and even Jesus. We could think of them all as coming "naturally into Spirit through better health and morals and as the result of spiritual growth."

Our own spiritual growth begins with the humility to turn to God. As we humbly yield to God, we find Him to be all-powerful. As we find His allness adequate for our every need, we leave off a desire for other healing methods. We do this by acknowledging

God's power and presence in our lives and by allowing our thought to be governed by God rather than by fear. This yielding develops our spiritual understanding, and we emerge gently from matter and its disappointments to Spirit and its fulfillment. Thus we find that prayer is not mere guesswork but is scientific because its foundation is God and His infinite power.

It's interesting that even as we begin to yield our thoughts and actions to God, we see results. Just a little yielding, a little turning toward Him, has its rewards. And each proof that our prayers are effective strengthens our faith and forwards our progress until step by step we feel spiritually strong, capable, effective.

A friend of mine often says, "If you want to get somewhere, start from where you're at." We are all at different stages of thought and experience, but at whatever point we find ourselves, we can follow Jesus' command "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Such spiritual seeking leads to finding! In actuality, though, we're not finding something we've been without, but rather are emerging into a God-protected, spiritual understanding of our identity and of all existence.

As consciousness yields to God's power and presence, as thought emerges from the material to the spiritual, experience changes for the better. We find that we no longer need look to other methods of healing. We look solely to Spirit, God. And we find healing. ■

"A lot of people are tired of traditional Western ways of living," says a 30-year-old woman browsing at the Whole Life Expo. "They want something better, a spiritual revolution, freedom and fulfillment. I'm all for it."

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