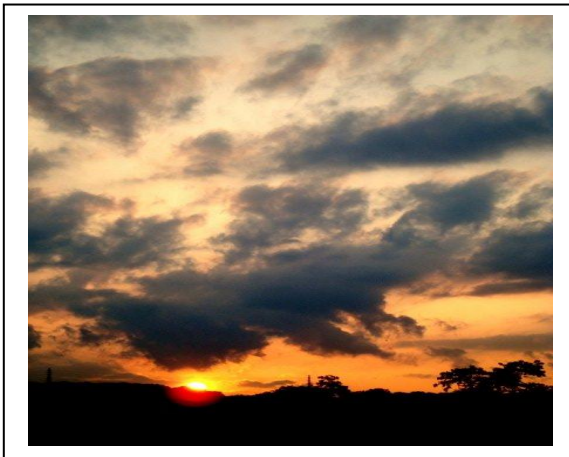


Broken Spirit...Awakening Spirit

By G. Raymond McCullough

The sentiment of this article is captured by the saying: 'I don't know about you but I am not going to live in hell to die and go to hell.' The paragraphs that follow will explore what is thought by some to be a mysterious and contentious topic: The Human Spirit. This may conjure up the idea of the supernatural, religion, or philosophy about life, death, and the afterlife. Despite the initial thoughts that come to mind this article will focus on hope, faith, and the resilience of the human spirit.



This article was inspired by my own personal journey that led me to discover my spiritual self and spiritual path.

I want to share a young man's story, with his permission:

Several decades ago a young man was spiritually lost and his spirit was on the brink of being broken. He was leading a life that was contrary to the values instilled in him by his mother and grandparents. Every poor choice he made led to greater internal conflicts that led to value confusion and to some degree value deterioration. His entire life was a lie

and a contradiction of the person he had been and the person he was meant to be. The young man had embraced a lifestyle where dishonesty and deception, conceit, self absorption, dishonor, irrational thinking and behaving became the norm. He had created a living hell for himself. As he spiraled further into a state of despair and desperation he felt helpless and hopeless. He was lost and the loss became his identity.



He was emotionally and spiritually unrecognizable to himself. His family and friends questioned who he had become. Fear, anger, guilt, and shame were his perpetual emotional companions. He truly believed he was headed for prison or a violent death. Then something of an unfathomable nature occurred in his life—he was saved from himself. It was his unwavering belief that he was saved by Divine Intervention.

The intervention began in 1981 when he was unexpectedly sent to Japan on military orders. This intervention in his mind and heart saved his worldly life and allowed for a spiritual

awakening and growth. As the chartered military 747 approached Japan for landing, he peered out the window at the rooftops of homes and the surrounding landscape he felt as though he was returning home, even though he had never been in Japan. He felt a great sense of peacefulness.

During the next 15 years in Japan he experienced a deep sense of spiritualism and a different way of looking at himself and the world in general. His education in Japanese Animism, Shintoism, Buddhism, and training as a Kami Kumite in Sukyo Mahikari was instrumental in his spiritual awakening and evolution. The practice of martial arts and Bushido, Ikebana, Zazen Meditation, and yoga further enhanced his spirituality. This entire process allowed him to accept the presence of a power greater than himself at work in his life.

This experience allowed him to see himself, others, and his environment in ways he never thought possible. He came alive and he found purpose in his life. His life became simple and he appreciated what he had ignored or what went unnoticed before. During this time his only son was born and that event had a transformative effect in his life as well.

At this point allow me to share with you a couple of personal experiences. I was present in the delivery room when my son was born. I know we have all heard that experiencing the birth of our child is miraculous. I agree and suggest miraculous is an understatement in the spiritual sense of life. As my son entered the world and took his first breath I was in a state of wonderment and awe.

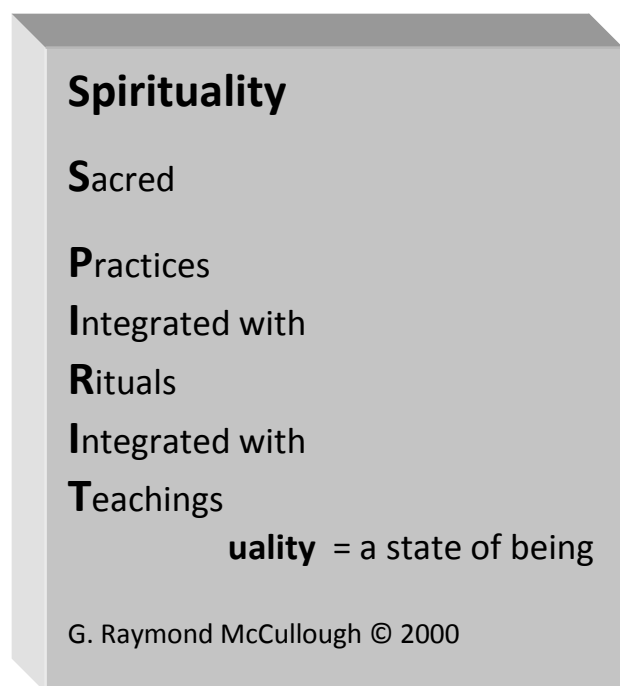


Moments later after the nurse had wiped him clean of birth canal fluids our eyes met for the first time. I felt my child immediately recognized me. His gaze was piercing as though it looked through me to the very depths of my soul. I felt exposed and vulnerable. This experience in the brevity of the moment reacquainted me with the physical fragility of my life and also reaffirmed my belief that we are spiritual beings. You may ask how this experience could affirm this belief. Without spoken word my son and I connected on a very profound level that can only be described as a spiritual experience--two life forces connecting on a level that defies logic or science. The story of my son's birth suggests we all enter this world as an awakening spirit, in its purest form, and in a very distinct human form.



A 2nd personal moment of exceptional clarity:

In 1990 I was onboard an aircraft carrier in transit to the Persian Gulf and North Arabian Sea during the buildup to the first Gulf War. There was a widespread belief that Armageddon had finally arrived and doomsday was on the horizon. I accepted that there was a great likelihood that my worldly presence would come to an end in this war. I accepted this as a real possibility and found a sense of peacefulness in this acceptance. It was during this time that I became acutely aware of what the concept of spirituality meant in a practical sense. I had a moment of clarity and that moment revealed the following graphic:



Let me explain how I came to conceptualizing the graphic:

- 1) Sacred to me means a deep respect and regard for something that inspires a sense or feeling of awe.
- 2) Practice translates to the repeated performance of something. When you put ‘Sacred and Practice’ together it suggests an exceptional way of behaving that is consistent and occurs on a frequent and regular basis.
- 3) Ritual , which I define as a way of connecting with the unexplainable and is dependent on faith.
- 4) Teachings that resonate with our being and compel us to seek deeper and greater meaning in life.

When we integrate Sacred Practice, Rituals, and Teachings into our way of 5) Being (uality) then we have taken the necessary steps to becoming more Spiritual.

Stop, take a couple of deep breaths, and take a moment to reflect on your life.

The recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction is not just a physical, emotional, social, and psychological process of healing. It is a spiritual process. This understanding is clearly articulated in the 12 Steps of 12 step groups. Step 1 of these groups says: “I admitted I was powerless over alcohol and my life has become unmanageable.” You can replace alcohol with the word drugs, gambling, sex, food, and a number of other self destructive ways of moving in the world. Step 12 (the final step) says: “As a result of working these steps I had a spiritual awakening...” The inference here is that if a person works the Steps 1 through 12 in sequence they will have a spiritual awakening.

As an addiction professional I have worked with 1,000s of individuals over the years. During that time I have seen individuals repeatedly fail—despite their best efforts-- to arrest their disease for any extended period of time. I've looked in their eyes and I've seen their desperation in wanting to be clean and sober. Also, I've seen something else. I saw a void...a sense of emptiness in their eyes. This in my experience has typically been evidence that the person has failed to address the spiritual issues in their recovery process.

I am inclined to believe: “Many of our personal life problems are spiritual problems manifested as physical, emotional, or psychological problems.”

G. Raymond

It is my belief and experience that individuals who are struggling with a host of life issues have very little chance of long-term success if they don't address the spiritual issue in the recovery process.

This article is an excerpt from a more lengthy written examination by the author on this topic.

