

# Spirituality & Self-Esteem

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE**

Something miraculous is occurring on our planet. A major shift is taking place in the minds and hearts of people everywhere. A powerful vision is emerging that invites us to celebrate life from a new perspective of wholeness. This evolutionary leap in consciousness presents us with exciting opportunities to take a whole new look at our universe, and our own personal journey toward spiritual enlightenment.

The formerly undisputed Cartesian framework of two realities (mind and matter) is fading into history as we begin to recognize life in all that we once believed to be static and inanimate. We are learning that everything in our universe is alive and vibrating with what Albert Einstein described as "wavelike patterns of probabilities". Our eyes are opening to signs of creative intelligence all around us - the dynamic, living energy (Spirit) animating all things. It is becoming increasingly evident that we live in a spiritual universe, and signs of the sacred are all around us.

As our vision expands, we discover that our search for enlightenment is no longer limited to the cathedral, the temple, the ashram, or the mountain top. We are becoming conscious of spirituality in the workplace, the supermarket, the ball park, and the kitchen. Individuals who once understood God to be an anthropomorphic being residing in the distant heavens, are coming to recognize God as Spirit -- fully present in the here and now. Many of us who were taught that humanity is sinful by nature, are learning to accept our inherent divinity and practice genuine self-love. More and more, we are listening to the divine call within us to heal the separation between the sacred and the secular that has burdened us for centuries. This healing will occur as each of us accepts personal responsibility for reconciling, within our own consciousness, the long-standing split between spirit and matter, mind and body, heaven and earth.

### **FROM DUALITY TO UNITY**

For hundreds of years traditional western theism has operated under the mechanistic paradigm that divides the universe into two types of reality: spirit (the unseen, the ethereal) and matter (objects of substance, including all physical beings). In this mind-set, humanity has been depicted as flawed, separate from God, and in need of salvation.

In recent years, many have turned away from this pessimistic viewpoint toward the more liberal theological disciplines. These teachings, particularly those of New Thought and Metaphysical Christianity, offer positive and uplifting alternatives to our old mind-sets. They are based on the understanding that the Spirit of God is present throughout all creation, and that humankind is, by nature, good and worthy of living a joyful and abundant life. From this perspective, salvation is defined as our inherent ability to awaken to the spiritual power that is already within us.

This awakening process has stirred a hunger within our souls to find ways of accepting and expressing more of our personal power. Our search for greater self-esteem has led many of us to explore the fields of psychology and self-help. We have attended seminars, read books, and worked diligently to develop a greater sense of self-worth. In many instances we have made significant progress in learning to love and accept ourselves.

Still, for most of us who travel a spiritual path, some of the old religious and cultural messages continue to remain imbedded in our psyche. A part of us worries that developing self esteem is not really "spiritual". Another part fears that self love is nothing more than an ego-trip. These inner voices are part

of the old mind-set -- important and valuable reminders that we still have more work to do in consciousness before we are fully prepared to accept our true worth.

## **OUR PATH**

The purpose of Spirituality & Self-Esteem is to provide nurturing support for the aspect of our spiritual journey that involves embracing our sacred humanity. The direction we will travel is inward. Our pilgrimage will bring us face to face with many facets of our nature -- both dark and light. It may not all be pleasant, but like every hero's journey, it promises to yield rich and rewarding results.

As we travel in consciousness to the center of our being, we will learn how to recognize and honor our wholeness. Rather than being driven by the need to become "good", we will see that goodness is our nature and that we are worthy and acceptable -- just the way we are! As we emphasize in our previous book, *Nothing Is Too Good to Be True!* "Our goal is not to change ourselves, but to become ourselves." Becoming ourselves requires us to shed some old beliefs about our human and spiritual nature, and learn to view spirituality in a whole new way.

Traditionally, spirituality has been regarded as a dimension of reality above and beyond worldly pursuits and human interests. Self-esteem has been considered a psychological or self help concern -- not relevant to the needs of our immortal soul.

However, the new paradigm of wholeness recognizes spirituality as life, all of life, as seen from a sacred perspective; and genuine self esteem as a spiritual attainment -- the consciousness that empowers us to accept and express our sacred individuality.

Let us repeat these new paradigm definitions:

Spirituality is life, all of life, as seen from a sacred perspective.

Self-esteem is a spiritual attainment -- the consciousness that empowers us to accept and express our sacred individuality.

These concepts hold powerful implications for each of us and, ultimately, for the future of our planet.

## **WHAT DOES OUR FUTURE HOLD?**

There is much speculation about what will take place at the 21st century unfolds. For some, there is the threat of the Antichrist, a superbeing who will wreak havoc on the world. It is said that on the great Day of Judgment the earth will be destroyed and only a few will be saved.

However, there is a more positive, uplifting, and life-affirming view available to us -- one that empowers us to see the universe as a benevolent place, and God as the Omnipresent Principal of Unconditional Love that indwells us all. Through the recognition of this power within us, we can learn to shed the old beliefs and superstitions that have caused us to feel unworthy and powerless, and agree to take responsibility for ourselves and our future.

As we grow to genuinely love ourselves, and accept responsibility for our own thoughts and feelings, we will come to honor and respect the rights of others to have their own viewpoints -- even if they differ from our own. Eventually, we will discover that the only real enemies we have are the conflicts and turmoil that lurk within the shadow of our own consciousness. Once we grasp these powerful concepts, we can begin the process of acceptance and forgiveness -- of ourselves and of others. For it is only

through genuine self love and acceptance that we can actually become the peace we wish to see in our world.

The future of the earth is in our hands.

Teilhard de Chardin

## **THE JOURNEY**

The following pages are devoted to recognizing and fully accepting our own spirituality. We will explore the nature of paradigms and determine how our mind-sets have shaped our view of reality. We will look at Christianity from two very different vantage points, and learn to see some of the old theological perspectives in new and powerful ways. We will define and discuss the concepts of spirituality and self esteem, and delve deeply into the importance of self acceptance. We will engage in exercises to help us own our own shadow, and discover the gold that has been lying dormant inside of us as well.

The challenges we face in our spiritual lives are not based on who we are, but who we have believed ourselves to be. As we study ways to change our beliefs so that they reflect more of our true identity, we will come to realize that our spirituality lies in being fully human.

As you move through this process of spiritual transformation, you may experience mixed emotions. Letting go of the old and familiar can be very difficult, even when you understand the benefits of doing so. It's important that you acknowledge your feelings and write about them in a journal. This practice will help you sort out your ideas and get to the root of your core beliefs.

If you mourn the passing of the God of your childhood, or feel uncomfortable about honoring some of the qualities that make you human, accept your feelings as an important part of the process of self discovery. The discomfort will pass as the light of true self acceptance lifts you to a new awareness of the strength and beauty that is already within you.