

Reiki and Spirituality

For the past few years, I often find a song from my childhood going through my mind: "What's it all about, Alfie? Is it just for the moment we live? What's it all about . . .?" Perhaps it is coincidental to my getting older and no longer able to maintain the illusion of youth and that youthful ability to rarely imagine the end of one's life. The recurrence of this tune is strangely comforting, a whispering of my soul breaking through the barriers of my ego, which only seems to be able to comfort with assurances of security, illusions of immortality, and promises of safety through maintaining what is.

I have always had a philosophical inclination, a desire to see and understand how things go together, how they work, to try to understand meaning and purpose. Perhaps this is just part of being human—self-consciousness calls out a need to understand other and relationship to other. Does self-consciousness also demand a sense of meaning? Well, "Alfie" was a hit song; perhaps it touched a universal longing in the human family.

I am struck again by the simplicity of the practice of Reiki—something to do with our hands that requires little use of the mind and a set of five principles that require little of our hands and a lot from our mind. Still, the principles don't tell our mind what life is about, they just list a few things that we should and should not do. How we approach the principles, what emphasis we give them, the depth of our commitment to their practice has a lot to do with how we understand life. What we do with our hands with Reiki also doesn't tell us the meaning or purpose of life, but it does give us amazing experiences. Our mind then tries to create context for those in a desire to understand.

I often hear people share that Reiki is a spiritual path for them. I have said it myself at times. I am intrigued by the topic of Reiki and spirituality. Reiki is a healing practice, a healing art, and I see healing as one of the doorways to spirituality.

I heard a wonderful story recently from one of my Reiki friends. A student in a first degree class shared this tale about a friend of hers. The student described the friend as being not such a good person in her mind—he liked to party a lot, liked to drink and "have a good time." This man had an eight-year-old son who had a rare disease and was dying. The man used to go and spend the night in the hospital as often as he could. One night he was sitting in the room with his son when a golden stairway appeared, coming through the ceiling. Jesus came down the stairs into the room, went to the son's bed, and placed his hands on the boy for a few moments. Then he began to walk up the stairs again. He stopped for a moment, looked back at the man, and said, "You owe me." He walked up the stairs which then disappeared. From that moment on, the boy began to get better, and in a short time, he was completely well. The man wasn't a member of a church before this event, and he did not begin to go after. He became a very generous person, giving of himself to others.

I love this story. Healing flowering into generosity. An awakening of spirit? A spiritual awakening? One thing intrigues me: this man could have been changed in so many possible ways, but this is how he chose to respond. Why and how? I find these questions interesting.

I just picked up a new book written by Ram Das entitled *Still Here: Embracing Changing, Aging, and Dying*. In the preface he writes: "Healing is not the same as curing, after all; healing does not mean going back to the way things were before, but rather allowing what is now to move us closer to God." Having practiced Reiki for all these years and constantly revisiting the question "What is healing," I am touched by his personal insight.

I see that all of us who practice Reiki ask ourselves this question: What is healing? And each of us has an answer, or at least a working definition. I believe that our working definition resides in the context of what we think, feel, and believe life is about. We ask and answer the question with the consciousness we bring to the moment, our mind, our heart, and our soul. And we find others that share and support our beliefs and feel at home.

One of the amazing things I love about the Reiki community is that we share an experience of healing, a hunger for healing, and a commitment to healing. We share a common doorway to the spiritual, and yet how we hold and understand our experience can be so different. I think we do not talk about our deepest understandings and beliefs very much. I think we assume that because we share a doorway, we think we see what is beyond the doorway in the same way. I think we may answer the question "What's it all about?" differently. We have our own way of seeing life and meaning and purpose, and it often changes over the course of our lives. I like to think that the differences are not so important, that our shared experience is more than enough of a bond. I like to think that we can take what is now and allow it to move us closer to God, whatever that means to each of us. Ah, and then I would like to think that I could act like I like to think.

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