

For this month's Pastoral Message, I would like to present a question which, over the years, hundreds of people have asked us. I include the question, exactly as it was asked by one of our website's visitors along with my response to his e-mail:

Question:

Hello. I came across your wonderful website while trying to find an answer to my question about why souls choose to incarnate. I was hoping you might be able to shed some light on this issue for me as I am finding it to be quite a sticking point when considering the purpose of life on this planet.

I understand that the primary reason for being here is that so the soul can grow and evolve. What I don't understand is why a soul would need to do that in the first place. If a soul is a part of god, why then would god allow it to feel separated from source and have to go through the terrible life experiences that we are all destined to have. What is there to gain from all this? There's got to be an end-game here, something god is striving for and something our souls have agreed is very important.

I find it particularly frustrating when life gets hard because I feel like I am the one that has to suffer, and yet I am also the one who is in the dark as to why. Not even suicide would let me escape the game of growth through suffering. I am thus far, an unwilling participant ... In my searches I have not yet found an answer to this question. Hoping you might have something for me?

Lots of love to you,

Response:

These are all excellent questions which so many people ask and upon which even more people ponder. I will try to keep this clear and to the point, so here goes:

It all begins with what is SYMBOLICALLY portrayed in the Bible's Garden of Eden. The first thing to consider is that there is a difference between the SPIRIT and the SOUL. We all, as spirit, are created in God's Image, as SPIRIT (not as male, female, Christian, Jew, Buddhist, white, black, purple, orange; I think you get it). As spirit, we are, indeed, perfect and fully ONE with God, with each other, and with the whole of God's Creation; yet, we are also one (individual spirits; that is, we never lose our individuality, even though that "spirit individuality" is nothing we can comprehend with our physical brains). In the story of the Garden of Eden, this is represented by Adam and Eve, prior to their eating the apple. We are not God, but we are fragments of God's Divinity. We ALL have within us the essence of God's Divinity and God's Perfection.

One would think we would be perfectly contented living in peaceful bliss, one with God, with each other, and with Creation, and on the surface this all looks terrific. But, it is

also rather stagnant. In this blissful Nirvana, there is no room for experience, nor any type of growth or evolution. I can only speak for myself here, but I would find that rather boring, with little to motivate me. Apparently, at one point, we all felt this sense of boredom. We wanted more than to be “stuck” in this never changing, never evolving state of bliss. God MUST have known this would be the case, or he would not have put the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden to begin with. God could very well have NOT placed that tree in the Garden if He did not want us to partake of its fruit. But, God knew that His creations (you, me, and all spirits) would not find fulfillment without the experience of experiencing.

So, Adam and Eve (representing us) ate of the Tree of Knowledge. They (we) wanted to experience. We wanted to experience and understand the difference between Good and Evil. We wanted to step out of the Garden of Eden and experience the rest of Creation. In other words, we wanted to right to be “free” and to make choices; not puppets dangling from the Divine string of having no choices. God, in His love for us, granted us this gift: the gift of choice. But, we could experience choice ONLY if we stepped out of the Garden of Eden and faced the other side of Creation. So, we ate of the fruit and God lovingly escorted us out of the Garden.

If you recall, when God sought Adam and Eve (after they ate of the fruit), they hid from Him. They had both clothed themselves to “hide themselves from God.” Again, this is symbolic in that, for us to experience the fullness of Creation, we needed to cloth ourselves (not in fig leaves, as portrayed in Genesis), but in flesh (and flesh comes in a wide variety of forms and dimensional vibrations). When spirit enrobes itself in some form of flesh, the SOUL is created. So, the soul is a fragment of the spirit, just as the spirit is a fragment of God. The soul is not the spirit, but intimately linked to the spirit, but lessened to some degree, because it is now clothed in some form of flesh. Once we clothed ourselves in flesh, we created a form of separation or distancing from God.

So, as SOUL, we have stepped out of the Garden of Eden and we are left (truly) on our own. And here is what we must all remember: In giving us the most wonderful gift of choice, God made one stipulation: We are all, individually and collectively, responsible for the choices we make. The gift is CHOICE; the rule is PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY for the choices we make. It does not mean that God has abandoned us; it simply means that God has given us the whole of Creation, in and through which we, as souls, can experience life in its fullness. In giving us choice, God also allowed us to make wrong choices; choices which are in opposition to God and to the spirit. Thus, we have the origins of Good and Evil. If God created everything, He must have also created the option of Evil. In the Garden of Eden, there was no option; no choice. Outside the Garden, there is the option; there is choice.

Keeping all this in mind, we must never feel that we are separated from God. No matter where we are or what we do, we are always connected to God and, likewise, to our spirit. God always seeks to guide us and inspire us. God does not want us to suffer pain and hardships, any more than God wants us to choose evil over good. But (and this is a

cosmic “but”), we asked to be given the right to experience Creation, in its fullness, and God granted us this right. But, we are bound by the Great Law of Cause and Effect (Karma); in other words, personal responsibility. When people think of Karma, most consider it to be a law of punishment: good karma and bad karma. Karma is simply a law of CONSEQUENCE. There is no GOOD karma, nor BAD karma; there is only KARMA. God’s Law demands that we be responsible for the choices we make; both good and not-so-good.

So, here we are, amid Creation, sharing life with God-only-knows how many other souls, for what purpose? To get us back to our roots. And what are our roots? GOD and SPIRIT. As odd as this may seem, we are all journeying back to where we once asked to leave: The Garden of Eden; to be back with God; to be, once again, fully one with God, one with each other, and one with Creation. What will we do when we get back to that blissful state? I have no idea. But, this I do know: we shall all have become wiser, more compassionate, and more embracing of God’s Love and Goodness. Why? Because it was not handed to us on a silver platter (as it once was in the Garden); we EARNED the knowledge; we EXPERIENCED the knowledge; we STRUGGLED and SUFFERED for the knowledge; and we ALL SHARED in that experience, even if we did so individually. In God’s Great Kingdom of Creation, there is both INDIVIDUALITY and ONENESS.

Are we alone in this journey? Never. Sometimes, when times get bad for us and we seem to have strayed a bit too far from the Gates of Eden, God sends us prophets, men and women of Light, Messiahs, to help show us the way and to guide us back onto the proper pathway. Jesus was one of many such Messiahs.

Why do we suffer? I wish I could answer this question with surety. But, it seems that struggle is what gets us moving and develops inner strength and compassion for the struggles of others. It appears this is the vehicle we have chosen to experience the journey; that is, until we realize that we do not need to struggle to grow and evolve.

You mentioned suicide, and you are 100% correct. The taking of one’s physical life does not end the journey, nor does it accomplish anything positive. In fact, it adds yet another issue for which the soul must account.

CHOICE and RESPONSIBILITY; this is what the journey of the soul is all about. God loves us so much that he “set us free” and allowed us to journey through Creation. Like any good and loving parent, God saw the signs when we asked to eat from the Tree of Knowledge AND God loved us enough to break the “apron strings”, so to speak, and let us go. Isn’t this what any caring parent does at a certain point in his or her child’s life? Even the birds know when it is time to push the fledglings out of the nest, so they may spread their wings and explore the world outside of the comfort and security of the nest.

You asked, “I understand that the primary reason for being here is that so the soul can grow and evolve. What I don’t understand is why a soul would need to do that in the

first place.” To answer this question: because we asked to do so, and God loved us enough to grant us this request.

You asked, “What is there to gain from all this?” To get us to experience the whole of Creation and to EARN the privilege of entering back into the Garden of Eden.

You mention, “I find it particularly frustrating when life gets hard because I feel like I am the one that has to suffer . . .” No one must suffer. We choose to suffer. That’s a hard pill for most of us, myself included, to swallow, but it is a pill best swallowed and allowed to do its magic.

I hope this has helped answer some of your questions and addressed some of your frustrations. I do not like to push any of our material, but you might wish to consider purchasing our study guide on “The Journey of the Soul.’ It answers and explains much. You can find information in our Bookstore.

I wish you much peace and love,
Rev. Simeon
www.fst.org

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