

SPIRITUAL GRIT

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT

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There is a connection between spirituality and grit.

When I first came to Sunrise Ranch in 1975 I had just graduated from the university. The Ranch had been operating since 1945 at that point. I came for a spiritually based 3-month Servers Training School.

When I arrived I met people in the Sunrise Ranch community with grit. They had made remarkable use of the resources available to them to build the Ranch. They had used the beams for construction from the canal that the U.S. government had built in 1948, running through the property. I believe some of that wood is still down at our farmhouse, reused for the third time. They made their own cement blocks.

They built a remarkable community with what they had. They had skills at many levels, and whatever skills a person had were made use of. There was a fellow, Roy Beaver; he could curse like a sailor, and he could weld, and seemed to be able to make anything that was needed at the Ranch. There was Betty Protzman. She had been here with her husband, Frank. Mabel Hagedorn

was an incredible presence in the kitchen. Just speaking her name, I can feel her spirit.

Some of those folks from that era are still at Sunrise Ranch: Nick Gordon, LeAnna Moore, Bob and Shareen Ewing, Diana de Winton, Dorian Black, Dawn Blechman, Annie Laflam and Mary Schmeer. Invoking their names makes me proud of the legacy of the Ranch.

A person who's got grit isn't just up there at ten thousand feet, observing the world from a great height. A person who has grit isn't waiting for somebody else to do it. A person who has grit is bringing something practical to the daily things for which they have responsibility. And a person who has grit is taking responsibility.

The kind of grit I'm thinking of is the grit of practical, everyday spirituality. It's the grit of employing our native intelligence for a high purpose. It's the grit of becoming intelligent about things because you care about them and you commit your mind to the doing of them. This is the intelligence that comes with creatorship, with knowing that you are responsible because you're the author of your

experience and you're the author of what is being created in your world.

Grit is not fussing with other people about who-said-what-to-whom, or who's in charge, or any of those petty little things that tend to come between people. Grit between people is getting on with it. It's doing what's yours to do, and then trusting that others will do what is theirs to do. And then, if they don't, it's taking responsibility anyway. A person who has grit lives by the imperative "Get 'er done!"

A person who has grit recognizes the people around them who have the same. A person with grit is someone you can count on. They are a person with whom you can have a reasonable conversation about practical things.

A person with grit is someone with whom you can get to the bottom of things. Do you ever have conversations with people where you can't quite figure out what's going on and never really get to the bottom of what's really happening or what you should do? That's not a person with grit. A person who has grit can speak to you practically and realistically about things and get to the bottom of them.

I'm into practical spirituality—how about you? I'm into bringing the highest expression that you and I are capable of as human beings into the whole range of things that we're about as human beings. That is contrasted with some approaches that are taken, religiously or so-called spiritually. Sometimes religion can go to superstition. And it's amazing how you can take something that is a practical spirituality for someone else and turn it into your superstition. When that happens, a person loses the sense of their own authorship of their lives. Here's an example.

A man who taught practical spirituality and lived

it in a truly gritty way was the one we know of as Jesus Christ. Talk about a man with grit! He lived in a country that was ruled by the Roman Empire, and that was governed by a local authority that was accommodating the Roman Empire and had gotten stuck in its ways. He let none of that deter him. He had the grit to teach what he knew anyway. That's a man with grit.

He was considered a threat by the local authorities and by the empire itself, to the point that he couldn't teach in public. He had to go into hiding and still meet with people more or less in secret towards the end of his life. And he did it anyway. That's a man with grit.

He faced a horrible form of execution, and he faced it when it seemed the only choice was to deny the leadership that he had to bring and deny the teaching that he had to bring, and deny a very short-sighted acknowledgment of who he was. He was seen to be king of the Jews, and he was applauded as that, even though he was so much more than that. But nonetheless, he was recognized as a leader, and rather than deny his leadership and disappoint and disillusion the people who had put their faith in him, he faced the consequences of leading. That led to something horrible, and he faced that too. That's a man with grit.

Now for the superstitious part: *It was all preordained by God that all this should happen. God wanted all that to happen, and Jesus was just playing out the string because he was somehow paying the price for humanity.* Even in that superstition, there is some truth. He did pay the cost of being in a world where humanity had developed a culture that fell far short of a practical spirituality. It was a culture in which humanity had denied its own birthright to live in freedom and nobility, and with conscious personal sovereignty. It was a world that was, in many ways, like the world in

which you and I live today.

He faced all that and did something about it. But notice what happens when you believe that he was just playing out the string, living a preordained, predestined life, required by a vengeful God; and Jesus did it for us, and there it is, all tied up with a bow—here you go; he did it for you. That's superstition.

What if a person understood the grit that he displayed, facing, in essence, exactly the same circumstances that you and I are in, exercising exactly the same kind of grit that we have the opportunity to exercise in our life, day by day? It *isn't* all tied up with a bow for you or me. It isn't all predestined. It isn't just happening *to* you. You are proactively creating your life and the world around you, just like he did. It *didn't* all get done two thousand years ago, or today, by somebody else. Just like for him, it's up to you and me to demonstrate the grit of true living, to face the circumstances that we're in and meet them in victory and overcome. Ultimately he did overcome; he had a victory in his circumstance and he changed the world. His message of his love, his truth, his knowing, reverberates, though misinterpreted, in the world even today. He won. That same opportunity is present for every human being today.

When we approach our spirituality with superstition, we move out of our own practical spirituality. We don't see that doing the laundry or pulling the weeds or balancing the figures—all the little things that people around the world do every day—add up to a big thing when we show up in them and have the grit to exercise our own authorship, our own creativity, our own role as a creator in our world.

We look around at the world which is, in so many ways, out of control. And there's such a

tendency to throw up our hands and say, "Oh, what can we do?" We might look for a so-called spiritual solution, which can be escapism. Maybe the spiritual solution is grit. We can't exercise that grit for everybody else, but we can exercise it for ourselves. We can't do it all at once for the *whole* world, but we can do it for *our* world, and then we can find other people who are up for doing it with us. Then we can have that grit together.

Think of a person with both grit and spiritual awareness—someone who is investing the highest potential of love and the highest potential of truth in the practical affairs of their everyday life. Do you think that such a person is creating something beautiful around them? Does such a person have a creative impact on the larger world? And how else would we have an impact?

I enjoy a really insightful book on spirituality as much as the next person, and I enjoy going to a good workshop or hearing a good talk on spirituality. But somewhere in the back of my mind, I'm asking, *Is what this person is presenting backed up with grit? Is it really happening in their life, and then with the people who are with them? Is this backed up by an actual human experience, or is it somebody's good idea?* I like good ideas; some of them might be useful. But my honor and respect go to people with grit, people who are living a practical spirituality, who are grounding their love in the way they're living their life.

The prayers and meditation of a spiritual life are wonderful. They become truly meaningful in the world when those prayers and meditations become part of a practical spirituality, when a person is, in essence, living their prayer. Cutting the grass is my prayer. My creation of a website is my prayer. It is my meditation. It's me showing up spiritually, bringing the power of the spiritual

into the world.

Maybe, like you, I've known people like that. Their words, however softly spoken, are like thunder. They may or may not be the greatest orators in the world, but their words are like thunder. Their thoughts are like lightning. Their love is like a river because it's real. It's lived. You can feel the substance of their spirit where they live and where they work.

I say that that is what this world needs: people with that kind of grit, that kind of practical spirituality. People who realize that whatever true spiritual experience has been known by anyone at any time is available in essence to us now, experienced uniquely by us as we assume our own responsibility as the author of our experience and the creator of our world.

Spirituality isn't something that just magically happens to a person. There's a part of the process in which the individual receives spiritually, but they have to be open to receive it. Then what they receive doesn't stay with them very long and doesn't end up having much substance in life if they don't live it. You cannot keep what you have received spiritually if you do not live it—if you do not have grit—because it can't be present in your own life and in your own world if you don't put it there.

The way you put it there is by expressing it, by acting on it, by speaking words that carry the truth of it in everyday living—not just lofty spiritual words but words that carry the vibration of love to other people. That's practical spirituality. Words that carry love and wisdom come to us when we take responsibility as the author of our experience and the creator of our world. We are then gifted with the intelligence of knowing what to do or say next. The wisdom and the love that come to us are amazing when we are

on a path of service and living our practical spirituality. There is the magic—we know what to do. And if we don't get it right the first time, we learn, and there's a higher knowing that comes to us.

It's said that the Creator is omniscient and omnipotent, all-knowing and all-powerful. When we're the creator in our life, we don't know everything about everything, but we end up knowing all that we need to know to take responsibility for what's right in front of us. We have the power to do what is ours to do. When we keep moving in that path, more and more wisdom comes to us and through us, and we have more and more of the vibration of love to give to other people. That love transforms us and it transforms our world.

This is about a human life, wherever a person may be. We are all called to be people with grit, not just slogging it out in a victim state—"poor me, struggling to get by." True grit isn't being a victim. True grit is being a creator and calling upon all the inner resource that you and I have as creators.

That's the story of what Jesus did. By age thirty it was pouring out of him. He apparently had been practicing. *He must have gone off to India and learned from a guru there.* I don't know where he went in those years from 12 to 30, but apparently, he was practicing. He had opened up a flood through his own expression. His words rang like thunder and are still ringing today. The enlightened ideas he brought to the world are still lighting up the world. And the profound nature of the Creator was revealed by him. Your nature, my nature, as creators were revealed by him. Imagine that: At the very heart of the Creator that you and I are, and the Creator of all things, is love. Imagine that.

It takes grit to express that love. It took grit for him in the face of what came back in his life. Most of us don't get away with expressing the highest love in our life without facing some kind of backlash, and perhaps a lot of it. It takes grit to face that and love anyway—to love unconditionally. *This is who I am, this is what I do, this is what I give in my life. Whatever comes back, this is who I am.* That's a person of grit, at all levels of the human experience.

With that attitude, there's a creative force unleashed in our own immediate world, and then a vibration brought into the larger world. Our own immediate world is ringing so loud with the vibration we are bringing into it that it rings like a bell into the larger world.

There is a woman at Sunrise Ranch, LeAnna Moore, who ran our laundry into her 80s. Going

to that laundry was like going to church. That's what I'm talking about. If you never experienced that, you missed something. You felt her worship in everyday life walking in that door. That laundry was there for anybody who walked in the door. It was there for all of Sunrise Ranch. It was there for any laundry around the world that wanted to tune into that vibration. LeAnna's laundry was ringing like a bell, loud enough for the whole world to hear.

That's the result of grit. I'm proud of the heritage of grit at Sunrise Ranch where I live. I respect the grit of people of integrity, wherever I meet them around the world. I'm called to that same experience. How about you?

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