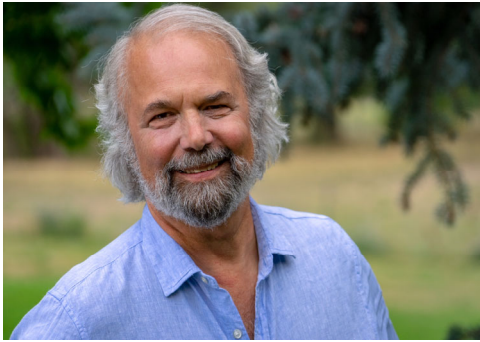


SPIRITUAL INTIMACY AND KNOWLEDGE

PULSE OF SPIRIT
NOVEMBER 20, 2024



DAVID KARCHERE is a speaker and workshop leader who assists people to renew their Primal Spirituality—an experience that virtually all human beings know at birth, and that ideally grows as they mature.

Do you ever find yourself looking around at your world, seeing things near and far, and wondering *How did things get this way?* We could investigate the near-term cause of whatever it is we are observing. We could go back through history and attempt to identify the root cause of whatever it is. But still, how successful would we be at identifying the cause of the ignorance we witness around us?

Stories from cultures around the world attempt to portray what goes wrong for us as human beings and how it begins. The ancient Greeks told the story of Pandora and her curiosity, and how she opened a box that released all the ills of the world. For Hindus, the Mahabharata tells of humankind's fall from a golden age.

The best-known story of the origin of human calamity is the story of Adam and Eve. St. Augustine was the first person to name their failing as humanity's *original sin* in about 418 A.D.

There are other biblical stories of the fall from grace. *Caan and Abel* is the story of the first murder, born of envy. The story of *The Tower of Babel* tells of the attempt of the human ego to make a name for itself, leading to misunderstanding between people. And the story of Noah and the flood recounts how evil imagination leads to human disaster.

What would you say is the root cause of suffering for us as human beings? This is my leading candidate: *An issue of spiritual intimacy.*

This is the challenge we have as humankind in connecting spiritually. It's plain enough to see, near and far. There is an estrangement from the source of love, wisdom, and power within us. There is a breakdown of our ability to know intimacy with the overarching Divine Presence that is there for us all.

With a breakdown of intimacy comes something else. If a person is separate from something, they

tend to lose an awareness of that person or thing from which they have separated. If a married couple divorces, they can lose touch and no longer know each other as they did before. If a person divorces themselves from the cosmic wisdom that's within them, they don't know it. They are ignoring it, and ignorance sets in.

Here is a poem from Jane Upchurch.

Suffering

*Some wonder
how there can be a God of love
when there is so much suffering.*

*For me, seeing God as responsible
for everything
is a historic view of God
blamed for bad weather,
earthquakes, and pandemics.*

*If God is a God of love
then that love
permeates all things with freedom.*

*Freedom for our planet
to follow its laws and forces.
Freedom for us
even to hurt ourselves and others.*

*It does not weaken God's love
which is still present
offering healing and hope.*

Jane doesn't name it this way, but her poem addresses the ancient affliction that comes from the failure of spiritual intimacy—superstition. When a person divorces themselves from the source of love and power within them, and within all people and all things, they don't understand it. They are not aligned with it. So they feel at the mercy of it—victimized. And

they begin to hold superstitious beliefs about things they don't really know.

I recently submitted a 500-word abstract of a presentation I am proposing to give online to the Madras Institute of Development Studies. They are holding a seminar on *Cultivating Transformative Faith and a New Ecology of Hope*. The name of my presentation is *Teaching Primal Spirituality*.

Whether or not my proposal is accepted, it was interesting to think deeply about the founding teachers of the world's great faiths. Each one of them lived and taught the end of superstition and the introduction of the highest knowledge available to a human being. They each addressed the estrangement that humanity has from the source of our Being. All too often, those who came after them reintroduced into their religion the same distant, superstitious relationship with Source that the founding spiritual teachers were attempting to heal.

Here is how I put it in the abstract:

At the beginning of each of the world's great religions and spiritual paths was the enlightened vision of the founder. That vision was always aimed at leading human beings out of ignorance, fear, and superstition and into spiritual knowledge and peace. Their message and teachings had profound implications for the cultures in which they lived. Abraham initiated a shift away from worship rooted in fear and sacrifice to an angry God. Through his recitation of what became the Quran, Mohammed transformed the superstitious culture of Arabia.

The origin stories of the world's great religions each portray an attempt to guide people beyond a blind faith in something they don't

know toward a knowledge of the reality in which they live. The Buddha taught people to wake up and understand—to be enlightened. Jesus promised his followers, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” The founder of the Baha’i Faith, Baha’u’llah, encouraged people to let go of superstition and dogma. And in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna calls for purification by the flame of knowledge.

Religion’s role is to carry forward the work of its founding teachers—to dispel ignorance, fear, and superstition, and to promote spiritual knowledge. The reality is that religion in the postmodern world is influenced by the same cultural forces that motivated its original leaders to bring their message of light in the first place. The same forces of ignorance, fear, and superstition can encroach upon the legacy of the original teachers, nullifying the power of their teachings.

The stories of the spiritual path that these luminaries walked are dramatic and moving. Abraham ended the superstition rampant in his day when, on the verge of sacrificing his son to God, he heard the voice of an angel telling him to stop. Mohammed speaks of being hugged and squeezed by the Archangel Gabriel and commanded to *Recite!* The words he was told to recite became the Quran. The Buddha became enlightened under the bodhi tree.

These words from Jesus are a prayer for ultimate spiritual intimacy:

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: . . .

John 17:21

There are many facets to what is written in the Bible. It includes battles, family feuds, religious instruction, and more. One of the things that makes it such a profound book is that it contains a portrayal of spiritual intimacy, such as in the words above. The Psalms are full of intimate conversation with Divine Presence. So is the *Song of Solomon*:

He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Song of Solomon 2:4-10

Spiritual intimacy requires an open emotional realm. It is no wonder that the word *heart* appears in the Bible 1,155 times—five times more frequently than the word *mind*.

Even though the Bible is the most read book of all time, in America today the number of people 3

reading the Bible is declining. Its portrayal and teaching of spiritual intimacy are often shrouded within religiosity and a perspective on its teaching that reverts right back to the superstition that its original teachers were attempting to address.

Don't think you can know God. It would be haughty and arrogant to think you could be intimate with the Divine. But you can obey. You can believe. You can have faith. But you can't know.

There is nothing wrong with obedience, belief, or faith. But those experiences are no substitute for spiritual intimacy, and what we have the opportunity to know because of it.

The quantity of human knowledge is growing exponentially. Currently, we are filling data banks with information which is growing at a rate of 19% per year. There are many dimensions to the knowledge we possess—scientific, historical, psychological, technological, and much more. But if you picture human knowledge as a pyramid, it has no capstone. So while the quantity of knowledge is growing prolifically, the most essential quality of knowledge is what is at issue.

Sometimes people refer to the great existential questions: *Who am I? Why are we here? Is God real?* And sometimes those questions are asked as if they are imponderables, as if it is impossible to know the answers to them.

The answers to the most profound existential questions form the pinnacle of knowledge. They are the capstone of knowledge for humankind. Without that capstone, all the rest of human knowledge goes on and on, without wisdom or insight. It becomes fragmented information about a world that appears to be fragmented.

And how are those existential questions answered? No one can give us those answers, even though they might show us where to look for them. The answers come to us through our own spiritual intimacy.

The great existential questions are not only of the mind. They are questions of the heart. *Is love real? Is there love in this world for me? Do I have a purpose in life? How do I find happiness?* These questions are only answered with spiritual intimacy.

Intimacy with Divine Presence creates relationship. We don't enter that kind of relationship by being a member of the *of course* club. *Of course I believe in God. Of course we are all part of the Divine.* This relationship becomes real because we call out for spiritual intimacy. We open ourselves to Divine Presence. We extend ourselves to it.

Here is a story of Abraham's welcoming of Divine Presence:

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

Genesis 18:1-4

These words express my welcome of Divine Presence:

*I want you. I need you. I am here for you.
I'm calling you into this space. And you are
welcome here in me, in this home, in my
thoughts, in my heart, in my energy field.
Your spirit is welcome here. Come visit me.*

Here I am. Don't mistake me. Don't miss me.

*I am here. I am reaching out to you. The
spirit in me is here for you. I'm asking you to
be in my life, to be with me, to create with*

*me, to do something majestic, powerful, and
world-changing.*

How do you reach out to Divine Presence? How
do you draw near to it? And how do you invite it
into your house, your home, your being?

I'd love to know.

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November 17, 2024*



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