

Where Will You Go Next?

When we have done all the work we were sent to Earth to do, we are allowed to shed our body, which imprisons our soul like a cocoon encloses the future butterfly.

—Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D.

Spirituality in Action

Food for your quest

Even the smallest moments in life can be food for your spiritual quest, nourishment for your personal growth, and a chance to observe and contemplate life. For example, if you're waiting to renew your license at the Department of Motor Vehicles, and the long line is moving very slowly, you can use that time to notice the variety of people around you, or to witness how you feel when you're getting impatient or cranky. See whether you can change an irritation into a happy moment. Smile at someone, get to know your neighbor in line, or sit or stand peacefully, observing your breath and savoring your own experience of spirit in the midst of this busy public place.

Have you lived before? Where will you go next? Will you still exist when your body dies? If so, will you remember then who you are now? Is there anything you can do now to prepare for your inevitable time of departure?

Most religious theories suggest that after the physical death of your body, your soul continues on in a purer form of some kind. Some traditions teach that you will either go to heaven or to hell after you die, depending on how you've acted or whether you've declared a specific kind of commitment to the prophet or teachings of that religion.

Spiritual Wisdom

Pope John Paul II beautifully described heaven as “neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but that fullness of communion with God, which is the goal of human life.”

The Pope then went on to describe hell as, “the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God, the source of all life and joy.”

Many traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Kabbalah, and Greek Orthodox Gnosticism, say that after death, your soul — the background of who you really are beneath the appearances of who you seem to be — goes through various stages and levels of other worldly planes before returning back to earth and taking birth once again in a human form, or perhaps even into other nonhuman realms.

Group lessons

One example of a group lesson for today's cultures, countries, and the whole of humanity is to be living on a planet upon which so many fellow human beings are starving and suffering. With all the wealth circulating in this world, there is no logical excuse for having so many people starving to death. According to World Bank statistics, nearly half of the world's population lives in poverty, earning less than two dollars a day. And according to a United Nations report, on this very same planet, 2 percent of all adults own half of the world's household wealth — with many storing away much more money than they could ever possibly use, even in many lifetimes. The lessons and tests inherent in this situation are obvious once you look at them with a bit of objectivity.

Imagine hearing that a planet has been discovered where a small percentage of the inhabitants had an abundance of tangible properties and massive amounts of wealth that they left unused in electronic bank storehouses, while their planetmates — brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, daughters and sons around their world — were dying of starvation, drought, and easily curable illnesses. What would you think of such a planet?