



Unity Church of Christianity
Your Soul Experience
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Howard Caesar

My title today is “Your Soul Experience,” which doesn’t mean your singular experience; I’m talking about your soul. You’re going through this experience called life, and it’s important to think in terms of the soul that you are.

Years ago, I was visiting Hawaii for the first time. I was there with my wife, Diane. We had rented a car and were driving along the beach to see some of the sights of Oahu. It was a chilly, windy day. We saw a beach, and people were body surfing, which I had always heard of. Diane wasn’t up for going in the water but told me, “Go ahead. Put on your suit and try it out.” So I did. I went out there and watched the people body surfing. I swam with it. The waves took me into shore. I saw a big wave coming and started swimming. I thought that my head would stay above water like everyone else, but my experience was very different. That wave grabbed me and pounded me into the ocean floor and tossed me around. I was discombobulated and scrambled. It threw me on the beach when it was done, and I had sand everywhere. What I learned from that experience was not to do that again. I have body surfed again but not in such strong waves and not again that day.

I’m not going to do something as foolish as that again unless I have more understanding of what I’m doing. That explains our soul experience, as we go through life on this earth. You get to experience lots of things. Sometimes you feel like you’ve been hit by a wave—pounded into the

ground mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. We're not always ready to handle the experiences effectively. We should question what the takeaway is from each experience we have in life. That's an important question to ask as the soul you are, to put purpose and meaning into your life. All experiences that come to you are there for takeaway—to learn something.

We've been hit by waves of thought, ideas, concepts, and religion. As a soul, our life should be about living in the question. If you are a soul that is progressing and is conscious about doing that, then you will continually be living in the question of where you are and what's happening to you.

Life is not just about surviving; it's about developing your soul. That's the most important aspect of life. I recently became a grandfather for the second time. We have a 2½-year-old grandson and now have a precious granddaughter. When we talk about them, we say, "What a precious soul." That's because she is a soul in a little body. The baby will eventually learn to walk, talk, ride a bike, get an education, mature, and become an adult. It's a process of development that happens physically. There's a progression as well as a soul.

Children have lots of questions growing up, and that's part of it. We should never stop questioning. At a certain age, a child is just questions. I read an article about a man who was babysitting his eight-year-old granddaughter. The whole afternoon, he received a barrage of questions. She would ask him, "Why do lizards do pushups? Why are some clouds darker than others? Why do you have less hair than Grandma?" He didn't have factual answers for some, so he made up answers.

Our relationship to our faith and God is somewhat similar. As we mature spiritually, we want to understand more about our God, our creator, our relationship, and what life is about. We yearn for answers to the mysteries because there's no way we can have all of the answers. You have to settle with that and know that it's an evolving process. You stay in the question. We particularly yearn for the answers regarding the challenges we go through in life and see others going through.

I read about a man who had a tragic experience in his home when he was a boy of 16. This story dates back to the early 1900s. His beloved 11-year-old brother fell out of a tree in their front yard. He broke a number of bones and was injured severely. It became complicated with blood poisoning, and his brother died in a matter of a week. He was left with a feeling of agonizing uncertainty concerning God. He was asking, "Why?" At the funeral, the message was given that one cannot challenge the wisdom of God for calling this soul home. The brother said that if God was all-merciful and just and had a hand in his brother's death, there was no way he could continue to worship Him.

The whole experience caused the man to have a profound interest in the mysteries of life and death. As tragic as the experience was, he was on his quest for the answers—and he found some.

He became more convinced that the only way to solve the mysteries of life is through an exploration of human consciousness. He said the answer was not to be found outside of man, but within a stream of consciousness. He discovered that life has been designed by such an infinite wisdom that it contains the answer to everything within itself. He used the example of the question, “When I die, and will I live again?” A person who sincerely wants to know the answer to that must find the answer within themselves, as a personal experience. He meant that through your evolvment as a soul, as you step into deeper stream of consciousness, you have experiences whereby you know beyond the shadow of a doubt that there is life beyond. You have no fear; it’s only love. But that has to be experienced within you as a soul, and you begin to push past the fears that most humans have around this matter.

You are an eternal soul—we all are. No one can live for you, and no one can die for you. We have to face both life and death for ourselves. We’ve been given the gift of life to understand that it’s a continuum, and death is really an illusion. You have to step into these streams of consciousness to get that—beyond doubt and fear.

If we were planning a trip, we’d prepare for it. Change is inherent in all of life, so the trip that we’re on in this life has changes inherent in it. In the midst of changes, it’s important that we enlarge our God-concept and not remain static. Just as a child comes into the world with many questions, we too have to grow and evolve to not remain in a static position. One mistake of religion is its tendency to worship the form over the spirit of the doctrine. Worshipping the form keeps it unchanged.

I came across the question, “What would have happened if Christ had not been crucified?” What would Christianity look like today? How would it be different? Where would the emphasis lie if Jesus had been able to live out His life and die of old age? What if so much emphasis were not able to be placed on Jesus dying for our sins? What would the emphasis be then? I think we can all agree that God is universal, which is what Jesus taught. God has a universal presence where He could not and would not reveal Himself in just one time in history or to one select group of people. God reveals Himself continually to all creatures, in all places, at all times, and at whatever level of understanding that soul is ready to receive. That should be a progression.

To find God and gain awareness that a part of God dwells within your own consciousness is an important stride to make. Beyond creed and doubts and religious concepts, there is a God that you and I seek and want to experience—not just know about. A key is to establish a sense of readiness. Ask yourself what you might or might not be doing to develop your soul. How ready are you to throw yourself into that dynamic?

The belief that man possesses a soul dates back thousands of years before Christ. The idea of a soul didn’t happen with Jesus; it was taught long before. Earliest humans had varying concepts of something in man that survived the body and continued on. Egyptians mummified bodies.

Pythagoras (the Greek philosopher), Buddha, and Confucius all taught concepts of a soul that continues on.

J.B. Rhine, who was the director of parapsychology at Duke University, believed that the existence of a soul had already been scientifically proven, many years back—that man is something more than a physical being and possesses a system that can function beyond the physical form. Man has been given free will and free choice. That freedom will impose upon man the individual responsibility of developing his own soul.

One of Christ's real purposes on earth was to place more emphasis on life, not on the fact that He died. He stressed the importance of how we are supposed to live our lives and progress as a soul. When you consider that the soul is the part of you that survives physical transition—or death—you can better appreciate the significance of some of the things He said. One of the things was, "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" In other words, you need to have things in proper order and balance. Your focus in life cannot be about achieving externally, because it's about achieving internally that's important. He was trying to make that clear. He also said, "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul." No one is able to kill the soul. There may be wars going on where bodies are killed, but you'll never kill the souls of those individuals, because life continues on. He was very clear about that.

He was also clear about the importance of developing soul qualities, which should be man's primary objective in life. Jesus also said, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I'm preparing a place where you may be with me." Was He implying that in the next existence there are many states, not just one? There are different levels. Whatever you've done in your soul, you graduate to the next level. You don't just get your wings and sit in the clouds. You continue to progress until you've fulfilled the idea of what you're held to be in the mind of God. Then you continue to go back into service, just as angels are around us, helping us all of the time.

There were two thieves on the cross with Christ. He said to one of them, "Today you shall be with me in paradise," which is an indication of Jesus' conviction that we're just making transitions, and life continues on. All fellow humans live on in the next plane of existence, gravitating to the plane their soul development has warranted.

In the order of life, we can gain knowledge of the world within and without, but it's only through personal experience that we make direct contact with a thing or person in life. Then we really know that thing or person. In the same way, we have to make contact with our soul. You have to come to know yourself and come into contact with your essence. You have to slow down and want to mold and shape yourself spiritually. Religion has an important role in the world, if there is an emphasis on the purification of the soul. All spiritual development comes from within, as does wanting a direct experience with the Divine. As a soul, you progress as you continue to invoke the highest that is in you, which is spirit. There is no place where God is not.

We have to comprehend how important it is for us to become acquainted with our souls. We can never see our soul; we can only feel it. Your soul includes your identity, personality, intelligence, and ego. They all come together, and you determine who's mastering or winning. Contained in the soul is the spirit of God, and we have to stop and listen to that—that spirit that God holds us to be.

Even in the Bhagavad Gita there was an inspired piece of writing from *The Song of Life*. It talks about the soul that is spirit. It states:

Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;
Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!
Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit for ever;
Death hath not changed it at all, dead though the house of it seems!

Although each soul is distinctive, it is a part of God, and it has access to the intelligence and ageless wisdom of the Divine. It's always there, so man is always making decisions. He's either been drugged by the illusion of the five external senses—which can be false—or he has begun to look within. It's like an iceberg: there is so much of us submerged that we haven't gotten in touch with. Your soul is the seat of all that you are.

The true language of the soul is expressed in feeling, not words. People get lost in those physical feelings and block out the higher feeling that is trying to emanate through you. We can weigh the soul down or retard our development by refusing to follow the intuitional flashes that arise in consciousness. At that point, it's a crossroads. Do you look outside yourself for the answers, or do you get in touch with those intuitional flashes that are trying to move you forward? There is a stream of consciousness there to assist you.

Experience is the great teacher. We're all going through experiences, good and bad. We should ask ourselves how we have faced sorrow, tragedy, disappointment, defeat, frustration, criticism, economic insecurity, ill health, and all of the other soul-testing occurrences in life. We should also evaluate how we've responded to the good things in life: achievement, success, praise, and joys. What have these varied experiences of good and bad brought out in you as an individual? Are we the possessors of fears, hates, prejudices, jealousies, selfish desires, uncontrolled emotions, and resentments? Or have we acquired attributes of love, compassion, understanding, patience, courage, faith, joy, and service to others? Somewhere between these extremes is where you are today as a soul, and that's okay. Everything that has happened to you, good or bad, has brought change in you. Only through the testing of experience can you come to know your own strengths and weaknesses. There is really no substitute.

Everything you have mastered in your life remains to serve you. Everything not mastered in your life stays to hamper you until you learn and grow as a soul. The history of mankind is filled with

thousands who are crushed by experiences that others have risen to new heights from. It's all in how we integrate the experiences we deal with. It's not always about the easy life. Those who have undergone the most severe trials and tribulations in life often have the greatest opportunity for tremendous leaps in consciousness and growth as a soul.

I want you to remember that an equal part of God dwells in every human, regardless of race, color, and creed. It is our role to remember the kinship we have with all—that no human is less a child of God than another. We're at different levels of soul development. We should not react when ill-treated by another. As Jesus said, "Return good for evil." That's the soul path expansion. We can never say that God has deserted us. If anything, we desert God at times. We get pulled away, but God is always here in us, beside us, and around us. He is in all things, ready to help and empower us.

Let us be evermore conscious that we have a soul, and that it is in the process of development through the life experiences that we're having. Some are painful and difficult, but ask yourself who you are going to be as you go through them. Who you are, from the highest part of you, helps in the development of you as a soul. To reach down and call forth the highest that is in you, even as you go through the most difficult of situations, is a profound stride forward as a soul.

Remember to let the soul of you speak to you, with the God-given wisdom that is contained in every soul. It is there to guide you forward, onward, and upward in your soul experiences.

God bless.