



TOUCHSTONES

Care of the Soul

June 2021

The topic, “Care for the Soul” of course begs the question, “what is the soul?” And philosophers and theologians have debated and discussed this for such a long time, and with so many words. I’ve read a lot of those words, and I can tell you what a soul is.

Ready?

I don’t know.

I don’t know what a soul is. I can tell you what it’s like, though: It is like a pond of water. Or a waterfall. It’s like the wind through the trees, and it’s like the trees. It’s laughter, also, it is tears. It is loud and quiet. It is a feeling and a way of acting.

Helpful? Maybe not! But what I know more about is how to care for the soul. This is the more relevant question anyway.

Here are some things that care for the soul:

Give it purpose. Souls want to “be of use” and do something that matters. What’s your soul’s purpose? (Hint, it is probably not labor or consumption. Souls reach for something more.). What makes you feel important, useful, and connected? Do that.

Give it variety. Souls like to try to things. Take it on trips. Read it stories. Listen to its favorite music. Let it meet new people. Souls like both familiar places and adventures. They need a good balance.

Notice your soul. This can be done through any one of many spiritual practices. Meditation, journaling, prayer, yoga, communal worship, and so forth – all these things can feed your soul. Your soul speaks quietly but persistently. If you slow down enough to figure out what it is saying, it will tell you what it needs.

For myself, I’ve found that one thing my soul needs is pilgrimages – it needs to walk through a country and go to a place. Something about this gets my soul back in its right rhythm. My trips to Israel, Transylvania, and New England all helped me regroup myself. Another thing my soul needs is friends. I have certain “soul friends” whose company and conversation always reconnects me. Even if we haven’t talked for a year, that time together is good for my soul.

What does your soul need? To find out, listen to it. Write down what you hear. Draw a picture. Sing a song. Give it attention, and you will hear what it wants. What it wants may be an easy thing (go lie outside in the grass) and it might be hard (find a new job, change how you love, speak the truth in a hard thing). But your soul will tell you, if you listen and feel. And it will reward you when you do it.

How do I know? I don’t. But it’s like water, and wind, and music, and love. It just is.

In Faith,
Matthew

Readings from the Common Bowl



Day 1: "Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul." Dorothy Day

Day 2: "The soul should always stand ajar, ready to welcome the ecstatic experience." Emily Dickinson

Day 3: "The human soul has still greater need of the ideal than of the real. It is by the real that we exist; it is by the ideal that we live." Victor Hugo

Day 4: "Memory is the personal journalism of the soul." Richard Schickel

Day 5: "A genuine odyssey is not about piling up experiences. It is a deeply felt, risky, unpredictable tour of the soul." Thomas Moore

Day 6: "The human soul is hungry for beauty; we seek it everywhere—in landscape, music, art, clothes, furniture, gardening, companionship, love, religion, and in ourselves." John O'Donohue

Day 7: "There is an eternal landscape, a geography of the soul; we search for its outlines all our lives." Josephine Hart

Day 8: "The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire." Ferdinand Foch

Day 9: "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul—and sings the tunes without the words—and never stops at all." Emily Dickinson

Day 10: "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul." Simone Weil

Day 11: "Re-examine all that you have been told... dismiss that which insults your soul." Walt Whitman

Day 12: "I've redefined success as 'fulfilling your soul's purpose.'" Jack Canfield

Day 13: "It's true about the eyes being the

window to the soul. Your face can be etched with worry, and twisted by ageing, but the eyes tell the true story of who you are." Naomie Harris

Day 14: "The soul is partly in time and partly in eternity. We might remember the part that resides in eternity when we feel despair over the part that is in life." Thomas Moore

Day 15: "You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you; none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul." Swami Vivekananda

Day 16: "Since love grows within you, so beauty grows. For love is the beauty of the soul." Saint Augustine

Day 17: "It may help us, in those times of trouble, to remember that love is not only about relationship, it is also an affair of the soul." Thomas Moore

Day 18: "I trust that when people meet,

Day 21: "Find out who you are and be that person. That's what your soul was put on this Earth to be. Find that truth, live that truth and everything else will come." Ellen DeGeneres

Day 22: "...to the soul, the most minute details and the most ordinary activities, carried out with mindfulness and art, have an effect far beyond their apparent insignificance." Thomas Moore

Day 23: "Age wrinkles the body. Quitting wrinkles the soul." Douglas MacArthur

Day 24: "The wilderness is healing, a therapy for the soul." Nicholas Kristof

Day 25: "The soul is stronger than its surroundings." William James

Day 26: "I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope, For hope would be hope for the wrong thing." T. S. Eliot

Day 27: "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?" Jesus

Day 28: "...you cannot have an impactful

life with an impoverished soul." John Ortberg

Day 29: "How many times do we lose an occasion for soul work by leaping ahead to final solutions without pausing to savor the undertones? ...thus, we lose opportunities to know ourselves for our motives and our secrets." Thomas Moore

Day 30: "Beauty awakens the soul to act." Dante Alighieri



we meet for a transcendent reason, and that the challenges we face in life are always lessons that serve our soul's growth." Marianne Williamson

Day 19: "Begin to see yourself as a soul with a body rather than a body with a soul." Wayne Dyer

Day 20: "Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes." Walt Whitman

Day 31: "Here's the deal. The human soul doesn't want to be advised or fixed or saved. It simply wants to be witnessed — to be seen, heard and companioned exactly as it is. ...As Mary Oliver has written, 'This is the first, the wildest and the wisest thing I know: that the soul exists and is built entirely out of attentiveness.'" Parker Palmer

The Soul of the Child

Michael Gurian

Our children are under profound stress and pressure today.

...Our civilization feeds, shelters, and clothes the bodies of our children better than ever, but sacrifices their souls. ...

Here are ten things ...to better advocate for and protect ... children:

1. Increase bonding and attachment in the family. ...
2. Bring the extended family back into the raising of children. ...
3. Insist on revision of daycare and school culture to fit the requirements of child bonding and attachment. ...
4. Change corporate culture to fit child bonding needs. ...
5. Control a child's media use ... before the age of fourteen.
6. Increase the time children spend in the natural world by at least double.
7. ...Increase the time children spend in ...understanding the mysteries of life, experiencing joy, and a sense of belonging.
8. Understand the potential toxicity of a child's daily schedule. If he or she is running ...from activity to activity ...he or she will ...need down time.
9. Understand and act against the toxicity of contemporary diet and nutrition. Junk food in large quantities is ...causing stress....
10. Work toward families ...that are driven by a holistic approach to child development: care for the whole soul of the child.

Source: no longer online

Nurturing Your Child's Soul

Kathy Slattengren, M. Ed.

What does your child's soul need? One need is for your children to be seen and heard from their deepest selves.

How can you help your child feel seen and heard? Some things ...include:

- ◆ Giving ...your undivided attention for at least a few minutes every day
- ◆ Encouraging them to have their own opinions and ideas...
- ◆ Showing respect for their bodies
- ◆ Treating them with kindness

- ◆ Allowing them to grow and change without trying to hold them back
- ◆ Seeking forgiveness and providing forgiveness

When you hold space for your children to share their thoughts and feelings, they deepen their ...authentic selves. It's like ...holding a mirror up so that they can see their inner beauty.

Nurturing your children's souls involves encouraging them to develop a strong moral ground.... This includes...:

- ◆ Having the courage to do what is right even when it's difficult
- ◆ Treating others with respect
- ◆ Showing compassion to others
- ◆ Being kind to all living creatures
- ◆ Taking care of the environment

When your children follow their values..., they will ...best use their talents.

Source: <https://www.pricelessparenting.com/documents/nurturing-your-childs-soul>

A Butterfly Mom

Annie Burnside

Is success primarily about status, financial gain, and intellectual achievement stemming from a 'survival of the fittest' paradigm? ...Success is much more about a child's metamorphosis from a beautiful, divine caterpillar – perfect already in every way despite any outward appearances to the contrary – into a conscious global citizen who knows their own heart. ... Such children radiate a love of self and others.

Fostering authenticity, which involves being liberated to live one's soul purpose, is the ultimate gift a butterfly mom offers her child.

Source: *From Role to Soul* by Annie Burnside

Family Activity:

Self-Care as Soul Care

Self-care involves paying attention to our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. We do this by tuning-in, listening, and responding. Invite your children into a discussion about how they can care for themselves, care for others, and invite others care for them in simple and special ways. Then talk about how to practice self-care and family-care.

The Soul's Dark Night

Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones

...When ...Saint John of the Cross pens ...*Dark Night of the Soul* in the 16th century, ...he doesn't see darkness as the source of "quiet calm," or of "comfort and caressing." ...No, he sees the dark night as the site of the ultimate spiritual struggle, a time of utter desolation, alienation, abandonment. As F. Scott Fitzgerald writes ..., "In a real dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning." ...From Mother Teresa of



Calcutta, whose "dark night" lasted 45 years, to heavy metal songs, ...we use the term "dark night of the soul" to describe the most difficult birth of all: the passage through a kind of "death" – the despair of the spirit – to hope and faith in life just as it is.

So, when we go through our own dark night of the soul, what is it that we need from others? When we know [others] ... are walking that lonely road, what can we offer, as their spiritual companions?

...Elizabeth Tarbox puts it this way: "None of us ever really walks in another's shoes or knows the innermost rooms of a person's heart. None of us truly knows the lonely places of another's journey or the causes of the lines around another's eyes. Therefore, let us be gentle with one another. Let us listen more than we speak and accept more than we judge. Let our open, outstretched hands reach and touch that we may walk along together for a little while in friendship and in trust."

Source: No longer online



The Unitarian Universalist Church
4848 Turner St.
Rockford, IL 61107

-Coffee Hour on Sunday. 337-267-3668. 11:10 a.m. Grab a cup and jump on to say hello! Chris hosts.

- Touchstones: contact your touchstones group facilitator for the time and meeting ID, if you don't already have it.

Want to have a group – a book group, a parent group, a “circle supper”, or whatever you like?
– just email Autumn at office@uurockford.org and she can give you the Zoom login and password

Care of the Soul & Deepening Connections

The care of the soul is important work. It is at the heart of self-care. Without it, we are diminished in many ways. M. Scott Peck wrote, “Life is difficult,” and love is “The will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.” The care of the soul is also self-love, not as narcissism but as a means to greater empathy. In this regard then, care of the soul is a means of both deepening connections and caring for community. Thomas Moore writes, “Just as the mind digests ideas and produces intelligence, the soul feeds on life and digests it, creating wisdom and character out of experience.” This wisdom and character is crucial for deepening connections.