



# Spirit at WORK

*"In the silence of our hearts, we know that we are proving ourselves worthy of the miracle of life." – Paulo Coelho*

BY DON PHIN, ESQ.



We are spiritual beings having a work experience. Unfortunately, we can run 75 miles an hour and forget who we really are. In this report I'm going to give you a reminder about the deeper opportunity for our time at work.

I've been studying religion, philosophy, spirituality, and New Age literature for over thirty years. At the end of this report is a list of some of the "spiritual" quotes I've gathered. This report is not about religion, it's about spirituality. Religion is a part of spirituality. In a sense, religion is one way people express their spirituality. In my comparative religious studies in college I realized we express similar thoughts in different ways; and spirituality cuts across much of it.

How do you bring spirituality to the workplace? As Jesus reminded us, "Ask and you'll receive" and "seek and you'll find." So, I've been asking this question and seeking guidance for years.

Why is spirituality at work important? One big reason is that our lives are one big balancing act. The Big Five to achieve balance in are: 1) Relationships (your relationship with yourself, the relationship with the work you do, the relationship with the people you do it with); 2) Health (are you engaging in proper exercise and nutrition?) 3) Career pursuits: what we are here to do? Buddhists might call it our dharma. 4) Finances—how we handle our money, no matter how much we make. 5) Last, spirituality, which is a foundation that supports all of the above.



### What is Spirit?

"The vital principle or animating force within living beings." Comes from Latin *spiritus*, which means *breath*.

*beings*. Originally the word comes from Latin *spiritus* which means to breathe. When we *inspire* we breathe spirit into people and when we *aspire* we breathe it out of us. So the base of spirit is breath. It is beingness. It allows us to bring life to the work we do.

Since we spend more time at this activity called work than anything else, we might as well make it a spiritual experience. The real question is what type of spiritual experience are we going to have?

In difficult times we often lean on our spirituality. Conversely, when fully engaged we are often motivated by that spirituality. Spirituality deepens our career, relationships, health, and finances.

Spirituality is defined as the "vital principle or animating force within living beings." Wow! Think about that again: *the vital principle or animating force within living*

### Spirituality is About

- Recognizing the miracle in all of us.
- Being grateful.
- Being helpful.
- Acceptance, not just tolerance.
- Unconditional love; not unconditional relationships.

Spirituality is not about forcing religious beliefs on anybody. I certainly have my religious beliefs but they're my religious beliefs; I don't believe I need to force them on anybody else. If you try to do that at work it's can be considered proselytizing or discrimination. If you're running a church and only want to hire people from your religion, then that's allowed, but outside of that context it's not. I know plenty of it agnostics (people not sure if there's a heaven or hell) and atheists (those people sure that there's neither) who are very spiritual beings in that they're caring, giving, energetic, and fun to be around. And I've seen highly religious people from all religions who do things that are abominable. Including at work.

How do we bring spirituality to our work? A couple things come to mind. First of all, it means you

**What does it mean to be spiritual? Many things are possible:**

- It means you look for the best in you...and others.
- It's about kindness.
- It's about compassion.
- It's about putting purpose before self.

look for the best in yourself and others. Am I looking for the best in me? Am I breathing life into myself? Am I doing the same to other people? One very interesting exercise I read in the book *The Tools* suggests that you absorb loving energy in from the universe, bring it into your heart, and then beam it into the heart of somebody else. Try the exercise sometime; it's very powerful. Similarly, before I speak to a group, I focus on liking them before ever meeting them. That's the energy or spirit I want to bring when I have a presentation.

Being spiritual is about kindness. When you're running 75 miles per hour, however, sometimes it's hard to be kind; whether it's to the people you work with, manage, live with, or even yourself. Would you describe how you've been relating to people as *loving kindness*? It's about being compassionate. Feeling for the other person. Which of course is difficult when you run 75 mph and don't show this compassion for yourself.

The concept of servant leadership was born from a statement by Jesus "Anybody who wants to be the greatest among you should serve others." Few carry this mantle. While we consider ourselves a Christian nation, we tend to focus on taking care of ourselves far more than serving others.

Spirituality is also about recognizing the miracle that is every one of us. Scientists and spiritualists remind us that we came from light which turned into matter. We may be the only living beings in this universe, although most physicists doubt that's the case. Even if the next civilization is 100 million light years away our very existence is miraculous. As Einstein said, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." I believe *we are all miracles!*

**What it's Not**

- It is not about forcing your religious beliefs on others. Except in rare occasions this is known as discrimination.
- You can be an agnostic or atheist, yet "spiritual".

**Servant Leadership**

"If anyone wants to be the greatest among you, they should serve others."

Jesus

Spirituality is about being grateful and thankful. One of the things I do when I wake up is I say my prayers and express my gratitude. I do that when I go to sleep too. I write thank you notes to people because I'm grateful. Even when suffering I am grateful for the ability to be suffering.

It's about being helpful. When we're overwhelmed it's very hard to help other people. Here's a simple but spiritually powerful question you can ask: "How can I help you?" If you don't hear yourself asking that question at work or at home then maybe it's time to start doing so.

It's about acceptance and love. When I teach about discrimination in the workplace, I talk about the four different levels that we deal with each other. At one extreme we deal in *fear* of each other. We don't know somebody; maybe they are from a different city, from a different culture, from a different country. Fear is often borne of ignorance. According to Dr. Deming's *14 Principles for the Transformation of Management* one of the goals of leadership is to drive fear out of an organization. The second level is *tolerance*. That's where the law shows up. You

shall do no harm because of differences. You shall not harm an employee who's disabled, over 40, female, of a different religion, nationality, or whatever. Tolerance is a do no harm standard. The third level is *acceptance*. In my experience it's difficult for the law to enforce an acceptance of each other. I do hear the argument the other way round. Maybe the law forces you to tolerate long enough that you become accepting. When spiritual you're accepting without the law requiring it. Last, is *unconditional love*. "Love thy neighbor." It is important to understand that just because you can unconditionally love somebody doesn't mean you have to have an unconditional relationship with them. I've had let go employees that I loved before and after I let them go. The relationship at work wasn't working out, it was a misfit. We think we can't love somebody and fire them at the same time. Yes you can! In fact, the way in which you handle the termination will show people that you care about them.

### **Do We Need a More Feminine View of Spirituality?**

#### **Male**

- Future
- Breakthrough
- Accomplish

#### **Female**

- Present
- Relationships
- Feeling

We could benefit from a more feminine view of spirituality at work. Our workplace has been extremely male-dominated since the beginning of the Industrial Era. It's all very future oriented, it's all about breaking through things, it's all about accomplishments, all about success. Look at the more female side of spirituality: it's more about being present, more about relationships, more about feelings, more about nurturing. *Don't we all need that?!* Sometimes we run right past our lives and we deny that we need these things until we get slammed hard enough that we are forced to address these needs.

Being spiritual is about bringing 100% of ourselves to work. Many of us grew up hearing the phrase "the Protestant work ethic." Its theme is that Hard Work is the Lord's Work. We swim like fish in that spiritual water. The American worker is the most productive worker on the planet; taking less vacation days and putting in more hours than most anybody. In Europe and other parts of the world they think we are nuts. In this country and in Japan you are somehow wrong as a person if you're not working toward exhaustion.

### **The Protestant Work Ethic**

**Hard work is the Lord's work.**

## The Stonemason's Story: Doing God's Work



The Protestant work ethic is epitomized in the classic story about the stonemason. A gentleman was observing stonemasons doing their work. One stonemason was asked “What are you doing?” He said “What do you think I’m doing? I’m carrying this rock.” The second stonemason was asked, “What are you doing?” He replied, “I’m helping to construct this cathedral. Can’t you see that?” He goes to the third stonemason and asks, “What are you doing?” who in turn replied, “I’m doing the Lords work.” That pretty much sums up the three different views of the work we all do. Who do you think gets more satisfaction out of doing the same job? We all know the answer. Fact is, we can find spirituality in our work no matter what we’re doing, whether we’re washing dishes or advising in the boardroom.

Bringing our spirit to work is not just a Protestant thing. To quote from the Upanishads (ancient Hindu): “Hope for 100 years of life doing your duty.” (I’d sign up for that right now.) Buddha said, “your work is to discover your work and then with all your heart give yourself to it.” Mohammed said, “it is better for any of you to carry a load of firewood on his own back than to beg from someone else.”

When it comes to spirituality it is your intention that matters most. If you intend to be a spiritual person at work, chances are, you will be a spiritual person at work. If you intend have a spiritual experience, then you’ll have a spiritual experience. It’s a choice we make every day.

Spirituality is about putting purpose before self; the bigger picture; more meaning; making a difference. One of my favorite thinkers was is Buckminster Fuller, otherwise known as Bucky. If you’ve ever gone to the Epcot center in Disney, he designed the geodesic dome there. One of my top 10 books of all time is *The Critical Path* by Bucky. In *The Critical Path* he reminds us that we’re all like little bumblebees. When the bee goes to feed itself, the precessional impact is to pollinate the plant. As a young man, Bucky had a Jimmy Stewart moment. He was working in Chicago, married there, his father-in-law was an industrialist who had a factory, he was asked to help work at the factory. He was great at inventing things but really not very good at being a manager. He figured he was a failure and would drown himself in Lake Michigan. So he’s up to his waist and he has his epiphany. He realizes, like Jimmy Stewart does while standing on that bridge every Christmas, that *my life is not my own*. While we remember that once a year when we see the movie, it’s omnipresent. We’re having precessional impacts on people all the time. Grasping on to that reality helps us to discover our spirituality... and where we can make a difference.

### It’s Not Just a Protestant Thing

- “Hope for 100 years of life doing your duty.” Upanishads (Ancient Hindu)
- “Your work is to discover your world and then with all your heart give yourself to it.” Buddha
- “It is better for any of you to carry a load of firewood on his own back than to beg from someone else .” Mohammed

For example, you may think you're simply managing an employee, but how you manage that employee has significant precessional impacts. I'll give you a classic example. I was doing a workshop for a roofing company in Brooklyn. Talk about a tough bunch of guys! I'm talking about this precessional impact we have on people; about how we treat the employees we manage affects how they treat their kids, how they treat their spouse, how they treat the person on the road that cuts them off, etc. So, how we treat people has all these precessional

impacts. All of a sudden, this big Puerto Rican guy, Edwin,

started tearing up in the back. I'll never forget him. I asked, "Edwin, what is up?" He said, "I didn't realize what I was doing. I got this new employee and I've been on his case and yelling at him every single day since we hired him three weeks ago. I found out today that he goes home to four kids every day. Until just now, I didn't realize what I was doing."

### **Creativity Ignites the Spirit**



a bad experience with us, whether it's in the workplace as a co-employee, one of our customers, or one of our clients? How is that paid forward to the people around them?

Conversely, a poor work environment that kills the spirit and imprisons the soul will cause lawsuits, turnover, sabotage, and dramas like that. Having litigated for 17 years, I can tell you that high culture organizations don't get a lot of lawsuits. What do you think is going to happen in an environment where we

kill the spirit and imprison the soul? People are going to fight back. They believe (wrongly) that it is the only response they have left to maintain their dignity.

### **Find Stillness So You Can Feel the Spiritual**



One thing that ignites the spirit is creativity. Creativity evokes words like: new, positive, genius, invention, brainstorm, innovation, art, ideas, insight and intelligence. How creative are you? Are you unleashing the creative spirit in your workplace? Do you allow that to happen or are you somehow afraid that you might not be able to control it if you did? Humble leadership doesn't worry about letting the spirit free; doesn't try to control.

### **The Precessional Impact**



### **A Poor Work Environment Kills the Spirit and Imprisons the Soul**



## Caring for the Less Fortunate



I suggest we learn how to find the stillness so we can feel the spiritual. Again, it is very hard to feel *spiritual* when you're running 75 miles an hour. Many companies have actually started creating meditation rooms, silent times, etc. When I want to do my deep thinking, writing, and work, I often get out of the office. I go to the public library, to a quiet corner, I go to the historic Hotel Del and I find a quiet place to write. I might even go down to the beach. The environment can allow us to be still and have our deepest thoughts. So, when we need to do our deepest work, find a stillness that allows us to do that work.

Of course, one of the spiritual things we can do is help care for the less fortunate amongst us. For example, there is nothing I can think of that is more spiritual, more of a powerful metaphor, than giving blood. What if you gave blood collectively as a company? I think that's a highly spiritual, bonding experience. Think about how you can engage in the community. A lot of people I know love doing Habitat for Humanity and things like that. Find a cause and contribute to it right in your own backyard.

A very spiritual thing we can do is care for Mother Earth. What's been more nurturing to us than this amazing planet that we live on? Spaceship Earth as Bucky called it; this blue marble flying out there in the middle of nowhere with us on it. I've help work on sustainability projects at companies where we asked, "How do we do things in a sustainable manner?" "How do we not harm the environment and fight regulation but turn them into a strategic advantage?" Because guess what? We need it. There is plenty of scientific evidence that we're in a bad spot right now. We've got to do better job and all get involved and care for Mother Earth. What little simple projects can you do as a company to make a difference? Do you have recycling? That's simple. Do you try to minimize plastic use? That's simple. We can just start with easy steps. Come up with new ideas for helping Mother Earth that are implemented every 90 days.

## Caring for Mother Earth



What's your spiritual story in the workplace? Where have you had highly precessional impacts? Where do you breathe life into each other? To what degree have you shared those stories?

## What's Your Spiritual Story?



Brand those stories? Sell those stories? Would I know your spiritual story by walking in the front door? For example, when I did the *Spirit at Work* webinar one of the attendees said their company had the kids of the employees bring in pictures of the workplace based on a suggestion they heard me make years ago. She said it was an awesome experience.

You want a spiritual experience? Have all of your employees' kids draw a picture of their parent at work on an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper and then get the clear page protector you can slide the pictures in, and put them up on the wall. Then have

the kids slide those pictures in. If the kids want to replace their existing picture with a new one, they can. And, if you are ever funky out and in need of a spiritual moment, you can just walk passed those kids' pictures. What did Jesus say? We've got to find the children in ourselves.

In conclusion, when you change the way you think and feel about work, you'll change the very nature of the work itself. Isn't that a powerful thoughtful for all of us? If we ask how can we make our work more spiritual, then that's what we'll get.

Take care and may you the Spirit be with you!

### Conclusion

Change the way you think and feel about your work...and you will change the very nature of the work itself.

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## SPIRITUAL WISDOM

I have gathered these words of wisdom over many years. All are "spiritual" to me. Feel free to share with all. Check off the boxes that resonate with you and then add your own. May you enjoy!

- ✦ "Hope for 100 years of life doing your duty." Upanishads (Ancient Hindu)
- ✦ "Be a lamp to yourself, be your own confidence. Hold to the truth within yourself, as to the only truth." Buddha
- ✦ "In the archer there is a resemblance to the mature person. When he misses the bull's-eye, he turns and seeks the reason for his failure in himself." Confucius
- ✦ "In dealing with people, we already have the perfect model behavior inside us. Just act sincerely, in accordance with your true nature. Don't do to others what you wouldn't want done to you." Tzu-ssu (Grandson of Confucius)
- ✦ "I have just three things to teach: simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures. Simple in actions and in thoughts, you return to the source of being. Patient with both friends and enemies, you accord with the way things are. Compassionate toward yourself, you reconcile all being in the world." Lao-tzu
- ✦ "If you want to realize the truth, don't be for or against. The struggle between good and evil is the primal disease of the mind." Seng Ts'an (Zen Master, 6<sup>th</sup> Century)
- ✦ "Don't keep searching for the truth; just let go of your opinions." Seng Ts'an
- ✦ "All things change when we do." Kukai (Japanese Monk, 8<sup>th</sup> Century)
- ✦ "Winning and losing are the same thing. Both are nothing." Buddha
- ✦ "In those who have cured themselves of selfishness, I shine with brilliance." The Bhagavad Gita
- ✦ "The path of love and the path of insight lead into the same garden." Stephen Mitchell (Translator and Poet)
- ✦ "This thing we tell of can never be found by seeking, yet only seekers find it." Abu Yazidal-Bistami (Sufi Master)

- ✦ “If you can’t find the truth right where you are, where else do you think you will find it?” Dogen (Japanese Zen Master)
- ✦ “Asking is half of knowing.” Rumi (Sufi Poet)
- ✦ “We are such stuff as dreams are made on.” Shakespeare
- ✦ “What can I do but thank you, one hundred times?” Bibi Hayati (Persian Poet)
- ✦ “The soul is light.” Emerson
- ✦ “God is a verb.” Buckminster Fuller (Inventor and Philosopher)
- ✦ “For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which the all other work is merely preparation.” Ranier Maria Rilke
- ✦ “It’s OK to love people unconditionally, but it is not necessary to have unconditional relationships with them.” Marianne Williamson
- ✦ “The true value of a human being can be found in the degree to which he has attained liberation from himself.” Albert Einstein
- ✦ “One must find out how to be happy by oneself.” Ramana Maharshi (Indian Sage)
- ✦ “Each new dawn is a miracle.” 19<sup>th</sup> Psalm of David
- ✦ “Happy is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.” Proverbs 3:13
- ✦ “Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light.” Jesus
- ✦ “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Jesus
- ✦ “Love is patient, love is kind.” St. Paul
- ✦ “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others.” St. Peter
- ✦ “At any moment, you have a choice that either leaves you closer to your spirit or further away from it.” Thich Nhat Nahn
- ✦ “God gives some more than others because some accept more than others.” Ernest Holmes
- ✦ “Realize deeply that the present moment is all you ever have. Make the Now the primary focus of your life.” Eckhart Tolle (author of Power of Now)
- ✦ “We can change the world not by what we say or do, but as a consequence of what we have become.” David Hawkins (author of Power vs. Force)
- ✦ “He is a warm, open space, which encourages them to trust whatever they feel.” Ram Dass
- ✦ “Once I knew the depth where no hope was, and darkness lay on the face of all things. Then love came and set my soul free.” Helen Keller



Here’s to the spirit in you,  
Don Phin, Esq.

