

Hyun Jin Moon's Family Peace Association: Happy New Year!

Howard Self
January 8, 2022



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For many of us, the New Year signifies a new beginning – a fresh look, a new perspective, a renewed commitment, or a mapping of a new goal. Letting God lead the way in our reflection and introspection, we find that there is always a path to redemption, renewal, and growth. Below are stories of such findings and inspirations. May they inspire your breakthroughs in the New Year of 2022!

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Stories



Finding Forgiveness through God

By M.G

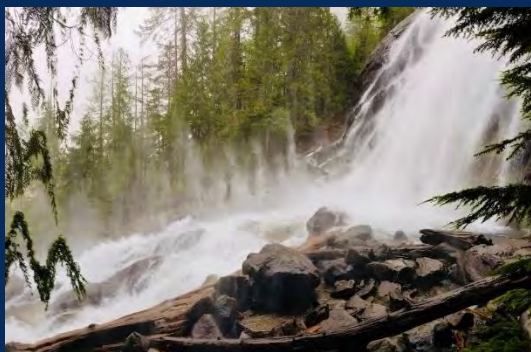
A heartfelt sharing by a daughter who learned to forgive her father through God's example of unconditional love. [Read her story here.](#)



Melting Grudges

By John Mowris

An unexpected marriage leads to a reconciliation of heart earned through sincere and consistent investment. [Read the story here.](#)



Trail Prepared by God

By Mark Sano

A broken trail reminds this father that a challenge is an opportunity for growth. [Read his story here.](#)

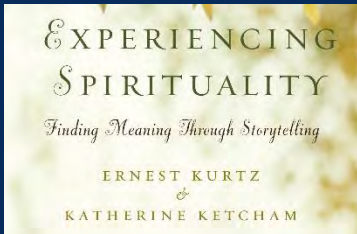
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STORIES



Melting Grudges

By John Mowris During World War II, my father was a Sergeant in the Marine Corps and my mother was in the Navy. My mother worked in the Washington D.C. office decoding Japanese messages. My father saw very brutal action in the Pacific during the fighting. He never...

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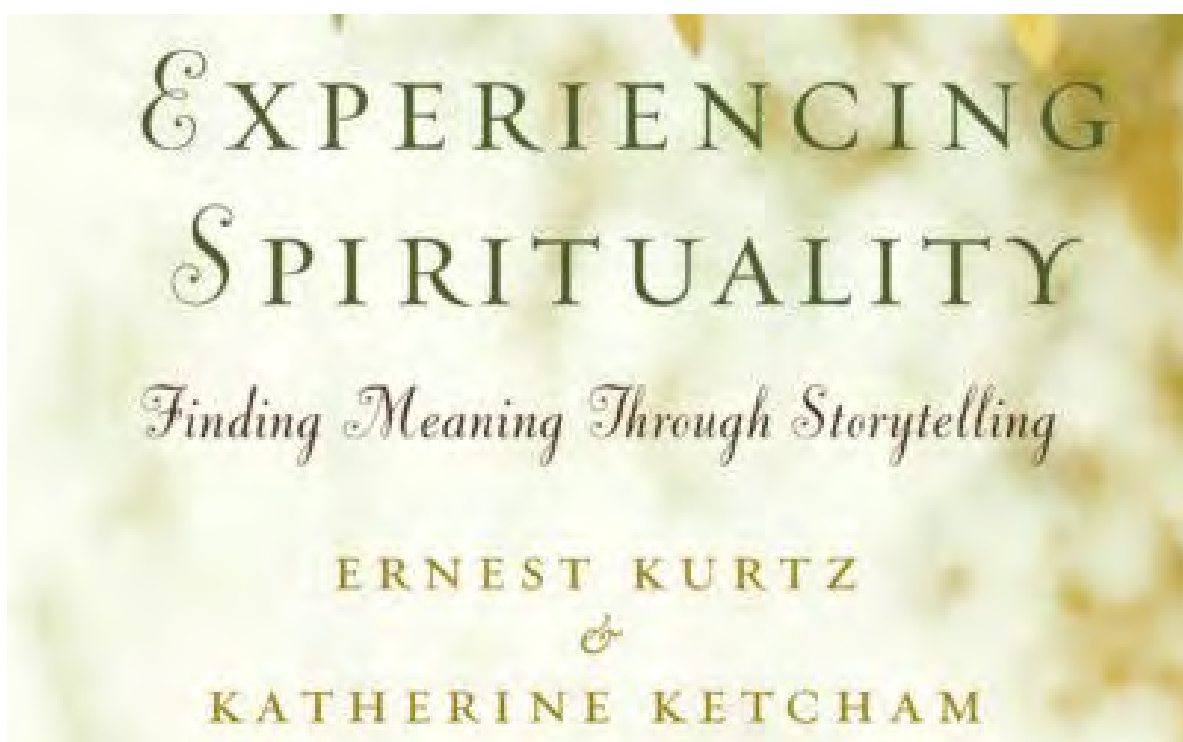
Putting Love into Action in the Community

By Mike Yakawich My wife, Yukiko, and I have raised five children in Billings, MT. We had a wonderful journey living on the South Side where Yukiko and I started the ministry. It was a time of pioneering. We had to be creative, innovative and resourceful. Certainly,...

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Melting Grudges

Jan 6, 2022 | 0 comments



By John Mowris

During World War II, my father was a Sergeant in the Marine Corps and my mother was in the Navy. My mother worked in the Washington D.C. office decoding Japanese messages. My father saw very brutal action in the Pacific during the fighting. He never spoke to me about it, but my grandmother told me his story. He was almost killed when the man next to him stepped on a landmine. Later, he became very sick with some tropical disease and was eventually sent to Bethesda Hospital in Washington DC. While he was recovering there, he met my mother. The war ended soon after that and they got married.

My father was a very open man; he never expressed any racism. People talk a lot about racism now. My grandma was very racist, but my father wasn't. I don't know



why, but he was very open and believed in fairness. The one thing he did have, however, was a huge grudge against Japanese people leftover from his personal experiences during World War II.



I left home at eighteen to work. Eventually, I went to the east coast, first Philadelphia and later Washington DC. I met many people from all parts of the world and made friends. I was introduced to a lovely Japanese woman one day and fell in love. My parents were explosively opposed to my marrying her. They eventually realized that I had made up my mind. Stubbornness is a family trait. I felt that by marrying a Japanese person, we could eventually resolve that grudge in my father's and mother's hearts to make them free.

When I got married, there was a big uproar. My mom said, "You did this to spite us!" Over time they realized, with my sister's prodding, that they had to accept my decision. Yoko, my wife, wrote a very sweet letter to them, introducing herself. My mother appreciated very much her effort to write in English. Little by little, they began to accept her into our family.

When our first child, Ami, was born, that grudge was erased completely. My father actually was a member of the VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars, a club for people who fought overseas. He quit the club because some of the other members had grudges against the Japanese, and he couldn't stand it. He loved his daughter-in-law and grandchildren very much.



My father's love language is cooking. He cooks to show how much he loves people, and he is a perfectionist. My mom and dad could barely work in the kitchen together. But my wife Yoko could work in the kitchen with my dad. Dad spent a lot of time teaching my wife how to cook

our family recipes and my wife made a sincere effort to learn them. They got along well and it was beautiful.

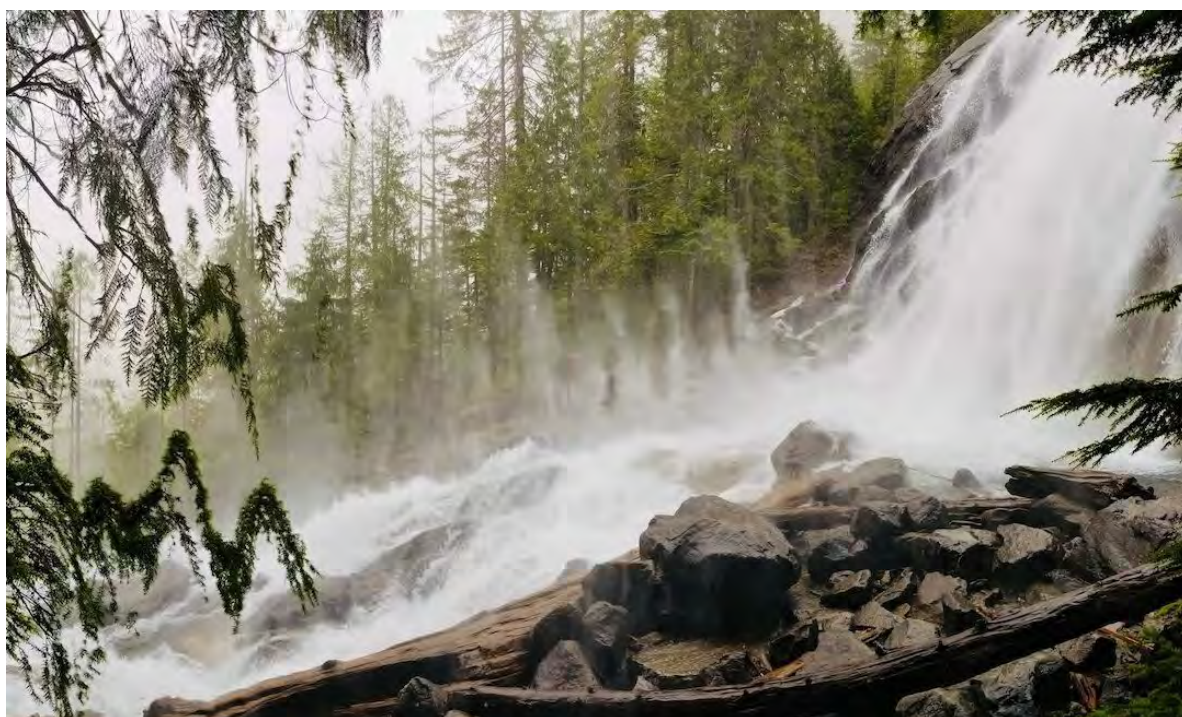
I would say that the best practice is to make the effort and spend the time. Of course, there are more adventurous things to do, but I took my kids to St. Louis to see my parents instead of seeing the Grand Canyon or something exciting like that. It was an investment of the heart. We also stayed with our family in Japan for a while. Spending time, listening, and getting to know people is the best practice.

"Please think about this: what do you think will happen if people from the United States and Russia marry across the boundaries of their nationalities through International Cross-cultural marriage Blessings, according to the teachings of Rev. Moon, who does God's work on His behalf? The two nations will belong to one family under God, the eternal, absolute Lord of all Creation. How could anyone harbor antagonism toward, much less point weapons at, a nation that many millions of grandchildren from their own lineage make home?"



Trail Prepared by God

Jan 4, 2022 | 0 comments



By Mark Sano

In November, my family went hiking with 3 other families in western WA area. The hike took place during a rainy season when it rained so much that there were flood warnings for many areas near rivers. The night before the hike, I learned that a bridge in the trail was destroyed by a stream. I knew that the stream would be a challenge in the trail, but I did not expect the bridge to be destroyed. The weather forecast for the next day was cloudy and rainy. Concerned, I thought about the safety of our group and alternative hiking places.

The next morning, on the way to the trailhead, I felt the inspiration that God is preparing something for us. Due to solo hike experiences in the past, I was familiar with such inspirations. After I arrived at the trailhead, I checked the destroyed bridge. People were crossing the stream. I was convinced that we could make it, even though I still did not know about other streams ahead.



When we arrived at the bridge, a young and strong member of our group



crossed first. Encouraged by his success, we started to cross the stream one by one, stepping onto wood and stones. There were middle school and high school children in our hiking group as well, and I noticed the

hesitation on their faces. From a distance, the stream might not seem like much, but when you are up close, you could feel the slippery ground, the fast current of the water, and the vast distance you need to cross.

I assessed the risks and the rewards. The stream was fast but not deep. There was also enough protection down the stream if anyone slipped. If someone failed to cross and twisted their ankle, this could become a traumatic experience. On the other hand, if they managed to make it across, they would think, "Wow, I can do it even though I was scared—the limitation was all in my head." It could become a life-long lesson. So we chose to help each other cross. The stronger ones helped to pull others one by one. If even one person said, "I can't do it", we would have had to turn back. Yet, eventually, everyone made it! It became a great teamwork experience. It gave us a chance to use our creativity to figure out how to traverse this obstacle.

We crossed several other streams on the way and finally reached the waterfall in the mountain. The fall was gorgeous and rewarding. On the way back, we crossed that stream again. It became much less of an issue because we started to feel comfortable dealing with the risk. After finishing the hike, I asked my daughter what was the most exciting part of the hike. Her answer was, "Crossing the river."



As we live and grow continuously, we inevitably face challenges and risks. What's important are the lessons that we learn, such as feeling comfortable in the environment of risk and overcoming challenges through teamwork and creativity. I believe that it is through such experiences that we develop our God-given character and talent. Our life course is like a trail. God prepares a course for us, but it is up to us to walk, learn and grow.



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Finding Forgiveness through God

Dec 30, 2021 | 0 comments



By M.G.

I recently attended a Sunday small group meeting. The theme of the discussion was, "Forgiveness." This topic reminded me of my past relationship with my father.

It was the worst when I had turned 20 years old. My heart was full of resentment towards my father, and I often thought, "If my father was not here..." Believe me or not, I even took a knife in my hand. I cried till I ran out of tears. Every night in my bed, I grumbled that my father was the one who put me in this horrible situation. I wished I could disappear from this world; it was really hell.



These repeated and unhappy days passed as usual. One day, I do not know why, but I replied to a postcard with a questionnaire from a Life



Study class. I started taking this course to study about life. I was slightly familiar with the Bible from when I was in elementary and middle

school, but this course was deep and beyond what I expected. I kept crying during every class as God touched my sorrows. I realized that God was crushed many times and had deep sadness, struggles, regrets, etc., but He continued to love, care, and give His blessings to us.

In my family, I was the one who listened to my mother complain about my father, and I nodded and comforted her all the time. One day, I suddenly told her, "There must be a reason for him to do it that way." My mom was shocked to hear that, and I, myself, was surprised, too. I did not expect those words to come out of my mouth. Have I ever thought about his background and why he acted in that way? No, I have not, and I've only accepted and listened to my mother's side of the story. This was her perspective and viewpoint. This was not my father's perspective at all. I even realized that this must not be God's perspective either.

More and more, I started to have sympathy towards my father's hard life of carrying a heavy burden without anybody's support or understanding. He must have been so lonely. Furthermore, I knew that I was the one who could help him and take away his burden so he could have a new life. This realization set me free, and all resentment towards my father was entirely gone at that time.

Instead, my heart was full of happiness and appreciation for what my father had done for me. I was grateful that my father was alive and I was born in his family.

After these life-changing experiences, I felt that time had come for me to leave my home and be more responsible for my own life. My father was concerned about my decision, and he even took the same Life Study class to find out what made me change so much. After he attended the course, he believed in me more and supported my way of life.



He even realized the value of his own life, and we ended up working together for the higher purpose of our lives. We became so close to each other that we could not believe this day would come in our relationship as father and daughter.

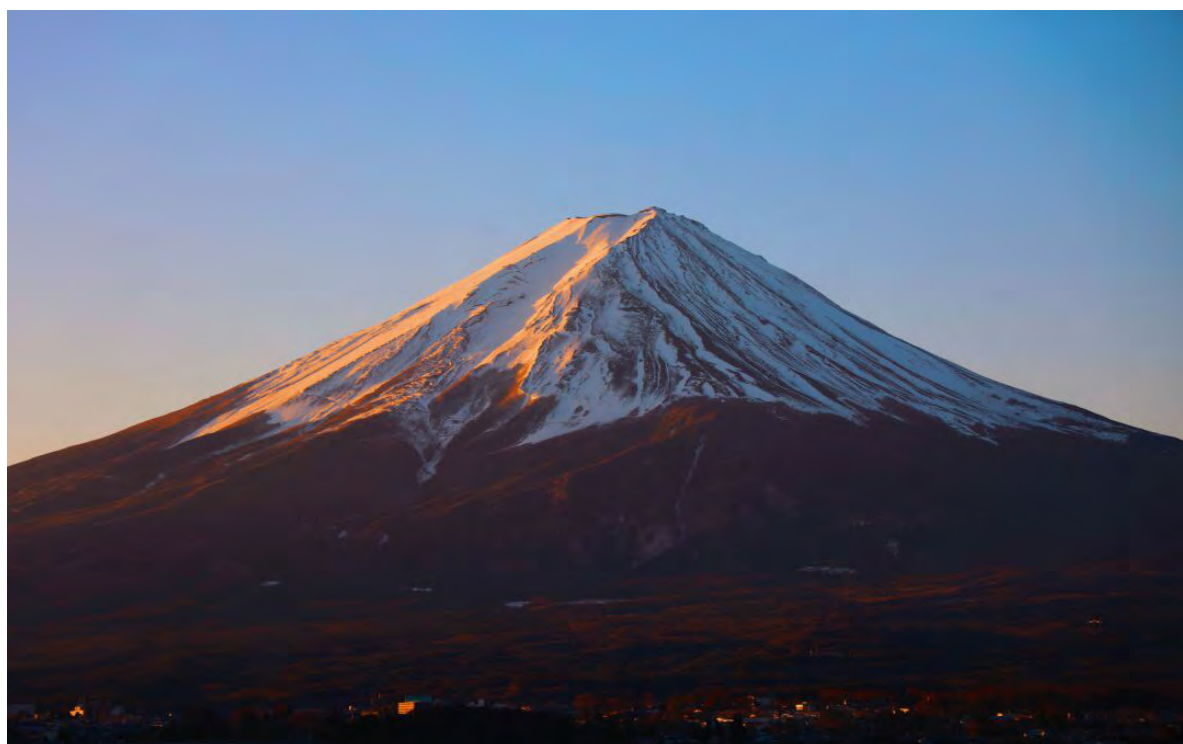
In my experience, forgiveness cannot happen without God's presence and guidance where the most valuable love relationship starts.



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Our Paths Lead to The Same Summit

Dec 16, 2021



There is a saying in Japan, “There are many paths to reach the top of Mount Fuji.” Many people have pursued greater meaning and purpose in life in search of God. I grew up in an inter-religious home –my father was a Buddhist and my mother was raised with both a Christian and Buddhist background. This unique upbringing helped me widen and deepen my relationship with God. It opened my mind and heart to recognize the common destination we all seek and the many paths that can be taken to reach that summit.

My mother was especially dedicated to her religious practices. In Buddhism, one reveres their ancestors and provides a table with offerings at the altar. I remember how my mother would prepare small offerings of rice, soup, tea, and other side dishes. She prepared



three sets of these trays – one for our ancestors, one for our clan and one for her spiritual mentors who passed away. Her mornings were so busy as she prepared meals for our family as well as the altars, oftentimes missing the chance to eat together with us. Our house was also filled with the fragrance of incense and with her prayers. Once I brought in a statue of Mother Mary for my mother and she made sure it had a place on the altar so she can light incense and pray for Christianity. Offering these prayers was a part of my mother's daily routine.

On weekends and during vacations, my mother would take us to a Zen Buddhist temple. The Roshi or the master monk always treated us kindly and made sure he made time to talk with us, even providing us with guidance.

Since my early childhood, I went to Christian schools from nursery through college. I made an effort to be a part of various Christian and Buddhist workshops growing up and my mother made an effort to join mass with me whenever she had the time. I was also exposed to the world outside of Japan very early in life thanks to going to a Christian school. Our school was filled with nuns from all over the world. .

Not only was my mother very good friends with the school Reverend Mother, principal and nuns, she had friends from the entire religious world. She would invite the Buddhist monks to join mass at my school chapel and they would join the celebration of Jesus' birth. At Christmas



mass, the Roshi even blew his conch shell in celebration of Jesus. Likewise, my mother would invite the nuns at my school to join meditation training at the Buddhist temple. There were even times when the monks would ask me to sing Christmas songs at their temple.

I felt there were no walls between Christians and Buddhists in honoring God, and there was harmony in their relationship with each other. I grew up thinking how, more than anything, they are peacefully harmonized and I was comfortable attending both houses of worship. It was a beautiful experience in the deep countryside of Japan, where we practiced our faiths together. I experienced living a harmonious inter-religious life in my home and in my community.

I believe God inspired the founders of all religions to walk their paths of faith and lead others to find Him. My unique upbringing in my village and the example set by my parents allowed me to seek that path towards God. I am especially grateful to my mother who provided me with the opportunities to expand my views and values of faith without being confined to just one religion. My childhood truly affirmed that God is part of my life and He is guiding each one of us along our paths towards the summit to finally meet Him.



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Serving Together With God

Dec 15, 2021



By Mark Johnson

Families or individuals who serve as a way of life usually do so due to the example that their parents, family members or mentors demonstrated early on. Education through example is the most powerful way to continue this way of life, the goal being to normalize service in all areas of our day-to-day experience and in every relationship we build. We have all experienced the joy and happiness that comes from living this way.

I learned so much from my Grandmother at an early age as she consistently lived a life of service, especially within our family. She did not make a big deal out of it or try to bring attention to herself. She lived this way naturally and was always emphasizing the importance of family and



God. She never once pushed her religion on anyone, but encouraged all of us to love and serve each other. This became the foundation for my own spiritual life.

At age 24, I joined a spiritual movement whose Founders' teaching on "living for others" also had a huge impact on my life. It was a continuation of what I had previously learned. This perspective helped me to connect to God on deeper levels. I learned the importance of deepening relationships of love in the family and expanding that into our community and the world.

I also learned and grew by being a part of a Small Group for the past 17 years with a focus on spiritual growth and community building. The Small Group environment is a great place to learn how to build authentic relationships, where love and caring for each other is the center piece. You not only learn to find your own voice, but also to listen to others and build authentic relationships. This experience has given me the foundation to reach out, and to make many new friends in the larger community. As I began reaching out, I found God guiding and connecting me with wonderful people each step of the way. This has been profound and has enriched my life in ways I never thought possible. Everywhere I went, whether it was at my favorite Starbucks, my health club, or wherever, new relationships were being built. One critical point to consider is that these relationships were built over time, through effort and consistency. To quote Stephen Covey, "With people, fast is slow and slow is fast."



About seven years ago, I got involved with the Cookstove Project. This organization builds clean cookstoves for families in Uganda and Nepal. In the beginning, I was not sure how I could contribute to this important work. While swimming at my health club, I became friends with a Japanese gentleman named

Ken, who lived locally. We were talking one day and he asked me if I was involved in community work. I told him about my connection with the Cookstove Project and what we do. Right away, he asked if we wanted to come to his Rotary Club and give a presentation, and of course I said, yes! I was not aware of Rotary or what it did. I just knew that it was a community organization that liked to help others, locally and internationally.

I reached out to the President of the Cookstove Project and we arranged to speak at the club. As it turned out, the Rotary Club really liked our work and offered us a generous donation. After that meeting, I was invited back twice and later decided that this is a great bunch of "like-minded" people. So I joined the club.

Being part of Rotary has been a huge game changer for me. Through this organization, I have become friends with so many wonderful people and have been connected with the larger community. One of the many benefits from being part of this organization, and through the relationships built there, was being able to give numerous Cookstove presentations to many other clubs in my district and beyond, and raise more than \$40,000 through this effort. This

has allowed us to help 4,000 families in a substantial way with a new clean cookstove. This happened very naturally and organically over time. You build trust through serving others, then God comes in and opens doors in ways you never thought possible. It is magical! Miracles come when we apply these simple principles of love and service.

After two years of being involved in Rotary, I was asked to join the Board of Directors, and a year later they asked me to be their president – something that I never sought out. I served two years as the president, and I cannot tell you how much I learned and gained from this experience. It is very humbling, knowing clearly that God is leading you on this path. You can be a part of any organization, not necessarily a Rotarian, for this to happen. Living these Universal Principles of love and service in your community and beyond is the key.



It is also important to remember that these types of experiences and our growth happen on the foundation of getting out of our comfort zones, taking risks and putting ourselves “out there” on a consistent basis. The fruit of our effort is not gained overnight, it takes time.

In conclusion, what I learned from my family, my spiritual elders and dear friends is that living this religious life is actually quite simple. It is all about service--“living for others, giving and forgetting, and giving again”. It is where we can meet and live with God every day. By our own example of living this way, we can naturally inspire our family and others to live this way themselves. And remember what St. Francis of Assisi once said, “Speak the gospel at all times, and when necessary use words.” I truly believe that our actions and service do speak louder than our words.

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Putting Love into Action in the Community

Dec 15, 2021



By Mike Yakawich

My wife, Yukiko, and I have raised five children in Billings, MT. We had a wonderful journey living on the South Side where Yukiko and I started the ministry. It was a time of pioneering. We had to be creative, innovative and resourceful. Certainly, by the grace of God and many good people, we were able to prosper under the “Big Sky”. We both met great men and women who embraced us and cared deeply about us.



One person who comes to mind is “Grandma Betty”. She was born in the neighborhood where we lived. She married and had two children. Grandma Betty kept a good eye on our family. She was a strong Catholic

devoted to her faith. She lived her faith by expressing such welcomeness and

kindness to our family, especially in the early days of our work when it was lonely and we were facing some persecution due to our faith. Subsequently, Grandma's children and four grandchildren became very close to our family. Even to this day, Grandma Betty's children and grandchildren call us "Aunt Yukiko" and "Uncle Mike". Later, I was honored to help conduct her funeral.

We met another great pair, of many others, Tiny and Chris. We met them one day when we were blessing the neighborhood. Tiny, the wife, initially teased me for what we were doing. I think that we, like many, were tested to see if we were sincere or not. Well, we became like family, and over the following years they would always invite us to their home for Christmas and other holidays. When I had taken some trips overseas for my mission work, this couple picked up our kids from school or invited the family over for dinner as ways of helping my wife out while I was away.

Our family, along with others in the community, launched a substance abuse prevention program (The March Against Drugs and Violence). It began with a dozen kids and some parents. Over the years, we gained sponsors and it grew to an annual event that includes over 300



participants. We had guest speakers from the area who were recovering addicts speaking on why abusing drugs was so harmful. Our children and others were always so willing to help haul the chairs and tables for set up and take down. Often, our children and other youth would comment, "It is nice to see we are not alone taking a stand against drug abuse." They found so much more value in this effort than one could imagine.

Community service also included wonderful homemade cookies and strawberry jam made by my wife. We could always share some good will with such treats which later created such a reputation that people looked forward to her treats. Whether she gave them to our business contacts, the friends in the neighborhood, the teachers at our kids' schools or fellow city councilmembers, outreach and service with something homemade made mouths water and hearts melt.



There were many personal benefits in doing community service that came about as "collateral blessings". The volunteer services were not done for this reason but my children came to tell me how they realized that doing community service has so much additional value. They earned college scholarships

through community service, and even gained letters of recommendation to attend college or receive funding for their education due to their community service investment. In fact, the Governor of Montana issues a \$1K scholarship



for any senior in high school who conducts 100 hours of community service. Our children found this not so hard to do, especially when they and their parents are in the habit of doing community service.

Nevertheless, community service was fun as well. There was usually plenty of free food, pizza and treats at most service projects, which everyone enjoyed. There was normally a lot of SWAG that partnering agencies would bring to information tables. We even had at times pictures of one of our kids appear on TV or the local newspaper, which was maybe an inspiration for them. Well, I think they did not care that much about that, but it was a great witness to their school teachers, friends and family.

Our children's Catholic school teachers knew that we were not Catholic. When the teachers saw them or their parents in the local media, it was a powerful witness. In fact, we even had the Catholic High school band that our children were part of come out and perform at our events, such as the Community 9-11 Celebration of Life.



In the end, people usually care more about who you are and what you do than what you believe or think. Actions do speak louder than words.

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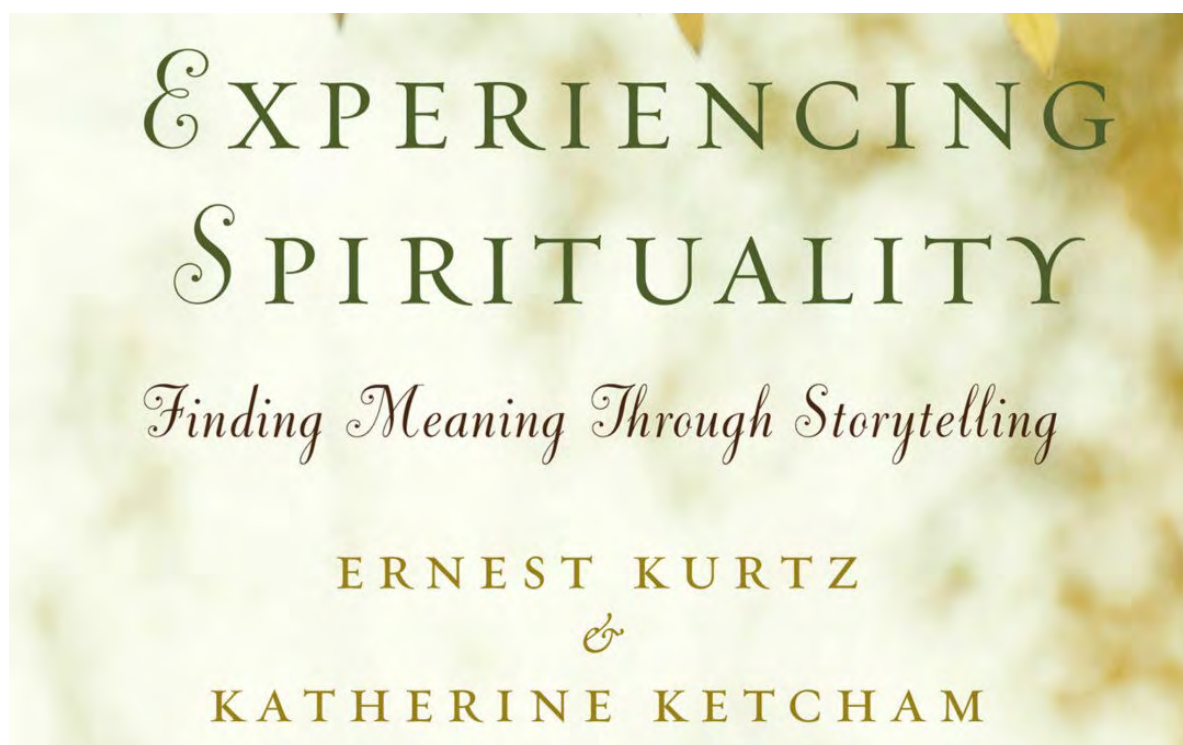
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Experiencing Spirituality – Book Review

Jan 3, 2022 | 0 comments



“Experiencing Spirituality – Finding Meaning Through Storytelling” by Ernest Kurtz & Katherine Ketcham is probably my all-time favorite book. It’s a quest into the essence of our human condition as it relates to our innermost resemblance and connection with our Heavenly Father. And it does it in a most refreshing, honest, and approachable way. Peppered with stories (which are our most direct paths to conveying truths), it allows the reader to skip through chapters (segments) of interest. An incredibly deep, yet easily approachable and entertaining way to give thought to our essential self, and it reflects upon our foundation in the community.

Review by Jerry Ciemny

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Lorenzo's Oil – Movie Review

Jan 2, 2022 | 0 comments



This movie is based on the true story of parents who fight for the life of their son with a very rare and, until then, incurable disease. Their desperate love for their child and each other drives them to go beyond what was considered possible and actually find a cure for that illness. Some of the most moving moments: when the father literally is given a revelation which leads to a major breakthrough in finding the cure; when the husband & wife finally overcome the conflicts that divide them, find peace together and that leads to the aforementioned breakthrough; the mother's absolute devotion to her son and faith that his spirit is greater than the illness that debilitates him. Though very painful to watch (as the filmmakers did not shy away from displaying the child's suffering), it is a very real testimony to the power of true love to resolve ANY problem in this world. It is one of those films that everyone should watch at least once in their lives. Its message will stay with you forever.

Review by Patrick F Nolan

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