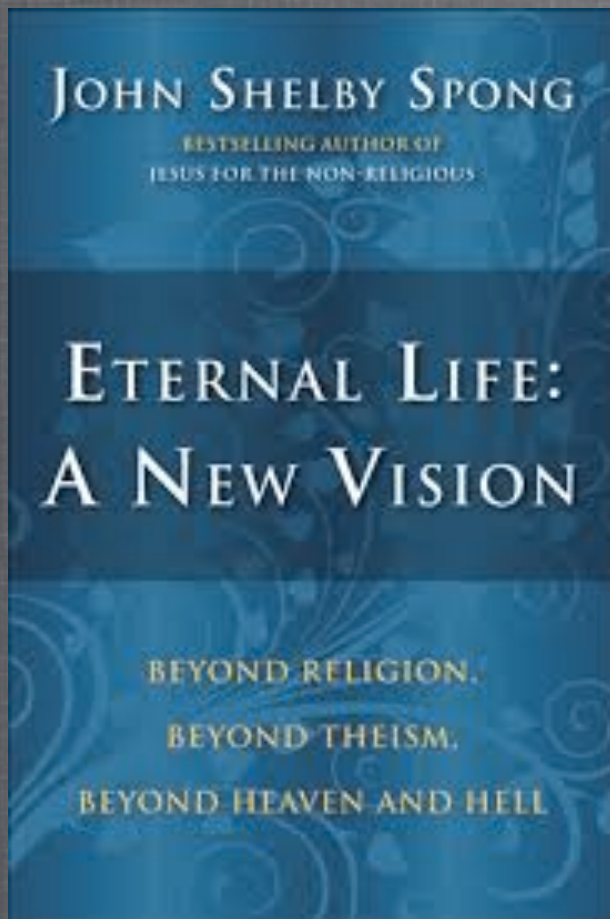
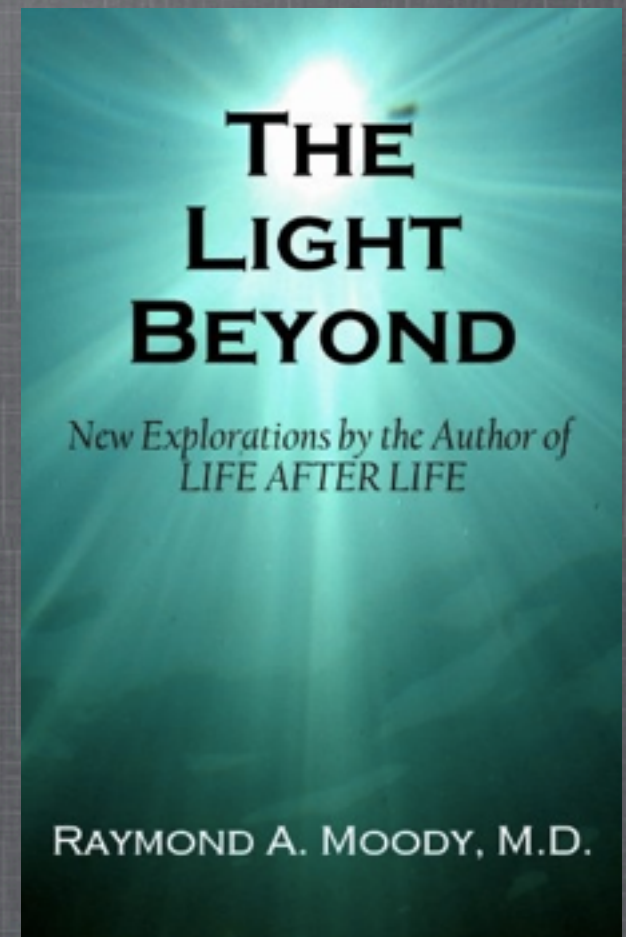


MEETING DEATH WITH HOPE AND UNDERSTANDING



A bookstudy
ACTS
St David's
United
Church
Calgary

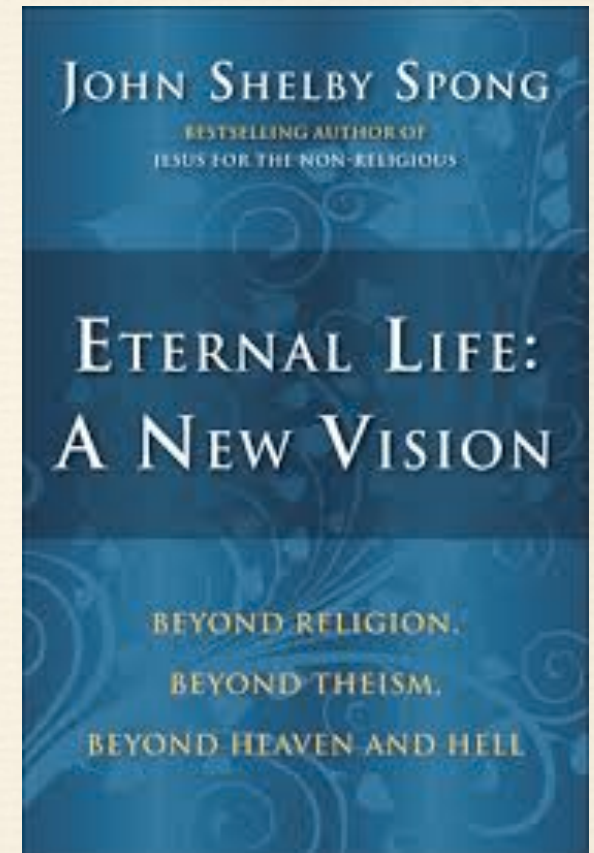


Internet Page: death.stdavidscalgary.net

Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

Session 6

- ❖ Opening
- ❖ Presentation - Introducing new book.
- ❖ Video - John Spong @ Chautauqua
- ❖ Break
- ❖ Discussion
- ❖ Closing



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Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

Spong - Eternal Life - From the Preface

“I have come to see Jesus as the one who pushed the boundaries of self-consciousness so dramatically that he redefined both God and the meaning of human life. That is why the Christian claim has always been that in Jesus God is met, engaged and known. The issue here lies in breaking out of the traditional theistic definition of God, which blocks for so many the meaning of Jesus.” (xix)

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Spong - Eternal Life

Leaving Moody, Background to Spong

Our course is an attempt to engage meaningfully both Moody's book on Near Death Experience and Spong's on Eternal Life.

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Spong - Eternal Life

Comparing Moody and Spong – a Beginning

Moody begins with science and works into the realm of the spirit.

Spong begins in the realm of the spirit, respects the role of scientific thinking, and helps us create new ways of understanding and speaking about death, dying and eternal life.

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Spong - Eternal Life

Both Moody and Spong call us to a helpful reshaping of our ways of understanding and describing our understandings.

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Chapter One “Setting the stage – A Necessary Personal Word”

Spong has carefully studied the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. He considers other faith traditions and parapsychology to shape his own personal approach to death, dying and eternal life.

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“... there is no consistent meaning in the New Testament about even so central a part of the Christian tradition as the resurrection of Jesus.” (p. 11)

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“After reading parapsychology on NDE’s and “Out-of-Body” experiences I found myself more skeptical than convinced.”

This book on Eternal Life is more an “internal narrative” a “spiritual autobiography” if you will
(p. 17)

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“Reality can be approached in a number of ways and we cannot bind reality with the limits of our own perceptions.” (p. 17)

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“Job asked, “If a man (or a woman) dies, will he (or she) live again?””

“My answer is “Yes” – now let me take you on the journey that brought me to that answer.”

(p. 17)

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Chapter Two – “Life is Accidental”

Three Explanations to the Beginnings of Human Life
on Earth

Scientific

Mythological

Theological Spiritual

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Spong believes we must accept the essential fact of the scientific narrative.

“I can quite accurately be described as “an accidental human being.”

Spong compares the scientific with the traditional “theistic” narratives and asks

“Since we are the product of the accidental forces of nature can we therefore believe that there is something eternal about us?” (p. 28)

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Chapter Three – “All Life is Deeply Linked”

“Life is still a profound mystery, even to those of us who are in the process of living it.”

(p.30) Moody would agree.

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“The critical moment in what we call life was when, in the evolutionary process, ‘consciousness’ expanded into ‘self-consciousness.’” (p. 33)

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““Why?” became a crucial question for developing humans as they began to distinguish themselves from the world of nature.” (p. 33)

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“The meaning of “time” began to permeate the newly self-conscious humans” (p. 35)

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The “Garden” image is a significant one.

“Life now seems an unending challenge between the longing “to return to Eden” and the new reality of “eviction from the Garden””

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“The only way I will know what it means to live (after Eden) is to discover what it means to die, and the reverse is also true.” (p. 38)

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Chapter Four – “Dancing with Death – the Discovery of Mortality”

We live – we die. We exist between these two realities.

The author describes how the reality of death unfolded for him from when he was a small child.

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“Now I lay me down to sleep ... if I should die before I wake” (p. 43)

- reflects what emerged as an inadequate explanation for him as he grew up
- unsatisfactory terms of both “hell” and “heaven” for him
- reward and punishment
- we tend to believe unquestioningly what our culture tells us about this.

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“I knew I needed to find better answers and became a religious ‘roamer’.” (p. 52)

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Video - 10 min

Excerpt

John Spong at Chautauqua 2011

short <http://youtu.be/sisWA3rImrs>

full 64m <http://fora.tv/2010/06/28/>

John Shelby Spong Facing the Issues of Mortality

BREAK





retreat

to be silent here
invites solace to visit
while the mind's winds calm

again comes resolve
to unravel mystery
in silence to see

then comes the moment
that seeking wants an anchor
the cease of drifting

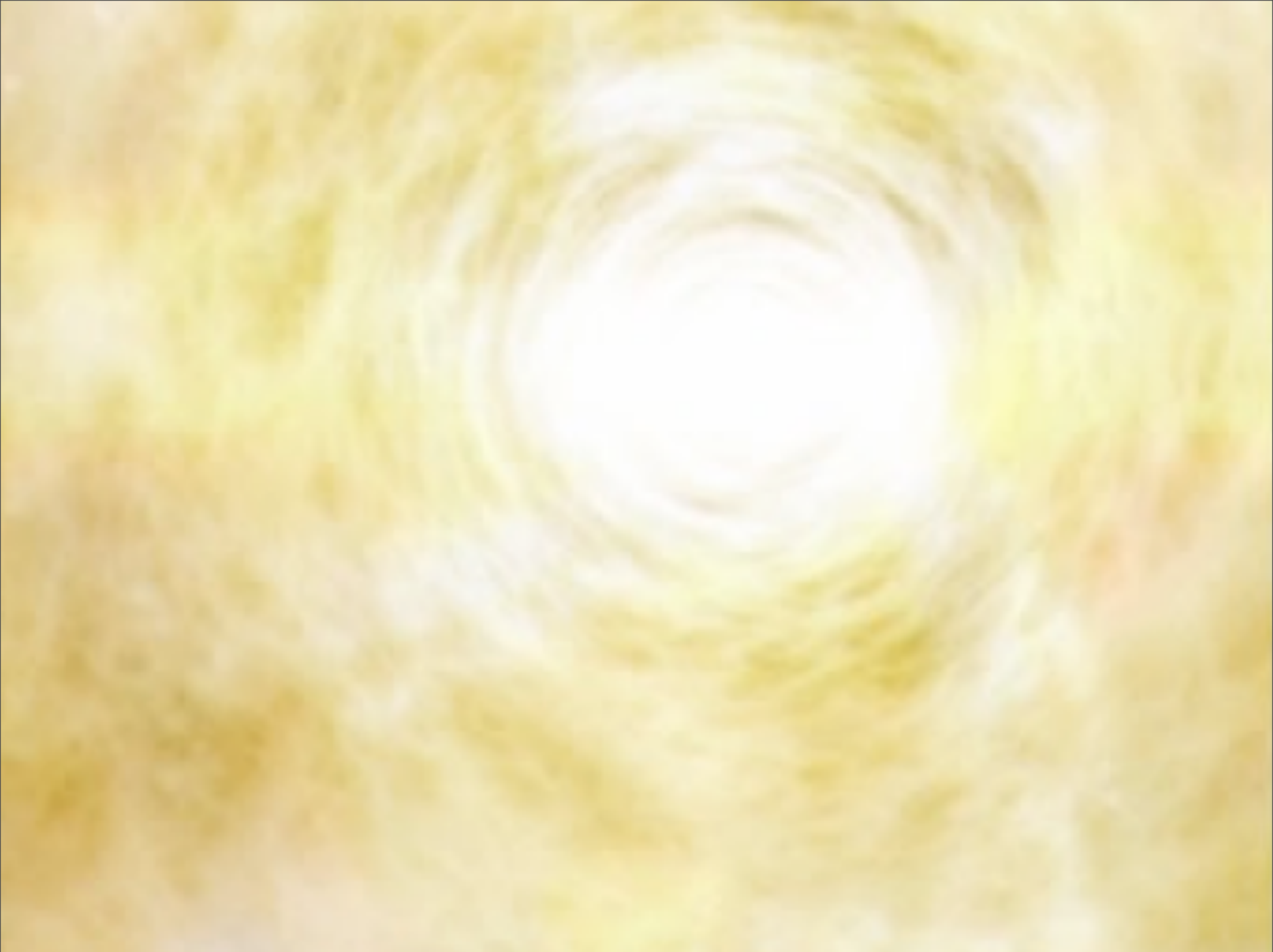
finding in silence
a spiritual direction
attending whispers

distant cumulous rising
st francis now free of snow

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Discussion Questions

- Discuss your experience with death.
- When you asked questions about death, what answers did you get?
- Where you OK with those answers? If not, what did you do?



Monday, 10 March, 14