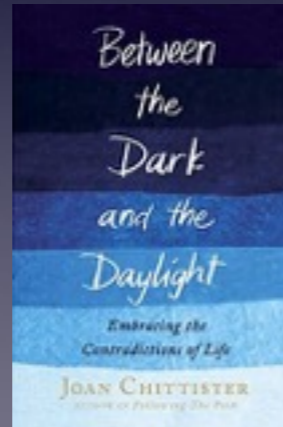


Spiritual Darkness Two Studies



ACTS
Fall 2014

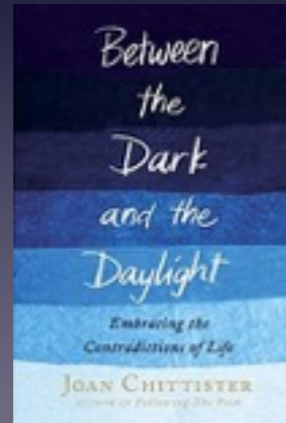
St David's United Church
Calgary

Opening

description
link
time

Between the Dark and the Daylight

Session 6



- Opening
- Introductions
- Chapter Summaries
- Media
- Discussions
- Closing

Between the Dark and the Daylight

Session 6 - Readings

Selected Chapters

1. THE LIGHT FOUND IN DARKNESS
2. THE DELUSION OF FRUSTRATION
3. THE PLACE OF TSUNAMIS IN THE OCEAN OF LIFE
4. THE MIRAGE OF SECURITY
5. THE INSECURITY OF CERTAINTY
6. THE FRAGILITY OF ACHIEVEMENT

The 3 green chapters, 1,2 and 5 will be looked at tonight.

Introduction - Spiritual Confusion



Introduction

- Part of the soul stirs at night ... “It’s then, in the still of life, when we least expect it, that questions emerge from the damp murkiness of our inner underworld”
- “It is these questions that the great spiritual traditions of every age have always set out to face and tame.”

In her introduction, Chittister discusses confusion and hopes her book will help dispel the confusion, as seems the core of the great spiritual traditions.

Introduction

- “This single-minded concentration on the essence and purpose of life, along with a focus on inner quietude and composure, makes for a life lived in white light and deep heat at the very core of the soul.”
- “this book is meant to shine light on the inner confusions of our own age.”

Video

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Spiritual Confusion

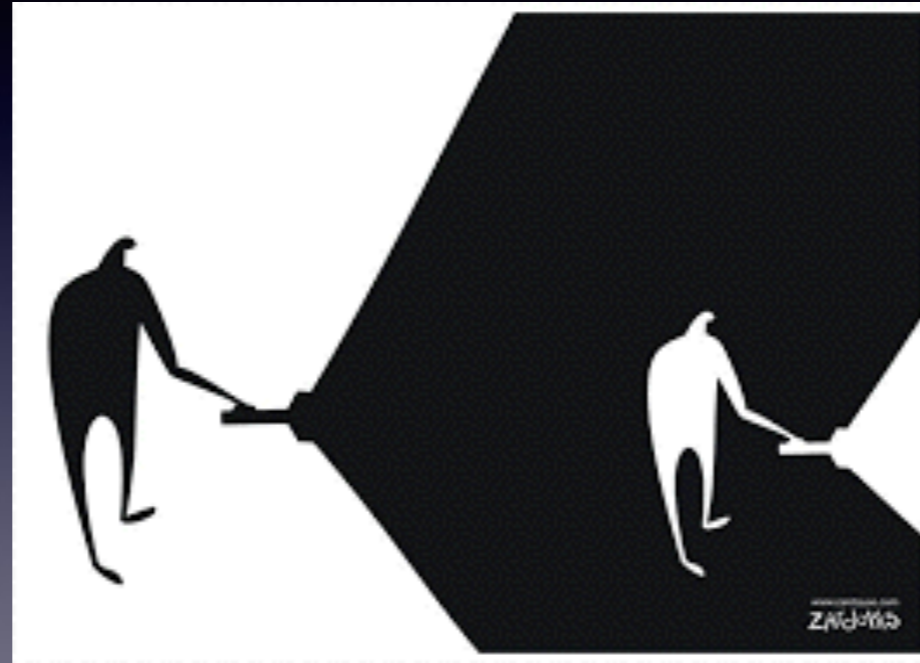
3m excerpt from an informal talk on Spiritual Confusion.

Christ Anglican Church
Ashley, North Carolina
<https://vimeo.com/christanglican>

In this 3m excerpt, Anglican priest Dr Walden points to the familiar gospel message of following Christ as the key means to declutter our modern lives and eliminate our spiritual confusion. Surprisingly he quotes Nietzsche to illustrate his point. Walden says freedom from order is not freedom but anarchy and that it is only in choosing who you will follow that you find meaningful freedom.



Ch 1 The Light found in Darkness



Chapter 1 then, The Light found in Darkness.

Chittister as a nun is sharing her training and experience, That only from spiritual darkness can the light we require be found. And that it is precisely from this inner overcoming, illumination, and understanding that our spiritual growth happens.

Ch 1 The Light found in Darkness

- “Only the experience of our own darkness gives us the light we need to be of help to others whose journey into the dark spots of life is only just beginning. ”
- “Growth is the boundary between the darkness of unknowing and the light of new wisdom, new insight, new vision of who and what we ourselves have become. After darkness we are never the same again. We are only stronger, simpler, surer than ever before that there is nothing in life we cannot survive ...”

Ch 1 The Light found in Darkness

- “There is a light in us that only darkness itself can illuminate. It is the glowing calm that comes over us when we finally surrender to the ultimate truth of creation: that there is a God and we are not it. Whatever we had assumed to be an immutable dimension of the human enterprise is not. In fact, it is gone and there is nothing we can do to bring it back. Then the clarity of it all is startling. Life is not about us; we are about the project of finding Life. At that moment, spiritual vision illuminates all the rest of life. And it is that light that shines in darkness.”

Video

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Integral Spirituality: from Belief to Liberation

Philosopher Ken Wilbur speaks of the confusion of so many spiritual voices and “religious orientations” in the world today. 4m32s excerpt

<https://vimeo.com/channels/integralspirituality>

Where Chittister has pointed out that spiritual growth is marked by finding the light in the dark, Wilbur here, points out that this experience of light only happens to a few. There is he says a majority that believe, and a minority that find the light of liberation.

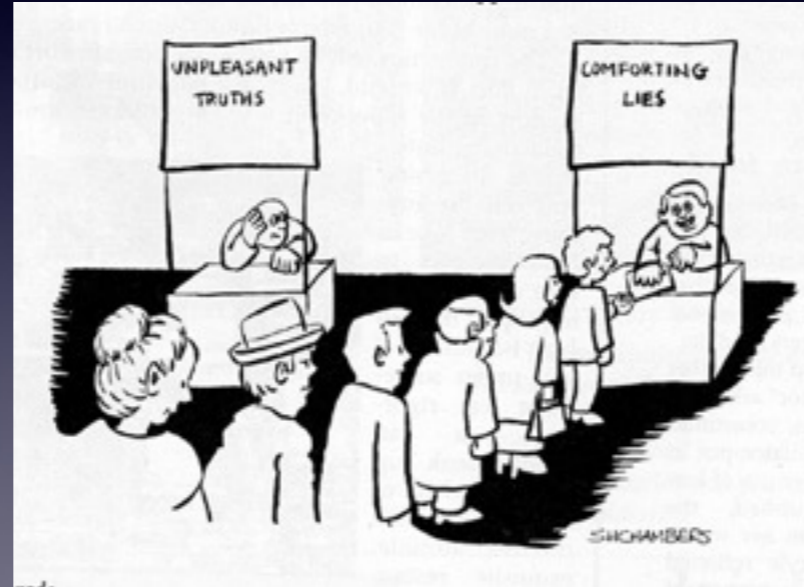
It is important says Wilbur, for our own spiritual development that we distinguish between the common religious experience of “the fundamentals”, and that spiritual practice that helps one “see the face of god”.

It is about finding the light within the dark. Wilbur has a vimeo channel if you want more of him.



Ch 2 The Delusion of Frustration

Luigi Pirandello wrote of our capacity to fool ourselves:
“ ‘Truth’ [is] what we think it is at any given moment of time.”



In Chapter 2 The Delusion of Frustration, Chichester discusses how shallow we often are in our frustration with the fuss of ordinary living. And yet significant spiritual growth is offered to us by certain of these frustrations. That the ancient lesson is to be content, and we will find that God is “standing by”.

Ch 2 The Delusion of Frustration

- “Frustration is a cover-up for something we have yet to face in ourselves. It lies in what we decide we have the right to demand from life rather than in concern for what life demands of us.”
- “To claim to be frustrated in the midst of life’s normalcies only defeats our desire to be a fully functioning human being. And, ironically, we do it to ourselves.”

Gloom, Despair and Agony on Me



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAAKPJEq1Ew>

Ch 2 The Delusion of Frustration

- “The lesson is clear. Learning to be contented with what we have—and no more—escapes us. The ancients tell us that, to develop spiritually, we must discover how to control ourselves in the face of what we claim to lack but have no right to expect.”
- “Only then can we begin to rest in the arms of a God who stands by, ready to companion us through our confrontation with the self to the Spirit of Freedom that awaits us at the end of the journey to Truth.

Christ and the Rich Young Ruler - 2m26s



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YehxfK8oXx0>

Ch 5 The Insecurity of Certainty



Chapter 5 The Insecurity of Certainty.

She includes the famous lines of the poet Shelley from Ozymandias. The cartoon illustrates it well.

and on the pedestal these words appear my name is Ozymandias ... look on my works, ye mighty, and despair! ... Nothing beside remains, round that decay of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare ... the lone and level sands stretch far away...

well, so much for 3 hours worth of sidewalk chalk art!



and what better mixture of irony to illustrate street art than this Peanuts enactment of the famous Beatles picture at Abbey Road?

Ch 5 The Insecurity of Certainty

- “So many of the illusions of life hide in full view. But we cling to them, nevertheless. We need them, perhaps, for reasons at first not apparent, even to ourselves. Power, one of the major illusions of life, is the modern drug of choice.”
- “We expect our talents, triumphs, and proficiencies to be recognized, to be rewarded. We want our achievements noted, our status guaranteed. And we want more and more of both. We want everything we can have. ”

Ch 5 The Insecurity of Certainty

- “So we toss and turn at night. We stay awake trying to plan for the unexpected. But the very fact that a thing is unexpected makes planning a foolish and feeble exercise.”
- “Certainty has its advantages, of course, seductive and sirenlike. It promises us immortal indemnity, yes, and it also brings with it the sweet taste of eternal delight. The problem is that its assertions are sterile, lifeless, frail. They bring no warranty of their warranty.”

Ch 5 The Insecurity of Certainty

- “When we opt for certainty, we make change inconceivable. When change comes unbidden and without our permission, it looks more dangerous than daring, more of an enemy than a liberator. ”
- “It is the spirit of invention and possibility to which uncertainty calls us. What uncertainty brings us to is the security that comes with knowing that we finally developed in ourselves the ability to grow, to adjust, to become.”

The Divine Comedy
I Believe in the Certainty of Chance - 3m20s



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=003pen7EtRI>

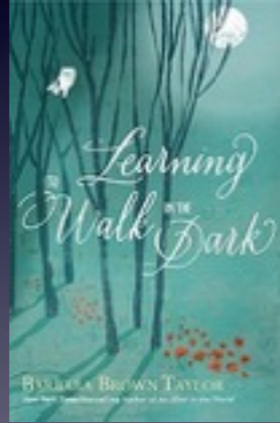
Discussion Questions

1. what sorts of things must we remain certain about?
2. what sorts of things are we willing to live with uncertainty about?
3. what is the difference?
4. where do confusion and frustration fit in this story “between the dark and the daylight”?

Break

Closing

Learning to Walk in the Dark



Next Readings

7. THE EMPTINESS OF ACCUMULATION
8. THE POVERTY OF PLENTY
9. THE ROLE OF FAILURE IN SUCCESS
10. THE SUCCESS OF FAILURE
11. THE ENERGY THAT COMES FROM EXHAUSTION
12. THE PRODUCTIVITY OF REST AND RECREATION

Study Website

<http://dark.stdavidscalgary.net>