

ALL SOULS CHURCH, UNITARIAN

Covenant Group Ministry

Covenant Group Guide

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“Wholeness”

By Mary Beth Hatem

Spirit, Soul and Body

We are not beings of separate and distinctively different components, but a whole person. We are a spirit who has a soul that lives in a body. All of these aspects of man are inextricably interwoven. To be whole, to be complete, each aspect of a person must be well. When any aspect of our being is not well, the other aspects are adversely affected.

Dave Fletcher, Faith and Health Connection

Wholeness and Our Potential

To be great, be whole;
Exclude nothing, exaggerate nothing that is not you.
Be whole in everything. Put all you are
Into the smallest thing you do.
So, in each lake, the moon shines with splendor
Because it blooms up above.
— Fernando Pessoa, *Poems of Fernando Pessoa*

Wholeness and Work

“As the connections have been broken by the fragmentation and isolation of work, they can be restored by restoring the wholeness of work. There is work that is isolating, harsh, destructive, specialized or trivialized into meaninglessness. And there is work that is restorative, convivial, dignified and dignifying, and pleasing. Good work is not just the maintenance of connections - as one is now said to work "for a living" or "to support a family" - but the enactment of connections. It is living, and a way of living; it is not support for a family in the sense of an exterior brace or prop, but is one of the forms and acts of love. (pg. 133, *The Body and the Earth*)”
— Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays*

The Paradox of Wholeness

To forsake all others does not mean - because it cannot mean - to ignore or neglect all others, to hide or be hidden from all others, or to desire or love no others. To live in marriage is a responsible way to live in sexuality, as to live in a household is a responsible way to live in the world. One cannot enact or fulfill one's love for womankind or mankind, or even for all the women or men to whom one is attracted. If one is to have the power and delight of one's sexuality, then the generality of instinct must be resolved in a responsible relationship to a

particular person. Similarly, one cannot live in the world; that is, one cannot become, in the easy, generalizing sense with which the phrase is commonly used, a "world citizen." There can be no such thing as a "global village." No matter how much one may love the world as a whole, one can live fully in it only by living responsibly in some small part of it. Where we live and who we live there with define the terms of our relationship to the world and to humanity. We thus come again to the paradox that one can become whole only by the responsible acceptance of one's partiality. (Pg.117-118, "The Body and the Earth")”

— Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays*

The Urge Toward Wholeness

“The discipline of creation, be it to paint, compose, write, is an effort towards wholeness.”

— Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*

“For the person with creative potential there is no wholeness except in using it.”

— Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant as Leader*

“Cultural wisdom says 'Don't quit your day job.' Yet I think these desires represent our psyche's stretch toward wholeness. And to be whole, as many religious traditions teach, is to make manifest a unique face of God in the world. We don't want to be irresponsible, yet for every accountant who deserts his family and sails for Tahiti, ten American men have heart attacks at their desks, after hours.”

— Mary Rose O'Reilley, *The Barn at the End of the World: The Apprenticeship of a Quaker, Buddhist Shepherd*

Wholeness Is About Darkness and Light

“But if I am to let my life speak things I want to hear, things I would gladly tell others, I must also let it speak things I do not want to hear and would never tell anyone else! My life is not only about my strengths and virtues; it is also about my liabilities and my limits, my trespasses and my shadow. An inevitable though often ignored dimension of the quest for 'wholeness' is that we must embrace what we dislike or find shameful about ourselves as well as what we are confident and proud of.”

— Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*

The Relationship between Whole and Part...John Muir

When we contemplate the whole globe as one great dewdrop, striped and dotted with continents and islands, flying through space with other stars all singing and shining together as one, the whole universe appears as an infinite storm of beauty.

There is not a fragment in all nature, for every relative fragment of one thing is a full harmonious unit in itself.

To be whole means. . .

To be whole means to be a flexible adventurer, ready to meet life's challenges with engagement and curiosity. It means feeling a sense of connection to the whole of life -- to other people, to new ideas, to the world around us. It means thinking less about 'I, me, and mine' and more about how we are all interconnected in a great web of life. It means caring for others and doing what we can to make the world a better place. It means recognizing that happiness arises within us independent of any external cause and removing the obstructions to that inner peace and happiness that are our birthright as human beings."

-- Joan Borysenko in *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*

For Reflection and Discussion

1 Are you 'whole' in spirit, soul and body? Does this explanation of wholeness resonate with you?

2 What is your personal definition of wholeness? How do we become whole?

3 Are you moving toward wholeness? How are you doing this? How do you see your participation at All Souls in the context of wholeness?