

Soul- Questions

**Is the soul solid, like iron?
Or is it tender and breakable....?**

Mary Oliver

Living soulfully is not about striving, being driven, or searching for perfection. It calls out from us that which lies hidden within: a capacity for openness, wonder and awe. It asks us to attend to everything that is, with patience, sensitivity and expectation.

Just as we have learned that it is better to say "I am a body" rather than "I have a body", **so I don't have a soul, I am a soul.** With soul I am becoming more aware of myself as a unity, not with parts to dispose of or abuse. I realize I am a deeply mysterious and beautiful gift. And I wake up to the truth that I am not an individual, autonomous being, but a person-in-relation - that I AM because YOU ARE. This is the soul's gift to us.

Look back over your life and notice where you have been "driven" to achieve something...

...to be someone.

Gently try and see what lies behind this driven-ness.

Face and accept the anxiety you might feel at the heart of your life...

...your insecurity and your nagging and threatening sense of inadequacy.

Our soul "speaks" to us when we experience poverty of spirit: when we experience the vulnerability of not knowing, of not being in control. We are in the right place when we experience such poverty. These moments are where we are "found" by God, "addressed" by God, who is asking us to stay with this soul-scape. In the Bible the same word can mean both "soul" and "desire". God is the One who satisfies the longings of human beings.

Caring for the soul means being focused in the present. It involves patience, waiting, receptivity. It means being affectively present, noticing my feelings. It is non-compulsive, non-controlling, non-competitive. It is about encounter, not performance.

We live the given life, not the planned.

Wendell Berry

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Look at your life and see how some of your suffering has come from failed plans, broken dreams, thwarted ambitions...and see if you can be in touch with, appreciate and embrace, accept and love the life you have been given. Of course some things we face in our life need to change, but instead of simply trying to change those circumstances that resist change, perhaps they are asking you to approach life differently.

“Religion has always been to me the wound, not the bandage.”

Dennis Potter

Thomas, after the crucifixion, was devastated by Jesus’ death, and desperately wanted proof so he could believe. He only came to resurrection faith- not through some evidence “out there”, but from within himself. He came to see, as H.A. Williams puts it, that **“I cannot properly say ‘I believe’ unless it’s another way of saying ‘I am’”**. He realized that Jesus’ wounds were in reality his wounds, Jesus’ vulnerability was in fact his vulnerability, Jesus’ death was in truth the death of all his needs for proof, and he woke up to the fact that Jesus’ life was his life - utterly renewed and transformed.

Kevin Hart, an Australian poet, ends his poem *The Companion* with the line: **“I come to wound you and to heal the wound”**