

The Secret – Is It Just Spiritual Materialism?

If you haven't heard, the latest buzz is all about The Secret. Many folks say it's HUGE. I saw the movie last week. In case you're unaware, the movie's general theme is about creating what you want by accessing the Universal Law of Attraction, that is, what we think about is what we attract. If you think about positive things, well, positive things result. Ditto the negative. But what intrigues me is the seeming use of spirituality as a marketing tool to manifest "stuff" and a naivety with which the narrators disregard the inner workings of the psyche which can sabotage the positive thinking approach to "having it all."

For me, the Secret is the Napoleon Hill, "Think and Grow Rich" of 2006-7. I've seen the Secret and view it as a prime example of "spiritual materialism" which is behavior that is purely ego-driven. Some thoughts:

When there is a conflict between a positive thought and a negative emotion, the emotion will always win. So, when one decides to "think positive" but is doing so because, emotionally, they are frustrated, angry, envious, jealous, or fearful, etc., there's a pretty good chance the thought will not manifest - which is one reason why many folks' attempts at living the Secret ("positive thinking", visualizing positive manifesting, and prayer, for that matter) end up in not "getting what I want." Too, when the effort, and for many it is efforting (which goes against the Yin and Yang of Universal flow) comes from one's ego, there's a good chance that one will not get what one wants or one will get what one doesn't want (i.e., the Soul's response to the ego's demand). Trust is sorely lacking here.

Too, in our Western culture, we are basically averse to pain on every level. This week I saw an interview with Jennifer Hudson, the young singer who was voted off of American Idol and stole the show in the movie, Dreamgirls. Jennifer was asked how she responded to being eliminated from Idol when most people thought she would win. She admitted that it was painful and that she cried a lot, but that eventually she returned to her faith. "I chose to trust that God had a bigger plan for me than I could see at the time," she explained. Trust...surrender...allow...probably not a lot of hand-wringing, mental gymnastics, "mind control", positive thinking (better go see the Secret!!!).....just allowing and trust.

The Secret, in my mind, is supposed to be the antidote to experiencing life's disappointments, or, for that matter, eliminating life's disappointments. For me, Jennifer's story is a powerful reminder of how life's disappointments may in fact be preparation for something even more significant in our lives. And, this belief has the best chance of coming true when one makes a demonstrated (read "conscious") commitment to learn and grow from one's present day circumstances NOT by evading, avoiding, denying and "thinking" one's way away from them.

So, for example, what am I learning about me, my work, my business, or how I am in relationship.. what's really at cause when it comes to a dearth of clients, or clients I would like to have, or a painful breakup of a relationship, or... The pain and suffering are teachers pointing to what we need to learn about "me" - about who I am and how I am in life. The pain forces one to grow, to mature emotionally and spiritually, to face fears and frustrations...the pain is a call to action, a call to learn, an opportunity to grow...and since many folks refuse to be self-responsible for working on their own "stuff", well, now we have the latest quick-fix, The Secret, that says, "OH, no biggie, just think positive and all will be well." Hmmm.

Just be positive...hmmm...my take is there are many, many silently angry, fearful, frustrated folks out there...folks who have 20, 30, 40, 50 years of anger, fear, frustration,

etc. inhabiting their cells and have never dealt with their emotional awareness or maturity. These are some of the 98% of the folks who will find it challenging, well-nigh impossible, to sustain positive attitudes, positive outlooks, positive reactions to the vicissitudes of life...on whom the secret of The Secret will be lost. "Waddya mean, I thought positive six times yesterday and nothing happened!?" Six times in the midst of a day replete with negative judgments of others, bullying, gossiping, being sarcastic, angry, mean-spirited and disrespectful, not trusting anything or anyone, lying, cheating.

For the 2% who really, really get it, the Secret is no secret - living life from the inside out, trusting without needing to control, experiencing life's pain as a teacher, surrendering their ego, seeing that life is larger than getting that parking space or Starbucks...that's it's not about spiritual materialism. When a pickpocket meets a Holy man, all he sees is the pockets. IMHO, The Secret, for many (over and above the 2%), is all about the pockets.

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