

Oprah, Steven, John – and you and me

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Bible, Mark 8:36)

Oprah has been the talk of the town over the past ten days, namely the fact that she has put on weight and now weighs 200 pounds. She recently appeared in a television interview where she courageously expressed her abject anger at herself for her weight issues. Oprah - one of the ten richest... Oprah – one of the ten most important... Oprah, one of the ten most influential... Now, Oprah-one of the most angry... Oprah, who has spent hundreds of hours and untold thousands of dollars having a personal physician, a personal trainer and chef and a personal spiritual guide at her side. Oprah who has accomplished what few women have. Oprah, overweight and very, very angry.

Steven Good was one of Chicago's most well-known and successful real estate moguls. He had a zest for life. He was described as a gregarious, positive and generous man, with a big personality, someone who regularly did deals with Donald Trump. This week he was found shot to death (a suicide)...in his Jaguar.

John is a billionaire. As described on CNBC by a financial psychiatrist - one who deals with people's emotional and psychological issues around money - John's fortune had just “dwindled” from one billion dollars to five-hundred million. John was now experiencing severe depression and a sense of incredible loss.

So, what's at play here?

“Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude.” -- Denis Waitley

Interestingly, during a Larry King (CNN) show this week that dealt with Oprah, and included Oprah's spiritual guide, personal trainer and physician, the question of “why?” came up. While her personal trainer and doctor pointed to such things as need for commitment to stay healthy, need to be regimented, need for consistency, need to slow down, lack of Vitamin D, and the like, her spiritual guide offered something very telling – (1) that she needed to stop overworking and achieving, which was related to (2) she needed to move away from allowing her ego to drive her life and stop “conquering” in order to feel like “somebody”. She needed to allow her self and her potential (true and real self) to come out

And, here is the heart of the matter for Oprah, Steven, John and for you and me.

Do-ing and having, things and stuff, working and efforting, materialism and wealth spell the death-knell, emotionally, psychologically, mentally, and spiritually when we use these things to define who we are, when we create our identity around them, when we use them in an attempt to create our happiness and well-be-ing, when we use them to mask our deeper dissatisfaction with who we feel we are deep down.

Obsessed with a self-image, or craving an identity, that depends on living “outside” our self reflects an ego ideal whose sole purpose is to substitute for our perceived feeling of imperfection, lack or defects in our self or in our situation. This false identity arises from a place of non- acceptance of what we experience in our personality so we strive to overlook and deny who we are, and work on the outside to replace who we are with a fake or phony sense of our self, to shore ourselves up. In essence, because we feel we are not “enough” in some way with who we are, we effort to try to be someone else. Trying to be someone else, we look to the outside, and most often get

caught up in a lifestyle that is obsessed with materialistically do-ing, be-ing and hav-ing, with needing to be seen, or feel we are “somebody” – an unconscious attempt to find our self which we call soul – a fruitless search when done outside our self.

"Why aren't you happy? It's because ninety-nine percent of everything you do, and think, and say, is for yourself -- and there isn't one."
-Wu Wei Wu

Peace, joy, happiness, health and well-be-ing can only be found within. These qualities exist within us now, waiting to be discovered. Yet we often tend to believe we cannot experience well-be-ing by just being ourselves, so we tend to look to the outside world to satisfy our needs and longings. Our outer life reflects back to us the way we think, feel and behave. The outer world is all effects.

"The great Western disease is, 'I'll be happy when... When I get the money. When I get a BMW. When I get this job.' Well, the reality is, you never get to when. The only way to find happiness is to understand that happiness is not out there. It's in here. And happiness is not next week. It's now." -Marshall Goldsmith

It's important that we need to go to the source inside for all of life's treasures. On the spiritual path, we must be diligent to discriminate whether we are acting from ego or from soul. If ego is in charge, what we do is self-referencing. At the deepest levels, we are motivated by our own self-interest. We're looking out for ourselves more than for others. Although soul works through individuals, its focus is on the needs of others and on service to humanity, **without the quid-pro-quo of "giving to get"** – getting something that make me feel like somebody because deeper down, I don't feel I am somebody.

"I don't think God cares where we were graduated or what we did for a living. God wants to know who we are. Discovering this is the work of the soul – it is our true life's work." -- Bernie Siegel

For Oprah, Steven, John, and for you and me, our self-worth must come from the inside, not from our net-worth or from our ego-driven ideas of how we should be that unconsciously drive the do-ings, be-ings and hav-ings that fill our minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Where are you not good enough, not worthy enough?
- How are you searching for peace and contentment outside of yourself?
- How do you think of money?
- How do you feel about money?
- In what ways do money, power, and position rule your life and give you a sense of your self?

"You follow the spiritual laws of money when you do your life's work and honor and serve the higher good of others, not your self. You follow the spiritual laws when you cooperate rather than compete with others, making every energy and money exchange a winning situation for everyone involved. You follow the spiritual laws of money when the way you make, spend, or invest money does not harm the earth, another person or your self."

– Sanaya Roman

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