

Tales of the Spirit

I was born in the early fifties, the second child in a family that would eventually grow to eleven. My parents raised us in the Catholic faith, and we received most of our education in the Catholic schools. We attended church every Sunday and part of the service was to receive holy communion. My prayer during this ceremony was simple and always the same. I would ask Jesus if He could help my parents get along. This weekly ritual was the beginning of an opening to the spiritual presence of Jesus in my life. He was my surrogate Father, so to speak, and later to become my role model in life. My physical father traveled during the week for his job as a salesman to support his growing family. We only saw him at the weekends. He did his best to make up for lost time with his children, but with eleven kids, all with different needs, a few of us were left to our own devices.

I grew up with a reverence for those who served God. When asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, my reply was always to be a priest. But, by age eleven, I'd become completely disillusioned with the religion I was raised in. It was hard to imagine a vengeful God who would condemn you to the eternal fires of hell if you didn't follow its teachings. I went from wanting to serve the Divine to a complete disbelief in His existence. The religions of authority presented a deity I did not want to know.

By age 25 I was struggling with life and its meaning. My father was dying of cancer and my most comforting thought was that death would eventually find me. At the time, I was attending the University of Cincinnati in a two-year associate degree program in business administration. After the death of my father, my mother encouraged me to stay in school and get my degree, but I was too disillusioned about the meaning of life and needed to find some answers. During this period, I read a book called *The Caravan* by Steve Gaskin. It was about his journey across the US in a caravan of converted buses preaching his enlightened views on life from his years as a University professor and insights he garnered from his LSD experiences. His entourage settled on a piece of land in Tennessee and started "The Farm" which is still going strong to this day. I quit school and decided to head down there and see if this was what I was looking for. On the journey South I picked up a hitch hiker who was headed to a piece of land in Southern Kentucky called, "God's Land." It was an open land concept started by a couple from California. The state of Kentucky accepted the title as long as the residents on the land paid the property taxes. It felt like home, so I stayed and made a go of it trying to make sense of the world.

During that period of off-the-grid communal living, I started to read a series of books called *The Teachings of Don Juan* by Carlos Castaneda. These books resonated with me because of my previous experimentation with consciousness-altering substances and I began to open up to the idea that there was more to life than what meets the eye. My curiosity as to who Jesus really was began to grow from a previous encounter 5 years earlier in St Louis, Missouri where I first attended college. I was walking down the street on my way to a job interview at Arby's when a young man about my age approached and asked if I knew who Jesus was. At the time the "Jesus Freak" movement was going strong, and this was getting to be a common occurrence, especially at rock concerts. Typically, I would have blown him off but for some reason I decided to give him the time of day. While he was speaking, I was more focused on the light in his eyes than the words he spoke. That experience planted a seed of curiosity in me that was beginning to push its way to the surface.

Fast forward back to "God's Land" and my growing curiosity as to who Jesus was, I asked everybody I met on the land if they knew the answer to that question but was left more confused than ever. One evening my roommate Lance, with whom I shared a converted goat shack, said he knew someone up in Vermont halfway up a mountain who might be able to answer that question. Being young and adventuresome and hungry for some answers, I headed out in the middle of winter and hitched my way up to Vermont to find this man called Butchie and to ask him if he knew who Jesus really was. The journey North lasted about a week with one stop at Frog Run Farm, an intentional community along the

way. I somehow found the man and arrived at his door unannounced. After he got over the initial shock of my presence at his doorstep in the middle of Winter, he invited me in, introduced me to his wife and daughter and added another plate at the dinner table. After a wonderful meal and lively conversation, his wife and daughter went off to bed, and I had the opportunity to ask the question I came for, did he know who Jesus was? He smiled and said if I really wanted to know, just sincerely invite Him into my heart. He then said good night and went to bed. Well, that night I did just that. I stayed another week getting to know his family and bringing back to life an old Volkswagen Squareback gathering spiderwebs in his barn.

Upon my return back to God's Land in Kettle, Kentucky, I visited my neighbors, Dwain and Gail in search of another book to read from their bookshelf. At the time I liked to pick out books with unusual titles and at the very top of the bookcase, I saw a large book with the strange title, *The Urantia Book*. I reached up, grabbed it, and asked them what it was about. I remember the surprised look on their faces and after a few moments of hesitation, the reply was that the papers were not of human origin, whatever that meant. I quickly glanced at the table of contents and locked in on part four, "The Life and Teachings of Jesus." I borrowed the book and began to read starting from the beginning. Finding the language and concepts on the "Nature of God" a bit much to digest, I moved to part four, "The Life and Teachings of Jesus." I don't recall at what point I realized the enormity of what I had just found and what had found me, the 5th epochal revelation to our planet. but I voraciously read and studied it from that day forward. The year was 1975.

During the next 25 years I attended numerous UB study groups, several International and local conferences and Urantia Book related gatherings. I was enthusiastically promoting the book whenever I sensed an opening. I married, became an at-home dad, raised 3 children, started an auto repair business and who knows what with all kinds of shenanigans in-between. Word of the Teaching Mission had been going on for several years and I was having no part of it. I recall when a friend contacted me and said he was starting a new study group. I agreed to attend but on the condition that none of the Teaching Mission rhetoric be brought up during the meeting. I had come to the conclusion *The Urantia Book* was too much for those TM folks. It seemed they had lost their way.

Eventually word got back to me that some friends down in Costa Rica were transmitting, so I headed down to see for myself what was going on. The year was 2000. On the plane ride down, I was reading one of Rob Cricket's books. In it he shared an experience he had while attending a wedding with his wife. During the ceremony he had an out-of-body experience where he was transported to the veranda of the dwelling place of Christ Michael and Mother Spirit (our universe divine parents) on Salvington, gazing upon them face to face. I remember feeling a bit jealous of Rob and wondering why he was gifted with such an amazing occurrence. After all, I had been reading *The Urantia Book* for over half of my lifetime and had nothing like that to report. At the end of the chapter Rob wrote, "and you dear reader can have similar encounters. Just invite Jesus into your heart and know that He will come." Well, I had already done that 25 years ago and was led to *The Urantia Book*. I then realized I knew Jesus intellectually, through the *The Urantia Book*, but perhaps not personally. In that moment I closed my eyes and once again invited Him into my heart.

After my arrival in Lake Arenal, Costa Rica, I was informed that the weekly TR session at the Butterfields was to take place that afternoon. I was staying with my friend Oliver, so we headed over and joined the meeting. There was another man attending for the first time who had also recently arrived in town. Both of us were somewhat skeptical of this transmitting phenomenon. Shortly into the session he asked a question in Russian, his first language, in an attempt to debunk what was taking place. Like myself, he was not aware of the transmitting process whereby the person transmitting can only speak in languages they are fluent in and with words that are in their vocabulary. Susie, the TR, tried to continue transmitting but became so flustered with the two skeptics in the room, she ended the

session. After returning back to my friend Oliver's place, I told him I was even more skeptical than ever from what I had just witnessed. He asked if he could have a shot at transmitting. I agreed and the next morning we did just that. Within the first few sentences of his TRing the teacher Alana, I was in tears with the beauty of the words spoken through him and the love that I felt from them. My ten years of doubt and disbelief in the Teaching Mission instantly dissolved. The presence I felt speaking through Oliver could not be denied. The unconditional love I felt had me in tears. Little did I know at the time what was to come next.

Later that morning I headed over to Tico Wind, a watersport destination on Lake Arenal, to windsurf. After a delightful day sailing on the lake, I went back to Oliver's. The bumpy, dirt road leading back to the main paved road from Tico Wind was about two miles, so it was slow going. I placed a cassette Oliver had given me in the player for the drive and no sooner had the music started than I felt a profound change taking place. The beautiful music penetrated my soul; the colors and shapes of the jungle terrain became more vivid and alive than I had ever experienced. And to top it all off, the love that was flooding in was beyond words to describe. By the time I reached the main road I was a river of tears overwhelmed by the unconditional nurturing love that was embracing me. In an effort to look somewhat normal, I put on sunglasses to hide the tears and pulled onto the road to begin the long drive back to my friend's place on the other side of the lake. Fortunately, the road wasn't heavily traveled, but the few cars I saw were quickly passing me with the drivers giving me angry looks. Not sure why, I glanced at the speedometer. I was doing 10 mph. Realizing I was in no shape to drive, I pulled off the road at the entrance driveway to a hotel, turned the car around so it was facing the lake and shut off the engine.

The spot was high above the lake and the vista spread out before me was breathtaking. There were billowing light and dark clouds with sunlight streaming through. As I looked out further into the distance, there it was, the most extraordinary rainbow I had ever witnessed. It cascaded down from the clouds in a wavy waterfall of shimmering colors to the water below, and in that moment of surreal beauty, I became conscious of the presence of Mother Spirit, Nebadonia. I don't know how I knew; I just did. After a period that seemed timeless, basking in the unconditional love and nurturing of Mother Spirit, I resumed my drive to Oliver's with a story to tell!

The next morning, I once again drove to the lake and was on the water by 9 am. The winds were gusty with speeds ranging from around 5 mph to 25mph. I rigged a small sail and took out a small windsurf board to handle the gusts and chop on the lake. I flew out from shore on a big gust and several hundred meters out the wind dropped. I tried to balance myself on the small board with only light wind in the sail, but it was a losing effort, so I just fell back into the water. The moment I hit the water and had the thought of how refreshing it felt, I heard the words in my mind, "Just as the water refreshes your body, so will my Spirit refresh your soul." My prayer from earlier in the week was answered! I knew, without a shadow of a doubt, these words that filled my heart came from the Master, Jesus of Nazareth, the Spirit of Truth. From that moment on the sublime adventure of getting to know Jesus personally had begun. There were more adventures with Spirit that week, but that is another story.

In closing I would like to share that my personal growing relationship with Mother Spirit and Christ Michael have led me to find that guiding voice within, the fragment of God that indwells our very minds. This can all be yours, if it isn't already, just for the asking. They are but a thought away.