

# 7 PUTTING THE ISSUES TO THE TEST

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## BEN'S STORY PART 3

*About this time, Sally and I met a practicing “white witch” who introduced us to such metaphysical phenomena as communing with spirits and mental telepathy. I was fascinated by the mystics, but in time, my conflicts with this self-proclaimed soothsayer became so excruciating that I decided to sever our relationship. To this point, I had not discovered the peace and harmony that each new philosophy and cult promised. Instead—even in my relationship with Sally—there was nothing but division and strife. Even when our son was born, the constant fighting continued. My dedication to egotism and selfishness caused me to make strange rationalizations which even made it easy for me to be unfaithful to my wife. In a reaction to this hopeless situation, Sally slashed her wrists. I got her to the hospital in time to save her, but within a short time I left her. After a period of self-obsession which included drugs, sex, and robberies, I was at the point of mental and physical breakdown, and I returned to Sally for help.*

### TOPICS

*Evaluating the New Age Issues*

*Recognizing Implications of the Issues*

## **DESCRIBING YOUR WORLDVIEW . . .**

### **HOW DOES YOUR WORLDVIEW MEASURE UP?**

In the preceding lessons we have asked you to identify and describe your beliefs concerning the various aspects of the five components of a well-rounded worldview. In doing this, have you discovered any contradictions or weaknesses in what you believe in any of the following areas?

1. Beliefs concerning knowledge (truth).
2. Beliefs concerning ultimate reality.
3. Beliefs about human nature.
4. Beliefs about ethics.
5. Beliefs about God.

Take a few moments now to summarize in your notebook what you have discovered about your beliefs that may indicate a need to rethink what you believe in some of these areas. If there are inconsistencies or uncertainties in any of your beliefs, your worldview needs to be reevaluated and changes need to be made. Give this careful consideration.

## **EVALUATING THE NEW AGE ISSUES**

As we have followed Ben's story in these pages, we have seen that the paths he chose led him to near destruction. The conclusion we might reach from this is that his worldview failed to meet his deeply-felt needs in crucial areas even though he sincerely followed these paths expecting positive spiritual results. Obviously, the New Age philosophies he embraced failed to pass the test of a cohesive worldview.

We have now reached the point where we need to put the New Age issues to the tests of reason, outer experience, inner experience, and practice. This will reveal whether or not the New Age issues represent a balanced, consistent worldview that is meaningful and fulfilling in every way. Further, we will examine the implications of those aspects of the New Age worldview that fail to pass these tests but are being spread by New Age adherents. Let us begin by applying to New Age issues the test of reason.

## THE TEST OF REASON

In our study of New Age issues, we have found contradictions. When such contradictions exist at the center of a belief system, they should be taken seriously. Dr. Nash indicates that a belief system should be regarded as “being terminally ill” if charges of inconsistency cannot be successfully rebutted.<sup>42</sup> For example, we have seen inconsistencies in the following areas:

1. *Belief that truth is relative.* The New Age worldview is that truth is whatever we say it is, because we all are creating our own realities. Therefore, all views and choices are of equal value.

It is interesting to note that the preceding statements about truth are absolute statements which are held to be true by people who believe that truth is relative. It is clear that such “truth” is no truth at all.

2. *Belief that people are limited only by lack of knowledge and that all spiritual paths, even if they contradict one another, lead to the same goal.*

While New Agers make this claim, they reject Christianity as a path to God, and they insist that their belief system alone is the pure wisdom of Higher Knowledge. Such contradictions do not meet the test of reason.

## THE TEST OF OUTER EXPERIENCE

Does the New Age worldview pass the test of outer experience? Is it consistent with what we know to be true of the physical universe? Is it consistent with human experience?

For example, New Agers reject the idea of sin or evil. They say there is no evil, only ignorance. This is inconsistent with our experience of the outer world. We live in what is called the “information age.” People are more educated and knowledgeable than at any other time in history. Yet every day we hear of atrocities, prejudices, crimes, and injustices enacted against members of society who do not deserve this kind of treatment. How can anyone say that such sinful behavior is merely ignorance?

## THE TEST OF INNER EXPERIENCE

Our worldview must be consistent with what we know to be true about ourselves as thinking, feeling, responsible human beings. Nash makes this observation about the test of inner experience:

No matter how hard it may be to look honestly at our inner self, we are right in being suspicious of those whose defence of a worldview ignores or rejects the inner world. Worldviews that cannot do justice to an internalized moral obligation or to the guilt we sense when we disobey such duties or to the human encounter with genuine love (*agapé*) are clearly defective when compared to the biblical worldview.<sup>43</sup>

Does the New Age worldview support what we know to be true about ourselves? Does it make allowance for our feelings of guilt or shame when we do something wrong? Does it recognize our sense of moral obligation to our society? These are some of the questions Ben and Sally eventually had to answer for themselves, as we shall see.

## **BEN'S STORY PART 4**

*It wasn't long before I became enslaved to a man named Rudy, whose psychic abilities appeared to be greater than my own. His diabolical powers ensnared both Sally and me at first. I seemed totally incapable of resisting his strangely hypnotic control. One night, after Rudy had sought guidance through the "spirits," he convinced me that I should help him commit a robbery. By this time, Sally could no longer tolerate such a way of life and wanted only to rid our home of the evil oppression with which we had become enslaved. Bravely, she reported the robbery to the police. Rudy and I were arrested and placed in jail.*

As we can clearly see from Ben's story, the New Age worldview fails to pass the test of inner experience for those who are looking for real meaning in life.

### **THE TEST OF PRACTICE**

Are people who have embraced a New Age worldview able to live consistently in harmony with this system of beliefs? We have discovered that this is not possible, because the system is inconsistent within itself.

For example, a system with some adherents who consider belief in reincarnation as meaningless yet useful for those who want to believe in it fails the test of practice. A system that excuses evil behavior because it is someone else's "karma" fails the test of practice. A system that views humans as capable of being "God" must either inflate the idea of what it is to be human or diminish the idea of what God is like. A system which insists there are many equally valid paths to God of necessity must reject the biblical path to God which insists that Jesus Christ is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, and that no one comes to God the Father except through Him. Such a system fails the test of practice.

## RECOGNIZING IMPLICATIONS OF THE ISSUES

Many people are being drawn into a New Age way of viewing their world without realizing this is happening. For example, Christians are largely unaware of the subtle way in which the thinking of their impressionable children is being influenced. The following story illustrates this point forcefully.

### DONNA'S STORY

*My first-grade daughter Jenny came home from school one day with a cute worksheet describing her "clear mind" and "mud mind" choices. When I questioned her about this activity, she said her class was learning to sit quietly and think about "good choices" after each student had emptied his or her mind of other things. I became concerned when so many of the things she described fit the examples of "new age" activities that I had recently read about. After doing some research into the self-esteem programs the school was using, I became extremely worried about the connections with the occult these programs used.*

*The school counselor had no idea that the program Jenny described was so closely tied to the occult and spiritualism; he saw it only as a self-esteem curriculum the school system*

*had endorsed. But he did set up a small group meeting of parents, teachers, a child psychologist, and the supervisor for the guidance counselors for the city. They allowed me to present all of the research I had done, and after some discussion they decided the program was inappropriate and it was dropped from the school curriculum.*

*I was thankful they listened and were willing to make this change, but the scariest part was the fact it could be slipped into the schools so easily—almost without detection—in front of professionals and parents. Children’s minds are being altered, and we don’t even realize it is happening.*

*Just to give you an idea about how the self-esteem programs sounded to the children, these are actual excerpts from the “Pumsy” curriculum being used with Jenny (“Pumsy” is a small dragon):*

You can visit your clear pond any time you like. It’s as near to you as your own mind, as close to you as your own heart. No one can stop you from going there. When you are ready to leave the meadow now—you’ll be back and you’ll be there more and more often—you can start wiggling your fingers, and then, when you are ready, you can open your eyes and repeat aloud with me in a clear, strong voice. . . . “I can choose how I feel!” . . .

You may return to spend time with Friend and Pumsy any time you wish by creating your own Mind Picture whenever you like. But for now, tell Friend and Pumsy good-bye. If there is anything else you would like to say to Friend and Pumsy, you might want to say it now. . . .

Pumsy peacefulness comes from her Clear Mind. Whatever you think or say or do that leaves you feeling OK about yourself probably comes from your Clear Mind. . . .

Remember that all the strength you need is close to you when you need it, and you can fill yourself with strength any time you wish, just like you did with your magic cup that continued to be filled up even when you gave some away. Would you like to have that feeling of being strong all the time? . . . Like

all the other beautiful, wonderful parts of yourself, nobody can take your strength from you. Your Clear Mind is yours, your strength is yours, and the choice of how to use them is yours.<sup>44</sup>

*The conclusion I reached in studying these materials is that “Friend” in the Pumsy program is to be seen as a “spirit guide.” In my research I came across this statement of a New Age educator quoted by Jack Canfield in an article entitled, “Education in the New Age”: “Every child will be introduced to his very own spirit guide by graduation time.”<sup>45</sup>*

*What I thought was scary about that quote was that it showed me what the real danger in such school programs is: these programs are introducing children to occult activities. Even if nothing happens as a direct result of the programs, the children will be desensitized to occult activity and accept it with less resistance later.*

*There is another program very similar to Pumsy called DUSO (Developing an Understanding of Self and Others). In this program DUSO is a dolphin in a “secret place” within oneself called Aquatron. Here’s an excerpt from the DUSO program:*

I would like to take you to a secret place where DUSO and I go. We call our secret place Aquatron. What makes it so secret is that it’s inside ourselves. We get there by swimming very fast and hard until our bodies are all tired out. Then we relax, close our eyes, and drift into Aquatron. When we’re in Aquatron, we start by relaxing our bodies. Then, when we feel comfortable and relaxed, we let our minds wander . . . Afterwards we will talk about what we have imagined in Aquatron. Pretend you are with your friends in Aquatron. When the music stops we will leave Aquatron.<sup>46</sup>

*One last thought: Children at the elementary school age are still easily influenced by those in authority. They don’t have sufficient knowledge or experience yet to be able to make a judgment call on anything that may be in conflict*

*with their own small set of values. They are also notoriously easy to hypnotize, which leaves them open and vulnerable to whatever the counselor wishes to suggest to their open minds when they are “comfortable and relaxed.”*

The following quotation by Ken Tye of *Network News* illustrates the insidious methods being applied to influence students with New Age philosophies in a manner that will not alarm their parents:

We view global education as what sociologists call a “social movement.” It is a new way of thinking about relationships in our world. As such, it has to seem legitimate to people and not to contradict current and deeply held values.<sup>47</sup>

Recently, I watched an interview on television of five people who were identified as spiritual leaders. They included four men (a Jewish rabbi, a Buddhist teacher, a well-known evangelical Christian, and a popular New Age philosopher/teacher) and one woman (a spiritual “healer”). The issues addressed were quite similar to those we have looked at in the preceding lessons. *Is there life after death? Can we communicate with the dead? What about reincarnation? What is the truth? Is truth relative? Do you believe in God? Is there more than one way to God? How do we find happiness in this life?*

The responses were quite interesting and varied. Each of the respondents appeared to be sincere and gave convincing arguments for his or her point of view, although the answers represented worldviews that were very different from one another. The Jewish rabbi based most of his answers on Jewish tradition and the Torah (Jewish Scripture), although he seemed uncertain about some of the questions. The evangelical Christian clearly emphasized that what people need most of all is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to find fulfillment both for this life and for the hereafter. His responses were consistent with biblical teaching, although he did not quote directly from the Bible.

The Buddhist focused on the law of karma, belief in reincarnation, and the Noble Eightfold Path to mystic illumination and *nirvana* (cessation of striving). The spiritual healer basically held a New Age worldview that

emphasized getting in touch with one's "inner self" to receive physical and spiritual healing.

As one might expect, the New Age philosopher/teacher supported all of the New Age issues we have raised in this course of study. What troubled me about his responses, however, was that in every instance he quoted passages from the Christian Bible to "support" his New Age beliefs. He came across as an "enlightened" Christian who spoke convincingly as he erroneously applied or reinterpreted Scripture to fit his New Age worldview.

This reminded me that in the biblical account of Jesus' temptation, the devil himself quoted from Scripture when he tried to tempt Jesus to do things contrary to God's will (Matthew 4:1–11). The apostle Paul warned believers to be on guard against those who practice such deception:

Such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. (2 Corinthians 11:13–15)

The apostle Peter also warns believers when he says, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8,9).

The following statement by a New Age advocate serves as a warning to those who unwittingly have been led astray by New Age teaching:

One of the biggest advantages we have as New Agers is, once the occult, metaphysical, and New Age terminology is removed, we have concepts and techniques that are very acceptable to the general public. So we can change the names and demonstrate the power. In so doing, we open the New Age door to millions who normally would not be receptive.<sup>48</sup>

Our emphasis throughout this study has been that the Christian worldview is the only one which passes the tests of reason, inner and outer experience, and practice. God has provided, for those who will seek Him with all their heart, a worldview that can only be described by biblical superlatives such as "joy unspeakable" (1 Peter 1:8), "great love" (Ephesians 2:4), "peace that passes understanding" (Philippians 4:7), "God's abundant provision of grace" (Romans 5:17),

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God's "abounding in love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6), the "grace of God" (2 Corinthians 9:14), the "incomparable riches of his grace" (Ephesians 2:7), the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8), the "surpassing greatness of knowing Christ" (Philippians 3:8), and on and on. The Psalmist David expressed his joy in God's provision with these words:

The Lord is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and rich in love.  
The Lord is good to all;  
he has compassion on all he has made.  
All you have made will praise you, O Lord;  
your saints will extol you.  
They will tell of the glory of your kingdom  
and speak of your might,  
so that all men may know of your mighty acts  
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.  
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and your dominion endures through all generations. . .  
You open your hand  
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

—Psalm 145:8–13,16

In our final lesson, we will show you how you can personally experience this rich, fulfilling, and marvelous way of life.