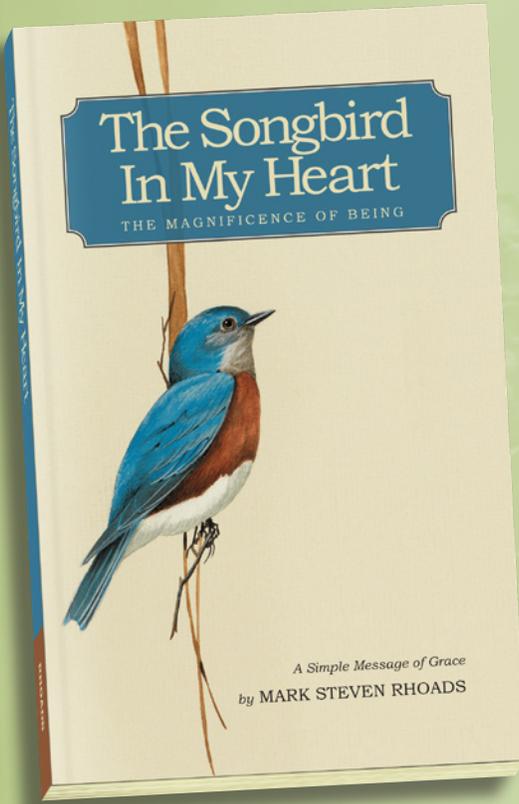


READERS GUIDE



The Songbird In My Heart

*The Magnificence of Being
A Simple Message of Grace*

By Mark Steven Rhoads

978-0-615-27362-4 / \$24.99

Sewn softcover with fold-in flaps
208 pages in full color with illustrations,
photographs, tables, bibliography and index



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About the Book

This book is a call to action, a song of grace, whispering softly to anyone listening for the call of inner knowing. It has simple intentions; to point toward the purpose of life and help the reader recognize the magnificence of being. It is inspired by the work of Dainin Katagiri, H.W.L. Poonja, Don Miguel Ruiz, Eckhart Tolle and Marianne Williamson. While no religious and spiritual traditions are promoted, all are encouraged and respected. It is the author's sincere hope that readers accept his challenge to take charge of their spiritual life and find their true nature.

The book is in two parts. The first is "The Magnificence of Being, A Simple Message of Grace" the story of a journey of self-discovery. The second is "Acts of Contemplation, Freedom for a Glad Heart" a series of exercises designed to demonstrate the principles of Part I through the reader's own efforts. The book is in full color designed to enhance the reading experience.

The book was written to be consumed slowly in simple beauty and quiet stillness, not from the back forward or for those trained to speed read. There is no plot or characters in this book; its purpose is what you find in it.

Some of the books in this genre use squiggly lines to suggest the reader pause to contemplate. Photographs and poetry are used here instead. In the writing, a hundred pages of text were removed in order to simplify and make the book less dense. The objective was to reflect the simple beauty that exists all around us.

Recommended Installments

The book is organized to encourage reading and discussion in several installments.

1. Pages 1 - 22 Introduction of book's objectives and author's challenge.
2. Pages 23 - 38 Primary basis of spirituality and finding our true nature.
3. Pages 39 - 88 Supporting principles of time, interconnection, truth, and the end of paradox, desire, pain and suffering.
4. Pages 89 - 143 Reflections on the world around us.
5. Pages 144 - 193 Acts of contemplation - exercises for inner peace.
6. Pages 194 - 208 Tables, bibliography and index.

Discussion Questions

Try using the Socratic Method in exploring the answers to these questions. There are many internet sources including the Socrates Café at <http://www.philosopher.org>

For each set of questions appoint a facilitator to probe deeper into the answers to each of the questions. Create a dialogue that is respectful and probing. The overall objective is the depth of dialogue not reaching agreement on a right answer.

Installment 1 - Discussion Questions

The author introduces his personal journey of self-discovery. Please discuss your own experience or of people that you know that have had similar experiences. Is this or will this become a part of your life? How so?

Installment 2 - Discussion Questions

What do you think about the ideas of personality and ego? How do you feel about personality tests that you have taken? Have you ever acted as a different person in different social situations? Describe these experiences and why you think that they occurred. Do you think that personality is something you are born with or something you develop or a little of both? How so? Is it possible you have a true nature that has been in hiding all these years? Is it important to know the answer to this question? Is it something you are exploring? Discuss any plans for future exploration of your true nature.

Installment 3 - Discussion Questions

How do you feel differently about time after reading the chapter on time? Have you experienced the quiet stillness of time? How does that differ from when time appears to fly? How does the discussion of truth and perspective alter your idea of truth? Can there be a relative truth and an absolute truth? How does the discussion of paradox change the way you think? Is fulfillment of desires an issue that people you care about face? How has pain and suffering influenced your life? How did you handle it?

Installment 4 - Discussion Questions

Which of the messages throughout these pages touched you the most? Why is that? What personal experiences have you had that have influenced the direction of your life? What regrets do you have regarding denied opportunities in your life? Give examples of how words have gotten in the way in your life. Give examples of how words not spoken have been as powerful as those that have. How do you see the circle of life?

Installment 5 – Discussion Questions

Divide the exercises up among the group and report back how they have helped you develop greater inner peacefulness. Will you continue to experiment with the exercises? Which ones and why?

Installment 6 – Discussion Questions

Throughout the book and in the bibliography there are recommended supplementary readings. Which ones might you consider adding to your reading list? Why?

General Discussion Questions

How did the use of photography and poetry influence your reading of this book? How so and why? What does page 208 mean to you?

Critical Review Excerpts

7/15/2009 “These brightly colored volumes indicate conscious engagement with the natural world as a means toward spiritual insight or revelation...”

Graham Christian – Library Journal

7/19/2009 “an exceptional manifesto of life in these troubled times...sure to inspire...”

Torey Mitchell – Newswire

8/31/2009 “a sincerely beautiful book... The book definitely gets you thinking and I did enjoy reading it.” **Erin - My Very Educated Mother Blog**

Book Excerpts

There are two chapters available for free downloading from the book’s website at <http://www.TheSongbirdInMyHeart.com>

About the Author

Mark Steven Rhoads is a retired CEO, now living in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. He continues his pursuit of everyday peace and grace in the propagation of flowers, fruits and vegetables. In this his first book, Mark recounts his journey of self-discovery through the readings and philosophies that have brought him to an everyday peace that passes all understanding. He sees this as nothing special, just simple magnificence. This peace and grace are our true nature, the right normal, available to us all if we can just remember who we are.

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