

The Lorian Association Presents



David Spangler's
Introduction to

Incarnational Spirituality

Incarnational Spirituality

What is incarnation? Common definitions include: “the embodiment of a deity or spirit in some earthly form” or “the particular physical form of something.” The word itself means “to make flesh.” For most of us that would likely describe the process by which we find ourselves on this earth: we have been made flesh.

In my and Lorian’s work, though, incarnation has a broader meaning. It is not just the condition of having a physical body and being in a material world. It is also a spiritual process, one that generates resources of spiritual energy in its own right. The practice of *Incarnational Spirituality* is learning to tap those resources, both for our own benefits and to connect with and engage our world in ways that are creative and a blessing for others.

A core concept of this booklet is that at the beginning of all our incarnations is a burst of light, an act of love and will that sets into motion the energetic processes that ultimately lead to our physical embodiment. The nature of those processes is outside the scope of this short introduction. But this burst of spiritual energy, this incarnational light, follows us into physical life—indeed is one of the forces that helps to shape this life—and forms a reservoir of spiritual energy configured to our uniqueness that can be a generative core within us.

There is a proverb that says there is many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip, reminding us that between the initiation of an action or condition and its resolution or manifestation, a number of things can happen that can affect the outcome. This is true for incarnation as well. Our early lives and upbringing may not at all reflect the energy of love that brought our souls into this world, but this doesn’t change the fact that that energy is there, or that

we are spiritual beings capable of drawing upon the reservoirs of personal spiritual energy that emerge from the incarnational act.

There is a history of spiritual perspectives that view incarnation as a fall from a more perfect state or as the entry into a “lower,” dense, and even dark world from realms of light and joy. There are perspectives that view the body and our physical nature—not to mention our personalities—as inherently obstructive to spiritual processes. These perspectives all share in common a desire to be free of our physical natures, free of confinement in a physical world.

There is no question that our world has its challenges and difficulties. But the same is true for every realm of consciousness and being, though the nature of these challenges and difficulties will certainly differ. But what differs the most are the resources and capacities that are available to a consciousness to meet the challenges that present themselves.

Our earthly challenges can seem more difficult to us because we also have a tendency to limit the resources we can draw upon through our attitudes and thinking.

It’s as if the citizens of England and America both face the needs to make ends meet and to make a living, but Americans make it more difficult by passing laws that only give a person access to their checking account and bank balance on one or two days of the week and only allow limited withdrawals until after death.

When we restrict our spirituality to certain days or certain times—or to certain people—and then if we have an attitude that we’re not spiritual at all and won’t be until we die and go to some higher realm, it can have the same effect. We end up not making our spiritual and energetic ends meet. We subsist but we don’t make a living.

We have a body but we’re not incarnating.

We limit ourselves when we say we cannot be spiritual because we are in physical bodies.

We limit ourselves when we say that enlightenment can only come as the result of a long process of spiritual training and practice.

We limit ourselves when we say that spiritual energy and blessing can only come from transpersonal and “higher” realms.

We limit ourselves when we say that the material universe is all there is.

We limit ourselves when we say that only the spiritual worlds are truly “authentic” and real and that everything in the material world is just a dream or an illusion.

We limit ourselves when we divide ourselves into a transpersonal side and a personal side and then assign all the good stuff to the former and the bad stuff to the latter.

We limit ourselves when we see this world either as a prison or a warehouse of commodities to take and use, rather than as a living partner.

A deeper, fuller understanding of incarnation and its possibilities challenges all these limited views. It claims instead that we each have a rich bank account of spiritual energy that is always available to us, 24/7, if we learn to access it. And the tools for that access, the passwords, are present to us in our daily lives and are part of our personal natures—or, more precisely, our holistic natures, which are both personal and transpersonal, physical and non-physical.

First Step:

The first step to unlocking our inner bank vault is to accept that it is there. This means accepting that we are spiritual beings here and now, not in spite of our incarnation but because of it, as part of it.

We are:

- Not spiritual beings having a human experience.
- Not spiritual beings taking on and working through a body.
 - Not spiritual beings slumming in some lower world of incarnation and materiality.
- Not spiritual beings trapped in a prison.
- Not spiritual beings learning lessons in some school house of physicality.
 - And not “baby” spiritual beings learning to become “grown-up” and mature spiritual beings.
- We are simply beings living in a realm that is, like us, simultaneously in wondrous and mysterious ways, spiritual and physical. For “physical” or “material” are simply words for a form of spiritual expression, or conversely, spirit is simply a word for a form of physical expression. Neither causes or creates the other but both are manifestations of something else, some deeper state, for which we do not have a good word, but which might be called the Generative Mystery. Or the Sacred.
- We are incarnate into the Sacred. We are the Sacred incarnating.

This does not make us gods or deities in flesh. It just makes us what we are: ourselves, spiritual beings having a spiritual experience. And having access to resources of spiritual energy, which can take a variety of forms.

Second Step:

The second step is to see ourselves as a generative source. We are not the only (or even the most important) generative source in creation, but we are each sources. We are not just recipients, not just sponges soaking up whatever life will give us—good or bad. We are sources, like miniature suns or stars.

For this is a fundamental aspect of spiritual energy: it radiates. It gives itself away.

A key to understanding the Source or radiance at the heart of each incarnation is that it supports Incarnation as a process. This means that part of the impulse behind each incarnation—whether of a person, an ant, a blade of grass, a planet, or a cosmos—is to support the impulse of incarnation within all incarnations.

Another word for this is love.

While there may be many reasons why a soul extends itself into this world, at the heart is simply one reason. Love.

For we so love the world, that we are willing to give ourselves to it, become part of it, live and work and radiate within it.

And that love is a fundamental part of the power and energy that erupts into being through our incarnational act, becoming part of our inner resources of spiritual energy. It is “gold” that backs up and gives value to the “currency” in our incarnational bank vault.

It isn't just that I have this vault of spiritual energies sitting in my bank; I open that vault through that love that can honor and empower not just my incarnation (though that is important)

but all incarnations. I take on the willingness to be a source of blessing, and the vault of blessing opens up to me.

In practical terms, this means that I recognize that I, as an incarnate, physical, material, individualized, personalized human being, am capable of being a source of spiritual energy and blessing. Spiritual energy and blessing does not only come from transpersonal, non-physical, numinous, higher levels. It is part of my everyday capacities here and now. It is part of my personhood. It is part of my body. It is part of my incarnation.

Incarnational Spirituality is partly about bringing spiritual energy into our everyday lives.

But that is only a part, and not the main part. In a sense, this is really a by-product of the main thrust of *Incarnational Spirituality*.

The central point is that the process of incarnation itself—the process of being a specific, particular, unique, individual, physical and personal human being—can generate spiritual energy. We don't have to "go" anywhere else to have spiritual capacities here and now as physical beings. We don't have to become something special to gain the capacity to bless, to love, to empower, to support, and to bring light into the world.

We have this capacity as part of the incarnational package. Consequently, I can use my understanding and attunement to the process of my own incarnation (and that of others) as a way of opening, unfolding, and using this capacity.

That is what *Incarnational Spirituality* is about.

Final important point:

There is no question that there are transpersonal resources and sources from which the traditional benefits of spirit—such as blessing, empowerment, healing, protection, and insight—may flow. An incarnational spirituality does not change that at all. Such sources and resources are always there for us to draw upon.

What a deeper insight into the spiritual processes of incarnation can offer is to redress a loss of balance in which the

non-physical, transpersonal states are seen as the primary or even the only sources of such blessing and spiritual energy. It can restore a sense of partnership—a key important concept in *Incarnational Spirituality*—between the personal and the transpersonal, the physical and the non-physical worlds in which each side has something vital and important to offer the other in a co-creative alliance.

Further, it allows us to appreciate the kind of spiritual energy and blessing for which any of us as incarnate beings can be a source. It expands our sense of who we are from being simply recipients—reflective planets to some other radiant source—to being active contributors of spiritual energies to our world—radiant suns in our own right.

Being a sun doesn't mean I'm the only radiant source. The galaxy is filled with radiant sources, the trillions of other suns we call stars. Our world is filled with actual and potential radiant sources in the forms of other people and the whole realm of nature. The point is to be a generative source ourselves, seeing ourselves as capable of being a source for blessing and light in our world and then acting on that insight in practical ways.

Having this insight and acting on it in no way eliminates or substitutes for an awareness of the sources and resources of other, transpersonal spiritual forces. Rather it adds to the possibilities for transformation, for healing, for blessing in our world.

Imaginal Exercises

The following exercises are suggestions. They are not cast in concrete. If you understand the purpose of the exercise, then you can feel free to redesign it and adapt it to your particular style and needs. Indeed, I encourage you to do so, so that you can enjoy the exercise as your own. An exercise is a living thing, filled with spirit, and it should blend with you in a way that honors and fosters your own spirit. In doing the exercise, it should emerge from you as much as from me and transform itself in any way that is needful in order for that to happen. It may contain elements that you may not wish to do or that seem too elaborate or just not your “style.” All I ask is that you understand and honor the purpose behind the exercise and the spirit it is intended to embody. Then feel free to change it or adapt it, as you need.

To paraphrase Jesus, “You were not made for the exercises: the exercises are made to serve you.”

Try each exercise at least once as presented, but please feel free after that to modify the form of the exercise to configure it to your unique needs and style. At the same time, be sure to retain the integrity of the basic objective and intent. If at any time in doing an exercise, you feel any physical, mental, emotional, or psychic distress (this might feel like discomfort, tiredness, restlessness, or an intuitive sense of “No” about doing it or continuing to do it) stop immediately. Close the boundaries, ground yourself, and shift your attention and energies. You can change your attention completely by doing something physical to shift and change your energy. For example, do something fun that makes you laugh. This is an excellent way to change your energy.

Having to stop an exercise doesn’t necessarily mean that you’ve come into contact with something dangerous or harmful.

It is simply a sign that for some reason, that may or may not be evident, your energy in the moment is not or is no longer compatible with what you're doing. It may be a matter of timing, it may be that you are tired, or it may be that this exercise is not for you. As I said above, make the exercise your own. If need be, adjust it so you feel comfortable with it, or find a substitute.

In doing these exercises, the rule "no pain, no gain" most definitely does not apply!

Unless you have a strong inner sense not to do so, I would recommend trying the exercise one more time later. If the sense of disturbance or uneasiness continues, then clearly this exercise is not for you.

Self-Light Exercise

This is the practice of attuning to the Incarnational Light as it manifests through our own unique self. My hypothesis is that all acts of incarnation generate an Incarnational Light in their own fashion, and our incarnations are no exceptions. Thus, there is a spiritual presence and radiance that is generated by the act of being a unique self, an individuation of sacredness. It is a Light that is born from the love and will behind our intent to manifest as an individual upon the earth, an intent that whatever its other specific characteristics may be still reflects and expresses the primal intent and will-to-be of the Generative Mystery.

Discovering and coming to know this Self-Light—our own unique embodiment of the Incarnational Light—is a life-long process, one that can bring great joy, wholeness, and peace into our lives. There are many ways this can be done.

Let your attention and consciousness move into what you experience as the center of your body. This might be your heart, it might be some other area. Feel yourself surrounded by the millions and millions of cells whose individual lives make up your life. Feel the power and wonder of those lives all blending and connecting to support your own. You are immersed in a community of life.

Feel the force and light of a presence that pervades this community, drawing it into unity, giving it one identity. This presence is you. It is the presence of your Self. It make you one being, one identity. Its light fills all your cells and all the activities that unite them.

Let your attention and consciousness move more deeply into this presence, like moving into a sphere of Light that radiates the energy which forms into your physical body. Just rest in this Light of your unique Self. What does it feel like?

When you are ready, let your attention move more deeply

into this Light, as if you are moving towards the Source of this Self-Light. As you do so, you become aware of a deeper Light that holds and empowers your Self-Light. This in the Incarnational Light itself and it emanates from the presence of the Generative Mystery. Through this Light of Incarnation you are part of the community of the cosmos, the community of all incarnation, part of all that is. It is the root of who you are, but it does not consume you. It supports the principles of identity, boundaries, engagement and relationship, and emergence that allow you to be your uniqueness. You are an emergent form of that Incarnational Light, bringing creative potential and discovery into the universe.

That potential is also your Self-Light. Who knows what you will discover today, what new knowledge will arise, what learning will unfold? Who knows how much richer creation will be today because you are present?

You are a gift of the Incarnational Light to the cosmos, and your Self-Light is the radiance of that gift.

When you are ready, let your awareness and attention move back from this deep Light into the radiance of your Self-Light. Feel the wonder and magic of being who you are, manifesting a unique and powerful will-to-be. Feel your lineage with the Light that runs through all creation and the way you individuate it.

Let your Self-Light—your individuated Incarnational Light—flow into your boundaries, supporting their integrity and power and nourishing the space they create that holds and protects your unique identity. Let your awareness return to your body. Feel your Self-Light permeating and uniting the presence of all your cells. Feel the wonder of your physical incarnation, of your mind and heart, your ability to think, feel, and to make choices. Feel the wonder of your spirit. Let yourself be surrounded by this Self-Light and Incarnational Light, forming around you your personal “Grail” space.

Standing in this Self-Light, go forth to meet your day.

Blessing Exercise

In the previous exercise, the intent is to come to a felt sense of your Self-Light, some inner familiarity and awareness that allows you to go to that inner place and Light when you think of it, without having to necessarily go through the whole exercise itself. In this follow-up exercise, this is what you do to begin with. This is a very simple exercise that can be done in as short a time as a matter of seconds or as long a time as you wish and as is comfortable for you before you get restless and wish you were doing something else!

1. Begin by entering your Self-Light

2. Take a moment to appreciate this radiant source of blessing within you, the generative spiritual emanation of your own unique incarnation and individuality.

3. Imagine and feel this Light radiating out from you into your body, filling all your cells with its power and blessing (and gratefulness). Feel it radiating out from you to your immediate surroundings. Feel it radiating out from you to family and friends. Feel it radiating out from you into the larger world of nature and humanity. Feel it radiating out from you to embrace the day that is about to unfold, the time that is not yet but which will bring you this day experiences, contacts, and connections old and new, familiar and unknown, expected and unexpected.

4. Give thanks for this Self-Light. If you wish, you can now open to any transpersonal or non-personal sources of Light that are meaningful. Receive its blessing, attuning to it, feeling its resonance with your own Self-Light, and then participating in radiating this greater, collective Light and blessing out into your world in a similar way to step 3.

5. Give thanks for these blessings, and step forth into your day.

6. When you have finished doing this exercise, record your experiences in your journal. Do this recording each time you do this exercise, so you can see what emerges for you over a period of time. Or spend some time in the evening to reflect back and record your experiences during the day from this place of sourcing.

Where to from here?

The Lorian Association offers a variety of mechanisms to support the practices suggested by this workbook.

Incarnational Spirituality home & group study guides

Starshaman Home Mystery School™

There are four modules in the basic Starshaman Training program which can be engaged as two-month long online classes, workshops, and/or home study materials:

- Home-Crafting: Generating the Sacred
- Space-Crafting: The Incarnational Self
- Crafting Inner Alliances: Working with Spiritual Forces
- World-Crafting: Manifestation and Service

Please contact Lorian for more information and to see which packages are currently available.

The Lorian Associates

The Lorian Associates make up our growing community of people engaged with applying Incarnational Spirituality in their lives and sharing the results with each other. The only requirement for participation is to a working knowledge of Incarnational Spirituality.

Workshops, Talks, Online Classes & Forums

Occasionally, Lorian sponsors online classes, face to face talks, workshops and forums around specific themes or books. These vary in length from a few hours to several weeks. Sometimes

David Spangler hosts a forum in which he is simply available for questions and discussion. Check with the website for availability.

Mailing List, David's Desk, Newsletters

If you are on our mailing list, you will receive every two weeks an article from David Spangler called "David's Desk," a monthly e-newsletter, and announcements about special activities and classes.

Advanced Programs and Training

Lorian also offers advanced training and longer-term programs for those who both wish them and qualify. Such programs can lead to a Masters Degree in Contemporary Spirituality. Be sure to check with us about what is available.

Soul Friending

We can recommend several trained Spiritual Directors/Soul Friends associated with Lorian. They work with clients in person and by phone to deepen into their experience of the sacred, develop their spiritual practice, and work through personal spiritual blocks and opportunities.

Check the Website www.lorian.org

Our website regularly has articles to read, updates and announcements about classes—including new, special classes that may not fit in one of our regular programs—and other goodies. Check by regularly to see what's new and what's available.

Thank you!