

What I Believe

By Mike Wilkes

(Given at Wildflower Church on August 15, 2004)

❖ Before I talk about what I believe

- ❖ How I came to those beliefs...

- ❖ I'd like to talk a little about my background...
- ❖ Raised a Methodist, but it didn't take, didn't last long
- ❖ Even as a child – made no sense - God is mean
- ❖ Mother was mentally ill, but the church did not hold her tenderly
- ❖ We didn't "practice what we preached"
- ❖ What I was taught in Sunday school didn't match what I heard in the gossip of the church kitchen
- ❖ Let me get this straight -- God is mean, but not really
- ❖ We should be compassionate, but we aren't
- ❖ I will come to the potlucks, but that's it, hold the dogma

- ❖ But - there was still a spark – as a teenager
- ❖ Read "The Book" by Alan Watts - On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are
- ❖ The illusion that the self is a separate ego, housed in a bag of skin while confronting a universe of physical objects that are alien and stupid — the author wanted you to feel it —
- ❖ No one thing or feature of this universe is separate from the whole But no one else seemed to want to think about it – especially didn't feel it, or experience it
- ❖ And then I learned why

- ❖ And then life happened...
- ❖ I left home at an early age (16)
- ❖ (Father's way or the highway)
- ❖ Just like him, choose the highway
- ❖ (Adult versus child, like to have that decision back)
- ❖ Roof over my head
- ❖ Working my way through high school and college
- ❖ Corporate job, meeting and marrying my sweet wife
- ❖ Raising a family, starting a business
- ❖ Looked up and I was in my forties, my late forties

- ❖ And I thought I had it all figured out
- ❖ Not that I knew everything

- ❖ But that I knew how it worked
- ❖ What was possible, not possible
- ❖ No angels, no Santa Claus, no miracles
- ❖ Cultural and personal beliefs (golf not ecstatic dance for me)
- ❖ Belief system was set

- ❖ But still I had the “Book”
- ❖ And thought about it once in a while
- ❖ My intuition (whatever that is) told me there was more...
- ❖ And I meditated, and read other books
- ❖ And joined covenant groups
- ❖ Thought about it - not much feeling, knowing
- ❖ Didn't really believe it any more like a child
- ❖ Wasn't in my experience

- ❖ And then my dad came back into my life
- ❖ We had made up, made our peace with each other decades ago

- ❖ In fact, I named my son after him -
- ❖ The distinguished name of Buddy goes way back in our family
- ❖ Actually, his name is Walter Allen Theriot Wilkes
- ❖ Named in honor of both his grandfathers
- ❖ But my father and I
- ❖ We weren't close, not physically, emotionally,
- ❖ I was still just like him...

- ❖ And then he died
- ❖ Within two weeks of being diagnosed with cancer
- ❖ Given months to live, Sent home to hospice care
- ❖ He died the first night we brought him home
- ❖ In the house he lived in for 50 years
- ❖ Death throes started the minute we laid him
- ❖ In his bed - just relaxed into it

- ❖ And it was a beautiful experience
- ❖ Sad but beautiful, others grieving
- ❖ But such a powerful, intense experience
- ❖ I felt as if he passed what he had learned
- ❖ What he had learned from his life, to me
- ❖ In his final moment, energetically
- ❖ Knowledge and love, heart to heart
- ❖ And I don't mean that I sentimentally/psychologically felt his passing
- ❖ I mean I had an Intense, undeniable, experience of healing and light and energy and knowing
- ❖ A tangible experience of the divine
- ❖ Of being more than the body,

of being connected to him, to everything

- ❖ And that expanded my belief system
- ❖ That experience didn't fit with being an isolated bag of skin and so it had to expand
- ❖ And it sent me seeking...
- ❖ And lo and behold within months
- ❖ I came upon others who could fit this experience into their belief systems
- ❖ Who'd had similar intense experiences (not the same, not necessarily about death, about healing)
- ❖ Intense experiences of being more than what we think we are
- ❖ Indeed, when I was around them, intense experiences occurred to both of us
- ❖ I also learned it had nothing to do with them or me in particular. It's everyone, and everything...
- ❖ And that further expanded what I believe

- ❖ And now that book, that book I read 35 years ago
- ❖ Ideas/feelings are alive for me again
- ❖ And I desire to keep it alive for my son (and myself) especially as he gets older, busier and sleepier
- ❖ And knows it all (which he already does)

- ❖ And this is what I believe
- ❖ I believe what I experience
- ❖ And experience what I believe

- ❖ That we are benevolently guided to love, truth
- ❖ Why we are guided - don't know
- ❖ What came before this place - no clue
- ❖ Where am I going after this - who knows
- ❖ My experience is that - no one else knows either
- ❖ Not preachers, not gurus, not scientists
- And I don't care right now
- ❖ Maybe our mind's can't grasp it

- ❖ What I do know is the experience of that benevolent guidance

- ❖ I believe...

- ❖ Fully human, fully divine (last few months in this church)
- ❖ Honored to be a member of a church that responds with loving kindness to the intricate twists and turns of being fully human

- ❖ Love is real - everything else is illusion (dense energy)

- ❖ That your soul is being brought, each moment, exactly what it needs to move further into Truth, Love
- ❖ That humans can evolve and do evolve at the rate they open their hearts to what is brought to them.
- ❖ (Old habits die hard - easy to feel fear, close your heart),
- ❖ That every moment is perfect (and relative to where you are)
- ❖ Start again each moment – geeky, 50, inhibited, inauthentic, out of integrity, workaholic – start again each moment choosing how to react to what life brings you
- ❖ Mother Theresa or a mass murderer, start again each moment choosing how to react to what life brings you...

- ❖ That your spiritual path is this moment. Not in the past, not in the future, not hidden, Now!
- ❖ (And finally)

- ❖ Emerson once wrote –
- ❖ Around every circle, a greater circle may be drawn.

- ❖ I believe we all stand in the circle of our own beliefs.

- ❖ And around that circle of beliefs, around every circle, a greater circle may be drawn