

## Discussion Questions for

### *The Congruent Life Following the Inward Path to Fulfilling Work and Inspired Leadership*

By  
C. Michael Thompson

© 2000

Published in San Francisco by Jossey-Bass Publisher

#### **Introduction: Life in the Lost Provinces**

#### **Chapter 1: The Great Divorce**

1. Why is it significant to explore the cultural and societal origins of the work-spiritual life divorce?
2. What evidence in your life supports or challenges author Thompson's description and explanation of the work-spiritual life divorce?
3. How does this "Great Divorce" affect your life? The life of your family?
4. How does recognizing that this divorce exists affect your attitudes about your life?
5. What would be the impact on your life if you chose to reconcile your work life and your spiritual life?

#### **Chapter 2: The Meaning of Work and the Work of Meaning**

1. What is the distinction that Thompson makes between a career and a vocation? Which emphasizes immanent motivation? Transcendent motivation?
2. In what ways and times do you view your work as a career? As a vocation? Give an example or short anecdote that illustrates this.
3. If you chose to view your work as your vocation, what difference has it made or would it make in your life?
4. Why do you work? Does that motivation satisfy you? What motivation would you prefer to have? What choices must you make to move to or keep your preferred motivation?

#### **Chapter 3: Spirituality—And Other Misunderstood Words**

1. Why is it important to have an understanding of what spirituality is? Why is it important to have a shared understanding of its meaning?
2. What definition do you give to "spirituality"? What is your understanding of Thompson's meaning? How do the two, yours and Thompson's, agree? Differ? What difference do the differences make?
3. How does Thompson say people express their spirituality? How have you recently expressed your spirituality—consciously and deliberately or unconsciously and without deliberation?
4. How would or could an organization express its spirituality?
5. What would change in your life if you chose to begin each day with the goal of making the decisions and taking the options that moved you toward God?

#### **Chapter 4: Beware of Cheap Imitations (or What Spirituality Is Not)**

1. Why might it be worthwhile to examine what appears to be a form of spirituality and yet is not?
2. Consider the five imitation spiritualities described by Thompson. Define one in your own words and give a personal example of its influence or presence in your workplace.
3. Select one of the imitations given by Thompson or another you have experienced and talk about how it has affected you over the years.
4. If you could reduce the influence of only one of these imitation spiritualities in your workplace, which one would you choose and why? What difference would that make to you and to your workplace?
5. What first step could you take to reduce the presence or influence of a imitation spirituality in your life or workplace?

#### **Chapter 5: Why Go There?**

1. What reasons does Thompson give for developing a true spirituality in ourselves and our workplaces? Which appeals most to you?
2. What would happen if you chose to act based on the motivation that most appealed to you? What if you chose not to act?
3. How would you proceed, your first and steps, if you chose to act?
4. Why will you act or choose not to act?

#### **Chapter 6: The “Fruits of the Spirit”**

1. What two models of human development does Thompson describe? How do they compare?
2. How could one use the ideas about human development in seeking to develop the life of the spirit for one’s self and others in the workplace? Or, conversely, how could one use the ideas about the spiritual life in seeking to further the develop of those in the workplace?
3. Why is an understanding of human develop and its relationship to spirituality of significance?
4. What would your workplace look like or feel like if one of management’s purposes was the development of its employees as human beings?

#### **Chapter 7: The Personal Fruits**

1. What is the basic connection that Thompson makes between the personal traits he discusses in this chapter and a developing/maturing life of the spirit?
2. Why might an understanding of these connections or “fruits” be of benefit to you?
3. How can you apply this basic concept to your personal and work life?
4. What do you think will be the result of your conscious awareness of the connection between these desirable personal traits and a mature spiritual life?

### **Chapter 8: The Interpersonal Fruits**

1. What is the difference between the “personal” and the “interpersonal” fruits that Thompson writes about? In what ways are they similar?
2. Why might an understanding of the connections between a mature spiritual life and interpersonal fruits be of benefit to you?
3. What would your personal life and/or your workplace life be like if you achieve these benefits?
4. What choices or actions would you first need to take in order to achieve these benefits?

### **Chapter 9: Toward the Future: Shifting Sands and Paradigms**

1. Why is a concern about spirituality of significance as one contemplates the shifting sands and changing paradigm in the contemporary world?
2. What dissonance seems to be at work in our contemporary work life for which attention to our spiritual life is seen as capable of addressing and relieving?
3. How is it envisioned that a mature spiritual life enables us to deal with the dissonance, the change in paradigm that Thompson believes is underway?
4. From your perspective, what will the new paradigm look like if it is based on a mature spiritual life? How does that differ from your current paradigm of life in this world?

### **Chapter 10: Personal Spiritual Growth**

1. Assuming it is true, why are you interested in spiritual growth and maturation?
2. What would your spiritual life look like, feel like, be like, if you are able to apply the ideas about the spiritual life developed in your reflection on Thompson’s writings?
3. What tools for bringing about these changes does Thompson bring up for your consideration? Which of them have particular significance or meaning for you?
4. How do you plan to utilize the tool(s) with special significance for you? What will be your first actions? When?