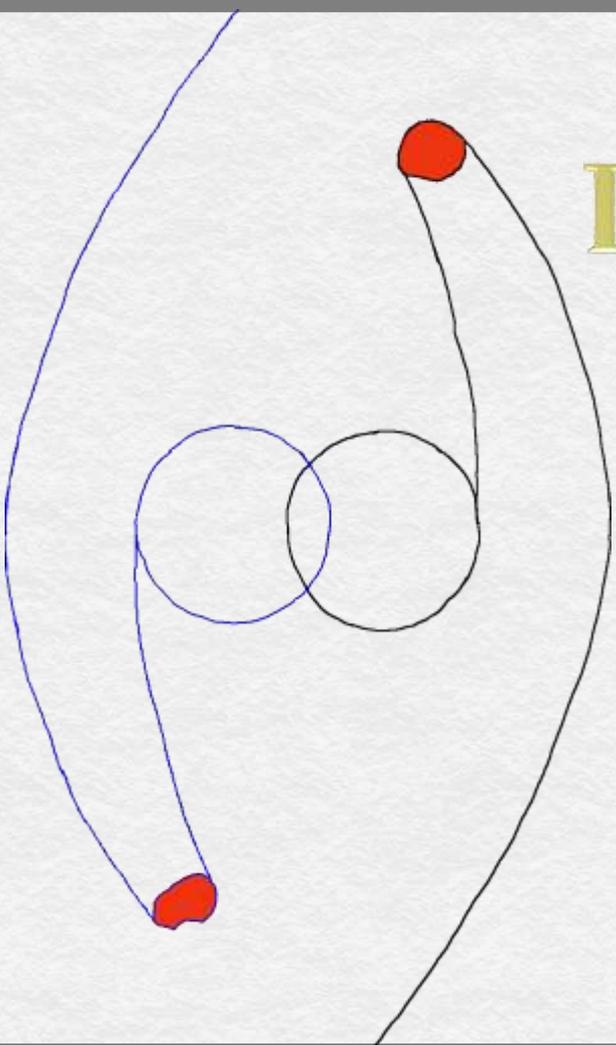


Divine Companion Symbol



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Divine Companion Symbol

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A Symbol of God Living within You

All religions have a symbol that identifies the religion and its sacred text. Judaism has the Star of David, Christianity has the Cross, and Islam has the star and crescent. In a few strokes of a brush, these symbols identify a group and express a person's spiritual allegiance.

This booklet imagines an image that might be a symbol for the teachings of the spiritual trailblazers, individuals who had the profound experience that God lives with them in their inner world, that God is present in the inner landscape as a dear and devoted friend, the Divine Companion.

In some circles, a mystic is understood to be someone who goes beyond the formal teachings of a religion and forges a personal relationship with God that transforms how she or he lives. In other circles, a contemplative is understood to be someone with a practice of opening himself or herself to the divine personality within. But these two terms – mystics and contemplatives – might conjure up misleading images of the occult or confusion about what is being contemplating. To avoid such confusion, the term *spiritual trailblazers* is used to refer to someone with a first-hand experience of personally knowing the divine in their inner life.

The symbol in this booklet is intended to reflect the heart of the spiritual trailblazers' perspective on life in a few strokes of a pen. The symbol represents an important facet of your inner world: that you always have the opportunity to cultivate a relationship with your indwelling Divine Companion. The symbol also represents your relationships with other people that you encounter in the world and how these outer relationships are connected with your inner world.

Hopefully, the symbol will be appreciated and valued by a person of any religion although the symbol is not anchored to any one religion. The symbol respects and represents core beliefs shared by individuals from multiple religious traditions.

Hopefully, the symbol will also be meaningful to a person with no religious affiliation at all because it speaks to a facet of human life that is available to anyone who desires it.

The symbol is intended to represent any person, with and without formal religious affiliation, who seek to understand God more clearly through his or her own inner experiences of the presence of the divine indwelling.

A Divine Companion Lives within You

The spiritual trailblazers shared a common belief that the God who exists in the vast expanses of the universe also made a way to be present in an intimately personal way in your inner world. Just as God inhabits the vast reaches of all creation, God also lives within you as a Divine Companion who is as real as your other inner parts, such as an inner critic or an inner child. The personal divine indwelling has been given many names; Divine Companion will be used in this booklet to convey the close friendship offered by Someone who wants to share life with you and do things together.

God reaches out to you in the most personal way by living within you so God can know first-hand what you are experiencing. Your Divine Companion's closeness also allows you to come to know the character of your Divine Companion (which is identical to the character of God) through your own first-hand experiences.

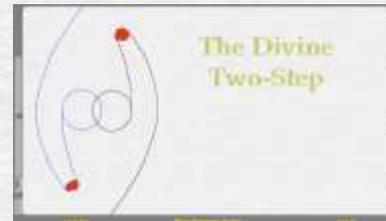
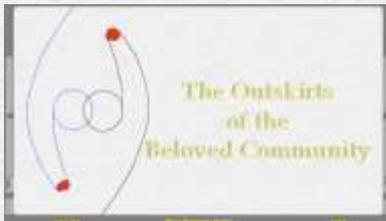
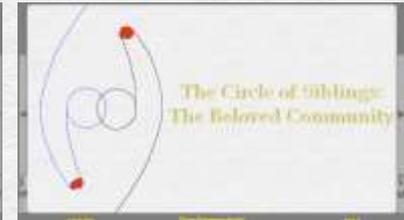
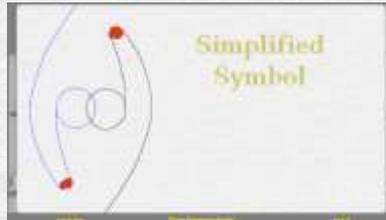
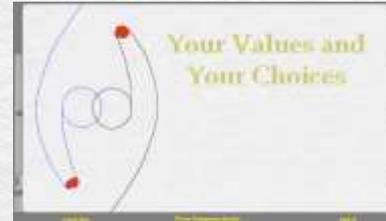
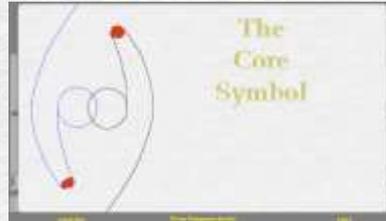
The spiritual trailblazers found that – only if you want – your Divine Companion can help you make big changes in your inner world even when the circumstances of your outer world are quite limited. But your Divine Companion is not intrusive and does not influence you unless you want to collaborate. As spiritual trailblazers deepened their relationship with their Divine

Companion, they were dramatically transformed; often they became far more compassionate than they were before. Being much kinder and more compassionate is a reliable external sign of internal cooperation with your Divine Companion.

This transformation begins with seeing your inner world as accurately as possible, especially understanding that you have spiritual as well as psychological facets. The symbol in this booklet attempts to visually represent that your inner world is home to both you and your Divine Companion. A Divine Companion, who is unique to you, choose you and offers you an invitation to collaborate as you face life's challenges and opportunities. You accept this generous invitation by sharing your inner life with your Divine Companion, a sharing that gives you a first-hand experience of your Divine Companion's character.

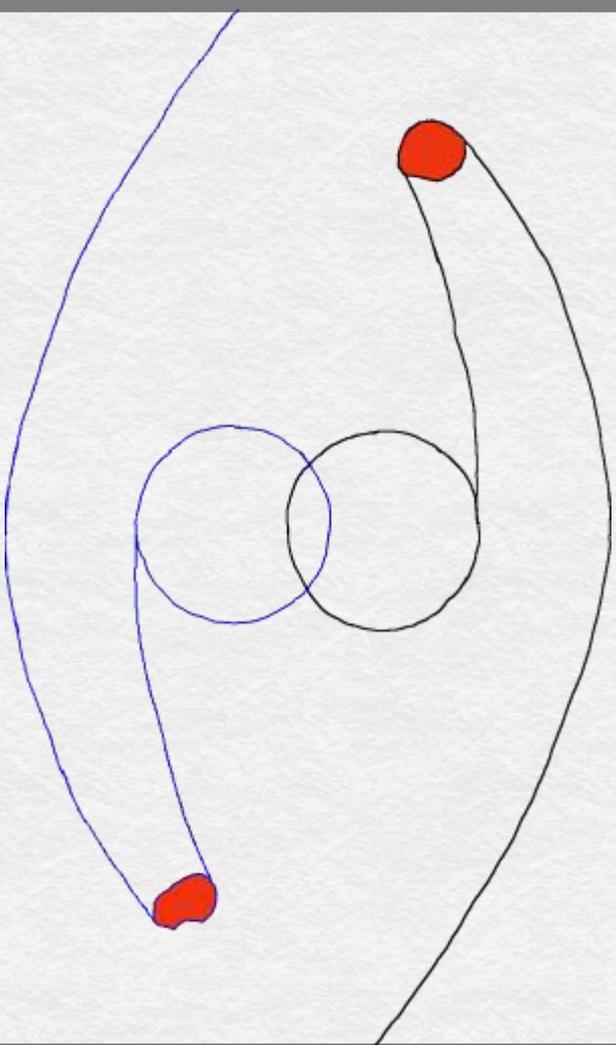
Life presents you with a core choice: to live an autonomous life (your ego is boss) or to live a life in cooperation with your Divine Companion who wants to collaborate with you to create a vibrant life. The spiritual trailblazers believed that bonding with God in this very personal way in your inner world is the foundation for living a life in the outer world that is pleasing to God.

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The Core Symbol



Your Inner World and the Divine Indwelling



Your inner world: home to both you and your Divine Companion

You have a vibrant inner world where many important things happen: the psychological and spiritual experiences that affect every aspect of your life. Your inner world is a home shared by both you and your Divine Companion who comes to you as a wise and devoted personal friend. Your Divine Companion is unique to you and distinct from all other Divine Companions in the universe.

This symbol depicts an intimate inner connection in which you (the lower right beige area) reach up towards your inner Divine Companion (the upper left yellow area) who is simultaneously reaching down to you as you are reaching up. The symbol illustrates a very close connection with no gap separating you from your Divine Companion, God in your inner world. Your Divine Companion wants to draw as close as possible to you so that you can experience and know the divine character as vividly as possible through your own first-hand experience of an intimate personal relationship.

Your main life decision is whether to cultivate a trusting and loyal relationship with your Divine Companion. You can choose to collaborate closely with this inner friend or to live a life divorced from your Divine Companion. Your Divine Companion very much desires to love you, to collaborate with you and to create a meaningful life with both of your contributions. Your Divine Companion awaits your decision, a choice that will flow from what you desire most.

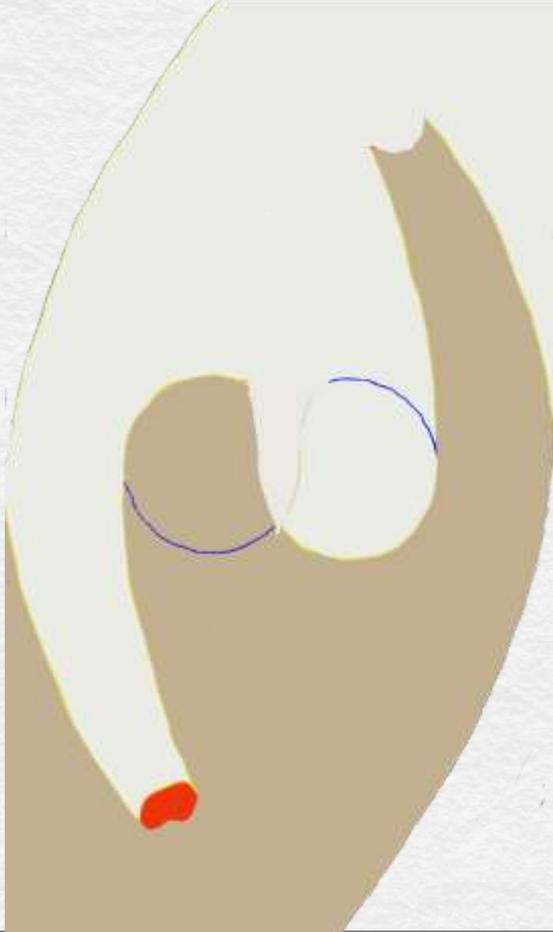
You

You reaching up to the Divine Companion in your inner world

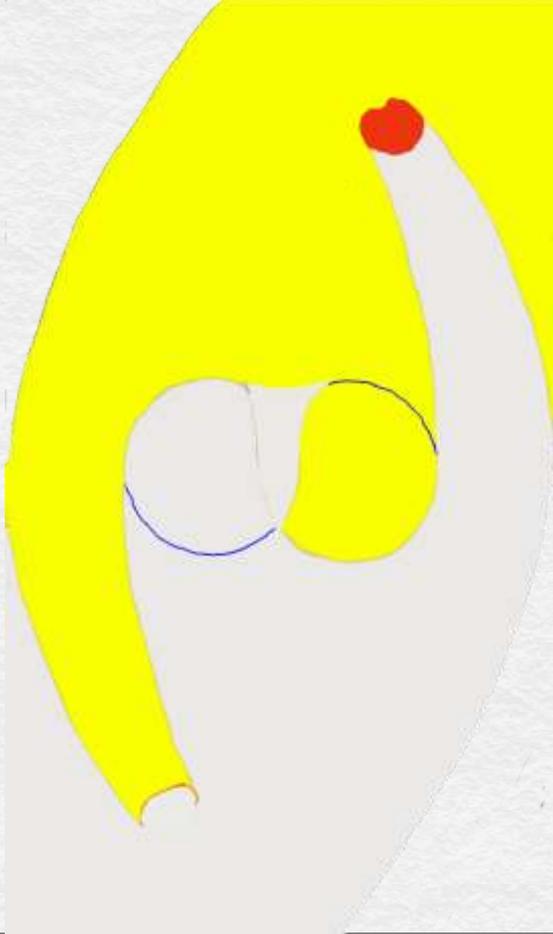
Imagine that you, the beige person in the symbol, are reaching up, much like a toddler might stand on tiptoes and stretch with all his or her might to reach a door knob to open a door into a new world and explore it with childlike trust and joy. Like a trusting child, you are reaching up with sincerity toward the Divine Companion who lives in your inner world; you are yearning to draw closer and to get to know your Divine Companion. Your reaching up is a posture of spiritual desire that reflects how much you value your Divine Companion, a posture that opens the door to the spiritual facets of your inner world.

The red area represents your heart: the seat of your highest ideals and deepest values, what you most desire in life. The beige circle represents your mind: your concepts about the world and where, guided by your ideals and desires, you chart the path that you want to pursue in life.

Your upward reach is motivated by a blend of humility and desire. Humility: How is that this great God of all creation has come into your humble abode, your wonderful but simple human mind? Desire: What on earth could begin to compare with the beautiful and enchanting personality of your Divine Companion? How amazing it is that such a wonderful one can be reached in your inner world! And so you reach up towards this person with much trust and great delight.



Your Divine Companion



Your Divine Companion reaches down to you in your inner world

Imagine that your Divine Companion, the yellow person in the symbol, is reaching downward to touch your heart just as you are reaching upward, wanting to know your dreams and passions, your wounds and fears; wanting to know exactly what you are experiencing; wanting more than a second-hand report on your life, instead wanting to actually share your very life with you.

Imagine the great stretch of God's arm reaching out to you from God's abode in the universe; God's great reach downward to you symbolizes that God will let no distance interfere with being intimately connected with you. God reaches down because God treasures you and knows your amazing potential; God knows how wonderful your partnership together could be. God places tremendous value on you. Although it is not clear that your partnership will reach its full potential, your Divine Companion trusts that you might accept this invitation to live together and so always treats you as a very valuable and precious partner even before that happens.

The red area is the heart of your Divine Companion, symbolizing great devotion to you. No matter how close you are or how far you stray, your Divine Companion continues to love you and invite you to embark on a spiritual journey of increased love, deeper understanding and compassionate service to others. The yellow circle is the mind of God which sees the world and you in great depth; the insights and depths of these insights are made available to you if you are open to receiving them.

Meeting of the Minds: Human and Spirit



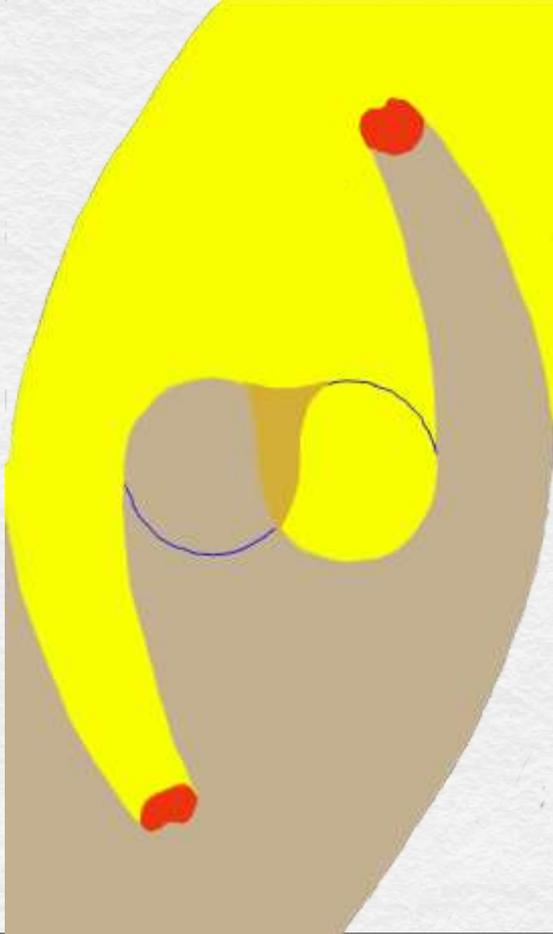
Minds overlap: a forge for cooperation and co-creation

As you and your Divine Companion reach towards each other, your minds (the two circles in the center of the image) overlap forming a very creative zone (gold vase-shaped area) where both of you contribute to a creation that neither of you can create on your own – because you both bring essential ingredients to this co-creation. This overlap represents the shared inner space where you are open to and receive the spiritual infusions of your Divine Companion.

Notice that the opening of the golden creative zone is smaller on the human side and larger on the divine side which signifies that any bottleneck is always on your side. Your Divine Companion is not stingy and withholding but wants to provide you with deeper insights; that sharing of insights can only happen with your receptivity and your appreciation that your Divine Companion has greater wisdom and understanding than you.

Each you decision make to include your Divine Companion in your life widens this channel in your mind which allows your Divine Companion to enrich and ennoble your life; each decision that values material satisfactions over spiritual growth narrows that channel. Much of what happens in your inner world hinges on what you value the most; your value system automatically places certain things higher on your inner hierarchy of values and other things at a lower level.

The Loving Embrace: You and God



Hearts connect: deep desire

The symbol shows you reaching up to touch the very heart of your Divine Companion, wanting to grasp the nature and character of your Divine Companion. Your desire, your reaching up, flows from having glimpsed that someone very wonderful lives just beyond the familiar regions of your psychological mind. You reach high, as high as you can stretch, beyond the limits of what your own logical mind can prove on its own, going to where you can touch the heart of your Divine Companion.

Your Divine Companion has been with you all along in your inner world, patiently and eagerly awaiting your heart-felt desire for connection, present but never intruding into your life without your wish to draw close. The embrace with your Divine Companion is all about intimacy:

- first, really getting to know each other;
- second, receiving and giving love;
- third, sharing that love with other people.

Your Divine Companion relationship is strengthened by your longing for deep and intimate connection, your desire to receive what your Divine Companion offers. Your relationship with your Divine Companion suffers if you allot much of your desires to things of lesser value. Your Divine Companion is always reaching down to you with great desire; the big question is whether you will reciprocate and reach up with your own fully consecrated desire.

Divine Companion and God



Your Divine Companion is directly rooted in the purest divinity

The blue area in the upper left symbolizes the great expanse of creation in the outer landscape: from the largest dimensions of creation such as galaxies to the very smallest pieces of creation such as atoms. The bright white light in the upper left corner symbolizes the pure and brilliant essence of God which is beyond the grasp of the human mind; God is not hiding God's pure essence but your ability to grasp someone so divine is still limited. The Divine Companionship provides a way for you to know God through a relationship when divinity is so far beyond your grasp.

In the symbol, your Divine Companion (the yellow) is connected to the divine aspects of creation (the blue area). Your Divine Companion is pure spirit, pure divinity. Your Divine Companion is not a substitute who is standing in for God or an ambassador who is only a proxy for another but who is not the ultimate person. Your Divine Companion is the actual presence of God made palatable for your human mind. God has made a way of coming to you directly so that you can know God without any intermediary despite the vast differences between you.

Your Divine Companion is God who knows and loves you personally and who you can also know and love personally in return. You could have no better spiritual teacher, no better spiritual companion. How amazing that God has found a way to come to live with you on earth so that you can get a real sense, right now, of God's character, of God's wisdom, of God's tender and vibrant love for you!

You and the Material World



You are yoked to the material world

The gray area in the lower right symbolizes the material realities of life: the pressing requirement for food and shelter; your intense need for relationships and connections; the knowledge accumulated by people over time. You and your human mind (the beige area) are built on the material elements of nature. You cannot escape the limitations of your brain, such as being vulnerable to anxiety about material security. You are inescapably linked with the material facets of life: you must find a way to acquire the things needed to sustain life.

The black area in the very lower right corner symbolizes a completely materialistic way of life that adamantly excludes spiritual values. The lower black area is the very opposite of the upper white area: the black area is the complete rejection of God and all things spiritual. Falling to this level is always a real possibility if you value material things far more than spiritual concerns; repeating choosing material things leads to this extremely low level of life where people can do very evil and harmful things to others.

Although you are bound to a material brain and body, you are not deprived of the great spiritual nourishment provided by your Divine Companion. But you must choose whether you will include or exclude your spiritual endowment in your inner life; the spiritual choice requires relinquishing some of your more materialistic urges. Your choices, repeated over time, will determine whether your relationship with your Divine Companion strengthens or weakens.

Connecting God and the World



You can be a bridge that connects the human and the divine

This image, the full symbol, shows:

- you reaching up with desire to touch the heart of your Divine Companion;
- your Divine Companion reaching down with devotion to touch your heart;
- your mind overlapping with your Divine Companion's mind.

This connection in your inner life is connected with the outer material and spiritual aspects of life.

This image illustrates an intimate bond in your inner landscape, a bond that bridges the great distance between the human and the divine, between the creature and the Creator. Although you are firmly yoked to the material world, together with your Divine Companion, you can create a bridge that spans the great distance between the purely material world and the spiritual world. You are not abandoned to live a purely material existence; you have the opportunity, and everything you need, to forge a meaningful spiritual life if you so desire.

Spiritual Resources Are Always Available



A link to God is always available

The thin blue line on the lower left edge indicates that a thread of spiritual connection is built into your inner landscape even when you don't put forth any spiritual effort. Even if you are living a purely material existence with almost no thoughts about God, you are never completely isolated from God's love; God always extends an inviting thread so that you can connect with God whenever you want even if you had absolutely no interest in God for many years or even decades.

The thin blue line on the lower right edge indicates that a thread of spiritual availability is built into the material world even when very few people seize that thread. Even when life's circumstances are bleak and heartless, the world is not completely isolated from God's love; even if the vast majority of people treat others cruelly, God's love and kindness is still available in the world for those who want to grasp it.

Of course, you still retain the authority to grasp these threads or ignore them; these threads are invitations not intrusions. Intimacy with God is an always-available option, not a requirement. Intimacy with God is always possible even when your inner world seems barren or the outer world appears hopeless.

Two-Way Flow



A channel for sharing your mind with your Divine Companion

This image illustrates how your mind, when open and receptive, can form a channel (the vase-shaped gold area in the middle) between you and your Divine Companion; this channel allows you to share your inner life with your Divine Companion. The channel allows the divine nature (the descending yellow tendrils) to flow into your inner life (the beige area). Through the same channel, your Divine Companion (the yellow area) can absorb the best of your thoughts, decisions and actions (the ascending beige tendrils) and incorporate them into the Divine Companion's experience and understanding of you.

The shared human/divine mind-space (the vase-shaped gold area) is like a loom where you can co-create with your Divine Companion: the woof of the divine contribution becomes bound to the weft of your human contribution and a new creation emerges that weaves together contributions from you and contributions from your Divine Companion. This shared area is like a golden zone of collaboration in which you can create far more than any solo creation which relies only on your own capacities. Creating together (even with an imperfect partner) seems to be God's preference. God might make a more perfect creation on God's own, but perhaps God would be "lonely" doing that. How privileged you are to have such an amazing partner who wants to collaborate with you to create your best and most meaningful life possible!

Why Does Knowing your Divine Companion Matter?

Having a Divine Companion is better than struggling alone

Many people are distraught by what is happening in their inner world. If you are overwhelmed by self-loathing, connecting with your Divine Companion and feeling deeply treasured and loved may help restore your self-respect. You might work diligently on your own (or with secular help from another person) for years to develop a basic healthy sense of yourself, but the experience of being so deeply loved and treasured by such a perfect companion may help you make a much bigger step towards true self-respect, a much bigger step than you could do solely on your own.

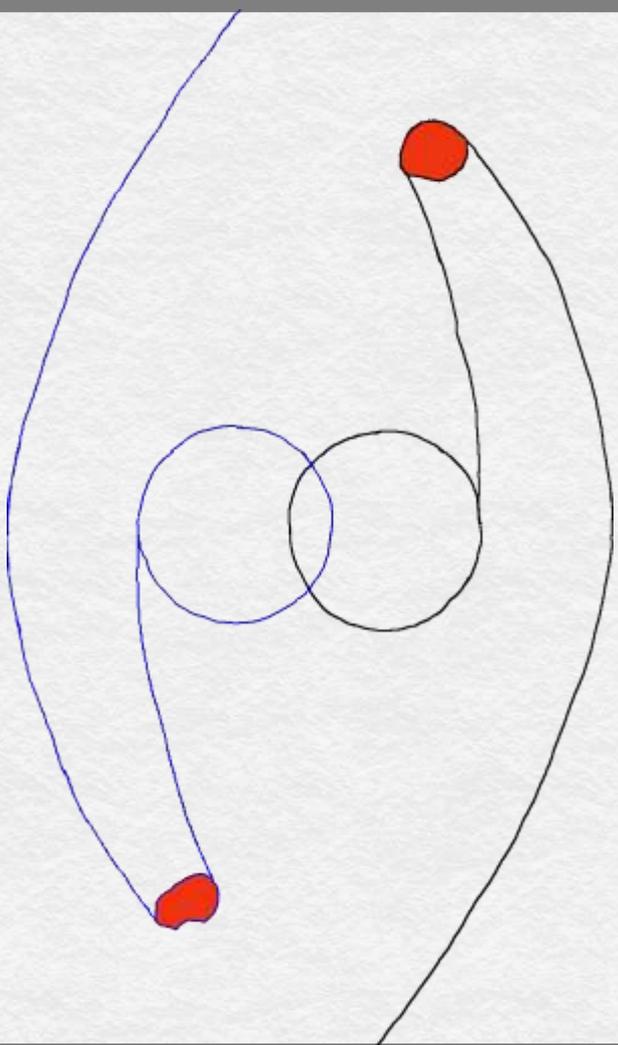
Or you may be swamped by frequent and outsized anxiety that exaggerates the real dangers of life; connecting with your Divine Companion may help you replace unhelpful worry and anxiety with a sense of assurance that you will be able to cope with whatever you face in life. You may work diligently on your own (or with secular help from another person) for years to defeat anxiety, but the experience of being accompanied by such a capable and devoted companion may help you make a much bigger step towards true confidence, a much bigger step than you could do solely on your own.

Or you may have a bottleneck in your life due to low motivation; perhaps you feel defeated because some of your previous plans failed or did work out as you hoped; partnering with your Divine Companion may help you develop a more robust perseverance in the face of disappointment. Together, you may develop a deeper life purpose that restores your enthusiasm and is more immune to being diminished by disappointment.

Or you may feel alone and adrift after being mistreated or shunned in your close relationships; being warmly and tenderly embraced by your Divine Companion may help you by feeling the deep affection of a healthy relationship. You may work diligently on your own for years trying to form healthy relationships with only limited success, but the experience of being so deeply treasured by such a perfect lover may help you form far healthier relationships than you could solely on your own.

If you are distraught by what is happening in your inner world, embracing your Divine Companion can help you make more progress in your struggles than you could make by relying only on your own resources.

Your Values and Your Choices



Your Divine Companion Relationship Is Dynamic



A growing relationship with your Divine Companion

This illustration shows an ideal state in which you are reaching up towards the divine with all of your desire and have fully opened the channel for your Divine Companion to enter into your mind and share your inner world. This ideal state flows from placing a higher value on God than your own status or your ego. Placing the highest value on God is the foundation for making the choice to full-heartedly welcome God into your inner life; this choice is represented by your fully raised arm reaching up to your Divine Companion in a loving posture. Your Divine Companion relationship won't always be in this ideal state.

The following series of images illustrate how your relationship with your Divine Companion can grow from a passing acquaintance to a fully committed relationship. This growth is supported by the values you hold which, in turn, determine what choices you make. If you value and treasure your Divine Companion more and more as you gradually get to know the wonderful character of your Divine Companion, you may reach up with more desire to touch the heart of your Divine Companion, to better know the tone of your Divine Companion's tender voice. These decisions to be more open and receptive to your Divine Companion are how you grow an ever more intimate relationship and develop an ever more cooperative collaboration with your Divine Companion. If you don't value your Divine Companion, your relationship will stagnate or deteriorate below its current level.

Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship



Complete disinterest in your Divine Companion

This image shows a person who has no interest in reaching for the higher, more spiritual aspects of life on this material planet (the person's upward reaching arm is devoid of color). Perhaps this person has no inkling of the spiritual possibilities that await or is entranced by his or her personal talents.

Even when you are not reaching up to God, your Divine Companion is always reaching down to you. The downward reach of your Divine Companion (the thin yellow line in the downward reaching arm) is narrowed because an excessive presence of your Divine Companion in your mind would be very intrusive if the Divine Companion were to reach down more intensely when you had no spiritual interest, when you placed very low value on the spiritual aspects of yourself. Your Divine Companion is always inviting you but is not stalking you which would be a flagrant disregard for your values and choices.

Even when you place no value on spiritual things, your Divine Companion continues to maintain a thin line of connection with you in case you might show an interest in developing a relationship at a later time. Perhaps, in a very extreme case, if a person irrevocably decided that God is completely worthless, then the Divine Companion would retract even that tender thread of connection, but apparently such a total and permanent severing of the God's reaching out to you is rare.

Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship

You slightly value your Divine Companion

This image illustrates just a slight increase in how much you value the spiritual aspects of life (the upward reaching arm of the beige person in the picture now has a thin line of beige reaching up to the Divine Companion). Perhaps you had an inner experience that piqued your interest in the Someone More who lives within you; perhaps you experienced the Something More of the world; perhaps you were moved when another person reached out to you in an authentically loving way; perhaps you became disillusioned by strictly material pursuits. Some event led you to trust, just a little bit, that something good and beautiful might be found in your inner landscape. This event sparked an impulse to know more and a new value took root in your inner world leading you to choose to be more spiritually receptive.

Your values, your sense of what is good and wonderful, led to your choice to explore this inner spiritual relationship just a bit. Your desire – which is really a value come to life – to get a better sense of your Divine Companion led to a choice to reach up to this wonderful person within your inner landscape. Your curiosity – which is a reflection of what you value – led to your choice to seek a fuller glimpse of the personality, or character, of your Divine Companion, who lives with you and knows you intimately.



Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship



Your Divine Companion responds

This image illustrates your Divine Companion's response to your slight reaching upward toward your Divine Companion. Your Divine Companion is delighted when you begin to reach up; in turn, your Divine Companion reaches down to you with tenderness and joy. Notice how a small opening on your part (the thin beige line in your upward extended arm) creates an even larger flow of love and guidance from your Divine Companion to you (a thicker yellow line in your Divine Companion's downward extended arm).

Your initial and perhaps timid upward reach is generously reciprocated by your Divine Companion. Now that you value your Divine Companion even a tiny bit, your Divine Companion can now reach down to you more without violating your autonomy, without disrespecting your wishes and desires. Your Divine Companion has tremendous respect for your decisions and has no interest in being an unwelcome guest who is not valued by the host, you.

Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship



You value your Divine Companion a bit more

Having glimpsed a bit of your Divine Companion's wonderful character and having enjoyed the experience of your fledging connection, you now place even higher value on the spiritual aspects of life, especially on the personal divine presence within you. Based on your own experience, you increase your upward reach (the beige band in the upward raised arm becomes fuller).

You now have even more interest and desire to draw closer to your Divine Companion; you value your Divine Companion more than before. Your growing appreciation of your Divine Companion leads to a more definitive choice to reach up to your Divine Companion and a stronger desire to bond with your Divine Companion.

Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship



Your Divine Companion responds

And now, because you value knowing your Divine Companion more and as a result you have chosen to be more open to your Divine Companion, your Divine Companion can show you even more of the Divine Companion's sublime and beautiful divine nature (the downward reaching arm has an even wider yellow band). You are blessed with an even larger infusion of God's love which you can grasp directly in your own experience; you can personally feel the individual devotion of your Divine Companion.

Again, your Divine Companion's response exceeds your response. Your Divine Companion's response is even more full-hearted than your response; your Divine Companion's investment in you is even more generous than your investment in your Divine Companion. Still your Divine Companion's response keeps pace with your response so that your Divine Companion's reaching out to you never becomes too overbearing.

Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship



You value your Divine Companion even more

As you come to know your Divine Companion better, you grow to love the wonderful character of your Divine Companion even more. You elevate the place on your relationship with your Divine Companion over your more egotistical urges; you are willing to trust your Divine Companion even more. The heightened value you hold for your Divine Companion and your relationship leads you to make a more committed choice to invest yourself in this relationship (illustrated by the widening beige band in the upward reaching arm).

Although you value your Divine Companion very much, you still retain some ambivalence about giving up your ego's wishes (illustrated by the remaining white band in the upward reaching arm). You may still have desire for more material success or the pleasures that life offers; you are not ready to completely relinquish your desire for them, if need be, in order to keep your relationship with your Divine Companion healthy.

Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship



Your Divine Companion responds

Again, your choice to commit even more deeply to your relationship with your Divine Companion leads to an even stronger infusion of graces from your Divine Companion into your inner landscape (the downward reaching arm opens now has a full band of yellow). Your Divine Companion has established a wide channel for generously nourishing your spiritual growth.

Your Divine Companion relationship grows because of your growing and deepening intimacy, not because of a better understanding of intellectual concepts about divinity. Although your intellectual understanding of spirituality may deepen as the result of your Divine Companion relationship, your intellectual growth is the by-product, not the cause, of deepening intimacy with your Divine Companion.

Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship



You value your Divine Companion above all else

This image shows the stage of the relationship where, having experienced how much your Divine Companion enhances your inner life, you value your Divine Companion and your Divine Companion's great contributions more than anything else in life. You see your Divine Companion's leadings as your highest values, you make a whole-hearted commitment to your Divine Companion (the upward extended arm is completely filled with beige). You chose to make a consecrated commitment to your relationship with your Divine Companion: to continually grow in knowing the character of your Divine Companion ever more deeply, to reciprocating more and more the devoted love that you have received from your Divine Companion, and to more completely cooperate with the leadings of your Divine Companion who helps you lead a more meaningful life.

You have moved past ambivalence about your Divine Companion; nothing else comes close to the value you hold for your Divine Companion. Your whole-hearted commitment to your Divine Companion means that you completely trust the leadings of your Divine Companion. You are assured of the love and confident in the wisdom of your Divine Companion even when faced with indifference and confusion in the outer landscape. You are certain that your Divine Companion is the most beautiful person who knows the clearest truth and encourages you to live a good and compassionate life.

Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship



A continually growing relationship

This image may suggest that your Divine Companion relationship has reached its maximum perfection but that is only a limitation of the image. Your relationship with your Divine Companion can, and needs to, continually grow and expand; there is no end point to the growth of this relationship. Your commitment to this relationship needs to grow continually; the infusions of your Divine Companion can always become stronger; you can always reach up more fervently to touch the heart of God, to know the tone of God's tender voice.

Relationships are like living things: at some times, they are growing and becoming stronger; at other times, when they are undernourished or under-exercised and they are losing strength and vitality. A relationship that languishes at its current level for too long is not simply holding ground; despite appearances of not changing, a stagnant relationship is actually becoming weaker and less vibrant. A relationship is either growing or weakening; there is no neutral ground in the health of a relationship.

Your inner relationship with your Divine Companion flows over into your relationships with others in your outer life. A vibrant inner relationship yields increasing spiritual fruits in the outer world: your compassion deepens for people who are hurting or excluded. The depth of your compassion can be a useful barometer for the health of your relationship with your Divine Companion.

Growth of Your Divine Companion Relationship



Regression is always a possibility

Even the spiritual trailblazers had peaks and valleys in their relationship with their Divine Companion. You too may be, at times, consumed by material concerns and thus neglect your relationship with your Divine Companion. Seemingly overwhelming psychological or material challenges may let your Divine Companion slip into a place of lower importance, a place of lesser value. Yet even in such overwhelming times, you can still have the opportunity to make the choice to reverse this slippage and to again seek the company and guidance of your Divine Companion with more fervor.

Your psychological desires may, at times, intensify and pull your devotion away from God and towards things that appear to bring security or pleasure, to avoid pain or anxiety. You may be seduced by the allure of lesser material things and lose sight of the more beautiful character of your Divine Companion. Yet even in the face of such compelling attractions, the option always remains for you to return your Divine Companion to the place of highest honor in your inner landscape, to the position of the highest value in your mind.

Your mental stamina may, at times, fade and you have little desire to reach for either material things or spiritual values. Even in such dry times, you can remain trusting in your Divine Companion, that your relationship has the strength to carry you through such dry times.

Experiences, Values and Choices

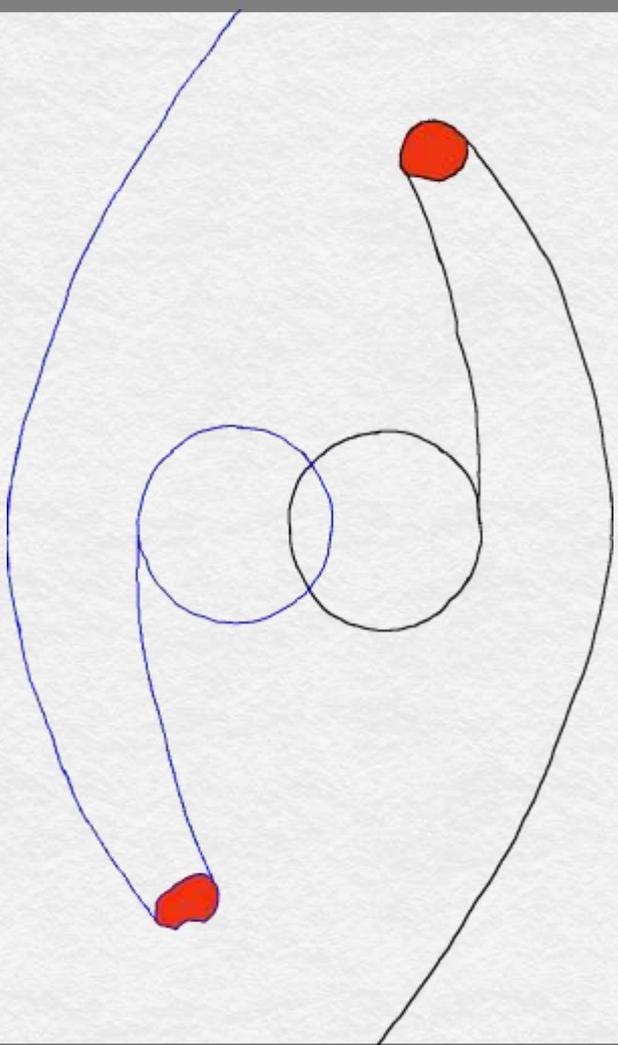
Experiences and Values. Your values are based on your experiences, on what you really know. It's hard to value something that you don't know much about. You will treasure and value the things that you have found to be good, beautiful and wise in your own experiences. Your experiences, especially when you have some depth of insight into them, are the source of your values. Having the experience of spending time with a good person will lead you to value that person and your relationship more; you can hardly value a person and a relationship when you haven't spent time with him or her.

Values and Choices. Your choices about how you act are based on your values: you will naturally be more involved with the people you value more. You will choose to spend more time with them, to listen more carefully, and to be more supportive when they seek your assistance and cooperation; as a result, these relationships are more likely to flourish. The opposite is also true: you will choose to spend less time with people you value less, listen less and be less engaged. These relationships are more likely to wither.

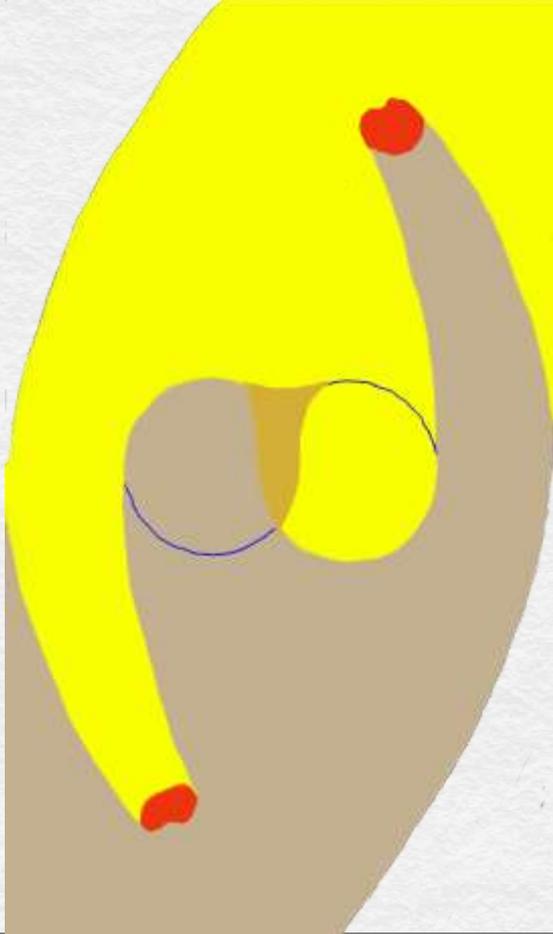
These principles that apply to your relationships with people also apply to your relationship with your Divine Companion. If, based on your experiences, you see your Divine Companion as a wonderful person, then you will value and treasure your Divine Companion and you will choose to spend time together and form a robust relationship. But you cannot value and esteem your Divine Companion if you have not first had an authentic experience of your Divine Companion; without that first-hand experience, you could not value and choose to pursue this relationship.

Your choice to seek a relationship with your Divine Companion produces a compound yield: as you trust more in the goodness of your Divine Companion, more of the gracious infusions can flow into your mind. These infusions grant you an even better grasp of the wonderful character of your Divine Companion which further increases your desire and love for your Divine Companion. This spiral of growth begins with your experiences which, with insight, produce deeper values; deeper values produce wiser choices which, if acted on, create the inner actions that strengthen your Divine Companion relationship.

Sharing Your Inner Life



A Shared Mind



Your inner world is a home for two

This image depicts your inner world (beige and yellow areas) but not your immediate world and the vast universe (the lower right and upper left corners are blank). Your mind, your inner world, is a home shared by both you and your Divine Companion. Your mind is the place where you can meet God and come to know God intimately. You can choose to share your life with your Divine Companion who is eager to collaborate with you in the situations you face in your life. Or you can choose to have a solo inner life.

God is eager to know you as intimately as possible and would not be satisfied with second-hand reports about you. God wants to experience your life as intimately as possible so God came to dwell within you as a Divine Companion who can experience what you are experiencing.

God eagerly wants you to know God as intimately as possible, better than you can through second-hand accounts. God wants you to experience God for yourself so that you can develop, with certainty, a sense of who God is, a sense of God's wonderful character based on your own indisputable experiences. Because God wants you to experience God directly, God came to dwell within you as your Divine Companion who you can come to know you if you share your inner world with your Divine Companion.

A Shared Mind



The first sharing: your Divine Companion absorbs your experiences

God is able to know you because your Divine Companion lives within you, within your mind, and can experience your life directly (the ascending beige tendrils). But this sharing of your mind is not intrusive or judgmental; your Divine Companion is a gracious visitor who respects your limits on how much you want to share (the ascending beige tendrils are very small filaments that allow just a bit of your experience to flow into your Divine Companion).

The beige strands entering the yellow space represent the creature's experience flowing into the Creator. Your Divine Companion is eager to understand you by actually absorbing your human experiences (the beige tendrils) into the Divine Companion (the yellow area) who dwells within your mind.

Your Divine Companion is not a spy who is callously recording what you do, always on the alert for documenting your worst moments and your flaws. Rather, your Divine Companion sees you with a kind and sympathetic heart, always alert to record your best thoughts and gradually emerging strengths. Your Divine Companion is quite kind and has much empathy for you and the challenges of your life circumstances; knowing all of this, your Divine Companion appreciates your strengths and accomplishments and is in confident in your ability to continue growing psychologically and spiritually.

A Shared Mind



The second sharing: you absorb your Divine Companion's infusions

You have options for how you respond to the tendrils of your Divine Companion ranging from disinterest/dislike to lukewarm interest to intense desire for more sharing. This image depicts a lukewarm interest and a restricted receptivity that allows your Divine Companion to enter into your mind and heart just a little bit (the descending yellow tendrils are very small). Your first spiritual opening may be timid because you are unsure how the newly revealed Divine Companion will treat you; you want to get to know your Divine Companion better before you feel ready to trust more deeply, to desire more fully, and to open more widely the channel that connects both of you. Opening this channel requires your trust which first requires clarity about the nature of your Divine Companion which first requires experiencing a fledging encounter with your Divine Companion.

Your Divine Companion's infusions allow cross-fertilization of thoughts and feelings between you that greatly expand your understanding about yourself and life. Your Divine Companion's infusions also include a vibrant love for you which assures you of how much you are treasured by your Divine Companion. The spiritual trailblazers often described tenderness and gentleness as hallmark traits of their Divine Companion.

A Shared Mind

A joint creation emerges from mutual sharing

The two-way flow of sharing your mind with your Divine Companion, both giving and receiving, produces a joint creation, the product of your contributions combining with your Divine Companion's contributions. This joint creation is depicted by the circle of light in the overlap (the golden vase-shaped area in the center of the image) of your mind (the beige circle) and your Divine Companion's mind (the yellow circle). This joint creation cannot be created by either person alone; not even your Divine Companion, with all of God's power and might, cannot create alone what the two of you can create in collaboration. This joint creation (the circle of light in your shared mind) is only possible when the human and the divine collaborate, when you share your inner world with your Divine Companion. What a privilege that you, a human person, are able to team up with such an amazing partner and can collaborate on creating something together!



A Shared Mind



Divine desire: God's craving to know you

Divine desire is God's empathy, God's deep listening, God's strong desire to really know you and experience your inner world so intimately that your Divine Companion virtually experiences your life just as you do. Your Divine Companion really wants to know you in great detail and very much wants to share your thoughts and feelings. Your Divine Companion craves sharing your life, especially what you value and what you don't value. This divine empathy is depicted by your Divine Companion absorbing even more of your thoughts and feelings (the ascending beige tendrils in the yellow area are becoming more numerous and thicker).

The divine empathy involves God being receptive to your experiences. This receptivity has no agenda – no intention to judge you – other than to get to know you as closely as possible. Your Divine Companion temporarily sets aside all divine prerogatives and draws close to you; otherwise, you would probably be quite overwhelmed if your Divine Companion arrived in your inner landscape using the complete set of divine capabilities. God has deep curiosity, a deep wanting to know you think and feel what you feel.

Divine empathy does not seek a passive understanding of you. Your Divine Companion wants to actually absorb your human experiences through this empathic connection. Your Divine Companion grows and is changed by knowing and absorbing your experiences.

A Shared Mind



Holy desire: your craving to know God

Just as God desires to know you very well (the divine empathy), you may desire to know God very well (a person's holy interest in and receptivity to the spiritual facets of life). Having personally experienced the divine empathy, you may choose to be more receptive to your Divine Companion and allow spiritual infusions to enter more deeply into your mind (illustrated by more and thicker yellow tendrils descending into the beige area).

If you have had unsatisfying relationships in the outer landscape, you may struggle to muster the trust to be fully open to an inner relationship with your Divine Companion. If so you can gradually open yourself to the influence of your Divine Companion step by step, deciding after each step how much you want to receive of your Divine Companion, how much you want to collaborate in your inner world.

Your desire to know God more grows from treasuring and valuing what you have already experienced in your gradually growing relationship with your Divine Companion. Your holy desire, your reverence for your Divine Companion opens the channel enables you to know more about God's wonderful character through experiencing a relationship with your Divine Companion.

A Shared Mind

An ever larger co-creation

As the channel with your Divine Companion opens further (illustrated by the increasing ascending and descending tendrils that link you with your Divine Companion), your shared co-creation grows more vibrant (illustrated by the larger light in the vase-shaped overlap of the human and divine minds).



A Shared Mind



Your Divine Companion absorbs your deeper thoughts and feelings

Your Divine Companion doesn't have a passive interest in you, an idle curiosity about you. Your Divine Companion actively reaches out to you, hoping to know you and absorb your experiences, especially your spiritual experiences, as if your Divine Companion is fed and nourished by absorbing them. Just as you are transformed by knowing your Divine Companion (you absorb some measure of those traits of God that you most revere), your Divine Companion is transformed by absorbing your human growth as you live and grow in a very demanding material world. Your growth and your Divine Companion's growth are yoked: your Divine Companion's experience can only grow when you are spiritually growing.

God is not at all a passive spectator in your inner world. Not in the least! God is always respectfully reaching out to you, hoping that you will be reaching back to God in response, so that together you can collaborate in making the most of your one precious life. God craves being bonded with you and creating together. God will go to great lengths to meet you where you are; God is delighted to meet you just as you are.

A Shared Mind



A dynamic and fruitful relationship

Having experienced your Divine Companion's tender character, you opened your side of the human-divine channel even more (the descending yellow tendrils in the beige area penetrate more deeply into you); you have stronger interest and desire to receive contributions from your Divine Companion.

Your Divine Companion only sends these infusions if you desire to receive them. Your Divine Companion won't pressure you to be more spiritually open and receptive if you don't desire to share your inner world more completely. But your Divine Companion will reward every bit of your openness by generously bestowing grace and assistance in excess of what you have extended to your Divine Companion.

Each deposit of your trust yields a deeper divine infusion and each divine infusion can deepen your trust. This mutuality builds a sweet cycle of spiritual growth: your increased trust of your Divine Companion rewards you with receiving more of your Divine Companion's love; receiving that love rewards your Divine Companion with your deeper trusting.

A Shared Mind



Ascending tendrils can reach very high

As you share your inner life more fully with your Divine Companion, your experiences extend through your Divine Companion to reach the God of all creation (illustrated by the ascending beige tendrils reaching all the way through the yellow area [the Divine Companion] up to the upper blue area [the God of the universe]). Sharing the human inner life with the Divine Companion is a way for the God of all creation to experience what each person, each creature, is thinking and feeling.

The ascending beige tendrils represent the reverence and love that you offer to your Divine Companion which can ultimately be received by God. Some of your thoughts and feelings, such as your reverence for what is holy, may be more likely to ascend from you to your Divine Companion and beyond; some of your baser impulses, such as selfish and aggressive thoughts and feelings, don't create ascending tendrils which reach high enough to link your baser experiences with God through your Divine Companion.

The descending yellow tendrils represent the great esteem and devoted love that your Divine Companion has for you. The love in these descending tendrils bring assurance that, whatever happens in the outer landscape, you are dearly beloved in your inner world. The descending tendrils bring not only love but also clarity of mind about spiritual matters.

A Shared Mind



Descending tendrils can reach very wide

As you share your inner life more and more with your Divine Companion, you widen the channel through which your Divine Companion can fill you with the spirit of God creating a very personal loving embrace (illustrated by the deeper descending yellow tendrils in the beige area). The divine infusions can deepen your highest values (illustrated by the yellow tendrils touching your heart, the seat of your desires). The filaments of connection now extend from your heart to your Divine Companion's heart and create a conduit of love, forming a two-way heart-to-heart connection between you and your Divine Companion.

The divine infusions also move through you and out towards others in the larger world (illustrated by the descending yellow tendrils that extend through you and then into the material world in the lower right corner). Then the Divine Companion (and the God of all Creation) can extend through you to share the spirit of God with other people through your compassion and concern for others.

Your Divine Companion is God's character perfectly presented at your current level of comprehension; your loving actions are your best attempt at re-presenting your sense of God's character by how you treat other people. Your Divine Companion is the highest fidelity possible representation of God that can be comprehended by your mind; you too can strive to give the highest fidelity representation of God that you can to others through compassionate connection and loving service.

A Shared Mind



Relapse

Sometimes the bonds between you and your Divine Companion may weaken (illustrated by the smaller tendrils connecting you and your Divine Companion compared to the previous image); your trust may falter as you confront difficult situations. At times, your connection with your Divine Companion may be weak compared to your most devout times of connection. Accepting that your connection with your Divine Companion will ebb and flow may prepare you to better endure the inevitable times of weakened connection.

Even during times of weakened connection, you can always reach toward the heart of God even though you may not actually touch it as closely as you once did during the best of your spiritual times. You can still strain to hear the tender tone of God's voice although you may not actually sense it as clearly as you once did. Having already tasted a fuller connection may whet your appetite to return to that higher level of connection. You can remain assured that your Divine Companion very much wants to be connected with you, very much wants to nourish you at all times, even during times when your own holy desire is weakened. Your Divine Companion waited patiently for that first contact with you, when you had almost no spiritual awareness and little desire for a connection; and your Divine Companion will continue to wait patiently for resuming a deeper connection with you in times when your spiritual desire temporarily waned and your connection weakened.

A Shared Mind

Ultimately...

As you share your inner life more and more fully with your Divine Companion, as you serve more and more loyally in difficult circumstances, you may gradually acquire more and more of the nature of God in your human personality. This image illustrates the character of your Divine Companion – which is the same as the character of God – flowing into you in large measure (the fan shaped yellow color entering the beige area that represents you). Some of the spiritual trailblazers who cultivated a very sincere connection with their Divine Companion were considered very holy people because of their deep spiritual insight and because they were exceptionally loving to the people they encountered.



A Shared Mind



The inner landscape connects with the outer landscape

The images presented so far have focused on your relationship with your Divine Companion in your inner landscape. But your inner landscape doesn't exist in a vacuum; it is intimately intertwined with your outer landscape and your relationships with other people. Improving your inner landscape through receiving the love of your Divine Companion prepares you to treat others more lovingly even when they are difficult to love based on your purely human perspective.

Even the spiritual trailblazers initially found some people hard to love. But, as their relationship with their Divine Companion deepened, they became very kind to and cared for people who they previously disliked. Being compassionate and caring for marginalized people is a hallmark of a vibrant inner life with your Divine Companion. The spiritual trailblazers remained vigorous and loving despite facing intense persecution from political factions or even their own religious organizations. The strength of their love came from their relationship with their Divine Companion, not from external reinforcement from the world.

Only inner peace, not freedom from difficulties and challenges in the outer landscape, is promised as a fruit of your relationship with your Divine Companion. The nourishment from your Divine Companion may help sustain you, and keep you kind and gentle, when you face harsh times in your outer landscape.

Summary of the Symbol



You are a potential bridge between the divine and the human

This image shows your relationship with your Divine Companion in full flower when you are completely open to the infusions which your Divine Companion wants to share with you.

God (the white light in the upper left) is rooted in the most spiritual part of the grand creation (the blue area in the upper left). You are rooted in the most material aspects of life (the gray area in the lower right) which includes the possibility that you may choose to exclude God from your life (illustrated by the black area in very lower right of the image). Your relationship with your Divine Companion forms a bridge, within one person (you), that spans across the great distance between the purely spiritual and the purely material aspects of life. When you cultivate a more vibrant collaboration with your Divine Companion in your inner world, you enhance the connection between the spiritual and material worlds. This relationship can connect you with God and, once it is well established, it can nourish you to have more compassionate relationships with other people.

Inner World Summary

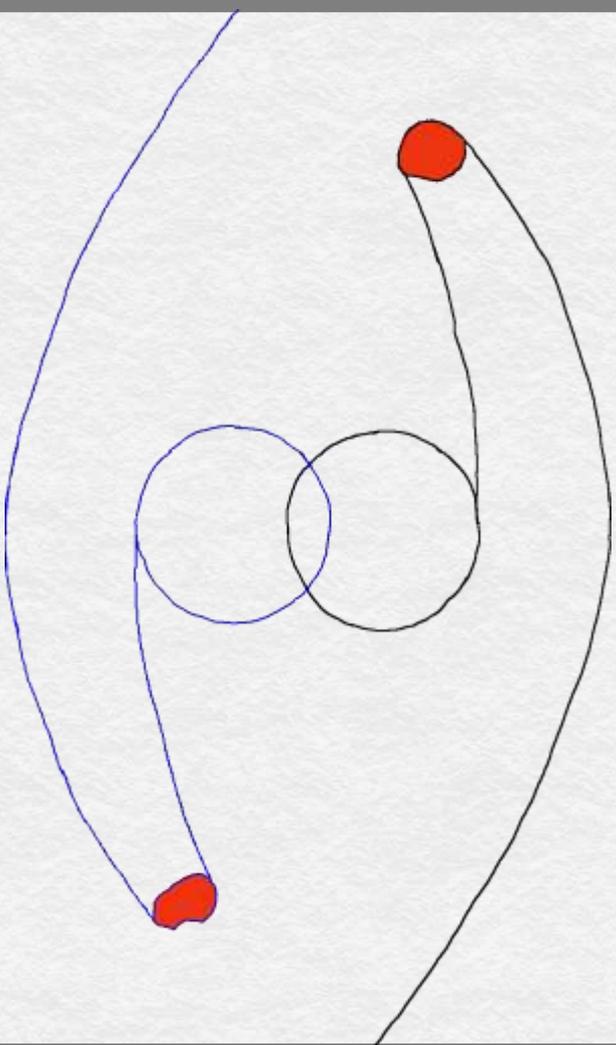
The previous series of images illustrate intimately sharing your inner life with your Divine Companion. The images suggest an ideal and enticing connection that belies the difficulties that you may experience in building such a relationship. Forging a close connection is not always an obvious choice or an easy path, perhaps because you may have trouble relinquishing control or sharing decision making.

You may have some ambivalence about deep intimacy: on one hand, you may desire sharing yourself with another but, on the other hand, you may fear that your desire will not be reciprocated or that you will be smothered or rejected. You may be very fearful of losing your independence, your single or solo life. Your ambivalence likely has roots in the less-than-perfect relationships you've had with other people. If you've been in unhealthy relationships, you may be fearful, rather than desirous, of being close to someone again. With such experiences, you will need to make a leap of faith to trust that you will be treated well in any new relationship. For these reasons, your relationship with your Divine Companion may start slowly.

God has much experience being disappointed in close relationships: God had been let down by some people who God had drawn close to. Yet God still very much desires to draw close to you; God has no ambivalence about you. God is not hesitant to vulnerably enter directly into your inner landscape as your Divine Companion. Although God has known disappointment in other inner relationships, God still very much wants intimacy with you and trusts that you can form a strong and healthy bond in your inner world. God has no hesitation about you.

Your Divine Companion is a patient lover who understands that you will need time to fully trust this emerging inner relationship. Your Divine Companion doesn't overwhelm you by coming on too strong; neither does your Divine Companion hold back on expressing as much love and support as you are capable of receiving. Unlike your previous relationships, your Divine Companion is a collaborator/lover/tutor who is perfectly attuned with you so that the relationship can develop into a full collaboration in which you both make essential contributions.

Simplified Symbol



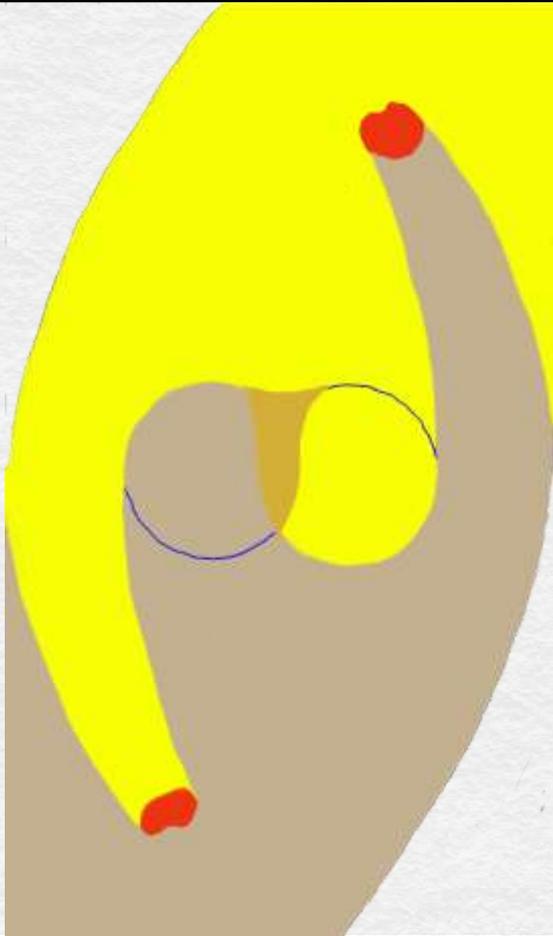
The Full Symbol

A vibrant relationship with your Divine Companion

The full symbol is useful to express some of the nuances and teachings of the spiritual trailblazers. The variations of the full symbol can illustrate the way that the relationship can change at various points in your life. Yet, at times, a less complex symbol may be useful: a simplified symbol still expresses the essence of you reaching up to God while God is simultaneously reaching down to you.



Simplification 1



Human and divine joined in heart and mind

Some of the details are removed in this image, but the simplified symbol still illustrates the core features of your inner world which is home to both you and your Divine Companion. You and your Divine Companion are linked through your hearts (the red areas), the seats of your deepest values which motivates both of you reach out to touch the other. You are also linked through your overlapping minds (the two circles), the seat of your world views. Your overlap with your Divine Companion forms your soul (the golden vase-shaped area), the fertile place where you and your Divine Companion can create together.

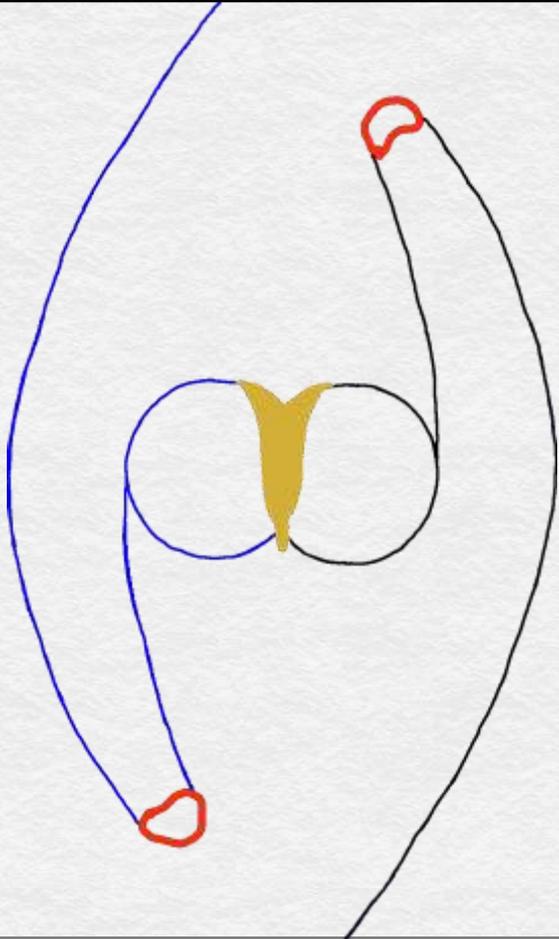
The heart connection represents that both of you treasure each other and are each supremely devoted to sharing life together. The mind overlap represents that you value your Divine Companion's great wisdom and open yourself to the influence of the divine perspective on life. The overlapping minds (the golden vase-shaped area) create a Shekinah, a sacred shared space, where you and your Divine Companion can collaborate and co-create new contributions, such as creating compassion where there is great animosity.

This union between you and your Divine Companion becomes the core building block for compassion for all and gracious service to those in need.

Simplification 2

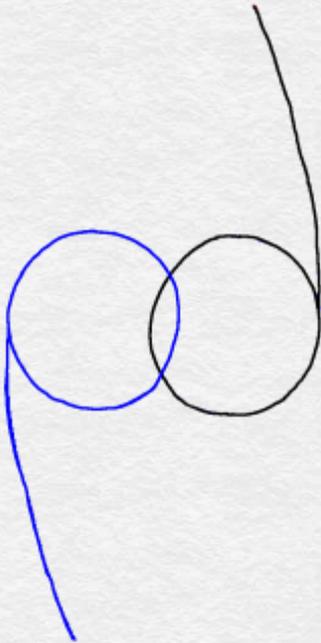
The divine reaching for the human as the human reaches for the divine

A even simpler symbol retains just the outlines of two people who are reaching out to each other. This symbol is more easily drawn yet still expresses the core features of relationship with your Divine Companion: desire for each other and a shared inner life.



Simplification 3

Simplest image

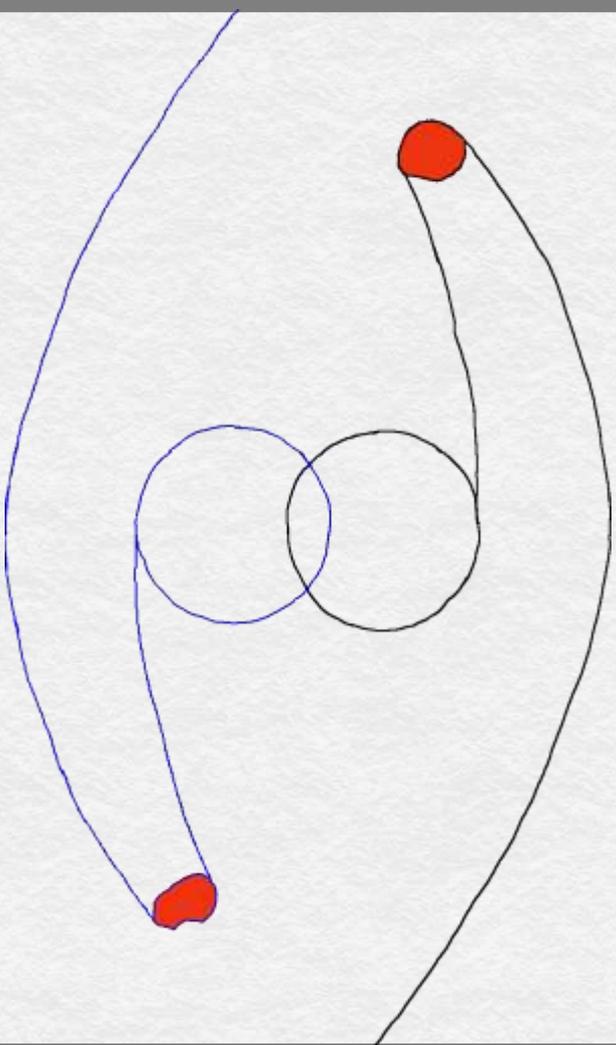


This most simplified version of the symbol is just two strokes of a pen; a shorthand symbol as simple as the Christian fish or the star of David. This simple figure is a symbol of a deeply desired kinship between one person and the God who lives closely within you, your Divine Companion.

The black stroke is you reaching up to God by fully opening both your heart and mind; it represents you growing closer to God through your attitude of reverence and devotion. The blue stroke is God reaching down to you, one-on-one, one person at a time. As you reach internally for your Divine Companion, your mind overlaps with your Divine Companion's mind. You are increasingly joined as partners in the divine dance of getting to know and respect each other, loving and treasuring each other, and working together to serve other people with understanding and compassion.

This mutual reaching depicts you simultaneously reaching up to your Divine Companion as your Divine Companion is reaching down to you in your inner world. This inner reaching mirrors the outer events when God reached out to everyone on earth by coming to dwell on earth in the person of Jesus.

Dyads



Dyads

The intersection between your inner and outer relationships



This symbol of the Divine Companion focuses on your inner world and your connection with your Divine Companion, but the spiritual path is not a dead end road that leads only to understanding yourself more clearly or even to only understanding God more accurately. The inner spiritual path also leads to connecting with other people; your inner spiritual journey is closely intertwined with your relationships with other people.

Your spiritual journey involves two relationships: your relationship with your Divine Companion and your relationships with the people in your life. For this reason, the Divine Companion illustrations don't end here; they expand to include your relationships with others.

You in the Outer World



The various facets of the outer world

This image illustrates you, accompanied as always by your Divine Companion, in the outer landscape (the background with the semicircular white, blue, gray and black bands). The white sphere at the top represents the pure essence of God who is at the center of all creation; the upper blue curved band represents the spiritual aspects of life. The lower gray curved band represents the mainly material aspects of life; the black areas in the lower left and lower right corners represent life when a person chooses to completely exclude and reject God and any spiritual values.

This illustration adds another hand extending horizontally from the beige person (which represents you) which can reach out to another person.

The horizontally extended hand represents your relationships with other people; the hand extending vertically represents your simultaneous connection with your Divine Companion.

You and Another



You are also intimately connected with others

This image of a dyad—a connected pair of two people—illustrates you (the beige figure on the right) in a relationship with another person (the beige figure on the left). The illustration shows that both you and the other person each also have your own relationship with your own Divine Companion. Each Divine Companion is directly connected with the same pure divinity, the God of all creation; these unique Divine Companions bring dignity to each person.

This image represents an ideal relationship: both you and the other person have a strong vibrant relationship with your Divine Companion. You are both equally capable of extending empathy and compassion to another person (illustrated by the flame of love being midway between you and the other person). You meet the other person halfway; you are both equal contributors to the connection you share. You are both fully extending your arm to meet the other person; you have formed an I-Thou relationship with another person which carries some of the same tone of respect and love as your inner relationship with your Divine Companion.

You and Another

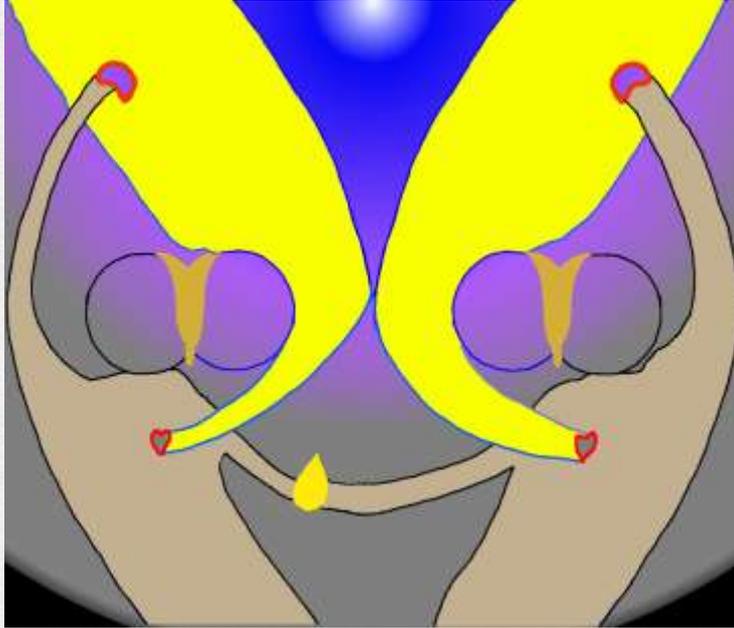
Connection between inner and outer relationships



Martin Buber said that an I-Thou with another person is based on each person having a vibrant I-Eternal Thou inner relationship; “Eternal Thou” is another name for the Divine Companion. The I-Eternal Thou relationship can also be called the I-DC relationship. The deepest and most compassionate relationships between two people happen when both are nourished by a strong connection with their Divine Companion; I-Thou relationships have a spiritual foundation.

Being compassionate and loving towards people in the outer world further opens your inner channel through which your Divine Companion can supply even more divine infusions into your inner world. Your loving inner relationship strengthens your loving outer relationships; and, vice versa, your loving outer relationships strengthen your loving inner relationship. Your spiritual growth is fed by both your inner and outer relationships; your spiritual growth can be stunted by having only having either only an inner relationships or having only outer relationships.

You and Another



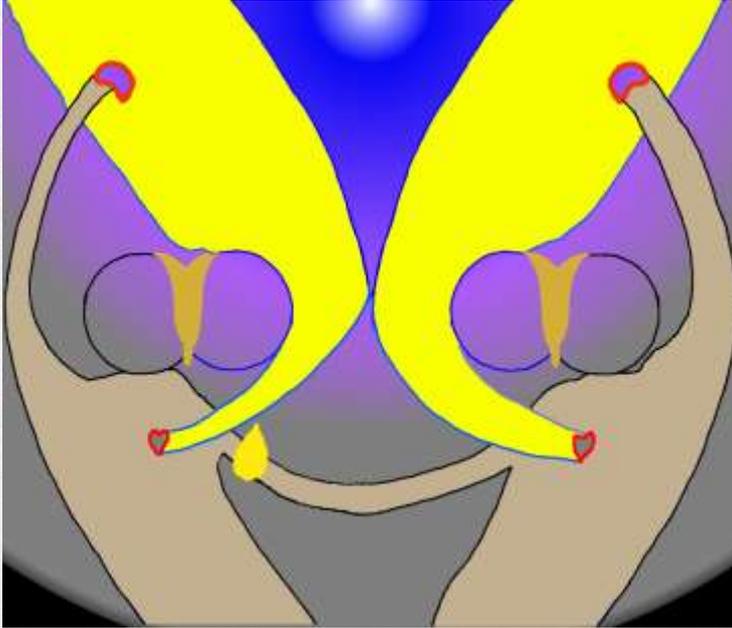
Meeting the full range of other people

The people you meet in life will span the full range of spiritual development: some will be very aware of their Divine Companion and very devoted to nurturing that inner relationship. Others will have only flickering interest or no interest at all in developing their relationship with their Divine Companion.

This image illustrates engaging with a person with a less-developed connection with the Divine Companion (the vertically extended arm of the person on the left is thinner). This person cannot fully extend his or her arm to meet you in an I-Thou connection (the horizontally extended arm of the person on the left is shorter than the figure on the right); you must reach further toward this person to touch his or her hand. You can still kindle the flame of love when connecting with such a person by extending yourself further.

This image also illustrates that each person, whatever his or her level of spiritual development, is of great value to God, illustrated by God personally investing that person with the company of a Divine Companion. God was also invested in you when you were less spiritually developed, as the person on the left in this image currently is. Whatever your level of spiritual development, you still have much, much growth ahead of you; we are all spiritual infants on this world. So others deserve the as much kindness just as your Divine Companion treated you very kindly when you were in primitive less mature stages earlier in in your life.

You and Another



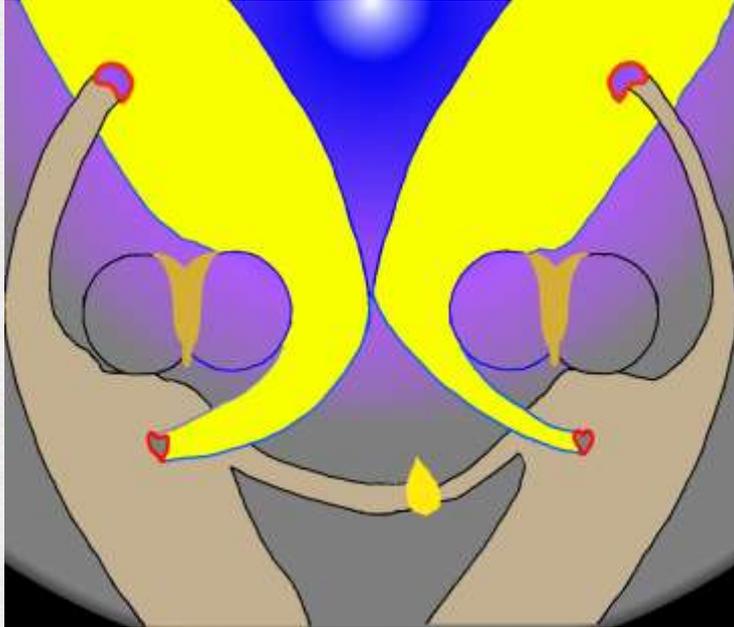
Going the extra mile

This image illustrates you engaging with a person with almost no connection with the Divine Companion (the vertically extended arm of the person on the left is thinner). This person can barely extend his or her arm towards you; you must reach very far to touch his or her hand. You can still treat this person with the same kindness as everyone else but you (and your Divine Companion) will need to bring a compassionate attitude to this connection. The other person is very unlikely to contribute to a kind tone to your interactions; the other person may be very unlikely to appreciate your efforts or to reciprocate your kindness.

In the extreme case, this image represents loving your enemy: being loving and compassionate to people who are very mean to you. You can still extend the same respect and kindness to them that you would extend to any person even when it is extremely unlikely that such a person will treat you well. Your kindness is extended, not for any advantage that might accrue to you, but because of the value inherent in the other person.

This image does not suggest that you permanently bond with a very cruel person in an ongoing abusive relationship, only that you can be kind and respectful during your (likely fleeting) interactions. Retaliating with anger and cruelty disrespects the other's Divine Companion and is a betrayal of your own Divine Companion's values.

You and Another



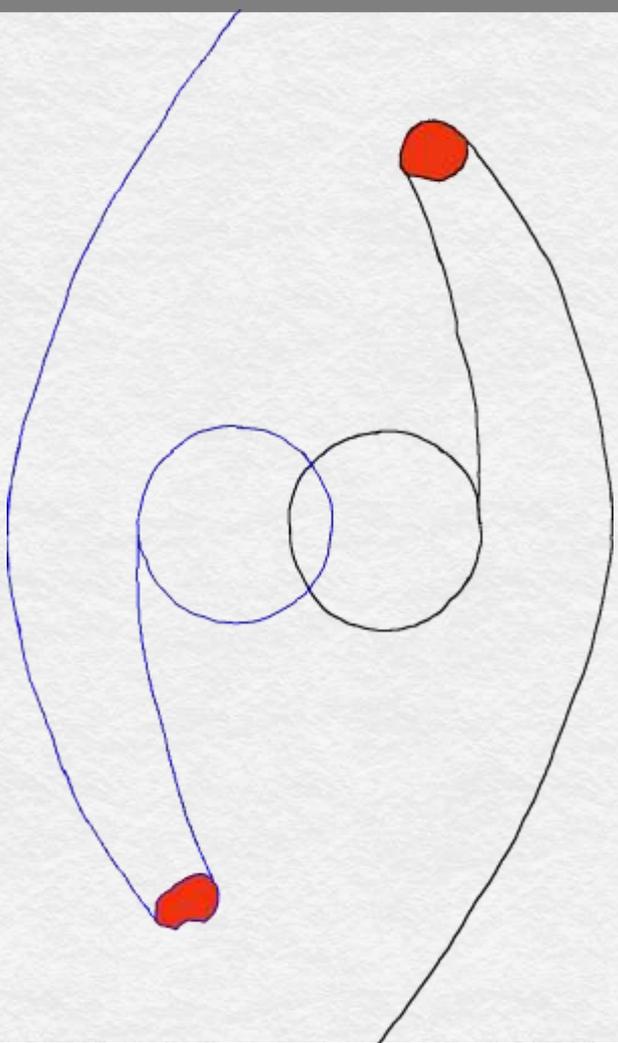
Receiving from others

At other times, you may engage with someone who has more spiritual light than you (illustrated by the other person, the figure on the left, having thicker arms than you, the figure on the right); you cannot reach as far as the other person who must reach further out to you to touch your hand. If you recognize this differential with another person, you will be prepared to appreciate the ways that other people, such as the spiritual trailblazers, bless your life with their personal interest in you and fertilize your own spiritual development with their insights. Recognizing their wisdom and compassion prepares you to be more receptive so they can enrich your life.

This image illustrates the importance of being receptive and respectful when you recognize someone has more spiritual wisdom or deeper devotion to their Divine Companion. Just as it helps the other person when you are respectful and kind to a person with less spiritual wisdom, it helps you when you are respectful and receptive to those who have gone further on the spiritual journey.

Of course, a person's level of spiritual development may not always be immediately apparent. Some may offer you insights that will help you; some may misguide you with inaccurate and limited understanding of life and God. Yet the same guidance applies: give respect to a person regardless of his or her level of spiritual development; always serve when possible; discern what is good and true (from what is not) and assimilate the truth into your understanding.

Dyads Simplified

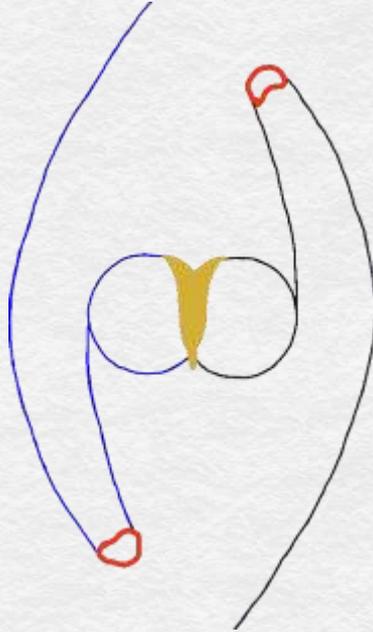


The Beginning of Connections: Your Inner World

Home to you and your Divine Companion

The previous images (page 54 through 60) of the dyads are detailed but too complex for use in other illustrations. The same dyadic relationship can be illustrated with simplified symbols.

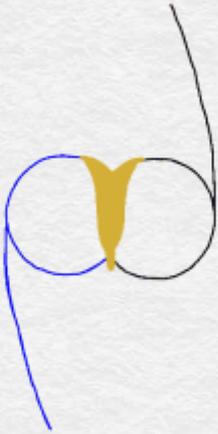
This simplified symbol begins with the symbol for the inner landscape, the home of this relationship. The image illustrates one person, you, reaching up to touch the heart of your Divine Companion and your Divine Companion reaching down to touch your heart, your deepest concerns and highest values. The two of you share a golden zone of co-creation.



The Inner You

A simple symbol of your inner world

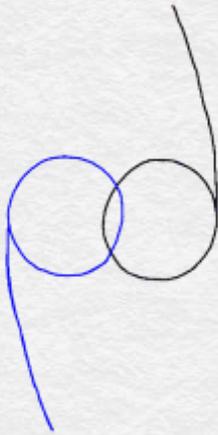
A simpler illustration of your inner relationship between you (black line) with your Divine Companion (blue line).



The Inner You

A even simpler symbol of your inner world

This image is the simplest illustration of your inner relationship between you (black line) with your Divine Companion (blue line).



The Inner You

The simplest symbol of your inner world



For the sake of even further simplicity, your Divine Companion (the blue line is not included) is not shown in this illustration. But your arm that is reaching up (the vertical line) indicates a connection with your Divine Companion. This simplified symbol, and the ones on the preceding pages (pages 62 through 64), represent your inner landscape.

You and Others

You in the Outer Landscape



This illustration adds a second arm extending horizontally which represents you reaching out to engage with another person. You still have an arm reaching up that represents your ongoing connect with your Divine Companion.

This symbol, and the ones on the following pages (pages 67 through 74), weave together your inner landscape (represented by the upward reaching arm in your inner world) and your outer landscape (represented by your horizontally extended arm to people in the outer world).

Another Person (#1)

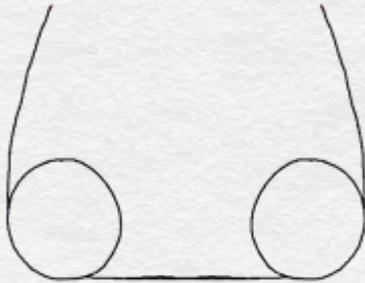
Another person in your outer landscape



This picture represents another person (not you) that you encounter in your life, in your outer landscape. This person also is reaching up to his or her Divine Companion illustrated by the vertical arm reaching upward; this person is also reaching out towards you with illustrated by the horizontally extended arm.

A Dyad: You and Another

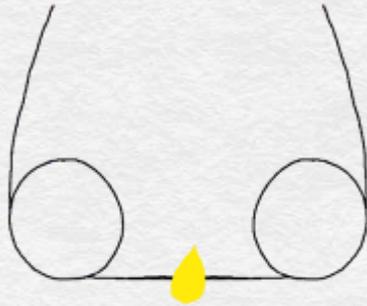
The Outer Landscape: You and another spiritual person



This illustration shows you reaching out to engage with another person who is also reaching out for you. Both of you are also connected with your Divine Companion (the upward extended arms) as you make a connection with each other.

Dyad #1: You and Another

I-Thou relationship



This illustration shows a flame of love that is created by the authentic connection between two people in the outer world who are each nourished and motivated by their own personal embrace with their Divine Companion in their inner world. Each person values the other person in the same way that the Divine Companion values the indwelt person. The flame of love in the outer landscape has the same tone as the loving overlap between each person and his or her Divine Companion (which was represented by the golden vase-shaped overlap in the previous, less simplified drawings, on pages 62 and 63).

This picture illustrates a relationship between two people who are motivated by their spiritual intentions. Their horizontally extended arms represent a reaching out to another person with respect and a desire for affiliative connection. Martin Buber called such a spiritually-activated intimate interaction an I-Thou exchange; the word *Thou* suggests a sense of reverence for the holiness of the other person who you know is indwelt by the spirit of God, his or her own Divine Companion.

This picture is not an illustration of a transactional interaction, such as when someone wants to sell you something and that person is chiefly concerned with obtaining something from you; the horizontally extended arm does not represent reaching out to another for a purely selfish or logistical purposes.

Another Person (#2)

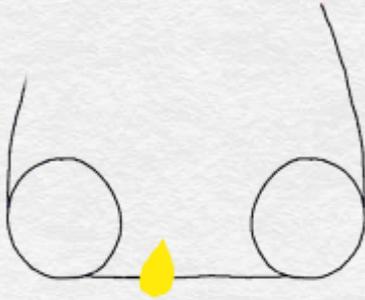
A second kind of person in your outer landscape



This illustration shows a different person in your life, in your outer landscape. This person also has an indwelling Divine Companion but this person has a less-developed relationship with the Divine Companion (illustrated by a shorter upreach of the vertically extended arm towards the Divine Companion). As a consequence of a weaker relationship with the Divine Companion, this person also has a less developed ability to reach out to another person with spiritually motivated love (illustrated by a shorter outreach of the horizontally extended arm directed towards other people).

Dyad #2: You and Another

You and a less spiritually connected person



This illustration shows a person, you (the figure on the right side), with a more developed I-DC relationship (illustrated by a higher upreach of the vertically extended arm) reaching out further (your horizontally extended arm reaches further than the halfway point between you and the other person) to make a connection with another person (the figure on the left side) who has a less developed relationship with his or her Divine Companion (illustrated by a lower upreach of the vertically extended arm) who has a more limited ability to forge an I-Thou relationship. You (the person on the right side) continue to respect the person on the left knowing that this person also has an indwelling Divine Companion who values this person tremendously.

Despite the two people's differences in their inner bond with the Divine Companion, they can still form an I-Thou connection (illustrated by the flame of love where their hands meet).

Another Person (#3)

A third kind of person in your outer landscape

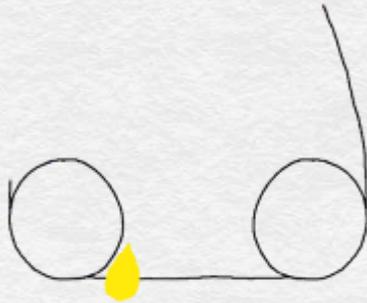


This illustration shows yet a different person in your life, in your outer landscape. This person also has an indwelling Divine Companion but this person has a barely-developed relationship with the Divine Companion (illustrated by a very small upreach of the vertically extended arm); this person also has very limited ability to reach out to another person with spiritually motivated affection (illustrated by a very short outreach of the horizontally extended arm).

Some people may have an extremely weak relationship with their Divine Companion. Some may have no interest in or desire for that relationship; or they may have a passing acquaintance with their Divine Companion but only a half-hearted investment in any relationship with their Divine Companion. Perhaps they treasure material success or psychological pleasure far more than spiritual values. Some may even belittle, undermine or attack other people who hold spiritual values and pursue spiritual growth.

Dyad #3: You and Another

You and a virtually non-spiritual person

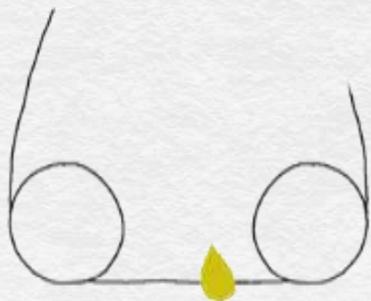


This illustration shows another person, you (the figure on the right side), with a more developed I-DC relationship reaching out further (your horizontally extended arm reaches almost all the way to the other person) to make a connection with a person (the figure on the left side) who has a weakly cultivated I-DC relationship and a very limited ability to forge an I-Thou relationship. You (the figure on the right side) continue to respect the other (the figure on the left) knowing that this person also has an indwelling Divine Companion although it may be barely obvious by the way the person acts in the outer landscape.

Two people with very different inner connections with their Divine Companion can still have an I-Thou connection (the flame of love between the two hands). The fruits of your reaching out may be clear immediately, or you may not sense any change in the person for a very long time, or your reaching out may have no effect on the other person ever. But spiritual trailblazers have always reached out to people of with all degrees of spiritual interest knowing full well that the other person may not receive their good intentions and is unlikely to reciprocate. Still the trailblazers remained assured that some of their reaching out will yield fruit although they couldn't predict with any certainty in which person the fruit would appear or when it will appear.

Dyad #4

You and a more spiritual person



The previous illustrations on pages 70 through 73 have shown you (the figure on the right side) as the person in the dyad who has a deeper connection with your Divine Companion, as the person who is better able to extend a compassionate hand to another person. You will also have opposite kind of encounters in which the other person has a deeper connection with his or her Divine Companion than you and is better able to reach out to you and create a deep and compassionate connection.

This illustration shows you (the figure on the right side), with the less developed I-DC relationship of the two people. You are reaching out less (your horizontally extended arm reaches less than the halfway point between the two of you) to engage with the other person (the figure on the left side) who has the better ability to forge an I-Thou relationship. You are more likely to benefit from such a relationship if you appreciate that the other person may be able to teach you and reach you spiritually in ways that can help your progress on your epic spiritual journey. Being spiritually receptive to such people can help you further develop your inner relationship with your Divine Companion; being receptive to the blessings of these relationships is as important as being a servant to in other relationships.

Dyad Summary

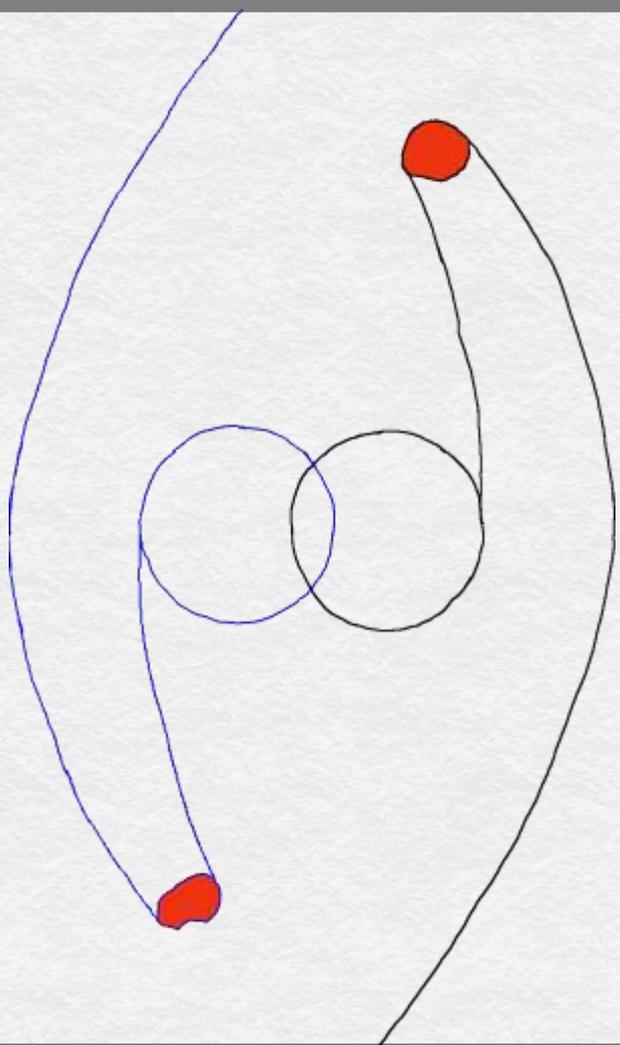
The images in the first sections (pages 5 through 50) illustrate your relationship with your Divine Companion in your inner landscape; they focus on what transpires within your own heart. The images in this section (pages 52 through 74) illustrate how your inner Divine Companion relationship connects with your relationships with others in the outer landscape.

The first set of images (pages 51 through 57) in the Dyad section illustrate that you are simultaneously in two relationships: an inner relationship with your Divine Companion and an outer relationship with another person. These two relationships are intrinsically connected: you cannot separate the influence of your inner I-DC relationship from the quality of your relationships with other people. A vibrant relationship with your Divine Companion supports having strong I-Thou connections with a range of other people.

The spiritual trailblazers found that they became more compassionate with others as they deepened their love for their Divine Companion. Their increased compassion flowed

from in part from a certainty that each person, regardless of any external appearances, is inhabited and loved by their own personal Divine Companion; from this their perspective grew a deep respect for another person, especially those who are excluded or marginalized. The spiritual trailblazers seemed to model their love for others based on the love that they received from their Divine Companion: a freely offered love that was not earned by amazing deeds but a love coming from a deep trust that each person is already intimately connected to God, a sign of the deep value that God holds for that person.

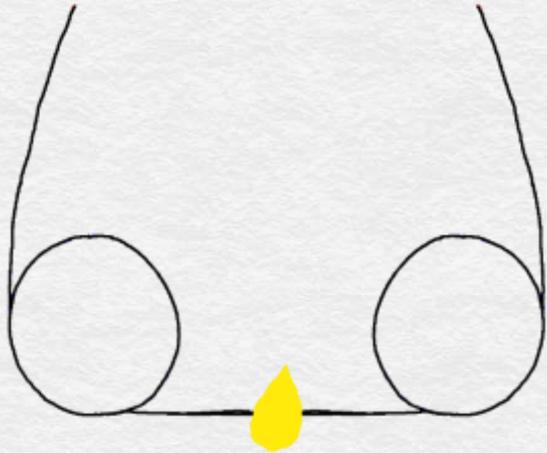
The second set of images (pages 58 through 71) in the Dyad section illustrate the variety of relationships you may encounter: relationships in which both are well-matched spiritually; relationships in which you can provide a more loving and compassionate hand to another who may well benefit from what you offer; relationships in which the odds are long (but not zero!) that the other person will benefit from what you offer; and relationships in which you may be nourished and uplifted by another if you perceive their spiritual fragrance and are open and receptive.



The Circle of Siblings: The Beloved Community

You and Community

Dyads form the basis of community



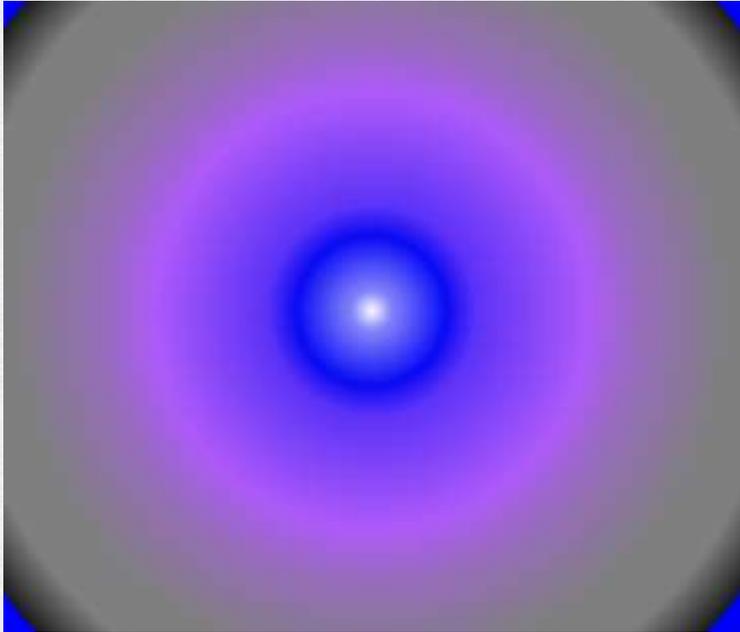
Dyads – relationships between you and one other person – are the place of intimate one-on-one connections. These relationships are very meaningful in themselves but they are also the building blocks of a larger community.

The following images (pages 78 to 98) illustrate a vibrant and fruitful community which is built on individual members who each have their own personal and unique spiritual inner experience of bonding with their Divine Companion. The images also suggest how members of such a community might interact with people outside the community who don't yet have a meaningful relationship with their Divine Companion.

Just as each relationship has its own depth and flavor, each community also has its own depth and flavor. Some relationships can be very superficial while other relationships can be deep and fruitful; some communities can be very superficial and other communities can be deep and fruitful.

The Outer Landscape

The various regions of the outer landscape



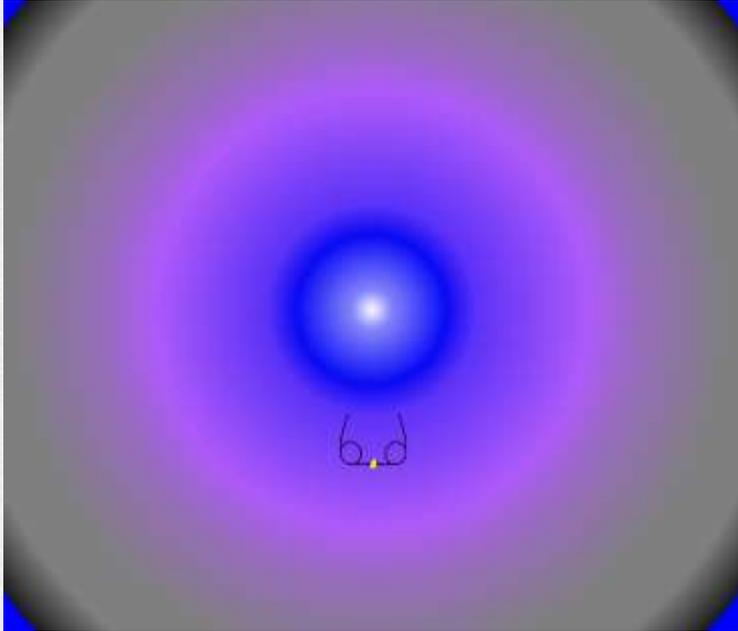
This image represents the outer landscape. The gray areas represent the material aspects of life; everyone must spend time in this part of the outer landscape. The outer gray ring represents a markedly materialistic mentality which holds that there's no reason to believe in God or that life has a spiritual dimension. The inner gray ring (where the grey dissolves into the blue) represents a mentality that is open to the possibility of God or a spiritual dimension of life. Each person chooses the material zone (which gray ring) where they spend most of their time.

The blue areas represent the spiritual facets of life where you appreciate and revere spiritual values. Spending time in the spiritual arena is optional. Life does not force you into this arena; you only enter it by intentionally choosing it, by intentionally placing a very high value on God: ranging from a lukewarm value (the lighter blues further from the center) to supreme devotion (the darker blues nearer to the center). The inner white sphere represents the pure essence of God that resides in the most spiritual facet of creation.

The black areas near the four corners represent the extreme materialistic mentality that actively attacks spirituality and undermines those who value it. Beyond the black ring, is a hint of blue to illustrate that God abandons no one, not even those who have abandoned and repudiated God. God remains available to them if they want to establish a connection; all they have to do is open their hearts to God.

Dyads and Communities

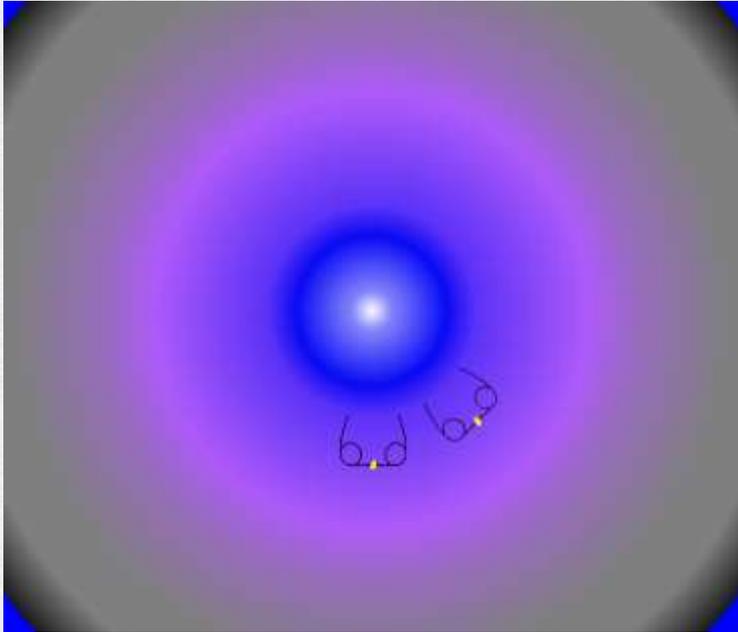
Dyads as the building block of community



This picture illustrates two people who have each taken the epic inner journey and have come to know and love their Divine Companion; that inner relationship became the basis for their compassionate reaching out to others. Each person has one arm lifted up to God (the white sphere in the center) and each person is simultaneously reaching out to the other person as if they are each extending a spiritual handshake to the other. When a person meets another who also has a strong inner relationship with his or her Divine Companion, they can form a strong spiritual bond with each other, a spiritually meaningful relationship that flows from their inner spiritual spring. These relationships spiritually nourishes each person in the dyad (illustrated by the flame of love where their hands meet).

Growing Community

Community grows dyad by dyad

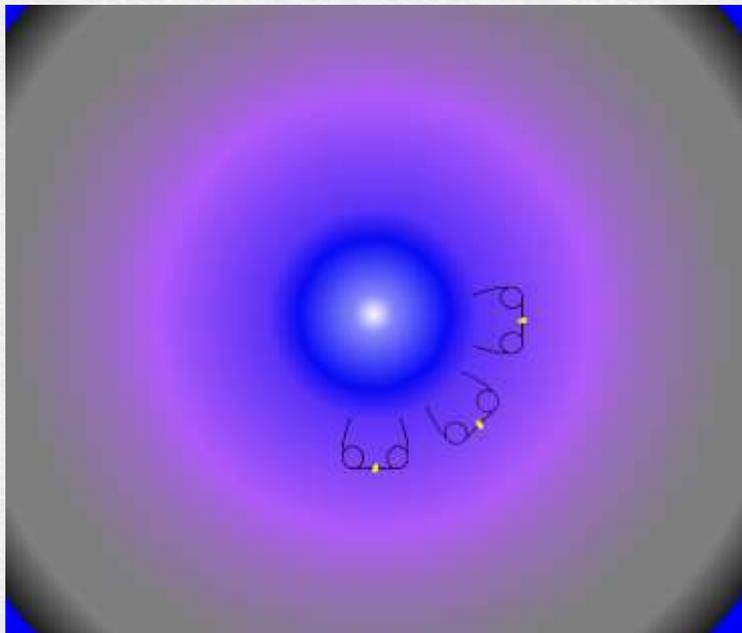


Other people may be attracted to a dyad who share an affectionate and supportive spiritually-based bond. The attraction likely flows more from the tenor of their relationships than from a specific set of tenets. Teresa of Avila and Francis of Assisi attracted many people who wanted to join their communities because they could sense the love that they extended to people. Other church communities with the same sacred text lacked the same drawing power because they did not have the same inner spiritual foundation as Francis and Teresa, the same compassionate attitude, or the same dedication to the service of others. Both attracted followers who first wanted to experience such loving interactions themselves and then, having experienced that affectionate affirmation, they wanted to serve others with the same great tenderness and enthusiasm they had received from Teresa and Francis.

Like-minded people may congregate around the nucleus of spiritually-rooted dyads. The drawing force that pulls the community together may come more from the quality of its interactions than from specific spiritual beliefs. These vibrant communities may be found in different religious traditions with diverse beliefs but not all religious communities will have these loving attitudes. Imagine the strong drawing power of a community that provides both vibrant loving relationships between members and visitors as well as accurate teachings about God's kind and loving character.

Growing Community

Each member is holy

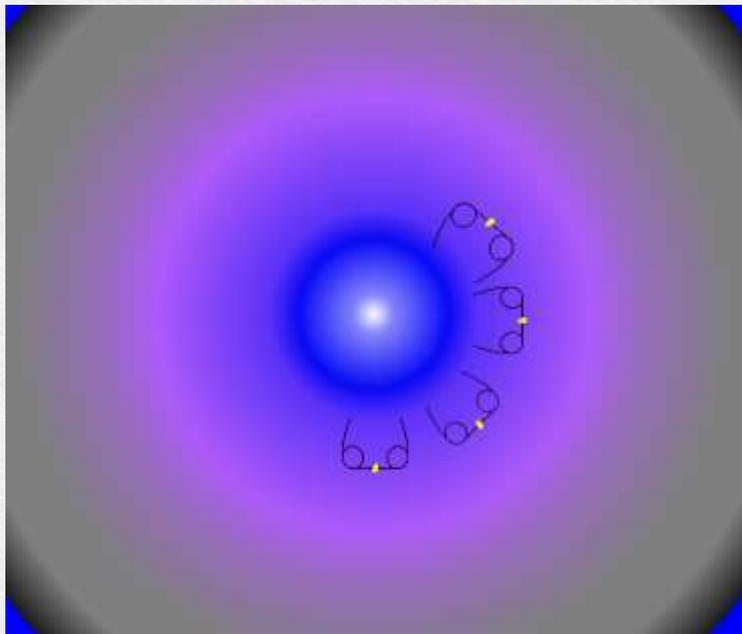


Scott Peck begins his book *A Different Drummer* with a myth/story called “The Rabbi’s Gift” about a small order of monks whose community was gradually fading as its aging members died. A visiting rabbi cryptically tells the few remaining monks that he believes one of them is an especially holy person but he doesn’t say who that one is. As the monks puzzle over this *koan*, they begin to treat each other, even the cantankerous ones, with more respect. Each monk also deepens his respect for himself on the outside chance that he might be the holy one. Their words and actions begin to take on a tone of deep respect and affection for each other. They developed a combination of profound self-respect and other-respect. People who visited the monastery were deeply moved by the monks’ relationships and the visitors returned with their friends. As more people visited, some were moved to join the monastery and more fully absorb the respect and quality of these relationships. The monastery, once fading, began to thrive because their deepened respect for one another overflowed into great compassion for their visitors.

Respecting each person (valuing each person’s inherent holiness because each person is treasured by God) is the cohesive force of a spiritual community, the Circle of Siblings where each person is sure that everyone is a beloved and valued child of God.

Growing Community

The center remains the Spirit



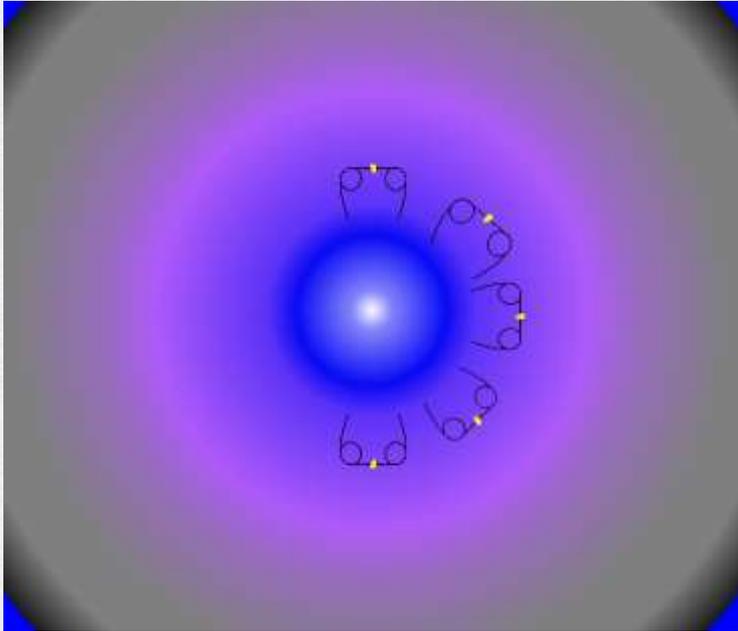
As the community grows, it remains centered in spirit; it remains centered around God (the white sphere in the center of the image). The center of the community does not shift to become centered on a particularly charismatic member. The center of a spiritual community is always reserved for God.

The family-of-God tribe extends an invitation to everyone to join the Circle of Siblings, the circle of people who are linked because all are children of God. Anyone who seeks to bond with their Divine Companion is automatically a member of this tribe even before they meet other kindred souls; they are often delighted to have found the companionship of those with similar values.

Although everyone is invited into this family, many different responses are possible: some accept the invitation with a whole heart; some embrace the ideals of the Circle of Siblings half-heartedly or only in an erudite manner; some vacillate and never reach a final decision that the values of the spiritual community are really good and true; some completely and totally reject the community's, and their Divine Companion's, sweet invitation. Some do not accept the invitation because their main allegiance is to material pleasures or their own independence; they are not willing to relinquish what treasures they have accumulated on the materialistic-only path in life.

Growing Community

A shifting dance of dyads

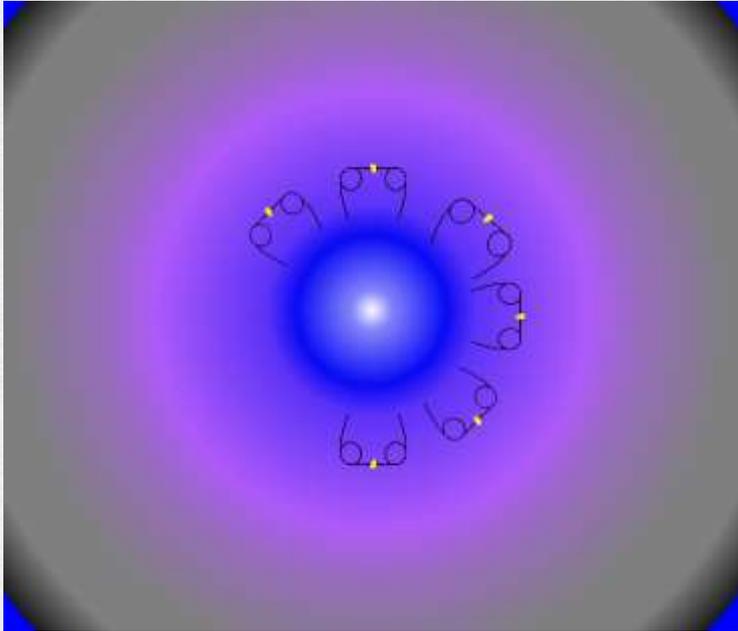


The illustration shows the community increasing by the addition of more dyads. The dyads are not permanently fixed partnerships; the specific individuals in a dyad may shift over time. The two individuals in the first dyad may separate and connect spiritually for a time with different people in the community. Ideally each person in the community could be a dyad with any other person in the community and have meaningful spiritually-based interactions with any member.

The community is like a dance where, at different times throughout the evening, each person dances with every other person in the dance hall. You may come to the dance with one partner, dance with many other partners, and then leave with the one you came with. Like the dance community, the spiritual community recognizes that certain dyads may be a very beneficial and productive pair, but the community avoids castes or cliques in which some people only interact with a select few.

Growing Community

Unity in spirit not conformity to rules

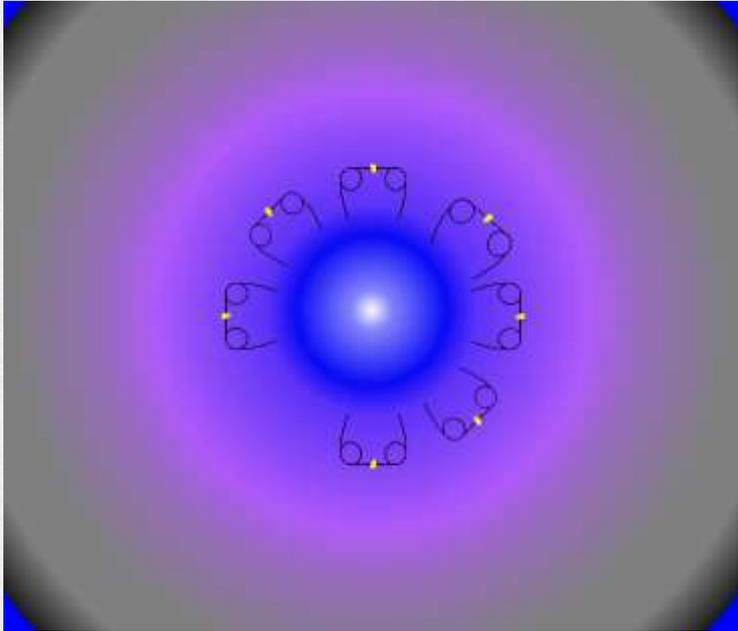


Like-minded people may congregate together into spiritual community because they hold similar spiritual attitudes but the individuality of each member is valued. The community does not pressure members to become identical carbon copies of one another. Quite the opposite: the characteristics and unique qualities of each person are valued and nurtured. Members of a vibrant spiritual group share a common reverence for God and spirituality but these shared values don't require that all members become identical in every thought and behavior. A common core of reverence, not conformity to a long list of rules, unites the members. The unique contributions of each individual are fostered not tamped down.

These images illustrate an ideal community in which all members in a circle of have an equal devotion to God. In reality, a spiritual community likely has members with varying degrees of reverence for and devotion to God. Although some members have grown more spiritually, all members are equally valued and welcomed regardless of their spiritual development (each person and dyad are the same size which represents that each person has identical value in God's eyes). The equal value of each person does not mean that members with less spiritual development should assume teaching or leadership roles.

Growing Community

Worship, mutual support, combined wisdom, greater service



A spiritual community finds great joy in worship, in sharing their love of God together. Much as a loving couple enjoys expressing affection for each other, members of a spiritual community enjoy worship: shared expressions of deep affection, reverence and love for God.

Experiencing the joy of shared worship may strengthen members for the times when the encounter nonchalance or even attack for their trust in God.

Integrating each person's allotment of wisdom may increase the sum total of the community's communal wisdom, their accumulated understanding of God's relationship with each person. As in the inner landscape, discernment is required to sort out what is valuable and what is dross.

As a spiritual group grows, they will be able to accomplish more than they could as individuals or as one dyad. Spiritual communities seek to accomplish a goal through loving spiritual means rather than using their large numbers to forcibly achieve a goal through material means such as using political power or social status.

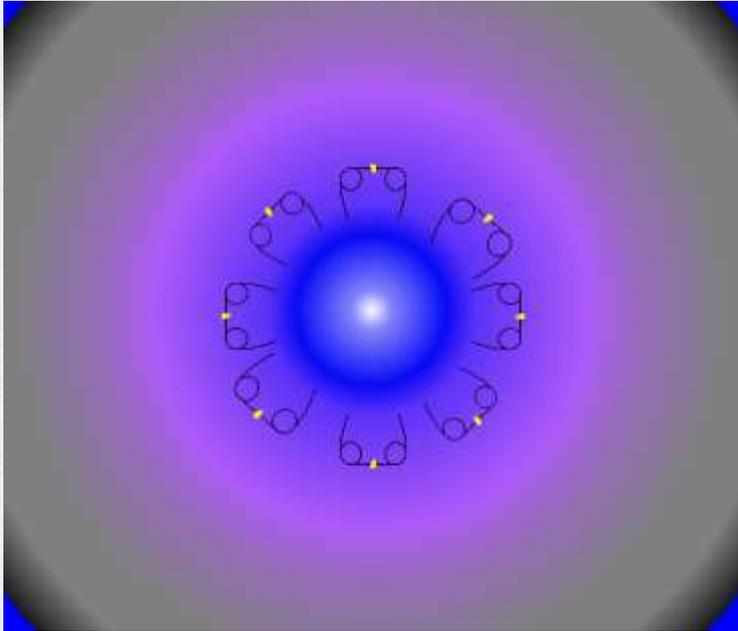
The Beloved Community

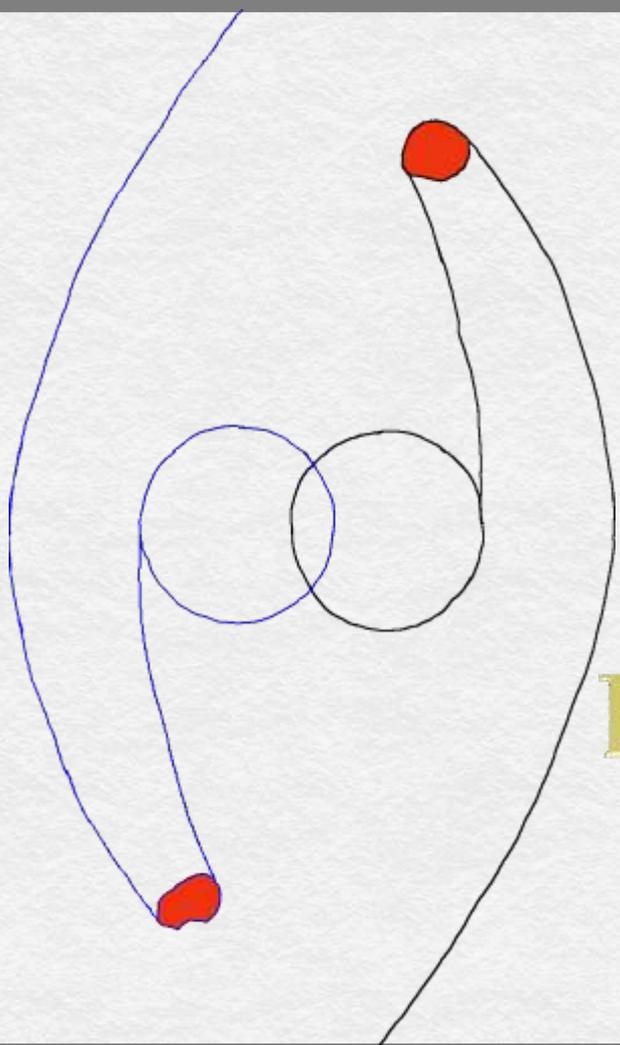
Community as a circle of those who love their Divine Companion

“Beloved” was Teresa of Avila’s favorite name for her Divine Companion because she felt very deeply loved and cared for by her Beloved in her inner world. Love was the dominant color of her relationship with her Divine Companion, a love that flowed over into her outer relationships.

“Beloved Community” was John Lewis’ name for a group of people who used loving methods to help make the world a better place; this community went so far as to be kind to people who were very vicious to the members. Before these civil rights activists did their monumental work in the outer landscape, the Beloved Community first honed each member’s deep inner spiritual sense of being loved to sustain them and to enable them to maintain their poise and loving attitude in very difficult circumstances.

Combining Teresa and John Lewis’ use of the word *Beloved* into the name, Beloved Community, indicates a group whose members have developed a close inner relationship with the Beloved Divine Companion. This inner relationship creates the foundation for their outer relationships, a community of kindness open to all, extended even to those who are mean. John Lewis’ Beloved Community worked for equal rights for Black people, but they were linked, not by having the same skin color, but rather by valuing their relationship with their Divine Companion which motivated their work in the outer landscape.

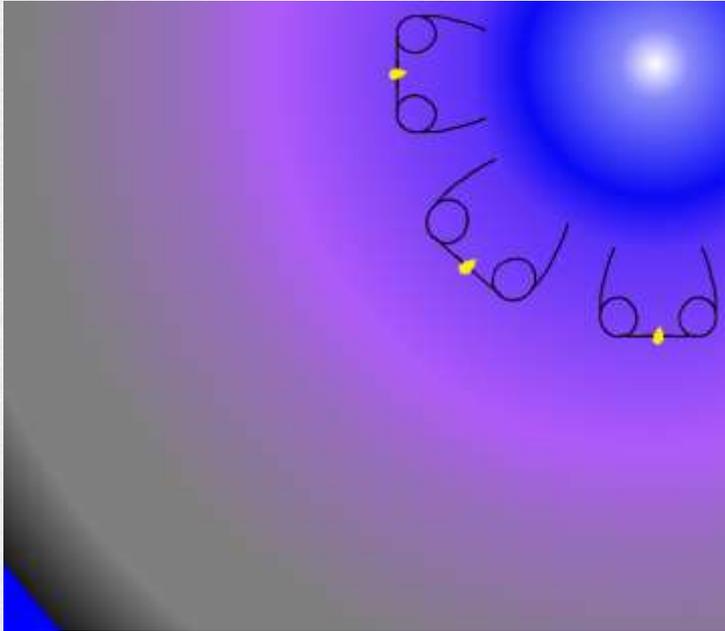




The Outskirts of the Beloved Community

Zooming in on the Circle of Siblings

You belong to the Beloved Community and to the rest of the world



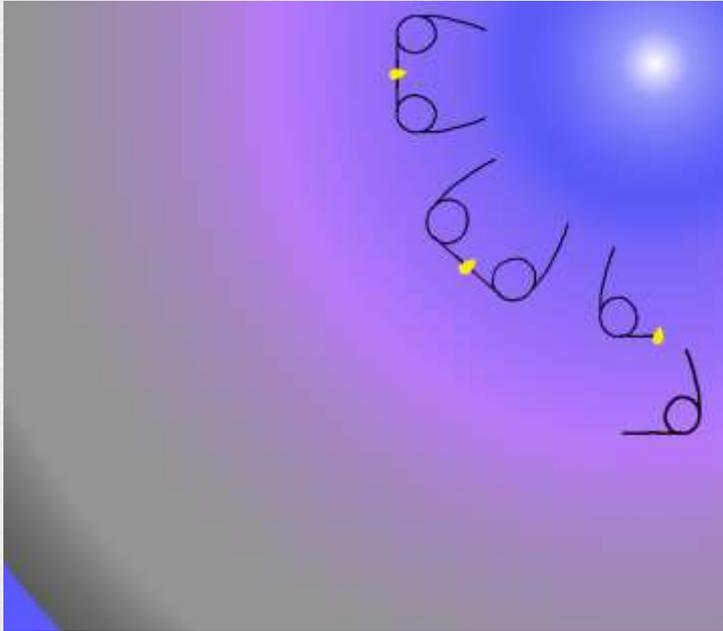
This image focuses on one part of the full circle of the Beloved Community to better illustrate how a member leaves the Beloved Community for a while, interacts with people outside the community, and then returns to the community.

People don't stay in the spiritual community at all times. Each member leaves the community to interact for a while with others at work or in ongoing relationships. Sometimes a member meaningfully engages with a person outside the community circle. The next ten images represent how an *individual member* might engage in a meaningful interaction with a person, not simply an incidental interaction.

As *a group*, the Beloved Community might engage with a disruptive person very differently than an individual member would. A community may need to protect itself from a disruptive or abusive person by limiting his or her participation or perhaps excluding the person altogether. Each individual in the community is still called to refrain from hatred and to continue to respect and, if possible, assist that person even after that person's participation in the community is limited or ended.

On the Outskirts of the Circle

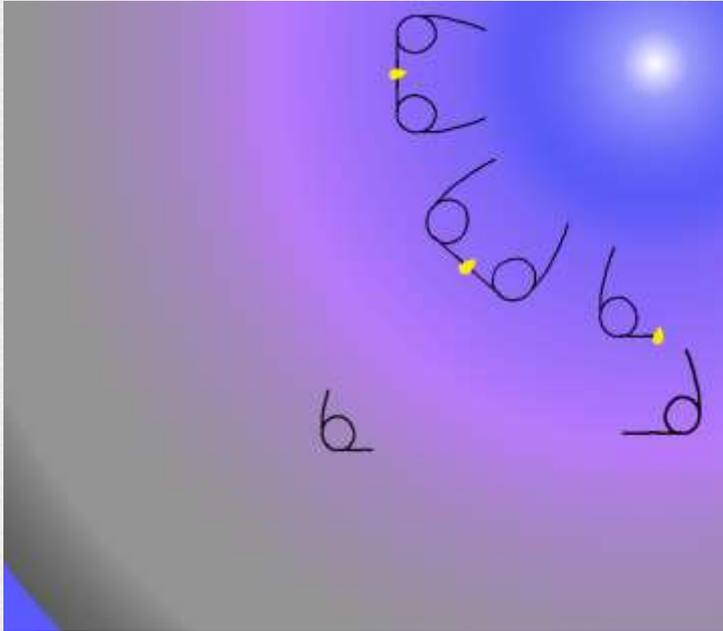
The attitude when stepping out of the Beloved Community



This image shows one member stepping outside the circle after being nourished by time spent with the Beloved Community. The member leaves with a kind attitude and a warm heart, happy for an opportunity to serve another. The member leaves with the attitude of a joyful servant who is gladly willing to take the lower position when engaging with another person. The community member isn't seeking a higher, one-up position or have a condescending attitude about people outside of the circle ("Oh, that poor back-slidden sinner!"). The member is not overly concerned with correcting another person's errors; instead, the member wants to extend a supporting hand especially to a person who feels alone and in need of an affirming connection. The community member is not trying to get more notches on his or her belt by racking up points from making converts. The member is sincerely moved by the circumstances of another person and reaches out with kindness and concern knowing that the other person is treasured by God.

Outside the Circle

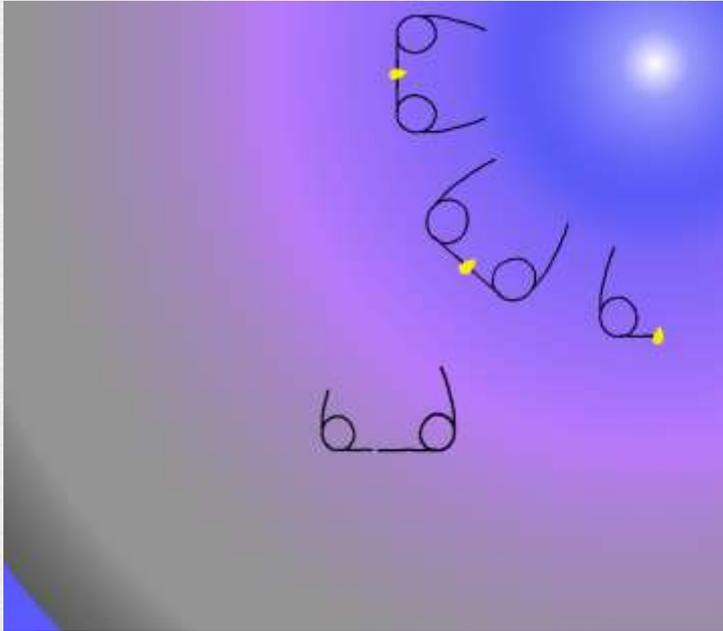
A person with a fledging I-DC relationship



This image shows a person outside of the community (the figure in the gray area) who has a fledging relationship with his or her Divine Companion (illustrated by the figure's shorter upward-extended arm).

Outside the Circle

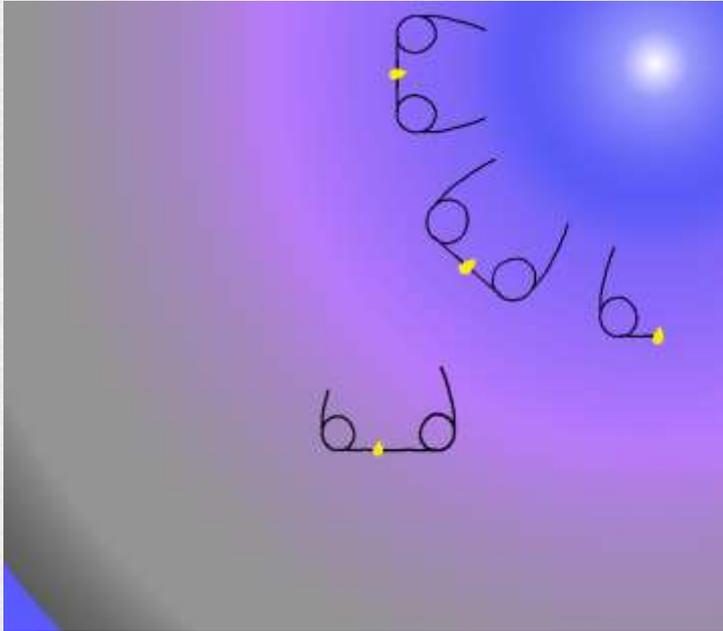
Reaching out with kindness



The member of the Beloved Community reaches out with hope and trust to this person (illustrated by the member's fully extended horizontal arm). The member does not restrain his or her warmth for the other person; the member is more interested in getting to know the other person than in making a convert of the other person.

Outside the Circle

Forging an I-Thou connection

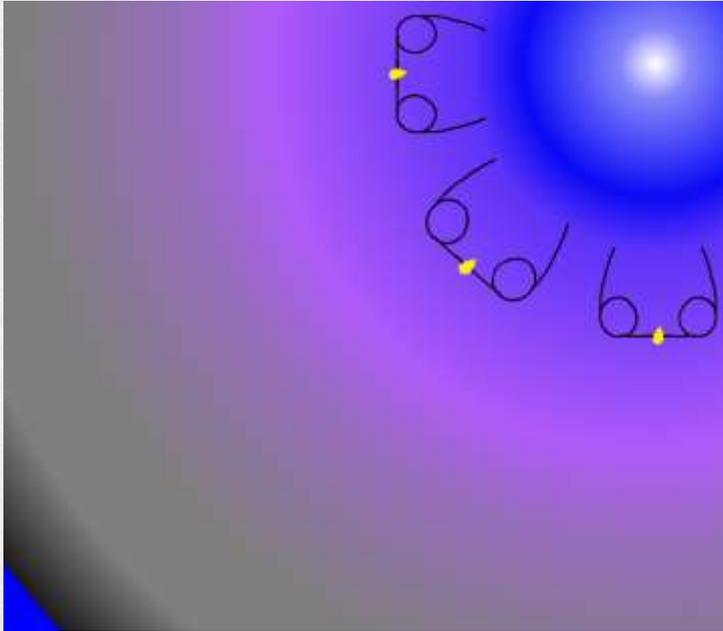


The two people may form an I-Thou connection (illustrated by the flame of love between their horizontally-extended arms). Their I-Thou relationship may be fleeting (illustrated by a flame that is a bit smaller than the flames within the Beloved Community).

Or the two people may not form an I-Thou relationship; it takes two people with similar intention and desire to form such a connection. One person can offer the possibility of an I-Thou relationship to another but one person alone cannot create an I-Thou relationship unless the other person also wants it. Even if the other person doesn't have a desire for an I-Thou connection, the community member can still offer the gift, perhaps unappreciated at this time, of respect and kindness.

Return to the Circle

The member returns to the Beloved Community

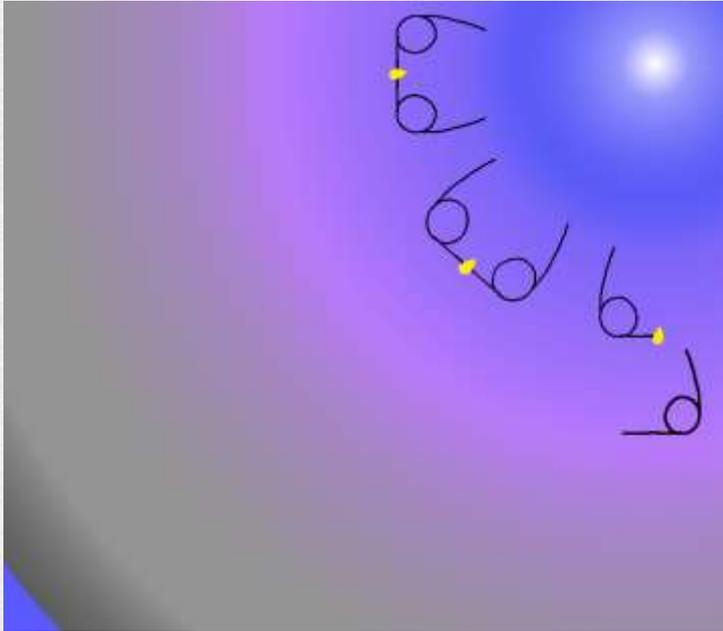


The member returns to the Beloved Community and is nourished again by the group's connections.

The primary goal of a member leaving the community circle is to serve in a helpful way, perhaps to be kind to a person who has little kindness in his or her life. The member does not have a hidden agenda (the member's real, but disguised, goal), such as making another person believe a certain dogma or gaining a new member for a religious organization. Perhaps the person outside the circle might join the community (which could be wonderful) but the member's service is not a failure if the other person doesn't join the community. The interaction is only a failure if the member of the Beloved Community did not communicate a loving attitude in his or her tone and actions, if the member did not fully extend his or her hand and treat the person as a beloved child of God with inherent dignity despite any and all material appearances to the contrary.

On the Outskirts of the Circle Again

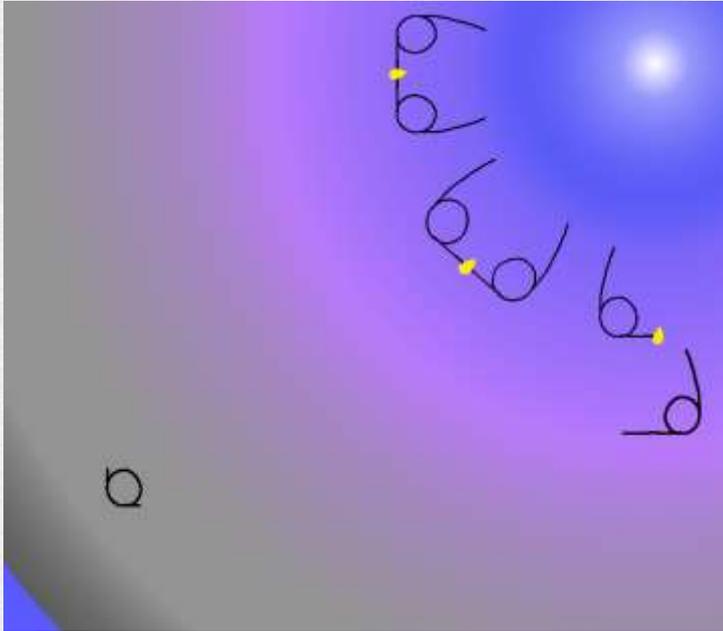
Another kind of encounter beyond the circle



The next five images illustrate another kind of encounter between a member of the Beloved Community and a person outside the community. Again, a member temporarily steps outside the circle to engage with another person. Having been spiritually nourished in the community, the member leaves the circle with a respectful attitude and loving heart.

Outside the Circle

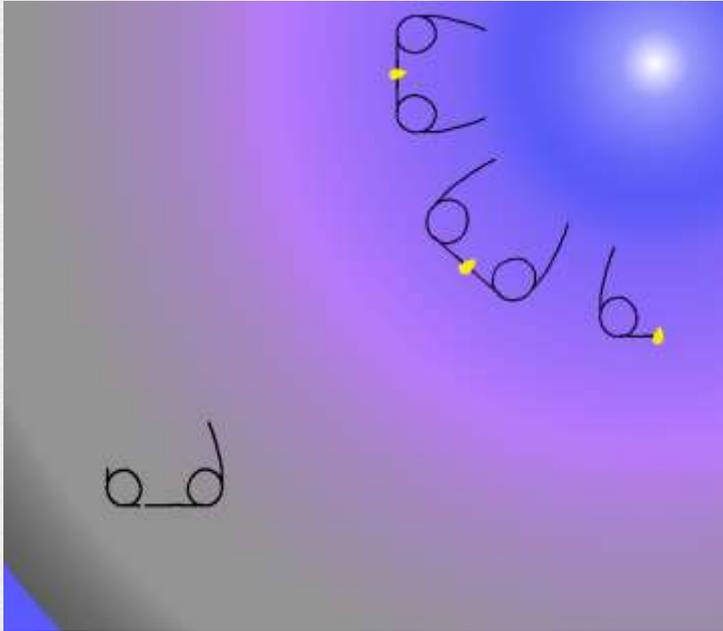
A person with minimal or no spiritual inclination



The other person in this illustration (the figure in the gray area) has little or no spiritual inclination (the figure is closer to the black area and extends his or her arm upward only a very small amount). Such a person sees material things as being far more valuable than anything such as God or spirituality; this person may be completely dedicated to a very materialistic philosophy of life. This person will likely dismiss any ideas about life being a mixture of material and spiritual facets. This person may enjoy undermining or attacking people who believe in God and spirituality as being naïve or stupid.

Outside the Circle

Reaching Out



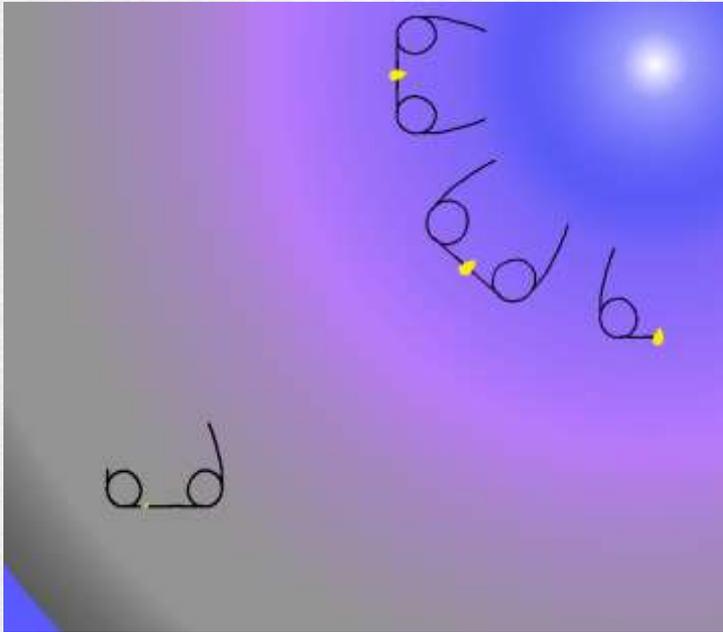
Again, the member of the Beloved Community reaches out with hope and trust to this person (illustrated by the fully extended horizontal arm of the figure on the right). The member does not hold back his or her warmth because the other person has little spiritual inclination. The member reaches out to this person with the same fully extended arm as when the member reaches out to another member of the Beloved Community.

The person who rejects spirituality is still dearly beloved by God even though that person disrespects God; that person is still treasured by his or her Divine Companion even though that person has no interest or respect for the Divine Companion. God hopes that each member of the Beloved Community would hold a similarly welcoming attitude for any person, even a staunchly nonspiritual person, and extend a hand of loving kindness to that person.

This hope does not mean that members are expected to invest large amounts of time in such encounters. A member is not expected to take a cruel person as an intimate partner; a community is not expected to make a nonspiritual person a leader. The initial kindness extended by members is freely given, but an intimate relationship or leadership must be earned by a person's character and behavior.

Outside the Circle

Always a possibility for an I-Thou moment

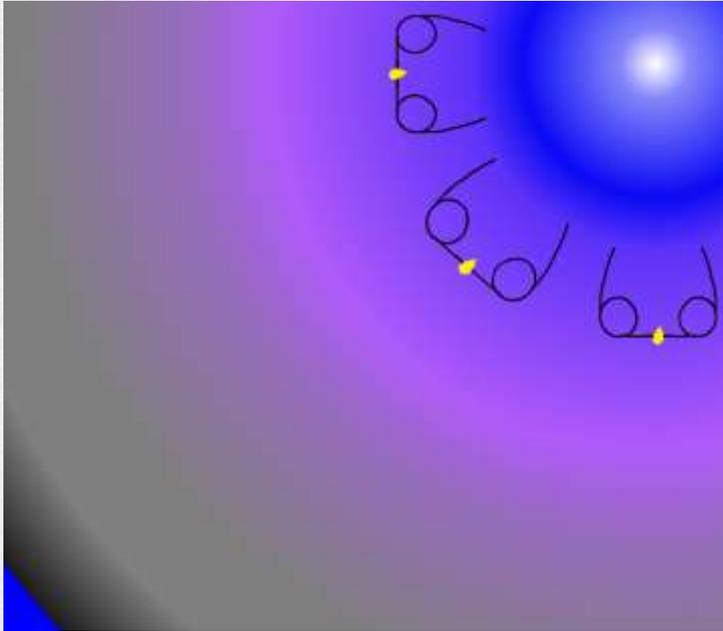


The odds of forming an I-Thou relationship in this encounter may be very low (indicated by a very small flame between the two hands), but they are not zero. A well-nourished member of the Beloved Community understands the difficulty of creating a healthy and meaningful connection in this situation, but is invigorated by the possibility, however remote, that an I-Thou connection could still be made. Perhaps the member kindles a small spark of connection that may later contribute to the other person later being able to form a more vibrant I-Thou connection; or perhaps not.

As before, the member of the Beloved Community extends the same welcome to any person regardless of his or her status or circumstances. The member respects the other person's autonomy and does not try to force that person to do something against his or her will; no one is forced or coerced into a relationship that he or she doesn't want or value.

Return to the Circle

Return to the Beloved Community



The member returns to the Beloved Community and is again nourished by the group's connections.

Life is like a dance in which you alternate between partners, some who are skilled dancers and some who are less so. In your life, you will alternate between interacting with people who are capable of kind and caring interactions and some who are less so. In a dance, the quality of a couple's dancing is determined by the abilities of each partner; it takes two skilled dancers to move gracefully together. In a relationship, the depth of your connection is determined by the attitudes of each person; it takes two motivated and attuned people to connect in a considerate and appreciative I-Thou way.

Another person may sometimes pull an interaction to a lower, baser level; the Beloved Community encourages you to resist that pull, which can be very strong, and to still give that person the highest possible level of respect and consideration. Your Divine Companion can help counteract that lower pull of another person and assist you with a pull towards a higher level of interacting.

Beloved Community Summary

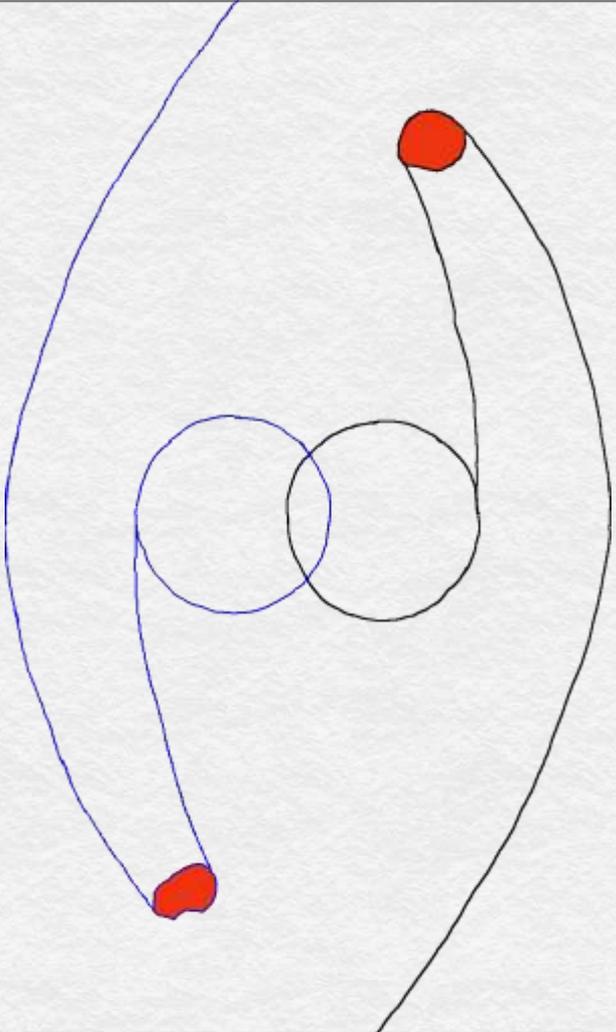
The first Divine Companion symbol focuses on your personal relationship with your Divine Companion in your inner landscape; the second dyad symbol focuses on your relationship with another person in the outer landscape; the third Beloved Community symbol focuses on a group whose members have each developed an inner relationship and cooperation with their Divine Companion.

The bond that connects you with your Divine Companion influences the bond that connects you with other people when you see them as having their own Divine Companion who dwells within them. A group of people who recognize the divine Beloved, both in themselves and others, are a Beloved Community. Spiritual reverence for God and deep respect for others distinguishes the Beloved Community from other groups.

The depth of your inner sharing with your Divine Companion (both receiving and contributing) influences the depth of love which you bring to a dyad. Sometimes you may have the opportunity to interact with someone who cooperates less

with the Divine Companion than you and, through your relationship, you may be able to provide spiritual nourishment for this person. Sometimes you may be blessed with interacting with someone who cooperates more fully with the Divine Companion than you and, through a relationship with this person, you are spiritually nourished.

As Jesus taught, some people are firmly rooted in the Beloved Community; some only pretend to be members; some are vacillating as to whether they want to surrender their ego so that they can fully embrace their Divine Companion and become full members of the Beloved Community; and some are actively opposed to the community and would enjoy disrupting or destroying the community. A theme common to many epic stories (e.g., Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, the Odyssey) is great value of the wisdom to distinguish friend from foe, and especially a true friend from a person only posing as a friend. The tone of the Beloved Community (kindness, concern for individuals, desire to learn, reverence) may be a useful way to recognize a true friendship or a true Beloved Community.



Jesus

The Human-Divine Gap

It's hard for our minds to really comprehend who God is

The Divine Companion logo is a visual representation of how, in your inner landscape, your Divine Companion helps you grasp and experience the character of God. The next six pages present an analogous logo that visually represents how, in the outer landscape, the life and character of Jesus help you grasp the character of God. Jesus and God the Father share the same character: the same strong interest they have in you, the same great effort they make to reach out to you, the same high value they place on you, the same strong desire they have to show you the truth that clarifies a muddled mind, the same willingness for enduring any difficulty and challenges – even pain – to reach you across the great spiritual gap that currently, temporarily, separates you and God.

The letter “F” represents God the Father, the God of all creation; the letter “F” is blue indicating divinity. The letter “P” represents a person living on earth; the letter “P” is black indicating earth-bound human nature. The letter “F” is above the letter “P” indicating God the Father, who is so spiritually sublime is beyond what a material mind can comprehend. Our mind’s limitations don’t permit us to really grasp the full character of the Father and to understand His wisdom. We cannot bridge the tremendous gap between us and the Father using our own resources.

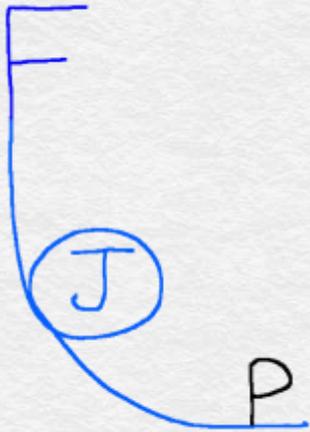
F

P

Jesus

Jesus is the bridge from the Father to you

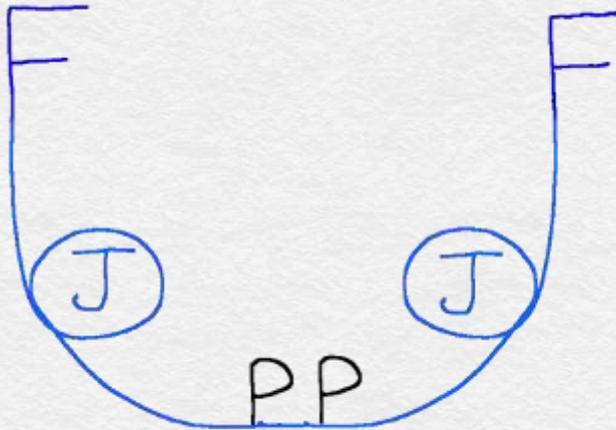
Although it is hard for the human mind to grasp the divine character of God the Father, the human mind can readily comprehend the character of another human being. Jesus came to reveal the wonderful character of God to us in a way that we could grasp: in the character of another human being, in the character of Jesus. His own human character was a completely accurate reflection of the Father's divine character. The curved line represents Jesus; the curved line is blue indicating that he is divine but it is a slightly lighter blue than the letter "F" indicating that Jesus makes divinity palpable and understandable to a person who could not grasp pure divinity of the God. The life of Jesus presents the Father's character to people in a way that they can comprehend. Each person can rest in the loving hand of Jesus (the letter "P" rests on the light blue representing Jesus).



Jesus

Jesus is the bridge from the Father to all of us

The second figure on the right represents Jesus being the bridge that connects another person with the Father.



Jesus creates a bridge for each person to connect to God the Father and really feel how much the Father's loves each person, to really feel that he or she is not abandoned and left to cope with life's challenges without any spiritual support. Each person has a loving Father who reaches out to her or him.

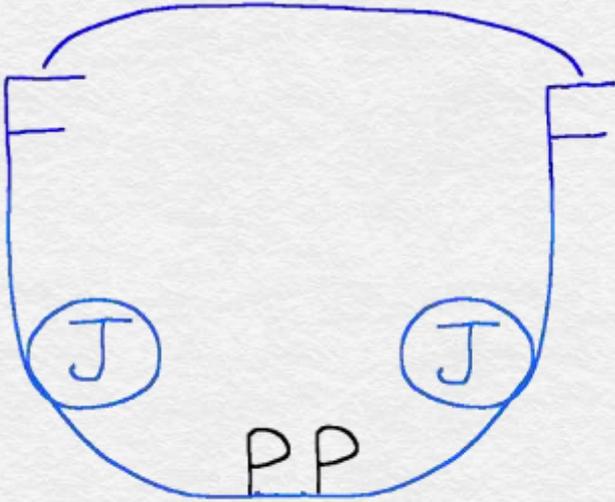
That common bond shared by all people – that each person is attached to God by a tender and strong bond – establishes a community created by a shared common bond, by a shared spiritual Father, Everyone has the same link with the Father even when a person cannot discern that inner bond, even when a person's outward behavior shows no evidence of a connection with divinity.

God and Jesus both reach out to you as an individual person: one divine person reaching out to one human person. But God and Jesus don't reach out to only you: they offer the same one-to-one connection to each and every person; they are reaching out personally to each individual.

Jesus

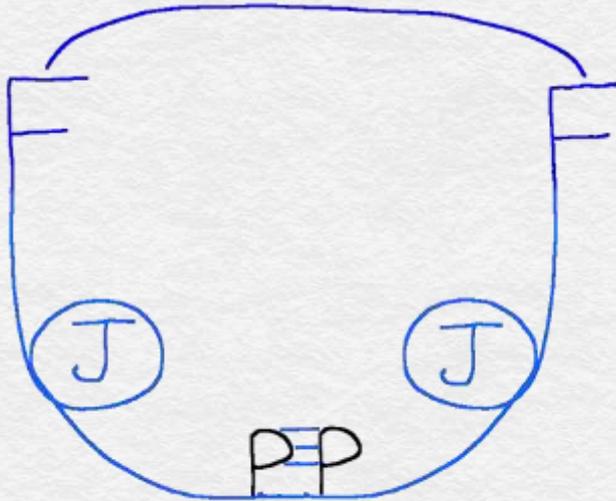
One Father

An arch connects the two F's that represent the God the Father indicating that it is the same Father who connects with each individual person through Jesus.



Jesus

The spiritual endowment that connects people



The two people who are resting in the hand of Jesus have three bonds between them; the bonds are light blue (the same color that represents Jesus) indicating that they treat each other in the same way that Jesus treats a person.

God the Father reached out to each person by coming to dwell in their inner landscape as a personal Divine Companion, a divine person who we can grasp and embrace. In the same way, Jesus came to dwell with people in the outer landscape to give a divine representation of God in a way that we can grasp and embrace the character of God.

Jesus made our connection with God visible and understandable. Jesus also made clear that our connection with other people is based on the fact that each person shares a parent-child bond with God the Father.

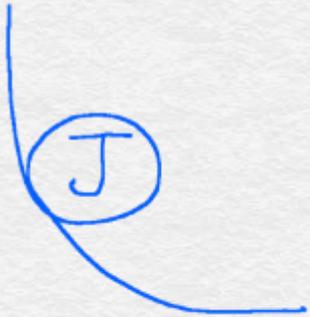
Jesus

The simplified symbol

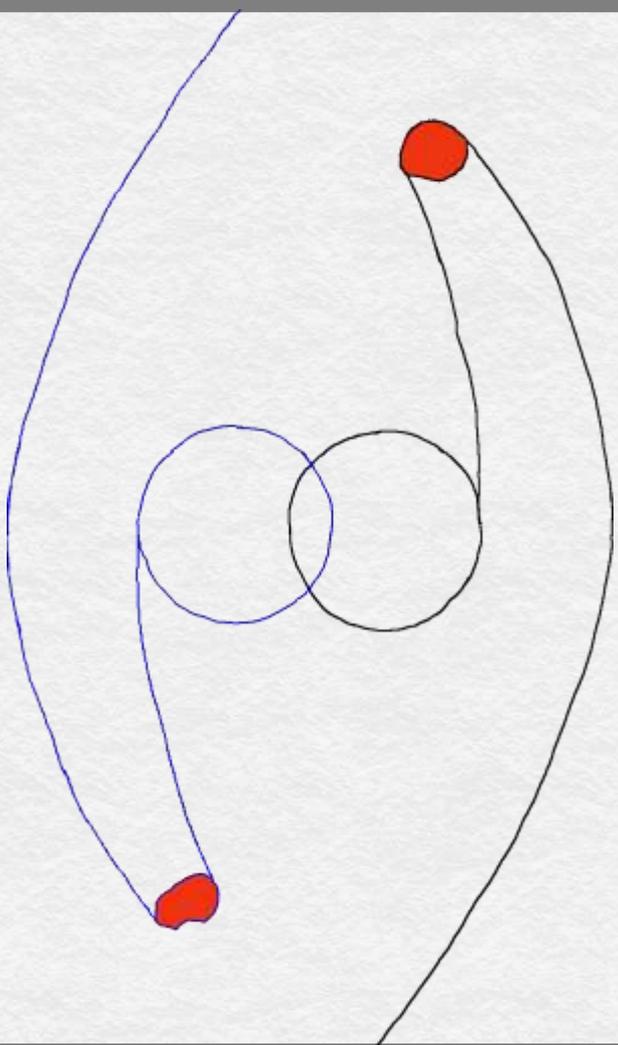
This image is a simplified version of the more developed symbol: two brush strokes showing Jesus as the bridge between pure divinity (the upward extended arm that is connected with the Father) and humanity (the downward extended arm that reaches out to an individual person).

This symbol emphasizes the great value of the life of Jesus that helped people have a more accurate and palpable sense of the Father's character, undistorted by the inaccurate teachings about the character of the Father. The great value of Jesus' life is that he showed us how you can balance the material demands of life with spiritual aspirations; his interactions with many different kinds of people showed how he might interact with you if you should meet.

The symbol of Jesus emphasizes his superb character and the illuminating example of the life he led rather than his cruel death.



The Divine Two-Step



The Divine Two Step



A Divine Companion dwells within you: the Spirit of God who wants to know you and love you; who desires to collaborate as you face the many issues of life; who hopes that you will cooperate in co-creating a unique creation that weaves together both of your contributions; who wants to build, within you, a bridge between the spiritual and human aspects of the world.

This inner relationship with your Divine Companion is the first step of the Divine Two-Step dance.

The Divine Two Step



Your outer relationship with another person is the second step of the Divine Two-Step dance. Your relationship with your Divine Companion is centered in your inner world but it is meant to be the foundation, in the outer world, for your relationships with others; your inner relationship is not meant to be savored only in a solitude.

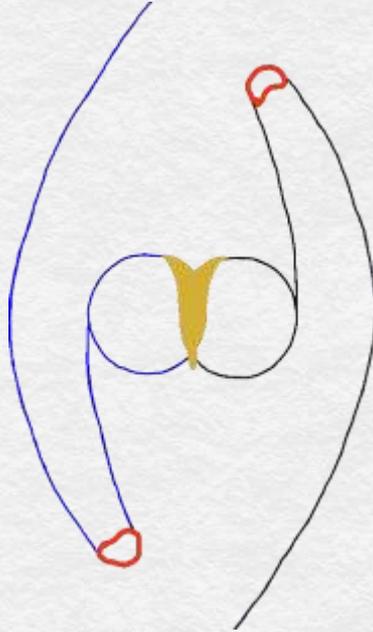
Just as your Divine Companion has generously reached out to you in love and hope, you are also invited to generously reach out to another in the same spirit of respect and kindness. Two people who have cultivated their own Divine Companion relationship can reach out to each other and form a very deep I-Thou relationship. The tone of their relationship may be the beginning of a Beloved Community, a group whose members nourish each other and seek to serve others to make the world a better place that is more conducive to cooperation.

The Divine Two-Step is an endless dance that continually alternates between the first step, cultivating your inner relationship with your Divine Companion, and the second step, gladly and generously cultivating relationships with others that reflect your inner relationship as accurately as possible.

When you click on the next page, a short video to play if your software is compatible with this file format.

The Divine Two Step

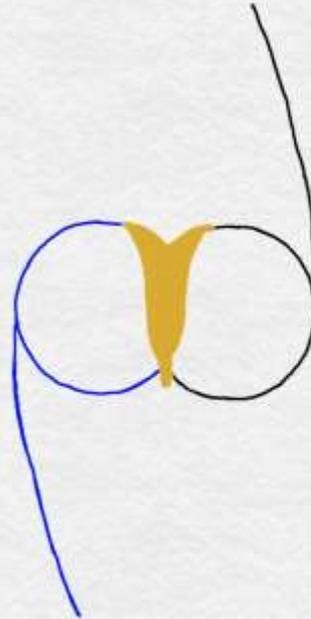


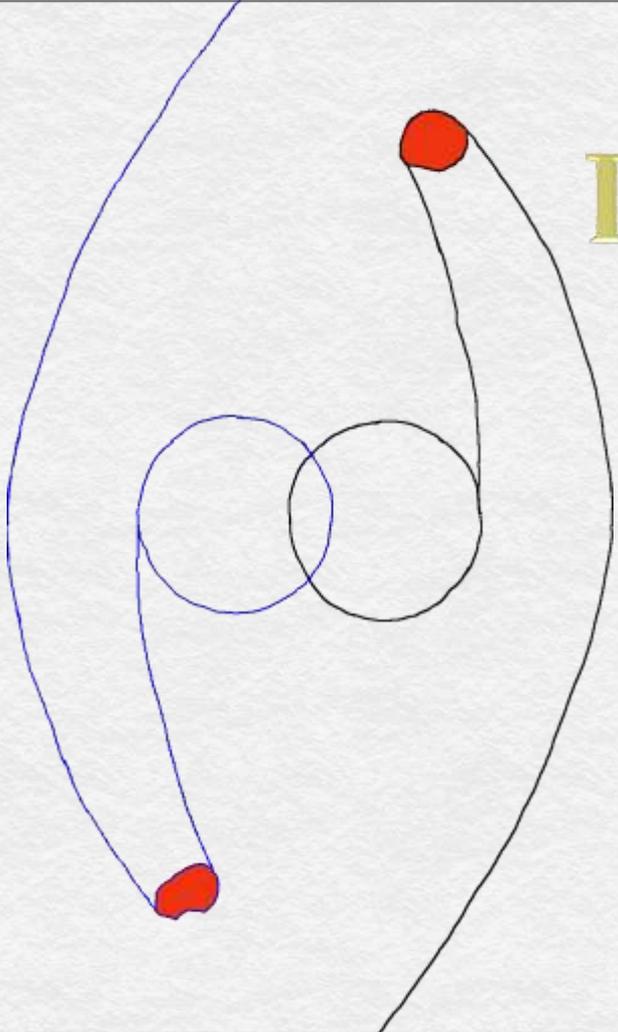


The Divine Two-Step can also be illustrate with the simplified version of the symbols.

When you click on the next page, a short video to play if your software is compatible with this file format.

The Divine Two Step





Divine Companion Symbol

The end