

CERTAINLY NOT

A Spiritual Interlude

Thom Rutledge

There are times when I will, in a moment of repose (which requires a big, fat cigar), consider the bigger questions of life. Last Thursday evening my friend, Bendel, and I sat with our feet propped on the back porch railing, puffing small clouds of smoke, doing just that.

“The problem with beautiful spiritual teachings is human nature,” Bendel said, after a characteristically long and apparently thoughtful silence.

“And the problem with human nature is that we don’t like surprised,” I added immediately, characteristic of my approach to conversation as a game show where the quicker the response the more points you can earn.

We resumed the silence, and the smoke, of repose. Later, when Bendel had gone home on his motorcycle --- after all, it is mid-life for both of us --- I thought more about what we had said. And yes, I smoked another cee-gar.

It’s true: we don’t like surprises. Oh sure, we love the unexpected gift, the apple pie baked especially for me (hint, hint), or the bonus check we hadn’t expected (as if). Some of us even enjoy surprise birthday parties. I do and Bendel most certainly does not.

But these are just baby surprises --- little baby, sissy surprises. It’s the big surprises we don’t cotton to. Not knowing what is going to happen next crawls all over us. We hate uncertainty. And mystery, though we don’t like to admit it, scares the crap out of us. We humans consider the unknown --- and God forbid, the unknowable --- to be our mortal enemy.

We will do almost anything to steer clear of something we don’t, and may never, understand. If we can’t maneuver around it, we hide from it.

That’s where alcoholics come from. And if we can’t run and we can’t hide, we ignore it. That’s where people who marry alcoholics come from.

Before I drift too far, the point is: humans don’t like surprises, the big ones anyway.

Now add this: spiritual truth is always simple. And we despise simplicity almost as much as we hate uncertainty. Once again, most of us deny this. I know that I do. (“Hogwash! It’s hogwash, I tell you!” I scream at myself in the mirror.) And yet, over the course of several consecutive moments of repose and a box of Mexican cigars, I think I may have stumbled across the most frightening simple truth of all, the one we hate the very most of all, this one:

We don’t know what is going on here. And when we think that we do know, we’re probably wrong.

From where we are sitting, we cannot see the whole; we cannot see the biggest picture. Hell, I can’t even see my neighbor’s yard from here. Our perspective is limited. And when our point of view is limited, we simply cannot claim to “know.”

And thus ends my reflective, spiritual interlude. And thus begins yours. Smoke ‘em I you got ‘em. Amen.

Postscript: Am I certain that the problem with beautiful spiritual teachings is human nature? Am I certain that the problem with human nature is that we don’t like surprises? Am I certain that mystery scares the crap out of us and that all truth is simple?

Of course not. How could I possibly know the answer to those things?

Thom Rutledge is a writer on purpose and a psychotherapist by accident. He has written several books, some published, some gathering dust in his office. “Certainly Not” is a piece taken from one of the dust-gathering manuscripts, entitled *Something to Read*. Thom is an outspoken critic of any self-help gurus and/or guru wanna-be’s who claim to have a corner on “the truth.” Case in point, visit the web site (www.thesecondantidote.com) Thom created specifically to speak out about the international mega-selling dvd/book project, *The Secret*.



Learn more about Thom and his work at www.nutshellwisdom.com or contact him directly at thomrutledge@earthlink.net. If you want to do something nice for Thom, go buy a couple of copies of his book, *Embracing Fear: How to Turn What Scares Us into Our Greatest Gift*.