

Maureen introduced the group to the writings of Professor Robert M. Sherfield, Ph.D., of The College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas. An award-winning educator, he has developed motivational programs for faculty and students, and co-authored several textbooks and trade publications. His latest, *The Everything Self-Esteem Book*, includes chapters titled "The Role of Spirituality in Character" and "The Role of Spirituality in Ethics".

Dr. Sherfield believes spirituality and self-esteem play major roles in character development, writing that "character is who you are when no one is looking." He adds, "character is the guiding force for how you act, and your character is a direct product of your spirituality and spiritual development. Character is a monumental force in building self-esteem. When you know that your life is guided by moral and ethical standards, you can't help but have a sense of pride in your own life." Also, a sense of self-worth.

Dr. Sherfield describes guidelines as to how to decide if an action you are about to make is ethical or not:

- Will this decision hurt your reputation or the reputation of others?
- Can you tell others about this decision or action with pride?
- Would you do it to your mother?
- Is it legal? (an aside--things that are legal may not always be ethical)
- Have you considered every angle and option?
- Is it right? (Yes, you do know!)
- Is it balanced and fair to others?
- Does your conscience approve?
- Have you betrayed anyone to make this decision?

Spirituality is the guiding force that lets you know what is right and just in the world.

Recognizing that words can be hurtful, both to the receiver and to the person expressing them, and given that our primary mode of expression is via speech, we discussed Buddhist beliefs, particularly the Precepts regarding speech: I abstain from false speech; from harsh speech; from frivolous speech and from slanderous speech. Instead, spiritual growth encourages us to concentrate on truthful communication, kindly speech, meaningful speech and harmonious speech.

The website of Humanity Healing International lists keys for ethical living. We ended our discussion by concentrating on several quotes from Albert Schweitzer.

A man is truly ethical when he obeys the compulsion to help all life which he is able to assist and shrinks from injuring anything that lives.

Realize that every act committed by you has a ripple effect on the web of life you directly and indirectly participate in. The quality of your intention can contribute to the betterment of the quality of life of all beings on the planet.

I can do no other than be reverent before everything that is called life. I can do no other than to have compassion for all that is called life. That is the beginning and the foundation of all ethics.