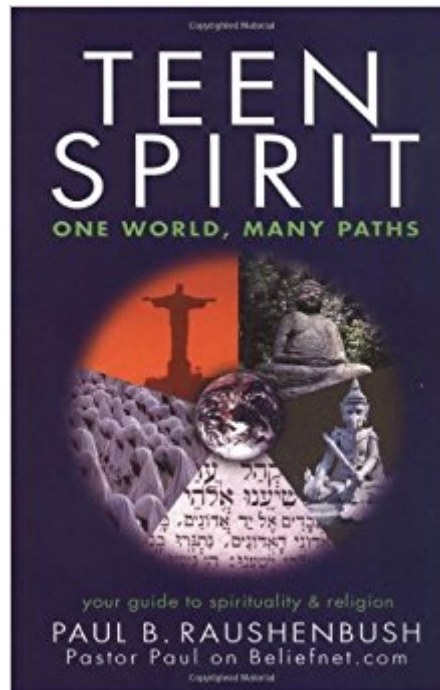




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Teen Spirit: One World, Many Paths



Synopsis

Are you curious about a friend's religion? Interested in going deeper into your own faith? In *Teen Spirit*, Pastor Paul demystifies misperceptions and shows you how to embrace and accept different religious beliefs while remaining faithful to your own core values. Check out: What celebrities like Ja Rule, Hakeem Olajuwon, Adam Yauch, Christy Turlington, Moby and Bono have to say about their personal spirituality and religion; Tips on how to visit a meditation center, a church, a mosque, a synagogue or a temple - what you'll see and what you should know before you go; Teens' own stories about why they're religious; FaithFacts, quizzes . . . and more. "Paul Raushenbush displays a deep, intuitive understanding of the spiritual crises afflicting young people. He knows how they see the world, and he feels what they feel." - Anthony DeCurtis, *Rolling Stone Magazine* "[Paul] Raushenbush brings the many roads of belief to one destination and enables them to coexist peacefully." - Laura Dern, actress, and Ben Harper, singer-songwriter "An excellent book." - *Library Journal*

Book Information

Paperback: 252 pages

Publisher: HCI Teens (October 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0757301193

ISBN-13: 978-0757301193

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.6 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #609,417 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #73 in *Books > Teens >*

Personal Health > Body, Mind & Spirit #158 in *Books > Teens > Social Issues > Self-Esteem & Self-Reliance* #159 in *Books > Teens > Personal Health > Self-Esteem*

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

Paul B. Raushenbush is the Associate Dean of Religious Life at Princeton University. His work is focused on religious diversity on campus and supervising a multi-faith student organization called the Religious Life Council. Prior to this position, Paul was the Minister to Young Adults at The Riverside Church in New York City. He has established himself as an expert in the field of multi-faith

advice for teens through his popular column, "Ask Pastor Paul: Spiritual Answers to the Multi-Faith World," which appears on beliefnet.com.

FaithFact - Although the stereotype is that most teenagers are turned off by religion, the truth is that about two-thirds of American twelfth-graders do not feel alienated from organized religion.

Spiritual, not religious? Dear Pastor Paul, I have a good friend who plays with me on the tennis team. I invited him to youth fellowship at my church, but he told me that he was "spiritual, not religious." I have heard this before, but I don't really get it. What do you think the difference is between spiritual and religious? Dear Friend, "Spiritual, not religious" is a common phrase among people who may have a belief in God or a higher power; who see the importance of meditation; or just feel the power of nature, but who don't see any benefits to organized religion. There is distrust on both sides of the spiritual versus religious issue. Religious people think those who call themselves spiritual are somehow false, weak or unable to commit to their beliefs. On the other hand, spiritual people are interested in a personal experience of the spirit, and they find that the rules, regulations and rituals of organized religion don't do anything for their own spiritual experience. They think that "Religion is what is left when the Spirit has left the building," as Bono has said. My feeling is that religion and spirituality are better together than either one is alone. Religion can give you a community and a well-considered path to help you along your spiritual journey. However, if religion is lacking in individual spiritual experience, it can become just a habit and be empty of meaning. So you can tell your friend, "I am spiritual and religious" – but only if that is true of you and your youth group.

Religious Traditions While it may seem like a contradiction, traditional religions are a great source for the spiritual seeker. Even if you're not planning on going through a formal initiation into a religion, learning about any faith can be a valuable part of your own search. Religions endure over time because they have provided answers for millions (even billions) of people. Religions offer their particular wisdom as the ultimate truth about the nature of life and the afterlife, answers about the existence of a higher power and how we might relate to that power, and guidelines for how to live our lives as individuals and as communities. Religions, in short, are interesting. Investigate a religion with an open mind, and be prepared for it to inspire your own spiritual discipline.

Spiritual Activity #1 How about your friends? Ask friends or acquaintances about their particular religious experience or belief. Steer them away from the "official line" on their religion. Instead, guide the conversation to their personal experience, which can be more informative and interesting and could even provide the basis for a stronger bond between you and your friends. Some examples of questions to ask are: How has your religion made

your life better? How did you begin to follow your religion? Have there been any moments in your religious life that really stand out? How does religion make you feel about yourself and about other people? What is your personal experience of God? You may wish to get five friends together and ask these questions of each other. Religion is very personal and important, so don't ridicule or judge each other. It is okay to disagree about matters of religion—just remember the golden rule of treating other people as you would like to be treated yourself. Spiritual Activity #2 Check 'em out! Investigate the rituals of a religion that interests you. Find out how often they worship and what participants are feeling when they go through their prayer or meditation. Learn how their community is formed and strengthened by their common devotion. Examine your own life in light of this knowledge. How often are you praying or participating in a spiritual ritual? How do you feel while you are engaged in religious devotion and afterward? Spiritual Activity #3 What do they believe? Research how different religions approach spirituality. Each religion has answers to the ultimate questions of life. You will gain wisdom by asking specific questions of any given religious tradition. Some examples of questions are: What does this religion believe about the existence of God or a higher power? What are human obligations in relation to this higher power? What are the creation stories of this religion that explain the makeup of the universe? What is the ultimate goal for each person within this religion? (Look at chapter 12 for an overview of the five largest world religions.)

How can I find the religion that is right for me? Dear Pastor Paul, I was raised in two different churches, Baptist and Episcopalian. I've recently become interested in Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism, among other faiths. I believe in some of what each teaches but not all, so I find myself floating back and forth, looking for the day when I latch onto and completely believe in something. I'm so confused about what I should be doing and finding the right religion for me. Dear Friend,

Some religious leaders complain of "cafeteria-style" faith - taking what we like from one religion and leaving the rest. Personally, this approach doesn't bother me too much because I, like you, believe that all religions are valid and can help us to live good and spiritually fulfilling lives. While I am grateful to have gained so much wisdom from faiths other than my own, I am clear about the central importance of my own Christian faith and promote the value of going deeply into one religion. I don't see a problem with where you find yourself right now. You are still young, and I expect that as you continue your search you will find the right religious community for you. You may wish to investigate the Unitarian Universalist tradition. Belief in the validity of all the world religions is an integral feature of their faith. Why I'm Unitarian Universalist by Jonathan Ladd "I've found you!" Emily exclaimed when she found our table at the student activities fair. Emily, a college freshman, had loved her high school youth group in Minnesota and was as happy to see us as we were to see her. In that

moment Emily expressed the excitement so many of us feel about Unitarian Universalism. I remember the first time I attended a meeting of our campus group. It was a time when I was feeling lonely. I felt like I didn't have a community of friends who would listen to me. What struck me immediately when I stepped through the door was how everyone was welcomed and loved no matter what. I didn't have to worry about acting right or saying a dumb thing. This place would always be a home for me as long as I wanted it to be. As I kept coming back, I eventually learned that the welcoming spirit of Unitarian Universalism is not an accident, but a deeply rooted part of our proudly liberal religious heritage. The foundation of our UU faith is the acceptance of all people, no matter what we believe about God and the universe, no matter if we are gay or straight, black or white, rich or poor. This means a lot to me because it means that my UU faith can grow with me throughout my life, no matter where my experience and consciousness take me.

I thought this book would be biased toward Christianity. I am so delighted to find that is not the case. It is comprehensive and easily digestible for young readers. I would recommend this book to anyone wanting to have their children explore religion.

I believe there is many paths to one G-d. How to express that belief to my young teens in a world that wants to slot-file every believer into one category is difficult. This book shares some of the beauty of all the major classic religions in a way that is fully accessible to teens and adolescents. It is a younger persons version of Houston Smith's World Religions.

I came across this book by accident. I expected yet another "religious" book that takes a stance against all the other beliefs in the world. I was amazed to find a book that not only profiled the mainstream religions but also profiled Wicca and many other non-mainstream beliefs. Not only were these different beliefs profiled, but each religion/belief system included a deeply personal letter from a young person sharing "Why I am...." each sharing an inspiration an insight into what they have experienced in their beliefs. Many "lies" and "false information" about different religions and beliefs were dispelled with truth. Hard questions through out the book "My boyfriend/girlfriend is of xyz beliefs/faith". This book belongs as a desk reference for all clergy of all belief systems on the planet. It belongs in the libraries and homes of all families. It refreshingly comes from a perspective of objective understanding of each other as a global community of human beings. I was amazed by the objectivity. I give this book 10 stars. Our planet needs more references of this caliber.- David Nelson, Founder The Church of What Works.

I highly recommend this book to all Teenagers. Hopefully this book will help them become aware of our ONENESS - that WE ARE ALL CONNECTED! Let's work towards creating a better world where there is respect, compassion and LOVE. Sister Rose Therese

This book provides an understanding of spirituality in many cultures and allows the reader to see not only the differences, but more importantly, the similarities.

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