

Chapter

1

My Journey to the Beloved Community

From the family chicken coop—by way of a hometown oak tree—to Harvard, and beyond ...

My journey to the Beloved Community has been a lifelong trip. When I got there—as Dr. King, had predicted we all would—after my fifty years of involvement in the work, I saw and experienced things that I thought would never come to pass in this life.

In a way, it started on a bright spring morning in 1938, when my father, Marion J. Wood, Sr., took his younger son of seven years into the chicken house, and gave him his first assignment of family responsibility.

I was responsible for feeding and giving water to 150 chickens, keeping the henhouse clean, and gathering the eggs at the end of the day. These tasks would have to be done early, before the two-room schoolhouse just up the road opened for classes; then later, after school; and before a welcome snack and the mandatory homework.

Little did I know then that I was being inducted into a family ritual of responsibility, which would lead me unerringly over time, towards my grandfather Alexander's jubilee cosmology, and ultimately, to the origination of SoulScope™.

It would prove to be a very satisfying journey, and the chicken house assignment would become only second in importance to what my father and beloved mother, Frances Brown Wood, made available to me. The most exciting and important lesson would turn out to be the careful path by which they led me to Christ in the home church, which was just across the street from the two-room schoolhouse. This lesson took place a few years after the chicken coop assignment, during the World War II years,

under the pastorate of Dr. H.W.B. Walker, an extraordinary shepherd of our flock.

I am now certain that these landmark events led me to the town oak tree in the backyard of Mr. Jesse Jackson, Sr., at the age of seventeen. Tall and erect, in spite of 95 years of struggle and labor, Mr. Jackson was 10 years old when the slaves were set free. Now almost blind, he met me dutifully at 7:00 a.m. He sat on the hardwood stool he carved, and with his unlit corncob pipe in and out of his mouth, gave me information about the heritage and history of our little rural community, the elegance and authenticity of which is unrivaled, despite many years of formal study and learning in many high places of academia.

It was at this time in 1948, that I first heard about the biblical jubilee, and how our enslaved ancestors embraced it as the ultimate symbol of their freedom. It would be another twelve years—long after Virginia Union University (1952), and Andover Newton Theological School (1956)—before the jubilee trail would pick up for me: when I joined the work of King and his SCLC. But even then, it would be still another twelve years before reflection and serious study at Harvard University afforded me the understanding of what I believed God had really been doing in the lives of our fathers and mothers, and that of all our awesome ancestors, and Dr. King, and ours.

In time, I would come to really understand that in order to have full appreciation for the universal significance of King's work, one would have to have some pretty good idea about his "soul print" and "soul work," and how he navigated his spiritual journey, and of the ancestors on whose shoulders King stood, educationally, spiritually, and materially. The SoulScope™ is the result of that ten-year, intensive, and focused search.

The search is premised on ten assumptions, which have emerged out of my journey and study of (and with) King, Gandhi, the science of organizational development at Harvard, my engagement with the Enneagram through studies with the eminent Enneagram teachers—Don Richard Riso, Russ Hudson, Kathy Hurley, Ted Donson, and Mary Mortz—to whom I am eternally indebted.

It was at the end of the first week of training with Riso that I became fully convinced that his work was the hands and feet to the general concept of King's notion of the Beloved Community.

To embrace the general idea of a Beloved Community is a great start, but it is only a start. It is much like the findings of our jubilee bible teams, interviewing inner-city youth across America and in South Africa about what they would find useful in a jubilee bible study movement.

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Their responses were synonymous: “Yes, we appreciate the older generation wanting to bring God’s Word to us. Yes, we do want to know what is right. But, what we really want you to do is not just to tell us what it is, but to show us how to do what is right.” While the Enneagram and the subsequent SoulScope™ cannot show one how to do what’s right, it can provide a cognitive map for the needed journey.

The SoulScope™ originated out of these studies, but would not likely have seen the light of day without the background through which I was led (and am now convinced God has been leading me) for the seven decades of my life. My greatest challenge and joy is to make available to the youth of America the path by which they can journey into the region of their own true greatness and joy, avoiding the world of drugs and every distraction, and to find peace and joy that do indeed surpass anything else that we can encounter in this life.

The SoulScope™ is a totally new configuration, born out of necessity and urgency, inherent in the crises and stresses of our time. The following ten propositions will sketch out its broad parameters, as a new tool for the 21st century, to help individuals assess and plan their lives, so as to ensure and assure significance and success. It is offered as a guide to an individual’s spiritual DNA, with the hope that people will learn how to understand themselves and each other, and get along better.

The ten assumptions that serve as the premise for the SoulScope™ will no doubt change, as the result of the dialogue and conversation its usage will engender. At this point, they are as follows:

1. This is a story (your story and mine) that begins with a singing God. It states that at the conception of every human soul, God sings a doxology. Why is God so excited at the conception of every human? At that point, even mommy and daddy are unaware that conception occurred. But God knows, and God sings. The same God who declared every aspect of creation “good,” also classifies procreation as “very good.” God probably said “wow” when each of us was conceived!
2. The SoulScope™ is the true birthright of every human born into the world. By it, the course for all life will be set–pre-engineered, but not constructed. Success for the SoulScope™ aware person, does not focus so much in being dealt a great hand at birth, as it does be in the learning how to play very well, whatever hand life deals you. The dealer is the Creator; parents, family, village and community—both local and national—serve as part of the construction crew.

3. Your SoulScope™ marks your highest potential for greatness, achievement, service, immortality, and union with God. It will be a matter of maximizing “heart, mind, body, soul, and strength” around love. People don’t naturally know how to do so. Some will refer to this personal attribute as their “divine endowment,” one’s “spirit fruit” (fruit of the spirit), their “virtue realized,” their “spot of grace received and appropriated.”
4. Your SoulScope™ also marks your most lowdown possibilities; your shadow side; your reigning compulsions; the sin that is original with, and unique to you; your evil spirit-in-waiting. It is living more out of fear than love, sometimes called your root sin. It is the evil spirit that captures your heart, mind, body, and soul in the absence of your commitment to love and decisiveness about “living in the spirit.” All the historic faith communities identified their great men and women (sometimes even youth) who made the decision to live by the spirit, and who do in fact make the valiant effort. Jesus said at twelve years of age, “Did you not know that I must [now] be about my Father’s business?”

The Bar Mitzvah, Bas Mitzvah, and other rites of passage, are saying a similar thing. The evil spirit, waiting in hiding, masks the compulsive side of human beings. People who neglect the spirit dimension of their own individual lives never make friends with their dark side. In fact, they deny it and become debilitated by it, pushing it off onto someone else, and thus, projecting and being swayed by it all the more, than if they acknowledged it, dealt with it, tamed it, and then used it creatively, as the dark with their light.

5. All real knowledge (including self-knowledge) begins with learning and knowing ones’ own SoulScope™. In time, all education that ultimately neglects knowledge of the learner’s true identity, destiny, and pathway to that greatness, fails.
6. Knowledge of your SoulScope™ prepares you to avoid costly and irreversible mistakes, which you may spend a lifetime regretting. This includes getting off drugs, or never being hooked in the first place: un-drugging the former, and drug-proofing the latter. The claim here is that knowledge and practice of ones’ SoulScope™ brings about a different kind of intoxication—a high on soul. The applications are as numerous as our painful human predicaments and problems.

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Without knowledge of that SoulScope™, we're almost bound to make these irreversible mistakes, which could have been avoided only with this kind of self-knowledge that very few people have at this time.

7. Knowledge of your SoulScope™ significantly shortens the learning curve to achievement, success, and deep satisfaction. This applies all across the board, to every level, phase, and type of learning: public, private, secular, religious, formal, or informal. Why should it be necessary to wait until you are on the back end of life to learn the vital lessons that will ensure the success of your life's mission?

If you were blessed with membership in a Beloved Community family (which could compensate for an inadequate nuclear family), where this kind of learning and knowing should be commonplace, you could have learned these lessons on the front end. Sadly, without knowledge of their SoulScope™, most people will never really know their unique, God-given, and God-endowed "self."

8. The SoulScope™ can be a major tool for building character empowerment in individuals. This must be the major mission of schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, community organizations, families (especially parents), pastors, priests, imams, teachers, and neighbors and friends, who can offer this tool as a gift because they themselves have already been so blessed.
9. The SoulScope™ collectivized is available as one of God's tool for building a kingdom (or community) of character. From this community will flow like-minded culture, commerce, and civilization. It will indeed be Martin Luther King's kind of Beloved Community (global family), of Jews, Christians, Muslims, and all other religions, cultures, nations, tribes, kindred, and even clan, across the face of the entire globe ... wherever the sun runs, and the Internet reaches. Wouldn't it be awesome if humans knew themselves, and then knew each other in terms of our character dimensions, beyond the externalities of life, such as color, as King said we would? It would be a measure of the mind, heart, and soul, not just our physicality.
10. It is the will of the God of love that all our global brothers and sisters be and become all that divinity saw in their SoulScope™ on the day when he or she was conceived. SoulScope™ gives them access to this mystery for building up their own lives and that of the community.

This mystery of human transformation, renewal, and revitalization will become clearer as the SoulScope™ is engaged and used by persons who have decided to engage in a soul search for their own identity, as to who they uniquely are, and where they are (with respect to universal balance or imbalance), and why they are here on Mother Earth, according to divine purpose.

It is our intent to take the SoulScope™ into the service of undoping and purpose proofing the youth of this nation and the world, beyond every fear of failure, or any other type. It will afford all youth—especially those who live in at-risk, toxic environments—an internal setup for fulfillment and productivity.

There are many other very exciting applications by which this world and its people can become so much better. Every sane person wants to be more and to do better. That is what it did for me. What God's done for others, God can do for anyone who desires to be more and to do better. Every person can be better at whatever is their own faith community and commitment. Who is to say what the Creator can't do through those who truly do believe, in self, others, nature, and Him?