

The Spiritual Warrior

An interview with Grant Schnarr


by Reid Baer

If you know the enemy and yourself
You will never be at risk in a hundred battles;
If you do not know the enemy but know yourself
You will sometimes win and sometimes lose;
If you know neither the enemy nor yourself
You will be at risk in every battle.
– Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*

Grant Schnarr, a Swedenborgian pastor, has taken the wisdom of Sun Tzu, a Chinese military strategist who lived some 2500 years ago, and applied these ancient principles of war to personal growth in his book *The Art of Spiritual Warfare - A Guide to Lasting Inner Peace Based on Sun Tzu’s The Art of War* (by Quest Books).

The previous quote is my favorite.

Robert Moore wrote foreword endorsing Schnarr’s book saying, “It takes an extremely bold person to suggest in these times that we should be utilizing the imagery of spiritual warfare ...when asked to define what it means to be a Warrior, I have often answered, ‘Warriors fight evil, often at the risk of their own well-being.’”



Isn't Moore correct that in this modern age, it is often not popular to discuss our personal struggles in terms of "good vs. evil?" It was no different in C.G. Jung's time, according to Moore:

"Carl Jung courageously challenged the theologians of his day who tended to reduce evil to a theological concept, avoiding facing its terrible agency in our lives. He called upon us to recognize the enormous power of Radical Evil, both within us and in the outer world. He saw our personal and spiritual development as a struggle for consciousness of evil and emphasized the importance of developing the courage to face it. In fact, the most basic fundamentals of spiritual discernment are dependent upon an adequate accessing of the potentials of the Warrior archetype in the human psyche ..."

Grant Schnarr knows about the Warrior archetype. He was initiated in 1997 into The ManKind Project in the Philadelphia community. He is currently a Swedenborgian pastor at the Bryn Athyn Church in Pennsylvania.

The day I spoke with him by telephone, he'd had a full day with his duties as a minister.

"I had three people at the hospital to see today," he began. "It was really something a young mother had to take her brand new baby back into the hospital because of respiratory problems; an 82-year-old man was on his death bed; and a 52-year-old man had a stroke while I was there. Being with those people brought up a lot of stuff for me. I realized the contrast of that picture, as I sat alone with him, was knowing that I'm never going to be by myself in a hospital room. I have a men's group that I've been a part of for more than ten years. I know they will always be there for me."

Schnarr keeps himself busy with his ministry, his writing, and working as a certified life coach. Plus, he runs his own Spiritual Warfare Effectiveness Training (SWET).

"It's a weekend of adventure, spiritual growth, fellowship, and learning how to be a spiritual warrior," he explained. "It started out as a weekend for men and boys, initiating them into mature adulthood, and helping them face some issues in their lives and bond together. Maybe because I have four teenage boys this is where it started."

The weekends are usually held in the Moosic Mountains of Pennsylvania on a 960 acre site. Click here for more info: www.swet.org

"Many men in The ManKind Project bring their sons. The event takes place outdoors and there's a connection to nature. It's a mixture of sacredness and play. We do a huge capture the flag game using bags of flour and water. The young ones show up as the heroes. Afterward, we get together around a fire and ask what did you do and how does this behavior show up in your life?"

Schnarr said he frequently encounters men in The ManKind Project.

“If you do this kind of work you’ll run into New Warriors. I’ll be talking to a guy and he’ll say ‘aho’ and I’ll say ‘wait a minute!’ Then we’ll soon be talking about when we were initiated, and where, and all that.”

It was a Michael Rath, a New Warrior friend of mine, who suggested I read Grant Schnarr’s books. Fortunately for me, I have a synchronicity with finding books at the right time in my life. I had recently taken a test to assess my relationship with archetypal energies. I was pretty “clean” in three of the four archetypal areas. I hit the “red zone” on my inflated Warrior.

Also, on a recent New Warrior Training Adventure, one of the leaders told me I might want to look at some of my “bad dad” energy. My men’s group was delighted when I told them I wanted to work on it. (They said it was about time.)

So, learning how to clean up my Warrior was exactly what I needed when I read Schnarr’s book.

“ *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* ”

-Ephesians 6:12

I’ll tell you one thing I learned - I don’t have to storm the gates like a brute every time I access my Warrior.

Therefore those who win every battle are not really skillful -
Those who render others’ armies helpless without fighting are the best of all ...
- Sun Tzu’s The Art of War

Said Schnarr: “At an NWTA men learn how to move out of where they’re stuck in their lives. Action is one of the major keys to their success. However, the true nature of a Warrior also includes knowing how to yield, like in the martial arts where an opponent’s force is used against him. The real power in a Warrior doesn’t react, but pauses and chooses his action very deliberately. A lot of guys have come to me ... you know, those type-A Warrior types that say ‘let’s go kill something’ ... and I teach them about non-reaction. I teach them how to yield, observe and choose.”

Schnarr began to use the word “control”, but stopped short.

“Well, yes ... control ... learning to control ones own impulses ... but I believe it’s ultimately about choice ... it’s about being a more conscious warrior, making smarter choices.”

If you know the enemy and yourself you will not be at risk in a hundred battles.

Stay on ground which is unassailable to the enemy.

To fight any battle without a strategy is to throw away the victory.

The one who goes into battle aware will claim the victory.

Timing is important in confronting enemies.

Know when to fight and not to fight.

Know the terrain in which you do battle.

Calm and decisiveness are critical in the heat of battle.

A good general walks in the Way (Tao).

- Schnarr summarizing some of his favorite passages from Sun Tzu’s The Art of War

Schnarr said the most important element is that men should camp on ground that is unassailable to the enemy.

“Often we put ourselves in a position where we can be attacked, like an addict putting himself in place where he’ll act out. Men should be aware of the terrain. You’re asking for it if you walk through the enemy’s terrain. Simply avoid fighting the battle. Maybe a man needs to use aggressive energy only once in every five times he encounters the enemy.”

Schnarr quoted one of my favorite references in the bible.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” - Ephesians Chapter 6:12

“Swedenborg talks about spiritual influences around us,” Schnarr stated. “In C.G. Jung’s collective unconscious there are spiritual beings that thrive on shame. We are subject to influences around us. The spiritual enemy is that which will destroy us. The enemy is the force that wants us to be so shamed that we are incapable of action. If we’re paralyzed, then they’ve got us. The only good thing about guilt - not shame - is if it gives us an opportunity to move forward.”

Schnarr said his books are often read as self-help books for someone “to get over personal shortcomings.”

“I also believe there’s a greater story to be read in my books over the battle between good and evil. I believe in the spiritual realm and its influences. Yet, I know I’m still responsible for what I do. This goes back to the work we do on NWTAs - to help men who are stuck in their lives. Swedenborg says that if you don’t put action into willing, eventually you will experience a failure of the will. Sometimes we need to simply move into action, even if we don’t feel like it. That’s the energy of the Warrior.”

In the past, Schnarr has written about his experiences in 12-step programs. When asked to describe the “difference” between AA programs and The ManKind Project, Schnarr hesitated.

“I can not tell you that difference, but I can make a distinction,” he said. “12 step programs offer a discipline for one’s life - an individual discipline, a spiritual discipline. MKP is more of an initial cathartic experience that leads toward more of a community ... a community of support. 12 steps also offers a sense of community, but it’s there mostly for the discipline. The model of recovery is a very good model for spiritual growth. You don’t have to be an addict to appreciate spiritual recovery.”

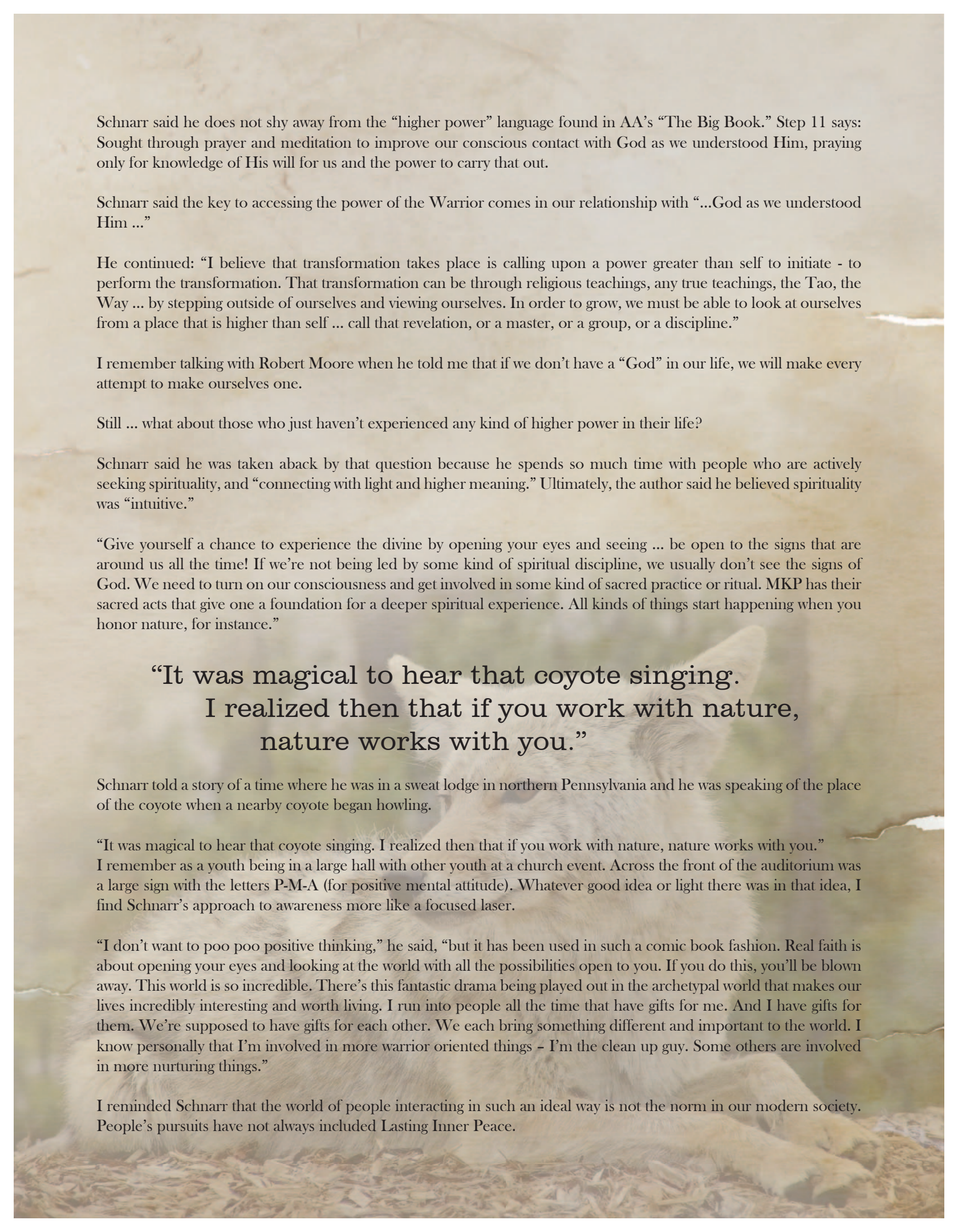
Schnarr said he speaks more to the recovery process in his other books. The genesis of his writing *The Art of Spiritual Warfare* came from his study of major religions on the concept of “the battle within.”

If one man conquer in battle
A Thousand men,
And if another conquer himself,
He is the greatest of conquerors.
- Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*

“Whether that battle is between demons and angels, or overcoming the self, I was searching for a stronger warrior discipline to use in my own life - that’s what attracted me to the New Warriors, and that’s what motivated me to write this book.”

In his book, Schnarr says that “Spiritual Warriors are impoverished by their own efforts when they move too far away from their Source. If you continue for a prolonged time in battle, even if you are winning, it will dull your inner forces and blunt your edge. In practicing spiritual battle, seek the quick victory.”





Schnarr said he does not shy away from the “higher power” language found in AA’s “The Big Book.” Step 11 says: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Schnarr said the key to accessing the power of the Warrior comes in our relationship with “...God as we understood Him ...”

He continued: “I believe that transformation takes place is calling upon a power greater than self to initiate - to perform the transformation. That transformation can be through religious teachings, any true teachings, the Tao, the Way ... by stepping outside of ourselves and viewing ourselves. In order to grow, we must be able to look at ourselves from a place that is higher than self ... call that revelation, or a master, or a group, or a discipline.”

I remember talking with Robert Moore when he told me that if we don’t have a “God” in our life, we will make every attempt to make ourselves one.

Still ... what about those who just haven’t experienced any kind of higher power in their life?

Schnarr said he was taken aback by that question because he spends so much time with people who are actively seeking spirituality, and “connecting with light and higher meaning.” Ultimately, the author said he believed spirituality was “intuitive.”

“Give yourself a chance to experience the divine by opening your eyes and seeing ... be open to the signs that are around us all the time! If we’re not being led by some kind of spiritual discipline, we usually don’t see the signs of God. We need to turn on our consciousness and get involved in some kind of sacred practice or ritual. MKP has their sacred acts that give one a foundation for a deeper spiritual experience. All kinds of things start happening when you honor nature, for instance.”

**“It was magical to hear that coyote singing.
I realized then that if you work with nature,
nature works with you.”**

Schnarr told a story of a time where he was in a sweat lodge in northern Pennsylvania and he was speaking of the place of the coyote when a nearby coyote began howling.

“It was magical to hear that coyote singing. I realized then that if you work with nature, nature works with you.”

I remember as a youth being in a large hall with other youth at a church event. Across the front of the auditorium was a large sign with the letters P-M-A (for positive mental attitude). Whatever good idea or light there was in that idea, I find Schnarr’s approach to awareness more like a focused laser.

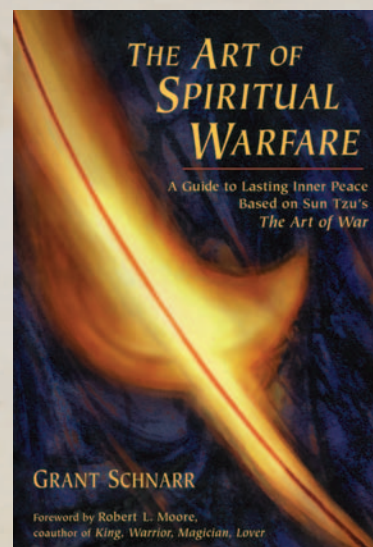
“I don’t want to poo poo positive thinking,” he said, “but it has been used in such a comic book fashion. Real faith is about opening your eyes and looking at the world with all the possibilities open to you. If you do this, you’ll be blown away. This world is so incredible. There’s this fantastic drama being played out in the archetypal world that makes our lives incredibly interesting and worth living. I run into people all the time that have gifts for me. And I have gifts for them. We’re supposed to have gifts for each other. We each bring something different and important to the world. I know personally that I’m involved in more warrior oriented things - I’m the clean up guy. Some others are involved in more nurturing things.”

I reminded Schnarr that the world of people interacting in such an ideal way is not the norm in our modern society. People’s pursuits have not always included Lasting Inner Peace.

“That’s why I wrote the book,” he exclaimed. “It’s like this ... unconscious conspiracy out there. The world would have us believe in an illusion that there is nothing but this world, nothing but whatever is there for me and me alone. The whole consumer/commercial world of need, need, need and buy, buy, buy is killing us.”

According to Schnarr, contemporary society is blessed when we refer back to ancient rituals, mythologies, and the archetypal stories told by men like Joseph Campbell.

“Archetypal stories have helped us understand our own lives,” Schnarr said. “In this day and age we have given all that up for science. Pragmatism is now our god and we’ve lost true mythology. Emmanuel Swedenborg said the bible is the mythology for our western culture - not to be read literally, but for the greatest stories of all time.”



I commented to Schnarr that I thought *The Art of Spiritual Warfare* was very candid, that included many of his own personal struggles. He quickly replied that his earlier works were much more revealing.

“Oh, I did a lot more in my other books and sometimes I wished I hadn’t,” he said with a good-natured chuckle. “I locked myself in. But, I’m glad I did. I pride myself on being emotionally honest. When I lead by example, then other people are willing to do the same thing. Overall, we all have the same basic experiences. I’ve never been burned by being real. I don’t always walk the talk, but I’m always trying. I think people have responded to that and allowed me to come to a place of leadership because of that honesty.”

For me, being honest with someone is easier than being honest with myself. What do I do with my Warrior amidst all my shadows? Well, Schnarr gives a good Sun Tzu-type answer in his book: In general, it is organization that makes managing many challenges the same as managing a few. It is a matter of dividing the challenges into groups and dealing with each as a separate yet related issue. No one can stand against one hundred spiritual enemies, but one can confront the weakest of the one hundred and consequently defeat them all.

“On a practical level, if something is slamming you into a wall, you might want to look at that first,” Schnarr cautioned. “So often those things [shadows] are the most powerful because we don’t give them the time of day. We need to have a plan for them.”

I liked the “plan” the author offered in the following paragraph: The principle upon which this strategy works is that when a spiritual warrior is able to conquer one defect of character, that warrior gains power, confidence, and a connection to the Source that allows movement against other defects of character with greater force. Schnarr said his work is “creating a world of love and integrity one man at a time from the inside out.”

As a Swedenborgian minister, the writer said he believes in absolute truth and that each person must find it for himself – in his own way.

“What gets me out of bed in the morning is being in the trenches, intimately involved in people’s lives and helping them have a better life.”

I’m glad Grant Schnarr got out of bed and wrote this book. His words were an inspiration to me precisely when I needed them.