

Make Your Life Spiritual

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I sat next to a world famous violinist who had fascinating stories to tell. The eighteen hours of flight, traveling to India, is an amazingly intimate setting; sharing that small space for such a long time. He had studied at Juilliard and with the greatest violin masters all over Europe. He traveled to perform as a soloist with major symphonies throughout the world. Now, at the top of his profession, he was going to study an entirely different method with an Indian violin master. He spoke reverentially of this great teacher, "He will start me at the beginning all over again."

My heart was opened by his words, because it was exactly what my own teacher had done, though it was in a different field of endeavor. My Guru stripped me of all that I thought I was. Then, he pieced me back together again in a whole new way. He gave me my Self. It was not easy, and it was not quick. After more than twenty-five years, it is still going on. However, I cannot describe what the current stages are because I do not understand the stages I have not passed through. All I can say is, "Study with a Master."

Too many seekers are reading books by unenlightened beings, asking other seekers for guidance and stumbling around in their own minds and emotions. Too many teachers are trying to lead you where they have not gone. It is amazingly easy to find a genuine Master to study with — they even come to San Diego! Go Guru-shopping. I highly recommend it. It is even more fun than other kinds of shopping. Meet several enlightened beings. One will touch your heart in a special way. You'll never look back at how life used to be.

If you cannot find an enlightened being to study with, at least get your spiritual teachings from someone who has decades of practice under a Master. If someone is teaching something that they recently learned, or (worse) that they made up — run the other way! Do not let someone else experiment with your spiritual development. It is the spiritual equivalent of a phenomenon best named by Hollywood, "Dumb and Dumber."

If you cannot find a spiritual teacher who has been doing their practices for a long time, then begin with simple and safe spiritual practices. You have a number of choices:

1. Go to church. Look for your fulfillment in the ceremony, not in the minister or in the social scene.
2. Repeat a mantra — one from your own tradition or religion is best. Repeat it all the time!
3. Meditate and/or pray daily.
4. Do yoga, tai chi, African drumming, Sufi dancing or any other spiritual practice for the body — with the emphasis on your inner experience, instead of the perfection of the body or on the social connections. Pick only one. Do it daily.
5. Make social connections with others who share your practice. Though you do your practice for the inner effects, you need the support of like-minded people to keep you on track. Still, they are not your Master. They are your traveling companions along the path.
6. Give of yourself. Give your time and money to organizations you believe in. Volunteer work is guaranteed to give you more than the organization gets from you. Giving monetary donations is making an investment in your own spirituality. It is sad but true — your heart goes where you put your money.
7. Read only non-fiction. Stop going to movies. Give up the video games. Empty all that unreal stuff out of your brain and begin to fill it with what is real: life, people, work, play, gardens, pets, ocean, sky, etc.

It is what you do every day that counts. This is true for your physical health as well as for your spiritual well-being. For a spiritual life, you must do spiritual practice. Do the time-honored practices daily. Give up the things that pull you away from your new lifestyle, a little at a time. Most importantly, find a Master. Let your mind and heart be filled by a Master, and you will be led to the One Reality within.

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