

When was the last time that you had what you would call a truly spiritual experience? Recall and reflect on the feeling and what made it spiritual.

“I’m spiritual, but not religious.” How many times have you heard this at our fellowship, whether from your own lips or your friends? I’m sure that I wouldn’t be the first to tell you that one can be fully spiritual without practicing a religion. Some famous agnostics or atheists, such as Carl Sagan, attest to this. He said, “Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality.” In fact, spirituality can and should be enjoyed across religious borders and on through those that reject religion. Perhaps many of your experiences you reflected on during the moment of silence were days, weeks, maybe even months in the past. Perhaps some of you have already had a spiritual moment this morning. Though any spirituality is a good thing, few of us would say that we experience it daily. Today, I want to focus on achieving daily acts of spirituality that can be found in moments that you overlook without realizing. I will touch on the meaning of spirituality, the benefits of greater spiritualism, roadblocks in our way, and methods of discovering your own spiritual moments.

Firstly, I’d like to attempt to pin down a definition. In our fellowship, we toss the word “spiritual” around like a hot potato here. We say it often, we extoll its virtues, but once we try to pin it down and subject it to a definition, we find ourselves in a quandary. It’s a slippery term, but for the sake of this speech, I’ll have to attempt to define it. For the purposes of the next fifteen minutes or so, we’ll define spirituality thus: spirituality is the searching and realization of something worthy of veneration. It’s the journey to whatever we consider sacred as well as the sacred itself. I realize this is a very broad definition, but it’s something: some parameters for a very abstract term. Thankfully, with such a broad definition, many acts fit under the spectrum of spirituality; it’s a very individual definition and each person will have a different set of spiritual

moments. It can be anything from a quiet moment taken to meditate during the day to the exhilarating feeling of conquering a climb up a mountain. What is spiritual to me may not be spiritual to you, but both are valid. So, we have a tentative definition for what I mean by spirituality while speaking today. Spirituality is the searching and realization of something worth of veneration.

Once we begin to become more spiritual, we start to realize the benefits of doing so. Those who meditate will often extoll its virtues to friends and family. Prayer often grants serenity and happiness to those who have a theistic faith. Greater spirituality leads to personal growth. We find ourselves being able to look at a situation with a more level head. Problems are given broader thought and consideration. Our lives will become more balanced as a result of our spiritual growth. Yourmorals.org, a website that focuses on political and moral issues, says, "Spiritual individuals strive toward a better life and consider personal growth and fulfillment as a central goal. Spirituality can be considered to be a path toward self-actualization, because it requires people to focus on their internal values and work on becoming a better individual." It also leads to increased self-worth. When we acknowledge and appreciate our connection to the world, we realize that we are important; we have an impact on the world and all of those around us. We enjoy enhanced happiness. We're more productive overall. Our stress is lightened significantly. Stressful situations can be met with a level head. Spiritual acts tend to relax the mind and body. We connect to the world through our spirituality. When you examine how you impact those around you and vice versa, you begin to recognize the strings that connect all of us to each other. All of these and many more are profits you can expect from beginning to increase your spirituality.

What makes daily spirituality better than regular old, time to time spirituality? Well, all of the benefits listed above would certainly come quicker. I think we'd all like a little more happiness and a little less stress as soon as possible. Also, I've found that the more that you practice these moments, the easier that they come to you. You'll find that you don't need to remind yourself to be spiritual; it simply comes to you naturally. You come to appreciate the potential and significance of happenings that you previously let pass by without a backward glance. Daily practice encourages quicker growth and easier practice.

So, that sounds good right? You're ready to jump in and start reaping all of those benefits, but truth be told, you're too busy, too tired, or simply too lazy. Many times, when we would like to be more spiritual, we find it difficult. Unfortunately, many roadblocks would see our efforts futile. It's important to identify them so that we can begin to remove them. One major roadblock that I hear is entirely self-constructed: "I would love to increase my spirituality, but I just don't have enough time." Many feel torn from their other obligations. Another is lack of knowledge about what acts count or what can be beneficial. Some people have a lack of resources, such as a place to practice or a yoga mat. Still others simply can't get the motivation to actually practice. Even further, some are discouraged from practicing by others in their life. Other roadblocks exist, but these are the most common that I think either all of us have heard or have seen ourselves.

Fortunately, many, if not all, of these potential discouragements are completely removable and will therefore no longer serve as an excuse. Almost all of them are self-constructed. Firstly, we have those who insist that they have no time for such acts of spirituality. This is simply ridiculous to me; those who have literally five minutes when they wake up, during their lunch hour, before bed, between appointments, etc., have more than enough time to enjoy a

spiritual moment a day. Even one minute of quiet meditation a day will reduce stress and refresh your outlook on the world. Many people can't truly enjoy that one minute because they feel as if they're neglecting their other obligations. However, it only takes a quick reflection to realize that those other obligations will be tackled much more efficiently and will bring less stress if you only take some time to connect to the world and quietly consider. For those that aren't sure what counts as spirituality, the answer is that almost anything can be spiritual. One only has to view the situation in a different light or to realize the significance of the action. Those that lack resources need to realize that the external resources are not the ones that matter. A yoga mat may assist in comfort during practice, but the actual benefits are gained through the movement and meditation. Similarly, one doesn't need candles and music to meditate, just one's own body and mind. Motivation is difficult to find. However, if you examine and consider the benefits, many times you will at least find the motivation to begin on day one of pursuing daily acts of spirituality. That first day is the first step. If you resolve to examine these benefits daily, you will more often than not find the motivation. And lastly, some face discouragement from friends or family when they attempt to pursue spirituality. Some mock them, asking why they're involved in that "hippie stuff." It's best to cast these remarks aside and show the individual that they're wrong by growing through your spiritualism. Perhaps one day, they will envy your growth and ask for your advice. Since we've gotten all of our excuses for inaction out of the way, let's get right to it.

So, what counts as a spiritual act? Well, the short answer is that it's a completely individual idea and each of us will find a different answer. But that wouldn't be very helpful, would it? I'll try to help you by asking the same questions I asked myself when attempting to search for the sacred in my life. What makes your life feel profound? What was the last thing

that you did that made you feel as if you made a difference in the world? With what are you unable to do without? What will you seek out and protect above all others? What brings you joy? What makes you smile? What is most important to you? What makes you grow? What do you do when you have no obligations? What do you find beautiful? The answers to these questions will lead you to your moments of spirituality.

Some examples of my own daily acts may give you ideas; some may make you laugh. Every day when I wake up, I take deep breaths, relax my body, and consider the day before me. I line up my obligations, examine what I would like to do, and construct a loose plan for myself. I embrace the day as full of potential and beauty, if only I choose to exploit those qualities. When I drive down Coffeen Ave. to college each weekday morning, I look up at the mountains on my way. I appreciate the beauty, think of all the life teeming in the forests, and reflect on all of the fun that I've had among those peaks. When I'm surrounded by people I love, whether it's my close family or best friends, I feel deeply connected to them. When I take a bite of a well-prepared and juicy steak, I revel in the experience that my senses give to me, wondering at the enjoyment I get from a good taste. Creating art, whether it's a song, a poem, or a painting, makes me feel as if I'm a profound being in the world. Enjoying the art and beauty from others fills me with a sense of well-being. All of these and many more varied experiences I encounter day to day count as my spirituality. I'd love to hear some of yours in the discussion.

When searching for the spiritual, there's no need to search for new activities or practices. Examine that which you already do in a new light. Realize that allowing a pedestrian to cross the street is not simply a socially favored act, but a spiritual one; it is an acknowledgement of the pedestrian as a person and a courtesy given while considering their point of view. Listening to music isn't a passive event. Explore the emotions that rise and swell with the melody and

appreciate the connection that you share with the sounds. Watching a sunrise isn't just visually pleasing; it's the beginning of a new day, filled with potential and meaning, just waiting for you to find it. The key to practicing spirituality daily isn't changing your habits; it's changing your point of view.

So today, I've given you a template to achieving daily acts of spirituality. We've gone through a working definition of spirituality, examined the benefits of it, the reasons that daily practice is preferable, looked at the barriers in our way, and found a method of searching for our own individual spiritual moments. All that's left to do is to apply it to your life and begin to enjoy the benefits of spirituality. The potential is limitless; you can use your spirituality to explore your life, your connection to the world, your relationships, your job, your hobbies, and nature. A daily examination only leads to a richer and more meaningful life. To close, I'd like to read a poem I wrote modeled after the Lord's Prayer.

“Our mother, who art the earth
Hallowed be thy name
Thy beauty lives,
Thy bounty gives
To all, as they are equal.
Give us this day our daily spirituality
And bestow us your love
As we bestow love upon each other.
And lead us not into selfishness,
But deliver us from ego.”