
CHAPTER 20

Connect with Your Spirituality

Spirituality is . . . the awareness that survival is the savage fight between you and yourself.

—Anonymous

Beautiful M

M, A PARENT and teacher assistant at the school where I worked during my principal internship, is an immigrant from Turkey with an engineering degree and certification in teaching high school math. She is a beautiful and giving person. She is always aware of her students' needs and the needs of the school. Whenever I asked her to perform a duty, she never complained. She seemed to enjoy being needed.



One day, M approached me about finding help for one of her students who was struggling with her academics. I sat with her to discuss how we could possibly help this student. We discussed the student's background and home life.

I knew that the family had no beds on which to sleep. M immediately offered to provide furniture for this student and her family. She informed me that during Ramadan, which M observed, she was to practice charity. She explained more about the Islamic faith. I realized that even though M and I come from different religious backgrounds, we share similarities with rituals and our devotion to God. I was fascinated with our spiritual connections.

Your Spirituality

I believe that my spirituality has made me who I am today. A person does not have to believe in God to have faith. We all practice spirituality in one way or another. There are many ways to find your spirituality, including fasting, praying, meditating, reading spiritual material, and attending spiritual programs or services. The importance of this chapter is discovering where your spirituality lies and how you can be more connected to God.

Fasting

Fasting cleanses your body and mind of toxins. In most religious rituals, we fast to better our lives and build a better relationship with our divine spiritual leader. Most religions share a commonality to give up certain foods, habits, or material possessions to cleanse and humble their followers. When I have fasted, I have discovered that I was much happier living without caffeine, sweets, breads, and television. My mind was more focused on my responsibilities. After several days, I became accustomed to this type of lifestyle. I was tempted, but I had to keep my mind focused on continuing my fast. When I fast, I find it easier to search for answers from God or to find inner beauty and peace.

You can fast from eating, talking, or watching television – anything that will bring you inner peace and awareness. Choose what type of fasting might be best for you. As you fast, you will be able to reflect more honestly about yourself.

Meditating

Each morning I spend fifteen minutes in meditation. I think about this day as a blessing, and I contemplate what I can do to be a better person. There is no perfect way to meditate. Simply begin with a fresh and open mind ready to start the day. I close my eyes and focus on what I need to do. Sometimes, I pray as I meditate. Other times, I sit quietly with my eyes closed and allow a message or voice come to my mind. I try to hear what I should do for that day.

Praying

I honestly do not know where I would be without prayer. I pray often during the day, asking God to hold my hand or to help me through situations. God answers all of my prayers. The answer may not be what I want it to be, but it is always the answer that I need to hear at that particular time. I have also learned that I must patient. The answer to my prayers will come in God's time.

We must remember that we cannot rely solely on prayer. We have to act in ways that will help us arrive at the answer to our prayers. Sometimes we grow impatient. And yet, after the outcome or resolution, we can begin to notice how the prayer was answered and why the answer was the right one.

Pray for wisdom, not for selfish gains. I pray for the wisdom to choose the right direction and make the best decisions. I remember to PUSH (Pray Until Something Happens). Above all, I make prayer part of my daily life.

A prayer partner can be helpful in establishing a prayerful life. Find someone to pray with you – perhaps a family member, friend, or colleague. Be sure it is someone you can trust, one who will provide encouragement and direction. Be there as a guide for your partner as well.

Matthew 18:20 states, "If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." My prayer partner is my husband. We have a special ritual before we leave in the morning; we pray for a joyous day and our children's protection and care. This practice supports us and unites our family.

Reading Spiritual Materials

My life is in my *Bible*. I live from it; I breathe from it; I grow from it. I read it as often as I can to learn about improving my life and myself. In addition, I read Christian journals that support Biblical readings. I have subscribed to daily email devotions. Reading these materials helps me with any circumstances or challenges I may face.

Find a book that best applies to your faith or belief system. Or read a self-help book or positive articles that focus on a better life. Apply these words actively. Hear the messages of hope and peace in these works.

Attending Spiritual Services

Find a place where you can share and celebrate your beliefs with others and grow from the power of the united community. Become actively involved. Listen for the message that is always there, and apply it to your lives. Some of us attend services and hear the message. However, as we go through our week, we forget the words and their meaning. We go through our everyday lives

without applying the nourishment we need from those words to survive. Make a concerted effort to apply the message every day. How can you strengthen your faith and spirituality by using the words and the message? By applying what you are reading and learning, you will be building a better relationship with God or a more spiritual foundation.

You don't always have to be in church or in a meeting to hear the message. While you're driving, switch the radio station to one that plays spiritual songs you enjoy, or a station that speaks about positivity and spirituality. This spiritual music has helped put my mind at ease and encouraged me to stay positive through hard times. If you cannot find a station, consider purchasing a spiritual CD to keep in your car. You will notice a difference in your mindset and attitude as you change your focus to a more peaceful existence.

You can also watch more spiritual programs on television. Sermons, testimonies, and reports on television can speak to us. Find a television program that supports positive, peaceful feelings and provides optimistic messages. Then apply these lessons to your life to find inner peace and happiness.

Reflection

Individuals who wish to have an even deeper relationship with God might want to consider other spiritual practices such as Baptism, oil anointing, or foot washing. There are many other practices that can enhance your connection with a divine figure. Find what is comfortable for you.

Motivating Messages:

- All major religious traditions carry basically the same message, that is love, compassion and forgiveness . . . the important thing is they should be part of our daily lives. 14th Dalai Lama
- For those who believe and do good deeds will be Gardens; the fulfillment of all desires—Koran
- Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual life—Buddha
- The essences of all religions speak of peace, compassion, justice and the interconnection of all life.—Ann Emerson