

*Spiritual Living Skills*

1. Right Actions

- A. *To refrain from actions which generally hurt oneself and other people.*
  - a. *Loose speech. Lying, gossiping, cursing, and pretentious speech.*
  - b. *Stealing, cheating, and all dishonesty.*
  - c. *The use of violent behavior and speech to hurt people unnecessarily.*
  - d. *Illicit sex acts.*
  - e. *Overindulgence in food and drink.*
- B. *To acknowledge one's powerlessness over those abusive behaviors which are repeated compulsively, and how these behaviors have made one's life unmanageable.*
- C. *To practice acts of compassion which build up the human community.*
  - a. *The Corporal Works of Mercy: to feed the hungry; to give drink to the thirsty; to clothe the naked; to visit the imprisoned; to shelter the homeless; to visit the sick; to bury the dead.*
  - b. *The Spiritual Works of Mercy: to counsel the doubtful; to instruct the ignorant; to admonish sinners; to comfort the afflicted; to forgive offenses; to bear wrongs patiently; to pray for the living and the dead.*

2. Right Desiring

- A. *To practice renunciation toward desires which lead to wrong behavior.*
  - a. *Consider consequences to self and others, and relationship with God.*
  - b. *Consider how those who have done this action were affected in the long run.*
  - c. *Walk away from the situation.*
- B. *To desire the best for oneself, other people, and all of creation (benevolence).*
  - a. *Do not wish harm to no one.*
  - b. *To envision oneself behaving kindly toward others.*
  - c. *To surrender one's life and will over to the care of God.*

3. Right Use of Feelings

- A. *To accept all feelings without pronouncing moral judgement on oneself and others because of feelings.*
- B. *To express one's feelings in a manner which does not lead to wrong actions.*
  - a. *To avoid projecting emotional states—even positive ones—into the future.*
  - b. *To avoid introjecting or repressing feelings unnecessarily.*
  - c. *To avoid blaming, judging, criticizing, or using violence toward oneself and/or others because of one's feelings.*
  - d. *To share one's feelings using "I Messages." ("I feel (feeling) about/when (issue/behavior)."*
- C. *To learn what feelings are teaching us about our beliefs and the meaning of our lives.*
  - a. *Anger. Wants/needs not met; hurt; disappointment.*
  - b. *Sad. Loss of important person, place, thing, or part of ourselves.*

- c. Glad. Wants/needs being met.
- d. Fear. Problem which threatens fulfillment of wants/needs, but no solution.
- e. Guilt. Behavior conflicts with values.
- f. Shame. Guilt turned inward on self in judgement.

4. Right Beliefs About Life's Meaning

A. Beliefs About God

- a. God is Spirit
- b. God is Love
- c. God is immanent and transcendent
- d. God is creator of all that is
- e. God's will is sovereign in history.
- f. God wants to be in relationship with human beings
- g. Jesus Christ reveals the nature of God
- h. God forgives all our sins
- i. The Holy Spirit joins us with Christ and the Father
- j. our conceptions of God are always inadequate

B. To understand the nature of a human being.

- a. Humans are a holistic blend of body, mind, and spirit.
- b. We are most ourselves when we are close to God.
- c. The faculties of consciousness are the property of the person.
- d. The faculties of consciousness have been distorted by Sin and become easily focused in fear and selfishness.
- e. Human consciousness can be energized by God's love if we invite God to do so.

C. The meaning in life.

- a. Life is short, and it will end in death.
- b. Life presents us with an opportunity to define what kind of persons we wish to be.
- c. The life we have chosen will be given to us after death, and we shall live in this manner for all eternity.
- d. Selfishness brings isolation and misery; love brings happiness and unity.
- e. The way to eternal life with God comes from living in the truth and love of Christ.
- f. We are to work hard in this life, using our talents for good.
- g. All things are good if used appropriately, and have been given to us to help us meet our needs and lead us to fuller growth.
- h. We shall suffer in this life, but we may learn valuable lessons from our suffering.

5. Right Values.

A. To practice the three mega-values which embrace all the rest.

- a. Awareness.
- b. Honesty.
- c. Benevolence.

B. To cultivate the virtue of temperance in regard to the fulfillment of our bodily wants and needs.

- a. Beliefs.
  - . We are stewards of our bodies. It is our responsibility to properly care for our bodies.
  - . The human body is good. It is a temple of the Holy Spirit. As we treat our bodies, so do we treat Christ.

- . We regard our sexuality as a gift to be shared fully only with those who pledge love and fidelity.
- b. Practices.
  - . Commitment to proper nutrition, rest, and exercise.
  - . Avoidance of intoxication with any chemical.
  - . Refusing to indulge in sexual fantasies.
  - . Learning to recognize stress signals, and to diminish stress.
- C. To cultivate the virtue of humility in regard to one's esteem of self.
  - a. Beliefs.
    - . No one is perfect; this includes you.
    - . No one is completely bad; this includes you.
    - . God loves you just the way you are.
    - . You are a unique individual.
  - b. Practices
    - . Accepting oneself in all one's strengths and weaknesses without putting oneself down.
    - . Acknowledging one's giftedness in gratitude.
    - . Acknowledging one's limitations without shame.
    - . Acknowledging one's selfishness with remorse.
    - . Fully accepting one's need for God and the help of other people to grow in character.
- D. To cultivate the virtue of prudence in regard to securing for oneself the necessities of life.
  - a. Beliefs
    - . It is a good thing to do as much for oneself as possible.
    - . It is a good thing to allow others to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
    - . It is important to distinguish between wants and needs. Needs are that which, if lacking, leads to physical or emotional death.
    - . Our God is a providential God, leading us to people and circumstances which will enable us to grow and prosper.
  - b. Practices
    - . We define our needs as simply as possible, and we desire no more than this. We practice renunciation toward anything in excess.
    - . We identify resources necessary for securing our needs.
    - . We make a budget, listing expenses necessary to meet our minimal needs, and sources of income to secure these good.
    - . We undertake moral work to secure our needs.
    - . We ask for help when we cannot do for ourselves.
    - . We pray for our specific needs, knowing that God is generous.
- E. To cultivate the virtue of courage to become assertive for the good.
  - a. Beliefs.
    - . We have a free will too use for good or bad. Our greatest freedom is touse our will for good.
    - . We recognize that other people also have free-will, and that our freedom cannot be exercised at the expense of their welfare.

- b. *Practices*
  - . We never do for others what they can and should do for themselves.
  - . We allow others the freedom to make their mistakes and to learn from them.
  - . We meditate on the fact that all things are possible when we act in union with God.
  - . We counter our fearfulness by asserting ourselves in behalf of goodness.
  - . After doing what we can, we wait on the Lord for results.
- F. *To cultivate the virtue of service unto justice to meet our needs for status.*
  - a. *Beliefs*
    - . We live in a broken, unjust world.
    - . Some people are born into very difficult circumstances; others very fortunate.
    - . Those who have much are responsible for using their gifts to help those who have little.
    - . Impressing other people is a very shallow way to attain status. What if they change their minds?
    - . Christ works with us to restore the world. We are co-redeemers with Christ.
    - . We recall that ministry to other people is ministry to Christ's body.
    - . Status attained through service will never exceed one's integrity; status artificially bestowed will rob one of integrity.
  - b. *Practices*
    - . We meditate on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.
    - . We identify specific circumstances in our lives to which we are called to practice works of mercy.
    - . We avoid temptations to impress other people with our lifestyle and our works by practicing right desires and right speech.

6. Right Awareness

- A. *To be reconciled in memory with one's past experiences.*
  - a. *To take a fearless moral inventory.*
  - b. *To acknowledge before God, ourselves, and another human person the exact nature of our wrongs.*
  - c. *To forgive others the wrongs they have done you, letting go of all resentments.*
  - d. *To ask God's forgiveness for the wrongs you have done to others and yourself.*
  - e. *To make amends to others except when to do so will hurt them unnecessarily.*
  - f. *To forgive oneself for one's own mistakes and sinful behaviors, knowing that no one is perfect and that all are forgiven sinners in the eyes of God.*
- B. *To utilize imagination and intuition to identify new options and possibilities for the future.*
  - a. *To cultivate one's Ideal Self.*
    - . *How does Christ see me?*
    - . *What is my ideal job description?*

- . What is my ideal lifestyle?
- b. To actually see and feel oneself living in the Ideal Self through positive imaging.
  - . To envision oneself interacting with Christ in Gospel scenes.
  - . To envision oneself showing love and compassion to other human beings and all of creation.
  - . To envision oneself behaving in the Ideal Self in the everyday circumstances of life, especially in areas where selfishness has prevailed.
- C. To live in conscious awareness throughout each day.
  - a. To live in the present moment as much as possible.
    - . Non-judgemental awareness of what one is experiencing on a sensate level (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and other sensations).
    - . Non-judgemental awareness of what one is thinking, feeling, and deciding to do
  - b. To fully surrender oneself to what one is doing.
    - . To avoid doing one thing and thinking about something else.
    - . To be totally present to what you are doing.
    - . To concentrate on doing what you're doing as well as you can; this is how to resist distractions.
    - . To find interesting and stimulating things to think about or listen to during long, boring and monotonous tasks instead of letting your mind wander.
- D. To bring conscious awareness into the serenity of God's loving awareness of oneself.
  - a. To surrender one's attention to God through prayer and meditation.
    - . To take time each day for silence, solitude, and reading Scripture.
    - . To allow God to energize you in love.
    - . To surrender your ego awareness to God, allowing God's awareness of you to take root (contemplation).
  - b. To do all things in God's loving presence.
    - . To say a short prayer before doing anything.
    - . To invite the Holy Spirit into all that you do.
    - . To ask the Spirit to guide you in all that you do.

7. Right Discernment

- A. Basic Assumptions.
  - a. God is a good God. God wants to give us much more than we want for ourselves.
  - b. God knows who we are better than we know ourselves. God also knows what we need in order to become the people we were created to be.
  - c. When we are faced with a number of options, it is possible that some of these options are better for us than others (in terms of our overall human project).
  - d. When we surrender our preferences for different options to God, we become free to discern God's preference (if any) among these options for us.
- B. Practice
  - a. Options which require wrong actions are not to be taken.

- b. *It is not necessary to agonize about God's will in choosing between healthy options in the small affairs of everyday life.*
- c. *In areas where binding commitments have been made, our choice ought to be to continue to live out the implications of these commitments unless they lead to a consistent increase in wrong actions.*
- d. *It is usually best to live out the implications of important, but non-binding decisions that we have already been made until it becomes very clear that God is calling us to leave this commitment.*
- e. *If possible, we should avoid making important life decisions during times when we are emotionally upset, for it is likely that we shall then be running away from a problem rather than responding to God's call.*
- f. *When attempting to discern God's will among a number of options regarding significant lifestyle choices, we do the following:*
  - . *Clearly define these options.*
  - . *Clearly list the pros and cons of each option.*
  - . *Honestly admit what attracts and repels you from each option.*
  - . *In a detached manner, envision yourself living out the implications of each option.*
  - . *Sincerely pray that God will enlighten and draw you to the direction leading to greater growth in holiness.*
  - . *Decide which option you prefer most.*
  - . *Imagine how this choice will look from the vantage point of your deathbed.*
  - . *Imagine yourself explaining to Christ why you have made this choice.*
  - . *Surrender this preference to God; acknowledging your willingness to pursue another option if it is His will.*
  - . *Pray for a sense of serenity about the path you take.*
  - . *After making this choice, do not look back. Begin to live out its implications.*