

POCKET GUIDES TO PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

*Create an Intimate
Relationship with Spirit*

This commonsense guide offers practical steps for staying in tune with Spirit midst the hustle and bustle of everyday life. For listening to the still small voice within. For living in the here and now. And it gives creative techniques we can use to uplift ourselves and the world around us. The keys to practical spirituality explored in this insightful book are gleaned from the ancient wisdom of the world's great spiritual traditions and are profoundly meaningful for our lives today.

“Highly inspirational and divinely readable. The Art of Practical Spirituality is modern medicine for the eternal soul.”

—DANNION BRINKLEY, author of
Saved by the Light

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THE ART OF PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

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*How to Bring
More Passion,
Creativity and
Balance into
Everyday Life*



ELIZABETH CLARE PROPHET
with PATRICIA R. SPADARO

THE ART OF
PRACTICAL
SPIRITUALITY



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and Balance into Everyday Life*

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How to Bring More Passion, Creativity and Balance into Everyday Life

by Elizabeth Clare Prophet with Patricia R. Spadaro

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Note: Because gender-neutral language can be cumbersome and at times confusing, we have used *he* and *him* to refer to God or the individual and *mankind* to refer to people in general. These terms are for readability only and are not intended to exclude women or the feminine aspect of the Godhead, just as our use of the term *God* is not meant to exclude other expressions for the Divine.

Everyday Spirituality

“What is the path?” the Zen master Nan-sen was asked. “Everyday life is the path,” he answered.

At one time or another we have all had a peak spiritual experience, whether we’ve called it that or not. Maybe it was a profound sense of inner peace or a deep communion with nature. Maybe it happened during a long trek into the mountains or when you first fell in love. But that feeling, whatever it was, just didn’t last long enough, and you were left wondering how to recapture the moment.

How do we sustain that inner peace? How do we endow our relationships, our family life

and our work with a spiritual spark? How do we tap our inner resources to handle stress and overcome the blocks to our creativity? How do we make our spirituality practical?

I've been pursuing the art of practical spirituality all my life. I can't remember a time when I wasn't walking and talking with God. As a child, my spiritual quest took me to all the churches and the synagogue in my hometown. Later, I took up the study of the world's religions.

Ultimately, my search brought me to the feet of the great luminaries known as the ascended masters—the saints and adepts who have emerged out of the spiritual traditions of East and West. These enlightened ones have fulfilled their reason for being and “ascended,” or become one with God. Each one has something uniquely compelling to teach us about the art of practical spirituality.

I don't believe that any one person or spiritual tradition has a corner on spirituality but that we can learn something from everyone.

Just as there are many ways to climb a mountain, so there are many ways to climb to the summit of being. Each path gives you a different perspective of that summit—a new way of understanding who God is and who you are.

We are climbing that mountain every day, not just when we're taking time out to meditate in the mountains or watch a beautiful sunset. Spirituality is an everyday affair.

A Working Relationship with Spirit

What does it mean to live a spiritual life, and what is spirituality? The word *spirit* comes from the Latin *spiritus*, meaning “breath,” “breath of a god,” or “inspiration.” Spirituality is to the soul what the breath of life is to a newborn child. Spirituality infuses you with life. It gives you peace and purpose. It empowers you to love and nourish yourself and others.

Spirituality is being able to sustain a working relationship with Spirit. It doesn't matter whether you call that spiritual fount the Christ

or the Buddha, the Tao or Brahman. We can all get in touch—and stay in touch—with the universal power of Spirit by working with that relationship, making that connection, every day.

When we talk about practical spirituality, we're really talking about spiritual empowerment, the power to transform ourselves and the world around us. Spiritual empowerment starts with understanding: *Who am I and why am I here? Where am I going and how do I get there?*

Who Am I?

You are a spiritual being—a child of God clothed with human form and personality. You have a divine nature, and a part of God resides deep within you. This is your personal source of power.

Hindu tradition mysteriously describes this indwelling spirit as “the inmost Self, no bigger than a thumb” who “lives in the heart.” Buddhists call it the Buddha nature. Jewish mystics refer to it as the neshamah. Fourteenth-century

Christian theologian and mystic Meister Eckhart claimed that “God’s seed is within us.” There is a part of us, he wrote, that “remains eternally in the Spirit and is divine. . . . Here God glows and flames without ceasing.”

Though they approach it from different angles, all of these mystical paths are describing the spiritual flame, the divine spark, that pulsates in the inner recesses of your heart. Some people who have heard me teach this concept over the years have had a hard time accepting that a part of God lives inside of them. That’s because many of us were taught as children to look outside of ourselves for the solutions to life’s problems rather than to access the spiritual power within to meet those challenges.

I like the way the ancients explained it. Both Buddhists and the early Christians known as gnostics¹ used the image of the “gold in the mud” to help people understand their spiritual essence. They said the gold of our spirit may be covered over by the mud of the world, but the mud never destroys that innate spirit.

In other words, it doesn't matter what you've been through. It doesn't matter how much mud has splattered onto your spirit and shaped your outer personality as you've trudged through the trenches of life. It doesn't matter what other people say about you. You still have a beautiful, everlasting spark of God right inside of you.

In addition to your divine spark, another component of your reality is your Higher Self. Your Higher Self is your wise inner self, your chief guardian angel, your dearest friend. Jesus discovered the Higher Self to be "the Christ" and Gautama discovered it to be "the Buddha," and thus that Higher Self is also called the inner Christ (or Christ Self) and the inner Buddha. Christian mystics sometimes refer to it as the inner man of the heart or the Inner Light.

Your Higher Self is your inner teacher whose still small voice speaks within you—warning you of danger, teaching you, calling you back to the point of your divine reality. Your Higher Self will always give you unerring

direction, if you will take the time to tune into that voice. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The only tyrant I accept in this world is the 'still small voice' within."

Why Am I Here and Where Am I Going?

The goal for each of us is to be, right here on earth, the reflection of our Higher Self—to manifest the full potential inherent in our spiritual self. That's what Gautama Buddha did and that's why he is called the "Buddha" (meaning "awakened one"). That's what Jesus did and that's why he is called the "Christ" (meaning "anointed"), the one anointed with the light of that Higher Self. Because Jesus fully embodied his Higher Self, the apostle Paul said, "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Gautama Buddha, Jesus and all the ascended masters tell us that we, too, can realize our full spiritual potential. How? By understanding, accessing and developing the spiritual part of ourselves. By liberating our own inner greatness

so that we can fulfill our soul's highest calling and help others do the same.

We all have moments when we feel connected with our Higher Self—when we are creative and sensitive, compassionate and caring, loving and joyful. But there are other moments when we feel out of sync with our Higher Self—moments when we become angry, depressed, lost. What the spiritual path is all about is learning to sustain the connection to the higher part of ourselves so that we can make our greatest contribution to humanity.

How Do I Get There?

Step by step, your soul is learning to access her inner power in order to fulfill the destiny that is uniquely yours. This doesn't happen all at once. It happens a little bit every day. Spirituality is a process—a path. We're not only walking that path; sometimes we're putting it together as we go. And it's not just *what* we do as we take this journey but *how* we do it.

In the process of walking your own path and fulfilling your destiny, do you endow your actions and all of your relationships—at home, at work, at play—with the special quality of heart that only you can give? Are you able to stay connected with that spiritual part of yourself? Are you able to dip deeply into your divine nature to uplift those you interact with? This is the fine art of practical spirituality. “To affect the quality of the day,” said Thoreau, “that is the highest of arts.”

On a very practical level, people often ask me: How can I handle the stresses of daily life and still keep my spiritual attunement? How can I be spiritual when my computer just crashed—for the fifth time today? Or when I have to work late again and my seven-year-old is expecting me to show up for his soccer game? Or when I just found out that management is downsizing? How can I find inner peace when there is turmoil all around me?

It isn't easy. But there are practical spiritual solutions to today's challenges. There are maps

that can help us navigate through the rough seas and narrow straits of life. That's what the rest of this book is all about.

The keys to practical spirituality on the following pages are gleaned from the ancient wisdom of the world's spiritual traditions as well as practical experience. They have helped me and many others as we have applied them to the challenges of daily life. What I've shared here is foundational but by no means exhaustive. There is so much more that could be said—and each key could be the subject of a book in itself. In fact, this is just the beginning. The ending, after all, is up to us.



Discover your soul's core passion and shape it into a mission

Each man has his own vocation. . . .

*There is one direction in which
all space is open to him.*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

You were born with a unique purpose to fulfill on earth. That means there is something that is yours, and yours alone, to do—and unless you do it for loved ones or for the betterment of mankind, no one will.

Many of us don't have the faintest idea what our mission is, or even that we're supposed to have one. To find your mission, start by asking yourself: *What am I passionate about?*

*What is it that I love to do, that I live just to do?
Plain and simple, what makes me happy?*

A Hasidic saying advises, “Everyone should carefully observe which way his heart draws him, and then choose that way with all his strength.” You will know your passion because it makes your heart sing. It’s the thing that gets you out of bed in the morning. When you talk about it, you become spirited, energized, alive.

That doesn’t mean, however, that pursuing your soul’s passion will always be easy. It can feel like both the agony and the ecstasy. For one thing, you may have to fend off the raucous voices that will try as hard as they can to drown out the voice of your soul.

T. S. Eliot once gave this advice to students: “Whatever you think, be sure it is what you think. . . . It is bad enough to think and want the things that your elders want you to think and want, but it is still worse to think and want just like all your contemporaries.” And Bertrand Russell once quipped, “One should respect public opinion insofar as it is necessary to

avoid starvation and keep out of prison.”

Another reason following your life’s passion isn’t always easy is that it takes hard work. Our calling is the crucible in which we forge our true identity. It’s the laboratory where we, like alchemists of the spirit, learn to transform the base metals of our lower nature into the gold of our highest self. This soul work is a sacred labor that we undertake not only for ourselves but for others. What will come out of it is a gift that we can lay on the altar of humanity.

If we don’t accept the challenge, if we decide to take the easy way out—because it’s more comfortable or lucrative—then we’ve betrayed our own soul. For the soul, as Jim Lehrer once observed, “must be nourished along with the bank account and the resumé.”

Sometimes we do have obligations to others that prevent us from immediately pursuing our passion to the fullest. Some of these obligations

*May you live every
day of your life.*

—JONATHAN SWIFT

may stem from our karma.² For instance, circumstances may demand that for a season you must care for a child or an ailing parent or support someone else at the expense of your own desires.

It is always important to tend to karmic obligations, but once you have paid off these spiritual “debts” to others you will feel much lighter and your soul will be free to pursue its highest calling. The best way to free yourself from a limiting karmic circumstance is to pour yourself wholeheartedly and joyfully into fulfilling that obligation so you can get through it and move on.

Another principle to remember is that your mission is not necessarily equal to your job. It's wonderful if you are able to mold your passion into a career, but your mission doesn't have to be what you do for a living. It may be something you do after work hours, like composing music or working with disadvantaged children or taking care of animals.

In fact, your mission may not be what you

do at all, but what you *are*. Your mission may be to bring into your interactions with others, into your relationships, into everything you do a singular spiritual quality (like love, compassion, patience, truthfulness) so that your very life is an example to others.

For example, Mother Teresa's calling, and that of her Missionaries of Charity, was to serve the poorest of the poor while living among them. But it was more than that. Her mission was to be love in action. “We have to bring God's love to the people by our service,” Mother Teresa once said. “We do no great things, only small things with great love.”

The ascended master El Morya, known to students of Theosophy as the Master M., says our mission involves perfecting the talents that God has placed within our soul. God has given you certain talents so that you can share the highest and truest part of yourself with others. “The purpose of life,” he says, “is to find God—in yourself, in your talents, in your calling and in your sacred labor. It is to endow anything

that you do with his Spirit.”

In the most popular spiritual classic of India, the Bhagavad Gita, the hero Krishna counsels his disciple and friend Arjuna to fulfill

*The purpose of life
is a life of purpose.*

—ROBERT BYRNE

his *dharma*, the divine plan for his soul. Our dharma is our reason for being—our duty to be who we really are, to fulfill our true potential.

When on the eve of a crucial battle the warrior Arjuna hesitates, Krishna teaches him, “One’s own dharma, even when not done perfectly, is better than someone else’s dharma, even though well performed.”

This profound teaching drives home the point that it is your spiritual duty to pursue your own mission. El Morya puts it this way: “One’s own canoe, though full of holes, is better than another’s ship. We value sailing only in one’s own boat.”

When we do not pursue our soul’s passion, the consequences can be spiritually, emotion-

ally and even physically devastating. Not only can it make us grouchy, but it can make us emotionally and physically ill. “The lost soul,” writes medical intuitive Caroline Myss, “is very susceptible to illness.”³

The feeling that life has lost its soul, or that our soul has lost its life, can also lead to addictions as a way to escape from reality. From a spiritual standpoint, it can lead to a dark night of the soul.

I encourage you to set aside time when you are by yourself to consider the following questions. They are some of the most important questions you will ever answer in this life. In fact, we periodically need to ask ourselves these questions because as our soul develops, our mission does too.

Spiritual Exercises

■ **Discover your passion.** If you have never thought about your passion in life, answering these questions may not be easy. Just let your heart speak to you and allow the answers to come in their own time. Ask your Higher Self to send you divine direction, and then be open to all possibilities.

*Am I happy with the direction of my life
and with how I spend most of my time?*

What is my passion in life?

*What is the greatest talent God has
given me to share with others?*

How can I refine it and perfect it?

*How can I use my talent to make the
most outstanding contribution to my family,
my community, those who need me
in my circle of influence?*

*How can I capitalize on this talent
to make a living and thus devote a major
percentage of my time to it?*

- 8 *What spiritual tools did they use to resolve their karma and foster their spiritual growth?*
- 9 *How did they turn every encounter and circumstance into an opportunity for spiritual growth?*
- 10 *How did they express their loving-kindness toward others—and toward themselves?*
- 11 *How did they deal with creative tension, and how did they renew themselves?*
- 12 *Who were their mentors, and what lessons did they learn from them?*

■ **Self-reflect.** After you have identified the virtues that helped your master navigate through the challenges of life, ask yourself what you need to do to develop those virtues.

Try to put their techniques into practice while experimenting with what your soul needs to soar to its own heights.

1. The gnostics were those who belonged to a number of Christian sects that thrived in the early centuries of Christianity. Their teachings were later suppressed by the church. The gnostics claimed to possess the secret teachings of Jesus handed down from his closest disciples. Some scholars believe that some of the recorded teachings of the gnostics predate the New Testament Gospels and may more accurately represent Jesus' original teachings.
2. Karma is the law of cause and effect, the law of the circle. Karma is the effects of the causes we have set in motion in the past. See pages 94–97.
3. C. Norman Shealy and Caroline M. Myss, *The Creation of Health: The Emotional, Psychological, and Spiritual Responses That Promote Health and Healing* (Walpole, N.H.: Stillpoint Publishing, 1988, 1993), p.10.

Opening quotation to section 3: from *Hua Hu Ching: The Unknown Teachings of Lao Tzu*, by Brian Walker (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), p. 36.

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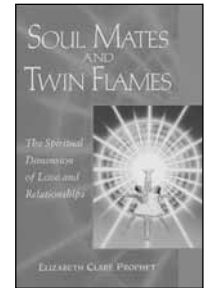
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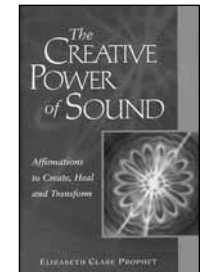


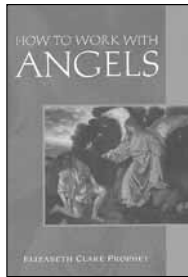
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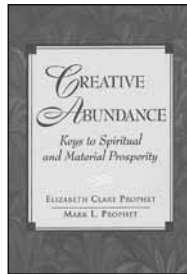
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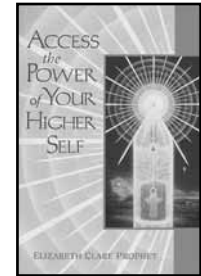
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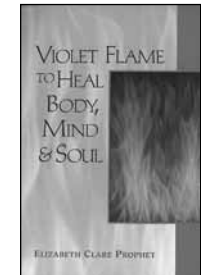
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