

INTRODUCTION



Everybody can be great because anybody can serve.

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

THE VALUE OF WORKING SPIRITUALLY

Imagine having a sense of personal wholeness, meaning, and connection in your work. How differently would you feel if you worked in that manner? My guess is your personal greatness would shine through your work if you did. One way to follow your path for greatness is to focus on your spiritual growth through work. Because we spend most of our waking hours at work, it is essential we find ways to bring spirituality to our work so we grow to our fullest potential. This book provides ideas for personal spiritual growth that will lead you on your

journey for greatness. Often it is in our work that we find the best opportunities for spiritual growth to take place. Through encounters with co-workers we have the opportunity to be more compassionate, understanding, accepting and forgiving. In seeing our work as loving service, we develop ourselves as spiritual beings.

As the global market place forces organizations to be more competitive, often resulting in companies producing more with fewer people, one of the distinguishing features between a well run organization and one that flounders will be the creativity, motivation and cooperation of the workforce. People who work spiritually are those who see themselves serving a greater purpose through their work, who see the spiritual value of working with others, and who have a stronger spiritual foundation to cope with increasing demands.

For those people who have little to no control of how their work is structured or conducted, the frustration can be enormous. In these situations people are looking for ways that their job can be less stressful and more tolerable, if not even more joyful and more meaningful. Working from a spiritual base helps people learn how to cope with changing circumstances and stressful conditions. Working spiritually allows people to see how they can grow through their work and how they can shift their attitudes towards work.

It is essential we see our work life as a place to follow our spiritual journey. The focus of this book is on growing spiritually to find and live our greatness. To live our greatness doesn't necessarily mean we must accomplish great things, only that we live true to who we are, offering our best gifts and passion to the world in service. It is the spirit and intention with which we do our work that determines whether our greatness shines forth.

Many of the stories in this book about working spiritually may seem rather ordinary. Indeed, seeing the sacred in ordinary day to day living is part of following a spiritual path.

INTRODUCTION

Working spiritually involves a holistic perspective of how we live and work. We must not separate our lives so that we are spiritual only on the weekends. Our spirituality grows when it becomes one continuous flow in our life.

ORGANIZATION OF BOOK

Part I outlines a framework for seeing how your work is a path for spiritual greatness. Part II provides ideas for strengthening your spiritual practice in your work. I describe how to create new metaphors for work, find your right livelihood, and live intentionally spiritual. By doing so, you will find greater meaning for what you do and bring the fullest of who you are to your work and organization. Part III focuses on ways to work spiritually with others. It includes ways to bring forth your gifts and create greater awareness to enhance teamwork, group processes, and meetings. The chapters on teamwork and organizational rituals examine how we work spiritually as a group or collective. Exercises are provided at the end of most chapters to help you practice the ideas presented.

Part IV outlines a new paradigm for organizations based on the premise that organizations are arenas in which people's personal spiritual journeys take place. By being intentionally spiritual at work, and bringing our personal greatness to our work, we help our organizations become more spiritual places. It is time to call for the creation of "Higher Consciousness Organizations" – organizations that believe in all people's quest for wholeness, meaning, and connection. Teams, departments, and entire organizations can be intentional about supporting members' spiritual growth. Throughout this book I provide examples of organizations that believe they must be intentional about developing their people.

One difference between this book and others that address the issue of spirituality at work is my discussion of the organizational influences that shape our individual spiritual

journey. If we want to work fully spiritually, organizations must support our spiritual growth. It is through dialogue and relationships with others that we discover more about ourselves. In our daily work encounters, we travel further along our spiritual path by being in relation with one another in more authentic and compassionate ways.

GOALS FOR THIS BOOK

I want to briefly explain my purpose and process of writing this book. My purpose for doing this book comes from my desire to propose another way of working, a way that leaves people feeling fulfilled rather than empty, enriched rather than drained, affirmed rather than angry. We must focus on growing spiritually during our daily work to live our personal greatness.

Like so many others, I have a strong yearning to bring my wholeness of being into alignment with my work. The task of writing this book has been a challenge for me to work spiritually, to keep open to guidance and inner clarity as I struggle to find the right words to put on the page. My process of living in the moment with my work – being both task-oriented and spiritually aware – provided me the experience of living what I was writing.

The focus of this book is on service in your vocation. However, since volunteerism in community groups is an important way to develop greatness through loving service, I hope the ideas will be applied to work in civic groups and other places where people combine their talent and efforts for a greater good. When we understand that our life quest is to grow spiritually, we can live this quest through the myriad of experiences that allow us to be more compassionate and loving, anywhere and at any time we choose. That is the ultimate in living a spiritually great life. I invite you to enter this book from whatever point along your spiritual path you find yourself.

INTRODUCTION

CROSSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS

The ideas presented in this book build on numerous views regarding spirituality and work. Many modern and ancient writers have reflected on how work is an essential part of spiritual development, as well as how life can be more spiritual through work. I reference such writers to demonstrate the diversity of ideas on this topic and to acknowledge their work.

Since this book bridges ideas from various writings on spirituality and management, it creates challenges for language usage. Because people will encounter the ideas of this book from different spiritual and/or organizational perspectives, it is a challenge to anticipate how different people will react to words related to working spiritually.

Words such as compassion, authenticity, awareness or trust may be easy to accept as workplace language, whereas words such as forgiveness, mindfulness, atonement, or love may be harder for some people to use at work. Because there are so many interpretations and characterizations of a divine power, I want to be explicit in how I am referring to such a power here. Words that are capitalized throughout the book refer to the Abiding, Abundant Love that goes by many names, yet is beyond naming. This is done in recognition that one word for this Source is too limiting.

I use language from various faith traditions so that people will understand the universality of the concepts presented. I use stories from various faith traditions to show that working spiritually isn't based on one belief system or connected to any singular religious doctrine. It is important that people understand the distinction I make in chapter 4 between spirituality and religion. I hope to reclaim some traditionally "religious" words as universal human characteristics so they can be used at work and in organizations.

PATH FOR GREATNESS: WORK AS SPIRITUAL SERVICE

Finally, references to personal pronouns will be varied such that “he” may be used in one sentence and “she” in the next. The intent behind this is to be as inclusive as possible and to avoid focusing on one gender exclusively when making a point. The process of working spiritually transcends gender.

CLOSING REMARKS

I hope you will find a message in this book that resonates with you so that you too can work spiritually and live your personal greatness. As we become intentional about our spiritual journey, we can be beacons for others who want to follow a spiritual path. Following such a path is not easy. However, the rewards from living your authentic self through your work will be worth the hardships.

This book is meant as a catalyst for other books and deeper conversation on this topic, not as a be-all end-all text. You are invited to explore, to question, to experiment with these ideas in the hope that you will be able to experience your wholeness of being and connectedness with others as well as the Divine Spirit.

If you are reading this now, then you are ready to grow towards your greatness. If this book speaks to a truth inside of you, then you are ready to find ways to work spiritually.