

Three Life Disciplines

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Most of us draw the wrong conclusion when we hear that reality is non-dual. "If I am awareness, what's to do?," we nonchalantly say. It is true that you are awareness but the person who you are every day does not miraculously disappear when you hear that you are awareness. To actualize your nature as awareness your life should be in line with who you really are. So action is required. Pretending that there is nothing to do or waiting for grace in the form of your enlightenment is foolish because the doer "you" is caught in the cycle of time. The days roll by and every day death is one step closer. Wasting time is not wise. When the house is burning it does not help to dig a well.

Here are three things you can do.

Worship

You needn't go to church, although it can't hurt, but you can make your life a prayer. Swamiji used to say, "The life we have is a wonderful gift and we should offer it back to the Lord." If we are going to see our lives as a gifts from the Lord they should be the very best we can muster and they should be offered with a cheerful, smiling face.

The best life is not measured in terms of money, success, name and fame. It is measured in terms of sincerity. We should do what we love and love what we do. Although there is reason for pessimism there is also reason for optimism because life is a zero-sum game. The half-empty glass is also half full. Cultivate cheer.

Charity

Give the gift that everyone wants: love. If you give love you needn't give anything else, although you certainly will. Without love other gifts are incomplete. Giving love transforms you into a saintly person.

Love is always present, but it is invisible. It does no good to love someone and not express your love in a tangible way. The best expression of love is to give time and attention to the other person, to share his or her life in some way, to share thoughts and feelings. The family is a social unit tailor-made for sharing love. If you don't have a family make the world your family and show genuine concern for everyone you meet. How quickly we grow when we share ourselves with others. Without this practice meditation and scripture study are stultifying disciplines that do not result in growth.

Austerity

There are many types of austerity but none as valuable as disciplining one's speech. There are four qualities of speech that make it an austerity.

1. Avoid verbal violence (*ahimsa*). Verbal violence is more injurious than physical

violence.

2. Speak the truth (*satyam*). When you say something you should mean it.
3. Speak in a kind tone (*priyam*). Words must be soft, polite and gentle.
4. They should be beneficial (*hitam*). Words should be helpful for both the speaker and the hearer.

Speech discipline requires alertness. Before speaking step back and think about what you are saying and why. See that what comes out is truthful, kind and helpful.