

Getting Started

First and foremost we need to know from the very outset that embarking upon this spiritual journey holds the greatest potential for deep joy and stimulating satisfaction of anything we have ever experienced in life. It can and will change our lives if we will but let ourselves go into God's loving care. We can allow God to begin removing from our lives those layers of protective attitudes and behaviors we have learned, developed and nursed over the years in our own attempts to become the kind of person we have wanted to be.

We have come to this juncture in life with the realization that all of our efforts to manage our lives have not produced the degree of satisfaction and joy we have desired. Now we desire something more—something better. Life is getting on and our earlier dreams have not been fulfilled. Bits of disappointment in ourselves begin to leak into our consciousness. We may not feel good about ourselves and where we are in life. Hints of depression may come and go.

We might begin to wonder if there isn't more to life than we have yet discovered. There is. Furthermore, in this very moment we are God's best candidates ever to receive something more. It is something that has been there all along but we might have filled our lives so full of other promising things that we have left no room for that special something which God has had ready and waiting for us all the while. If we wish to check ourselves on this possibility, we should stop reading now and spend the next five minutes meditating and conversing with God. Try it. Take time out to be silent and still. Take at least 5 minutes. Now be still! How well did you do in this exercise? Were you able to stay focused on this, conversation, or did you find your mind wandering and jumping from one thing to another? Was your attention diverted to things you have to get done or have just done? For most people taking time apart just to be with God and becoming grateful for God's presence is more than we can deal with at the beginning.



If we cannot focus on God's presence in our lives for five minutes then we can be assured that we have filled up God's space in us with extraneous things. That very condition is what has kept us from feeling joyful, grateful and deeply satisfied with life. Most of us have certainly junked up our lives until now. That which can change and turn us around is God's creation in us of the awareness that there must be something more in life. That is probably why you have read this far.

Your life is about to be changed. You will not change it— you cannot—try as you may. God will change it. All that it takes to get started is your decision that it be changed and you're asking God to take over.

This journey will be different in many respects from much of our past lives. Perhaps we have had special moments when we become clearly aware that God has invaded our space with some special gifts, turn of events or insight. Those are wow moments which come along rarely. The journey we are beginning now will have more wow moments for us.

One warning as we get started. Be patient. It is easy to get discouraged. At times things move slowly. We will experience dips of failure or at least plateaus on our upward journey. Those are the times when we should become aware that we are not the one in control—God is. So wait patiently on God. Remember Jesus' words: "I am with you always".

Whenever we cannot feel/ God's presence, then we must trust God's promises to be with us. When we learn to let go and trust that God is present to us, although we cannot feel that, then we are experiencing real growth.

Just remember that this is not a how to presentation because we do not tell God how to do anything and it is God who must take us on this journey. Our part always is to have the desire to be with God in God's time. That is always our starting point. Desire! Then we ask God in simple conversation: Please, O Holy One take me with you on this journey. All I bring to you is myself, my desire and my simple prayer.

When we have spent some time with that prayer and we feel the desire to live more closely with God, we are on our way. God will take us in tow. Just be ready for things to begin to happen. Expect change to get underway.

Beginning can be challenging. Getting into conversational and contemplative prayer and meditation is not at all easy at first. It is tempting to think that you cannot do this. It is not for me. But it is!

When I moved to Colorado from Florida I wanted to learn to ski. On my first trip to the slopes I watched some people coming down the mountain with reckless abandonment. It looked easy. I had no awareness of how long they had been skiing, how many times they had come down the mountain before that day or how many times they had fallen. Also, I watched some beginners who were not so agile and poised and in fact out of control. As I watched for the first time, I knew I could do it.

I was fitted with rented boots, skis and poles. With all this paraphernalia somehow attached to my body I felt certain something was seriously wrong with the equipment. I knew there was no way any person could move down a mountain with this weird stuff on. It was so constrictive. Furthermore, my feet would not stay under me even when I tried to stand still. It was then I was convinced that I would never ski. This was not for me.

Then in spite of my complaint and hopelessness I was led to a beginners ski class where I was taught some skills and encouraged by someone right there in front of me who was on skis and moving around comfortably I did learn to ski and enjoyed it for a number of years. I was never a great skier, but I kept learning, taking lessons and practicing. I learned enough to enjoy it.

Pursuing a spiritual journey can also be challenging and at times frustrating. Indeed we can be tempted to give up thinking: This is not for me. But it is for you. We can all learn to do it. When we do learn to do it and develop some skills we become free to enjoy the abundant life.

