

## The Twelve Principles of Personal Leadership *Principle #12 – Embracing Spirituality – Part 2*

*-One Leader's Perspective*

By Greg L. Thomas



There is one definite thing that believers in God and atheists have in common. They both believe in something they can't prove by scientific methods. We cannot prove or disprove the existence of a Supreme Being by scientific analysis. People who believe in God have faith in a higher power, while atheists have faith in unplanned randomness. One belief system inspires individuals to attain phenomenal achievements while personally facing deprivation, pain or death. The other belief system accepts that life is meaningless and whatever we do is ultimately irrelevant or the result of blind chance.

Sadly, western civilization today has abandoned its spiritual roots and has now morphed into a post-Christian culture. By using the phrase post-Christian... I do not mean to imply that Western culture was ever near perfect, or that it even lived up to its Judeo-Christian values! However, for almost 2000 years Western civilization at least claimed to be centered on the moral standards revealed in the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. As a result of our post-Christian age, many people who even acknowledge a God of divine providence no longer want to have a real *personal* relationship with their Creator!

Instead, the great majority of people want a "genie" in their lives, not an Omnipresent Friend. Much like a classic Walt Disney cartoon character, far too many people, including many who profess Christianity, Judaism or Islam, desire a god of convenience or outward ceremony. When they are facing a terrible or tragic situation they want their genie to come out of nowhere and immediately solve the problem. Then... when the crisis is over they want their genie to suddenly disappear and go away until they call upon it again. In a similar way, many people also believe that the major role of God should be as a dispenser of good gifts when called upon to provide them. When they want something, they simply make a "wish" or prayer and God is instantly expected to provide it.

What has caused this warped perception? If there is a God who controls the destinies of mankind and desires a personal relationship with His creation... this *acceptance* comes with strings attached! If He is this kind of a God, He has values and expectations of us. This means we have obligations and responsibilities to fulfill as part of a unique spiritual relationship. This is the *part* of acknowledging spirituality that most people today find difficult. They want rewards without the responsibilities. People want convenience without commitment. They want miracles without maturity. People want solutions without stewardship. Finally, they want a strong reliance without the need for a relationship. But the truth is that without a *personal* relationship with God, we see the world, and our purpose in it, from a very shallow and myopic view.

It is not my intention here to tell you what to believe or opine about a particular sectarian theology. However, spirituality is an essential element that gives everything else in life an additional perspective and meaning. Embracing your spirituality will take your physical existence to the next level. It will help you to transcend reality and the limitations of your five senses. Let's look at the previous eleven principles of this book and see how this is true.

**Principle one is *The Right Visionary Goals*.** When you have the added dimension of spirituality in your life it gives your goals a long-term perspective... eternity. From this viewpoint your goals not only benefit you today, or throughout your lifetime, but may influence your existence beyond this mere mortal world. You then understand that your goals should be in harmony with spiritual laws and values to be productive and fulfilling. You also understand that the personal skills and gifts you possess are not an accident. They were given to you as a *gift* so that you may serve others and make the world a better place to live. Spirituality teaches you that a great goal established in harmony with eternal values will benefit generations yet unborn.

**Principle two is *Continuous Education*.** Spirituality helps you to realize that education is not something we acquire only for this physical life. What we learn through good choices and bad decisions are preserved and carried over to be used within a deeper level of existence. Our physical life becomes a learning environment and proving ground. We press on to grow and change because education now acquires a greater purpose than the here and now. This brings to mind Thomas Jefferson's words about the value of learning, "always leading us to something new, never cloying, we ride, serene and sublime, above the concerns of this mortal world, contemplating truth and nature, matter and motion, the laws which bind up their existence, and the Eternal being who made and bound them up by these laws. Let this be our employ."

**Principle three is *Maintaining Your Health*.** Looking at your health from a spiritual perspective helps you to realize your body is a physical temple and you have been given temporary stewardship over it. You may have diseases you have acquired or inherited due to your DNA, or the environment. You may have even neglected your health in the past. But, starting today... you can value and nurture what you have left. You can respect and honor your body and mind because as an ancient scripture states it is "fearfully and wonderfully made." A responsible steward doesn't abuse, mutilate or neglect a precious resource. This means we take responsibility to get enough rest, eat a balanced diet, get regular exercise, and avoid addictions. This helps us to be more productive and energetic even into our senior years. We appreciate the fact that life is an *endowment* and our mortal body is a physical treasure.

**Principle four is *Driven to Achieve*.** When you embrace your spirituality, you welcome a life filled with new meaning and purpose. You realize that you were born for a cause, and granted specific talents for an earthly mission. You recognize that your opportunities are a platform to achieve the very reason you were born. You also begin to see that many of these opportunities are not a result of luck or chance but by design. When other people abandon or attack a great cause because they lack SQ, you have the strength to go forward even against overwhelming odds or adversity. And what about the goals you don't reach in this lifetime? You know that it is important to make an effort in the right direction. Even the small progress or few steps you started will be completed in another place and another time.

**Principle five is *Imagination*.** As you grow in your understanding of spirituality you appreciate the incredible potential of the human mind. What separates us from animals is our much greater IQ and the very ability to comprehend SQ. When our spirituality is nurtured, our thinking can transcend the physical senses and our imagination can grasp concepts we can't typically envision. Answers and solutions become possible for even the greatest problems. For example, Sir Isaac Newton was a deeply religious man whose grasp of the theory of gravity and the three laws of motion were enhanced and stimulated by his spirituality, not hindered by it.

**Principle six is *Dealing with the Disappointments*.** Perhaps there is no greater benefit in possessing spirituality than the ability it provides to deal with personal setbacks, problems or even a serious crisis. Part of this comes from knowing that there is an unseen hand of Providence ruling and guiding the universe. Things happen for a reason... even terrible things and if we have the proper perspective, we can glean wisdom and maturity from all life experiences. Nothing great has ever been achieved without conflict, adversity, disappointment and the real possibility of failure. Just study the lives of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Helen Keller, and Clara Barton. They (and many others) are a testament to those who used their personal faith to deal with great personal disappointments and setbacks.

**Principle seven is *A Life in Balance*.** Taking control of your life and not allowing others or your environment to determine your fate is an important principle. With spirituality as your guiding force you come to realize that you can have a great amount of control in your life and additional help when needed from the Great Sustainer. An unbalanced life leads to addictions and obsessions that ultimately will destroy us. As I stated earlier, life is a complex *mixture* of personal needs and responsibilities. These should include family, work, recreation, spirituality, community service and self-fulfillment. These areas all need at least a certain amount of attention and nurturing. Spirituality provides the inner-conscience and constant reminder to keep this important balance.

**Principle eight is *Simple Diversions*.** In our workaholic world we need occasional diversions more than ever. Spirituality reminds us that even though work is important, it is not the *most* important thing in life. Work should fall below our commitment to the Creator and our family. Setting aside the time to regularly enjoy nature, our hobbies, and our community provide a vital emotional and social connection apart from the work environment. Another important diversion should include weekly worship, prayer and meditation time. Over 35 years ago I embraced the observance of a weekly religious Sabbath. For a 24 hour period each week I spend *extra* dedicated time with my family, close friends and in spiritual worship. This is a time set aside for rejuvenating my mind and getting off the “merry-go-round” of cultural distractions. Have I received hostility for my observance of a Sabbath? You bet I have! Has it cost me some career promotions or profitable speaking opportunities over the years? Yes, it has... but keeping your priorities and values are more important than making other people happy or making more money. It has been said that people without goals are used by those who have them. I know what my values are, and I am not about to violate them to comply with another person’s agenda.

**Principle nine is *Meaningful Relationships*.** One of my hobbies is to visit old and abandoned historical graveyards. I have never seen a grave stone that had inscribed on it, “I wish I had spent more time in the office.” Actually, my favorite headstone is one that states, “See... I told you I was sick.” We tend to spend an entire lifetime trying to accumulate material wealth, prestige, power or other things that fade with our passing. What really matters is family and friends. If we have spent a lifetime loving and nurturing our relationships with others we leave a true legacy. Spirituality reminds us that these relationships will transcend the joys and fellowship of this lifetime. When all else fails, including our health, those we have loved will be there to support and comfort us. Since our most meaningful relationships can be with our spouse and our God, our spirituality helps us to appreciate that these intimate bonds are intended to last for an eternity.

**Principle ten is *Know Thyself*.** I heard a sermon once from a minister who spent five minutes trying to convince the audience how *humble* he was. Unfortunately, you can tell a tree by its fruit, and what he truly was echoed so loud I couldn’t hear what he was saying. Spirituality, when fully understood, promotes a candid exploration of self and all of our weaknesses as well as our strengths. It provides a counter-balance to our darkest thoughts and idiosyncrasies. It reminds us that there are laws that regulate our conduct, and when we break those laws we suffer the consequences. It teaches us to listen to criticism and use it to reinvent ourselves into a better person. If our attitude is right it points out the “chinks in our armor” and prods us to *overcome* our faults and weaknesses. It is also this routine self-analysis that introduces us to theological terms like repentance, remorse, forgiveness, mercy and grace.

**Principle eleven is *Passionately Positive*.** If a person deeply believes they have a life blessed with purpose and rich meaning, how can they not help but to be optimistic? In addition, spirituality makes even mundane everyday events more significant because they are part of a greater overall plan. The past, and our errors can't be changed, but we can still learn valuable lessons from them. Even our mistakes can be reviewed as chance for new growth and a commitment to do better next time. The present time is filled with choices that will have a clear impact on our future. Having a confident spiritual connection teaches us to value right from wrong. When we filter our thoughts and dwell on a positive "can-do" approach to each day, we maintain an upbeat outlook that can achieve virtually anything.

In closing, don't allow yourself to be an Intellectual Cyclops. There is a valid reason why the overwhelming majority of great historical leaders and other famous social achievers believed in a higher power that directed and controlled the affairs of the universe. It allowed them to see beyond the "now" and inspired them to believe in ideas and missions that would last far beyond their lifetimes. Some were profoundly religious and it was demonstrated in their writings and public examples. Others were not overtly religious, and were not promoters of the organized religions of their day. But, it was their deep personal abiding belief in a Supreme Higher Authority that propelled them and their ideas to greatness. Don't disregard the importance of nurturing and embracing your spirituality. It is not only the most important principle, but is the glue that bonds, magnifies and gives rich meaning to all the others.

As an ancient scripture reminds us, "These are the people I am pleased with: those who are not proud or stubborn and who fear my word." [Isaiah 66:2]

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