

## What is the Most Important Thing?

By Don Oakley

What is the most important thing? In the abstract this question doesn't mean that much. The only important thing is what is important to *you*. Only that which is important to you will bring curiosity, intent, and commitment to your search.

Whatever direction your search or human process takes you, there are certain characteristics that are essential for its resolution. The first is integrity: to act out of what you *know* and from what you've realized; to avoid denying what we've realized and to recognize what we haven't yet realized in our own direct experience.

It's also essential that we distinguish between something that we believe is true but haven't actually experienced ourselves, and something that we've realized for ourselves. It's fine to read about internal journeys that others have taken and maybe glean some sense of what may lay ahead, but at the same time recognize that another person's path is their path and every path will be different.

It's also essential that there be a sense of earnestness. With earnestness, there is a conscious recognition: "This is important, therefore, I will devote myself to it; I will honor this pursuit." If it's the most important thing to *you*, does it not deserve to be honoured and pursued wholeheartedly?

This intention need not be limited to our spiritual search. In any life endeavour, what is attained is nearly always a function of our commitment. Even simple things, like preparing a meal for a friend, or a more sustained commitment like learning to play an instrument are activities which benefit from wholeheartedness.

Often these journeys, if they're of a deeper nature, go into territories that are not known; go beyond the comfort of our conceptual thinking mind. It's looking deeply at what is true in our own direct experience.

Exploring unknown territories requires an openness and a willingness to look at things that may be difficult for us; looking at things that arise within ourselves: maybe old beliefs that may need to be challenged, or painful memories, old circumstances, perhaps childhood conditionings that arise into our consciousness. These engrained energies are seeking the light of day. We need to allow them to do so - without blame, shame or judgment. Self-judgment and condemnation only embed these energies within us. Instead, they need to be seen so that we can move beyond them. This process takes courage. It takes a willingness to be deeply and fearlessly honest with ourselves.

I am not saying that we need to be hyper-critical of ourselves. Rather, we need to be willing to look at what arises without judgment. If we judge, we oppose what is arising. Whatever we oppose, we energize. By not judging these arisings, the contracted energetics will be dissipated.

We may find that we need to nurture essential qualities such as willingness, openness, honesty, and integrity. They may be there to some degree in all of us, but they are empowered by our devotion to them: our willingness to be willing, being open to

whatever is presented, etc. Whatever this journey is for us individually, these qualities are more important than any concept about where that journey will lead or any concept about how to reach our imagined destination. These qualities will take us to the deepest part of ourselves if pursued with curiosity and devotion.

Devotion to this inner journey is far more important than devotion to any belief.

Whatever your search is, whatever you imagine or perceive your journey to be, I invite you to do it wholeheartedly. Your path will unfold before you and that path will lead you home.

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