

## **What is Spirituality?**

**by Don Oakley, 2018**

One thing to remember about defining “spirituality” is that it forces us to make some assumption about what it isn't. In other words, from the get-go, we divide existence into two pieces: spiritual things and everything else. So, you often hear people talk about their spiritual life and then their ordinary life. They go on retreat for their spiritual life and then they go back into the world. But as I see it, the world is part of our spiritual life. It's how we learn. Just as spirituality is a journey into our deepest nature, life is showing us that journey as well, and perhaps even more directly than when we sit down to meditate.

This may not be absolutely true but it's a useful construct: everything in life that happens to us is done for our own benefit – to show us our deepest nature, to give us an opportunity to learn something more deeply. And this is what spirituality is indeed all about. Spirituality is a technique to hasten our journey. Spirituality can take the form of meditation, a reflection or inquiry into the bigger questions of life. Other forms of spirituality can include silence, listening, being out in nature, walking anywhere outside without the conceptualization of naming and judging, and evaluating things around us.

There's many paths, many techniques, that we can use to look more deeply into ourselves. Spirituality is just the broad name that we give to that endeavour, but the really important thing is our intention, our honesty, our openness and willingness to encounter life, to experience life. To be open to what arises within us and be willing to look without prejudice, that's the real spiritual journey. To use spirituality as a practice to temporarily fix our anxiety or busyness so that we can go back and perform better at work the next day, that's okay, but it's not the deepest inquiry that we can take during this lifetime.

Spirituality taken to its fullest is the most exciting, most challenging, and really the only true journey that we can take in this life. It's not separate from life; it is indeed life itself.