

“Go with the high road,” “The road to hell,” “Remaining on the straight and narrow”: the list of proverbs in our language that makes use of roads as metaphors for life could go on and on. A lot of sayings are about being a good or bad person. However, what of a road that could take us to spiritual growth and exploration, a road that is less traveled?

In these book chapters, we'll go on a journey on this road, and discover how a few ideas can take you down the road of spiritual growth— a road that will assist in your daily life and more metaphysical aspects of existence.

## Chapter 1 - Having a good life begins with working on self-discipline and developing the routine of delayed gratification.

Let's be frank: life stinks. And the earlier you believe this, the happier you'll be.

However, don't lose hope. It's only a basic reality of life that every day comes with the likelihood of a new range of issues, and, as soon as you accept this, you'll be on the path to getting an answer for these issues.

The majority of the people live with the illusion that life has to be just, pleasant or rosy. Having such a mentality will only take you to the path of disappointment. On the other hand, knowing that life is naturally hard will push you to gather the measures you'll require to survive.

Together with this healthy mentality, the best tools you can possess are the tools that assist you to work on self-discipline; and the first tool is becoming acquainted with delayed gratification.

Nobody likes to wait for a good thing when they could get it immediately. A lot of us would like to take dessert before dinner, and we have a tendency to live our lives according to the exact viewpoint.

This approach to life could be named as “play now, pay later,” and the people who follow this approach aren't essentially stupid. However, they are kind of smart people who succeed to have bad grades since they'd prefer to miss class and enjoy themselves than coping with the boring business of studying. To put it this in a different manner, they're driven by their impulses.

Assuming you deal with procrastination. Which one of us hasn't done the simple task first and then used the remaining of the day dealing with the boring and hard things?

The author had a patient that has the same issue, and he told her to begin working on delayed gratification by changing her work routines.

This entailed bearing down and doing the difficult things first. Therefore, rather than using one simple hour and then six uncomfortable hours of doing things slowly, she could get one uncomfortable hour and after that the reward of six pleasurable hours.

## Chapter 2 - Discipline also entails admitting duty, being honest and having a healthy balance in life.

One of the tools that will assist you to have discipline in your life is Delayed gratification.

Also, Real self-discipline needs you to accept duty for your personal life.

Do these words "this isn't my problem" seem conversant to you? It's a usually means of responding to the things we'd prefer not to handle. However, bear in mind that: avoiding things doesn't fix anything.

When the M. Scott Peck an author was finishing his psychiatric training, the bad habit of evading duty became obvious. At a point, he was sad about working for more hours than his mates. However, when Peck questioned his director about this, his director said: "It's not my problem. It's your issue with your time."

For several months, Peck was angry with the director for evading responsibility, when as a matter of fact it was Peck that was evading the issue. Nobody forced him to work for longer hours; it was just his decision to look for a solution.

A different tool that can enhance your self-discipline is a commitment to truth, that means you honestly and sincerely face the reality of your life.

Now, this can be a difficult thing to do because it needs you to have a strong sense of self-reflection and be ready to renew your worldview all the time.

If this seems more like psychotherapy, you're completely correct— consulting a therapist is a good means of knowing the personal truths. Part of personal development is being open to self-analysis and reflecting truly on life.

Balancing is the last tool for better discipline.

This entails quitting and giving up on unhealthy lifestyles and risky behaviors that are throwing your life out of balance. We do these things since it makes our life fun; however, which, eventually, have a tendency not to work out.

The author relates this to an experience he had while on his bike, riding down a hill at full speed. He sensed an incredible rush and was unwilling to let go of this thrilling feeling, which is the reason he ended up crashing into a forest. He learned that it can be uncomfortable to leave the things that make you feel a rush; however, it can be more painful losing your balance.

## Chapter 3 - Love is very related to our self-discipline and spiritual growth.

A lot has been written and talked about regarding the nature of love; however, simply put, love is the will to foster your own spiritual growth and the spiritual growth of another person.

By doing that, you can view love as a significant aspect of your evolution, because spiritual growth is essentially about getting to a bigger state of being.

Also, it is significant to know what love is about before you can love another person; firstly, you have to love yourself. It's kind of related to a parent teaching his or her child how to act in a disciplined way. The parent has to follow this discipline first themselves before they can teach the child.

Loving a person entails making an attempt. It needs much more than just a desire to love. The majority of the people desire or want, to love; however, as a matter of fact, only a few are loving. The people with the will to develop spiritually have decided to love and so they behave lovingly.

The dissimilarity between the desire to love and the will to love is the difference between saying, “I would love to prepare delicious food for you” – and then perhaps doing it, or maybe not – and saying, “I will prepare delicious food for you,” and basically doing it.

Because it needs will and effort, love has the potential to form discipline in your life.

In your heart, when there is love, it’s just like a storage tank that is full of energy. This supply can be self-nurturing too because love lets you develop and enhance your ability for love.

However, maintaining any type of loving relationship needs discipline.

One time the author counseled a couple who assumed that their regular fights were basically a natural part of their passionate love for each other, although the quarreling was clearly causing pain to them. Also, when they told the couple that the aim of the counseling would be to enhance their self-discipline and balance their feelings in order for the fights to stop, they gave up.

Without improving their discipline, they were fated to keep on causing pain to one another.

## Chapter 4 - Love is not a feeling; however, it is an action that needs attention and love come with risks.

Often time than not, we consider love to be a feeling instead of an action, and this can cause issues.

The feeling of love is similar to cathecting, which entails putting in emotional energy in a thing or a person.

For example, if you have a piece of jewelry that you cherish, you may catch that ring or necklace. And when two people see in a pub and they bond, they may feel that kind of strong catching that the rest of the world falls away.

However, this feeling is usually brief and connected to a certain moment; on the other hand, true love comes with a long-lasting dedication.

Also, love can happen without that feeling we usually connect with it, because real love is more than catching.

In a marriage that is functioning well, conflicts can occur, and anger can happen; however, the couples keep working in tandem toward their aims. These two made a vow through their own wish, and that's more significant than any brief emotions.

But, for love to thrive, it requires more than only commitment – it needs attention and the knowledge that it can be lost.

Loving a person entails giving them attention and encouraging their development. And this needs setting apart every other thing to really pay attention and focus on what the person you love is saying and feeling. When you do these things, you enlarge yourself and acquire a new understanding of your loved one.

However, bear in mind that, you can't love a person without the risk of losing them.

There is usually the risk that the love might fall apart, and you might be left with a broken heart alone. But, that's parcel and part of the price of love. Life is a risk itself – and the more love you bring to your life, the riskier it becomes.

## Chapter 5 - Religion is basically a personal worldview that can develop and grow as we acquire new viewpoints.

What comes to your mind, when you ponder on religion? For a lot of us, it's a stern set of guidelines and ritualistic routines, and belonging to a group that has faith in and worships God.

However, this definition is really narrow.

Religion needs to be considered as a belief system that is decided by our culture.

In this sense, everybody has a religion, and it may not have anything to do with God or gods. Therefore, see “religion” as only a different term for “worldview,” a worldview informed by the way you were brought up and family culture.

This view on religion assisted a man called Stewart, an extremely depressed patient who viewed himself as an atheist. However, as soon as the author assisted him to examine his worldview, Stewart started to recognize his own religion and how it was impacting his mental health.

When considering how his family culture influenced him, Stewart understood that his belief system made the world seem like an evil place, influenced by ruthless forces keen to punish him if he went out of line. This emanated from being raised by God-fearing and physically abusive parents.

This case shows how our worldview is founded less on the beliefs that our families transferred directly and more on the actions and actions they partook in.

Fortunately, all of us have the ability for spiritual growth if we let new experiences to inform our viewpoint on life.

See yourself as a scientist, regularly questioning and exploring the world that surrounds you, and making use of this understanding to inform your views. This outlook will let you challenge your parents’ religion. You don’t have to stick to their narrow worldview when you can accept everything that life has to give and create your own viewpoint.

Don’t allow past experiences blind you to the beauty of the spiritual world. In the following chapter, we’ll explore the phenomenon of grace.

## Chapter 6 - Normal incidents can explain the remarkable phenomenon of grace.

There's a good probability that you are familiar with the hymn that begins, "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound..." Due to this popular song, the term "grace" is very linked with "amazing."

However, what precisely is the meaning of grace? And is it, as a matter of fact, really that amazing?

Grace is really a rather frequent phenomenon. It's the force that safeguards people's physical as well as mental health, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Fascinatedly enough, when you experience neurosis, a psychiatrist that is skilled can know precisely the reason why that disorder appears and the reason why it continues. It is still strange why some neuroses aren't more serious, and the reason why a lot of people who have experienced very great traumas can continue to live good lives.

A patient of the author is an extremely successful businessman who had just a mild neurosis. Still, his upbringing had a lot of both psychological and physical trauma, as well as spending time in cold and uncaring foster homes and a time when he was still a teenager, locked up in jail.

Although it was possible to describe and cure his neurosis, it's wasn't possible to explain how he handled the way he was brought up and how he became a really extraordinarily successful adult.

The author assumes that we can only explain this by postulating an external force that safeguards people and their mental health, hence making them endure even the most severe circumstances.

Therefore, maybe it is beyond only an amazing resilience, and instead of a force beyond our consciousness that fosters our development as humans. We can consider grace as an evolutionary force from a god who wishes to make sure that we don't keep things as they are and rather feel the desire to develop.

You might reason that this notion is naïve; however, as stated by the author, there is no other theoretical method that can better describe our survival nature.

If you are still unsure about this, let's consider some different "miracles" that better show grace working.

## Chapter 7 - Also, grace can be seen in our dreams and in cases of synchronicity and serendipity.

Human beings possess a strong inclination to group phenomena. We understand that a sandal and a canoe are two different things, and to better know the two, we put them in their separate groups: shoes and boats.

However, the phenomenon of grace lies beyond the understanding of our traditional senses, more like the miracle of our dream states and unconscious

While the author was working with his patients, has found proof that our unconscious is capable to help the therapeutic process by giving understanding dreams.

It has been shown through analysis that specific dreams are cautions of personal consequences. The author assumes that dreaming is an illustration of how grace works because dreams appear to assist enhance our spiritual growth.

As stated by the author, people have been known to have extraordinarily related dreams, or even to psychically convey pictures to one another. Psychic occurrences like these are illustrations of synchronicity, which can be understood as a different illustration of grace working.

Synchronicity is the regular event of extremely unlikely incidences, and, just like grace, it's difficult to explain it. There are recorded incidences of synchronicity; however, there are no reasonable means to describe the reason two people would share the exact kind of dreams or be able to convey pictures.

However, when incidences like these occur, people involved usually gain from it, making it an act of serendipity, which according to Webster's Dictionary was described as "the gift of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for."

While the author was writing a book, he experienced this directly.

While the author was working at his friend's library, far from home at that point, he was a bit stuck with writer's block. Even though the wife of his friend was usually unkind and hostile to him, on this incident she went to the room unprompted and gave him a book. Although she didn't have any means of identifying what he was writing on, the book she gave the author was titled *How People Change*, written by Allen Wheelis, and it was the ideal book to get him unstuck and carry on with his work.

All of us can be touched by grace, even in the most ordinary circumstances.

## Chapter 8 - Laziness is humankind's original sin and this hinders us from reaching spiritual growth.

In the tale of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we're presented with the story of original sin.

The serpent enticed Eve into eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge, something not allowed by God. In this scenario, we could say that the actual nature of this sin was that Adam and Eve didn't talk to each other or with God the reason why the fruit was not allowed, and hence didn't know the law they were violating.

Meaning, original sin can be viewed as laziness: not taking the time and energy to have a good internal debate. If we're to have any expectation of evading sinful choices and making good choices, we have to be careful about questioning ourselves and getting to the root of the reason we do the things we do.

Definitely, this isn't an easy internal conversation to do. It is not easy reconciling our inner God and our inner serpent and questioning them entails being opened to a deeply-rooted struggle. So it's completely natural for us to be inclined to avoid this conflict.

However, together with being our original sin, laziness is the main thing hindering us from our spiritual growth.

This type of laziness isn't connected to your relative or your duties at your place of work. You might give 60-hour workweeks, attend to your children and house chores, and still be lazy in the aspect of handling your spiritual growth.

For a lot of people, this lack of energy for growth can come down to a dread of change and not wanting to lose the small comfort they possess at the moment.

Many people see new views threatening and they don't want to worry about the energy it needs to adjust their comfortable worldview. It's very easy to disregard new viewpoints than to take them seriously; therefore, with both fear and laziness, spiritual growth can stay still.

However, it doesn't need to be like that. By accepting your resistance, you can be on your path to defeating the biases and difficulties that hinder your spiritual growth.

## The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth by M. Scott Peck Book Review

Living a life of spiritual growth needs a loving nature and being open to new viewpoints, as well as the beneficial and mysterious force of grace. It is not easy following the road less traveled – it needs effort, will and a powerful sense of self-discipline. Luckily, there are tools and adjustments that you can include in your life to bring balance and place yourself on the way to spiritual growth.

Balance your discipline.

A lot of anything is bad, even discipline as well. Therefore, don't be scared to include a bit of flexibility in your life. If you're excessively rigid about things such as sleeping and eating routines, ensure you adjust things regularly. Rather than waking up at 5 a.m. daily, attempt to enjoy sleeping sometimes. As with every other thing, healthy discipline needs a balance.

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