

Discovering Your Life-style

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What's your style of living? Can you really control how you will live? Is life a search for just the "right" person, place, or circumstance? The current interest in life-style suggests that the previously common view that life should center on the acquisition of objects is being questioned and that more people are seeing living as an art—the art of expressing more noble and less material qualities of thought.

Because living is an art, it—like any art—requires mastery of both theory and practice. But where does one begin to find the theory of life—its laws, rules? Through philosophies, theologies, or sciences? One might consider ontology—searching for and studying the nature and essence of being—and gain a firm conviction that God exists as the divine Principle of being.

Such a conviction was Mary Baker Eddy's. Through a life that stripped her of material hopes, through an inspired experience of healing at a time of great need, through deep search and study of the Bible, Mrs. Eddy arrived at the discovery she termed Christian Science, the "Science of being," the "Science of Life." This Science emphasizes the need to understand the very essence of being. It requires of its learner the mastery of its theory, its fundamentals, its letter, its spirit, and its evidence in the daily round.

A knowledge of the Science of Life is a vital step in learning to live satisfyingly. And mastering this Science involves more than intellectual comprehension. Knowing the letter alone is no guarantee of success. One needs to gain the spirit that underlies the letter, and the deeper understanding of God that results in healing and moral regeneration.

More than maintaining just its symbols and forms, the artist in the Science of Life commits himself to its essence. His life-style is characterized by quality, by spirituality. It has little to do with how many material goals one accomplishes, how much money, power, or prestige one amasses. The artist whose life is his art improves his thought and character—through such qualities as purity, faithfulness, innocence, unselfishness, health. This commitment demands the expression of a life uncontaminated by merely materialistic pursuits.

Does an uncontaminated life seem a bit unrealistic? The supreme example of the art of living is Christ Jesus. His spiritual sense earned him that distinction, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, ...Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" he taught, "but seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."¹ Those words refer to spirituality, and as

¹Matt. 6:31,33

we apply them, we find that expressing spiritual quality shapes experience, and that life need not be at the mercy of circumstance.

Toward the end of my college years I began to formulate just what I wanted to do with life, what career I wanted to pursue. I was even pretty sure just what steps I must follow in order to do this. Back in my sophomore year I began laying the groundwork for a program I thought would get me where I wanted to go. During my senior year things were rolling along pretty much as I had planned. But just to be entirely covered, I considered another career I could fall back on in case this other program didn't work out.

As the months went by, I found myself having to make a choice. I was confident that my first choice was the answer, so I dropped my alternative. Soon the time came for final selection in this program, and I was off for job interviews. I enjoyed three days of looking and returned home to await what I felt sure was the inevitable outcome.

What a surprise I got when the letter arrived shortly after my return! The employer I'd counted on didn't want me. I was deeply disappointed. I had searched unselfishly, or so I reasoned, but where were all the blessings that were supposed to be forthcoming?

Months went by. This was, in some ways, the hardest time in my life. There were nights when I couldn't sleep at all, feeling such despair. But I was pretty good at fooling those around me. What did I care! Something surely would turn up! I kept seeking answers, but a passage from the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mrs. Eddy, helped me realize there is something more to do: "Seeking is not sufficient. It is striving that enables us to enter. Spiritual attainments open the door to a higher understanding of the divine Life."² I realized that I had to start striving to express spiritual truth in every way and stop just seeking, or merely desiring, spiritual qualities and attainments intellectually.

And that's when I discovered that human life is an art—a matter of expressing one's spiritual nature, seeing oneself as the very expression of God, divine Soul, and living up to that nature. It doesn't take the right circumstance or the right people to begin living these qualities. There is not necessarily a one and only right human circumstance. What I needed to do was express right qualities—man's spiritual inheritance—and make sure that living these qualities daily governed my entire life.

Soon my experience changed radically; I gained joy, freedom, and fulfillment in just expressing the qualities of divine Life. Then my occupation developed, and it corresponded as nearly as any human occupation could with the spiritual sense I had of life as art. I enjoy freedom of just being me as God knows me, and full time!

The key to finding our life-style is maintaining a clear sense of unity with our divine source. We can start seeing ourselves and others with a spiritually scientific and discerning eye. We need to reflect

² *Science and Health*, p.10

God's intelligence and His love. To do that, we must have a clear understanding of the source we are expressing—that is, infinite Mind, perfect Love. One cannot be effective without that, because he'll never know what unlimited, uncontaminated living is without knowing God's nature. And spiritual perception is the essence of the art of living.

In Romans we read, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."³ That is not abstract idealism; it is inspired truth. If we can remember this one verse in the light of Christian Science, we can face uncertainty with the assurance of a harmonious outcome. It is never the so-called problem that presents the challenge; it is merely one's incorrect response to the problem.

Because there is not harmony every step of the way in a given circumstance in our lives does not mean that we're not on the correct course. One often finds human circumstances of little aid in judging accurately the correctness of one's outlook. There has undoubtedly never been anyone more clearly sure of his divine calling than was Christ Jesus when he was about his mission of proclaiming and illustrating God's spiritual kingdom. But he often met opposition. He didn't give in by reasoning, "If this were really the right thing, there wouldn't be all these problems."

What kept him going? The same thing that can keep each of us going: he learned to judge and discern events rightly from a spiritual basis.

We've heard the counsel, "Do your best." But we need to ask what it means. One's best, in fact, may be very limited until what constitutes his best is learned. When we understand that spiritual law underlies all reality, we'll not just depend on our human best; we'll strive to know and follow our spiritual sense, which cannot err.

There is little room for mere opinion or guesswork in the art of living because this art flows from its Science. We must learn to be alone with our true selfhood, to be in constant communion with our divine source.

Aiming to live a true, substantial life maintains a forthright honesty. If one lives the truth and loves it, he will demonstrate it. What we do, more than what we say, shows what we are. These words from the writings of Mrs. Eddy, the discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, guide us in the Science of Life in discovering our life-style: "To live so as to keep human consciousness in constant relation with the divine, the spiritual, and the eternal, is to individualize infinite power; and this is Christian Science."⁴ Human life can be a quality experience; how one lives it is, in essence, the real goal.

3 Roman 8:28

4 *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 160

