

Is there progress in the spiritual search? Does it have an end?

by Paul Constant

Is there progress in the spiritual search, or is it "all or nothing"?

I'll offer a possible formula for finding Truth. Rather than put our sights on something vague that is beyond the mind, there's an alternative approach called retreating from untruth. It's a path that involves backing away from error, where we erode our ignorance. Richard Rose called it the reverse vector.

The path involves an intense application of energy towards our spiritual quest. Otherwise, life will consume our time and energy and bounce us down a channel that we may not desire in the end. If we are sincere, our spiritual efforts become a center of gravity around which life revolves instead of the other way around.

It doesn't mean that we must dedicate every minute of every day to spiritual matters. As a practical step in doing this, every spiritual teacher I encountered in my search advocated setting aside time each day to focus attention on solving the fundamental problem of life, understanding the mystery of "Who am I?", and answering the question of what happens at death. The exact ways and means of doing this are best left to each seeker.



A spiritual path should prove itself along the way. We shouldn't spend 20 years wasting our energy on false beliefs and discovering that we've fooled ourselves, or discovering that a charismatic, charlatan teacher fooled us. When we apply ourselves, we should see results, such as honing our intuition and reasoning skills, getting insights on how our mind works, and seeing more about our small "s" self. As we retreat from error and become more adept at watching our mind, *that which is watched becomes larger*. The view expands and the viewer becomes more familiar. These are all indicators of progress.

Caution here is warranted: the more we watch our mind, the more likely it is that we'll see the coarser aspects of ourselves. We'll surely see lots of internal stuff we don't like. It might even feel as though we are going in the wrong direction based on our inner observations. However, if we remain sincere and honest with ourselves, and keep watching, our self-doubt will loosen its grip.

It took me 22 years of relatively intense seeking to culminate into an experience of emptying out. An experience of nothingness. Death. Actually, it was 21 years and 9 months of hot-and-cold intensity and 3 months of finally knuckling down and getting serious. Oddly, it took another 7 years for my mind to fully bow to the Truth. I became everything, capital "L" love. That latter experience took additional effort, self-inquiry, and meditation to arrive at what I would call a dynamic balance between nothing and everything.

I tried a lot and failed even more. In retrospect, I realize that I failed my way to Truth. I exhausted my delusion that I was going to become something special or acquire something grand through Enlightenment.

I have one last comment concerning progress that I can't prove, so it's more of a belief. I feel that I had help from something unknown to me, an invisible lover by my side. In my striving for Truth, the Divine or

some intelligence met me halfway by reaching across the great divide. It just might be possible that the Divine responds to our efforts and our deep commitment.

Is there an end to the spiritual search?

I could quibble over the words "search" vs. "discovery." But I'll use myself as an example: if I had accepted that my epic experience of nothingness—death while living—was the end of the search, I might have stopped there. For me, the truly unimaginable gift came with the realization of everythingness and an experiential understanding of Love. So I strongly encourage prudence. Be sure to check in with yourself. Be super honest to ensure you are truly satisfied and your heart is filled.

It's been my experience that becoming deeply rooted in our fundamental nature—awareness—provides opportunities to observe and learn even more about small "s" self. We become grounded in a far more stable aspect of ourself. From this solid ground, many discoveries arise with an attitude involving an open mind and an open heart. For me, it involves exploring the boundaries and potentials of consciousness and the mind. I also love exploring the potential of rapport and transmission, which seem to offer endless discoveries. And finally, my discoveries continuously unfold because of my special friendships with fellow seekers and finders. My greatest teachers have been and remain my spiritual friends....