



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

2.2 THE POWER OF SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

Spiritual character is already inherent in our very nature – we do not have to look outside of ourselves for it. It's an inner power that radiates and communicates beyond our words and deeds.

IN HIGH SCHOOL and college, Debra excelled in accounting and William in mathematics. So, from time to time we love to represent new ideas using numbers or equations. As we were looking at the components that make up our view of spiritual character, we realised there was a great equation we could use:

$$\text{Spiritual Character} = \frac{\text{Spiritual Context} + \text{Spiritual Purpose} + \text{Spiritual Values}}{\text{Ego Desires}}$$

In this equation, *Spiritual Context* is how purely you live by a spiritual view of life that gives meaning to everything you do. *Spiritual Purpose* is how focused you are in fulfilling your most essential goals in life. *Spiritual Values* are how well you embody the spiritual qualities that are most important to you. And *Ego Desires* is how much you live to fulfil self-centred, self-serving needs and wants.

What we love about this equation is that it clearly demonstrates the source of the power of spiritual character, and its relationship to our ego desires. Our spiritual character goes up as we strengthen our spiritual context, purpose and values, and as we reduce our ego desires. As our ego desires approach zero, our spiritual character approaches infinity.

In future articles we will focus on each component of this equation and share with you how you can fully develop your spiritual character.

For now, let's explore the power of living and working from our spiritual character. To begin with, spiritual character is already inherent in our very nature – we do not have to look outside of ourselves for it. We have all the “raw material” within us, and all we have to do is recognise it and nurture it to maturity.

What is this “raw material”? Spiritual texts from around the world give us some insight:

Be sincere and truthful; be fearless and equanimous; show goodwill to all; don't harm any living creature. All these are the virtues that reveal the real nature of human beings: Divinity. (Baghavat Gita 16:1-3)

The seed of God is in us. Given an intelligent and hardworking farmer, it will thrive and grow up to God... and accordingly its fruits will be God-nature. (Meister Eckhart, 14th century Christian mystic)

We are all of God, and towards Him we are progressing. (Koran ii:156)

If you want to know Me, look inside your heart. (Tao Te Ching 70)

In the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, where William is a guest faculty teaching MBA students, the foundation of their education is building spiritual character. This is based on the teachings of its founder Sathya Sai Baba, who says:

The end of education is character. Many people think that knowledge is power. It is not so. In fact, character is power.

The respect that the students have for each other, their teachers, and others is clearly evident even in the smallest tasks they are engaged in. Their ability to collaborate creatively together in a wide variety of academic and community projects is one of the most noticeable aspects of their spiritual character.

Just like this university, our daily work life provides a rich opportunity to develop the “true power,” of our spiritual character. This power is not the same as “authority or positional” power in an organisation. It’s an inner power that radiates and communicates beyond our words and deeds.

A spiritual-based leader we interviewed was known in his organisation for speaking honestly. As a result, he developed an unusually forthright relationship with the chairman. When offered a prestigious position in the chairman’s office, he turned it down because he felt he would “lose his soul.” He believed it would require him to do and support things that he didn’t necessarily believe in, and he was unwilling to do that. As he says, “I was never so ambitious that I tried to advance my career at any cost.”

In summary, the Buddha spoke of the power of spiritual character when he said:

Those who have character and discrimination, who are honest and good and follow the dharma with devotion, win the respect of the world. (Dhammapada #217)

So, ask yourself: *What are ways that I express the power of my spiritual character at work? Where do I feel my spiritual character could be stronger?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Book 2 – Work as a Spiritual Practice*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org