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Books for Living
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Your Daily Walk with The Great Minds

Foreword and Introduction

Foreword

The secret of a good book is that it reaches into the reader's heart and touches him at a deeper level. You, the reader, know when the words on the page are true, for they have always been true for you. "I knew that. I guess I've always known that," is the response we give when we connect words with the heart. Anne Lamott says, "Good writing is about telling the truth." Good books help us pay attention to and communicate about what is truly going on for us in life, what is Truth.

Good books also communicate the wisdom of the sages through the ages. Some age-old wisdom sustains us through the hours, days or years of sunshine that lights up our lives. Some wisdom is aimed at the cold dark places within, the water under the frozen lakes of our lives. These are the times when we need light and encouragement. The Buddha said that life is 10,000 joys and 10,000 sorrows. Either way, the wisdom of the ages shines on the secluded, camouflaged holes of our lives, helping us to step and live through the brambles of our life.

Life is like a giant recycling machine. The wisdom learned from other people's life dramas gets recycled back across time. The good wisdom of the ages is already out there, waiting to be told and received in fresh, new and wild ways. Mark Twain said that Adam is the only person that could be 100% certain that nobody before him had done or said what he did or said. Ever since the Garden of Eden, we have been recycling the wisdom of the ages, which gives us new light and life as if we are hearing it again for the first time.

Wendell Berry, the curmudgeon Kentuckian poet, describes this process wherein we, after all these years, find something that makes sense to us, again, but as if we'd never heard it before:

*Sometimes hidden from me
In daily custom and in trust,
So that I live by you unaware
As by the beating of my heart,
Suddenly you flare in my sight,
A wild rose blooming at the edge
Of thicket, grace and light
Where yesterday was only shade,
And once again I am blessed, choosing
Again what I chose before.*

How does that happen? Truth and wisdom have a way of harvesting and integrating the joys, sorrows, glories, mediocrity, and even evil of a lifetime, transfiguring everything. Wisdom goes before and behind us, breaking through and consuming into life the dyings of a lifetime.

Wisdom of the past lights up the spiral path of life, which, for most of us, is largely unmarked and not easy to follow. Wisdom gives us the light to allow us to transform our pain. If we do not transform our pain, we transmit it. So, what transforms pain? I have come to see that transformed people transform people. They offer us a vision of a new set of values, a deeper understanding of ourselves, a greater appreciation of our own innate and acquired wisdom, and most importantly, a deeper capacity to love.

So what transforms people then? Sometimes change happens when something appeals to our intellect. Sometimes we change when we learn a new skill or an idea. We always change when we are confronted with love that is conveyed to us in the silence and sounds of others. Love always transforms people.

So, good books and sound wisdom (prior and present) convey to us a deep abiding presence, a sense of a hidden wholeness. Thomas Merton spoke of this as returning to our true self. Buddhists call this our original nature. Quakers named it our inner teacher. Jews through the ages have spoken of this as the spark of the Divine. Psychologists speak of our identity and integrity. I will call it our soul that yearns to be rooted in something else that tells us the truth about ourselves and our world. It gives us life. T.S. Elliot said,
We shall not cease from exploration
and the end of all our exploring
will be to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time.

True wisdom does not seek to fix anything. In it there is no saving, no advising, and no setting the person straight. True wisdom simply holds us faithfully in a space where we can listen to our inner teacher and find truth. It offers us an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted within and around us, with passion and an air of discovery. In this process of transformation, a response is required of us. What are our thoughts, Meditations, and emotions as we hear the words of wisdom of the past? At some point we are asked, "How do you feel about that?" Writing down our responses through journaling, we engage in a spiritual discipline. Journaling is not the same thing as a simple diary of activities, a systematic listing of events. Journaling asks us to record our reactions to the words of wisdom, chronicling the spiritual odyssey we are taking, day-by-day and hour-by-hour. Journaling provides us a means of meditation wherein we become engaged in the conversations with the authors of the wisdom.

There is something in the physical act of writing that releases our creative responses and leads to self-understanding. Regularity in journaling is essential as a way of providing us structure, form and consistency to our Meditations. The time for journaling is less important than the regularity of it. Ideally, it can become a daily practice. The first step of journaling is to relax into the space, to prepare ourselves for the spirit that is at work within us, drawn out by the wisdom we've read. We need to breathe deeply, finding ways of our own choosing to clear our mind of other things so that the words can wash over us, like the cascading waters of a morning shower.

A disciplined form of growth comes as daily readings. "Your Daily Walk with the Great Minds" by Richard A. Singer, Jr. offers a daily guide and disciplined way to allow the wisdom of the past and present to wash over us, allowing the reader to enter his inner spiritual world and to reflect on how he responds to this wisdom. This book can transform your life, especially if you accept the daily discipline of reading, relaxing, and reflecting on the words.

Your Daily Walk... is packed with the wisdom of great minds, from Dale Carnegie to Anton Chekhov, from great thinkers like Euripides to Ralph Waldo Emerson to Einstein to Thomas Edison. It gives us the thoughts of Henry David Thoreau to Harriet Beecher Stowe. We follow the ideas of great poets from Walt Whitman to Robert Frost. This gem of a book moves us through the diversity of words from people such as Henry Ford, Sigmund Freud, Vince Lombardi, Mahatmas Gandhi, Aristotle, Augustine, Martin Luther King, Jr., Abraham Lincoln, St. Augustine, Mother Teresa and John Paul Sartre. It encompasses the wisdom of writers as diverse as Hindu and Buddhist texts, the Jewish Talmud, and philosophers ranging from Lao-Tzu and Confucius to Milton Berle.

The wisdom encapsulated in this book can transform your life, especially if you soak in the words and practice the daily discipline of journaling and meditation, as the book allows. This is a gem filled with daily opportunities to grow, for its words are true. They will resonate with your head, heart, and soul.

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*This book is dedicated to all of humanity.
Each human being that walks this earth is just
as valuable and precious as the next.*

Introduction

"Words are the physicians for the mind diseased."