

ALI 369: The Spiritual
Journey: A Practical Approach

How would you define
spirituality?

The heart is the
sanctuary of Allah so
do not settle in it
anything other than
Allah

Imam as-Sadiq (a)

Definitions of Spirituality

- Becoming a purer and more natural human being
- Quest for personal growth
- Achieving closeness to God
- Searching for meaning in religious rituals
- Connecting with the inner dimensions

Approaches to Spirituality

1) As an internal struggle

To fight the enemy within, the nafs Ammarah which inclines towards wrong. This is the major jihad.

It is the struggle against wrong thoughts and ideas, desires, anger, and insatiable imagination, and putting them under the dictates of reason and faith in obedience to God's commands.

From the Whispered Prayer of the Complainers

My God, to Thee I complain of a soul
commanding to evil, rushing to offences
eager to disobey Thee,
and exposing itself to Thy anger.

It takes me on the roads of disasters,
it makes me the easiest of perishers before Thee;
many its pretexes, drawn out its expectations;
when evil touches it, it is anxious,
when good touches it, grudging;
inclining to sport and diversion,
full of heedlessness and inattention,
it hurries me to misdeeds
and makes me delay repentance.

The struggle within is difficult because;

a) Love of self

b) Harder to self scrutinize and criticize

c) A continuous battle

d) Easy to compromise and settle

A Prayer from the Prophet (s)

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَكِلْنِي إِلَىٰ نَفْسِي طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ
أَبَدًا مَا أَحْيَيْتَنِي

O Allah do not leave me to myself
even for a brief moment
[the blinking of an eye]
so long as I am alive

2) As a Medicine

Souls become sick just like bodies.

Spirituality is the cure for a sick soul.

The Prophet was a like a roaming physician who has set ready his ointments and heated his instruments. He uses them wherever the need arises for curing blind hearts, deaf ears, and dumb tongues. He followed with his medicines the spots of negligence and places of perplexity.

Nahjul Balagha, Khutba 108

3) As a Journey

Human beings are on a journey towards God. This is termed as 'Sayr wa sulook'.

The desire to travel - when a human being realizes the insignificance of this world and the everlasting beauty of the other world.

The Direction - The need to identify the right path for travel. Once it is identified it is necessary to stick to it and not be distracted.

The Destination - God is the ultimate destination. Being close to God, having pleased God, witnessing His Magnificence . . . are all the goals of the journey.