

## The Best You Can Be

April 14, 2019

At some point in my life I saw the value in turning from *doing* the best I could, toward *being* the best I can. Sounds like the right thing to shoot for, doesn't it? Well, I'm here to tell you that's not the final equation in the formula for a happy, purposeful life.

We're often told by well-meaning, compassionate people to "Do the best you can." It's meant to encourage, of course, frequently offered as an antidote to the other messages that exhort us to win at all costs.

It seems benign, and I suppose it is, but by leaning on these messages to "do the best we can," we're missing the bigger picture. By hauling ourselves from one measure of success to another by doing the best we can, we're shorting ourselves in the human race to contentment, purpose, and prosperity — all those intangibles meant to bring us joy.

"The best" is a moving target because our stamina and drive shifts from day to day, and the strengths and accomplishments of the rest of humanity are so fluid you can be on top one day and at the bottom the next.

Personally I've followed an increasingly distinct understanding of success measures. As a kid, then as a young adult, right up through recent years I followed the real-world trajectory of first doing the best in my school, on my sports teams, in my art classes; then transitioning to a more - let's call it New Age- self-loving idea of success, which was going after my personal best.

I worked diligently on doing my personal best as a psychic and medium. I strove to do my best in achieving health solutions on my own body. I worked hard with my dog on Competition Obedience to do the best we could at the trials. I even began to do the best I could in my relationships. I began deliberate practice on specific areas, intending to have a solid awareness of where I was so I could measure my improvement. All in the name of doing my personal best. I long ago saw the futility in trying to be the best medium *ever*, the best dog trainer *ever*. So personal best, achieved through honest effort and giving 100% *should have* brought me satisfaction.

More recently I shifted even my language away from the notion of *doing* my best to *being* my best. I thought that would help, and it did to an extent. I reminded myself of that handy New Age phrase: I'm a human being, not a human doing.

I wanted to be the best medium I could be. I wanted to be the best trustee on the Library Board, and the best girlfriend, and the best daughter, sister and friend. And yet, with the benefit of hindsight, I can see that all of that "being" really came right back to "doing."

Recently I heard a very wise teacher say, “Stop trying to be the best medium and focus on loving God.” She said, “Don’t worry about your mediumship, or your relationships, or your work. You can’t move away from your destiny, so relax and enjoy where you are, and pray to connect with Spirit.”

Wait, what?

Stop trying to be the best medium I can be? Stop trying to provide the best experience for my clients?

This is antithetical to everything I’ve learned about being alive in the world. And yet...

I thought about this prayer that I pray every night. It’s called the Suscipe: (Latin for “receive”)

Take Lord and receive all of my Liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will. All that I have and call my own. You have given all to me, and to you Lord I return it. Everything is yours. Do with it as you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.

That was written by St Ignatius Loyola who founded the Jesuit Order. He’s known for writing the The Spiritual Exercise, which are a set of meditations and contemplations of the life of Christ, and something Jesuits still follow to this day. The point of the Exercises is to rid oneself of all disordered attachments, so that once rid of them one might seek and find the divine will in regard to the disposition of one’s life.

In other words, Priscilla, stop trying to be the best medium you can be and attend to your soul.

Let go of the attachments of worldly success and acquisition, even if that is built entirely around service to others, as I consider my mediumship to be. As my teacher said, “You can’t move away from your destiny — or as St. Ignatius saw it, the divine will in regard to living ones life.”

The Suscipe prayer is acceptance of this divine will. We ask in praying it, to help us stop doing the best we can, and to be open to God’s will instead. What a powerful prayer.

Even though I grew up in a Catholic household and received all of the sacraments and attended religious education and mass every weekend; even though I went to a Jesuit college, I think I never really knew how to pray.

I can recite all the prayers of my childhood, but I can’t say for sure that I’ve ever really been praying.

I don’t know what God feels like. I think I’ve experienced moments when the clouds parted ever so briefly and I felt as though I’d touched the very edge of something extraordinarily loving, but it’s been so elusive I can hardly recall it.

Last October I went to the Holy Land for the second time. I went with my mother's Catholic church for a ten-day religious tour of places where Jesus walked, healed, and performed miracles. The greatest miracle of all was spending all that time with my mother, God Bless her. We did beautifully until the very last day, proving to me I can spend exactly nine days with my mother God Bless her, and not a second longer.

I felt a little closer to God there, walking on 1st century flag stones and dipping my toes in the Sea of Galilee. And since I returned I've been "doing my best" to pray for a deeper relationship with God.

You see, I'm a person of strong flavors. I prefer dark, heavy beer you can chew; earthy red wines; strong coffee; spicy food. Subtleties often bewilder me. I work with them all the time, particularly in mediumship, but at least in mediumship I can give subtle evidence that is validated strongly.

I can say, Your father is here with his one leg and his gold watch and his happy nature, and you can say "Yes." So the subtleties are made real by your validation.

But what about God? It's hard to get that kind of validation, isn't it? I pray every night before bed, the Suscipe — take everything I think I know about myself and life, and instead give me your love and your grace.

Upon reflection of these wise words, I wonder if I'm not really willing to give up my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will... because I'm STILL trying to be the best I can be at whatever I'm doing.

There's nothing wrong with my endeavors, but if my desire is to know God, and it is, I'm drawing from the wrong well.

Like many people, I panic a little bit when I have to give something up. Remember the story in Matthew, Chapter 19 of the wealthy young man who comes up to Jesus and says that he wants to know God, he already follows all of the ten commandments, what else can he do?

And Jesus replies:

If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me."...<sup>22</sup>When the young man heard this, he went away in sorrow, because he had great wealth."

I get that. Part of me is actually afraid to surrender entirely to the will of God.

From the obvious such as, “how will I pay my mortgage?” to the more subtle, what will all my friends think about me if I turn into a holy roller. Because we’ve all met those people...

Because I don’t know what God feels like, I don’t know what simply being God’s child is going to feel like, so I hang on to what my rational mind tells me is true. And because I do that, I hold onto the measurable rewards that come from our human understanding of success. Happy clients, contributing to society, paying bills, etc.

I can’t let go of this idea, however, to focus my energies, my endeavors on connecting to Spirit. Get to know God, first. Be a child of the Great Spirit, first. Seek the Kingdom of Heaven, first. It’s not a new idea, but somehow, it’s only in my recent experience with my teacher, I grasped the intent of it.

I practice my mediumship every day, with my clients of course, but also with fellow mediums and with my own guides and inspirers in spirit. I ask them every day, help me to be better, to do a better job of representing you, of telling your story.

I don’t want to stop that, but I am going to start praying a little differently. The kind of prayer that doesn’t require validation, or evidence that I’m making progress as a better medium. I’m just going to pray.

Here in the Spiritualist tradition we sit for healing. We sit in the power, without asking or judging. This is the kind of prayer that leads away from the common and seductive drive to do and be the best, and towards the only well-spring of perfection.

Consider Matthew 6:26:

Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your Heavenly Creator feeds them. Are not you more important than they?

From this we’re assured that God knows and cares about all of our needs. God takes care of the birds and flowers, so surely we will be taken care of as well. We’re assured of the perfect and intimate love that God has for us and reminds us of our inherent worth in God’s eyes.

The Great Spirit knows every single thing about us and loves us. Is it possible, instead of trying to *be* or *do* the best, that we revel in the love that proves beyond all doubt that we *are* already the best?

When writing about the immeasurable love of God that is bestowed upon all of creation, Ignatius suggests the Suscipe prayer for, as he put it, the “contemplation for attaining love.”

He writes, “Then I will reflect upon myself...what I ought to offer the Divine Majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it.”

And as I read and reread Ignatius Loyola and the Spiritual Exercises, I began to comprehend, just a little bit, what it means to be the best for the Great Spirit. I think I got a handle on how to do that, that kind of prayer.

Ignatius also wrote:

I will ponder with great affection how much ... our Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees.

By the grace of God, our Great Spirit, I begin to understand my prayers now, and how to pray for the only thing necessary for happiness, prosperity, love, fulfillment and lasting contentment. I begin how to pray, just by being ME, trusting that I will be lead, from there, to my own destiny, to the Great Spirit's divine plan and will for me.

Please pray with me:

Receive, Great Spirit, all my liberty. Take my memory, understanding, and entire will. Whatever I have or possess you have given me; I restore it all to you, and surrender it wholly to be governed by your will. Give me love for you alone along with your grace, and I am rich enough, and ask for nothing more.

Great Spirit, you meet the needs of all creation. Be with us today and help us to be a sign of your love to others.

Amen