

Virtue Note

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ABSTAINENCE

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Abstinence is disassociating from or renouncing a particular thought pattern, practice, or lifestyle that has come to be regarded as immoral, or unhealthy (such as an indulgence that cannot be moderated). A common goal of abstinence is to discourage and eventually prevent physical, emotional, and mental energy from being used for immoral or unhealthy purposes, and instead re-direct and re-channel such energy along pathways associated with spiritual goals. Abstinence can be accomplished through abrupt severance from and permanent avoidance of All associated with a particular practice or lifestyle, but is more commonly accomplished through a careful monitoring process that slowly but surely phases out the undesirable behavior. Since all our actions are deeply rooted in our unconscious or conscious thoughts and desires, the temporary practice of abstinence can help identify our particular patterns of thoughts and desires, and how we can change them. Naturally, abstinence is best practiced in the company of kindred souls— people also committed to practicing their moral, religious, or spiritual beliefs— where one can find sympathy, encouragement, and support. As people strengthen their contact with Divine Grace, they will naturally abstain from all that pulls them away.

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SERENITY

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Serenity is the composure of spirit and unshakeable steadiness of mind that comes from the awareness or realization of Spiritual Truth. A serene person continually experiences calmness and clarity, as his mind is unruffled, unclouded, and undisturbed. Such a person can move through all varieties of annoyance, provocation, adversity, pain, suffering, and disaster— and all varieties of sympathy, kindness, beauty, truth, peace, and love— with what seems to be infinite patience and faith, and still continue to be completely focused on carrying out his duties and responsibilities. This is because such a person is in constant communion with Divine Grace. Sensory desires and ego desires are unreliable motives for thoughts, words, and deeds. Being attached to the satisfaction of such desires does not lead to serenity; it only locks the mind's focus into activities with uncertain or temporary outcomes. Serenity cannot be attained by the everlasting addition of activities with uncertain or temporary outcomes. Serenity can be attained when one becomes indifferent to the bubblings of the senses and the ego— and instead dedicated to carrying out all prescribed duties and responsibilities in accordance with Spiritual Truth. Then, all internal and external experiences are perceived to be the Perpetual Flowering of Divine Effulgence— an Inscrutable Grace that permeates All— and no one moment is more or less Graceful than the next.

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PURITY

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Purity is a complete identification with and actualization of what is true and virtuous conduct, in thought, word, and deed. External purity includes purity of the body through bath, healthy diet, etc., clean and modest dress, a utilitarian household, and an ecologically-sound lifestyle in a spiritually aware community. External purity is a natural consequence of internal purity. Internal purity is purity of thoughts, feelings, motives, and conduct. Internal purity requires careful observation and much practice. Religious and spiritual principles and moral codes of conduct have been received through Divine Revelation, and have been accessible for milleniums. When one has faith in such principles, and is completely immersed in practicing them— in thought, word, and deed— one merges with the Being, Awareness, and Bliss of Divine Grace.

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REVERENCE

In the presence of natural phenomena, such as ocean waves, lightning, solar eclipses, and etc. , we sometimes experience a sense of the miraculous, as if we are momentarily in sacred communion with the Source from which all this multiplicity of names and forms emanates. We also experience this sense of the miraculous when exceptional events occur in human affairs: such as birth, death, extraordinary efforts in disaster relief, etc.— and when in the Presence of a Spiritually Enlightened Individual. During such moments, it is wise and appropriate to carefully and conscientiously observe the most proper attitudes and behavior. In most people, it is also natural— and even instinctual— to express profound respect, admiration, and reverence for that which is transcendent in its manifestation of Divine Truth. Spiritually Enlightened Individuals have attained the awareness that All Beings and All Experiences are equally miraculous manifestations of Divine Truth.

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SILENCE

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Silence is the absence of sound. One of the reasons people enjoy being in the mountains, in a forest, or by a lake is because of the absence of sound there, and the resulting sense of stillness and peace. In solitude and silence it is easier to feel the Presence of God. That is why most people seek a quiet, secluded environment when they pray. When relating with other people, silence is a form of wisdom, as by exercising silence one can avoid unnecessary discussions, disagreements, and disputes— and a variety of other forms of entanglements. Silence is also a form of courtesy. How many times have we thought to ourselves: how can I concentrate, relax, sleep, etc. when other people are making so much noise? Keeping this in mind, we should carry out our responsibilities in life as quietly as possible. Silence also allows us to perceive the way the mind generates thoughts and desires. Having fewer and fewer selfish thoughts and desires leads to inner peace, and mergence with God. Silence thus conserves energy, contributes to social harmony, and brings us all closer to God.

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WISDOM

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The most valuable lesson anyone will ever learn is how to love. From years of being in the company of God-oriented people, being receptive to Divine Guidance, being disciplined in practice, and being thoughtful in evaluating experience, the wise person has attained a fully established Awareness of the Truth about Love. A wise person Knows that God is Love, and that God is the Source and Substance of All that ever was, All that is now, and All that ever will be. A wise person thus has Perfect Faith in God's Divine Omnipresence, a Most Natural and Heartfelt Willingness to Love All and Serve All— and no taint of desire for the fruits or consequences of any Thought, Word, or Deed thereof. A wise person has learned how to be an instrument of God's Grace. A wise person is also aware that inner harmony is disturbed when the mind lets itself be lured into indiscriminantly sampling the world of phenomena. Therefore, while a wise person consistently manifests courtesy and reverence for All, he is naturally careful and conscientious in attending to even the smallest and seemingly most insignificant details associated with his duties and responsibilities. He thus participates in the Divine Story as an instrument of God's Grace, with no need for recognition or aversion to disaster.

WISDOM

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LOVE

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Love is God, God is Love. Where there is Love, there, God is certainly evident. Your task is to recognize the Spring of Love within, develop its possibilities, rely on it more and more; to see with the eyes of Love, hear with the ears of Love, work with the hands of Love; to feel Love in every cell and energy channel; to Love because your very nature is Love. But do not seek the fruits or consequences of any Thought, Word, or Deed thereof— do not seek anything in return from those to whom you extend Love; for when the Grace of Love flows through you, they are no longer your acts. Love is the highest miracle God can manifest. God can do anything. Let God manifest the Miracle of Love where “you” used to be.

LOVE