

Spiritually Speaking

Prayer is a relationship; half the job is mine. If I want transformation, but can't even be bothered to articulate what, exactly, I'm aiming for, how will it ever occur? Half the benefit of prayer is in the asking itself, in the offering of a clearly posed and well-considered intention. If you don't have this, all your pleas and desires are boneless, floppy, inert; they swirl at your feet in a cold fog and never lift. So now I take the time every morning to search myself for specificity about what I am truly asking for. I kneel there in the temple with my face on that cold marble for as long as it takes me to formulate an authentic prayer. If I don't feel sincere, then I will stay there on the floor until I do. What worked yesterday doesn't always work today. Prayers can become stale and drone into the boring and familiar if you let your intentions stagnate. In making an effort to stay alert I am assuring custodial responsibility for the maintenance of my own soul.

Destiny, I feel, is also a relationship -- a play between divine grace, and willful self effort. Half of it you have no control over; half of it is absolutely in your hands, and your actions will show measurable consequences. Man is neither entirely a puppet of the gods, nor is he entirely the captain of his own destiny; he is a little of both. We gallop through our lives like circus performers balancing on two speeding side-by-side horses -- one foot is on the horse called 'fate' the other is on the horse called 'free will'. And the question you have to ask everyday is -- which horse is which? Which horse do I need to stop worrying about because it's not under my control, and which horse do I need to steer with concentrated effort?

There is so much about my fate that I cannot control, but other things do fall under my jurisdiction. There are certain lottery tickets I can buy, thereby increasing my odds of finding contentment. I can decide how I spend my time, with whom I interact with, whom I share my body and life and money and energy with. I can select what I eat and read and study. I can choose how I am going to regard unfortunate circumstances in my lifetime whether I will see them as curses or opportunities (and on the occasions when I can't rise to the most optimistic viewpoint, because I am feeling too damn sorry for myself, I can choose to keep trying to change my outlook). I can choose my words, the tone of my voice in which I speak to others. and most of all, I can choose my thoughts.

“Eat,Pray,Love”

by Elizabeth Gilbert pg 77

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