

The Keys to the Kingdom
Eight Spiritual Practices That Will Transform Your Life
by Paul Ferrini

- 1) Love Yourself – Am I loving yourself right now? (The most important question of all)
 - a) In what way are you not loving yourself?
 - b) In what way are you not holding your experience gently and compassionately? You cannot bring love to yourself in an unloving way or it is not love that you bring.
 - c) In what way are you beating yourself up, crucifying yourself, and condemning yourself?
 - d) How can you bring love and compassion to the things you beat yourself up for and how can you even bring love to the act of beating yourself up? How can you be more present for yourself in a more gentle way? Notice your breathing and open your Heart more compassionately.
 - e) In co-dependent love we usually depend on others to love us and show up for us. This is like building on quicksand. We set ourselves up for disappointment. How can you learn to love yourself from the inside out and know that you are okay even if others are unable to love you and show up for you?
 - f) You are the bringer of love. Your love is the key. You are the initiator. How can you offer more love to yourself, which is the best way for the power of love to express in your life?
 - g) There is no moment when you are not connected to the Source of Love. How can you better see that your job is to be still and open your Heart so that you can feel the connection?
- 2) Be Yourself – Is this in harmony with Who I am?
 - a) In what way are you not being yourself? We need to live our own life, support ourselves, and make our own choices.
 - b) In what ways are you showing up the way others expect you to, with your mask so you can get love and approval? In what way are you showing up completely identified as your shadow self, thinking you're bad and horrible, identifying with your darkness and not seeing the Light behind it? You cannot be yourself if you are trying to please others, allowing others to influence your decisions or in any other way giving your power to them.
 - c) In what ways are you afraid to be who you are, to be seen and heard?
 - d) In what ways can you encourage others more to live their own lives, support themselves, and make their own choices? You cannot be yourself if you are withholding support from others, trying to influence them, or in any other way trying to take their power away.
 - e) Are you caring too much about what others think about you and your life and what you think about theirs? This is irrelevant at best and intrusive and controlling at worst. When you stay out of the lives of others, you can be fully present in your own. The reverse is true for them. In all interactions with others, equality and mutual respect are the goals.
 - f) Work with the question "Is this in harmony with Who I am?" to honor yourself and be authentic, you are doing your part to create a more gentle and harmonious world.
- 3) Be Responsible – Am I owning everything I think, say, feel, and do?
 - a) We need to be responsible for our lives, so in what ways are you showing up as a victim, blaming others, shaming others, and refusing to take responsibility for what you think, what you say, how you feel, and what you do?
 - b) Are you willing to own the entire contents of your consciousness and your entire experience?
 - c) Are you owning your mistakes and learning from them, being responsible for your life? Without responsibility there is no power to create. You might think it is no big deal to admit your mistakes and learn from them. But it is a very big deal. For most of us it is a defining moment. You are responsible for everything you feel and everything you believe to be true. You are responsible for the words that you say and the things that you do. No one else is responsible for any of it.
 - d) Are you shaming and blaming others? This only deepens your own pain. What stops you from choosing more and more not to do it? Are you willing to give up the idea that anyone else is responsible for your happiness or lack of it? Also, others are responsible for their own thoughts, feelings, words and actions. You are not responsible for the creations of others. Don't take on a false responsibility. Let others be responsible for their own experiences.
- 4) Be Honest – Am I telling my truth and listening to the truth of others?
 - a) Are you honest with yourself?

- b) Do you listen for the truth in your Heart of Hearts? To hear the truth, you must listen for it. Truth always comes when you silently sit with something long enough.
- c) Are you able to get down beneath the chatter of the mind to what is really true for you?
- d) To what extent do you listen for what is true for others? Can you accept what is true for others even if you don't agree with it, to accept it as their experience? Listen to others so that they feel heard and accepted. Don't add your two cents. Don't judge, criticize, evaluate or give unsolicited feedback. Are you able to accept that their experience is as legitimate as your own? We don't have to be the judge of their experience and they don't have to be the judge of ours. When we know something to be deeply and profoundly true, even when it's difficult to acknowledge it, are you willing to acknowledge it first to myself and then to the others that are involved, or do I try to hide the truth or sweep it under the carpet or try to hide it because it might stir things up?
- e) Telling the truth is an act of courage. It enables us to find a deeper intimacy with each other.
- f) When truth is not honored as part of an organic process, it erupts suddenly, unexpectedly. People are hurt, abandoned, or betrayed. That is the price of denial.
- g) There is a right time to speak the truth and a wrong time to speak it. There is a right way to speak the truth and a wrong way to speak it.
- h) When you speak your truth use the language of love. The language of love supports, understands and respects. It uplifts others. It does not put them down.
- i) Ask others for acceptance, not agreement. Love is not based on agreement. It is based on acceptance and mutual respect.

5) Walk Your Talk – Am I willing to show up, even if it is hard?

- a) To what extent do you keep your word when you say you will do something? When you say you will be there to what extent do you follow through? You can't be on a spiritual path if you are always making excuses for why you can't show up. You can't be a spiritual student if you aren't willing to learn to walk your talk. And you can't be a model for others if you don't keep your commitments.
- b) To what extent are you reliable so that you are credible to yourself and to others, so that you can trust yourself and can be trusted by others? You get to decide whether or not to keep your word and fulfill the promises that you make. You decide whether you are trustworthy or not. No one else can force you to show up when you don't want to.
- c) If you have trouble showing up, are you willing to shift in the opposite direction, so that your actions can speak louder than your words? Watch out for grandiosity, it is insincere and misleading. Don't make promises you can't keep. Scale down the talk and beef up the walk. Promise less. Deliver more.
- d) If you make promises that you cannot keep, to what extent do you acknowledge it and learn from your mistake so that you don't make those kinds of promises again, so that you are more modest and tempered in what you say, more present to the truth? We promise what we can do and follow through with it.
- e) The question is "Can you show up when you don't want to?" That's the fifty million dollar question. It's easy to show up when you want to, it's when you don't want to that you are tested and show your true character.

6) Follow Your Heart – Is this what I really want to do?

- a) Are you in touch with your desire, with your joy? Your desire is the energy source that moves you. Learn to value it and connect with it. Knowing what you want and acting on it is not selfish. It is self-actualizing and brings energy and joy first to yourself, and then to others.
- b) Do you live in sacrifice, doing what others want you to do or what you think you are "supposed to do", or do you really let yourself feel the desire of your heart? Do you do what is really important to you and take those risks you want to take and express yourself creatively? Sacrifice and struggle are the yardstick for failure. Joy and abundance are the measure of success.
- c) To what extent do you take the path less travelled in your life as opposed to taking a path that others would have you take so you can get their love and approval? To what extent do you hold yourself back because you are afraid to take risks, are afraid to be seen, or are afraid to let go of the security? And what's happening now in your life, are you holding yourself back or are you trusting your Heart in moving forward toward your joy, giving your gifts, feeling good about your life, experiencing your power, to be fully present in your work and in your relationships, living from your Heart? Be faithful and committed to yourself. Nurture and express your creative talents and gifts. Let yourself bloom and shine. That is why you are here.
- d) In what ways do you betray yourself, forcing yourself to do what you don't want to do?
- e) How can you honor yourself more, giving yourself permission to have what you want and need?

7) Be At Peace – Can I do this without stressing myself out?

a) To what extent are you really centered in your Heart and really patient with your life, allowing it to unfold naturally without putting a lot of pressure on yourself, even for those things you are really passionate about, that really are the desires of your Heart?

b) Ask yourself the question, “Can you do this without stressing myself out, can you do this in a peaceful way?” Or do you put so much pressure on yourself and others that that following the desire of your Heart becomes an incredibly stressful affair and ultimately leads to failure because you are doing what you love to do but you are not doing it in a loving way? What we do and the way we do it must be cohesive. Doing what we love to do in a stressful way is not a loving way of being and it’s not a peaceful way of being. Are you asking BOTH questions – “Is this what you really want to do, is this the desire of your Heart?” and if the answer is yes, “Can you do it in a peaceful way?” Only then do you speak and act. If the answer is no, do you refrain from speaking or acting until you can do so, in alignment with your Heart and in a peaceful way. Refrain from acting in a way that brings pressure and stress to yourself and others. Acting and refraining from acting should have equal weight in your practice. If it is not for your highest good and for the higher good of others, do not do it. Do and say what is helpful. Refrain from doing or saying what is harmful.

c) Are you patient with your process of unfolding? Do you allow the Universe to support you or do you try to make it happen?

d) Do you use the Serenity Prayer regularly?

8) Stay Present – Am I forgiving the past and allowing the future to unfold?

a) Are you staying in this moment, are you staying present for myself and others, staying alert, being the Witness, neither attaching to what happens nor pushing it away, but just watching it, experiencing it, understanding the patterns that are there, and not reaching to them?

b) Are you being emotionally present in your life, not driven by what happened in the past or preoccupied by what might happen in the future, but staying right here and right now?

All these Keys to the Kingdom are within. They are all available to us. When we see we are not using them, we are not being patient, when we are not connecting with what’s true for us, when we are putting pressure, we are acting out of harmony with who we are, trying to please others or take care of others, we have only to become aware of what we are doing, and remember the key that sets us free. Each one of these eight keys sets us free to be who we are, to rest in a state of love for ourselves and others, to live the life that we have come here to live, authentically. Very simple, very clear. It’s all about practice. We don’t practice, we don’t get results. The more we practice the more we sink into our Hearts, sink into our lives and become the embodiment of love. All that is dwells in this moment. When we dwell with it, we know that Love is who we are, we are not separate from our True Self, we are not separate from our brothers or sisters, we are not separate from God, we are both witness and participant, we are the bringer of love and the one who receives it.