



The “*Light of Wisdom*” magazine: 14 Questions for Jack Hawley...

*Dr. Jack Hawley, a well known author of spiritual books, was passing through our country a few months ago. His schedule was already full, but he graciously agreed to respond to our questions. Dr. Hawley heads an American management consultant consortium that brings new energy, heart, and spirit to large organizations throughout the world. Jack and his wife Louise spend six months every year living, learning, and lecturing on the spiritual principles contained in his books. These are his responses exclusively to **The Light of Wisdom**.*

LW: Dr. Hawley, what do you mean when you say “I don't have a missionary bone in my body. I'm a bringer of helpful ideas”?

JH: That I have no need to convince anybody of anything. As the old aphorism goes, “I have no ax to grind.” I am not a salesman for any set of beliefs. I'm not “on the make,” as they say. I do, however, revere truth. I love kindness, fairness and justice between human beings, and I greatly value peace of mind. I'm certain that many of these principles from ancient India would be good for Westerners to know, and this knowing would be good for the whole world as well. Indeed, the only way to peace of mind—and peace in the outer world—is spirituality. That is the great gift of spirituality.

LW: How can our work be an expression of spirituality?

JH: Mainly through strengthening the five basic human values at work: Truth, Right Action, Peace (inner peace), Love, and Non-harmfulness toward others. Imagine a workplace saturated with these! Each individual can practice these values within him or herself no matter where they are, even if the culture of their work place is generally not supportive. Those in positions of responsibility can be more openly deliberate in their practice, and persons in leadership positions at the top of the organization need to more explicitly affirm these values. But don't wait for them. The key point is that everyone, regardless of their place in the hierarchy, can live a spiritual life whether at work or anyplace else.



LW: Do you think that spirituality and love has been the dimension that is studied the least and the most difficult to openly discuss in the context of work?

JH: Yes, and it is not that these important things are merely overlooked, it’s an active evasion of them. People are embarrassed about *Love* especially. They get it mixed up with lust or desire. They think of it as merely an emotion, as only a relationship between two human egos. *Love is* those things at the worldly level, but at the spiritual level it’s far, far more than that. It’s energy, a powerful force. *Love* at this high level is not only important, it’s imperative.

LW: Is an interest in the spiritual aspect of wellness at work growing worldwide?

JH: Perhaps. My book *Reawakening the Spirit In Work: The Power of Dharmic Management* was, as far as I know, the first book title that referred to “spirit” and “work.” Published in 1993, it gradually caught on, and eventually became a bestseller. Now, I understand there are scores of books that relate to this subject. This *Reawakening the Spirit* book is still in print in the U.S., which is rare in this era of fast turnover of books. It’s messages seem to defy time. People throughout the world are still translating it into their languages and reading it. Does this signal a groundswell of spirituality in the workplace? I don’t think so, but it does reflect a higher interest in these timeless and important considerations at work—and I think it reflects a changing consciousness throughout the world. More and more smart managers are seeking to create a life at work that not only finds new ways to be more effective, but reflects their own inner needs and hopes, as well.

LW: How to introduce, channel, and better use spirituality in the workplace to enhance wellness?

JH: In the West, the term *wellness*, especially when used in connection with *workplace* connotes the promotion of the physical well being of workers. It’s a good and smart thing to do, and in some cases concern for workers’ health is of the same family tree as spiritual values, but I do not consider this to be a main aim of spirituality.

I’m apprehensive that people will begin using spirituality as a method or strategy for enhancing worldly things. Ramakrishna, the renowned Indian saint of the late 1800s, explained spirituality this way: “Using spiritual means to achieve worldly ends is *not* spirituality; using worldly means to achieve spiritual ends *is* spirituality.” It is important today to understand that spirituality at work is *not* just another way to manipulate workers to work harder. Increased productivity may be a byproduct of spiritual values at work, but it is certainly not the purpose of it.



LW: How can we increase a holistic approach to work, integrate the spiritual and the material sides of life into the work?

JH: First, just acknowledge that both the spiritual and material sides coexist. Convey to people that spiritual aspects of life are legitimate topics for them to think about and factor into their work and their lives. Second, trust that a balanced, whole person (i.e., holistic person) is indeed a good thing to become—and a good thing to foster, advance and encourage at work. Third, know that if you do this merely to enhance profits your effort will probably fail. Do it because humans are both spiritual *and* worldly beings. Do it because you know that people need to live a more balanced existence in a more spiritually balanced world.

LW: Which are the key characteristics of selfless service at work?

JH: Selfless service is helping others with no ax to grind, no strings attached, no expectations of reward. It's helping others just because they need help, or simply because helping others is a good thing to do in this world. That's what selfless service is. After awhile it becomes a way of life, a magnificent and sacred obsession. As your world changes, the world around you improves. Lasting, happiness enters.

LW: How can our lives and work become conscious expressions of joyous service?

JH: First, clearly fix in mind that “joyous service” is good, not only for your self but for the whole world. Secondly, be certain that joyous service is an active, not a passive process. You have to reach out and do it rather than just wait for it to come. Love is the basis for selfless service. The quickest, surest, best way to express your love is not to talk about it or wish for it, but to serve others! People understand love when it's acted out as true helpfulness. The workplace is replete with opportunities for non-selfish serving.

LW: What will be the future of management?

JH: Be very clear: *management* is a needed and important function in today's world. Managers will have to work ever-harder to keep up with the demands and technology of their art. But even as I say that, especially in your part of the world, I want to make it clear that management is not a mystical state, but is largely common sense with some added knowledge, technology, sensitivity, and spirit in it.

My guess is that management will rightly move more and more toward leadership, which is also a legitimate and needed role in society. The key point for both managers and leaders is this: Your jobs are not just worldly, they're spiritual! Why? Because to do them well you have to get things done through other people—and to do that well you have to seek and release the best in them. That's a *spiritual* process. You have to help your people be better, happier, healthier human beings—not just at their jobs, in life as a whole.



LW: Why do you find the Gita to be a source of profound inspiration?

JH: I love the *Bhagavad Gita* because of the truth and guidance it offers me. As I said in one of my books:

“Like water that gradually filters down through earth and comes out fresh and pure, important ideas also pass down through the sands of time and get cleansed in the process, eventually emerging, eons later, as pure truth. The world’s most ancient scripture, the timeless Bhagavad Gita, India’s greatest gift to the entire world, is by now a veritable fountain of pure truth.”

I love being able to bring these wondrous, ancient yet timeless teachings to humanity, and feel extremely privileged to do this work.

LW: How can these ancient teachings help us to chart our course to self-realization?

JH: That’s a wonderful question! The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches us four essentials: a) **to Know**—that is, to find the real truth of ourselves, that we are far, far more than we think we are; b) **to Act**—that working, doing good in the world, can be the best way to self-realization; c) **to Love**—to understand that love is not a mere emotion but the most powerful force in creation; d) **to Be**—that is, to exist and be present a certain way in the world—unperturbed, unaffected, able to navigate through life at a higher level of consciousness. Knowing, working, loving, and being in these ways results in adding our light to the sum of light in the world.

[Please go to my website <www.GitaWalkthrough.com> and click on any of the downloadable articles, especially “*Permanent Cheerfulness*” and “*23 Reasons to Love the Gita*,” for a much more thorough answer to this important question.]

LW: Do you find Sathya Sai Baba to be your great inspiration?

JH: I have been journeying to, and living in India for almost 30 years. While there, I constantly, incessantly, unremittingly study and *practice* spirituality. I do this day and night, and then dream about it. I eat it. I drink it. I research it, and write books about it. (I ended up reading close to 40,000 pages of Gita commentary so I could understand the intricacies of its teachings and clearly put them into a modern Western language.) I and my wife are both absorbed in spirituality, as well as being extremely busy bringing these principles all over the world.

To answer your question about whether I find Sai Baba an inspiration: For much of the past 20 years I have sat within 15 meters of his door, watching and learning. It is my measured, carefully considered



opinion that Sai Baba *is* Inspiration itself! He *is* Truth itself! This entity called Sathya Sai Baba (literally “Truth-Mother/Father”) *is* indeed Love itself!

I know this sounds a bit strange and overly poetic at first hearing, and I am neither poet nor philosopher. I’m just a worldly man who has become a student of spirituality. But if we all think seriously and deeply about it, we—all merely normal human beings—discover that we too are Love, Truth, and Inspiration.

The reason we yearn for these things is because in our innermost beings we *are* those qualities! At some rare, higher level of awareness those qualities are our very nature. We may have grown distant from them and forgotten them, but they are the very source from which we all spring. Removed though we may be from this, our basic nature, we are all at some deep inner level certain of it. We are attracted to these godly qualities because of our own godliness. These qualities are in fact not distant or forgotten, but dwell within us as we sit here now.

LW: How can we distinguish religion from spirituality?

JH: This is an extremely important question in today’s contentious world. It’s a difficult one to clarify because of the widespread tendency to take sides at the tiniest provocation. Let’s attempt to deal with it in a balanced, truthful manner.

To paraphrase Sai Baba: “*The person who says bad things about another’s religion does not understand the real teachings of his or her own religion.*”

The distinction between religion and spirituality, as in most *religio-spiritual* matters, is subtle. When you look closely enough to truly see, to genuinely understand and appreciate both *religion* and *spirituality*—something very magical happens. The perceived gap separating them seems to dissolve! It just vanishes! But this level of open, careful examining requires a dramatic shift away from strict adherence to one’s religious teachings. That option is a leap most people can’t or won’t take.

In a sense, the option “to leap or not to leap” *is* the difference between the two. Some religious people hold fast to their religion’s teachings; other religious people seek to move beyond the teachings toward a clearer understanding of what the tenets mean to them personally. The term *spirituality* is often used today to describe this shift beyond regular religion.

To say that religious people are not spiritual would be unreasonable. And likewise, to assume that spiritual people are not religious would be too simple.



Although in most respects there is not a basic difference between religion and spirituality, there is a distinction between them in people’s minds. The ordinary religious person and average spiritual person *perceive* a gap, and thus a fissure magically appears.

I gave an assignment relative to this rift to a group of bright MBA students at the university in India (which I described in my *Reawakening the Spirit* book). I asked them to help me “tease apart” these two very similar things spirituality and religion. I liked doing it there in India as the university is connected to the ashram where we live, where both religion and spirituality are very much a part of life. Also, Indian society is not as opinionated and doesn’t have the fierceness about religion that most other societies suffer with, so the students’ responses were less emotionally loaded. A few of them got it mixed up, as most people do, but others were of great help. Overall, their answers were a good reflection of existing perceptions of these two important aspects of life.

My answer today takes the students’ responses a step or two further. Please keep in mind that this is a rather artificial forcing apart of two very similar phenomena, and that I have edited it a bit to suit this question-and-answer format.

So, how do we distinguish *religion* and *spirituality*?

- One is for “religious” people. The other is for “spiritual” people.
- One is largely about external behavior. The other is mostly internal.
- One is a product of a certain time and place, created by human beings to address certain human situations. The other is a product of individual human beings searching for meaning.
- One is aimed at gaining entry to heaven. The other is aimed at merging with divinity.
- One is generally about living a worldly life by the rules. The other is about living a spiritual, more mystical life by similar rules.
- One turns us outward, toward the rule book, and helps us internalize those rules. The other turns us inward, toward our truth within, and helps us live by that.
- One says, “Do good.” The other says, “Do good.”
- One focuses mainly on its own community, and emphasizes good citizenship. The other focuses mainly on the individual, but emphasizes oneness with all.
- One says, “Love all.” The other says, “Love all.”
- One puts emphasis on tolerance toward all others as the solution to the cruelty in today’s world. The other emphasizes awareness of the basic oneness of all as the solution to the cruelty.
- One has clear membership criteria, an organization, a hierarchy, and considerable *edifice* (a church). The other has no membership criteria, no organization, little hierarchy, and practically no edifice.
- One says, “Join us and we will provide friendship and guidance.” The other says, “You have to find your own way.”



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- One says, “Live a good, worthwhile life.” The other says, “Live a good, worthwhile life.”
- One disciplines you (which sometimes works and at other times does not work). The other calls on you to discipline yourself (which sometimes works and at other times does not work).
- One believes you are basically a sinner who can be saved. The other believes you are basically a divine person who can veer either away from, or toward God.
- One wants your soul. The other wants you to seek your *Atma*, which is an aspect of divinity, a personal version of the soul within.
- One loves its own rendering of God. The other loves the one God in all.
- One sees itself as spiritual. The other sees itself as spiritual.
- One sees itself as guardian of the Truth. The other sees itself as searching for the Truth.
- One bases its teachings on its own version of Love. The other is bases its teachings on its own version of Love.
- One emphasizes what it thinks is important. The other emphasizes what it thinks is important.
- One is good. The other is good.
- One believes “God is love.” The other believes “Love is God.”

LW: Why do you and your wife, Louise, spend half of each year studying and lecturing in an ashram in India - how is it effecting your “western life”?

JH: We persistently ask ourselves that question. The best answer thus far is simply that we are called there. India is the spiritual capital of the world, and we are spiritual seekers. Our being there makes spiritual sense to us, if not always to our family. Our work in life has always been about the things that matter most to people: happiness and peace of mind. We have found that the spiritual teachings of ancient India are invaluable for those who are earnestly seeking those qualities in their lives.

India is also where I do most of my writing. My latest book *Essential Wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita* is about the five big spiritual questions seekers and philosophers have been struggling with for thousands of years: (1) Who am I? (2) Why am I here? (3) Who, or what, is God? (4) What should be my relationship with that Divinity? (5) Is it possible for me to live a truly fulfilled life in a world that doesn’t seem to support it? Finding satisfactory answers to those big queries is what the teachings of inner India are all about.

As we grow spiritually, our consciousness continually amends itself and thus our whole world changes. Our personal values, knowledge, wisdom, relationships with friends and associates all shift. The way we deal with the inevitable ups and downs of life alters—and life smoothes out. We have never experienced the peace of mind that we now enjoy—and each year, to our utter delight, it deepens. Our grown family knows this and feels it along with us. As we evolve spiritually, the lives of our loved ones expand also.