



**SAMPLE CHAPTER**

## Chapter 6: Sustaining A Divine Life

*First we make our habits, then our habits make us. –Charles C. Noble*

Now that we've discussed the various components of a divine life and how we can go about pursuing a divine life, let's look at the long term ideas. When we set out to make changes in our lives, it's easy to change in the short term, but sometimes, we find it more difficult to sustain change over time without reverting to our old ways of doing things. In this chapter, I'll outline some of the keys to sustaining a divine life and important things to remember as you continue on your divine journey.

As we go through life, we'll experience ups and downs. We'll have good days and bad days, but if we look closely at the gifts and opportunities before us, we will see that God is exceedingly merciful to us and gives us new things to celebrate every day. In order to completely appreciate a divine life, we have to see the world around us through a different set of goggles. We have to be able to understand and appreciate that life is indeed good and that happiness is a choice that we make every single day. Many of us believe that our circumstances are responsible for our unhappiness, but the truth is that we are choosing unhappiness. Have you ever met a person in dire straights that had a smile on his or her face? Or have you met a dying cancer patient who seems completely content and peaceful? These types of situations are examples of people who are able to retain their joy in spite of what may be going on around them. The important lesson we can learn from them is that we are all blessed and have things to be grateful for at every point in our lives. Gratitude is the key to abundance. We'll discuss gratitude a little more later in this chapter.

### **Daily Commitment**

The first and perhaps most important aspect to sustaining a divine life is realizing that it is an ongoing process. Because none of us are perfect, we have to afford ourselves room to fail and grow. After all, failure yields tremendous opportunities to grow and develop our character. Think about the times you've attempted something and succeeded with ease the first time versus a time you've attempted something and perhaps failed miserably or tried several times and finally got it right. If you look closely at your failures, you will see open doors for you to learn more about yourself as a person and to grow as a person. Furthermore, you will see that your failures contributed to your successes, even in unrelated aspects of life. Our failures exist to serve purposes in our lives, and when we approach them with this attitude, we can press on with a spirit of gratitude, resolution, and hope.

Several months before I finished this book, I began doing some really important things that changed my life for the better. I decided that I wanted more. Even though my life was moving forward, and I was generally very happy, I felt that I needed a more quantitative way to approach my daily happiness. So, I sat down one day and spent some time really meditating on my best days. I considered the uneventful best days, meaning the days that were "normal" versus the days that were momentous such as births, graduations, accomplishments, etc. As I considered my best days and best seasons, I noticed some common threads in them. I quickly realized that there were several choices I made during those times that resulted in a heightened level of

happiness and gratitude for the things I had in my life. During those times, I felt intuitively connected to God and to my higher self. I spent a few months doing trial and error to really narrow down the things that made a significant difference and the things that didn't. What you will read below is the result of that trial and error and is my personal prescription for the development of self-esteem, happiness, and a divine life.

The first thing is committing to my gratitude journal. A gratitude journal is a place where a person can list or write freely about the things she or he is grateful for. I started my gratitude journal because I was too engrossed in the cares and trials of my life. I was complaining often, and I had even started to grow resentful and angry with God. I knew it was time for a change, and I slowly started to realize that gratitude was essential to my happiness. I also knew subconsciously that until I learned to be grateful for the infinite number of blessings I had, I would never be able to unlock the door to abundance in my life.

In the past, I've been less disciplined with my gratitude journaling. I was pretty consistent when it came to journaling about other things, but I needed to buckle down and do the gratitude journaling daily. Once I was consistent, the floodgates flew open, and I had more and more to be grateful for. The fact of the matter is that when we truly learn to develop and cultivate an "attitude of gratitude", we will always have more to be grateful for, and we often see more abundance flowing into our lives. If you don't understand the power of gratitude, you may consider this frivolous or a waste of time, but if you are in any way connected enough to God to understand the importance of remaining grateful, you will completely appreciate the importance of this exercise.

There are many ways to approach gratitude journaling. Some people like to do it by the week while others like to do it daily. Some do it in the morning and some at night. The important thing is that you develop a habit of journaling your gratitude. I have a trusty little notebook that I keep in my handbag, and I use this book as one of my gratitude journals. I like to keep it with me because sometimes I'll have a grateful thought during the day while I'm away from home or maybe some revelation will come to me. I also have a beautifully decorated notebook at home that I journal in daily. The process of gratitude journaling does not have to be long or complicated; it usually takes less than 5 minutes. I split the page in half by writing a line down the middle and I make 2 lists: one list is of 10 things I'm grateful for that day. The other list is of 10 things I believe will come to me, including achievements, people, things, and more. These lists achieve several goals. They help me to contemplate the blessings I receive each day – from the grandiose and big things to the small and mundane things. The gratitude list also helps me to say that every single day, no matter how "good" or "bad" I thought the day was, there is something to be grateful for. The list of hope and faith helps me to stay focused on my goals, and it also acts as a motivator by tying my emotions and prayers to the things I want in my life. Both lists, when done consistently, are very powerful and have affected my life in wonderful ways.

Another amazing daily exercise that has set my life on fire is doing what I call the Big Six every day. The Big Six are six important things that can help transform your life into one that is abundant, happy, and productive. I noticed that I was not feeling as "filled up" about my life as I wanted to, but I didn't entirely understand why. I prayed about the matter and realized that there are certain things in life that are good for us and that over time, those things yield good

feelings. I realized that if I were to commit to doing these things daily, my life would begin to look very different over a short period of time.

This list of things must be done every day, even if you have to scramble a little bit to get them in at the end of the day. I personally guarantee that if you will do these six things every day, your life will improve. No ifs ands or buts about it – you will become a better person, your life will be better than before, and those around you will benefit even more from your existence. If you are wrestling with self-doubt, it will improve. If you are battling depression, it will improve. If you feel disconnected from God, it will improve. If you are just plain ol' unhappy, you'll feel better. If you are not achieving your goals or you need to discover what makes you happy, this will help.

1. *Pray.* This is simple yet powerful. Not a single day should pass in which you do not spend time alone in communication with your Creator. I think this is essential to the grounded, centered person who has peace and joy. There is something special about having alone time with God and being able to share our deepest thoughts and feelings with him. Imagine a friend with whom you can be completely free and uninhibited. Consider One whom you can share every detail with and who loves you in a tender, unconditional way. Why would you want to skip such a precious time? God enjoys communion with us, and He can use prayer time to strengthen and encourage us as well as reveal Himself to us. The person seeking to grow as a human being can not afford to forgo the opportunity to plug into such a powerful source. Don't neglect the opportunity to say thank you for all that you have been blessed with and to petition God for those things you desire.

2. *Do something to help someone.* Reaching out to others is good for the human spirit. When we give to others, we not only help others but also help ourselves. It is impossible for us to give of ourselves and our resources without receiving. The Bible points this out in telling us that we reap what we sow. The act of helping or giving could be something as simple as giving someone directions or giving someone a ride. Or it could be a larger commitment like helping a friend write a business plan or committing to cleaning your mom's basement. Either way, we can rest assured that when we make a sincere effort to help others, we will reap the benefits of what we've given many times over. Additionally, helping others will contribute to our self-esteem and mental well-being. It's tough to help someone in need and not feel good for having made someone's life easier and better.

3. *Do something that makes you happy.* Of course, happiness is completely subjective so you'll have to spend time thinking about the things that truly make you happy. This exercise is great because it requires that you think about the things that bring you joy and how you can find little ways to infuse your day with happiness. Doing this exercise has really helped me reconnect with certain aspects of myself that were repressed. You deserve to be happy! You deserve to be happy now...not when you move or make more money or get married or get that promotion or have kids that are well-behaved or lose weight – you deserve it right now! Your happiness act for the day could be short and sweet like a crossword puzzle or something bigger like spending the entire day at the beach (my personal favorite). Regardless, it has to be something completely self-indulgent that totally puts you in a state of bliss, if only temporarily. I have to qualify this by saying that drugs, alcohol, and any type of self-destructive behavior does not fall into this

category. You don't want to suffer negative side-effects later from your "happy" act of the day. Be sure that the action edifies you instead of tearing you down.

4. *Do something that makes you a better person.* This also varies from person to person. It could be prayer, journaling, meditating, exercising, reading, or seeing a therapist. For me, it's usually something educational. I typically read 1-3 books every month, and I have found that doing so has been instrumental in my personal development. I've learned about a variety of topics, and I have been able to press forward towards my goals with more knowledge of the world around me. However, the thing that another person chooses that makes him or her a better person may be very different from mine. The important thing is that you walk away from this act feeling like you've honored your spirit as an individual and that you are better, if only by a small increment, than you were yesterday. You eat an elephant one bite at a time, and you become a bigger, better person one act at a time.

5. *Do something that moves you closer to attaining an important goal.* I can not stress this enough. If you are suffering from feelings of hopelessness or feeling like your life is going nowhere fast, this should be the first thing you do each day. This is important to your growth as a person and to your confidence. The important goal could be losing weight, studying for an important exam, completing a project for work, or preparing a house to be sold. Whatever the goal is, we often feel much happier and more relaxed if we do something – anything – to work towards achieving the goal. Baby steps count on the way to achievement. Remember that even the loftiest of ambitions must be broken up into manageable pieces that can be completed day by day. With an ongoing commitment to doing at least one thing every day that moves you closer to an important goal, you will soon look up and find that you've accomplished a lot and that your goal is much closer than before. Committing to doing at least one thing that moves you closer to one or several of your goals will lead to less fear, less self-doubt, and more confidence. It will also help you stay connected to your purpose and to your personal achievements.

6. *Get moving.* Contrary to how some people live, our bodies were not designed to be sedentary and stagnant. When we consider the complexities of the human body, it is clear that God was not sparing any details when He created us. We have not been given these amazing temples in order to sit around and do nothing. Our bodies function best when we move them every day. This could include strenuous activity like running 5 miles or something simpler like gardening or walking the dog. Either way, the important thing is that we move every day. Studies have shown that movement and exercise are effective at treating depression. The state of our bodies is connected to our emotional and mental well-being and vice versa. When we are able to think positively and live well, our bodies are healthier, and we are less likely to become ill. Likewise, when our bodies are healthy and fit, we tend to feel better about ourselves and about life, and we are more productive. This makes exercising and recreational activities a win-win situation. Be sure to get up and get moving for at least 30 minutes every day.

Now that we've discussed the benefits of gratitude journaling and the big six, let's continue with some ideas about what other things can help us sustain a divine life. One of the keys to sustaining a divine life is to define happiness so that we can choose it consistently. To begin, let's analyze happiness and how we can mold our attitudes to yield happiness every day.

## **Analyze Happiness**

Those of us on the path of personal and spiritual growth have a tendency to analyze our unhappiness in order to find the causes and make improvements. However, one of the most effective techniques for sustaining a divine life is analyzing our happiness. Since we have the ability to rise above and observe our emotions, we can recognize when we are feeling joyful and content. Then we can harness the power of the moment by savoring our feelings and taking time to be grateful for them. In order to make the most of this analysis, we must make it a point to be present from moment to moment in our lives. We have to remember that while setting goals and looking ahead is important, remaining present and aware of where we are at any given moment is powerful and can help us grow more fulfilled and joyful by being conscious of the abundance surrounding us.

As you may have heard, recognition is the first step in creating change, therefore recognizing what it feels like to be happy is the first step toward sustaining happiness in our lives. Addicts are told that the first step to recovery is admitting that there is a problem. I submit that the first step to happiness is admitting that we can choose to be happy. We can examine how joy feels in our bodies and what thoughts run through our minds in times when we are happy and content. Without diminishing its power, we can reflect on what may have put us in this frame of mind, and then we can take note of the choices we made while there. We might realize that we are generally more giving and forgiving when there's a smile on our face, or that we are happiest when we are spending time with our families. Whatever the case may be, simply being aware of this can give us insights on what is most important to us and how to invite more happiness into our lives.

Once we know what it feels like and can identify some of our happiness indicators, we can recreate that happiness when we are feeling low. I realized last year that for me, reading something positive and affirming helps to restore my happiness and peace of mind if I have slipped into a bad mood. As we go about sustaining divine lives, we will meet with some challenges and adversity. Knowing that like attracts like, we can pull ourselves out of a bad mood by focusing on joy, peace, and gratitude. We might find that forcing ourselves to be giving and forgiving, even when it doesn't seem feel good, helps us to reconnect with the joy that usually precedes it. If we can identify simple things in our lives that can help us re-center, we can use them as tools to recapture joy if we are having trouble finding it. By focusing our energy on analyzing happiness and all that it encompasses, we feed, nurture, and attract more of it into our lives, eventually making a habit of happiness.

## **Growing pains**

It can be very challenging to maintain a positive attitude and a measure of faith when you are in the midst of difficult times. This is partly because we tend to think that if the God loves us, He will express that by only allowing positive circumstances into our lives. However, we are like children, and God is our infinitely wise and loving Father who knows what our souls need to thrive better than we do. Just as a young child does not benefit from getting everything she or he

wants, we also benefit from times of constriction and difficulty to help us grow and learn. The Bible even tells us that God disciplines those He loves and calls His children as an earthly parent does. If we keep our minds stayed on God's unconditional and unfailing love, we can always trust that we are loved even when things are hard.

At the same time, if you truly feel that nothing is going right for you, it's never a bad idea to ask for God's revelation, examine your life and see if there are some changes you can make to alleviate some of the difficulty. Gently and compassionately exploring the areas causing the most trouble may reveal things you are holding onto and need to release such as unhealthy relationships, unprocessed emotions, unresolved transitions, or negative ways of looking at yourself or your life. As you take responsibility for the things you can change, you can more easily surrender to the things you can't, remembering all the while that every phase of your life will, without doubt, give way to another.

One of the most important things to remember in sustaining a divine life is that no negative event or circumstance can permanently destroy or cripple us unless we allow it to do so. Too many people live their lives and govern themselves according to the circumstances that surround them. We must remind ourselves that "this too shall pass" and that God has not left us, even in our darkest hours. We also have to grow to a place of accepting what is. Many of the struggles that we face in life are issues of a lack of acceptance rather than whatever the perceived problem may be. We often blame our lives, other people, or even God for not being where we want to be, not having what we want and not being able to create the lives we desire most for ourselves. It is important to remember that the present moment has been given to us as a gift; it is all we have. Lamenting the past and fearing the future do not serve us on our path to self-actualization. God, in all of His omnipotent glory, is error free. Our small minds can not possibly begin to truly understand His ways. The Bible tells us that His ways are as far from our ways as the east is from the west! That's a long way. His wisdom is infinite, and as we begin to truly appreciate each moment and situation presented to us, we can rest in knowing that God has it all under control. When we learn to accept our lives and our circumstances, we can unlock new truths that empower us and put us on a path to living well.

### **Getting Comfortable With Discomfort**

There are certain things that we must learn to be comfortable with if we are to remain in alignment with the goals of living a divine life. Those things include uncertainty, change, bad days, and failure. We'll examine these things closer in the following paragraphs.

Most folks don't like change. Anything that disturbs the status quo and removes us from our comfort zones is usually not well received. What we must remember is that there is no such thing as a true comfort zone. The only certain things in our lives are change and God. If we can learn to trust God to be all of the certainty we need, we can be free from the fear of not having enough, not being good enough, and not knowing what is to come.

Change, like uncertainty, is something we simply can not control. The more we attempt to resist necessary changes, the greater the disservice we do to ourselves. We often exert

unnecessary energy trying to fight the inevitable instead of appreciating that change can be transformative and can help us grow. Our lives are meant to be a journey; without change, there is no journey. We can not truly discover the deepest parts of ourselves until we are faced with change, particularly unexpected change. Showing up for our lives every day and living truthfully require that we accept life as it is presented to us and allow change to be an ally on our path towards achievement and joy. Those who are able to use change to their advantage are often more successful, happier, and better adjusted in their lives. We can learn from these people by observing that they have learned to consistently make lemonade out of lemons. Along with learning to accept change, we have to develop the ability to persevere through hardships. Many of us never realize the goals and dreams we set for ourselves because we allow ourselves to be easily swayed and deterred by obstacles. The important thing to remember is that God will not bring us to anything that He will not bring us through. He has given us each special gifts to help make this world a better place for those who live in it. Hardships and challenges are a sign that we attempting to do something worth while. The more we learn to continue on our paths in spite of the circumstances that present themselves, we will find achievement easier.

Another key component to sustaining a divine life is overcoming self-doubt. At some point in our lives there may come a time when we feel insecure about ourselves. We might judge our ability to do something or feel self-conscious about the way we look. It does not matter how this feeling manifests in our life, but it is important to be aware of our thoughts and how they impact our view of ourselves. Once we remember that insecurities are a normal part of life for everyone—even those who appear to be extremely confident—we may find it easier to step back from the uncertainty that lies within and take a more realistic look at ourselves.

The desire to improve or better ourselves is a natural response that arises when we begin to compare our lives to those of other people. It might seem, for example, that we do not have nearly as much going for us as our neighbor, best friend, or coworker. In truth, what we think we see about another person is usually what they want us to notice. They may be putting on a mask, trying to make things in their lives seem better than they are. If we were to look at their lives a little more closely, we would also realize that they are human, full of glorious imperfections that make them who they are. Recognizing this may take some time at first. Should we, however, feel our insecurities begin to surface, taking deep breaths while at the same time acknowledging each one of our gifts will help us become more centered. Doing this allows us to see the wonders that lie within and lets our inner beauty shine forth into the world all the more brightly. When we hold up a detailed mirror to our lives and weigh ourselves against others, we are not able to see the things that make us truly unique. Giving ourselves permission to appreciate all the gifts God has given us, however, will make us feel more secure about ourselves and more able to use our gifts to their fullest.

As I mentioned in the section on the Big Six, gratitude is perhaps the single most important element in maintaining a divine life. Without gratitude, we can not truly develop a deep relationship with God nor can we develop and maintain true relationships with other people. The more we show gratitude, the more we have to be grateful for! Gratitude is truly the key that unlocks the door to abundance in our lives. Think about how you feel when you give someone a gift, and the person fails to say thank you. Even if you didn't give the gift to receive praise or thanks, you may feel slighted or feel that the recipient was ungrateful if they didn't

bother to say thank you. Well, how do you think God feels? He is infinitely generous to us and yet so often, we don't thank Him for the many things He does for us. We behave like spoiled children who always have their hands out wanting more, never being conscious or grateful for what we have been given. It is easy to get busy with our lives and forget to appreciate the simple things in life. I went through a period where I didn't realize just how blessed I was until I had some things taken away from me. What I realized was that I was indeed blessed and that I need to cultivate an attitude of gratitude within myself. I slowly but surely started to understand that we can not wait for the right circumstances or anything outside of us to be grateful.

## **Bad Days**

Have you ever had a day that seemed doomed from the time you got out of bed? We all have days when it feels like the world is against us or that the chaos we are experiencing will never end. One negative circumstance seems to lead to another, and we start to lose hope that the cycle will stop. You may wonder, on a bad day, whether anything in your life will ever go right again or if that day is the beginning of a downward spiral of your life. We must remember that a bad day, like any other day, can be a gift. On our path of divine inspiration, we will meet with bad days. Having a bad day can give us an opportunity to listen to our lives and get in tune with ourselves on a deeper level. A bad day may show you that it is time to slow down, change course, or lighten up. Sometimes we go out about the day with a white knuckle grip on everything that is happening. When we release the need to have everything be how we believe it should, we can more easily adapt to unfavorable circumstances that may arise. A bad day can help you glean wisdom you might otherwise have overlooked or discounted. Bad days can certainly cause you to experience uncomfortable feelings you would prefer to avoid, yet a bad day may also give you a potent means to learn about yourself. Your attitude can make all the difference in whether a bad day is a day of learning or a day of emotional tailspin.

You may consider a bad day to be one where you have missed an important meeting because your car stalled or your computer shut down or you received a piece of very bad news earlier in the morning. Multiple misfortunes that take place, one after the other, can leave us feeling vulnerable and intensely cognizant of our fragility. However, bad days can only have a long-term negative effect on us if we let them. You can reclaim your power and gain control by asking yourself what you can learn from these kinds of days. Make it a point to see "problems" as challenges and opportunities to learn and grow. In doing so, you are able to quickly turn a bad day into a great day by virtue of having learned an important lesson, developed your character, or increased your self-esteem.

Bad days contribute to the people we become. Though we may feel discouraged and distressed on our bad days, a bad day can teach us patience and perseverance. It is important to remember that your attitude drives your destiny and that one negative experience does not have to be the beginning of an ongoing stroke of bad luck. A bad day is memorable because it is one day among many good days. Otherwise, we would not even bother to acknowledge it as a bad day. Remember that everybody has bad days. Reach out to your friends and loved ones if you need advice or a listening ear. You are not alone, and the world is not against you. After all, if God is for you, who could possibly be against you? Each day is a new gift, and with God on our

sides and a great attitude in our minds, we can face each day with peace, purpose, and divine inspiration.

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