



Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life

Frederic Brussat, Mary Ann Brussat

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A book that belongs in every seeker's home, *Spiritual Literacy* answers the universal question, "How can I live a spiritual life every day?" Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat reveal a way to read the texts of our lives and of the world around us for sacred meaning.

Using more than 650 brief examples from contemporary books and movies, they tutor us in the art of lingering with our experiences and seeing the world with fresh eyes. They present spiritual perspectives on things, places, nature, animals, leisure, creativity, service, body, relationships, and community. The Alphabet of Spiritual Literacy describes the key spiritual practices -- from attention to zeal -- that spell the meaning in daily life.

Here is the book to share with your children, family, colleagues, and friends as you explore together the bounties of the spiritual life.

Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life Details

Date : Published August 5th 1998 by Scribner Book Company (first published 1996)

ISBN : 9780684835341

Author : Frederic Brussat , Mary Ann Brussat

Format : Paperback 608 pages

Genre : Spirituality, Religion, Nonfiction, Reference



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From Reader Review Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life for online ebook

Michelle says

This book is the kind of spiritual book to dip in and out of each day. Even just opening a page at random may give you insight into what you need to hear at that moment.

I bought this book for a college course "Development of Wisdom and Spirituality." This text helped me to see the spiritual in every waking moment- if I choose to focus upon my awareness of the moment. The spiritual aspects in my life have been more frequent. Over time, I see spirituality as a way of life.

3 stars... because I think this could be MORE helpful divided into separate texts!

Laura Raines says

Lots of nourishment here from a rich wealth of sources. A good book to keep by the chair and dip into at random.

Debbie Hoskins says

I found this on Hoopla of my local library. The reading was so good that I was willing to just take a break from drawing and listen. Or maybe I was tired of drawing?

The snippets are good with some of them quite memorable. Many of the writers I have not heard of and would help with a "spiritual" to-read list. I was pleasantly surprised to find a nice piece about frogs by juvenile writer, Joseph Bruchac.

Another idea I don't want to forget is the importance of the artist, writer, poet, actor, dancer and musician to the community's spiritual growth. It is recommended that those who have these gifts practice and share them. And those that don't have these gifts are suggested to find and experience the arts.

The variety of professional readers makes this enjoyable.

JayeL says

I received this book as a gift from a friend a couple of years ago and re-started reading it in December. Somehow it had never caught my attention. In December 2008, I seemed to be in a better frame of mind to get into it. The subtitle, "reading the sacred in everyday life," is a perfect description of the book.

I am not sure how to categorize this book as I think I have decided that this is not a book that is easy to read from beginning to end. I think it would be a great book to read slowly and mark quotes I find interesting. By

default this is the way I am reading it. I think that I may extract the quotes and write about them later.

This isn't a book about religion. It is more about spirituality and exposes the reader to bits of texts on spirituality which I don't normally encounter.

The authors use the alphabet and words associated with each letter as a way of guiding the reader through the text. The list of words alone is a good starting point for thinking about what is sacred about everyday life.

G is for Grace and Gratitude and the section on gratitude, while short, is deep and meaningful.

In February 2009, I was about halfway through and losing steam. I think it is a book that I need to read in between other books.

John says

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat are the Directors of SpiritualityandPractice.com. Both are journalists who have spent more than thirty years identifying and reviewing resources for people on spiritual journeys. They also write a monthly column on "Spiritual Practices" for The Lutheran magazine and their book is on the recommended reading list of Luther Seminary.

Spiritual Literacy is a collection of 650 spiritual vignettes culled from a vast array of literary and religious sources and held together with personal commentaries and anecdotes. Each is designed to cultivate our ability to listen deeply--to hear "with the ear of our hearts." As one of the top spiritual books in print today, it is a wonderful source of wisdom and insight into the spiritual life we all try to hone. The editors have included passages of poetry, prose, every conceivable vantage point and different religious orientations ranging from lyricist Leonard Cohen to philosopher Jacob Needleman; Christian mystic Meister Eckhart to writers Maya Angelou, Annie Dillard, Wendell Berry, Ram Dass, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Robert Fulghum, Thich Nhat Hanh, Barbara Kingsolver, Kathleen Norris, Henri J. M. Nouwen, Anne Tyler, and many more.

With such diversity there is much to inspire us to "read the signs that point to the active presence of Spirit in the world around us" --signs written in the very texts of our own experiences. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of spirituality: objects, places, animals, nature, leisure, creativity, service, relationships, community and more. At the end of each section, the authors provide suggestions for activities, exercises, and rituals.

Here is a timely selection that G. K. Chesterton wrote about Santa Claus:

What has happened to me has been the very reverse of what appears to be the experiences of most of my friends. Instead of dwindling to a point, Santa Claus has grown larger and larger in my life. It happened in this way. As a child I was faced with a phenomenon requiring explanation. I hung up at the end of my bed an empty stocking, which in the morning became a full stocking. I had done nothing to produce those things that filled it. I had not worked for them, or made them or helped to make them. And the explanation was that a certain being people called Santa Claus was favorably disposed toward me. What we believed was that a certain benevolent agency did give us those toys for nothing. And, as I say, I believe it still. I have merely extended the idea. Then I only wondered who put the toys in the stocking. Now I wonder who put the stocking by the bed, and the bed in the room and the room in the house, and the house on this planet, and the great planet in the void. (p. 267)

As one of your New Year's resolutions make Spiritual Literacy a part of each day and you will see that the world is alive and moving toward you with rare epiphanies and wonderful surprises. Pay attention to the rhythms of life not just the ripples, the currents and not the waves. Remember when you put a seashell to your ear it is not the ocean that you hear but the flowing of our own blood, the pulsations of your inner ocean. "For lack of attention," wrote the English mystic Evelyn Underhill, "a thousand forms of loveliness elude us every day."

Holly says

A book for constant reading.

Laurel says

I am slowly re-reading Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat's "Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life," which includes an "alphabet of spiritual literacy" and a wonderful collection of quotations and vignettes about topics such as nature, creativity, and relationships. There is a list of questions and exercises at the end of each chapter. The companion DVD series, also entitled "Spiritual Literacy," is in the Webster Library. Both the book and the DVD series are enriched and enlarged by the website, which includes spiritual practices, writing questions, and additional quotations to illustrate the spiritual literacy alphabet.

Jen says

I admit that there were parts of this book where my mind wandered. I think I like the concept of this book better than I like the actual book, but it was a nice reminder to look for the sacred in everyday life. It was also a good look at how much the major spiritual traditions have in common.

Richard Piet says

Even the most literal, materialistic person has trouble denying the intrusion of the spiritual in his corporeal life. The Brussats, in a comprehensive collection of reflections on holy incursions in the everyday, teach us to recognize and read the sacredness of the familiar.

Interwoven between the themes of our world, such as things, places and community, the Brussats present the ABC's of spiritual literacy. Not only is the book a collection of spirituality in the everyday, it is an instruction manual of how to read the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Spiritual encounters are not the property of mystics, of Christians or religion. They cross all boundaries. The sources of the contributions reflect the nature of sacred encounters. Philosophers, theologians and pet owners share how God has spoken to them in everyday encounters. From the learned to the simple, all are touched by God. In browsing through this collection, no reader is left out. We can recall with understanding those moments in our life when God intervened and showed us a glimpse of the supernatural.

The personal reflections of the contributors are an insight into the mind and spirit of those touched by God. The vignettes provide a fleeting glance at Him who quickens their soul. We are able to identify with the

writers in a close and candid way. The reading of Spiritual Literacy is of itself an encounter with the sacred in everyday life.

Bryon Medina says

I find myself skipping over the authors' comments and going straight for the quotes from the great prophets, saints and sages.

This book anthologizes pieces of wisdom from different cultures. As a medium, I feel that this book would have gone over better if the people who put it together had behaved a little more like editors and a little less like authors.

What makes this book work is that there is a well chosen selection of quotes; what makes it tedious sometimes, are the words of the authors trying to tell you what it all means.

Perhaps I'm being hard on the authors, after all, not everyone can write as well as Aldous Huxley, and not every anthology of spiritual quotes is as well put together as Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy*.

Kate says

I love this gem of a book. It is an invaluable road map for a spiritual journey, a treasure box, a tool kit and a Spirituality 101 Primer all in one. For those interested in leading a richer, more purposeful and meaningful life, do yourself a favor and buy this book.

My copy of Spiritual Literacy sat among my to-read books for more than a decade gathering dust (while I raised my four young children.) I dug it out recently at a time when I could savor and fully appreciate its richness. It has been my constant companion now for several months. I am delighted to report that this book was the impetus for the inauguration of a Spiritual Literacy book group that meets twice monthly. The wisdom and guidance in the pages has served us well as a blue print and guide for our own spiritual paths.

It is interesting to note that in this 21st century of communications and technical advancement, some of us have become spiritually autistic. We recognize our physical, intellectual, vocational and emotional natures, and we carve out our time and make our choices accordingly to fulfill these needs forgetting that the essence of our reality is spiritual. Our happiness and fulfillment, our wholeness is in direct proportion to our daily spiritual nourishment ... a nourishment not confined to religious brick and mortar but to recognizing and connecting to the sacred that abounds in everyday living. For those who have dulled their instinct of their spiritual connection, or perhaps have remained unaware of its existence, this book is for you.

Spiritual Literacy is refreshingly universal and world embracing in scope and not limited to one spiritual tradition. It very much takes an interfaith 'unity in diversity' approach. The authors describe the divine as an underground river of wisdom with many wells tapping into it, wells that lead the thirsty to universal wisdom.

The authors achieve this by interspersing throughout the book hundreds of stories and quotes from a cross-

section of spiritual and literary leaders which are engaging, moving, thought-provoking and inspirational. The chapters focus on those areas where we encounter, embrace and channel the divine in our daily lives - areas such as nature, creativity, relationships, community and service. Key spiritual practices are also outlined by means of a spiritual alphabet (A for attention, B for beauty, C for Compassion etc) offering a collage of spiritual wisdom both new and old, from the east and the west. Each chapter ends with a practice guide of suggested activities, projects and exercises perfect for individual or group practice.

The authors are devout Christians who recognize and validate the contribution made by each of the world's religious traditions to the pool of universal wisdom. They view the religions like separate fingers, distinct from each other but all connected to the same source, the palm. In this way, the authors demonstrate a close affinity to the teachings of the Baha'i Faith, whose central teachings include the Oneness of God, the Oneness of the Great Religions of the World and the Oneness of Humanity and whose essential message is that of unity. Prophet-Founder Baha'u'llah, taught that the time has arrived for the uniting of all peoples into a peaceful and integrated global society. The Brussats include a quote from Baha'u'llah in their section on Unity: 'O Contending peoples and kindred of the Earth! Set your face towards unity. and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention among you."

Jessie says

Next to my bed is a stack of books, among them Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life by Frederic Brussat and Mary Ann Brussat. While I was practicing free love and expanding my mind psychedelically in the 1970's this wild and crazy couple of kids were exploring spirituality and culture. They've been married for 40 years and are rich. I haven't and am not. Go figure.

Anyway, I've had this book in my library for a number of years and haven't done more than thumb through it. To be honest, it seemed a bit on the western Judeo-Christian side of spirituality, so I wasn't all that interested in actually reading it cover to cover. But as I am packing up and supposedly simplifying my life and simultaneously trying to rekindle my daily spiritual practice, I thought I'd give it a go.

Yep, it is a little heavy on the contemporary western theologian with Judeo-Christian educations bit. There is some Thích Nh?t H?nh tossed in and some other western Buddhism, along with a little Sufism. If you try to read it cover to cover it comes off as that heavily intellectual stuff that puts most plain ole people right to sleep.

I did make it through the opening introductory chapters though and decided to skim the readings in the following chapters, except for the introductions and the bits at the end with suggestions for spiritual activities. I think a book of this sort is best thumbed through while looking for inspiration. Except that physically it's so big and unwieldy.

In the chapter "Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life" they give definitions of spirituality from 11 different Christians in 6 paragraphs, as though only western Christians have a viewpoint. And the definitions are SO complex and difficult for a poor, uneducated regular person like me.

To me Spirituality is Being in Awareness.

When I think of people I know who I consider truly spiritual I mostly think of smiles that come from within and eyes that dance with joy. These people seem to just glow and radiate a peace that affects everyone around them. They seem to be able to just BE and to be happy just Being. At the same time, they have an Awareness of everything around them, of the world and how it all interconnects. And they transmit this, convey it somehow, in a way that is kind and inclusive.

Those times when I myself have felt most spiritually connected have been moments of awareness. Times when you just BE and are Aware of it and of your connection to and interconnectedness with everything seen and unseen, known and unknown, and of its connection to and interconnectedness with you.

Simply Being, in Awareness.

P.S. This book goes in the give-away pile.

Craig Bergland says

An okay survey that lacks depth but is fine as far as it goes.

Antigone says

I love this book.... it is kinda like a Bible to me. Reflects various backgrounds and faiths and is organized topically. I like to sift through it and find something that calls to me.

Amy Paget says

Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat is a wonderful compendium of reading and practices to help you integrate spirituality into your every day life.

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat are the Directors of SpiritualityandPractice.com. Both are journalists who have spent more than thirty years identifying and reviewing resources for people on spiritual journeys. They also write a monthly column on "Spiritual Practices" for The Lutheran magazine and their book is on the recommended reading list of Luther Seminary.

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I was most taken with the alphabet of spiritual literacy, which provides an approach to study. Spiritual Literacy also includes sections with suggested practices both for journaling and for active practice.

This book is a great starting place for every day spirituality practice with its short vignettes. Highly recommended.
