



## Nourishing Your Spirit

**A** sweet, good-humored and gutsy older woman, Mary has seen more than her share of challenges. She has faced the illness and death of loved ones and friends, had her leg amputated, and has undergone at least 30 major surgeries. Yet, in the middle of my interview with her, tears of joy stood in Mary's eyes as she said, "I can't imagine anyone having a more wonderful life than I've had." And she meant it!

Mary has a secret—one that's shared by millions of mature men and women. She is a deeply spiritual person who derives profound strength, comfort and guidance from her relationship with the Divine. She has experienced an inner peace and love and a quiet joy that nothing can take from her.

Spiritual health plays a key role in our well-being as we age. The decline of our physical powers and our increasing awareness that death is closer bring our spiritual life into sharper focus. As the going gets tough, many older people say it's their faith that sustains them.

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*I want to cry out that the invisible part of me is not old. In aging we gain as well as lose. It's a time when our spiritual forces seem to expand. A life of the heart and mind takes over as our physical force ebbs away.* —A 90-year-old woman

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The spiritual side of life has different meanings for each of us. For most people, a belief in God or a higher power gives their lives meaning, hope and



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♦ OLDER PERSONS ♦**

inspiration. Others do not believe in a God. For them, spirituality may mean a closeness with nature, expressions of kindness and love, or contributing to the well-being of society.

For our society to thrive in coming years, I believe we must do a much better job of respecting, sharing and applying the spiritual wisdom of later life. I also believe that we are spiritual beings and that only by nourishing our souls can we find the satisfaction we seek.

What are your thoughts about spirituality? Join a friend in discussing questions such as: In bringing up children, what are the two most important spiritual principles we should teach? Spiritually, who has been the most important person in your life? What has been most helpful in your spiritual growth? How can we better tap the rich spiritual wisdom of later life?



Prepared by **Sam Quick**, Human Development & Family Relations Specialist, University of Kentucky.

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