

# How to Find A Spiritual Community

by Mother Clare Watts

Spiritual communities provide benefits we can't find in other social circles. Throughout known history, people have sought out such communities. And in these communities they revealed the most important and personal developments in their lives. Joys and sorrows, vows and confes-

sions, hopes for a better life beyond life on earth, and fears of eternal abysses have all been shared in spiritual communities around the earth.

And yet, spiritual communities have also been the causes of much deep-set heartbreak and disappointment. Corruption and depravity have destroyed churches, synagogues and

mosques, as well as numerous alternative spiritual communities. Then the faithful often scatter, and some decide to never trust or be a part of a spiritual community again. How can you know if a spiritual community is likely to be strong and hold integrity or become corrupt and fall apart?

The quality and dedication of a spiritual community's

leadership is central to its success or failure. The most common cause of a spiritual community's breakup is the fall of the leadership into sexual or financial scandal and opportunism. Spiritual leaders often are confronted with great temptation to abuse the trust their congregations or students have given them. Misguided or troubled members may offer sexual favors or naively believe that sexual relations with a spiritual leader will help them grow spiritually. Many religious and spiritual organizations keep no checks and balances on the moneys generated through their membership and services, and the leaders are allowed to take extravagantly from the generosity of others who trust them.

How then might you find the right spiritual community? You can start looking at the websites of various groups and reading what they have to say about themselves. Do note that there are hate-groups and people who deride almost all small spiritual groups, so do not go by what they are saying on the Internet. Instead, if you see a group that interests you, find out if they have introductory classes or services that you could attend to get to know them. Ask about their sexual and financial mores: Do the leaders or ministers sleep around? Do they make exorbitant salaries that are not commensurate with what their typical members make? Do they live ethical lives?

When you visit the communities you are considering joining, trust your heart. Is there an atmosphere of warmth and love that is also honest and open? Does this group help their members learn better communication skills? Do they teach how to develop a deeper relationship with God? You will want to know yourself enough to know what you are looking for. If you want a quite in-depth spiritual training program, then you will need to find

a place that offers that. If you mostly want a social spiritual group, then look for that. Take your time, trust your heart, and treat yourself to a spiritual community with which to grow and deepen.

*Mother Clare Watts is a master teacher, priest and co-director of a mystical Christian order with spiritual centers in 15 cities called the Centers of Light. She is the author of "Giving Birth to God, A Woman's Path to Enlightenment." For more information see [www.centersoflight.org](http://www.centersoflight.org).*



Mother Clare Watts says that when you visit a community you are considering joining, trust your heart. You will want to know yourself enough to know what you are looking for.




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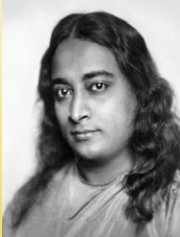
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## Women and Climate Change

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consumer choice, energy we use, disposal of our refuse. If every person in the U.S. took personal responsibility you would see a significant shift in those arenas.

And then go deeper. We can take sacred responsibility for each of our individual actions. I can take responsibility for manifesting my highest and best self. Once I have connected to this deeper place I can influence you about products, and choices, a multitude of things. Men don't generally do that. Women innately have a different

approach, which is why the male model is so foreign to us. The feminine approach is to talk about these issues from the heart perspective, and to connect more deeply so that we don't just see things differently but that we feel things differently.

*Kathy Baxter is a Seattle writer and metaphysical counselor. You can find out more about her at [www.HarvestoftheHeart.com](http://www.HarvestoftheHeart.com). To contact her, e-mail [kathybax@gmail.com](mailto:kathybax@gmail.com).*

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