

High School / College - Sample Questions
Characteristics of the Spiritual Path - HH Pope Shenouda III

(updated 7/17/2015)

1. In his introduction to *Characteristics of the Spiritual Path*, H.H. Pope Shenouda III explains that the purpose of this book is to explain to you the spiritual path, its signs and features, and how you can walk in it. What does he say is the beginning of the spiritual path according to the Holy Bible? What scripture is referenced in support of this?
2. In the introduction, H.H. Pope Shenouda III outlines the major themes of the book to his readers. What are the four general elements upon which the uprightness of the spiritual endeavor depends in the relationship with God?
3. H.H. Pope Shenouda III discusses the reasons for the success of many people in attaining their goals. He explains that the love of the goal and the desire to attain it gave them these four character traits. Which four character traits are given?
4. When discussing false aims, H.H. Pope Shenouda III mentions that “the ego is in competition with God.” What is meant by that? Explain
5. It is discussed that even spiritual matters are to be means and not goals. Give an example of a spiritual matter and explain why it ought to be a mean and not a goal. Provide one biblical reference to support your answer.
6. In speaking of “the constancy of the spiritual goal,” H.H. Pope Shenouda III describes who the steadfast person is by explaining who the spiritual person is. How is the spiritual person like the arrow of a compass?
7. In defining the steadfast person, H.H. Pope Shenouda III describes the “true man” and the “weak person”. Compare and contrast these two.
8. In discussing “Examples of Those Who Fell” with regard to “The Constancy of the Spiritual Goal,” H.H. Pope Shenouda III talks about the story of Samson. He notes that the Spirit of the Lord was moving him, but then something happened. What happened to Samson? Which Biblical reference talks about this?
9. The Apostle Saint Paul speaks of being steadfast in 1 Corinthians 15:58. What does he say and what does it mean?
10. In discussing “Examples of Steadfastness,” H.H. Pope Shenouda III talks about the “Repentants.” Who is one of the examples of “Repentants” listed? What is the act of repentance?
11. In chapter two, H.H. Pope Shenouda III instructs that the spiritual aspirant must start and continue his relationship with God. The reasons for commencing differ from one person to another, but he outlines three situations which may cause a person to commence his relationship with God. List the three situations and describe one of them.
12. What is meant when it is said that a spiritual aspirant may think of commencing a serious relationship with God on a certain occasion? Give an example.
13. H.H. Pope Shenouda III notes that “it is good to have a good start but what is important is to continue.” He gives Saint Peter the Apostle as an example of someone who has a good start, but stumbles. Explain this example. Provide a Biblical reference to support your answer
14. The person who vows or makes covenants is an example of someone who has a good start in their spiritual path, but often finds it difficult to continue. What does the person who vows do when making the vow, and what does he do soon after? What does H.H. Pope Shenouda III say would have been better to do instead of vowing or promising?
15. In continuing your spiritual path, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says you should experience warfare. What does it mean to experience warfare and why is it important?
16. God does not allow the devil to wage war against you at the beginning of your path. Why is this and when can a person expect the warfare to become tougher?

17. In continuing the spiritual path, a person that has no root is described. Describe this person and what it means to "have no root."
18. In continuing the spiritual path, it is said that "the root is the life of profound faith and true love." What does this mean?
19. In speaking of "The Inner Correction," H.H. Pope Shenouda III talks about the need to amend your heart from within, and to rectify the actual causes from which sin springs. In correcting yourself, why is it important to do more than amend the outward appearances? What does Revelation 2:5 say about this?
20. H.H. Pope Shenouda III discusses that at the beginning of the spiritual path, self coercion may be necessary in order to suppress your will and force your soul to walk in the spiritual path. He goes on to say that force may be necessary because there is no love. What does he say will happen if you eventually reach this love? What will you be able to do?
21. H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that you should "be confident that the fear of God is the path that leads you to love." Why does the fear of God prompt you to keep His commandments?
22. H.H. Pope Shenouda III quotes the holy Scriptures in talking about the starting point of the spiritual path. According to the words of the Divine Inspiration, which are mentioned twice in the holy Scriptures, what is the starting point of the spiritual path? What does Proverbs 9:10 say about it?
23. H.H. Pope Shenouda III instructs that the fear of God is a curb restraining us from committing sin. He also notes that many jump into the love of God without passing through His fear. What don't the people who jump into the love of God without passing through His fear understand? What are they led to because they are not used to the fear of God?
24. A person starts their spiritual path with the fear of God's punishment, and it may continue with him all the days of his life. In discussing this, H.H. Pope Shenouda III quotes one of the Fathers who fears three things. What are those three things?
25. In discussing the "Benefits of the Fear of God," H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that "it is better for a person to fear here than to fear on the Day of Judgment." What does having fear here accomplish versus having fear on the Day of Judgment? H.H. Pope Shenouda III also quotes a section of the Thanksgiving Prayer referencing His fear which helps us not to deviate from the path. What does this section of the Thanksgiving Prayer say?
26. There are some who refuse to acknowledge God's power and choose not to walk in the fear of God. Which four causes of fearlessness are presented by H.H. Pope Shenouda III?
27. There are some practices that help us acquire the fear of God. List and explain two of them.
28. Self-coercion is discussed as a means to help a person walk in the spiritual path. Explain self-coercion and how it helps a person who has awoken from his slumber to change his path. What does Saint Isaac say about forcing yourself to pray?
29. In speaking of practicing virtues which are forced, H.H. Pope Shenouda III assures us that these virtues are not void of love, because without love you cannot practice it. Similarly, self-coercion is presented as a transitional virtue. Discuss why it should not remain a permanent virtue and give an example of the transition.
30. Self-coercion is greatly beneficial to a person just beginning his spiritual path. Explain why this is and give an example.
31. In chapter four regarding "The Spiritual Conduct," Romans 8:6 is cited, saying, "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Why is it that carnal people cannot inherit the kingdom of God? What does 1 John 2:16 say about this?
32. In answering the question, "Is the Body a Sin," H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that it is not, otherwise God would not have created it. Why does H.H. Pope Shenouda III say that the body is holy? What does 1 Corinthians 6:20 tell us we should do?
33. H.H. Pope Shenouda III talks about conflict between the body and the spirit in chapter four. How does a person become one being, not two conflicting ones?
34. Along with spiritual conduct comes uprightness. What is an upright person and how does he act? What does Proverbs 4:27 say about this?

35. In speaking of uprightness, H.H. Pope Shenouda III warns against extremity. More specifically, he speaks about how those operating in extremes can constrain others. What does this mean? What did the Lord Jesus Christ do to the scribes and pharisees because of their extremity?
36. Within the section speaking of "Uprightness Versus Falsehood," H.H. Pope Shenouda III makes mention that uprightness needs a humble heart. Why is this? Why does the haughty person continue in his wrong behavior? Why does the Holy Bible describe the haughty person as a fool?
37. As H.H. Pope Shenouda III presented "Uprightness Versus Hypocrisy," he said that "through hypocrisy they combine two types of perversion." What are the two types of perversion? Why is it said that these type of people fall into dual sin? Describe the example of Judas given as a double hypocrisy.
38. Honesty is the virtue discussed in the "Uprightness Versus Deception" section. What characteristics are used to describe an upright person in this section? How are they explained?
39. How is artfulness described with regard to uprightness? How does the upright person reject these ways?
40. Why is the upright person trusted by whoever communicates or converses with him?
41. In speaking about "Values and Spiritual Evaluation," how does H.H. Pope Shenouda III define values? What are the things of value in your opinion which direct you in life?
42. H.H. Pope Shenouda III defines success for us in the section titled "The Meaning of Success." What are the three examples of true success given by the Pope?
43. In "Caring for Eternity," H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that the spiritual aspirant "considers his present life as mere preparation conducive to eternity." What is meant by that?
44. In the section on "The Spirit and the Body," what the majority of people care for is discussed. Why is it that people's spirits weaken?
45. In chapter five, there are three examples of spiritual values discussed: Prayer, Yourself and Others, and Comfort and Toil. Explain the value of Prayer.
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48. H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that "commitment is one of the most important characteristics of the spiritual path." Why does he say that a person who does not adhere to his commitments is by no means spiritual? Describe the example given of Abraham the Patriarch with regard to the virtue of commitment and the life of obedience.
49. What does H.H. Pope Shenouda III say that a lack of commitment involves? What does the absence of commitment mean about a person? Describe the example that was given about the children of Israel in speaking of a "lack of commitment."
50. In chapter five, while speaking about "Lack of Commitment," H.H. Pope Shenouda III mentions that "grace does not conflict with commitment." What is meant by this? Describe the example given in this section regarding tithes.
51. What did saint Abba Antony the Great say was the greatest of all virtues? What does it mean?
52. H.H. Pope Shenouda III identifies three sources of wisdom. List each one and describe how the first source of wisdom is gained. What does James 1:5-6 say about this?
53. "The Most Important Domain Where Wisdom Is Necessary" is discussed in the chapter on Wisdom and Discernment. H.H. Pope Shenouda III points out that deeds are divided into four categories, but says that the first two need no discrimination. What are the four categories of deeds? Explain the third and the fourth categories.
54. In the section on "Intelligence and Wisdom" of chapter six, H.H. Pope Shenouda III compares and contrasts the two of these qualities. Choose one of the points that he makes and discuss it.
55. In speaking of "Intelligence and Wisdom," H.H. Pope Shenouda III points out that "every wise person is intelligent, but not every intelligent person is wise." What does this mean?
56. In chapter six, H.H. Pope Shenouda III identifies some Hindrances to Wisdom. Describe why hastiness

in conduct is one of the hindrances to wisdom. How long did Saint Makarios the Great fight the thought of going into the wilderness to see the hermit fathers in order to determine whether or not it was a thought from God?

57. In chapter six, H.H. Pope Shenouda III identifies some Hindrances to Wisdom; one of which is misunderstanding and a lack of knowledge. Describe what is said we should do in an effort to gain understanding and knowledge in dealing with people. How will this help you succeed in your dealings with them?
58. H.H. Pope Shenouda III points out that “tears can be a sign of repentance” in the “Wisdom in Dejection and Cheerfulness” section of chapter six. He cautions, however, that remaining in this state of dejection can turn into a stumbling block. What does this mean? In helping us live the life with God in continuous joy, what does Philippians 4:4 say we should do?
59. In speaking with regard to “Discernment in the Spiritual Practices,” H.H. Pope Shenouda III mentions that “spiritual practices are not restraints and chains.” What does he mean by this? (p.126, para.3)
60. In discerning between fear and love, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says “that fear is a stage that develops and turns into love and reverence.” What does this mean?
61. In speaking of the importance of resisting sin, H.H. Pope Shenouda III quotes Galatians 5:17, which speaks to the struggle of resisting sin. What does Galatians 5:17 say, and what reason does the Pope give for the struggle? What is the remedy?
62. In speaking of the importance of the love for God, it is said that sin will flee from your heart completely if the love of God enters it. Why is this? What does John 14:30 say with regard to the devil finding no place for himself inside your heart?
63. If a person fills their heart with the love of God, sin will flee from it. How does a person attain the love for God? What does 1 John 4:16 say about this?
64. H.H. Pope Shenouda III teaches that positive work leads to attaining the love for God. What is the positive work that leads to all this? How can you become preoccupied with God? What does Psalm 119:97 say about this?
65. In attaining the love for God, it is said that you should be mindful of God always. Since your remembrance of God will generate His love in your heart, what are some ways in which you can accomplish this?
66. In speaking of the inner work, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that “repentance, whether in reconciling with God or with our fellow men, is an inner work.” What is meant by this?
67. It is said in the section on “The Inner Work in Upbringing and in the Ministry” that the love of God is far mightier than the rod and that it can peacefully repel every sin from the heart. What is the aim of the inner work? How does the inner work influence external matters?
68. In discussing “The Inner Work in Prayer,” H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that talking with God is the obvious external work in prayer, but undoubtedly there are more important inner works. What are they? Why is it important to sometimes silence your tongue and silence your heart in prayer?
69. As an external work, fasting includes abstaining from food for a certain period of time and limiting what you eat to the unappetizing. What does the internal work of fasting include?
70. Reading is an external work, but contemplation on what you read is an inner work. What does this mean?
71. With regard to the “Importance and Extent of Faithfulness,” H.H. Pope Shenouda III talks about faithfulness in the whole of one’s behavior and spiritual life. Which three relationships does he mention a man should be faithful to? What does the Lord Jesus Christ mention that faithfulness is the criterion of and the basis of?
72. God showed his faithfulness to us to the extent of Incarnation and Redemption. In speaking of “Your Faithfulness to God,” H.H. Pope Shenouda III points out that your faithfulness towards God means that you do not betray Him at all. What does this mean? Describe the analogy given regarding the wife who is faithful to her husband.
73. God showed his faithfulness to us to the extent of Incarnation and Redemption. H.H. Pope Shenouda III

points out that your heart, which belongs to God, should not be opened to His enemies. What does this mean? In the story of the chaste Joseph, what does he say in Genesis 39:9 when contemplating the potential sin?

74. H.H. Pope Shenouda III points out that faithfulness to God necessitates that a person be faithful in all his spiritual practices. What are the spiritual practices he refers to? When we are faithful in the spiritual practice of prayer, what does this allow us to do?
75. In outlining your faithfulness to yourself, H.H. Pope Shenouda III lists the elements by which this is constituted. What are those elements? Explain the element of your faithfulness over your eternity.
76. In outlining your faithfulness to yourself, H.H. Pope Shenouda III lists the elements by which this is constituted. What are those elements? Explain the element of your faithfulness over your concern about your spirit and spiritual growth.
77. In outlining your faithfulness to yourself, H.H. Pope Shenouda III lists the elements by which this is constituted. What are those elements? Explain the element of your faithfulness to be on your guard not to leave any of the doors of your soul open to sin.
78. In outlining your faithfulness to yourself, H.H. Pope Shenouda III lists the elements by which this is constituted. What are those elements? Explain the element of your faithfulness over your honesty with your time.
79. "The faithful person, inasmuch as he is faithful over the kingdom of God within himself, is also faithful over the kingdom of God within others." What does it mean to be faithful over the kingdom of God within others?
80. In answering the question, "How can I be faithful," H.H. Pope Shenouda III points out that we should be faithful in the few things and God will entrust us with much. What does this mean?
81. Part of being faithful to God is through ministry and dedication. What are some of the things H.H. Pope Shenouda III says you can do in order to live your whole life for the Lord?
82. It is said that if we are faithful in resisting the willful sins, God will entrust us with the resistance of unintentional sins. What does this mean as it relates to the conscious and subconscious mind?
83. In speaking of the virtue of love, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says, "If you are faithful in keeping the virtue of the fear of God then God will entrust you with the virtue of love." What does this mean?
84. In speaking of faithfulness, a common theme from H.H. Pope Shenouda III is that if we are faithful with a little, God will entrust us with much. What does this mean as it relates to prayer? Is our instruction to "pray without ceasing" too much for us?
85. In speaking of "The Importance of Seriousness," H.H. Pope Shenouda III explains that seriousness is one of the most important characteristics of the spiritual path; without which man cannot attain his goal. Why is seriousness also an indication of manliness and strong personality?
86. Seriousness is not a trait that is held by everyone. Why is it that some people act seriously in their material and worldly affairs, whereas in their spiritual life there is no seriousness at all?
87. He who is not serious in his spirituality fluctuates up and down, and his walk is unstable. He who is serious, however, is never indifferent over God's prerogatives. Why does a serious person not give excuses for himself or present justifications for his sins? How did the chaste Joseph and Daniel the Prophet demonstrate their seriousness?
88. He who is not serious in his spirituality fluctuates up and down, and his walk is unstable. He who is serious, however, is never indifferent over God's prerogatives. Why is the spiritual person serious in his repentance? What does Hebrews 12:4 say about the seriousness of resisting sin? Which three saints are mentioned as examples of repentance?
89. In speaking of the "Qualities of the Serious Person," H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that he who is serious in his spiritual path is distinguished by continual growth. This seriousness gives him spiritual ardour. What does this ardour prompt him to do? What does he strive for?
90. In speaking of the "Qualities of the Serious Person," H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that he who is serious is not mindful of his personal desires, but sacrifices every pleasure for the sake of the Lord. What do those who were trained in seriousness always do for the sake of the Lord? How did Saint Paul of

Tamouh exemplify this? What did David the Prophet say about this in Psalm 132:3-5?

91. H.H. Pope Shenouda III says about meticulousness that “he who is meticulous is not only meticulous when he is among people, but even more so when he is alone in his private room.” Why is meticulous behavior relatively easy in the presence of people?
92. H.H. Pope Shenouda III provides a specific definition of meticulousness. What is meticulousness?
93. In H.H. Pope Shenouda III's description of a spiritual person who is meticulous in his speech, he says that “rashness in speech is one of the reasons of its lack of meticulousness.” Why does rashness in speech lead to the lack of meticulousness? What does the Apostle say about this in James 1:19?
94. The spiritual person is meticulous in resisting sin, cautious not to fall into it. How does H.H. Pope Shenouda III instruct that a spiritual person should be meticulous in resisting sin? What does Ephesians 5:15 say about the spiritual person being meticulous in all his behavior?
95. The devil fights meticulousness and calls it rigidity or lack of flexibility. As spiritual aspirants, where should our flexibility be?
96. H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that “the spiritual man is victorious in all his spiritual warfare.” Over what three things is he victorious? What is the result of this victory?
97. In the section speaking about “The Importance and Blessing of Victory,” H.H. Pope Shenouda III points out that God permitted spiritual warfare, temptation and devils. Why is it that He puts our will to the test? What does Saint Paul the Apostle say about putting on the armor of God in Ephesians 6:11-12?
98. In order to successfully engage in spiritual warfare, we are called to put on the “whole armor of God.” Ephesians 6:11-12 talks about this. What does this Bible verse say?
99. In speaking about not having despair even if you fall many times, H.H. Pope Shenouda III quotes one of the Fathers in saying, “The soldier who is wounded by the enemy is rewarded with medals and not only the soldier who overcomes and kills his enemies.” How did H.H. Pope Shenouda III explain what the Father meant by this?
100. In speaking of the causes of victory, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that the most important thing is that God fights in you and fights for you. Along with the help of God you must have complete circumspection. What are the seven means by which we do this according to H.H. Pope Shenouda III?
101. In speaking of the causes of victory, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that the most important thing is that God fights in you and fights for you. Along with the help of God you must have complete circumspection. One of the means is keeping away from the causes of sin and escaping from them as best you can. How does H.H. Pope Shenouda III say we should do this?
102. In speaking of the causes of victory, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that the most important thing is that God fights in you and fights for you. Along with the help of God you must have complete circumspection. One of the means is striving with all your might and not surrendering in the warfare. How does H.H. Pope Shenouda III say we should do this? What does Hebrews 12:4 say about resisting sin?
103. In speaking of the causes of victory, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that the most important thing is that God fights in you and fights for you. Along with the help of God you must have complete circumspection. One of the means is strengthening the love of God in your heart by being regular in the means of grace. How does H.H. Pope Shenouda III say we should do this?
104. In speaking of the causes of victory, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that the most important thing is that God fights in you and fights for you. Along with the help of God you must have complete circumspection. One of the means is letting your spiritual principles be sound and let your aim be God and His kingdom. How does H.H. Pope Shenouda III say we should do this?
105. In speaking of the causes of victory, H.H. Pope Shenouda III says that the most important thing is that God fights in you and fights for you. Along with the help of God you must have complete circumspection. One of the means is preserving continually the humility of your heart. How does preserving humility do this? (p.213, para.2)