



# Stories of the Desert Fathers: Ancient Wit and Wisdom for Today's Bewildering Times

*Israel Galindo*

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It may seem unlikely that ascetics and monks have much to say that can be of relevance to us, living in our digitized, relativistic, consumer culture. We are far removed from their odd lives of extreme devotion. Most striking in our age on constant entertainment is what comes across as the deprived and aspects of their lives. They did not sleep much, rarely bathed, had poor diets, owned little by way of material possessions, enjoyed little company, abstained from sexual relationships, and in many cases, did not even attend church! Truth be told, the average modern suburban church-goer would hardly recognize them as Christians! These stories of the Desert Fathers, however, speak to universal human relationships and spiritual struggles. These ascetics struggled with the same challenges and foibles as do modern disciples who seek to sincerely practice the Christian faith and live lives worthy of their calling. The stories speak to struggles with pride, impulses, anger, temptations. They speak of our often confusing relationship with our Self, and our occasional prickly relationships with others in community. On loftier matters they speak about the will of God in our lives, the attainment of salvation, and obedience. Despite their oddness, or perhaps because of them, these ancient stories have a universal appeal. Their simplicity in addressing basic human issues touches a chord, and their narrative structure provides an entertaining vessel for deep insights for today's bewildering world. In a world demanding productivity, the stories speak to simplicity in living. In an age that worships the vanity of youthful celebrities, the stories speak to wisdom and respect for sages. In a culture that celebrate violence and war, the stories urge transformation through silence and compassion. For a fractured world seeking meaning amidst the cacophony of media and trivial entertainment, the Desert Fathers point to a different path, that of obedience to the God who creates and calls us to a life of meaning and joy.

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