

What Has Dr. Shook Been Reading?

Sweeping Changes, Discovering the Joy of Zen in Everyday Tasks.

By Gary Thorp

Walker Publishing Company Inc. (2000)

Zen is the Japanese word for “meditation”. To many people this means sitting quietly and breathing steadily while emptying the mind of distracting thoughts. For Gary Thorp, Zen is also realizing that each moment of life is unique and extraordinary. In monasteries all over the world, this meditative state is applied to the tasks of daily living. Sweeping, washing, dusting and mending are all apart of the daily practice of Zen.

Sweeping Changes is a book about the Zen of housework. “Everything around us is interesting if we take the time to look closely”. Gary Thorp suggests looking at your home and the things within it, as an organic unit not unlike your own body or the planet earth. This environment will be altered by what you bring into it and how it is cared for.

When washing laundry, appreciate not only the workings of this handy appliance, but also the cleansing water that has traveled so far to be there. Give thanks that you’re not using a rock at the river and be joyful that your clothes will keep you warm in the winter and shielded from the sun in summer. A doorway is at the same time a new beginning and a limitation. A Window is a place of illumination. The wind is nature’s rake and she will arrange the leaves as she sees fit.

The book also discusses different living arrangements in the most pleasant terms, whether living alone, with others, or with pets. There is a discussion about cooking, the sharing of food and a few words of wisdom for dealing with that which is uninvited and unwanted.

Perhaps my home is a bit tidier these days. This was a delightful book and I enjoyed reading it. I found the advice useful and the meditative practice soothing.

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