

**Optional Study and Practice Suggestions for Chapter 4,
“The Stature of Spiritual Manhood,”
in *I Stand on Holy Ground***

The focus in this chapter and the class on which it is based is on developing the spiritual discernment to perceive the nature of individual being, the nature of our true identity, or the “stature of our *spiritual* manhood.” Joel gives us several suggestions for practice.

Am I giving enough time to meditation?

When Joel asked himself, “How does one teach another to develop the faculty of spiritual discernment?” the answer that came to him was “through *meditation*.” Through meditation, we can develop the spiritual discernment that allows us to know our true identity, our eternal nature, and the infinite spiritual resources that already exist within us by virtue of our oneness with God. When we discern our true nature, we can return to “the glory that we had in the beginning” before we accepted a world of limitation. We can place the responsibility for our lives on the Spirit of God that indwells us, and we can live in peace without worry, fear, or anxiety. Further, we can discern the true identity of every other individual.

Joel says that if we are not developing spiritual discernment, it could be because we are depending too much on reading and listening, and not giving enough time to meditation. So yet again, we can review our own practice and see whether we are giving sufficient time to meditation. Joel suggests that if we are having difficulty with meditation, we can practice the Presence to develop that inner quiet required for meditation, and he refers to the book *Practicing the Presence* as a guide.

Release concepts of God

Joel encourages us to know the nature of the God with which we are one. He tells us that we must release all our concepts of God and our words for God. When there are no more words and no more concepts, we stand in the presence of the living God.

So we can ask ourselves, “Do I still entertain any concepts of God? If so, what are they? Am I willing to release them?” Sometimes our concepts of God are so ingrained that it can take a while for them to surface and be identified. Even so, we can let the question float in our awareness until they reveal themselves.

Joel gave us an exercise that helps us notice how we entertain concepts. He told us to think of someone who is not physically present with you. As you think of them, instantly your concept of them is with you. If you are thinking of someone you love, you have a pleasurable feeling because you are entertaining a pleasurable concept of the person. Then, for a moment, think that there may be someone who does not entertain this concept of that person and does not love them. You will see that you are not experiencing the *reality* of this person. You are experiencing your *concept* of the person, just as the one who does not love the person is experiencing their concept of him or her.

It's worthwhile to try this exercise as Joel suggested it, and then to try it with someone for whom we do not have such affection.

You cannot know God with your mind

In this class and chapter, Joel explains *why* you cannot know God with your mind. Rarely has he made this so clear, and his explanation here is worthy to be called out for serious contemplation. In the class, he says:

“You cannot know yourself. You can only *be* yourself. You can only *live* yourself. You cannot know yourself as if it were someone external to you. You cannot objectify yourself and say, ‘Oh, I know me out here,’ because the ‘me’ out here is not ‘me.’ The ‘me’ is *I* inside, looking out here. So you will understand that you cannot know God with your mind because you cannot know God out here. You cannot have a picture of God; you cannot have a thought of God. You cannot have even an image, a vision, or an idea of God *because the knower is God*, not the known—the knower. But the knower and the known are one. Ah! Here is the mystery of the revelation of God in individual consciousness.”

He continues on to explain why, in light of this realization, we need not seek or attain in the without:

“When you realize that ‘that which I am seeking, I am,’ then you will know how it was that Moses could understand in a flash: *I am that I AM that I am seeking!* You will know why Jesus taught, ‘I Am that I Am;’ ‘*I am* the bread, the meat, the wine,’ ‘*I am* eternal life.’ You will know why you cannot *know* eternal life, because ‘*I am* eternal life.’

“You will know why I cannot *have* bread, you will know why I cannot *receive* from God, because *I am* the embodiment of all that God has and is. *I am* life eternal. I cannot *know* life eternal; I cannot *get* life eternal. I cannot *get* health; I cannot *get* supply; I cannot *get* companionship—I *am* these. I am; I embody; I embrace these within my own being, and that is the reason I cannot demonstrate them, or get them, or attain them.

“‘*I have* meat that ye know not.’ ‘*I am* life eternal.’ I cannot *be* resurrected; *I am* the resurrection. I cannot *attain* immortality; *I am* immortal. I am immortal being because ‘I and the Father are one.’ God’s being and my being is one being. ‘All that the Father hath is mine.’ ‘Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine.’

Practice seeing the true identity of others

Joel suggests a practice to help us attain the consciousness of true identity, or the “stature of *spiritual* manhood.” Start with your family and silently, secretly, and sacredly—never openly—take one member of the family at a time and try to look *through* their appearance. Forget all that you know about them. See if you can discern something within them that is not evident to your five physical senses, something that was there before the world ever was. Then gradually extend this silent practice beyond your family to everyone with whom you come in contact. You will find that this recognition will be reflected back to you.

Contemplate what resonates with you

In our group sessions, you are not able to stop the recording when something that Joel says speaks deeply to you. But when you listen to the class on your own, you can do that. This is a helpful way to study a class. When you hear something that resonates with you, stop the recording and take a few minutes to contemplate what caught your attention, possibly writing down any new insights that come to you.