

**Optional Study and Practice Suggestions for Recording 469B,
“Third Stage of Our Unfoldment”**

1) About This Session

In this class, Joel continues to describe the stages in evolving spiritual consciousness. He refers to these various stages of development as the “second,” “third,” and even the “fourth.” In other classes, you may have heard him use different “numbers” to describe the same stages. But at the conclusion of this class, Joel points out clearly that we do not need to “number” the stages because there is really no specific defining line between them. Spiritual development is a continuous transition, and we are never wholly in one stage or another. So in this class, Joel is not so much building a precise model as he is simply describing the evolution of our experience as we progress toward attaining “that mind that was also in Christ Jesus.”

2) Summary of the Class

We always encourage you to write your own summary of the class, because each person will select the points most important to them. However, if it is helpful to you as a quick review, you are welcome to use this summary of recording 469B.

As human beings, we are in a state of consciousness made up of both good and evil. But when we start on a spiritual path, we learn that the kingdom of God is within us; that there is a Presence within, a “He” within that is greater than he that is in the world. We learn that this Presence performs that which is given me to do, and that we can do all things through this Presence. It is “closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.” This is the metaphysical stage of spiritual development.

In this metaphysical stage, you may begin to think that there is a power of Truth over error, or a power of good over evil. Evils may be overcome in your life, and you may begin to think of Truth as a power that can be used. But while this state of consciousness is a step up from the purely human state, it is only a transitional state, because there is no truth to the belief that good is greater than evil, or that the immortal is greater than the mortal.

As you progress, you begin to see that God is Spirit, Life, and Law, and this recognition changes your consciousness. You withdraw from any mental effort to get something from God. You realize that there is no God to give you anything, because there is no God withholding anything. You understand that God does not withhold from you even because of your sins, for God is no respecter of persons.

Then, as you begin to practice the Presence of God, you realize that this Presence within goes before you, and things go more smoothly in your life. Your consciousness changes once again. At this point, you may find yourself pulling away from the people and places that traffic in the grossness of the human mind. You may have a spiritual experience that gives you the feeling of “touch me not,” and you might prefer to be apart from others and from the material world.

So you evolve from one state of consciousness to another. Eventually, you come to realize that Truth does not do anything to evil, because evil was never a power. You begin to see that God

is the only Power and the only Presence, and that evil is neither a power nor a presence. In that state of consciousness, you no longer try to use Truth, because there is no evil or error to use it on. You do not have to use Truth when there isn't anything but Truth. This is the consciousness of "Resist not evil," which Jesus taught and demonstrated. He never used the power of God over evil; he acknowledged that evil *was not a power*. "What did hinder you?" "Open your eyes." In this state of consciousness, you perceive the unreal nature of appearances.

At some point, you realize that since God is Spirit, and since God is all there is, this is a spiritual universe, governed by spiritual law, and that there is only one Power and Presence. This is not to say that there is no evil in the human realm. In the human state of consciousness, evil certainly seems to be a power, and often it seems to be more powerful than good.

As your consciousness changes, you settle into peace. You realize that "I and the Father are one," and that there is nothing to war against when Truth is all there is. You no longer battle error, and you feel no need to overcome evil. You can "be still and know that I in the midst of you am God." You do not feel that you have to save the world, and you realize that you can only help those who are looking for the realization of the presence of God. You no longer seek to demonstrate material things or material health or wealth. You "take no thought" for the things of this world. Your only demonstration is the "messenger," or the Christ within, and your intention is to always realize this indwelling Christ and feel the divine Presence within you.

Now you are in a stage of spiritual unfoldment in which you have left behind the powers of good and evil. You have stopped trying to demonstrate material things; and you have risen to the consciousness of the indwelling Christ. In this state of consciousness, you realize that the kingdom of God is within you, and that you can do all things through the indwelling Christ, which functions to fulfill you. There is no human effort. You relax, doing your work in the consciousness of "My Father knoweth my need, and it is His good pleasure to fulfill me." You become a beholder, watching God at work in nature. You bear witness to God in action, and you relax completely in His Spirit. You begin to understand the life by grace as you see wonderful things happen in your life that you had nothing to do with.

As you come to this stage of unfoldment, you no longer treat diseases or persons. You do not try to correct, heal, or reform anyone. You leave this world alone, knowing that nothing will change without a change in consciousness. Since you know that this is true for you, too, you devote your life to the development of your own consciousness. You dwell in the consciousness of "God IS, and God is Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience." To be God-governed, you must be still and *let* God's government take over. Your devotion helps others as well, because with every grain of light that enters your consciousness, those who are receptive benefit by it.

But there are things you must do to prepare yourself for God's government. You cannot hold revenge or hate in your heart. God is love, but God is a love that you let flow out from you in the forms of forgiveness, benevolence, cooperation, sharing, giving. So you must be an instrument through which God's love can flow.

You must practice forgiveness, too. Forgiveness has to be a conscious process, in which you do not want the wrongdoer to be punished, but rather released from his sins and any penalty for them. You must do this consciously, realizing that you no longer follow "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Instead, you forgive. You forgive because you do not sit in judgment of anyone or hold them in condemnation. While you cannot absolve another from the penalty for

their sin, you can absolve *yourself* from judging him. And sometimes, if that individual is receptive, they can be awakened spiritually, and their nature can change.

Always forgive as you would want to be forgiven. Everyone has sinned, and everyone wants forgiveness, not punishment. Hold the attitude: “Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. Let Thy light shine within them. Let Thy Presence always be with them. Let Thy Grace feed and sustain them.” When you forgive, you release *yourself* from judgment, hate, condemnation, criticism, and bearing false witness. Then you are under God’s law of love, and healing can take place in mind and body. Forgiving is starting over, recognizing the true identity of the individual, and not feeling more righteous than they, but knowing that spiritually, you are one.

So we are not good and bad men and women. We are states and stages of consciousness. At certain stages, good and evil come through us, but eventually, neither good nor evil must come through us. There must only be God. As the Master said, “Why callest thou me good?” He realized that of himself, he was not good, but that God was flowing through him, doing the uplifting and healing work. We must become beholders, watching the spiritual Presence within do Its work to dispel darkness, evil, and injury.

At this higher stage of consciousness, you are consciously aware of an invisible, gentle Presence. You do not see It, feel It, or hear It, but you know It is there. You witness It at work and see the wondrous things It does. This Presence is within you, closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet. You do not have to tell it anything. You need only be still.

3) Practice

In a 1957 class, Joel said, “Throughout the writings, I make it clear that you must know the correct letter of truth. But I think that I have failed to make it clear to you that knowing the correct letter of truth is only a step; that unless you practice the truth you know diligently, perseveringly, you will never get any further than knowing it—intellectually knowing it—and not practically demonstrating it. . . .

*“Now, I teach these things because that is the way it has been revealed to me, and you nod and say, ‘Yes, isn’t it lovely? I’m glad it’s true.’ Then tomorrow you promptly find out that it isn’t true, because you’ve caught a cold, or you’ve fallen down and had an accident and gotten hurt, or something else happened to you, and you say, ‘Oh, Joel says this,’ or ‘The Infinite Way says this, but look at me.’ But that’s because you have misunderstood. I have said that this is the letter of truth, but I have said that it is of no power to you or no avail to you **except in proportion as it has become a constituted part of your consciousness**. Therefore, I have given you this truth, not because it is truth, but because it will **become truth to you in proportion to your embodiment of it.**”*

One way to embody what Joel has given us in this class is to identify the things that we can practice. Then we can choose just one or two of those things and decide how we will work on them. Generally, we have more success when we focus on just one or two practices until we feel that we have “caught” them, which could take days, weeks, or months, depending on where we stand spiritually and on the degree of devotion we give to the practice.

Here are some of the things that Joel speaks about in this class that we can practice. As you review the class, you will find others.

- Refraining from any mental effort to get something from God.

- Practicing the Presence of God.
- Acknowledging that God is the only Power and the only Presence, and that evil is neither a power nor a presence. Refraining from trying to use Truth, because there is no evil or error to use it on. This is “Resisting not evil” by knowing the unreal nature of appearances.
- Recognizing that “I and the Father are one,” and practicing “Be still and know that I in the midst of you am God.”
- Refraining from trying to demonstrate material things, or material health or wealth; “taking no thought” for the things of this world.
- Realizing that the kingdom of God is within you, and that you can do all things through the indwelling Christ, which functions to fulfill you. Relaxing and refraining from human effort. doing your work in the consciousness of “My Father knoweth my need, and it is His good pleasure to fulfill me.”
- Becoming a beholder, watching God at work in nature and watching the spiritual Presence within do its work to dispel darkness, evil, and injury.
- Recognizing that nothing changes without a change in consciousness and choosing to devote your life to the development of your own consciousness.
- Never holding revenge or hatred in your heart and working to become an instrument through which God’s love can flow in the forms of forgiveness, benevolence, cooperation, sharing, giving.
- *Consciously* practicing forgiveness, not wanting the wrongdoer to be punished for his sins, but to be released from them and any penalty for them. Refraining from judging or condemning. Holding the attitude, “Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. Let Thy light shine within them. Let Thy Presence always be with them. Let Thy Grace feed and sustain them.” Releasing *yourself* from judgment, hate, condemnation, criticism, and bearing false witness. Recognizing the true identity of the individual and acknowledging that spiritually, you are one. *(With all the appearances of evil doing currently in the world, a focus on the practice of forgiveness would be particularly timely.)*