

**Optional Study and Practice Suggestions for Recording 471A,
“I Am”**

In the first two sessions of this class, Joel spoke about the foundational principles of the nature of God, the nature of individual being, and the nature of prayer. In the next three sessions, he focused on the stages of spiritual development and the practices that mark those stages. Then he spoke about the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey—the experience of the Absolute. He answered questions about the journey and about initiation and elaborated on the experience of becoming consciously aware of “My kingdom,” “My peace,” and the presence of God. In this session, he takes us deeper into the nature of individual being as “I Am,” and how we can live in the experience of I Am and LET our life unfold from that dimension of consciousness.

1) Summary of the Class

Note: 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 471A.

Joel begins by reviewing the previous sessions, reminding us of how we pass from the human state of consciousness, to the metaphysical, and then into the spiritual. In the spiritual state, we become aware of the Presence within, or the Spirit of God in man. The more we live with the idea of this indwelling Presence, the more relaxing, pleasurable, and successful our human experience becomes because we have access to this “Father within,” and we can rely on It. It is always available, in sickness or health, life or death, purity or sin. We can attune ourselves to It and LET It flow forth into expression to prepare the way and make the crooked places straight.

Scripture says, “I have never seen a righteous man begging bread,” but a righteous man is not merely a man who obeys the Ten Commandments. The righteous man is the one whose righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, who rigidly lived up to the letter of the law. By contrast, Jesus taught us to worship the Father in spirit and in truth, not in temples or cities, or with tithes or sacrifices. He taught us to pray for the enemy, to make peace with our fellow man before we pray, to forgive seventy times seven, and to resist not evil. He taught us to live a life in which we worship God by loving and serving our fellow man. There is no God to worship, love, or serve, apart from our fellow man. “Inasmuch as ye have done it (or not done it) unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it (or not done it) unto me.” God has manifested Himself as man, so there is no God separate and apart from man.

The truth that God dwells within every individual is universal. When I see you, I see the Father that sent you forth into expression. You and your Father are one. Therefore, in serving you or loving you, I am serving or loving my Father. The kingdom of God is within you, so I can look inside you to find it. To serve God or show my love for God, I serve you or show my love for you. In truth, I am you, and what I do unto you, I do unto myself. Recognizing this oneness is the solution to all relationship problems. Eventually, you realize that there is only one I, one Selfhood. Even what you do to your enemies, you are doing to yourself. Anything you do to harm another has its reaction on you. That is why we practice forgiveness.

Your thoughts and actions are never hidden. You can close your eyes and think, “I seem to be in here all alone, and nobody but me knows anything I think or do.” But—right there with you is your Self, your own being. You cannot think or do anything that isn’t known to your Self, and that Self returns it unto you. “The Father, the divine law, that seeth in secret rewardeth openly.” You cannot do anything—good or bad—without your Self knowing it and reflecting it back into your experience. There is a karmic law that eventually makes us pay for our wrongs and rewards us for our rights. But God is *not* doing that; it is the *law* that operates within us that does it.

Moses discovered the truth that “I am that I am.” Many of the great Hebrew prophets knew this secret, too, but Jesus was the one who tried to tell it to the world. He revealed that the secret is in the word “I.”

I in the midst of you am mighty; I in the midst of you am God, and beside Me there is no other. I in the midst of you am come that you might have this abundant life. In fact, I am your life. I am your bread and your meat and your wine and your water. I go before you to prepare mansions for you. I go before you to make the crooked places straight.

All you have to do is close your eyes, and *I* am there. There are not two of *I* within me—an *I*, God, and an *I*, Joel. There only one *I*, the *I* that I am. I am that *I am*. *I* is the secret, sacred word.

Never try to make a human being into God. Just know that *I* is God. Then you will realize that there are no external powers that can act upon you, for *I* am God. All power is given unto Me. God has given dominion over everything to *I*, the individual *I* within you that is God-ordained and God-empowered. We say “given,” but it is not really given, because there are not two. There is only one, and *I* am that one.

When I know that the infinite, divine *I* has embodied Itself as this individual *I* which I am, all power flows out from me. No power acts upon me. Where would such a power come from? What we call evil is not power because *I* is the all and only power, and that *I* functions out from within me. Whatever need I might have, I just relax in the assurance that *I* will bring it forth into expression. When I rely on the *I* that I am, my business, art, or profession will prosper as long as it is not violating the law of love. Once you turn to the spiritual path, eventually you must come to the recognition that this *I* that I am is the law unto my being, and I can’t choose how It shall operate. Even though It is the Selfhood of my being, I have to let It govern my outer experience.

When you go to God in prayer, you must fulfill the conditions of prayer. You must go clean of heart, clean of spirit, pure in every way, and that means with only peace and love in your heart for your fellow man. You are not at peace with your fellow man if you are serving him drugs or alcohol, or selling him bullets, or selling a product intended to deceive or defraud.

We cannot prevent others from acting in a wrong manner toward us, but we need not react to it, return evil for evil, or try to reform them. We must return good for evil. The intelligence of my own being knows what things I need, and Its good pleasure is to give me the kingdom. When I recognize that the *I* of my being is Omniscience, I do not have to pray in words or thought. I need only be receptive: “Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth.”

Not only is the *I* of my being Omniscience, but It is also Omnipotence and Omnipresence. Omnipotence does not mean that God is a great power. It means God is the *only* power, and therefore, there is no power of evil. When we say “God,” we are saying “*I*,” so the *I* of my being is Omnipotence, all power. *I* is Omnipresence, too. The body exercise has taught us that I am

not confined to my body, but I am not dangling in space. *I am Omnipresence. I am here, and I am there, and I am everywhere.* I embrace the world in my consciousness, and we are all one in God, in our spiritual relationship. We are all in and of one presence, Omnipresence. When I serve you, I am serving myself, and I am serving Christ, for Christ is your identity, the Son of God, one with God.

This is mystical awareness, but it will do you no good if you only learn it. You must embody it and have the *feel* of its rightness. You must embrace it within your own being so that you can feel that "*I am.*" Your relationship to other people will tell you if you have progressed toward this awareness. You will recognize that your friends and your enemies are the only God you are ever going to know, the only Christ you are ever going to be able to serve. When you have realized this, you have not just learned the absolute truth; you have *experienced* it.

As you dwell in the recognition that the *I* of me is the *I* of you and begin to see that every individual is *I*, you cannot fear anymore. Nor will you know such a thing as bias, bigotry, or prejudice. You will not judge those who act out of stupidity, greed, or anything else, because you will have the awareness "Oh, if you only knew your true identity, how you would change!"

So we see that spiritual teaching is taken by degrees. We come up through human betterment, then through the realization of the indwelling Presence, and then finally to the realization that I Am that *I Am*; that *I* and my Father are one, and all that the Father hath is mine; that this *I* that I am is come that I might have life and have it more abundantly.

Regardless of how wealthy or healthy we think we are, we are using up wealth and health like the prodigal son, unless we know our true identity. When we know that we are fed by the Infinite Invisible, and ultimately we realize, "I'm not fed by It. *I am* It! I'm not fed by spiritual bread, wine and water. *I am* the bread, the wine and the water," the whole of this world drops away. Like the Master, we have overcome the world, because we have the experience of *I Am*.

2) Putting the Lesson into Practice

This class takes us deeper into the nature of individual being as *I Am* and addresses two aspects for practice: (1) what the realization of our true identity as "I Am" means for ourselves, and (2) what it means for our relationships with others.

For Ourselves

Joel tells us repeatedly that the first step is to know the letter of truth, but that simply knowing the letter of truth will not bring us into the *experience* of truth. If I only "know" intellectually the letter of truth that "I am that I Am," it remains a concept to me, something that I entertain in my mind. I might think about it as a beautiful spiritual idea, or how wonderful it is, or how blessed I am to know it. But if I am not experiencing harmony and fulfillment in my life, I have not yet gone beyond knowledge to some degree of *experience*, to the place where "I am that I Am" is my *reality*, and my life unfolds from that dimension of consciousness.

Once I know the truth that "I am that I Am," I must go further. I must embody it and have the *feel* of its rightness. I must embrace it within my own being so that I can feel that "*I Am.*" I must "abide in the Word and let the Word abide in me" until that Word takes root. Then, after it takes root, I wait patiently for it to bud and blossom and finally yield its fruitage.

1. Joel gives us a simple practice to develop our awareness of the *I* of our being. He says, "All you have to think of is *I*; and all you have to do is close your eyes, and *I* am there." *I* is the secret, sacred word:

I in the midst of you am mighty. I in the midst of you am God, and beside Me there is no other. I in the midst of you am come that you might have this abundant life. In fact, I am your life. I am your bread and your meat and your wine and your water. I go before you to prepare mansions for you. I go before you to make the crooked places straight.

So the practice is to close your eyes, get quiet, and bring to mind the nature of *I* (for example, using the paragraph above). Then REST in that, with a receptive attitude. Just REST. Joel has told us many times that we will not come to the *experience* of *I Am* through the mind, so to the best of your ability, refrain from thinking about it or analyzing it or struggling to understand. In other words, insofar as possible, refrain from mental activity. Just REST and LISTEN. For the moment, you might even put aside the wealth of "knowledge" you already have about the nature of individual being. Listen as if you were at a concert for which you had no program. You do not know what you are going to hear, and you simply wait patiently for the music to begin.

Notice that this is different from contemplative meditation. In contemplative meditation, we use the mind to ponder a word such as "God," or a quotation from the Bible or from a spiritual writing, until the mind quiets down and we can enter the silence. Of course, if you have difficulty going into REST right away, you can certainly use a contemplative meditation to start.

2. As we go through the next two weeks with this class, we can notice what we do when we have some need. It could be a need for health, or for supply, or for harmony in a relationship. Where do we look to fulfill the need? Do we look outside ourselves or within ourselves? Joel gives us a practice for these situations, which is really practicing "Take no thought for your life . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God [the *I* of your own being.]"

Joel tells us that whatever the need is, I have only to *relax* in the *assurance* that the *I* of my being will bring the fulfillment into expression. This *I* that I am *is the law unto my being*. I do not *choose* how It shall operate. Rather, I *relax* and *let It govern my outer experience*.

As I learn to tabernacle with the *I* that I am, my inner Selfhood, the divinity of my own being, I will discover that all spiritual law and spiritual life is embodied in me; that infinity is the measure of my substance, and that I can rely on It. I am not limited in any way.

When I recognize that the *I* of my being is Omniscience, I do not have to pray in words or thoughts. I am just receptive: "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth." The intelligence of my own being knows what things I have need or, and Its good pleasure is to give me the kingdom.

3. Joel also counsels us about the conditions for prayer, explaining that when we go to God in prayer, we must go clean of heart, clean of spirit, and pure in every way. That means with only peace and love in your heart for your fellow man, for "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." So again, we can watch ourselves as we work with this class and notice whether we are fulfilling these conditions when we pray or meditate.

For Our Relationships with Others

This lesson has noteworthy implications for how we live our life in relationship to others, too.

Joel reminds us that Jesus taught us to live a life in which we worship God by loving and serving our fellow man. He asserts that because God has manifested Himself as man, there is no God to worship, love, or serve, apart from your fellow man: "Inasmuch as ye have done it (or not done it) unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it (or not done it) unto me."

What does this mean for us in our daily lives?

1. First, it tells us how we must *regard* others. Joel points out that there is only one *I*, one Selfhood. When I see you, I see the Father that sent you forth into expression. You and your Father are one. Therefore in serving you or loving you, I am serving or loving my Father. The kingdom of God is within you, so I can look inside you to find it. To serve God or show my love for God, I serve you or show my love for you.

I am you, and what I do unto you, I do unto myself, even if you are my enemy. Anything I would do to harm the life of another has its reaction in my life. Your friends and your enemies are the only God you are ever going to know, the only Christ you are ever going to be able to serve.

We can ask ourselves: To what extent am I living this in my relationships with others? Is there room for improvement?

2. Second, the lesson tells us how we are to *respond* to others. Joel says that we cannot prevent others from acting in a wrong manner toward us, but we need not react to it, return evil for evil, or try to reform them. We must return good for evil. We must forgive.

Again, we can ask ourselves: "How am I doing on this score? What do I do when someone is thoughtless, mean, critical, or unkind toward me?"