

**Optional Study and Practice for
The Eight Most Important Chapters Revisited, Session 1: Introduction
Recording 453A: “Special Reference for Study and Practice”**

Summary of the Class

As we begin this study program, it can be helpful to review the class because in it, Joel is very clear about why he is recommending these specific chapters. You may prefer to do your own summary of the class, or you are welcome to use this one.

Every individual must go within themselves to find the spiritual message that is right for their own state of consciousness. No message is for everyone, because we are at different states and stages of consciousness. Every student should be free to search for their teaching, and if we go by our own inner feelings, we will be led to the one that is for us. When we feel the rightness of a spiritual message, we should abandon all others, because the principles behind each teaching are different, and there is no way to study and practice the principles of more than one message at the same time.

If *The Infinite Way* proves to be “your” message, there are several chapters in *The Infinite Way* writings that are absolutely necessary to know, because they reveal the fundamental principles of *The Infinite Way*. These are listed in the monthly Letter for October 1961 [Chapter 10 in *The Contemplative Life*].

The first chapter listed is “**The New Horizon**” in *The Infinite Way*. All the principles necessary for the development of the healing consciousness are in this chapter. It will help you understand why other methods of healing will not mix with healing as practiced in *The Infinite Way*.

In the chapter “**Protection**” in *The Heart of Mysticism, Volume 2: The 1955 Infinite Way Letters*, you find the principle of one power and the principles of impersonalization and nothingization. These are fundamental to spiritual healing as it is practiced in *The Infinite Way*. This chapter also deals with how to prevent the conditions that later would need to be healed. It explains that anything negative that befalls us—illness, accident, loss, discord in human relationships—happens because we have not learned the principle of protective work. We do not have to be sick or have problems or accidents. We experience these things because we are ignorant of how to prevent them.

The source of our difficulties is a universal belief in two powers. If we do not do protective work in the morning, we go out into unpredictable circumstances and conditions. But if we start every day with the clear realization of God as Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience, we know that the Presence goes before us to make the crooked places straight. We know that we live and move and have our being under the grace of God, and that there is no other power.

The chapter “**God Is One,**” in *Living the Infinite Way*, is a whole treatment of the subject of oneness. It will help you live in the consciousness of oneness, and when you do that, you will see how little chance duality has to get into your consciousness.

"Break the Fetters that Bind You," in *The Heart of Mysticism, Volume 5: The 1958 Infinite Way Letters*, is an entire lesson in the nature of mesmerism, hypnotism, and universal belief, and how to break it.

"Contemplation Develops the Beholder," in *The Contemplative Life*, is a lesson on contemplation and learning how to engage in contemplative meditation.

The **"Introduction"** in the book *Practicing the Presence* is one of the most powerful chapters in all the writings, because it explains the reason for practicing the Presence, how to practice the Presence, and the function of that practice. Whatever touches our lives must touch us through our consciousness, so by practicing the Presence as an activity of our consciousness we can experience freedom.

The idea of practicing the Presence was given to Joel in an inner experience. He found that in proportion as he practiced the presence of God, he lived and moved and had his being in an atmosphere of God. The hates, fears, and discords of the world did not penetrate his consciousness, because he was abiding in the Word and consciously having God abide in him.

Most of us are in the world, and so we are going to get some of the good and some of the evil of the world. We must "come out and be separate" by an act of our own consciousness. How? By practicing the presence of God and by meditation. Joel says that "Introduction" in *Practicing the Presence* is worth the whole book. Without it, you cannot grasp the nature of the book.

The chapter **"Love Thy Neighbor,"** also in *Practicing the Presence*, and **"The Relationship of Oneness"** in *The Art of Spiritual Healing* both address how to overcome discord and bring about harmony in human relationships. A transformation must take place in your consciousness through a *conscious* practice, in which you recognize that *you*—not "the other fellow"—determine the nature of your relationships. If we believe that people are good and bad, reasonable and unreasonable, just and unjust, we are accepting a universal belief, and then we demonstrate it. There are no such people, and these two chapters help you understand that you cannot call anyone good or evil. Good and evil are impersonal and do not belong to any man. But when I realize that God constitutes your goodness, I *impersonalize* goodness, and then everyone shows kindness to me, because I see that it is *God* being kind to me *through* them.

God is love, not you. God is the love that flows through you. When I look to God for love or supply and not to you, you and other "yous" in the world express it to me. Do not look to anyone for gratitude or for justice. Look to God, and something will happen so that gratitude or justice comes through.

These chapters have the important principles for you to live by and bring about a change in your consciousness. To experiment with this, set aside two days and take six hours each day to go through these chapters. Read all the chapters slowly on each of the two days and see if you aren't freed in some measure. This should convince you that if you took one or two of these chapters every day for two or three years, your consciousness would change. These chapters are seeds of truth. If you fill your consciousness with them, the seeds will sprout and develop a whole new consciousness for you. One of the first things you will notice is that fear will lessen and drop away.

These chapters also prepare you for meditation. Meditation is not easy. Many try it and give up. But when you abide in these chapters, you will find that you can settle down into meditation. Consciously practicing the presence of God is a form of contemplative meditation that reassures

you of the presence and power of God and calms doubts and fears. In that peaceful state, you can be still for ten, twenty, or thirty seconds with no thoughts, with ears open, as if listening for the still small voice. Then you feel something that tells you God is on the scene. These seconds in the silence, when the presence and power of God is stirring in you, are the most important part of your day.

The only difference between a person who is the victim of the circumstances of human life and the one who has dominion over the circumstances of life is practicing the presence of God. The person who consciously abides in the realization of God's presence, grace, power, and love has God operating in his consciousness. The person living an ordinary human life is cut off from God. To be consciously one with God, under the law and grace of God, we pray without ceasing.

The Infinite Way sets forth the practice of the presence of God and the practice of meditation and provides you with specific spiritual principles. These will work for you *if* you embody them in your consciousness. If you don't, they will remain in the books. They only have value when you take them into your consciousness and live with them, abide in them.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The only word that does you any good is the word that you receive within and maintain in your consciousness. If you live with these chapters in your consciousness, you will be living by the Word of God, and the Word of God transforms your consciousness. So fill your consciousness with the word of God. Practice the presence of God. This continuous contemplative meditation will lead you to the actual experience of God.

One of these days, you learn that God is not in the whirlwind nor in any evil. God is in the still small voice. If you believe that God is the solution to your problem, then get God. How? Since God is in the still small voice, learn to be still and know that the *I*, the spirit of God in you, is God. Man does not pray. He opens himself for God to pray in him. Talking to God, asking God for things, expecting God to do something for you, is not prayer. It is dishonoring God.

We live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How can we do that if we are not listening? Our function is to be still and let God utter His voice, and then the whole earth of error melts. In other words, be receptive, responsive, and humble enough to know that you do not know what to pray for, or what God's will is for you. Say, "Nevertheless, Father, not my will but thine be done," and then follow whatever direction you receive. Let the will of God be done in you, because the will of God for you is eternal life, eternal harmony, infinite abundance, divine grace. You are not saying, "Thy will be done in me, and if you want me to be sick or poor, I'll be sick and I'll be poor." That is old-fashioned theology. The nature of God is love.

To be a Christian is to follow the teaching that says, "To know God aright is life eternal." If I know God aright, I cannot be stricken down by disease, death, or poverty. To be Christian is to accept the revelation of Jesus Christ. There is no higher revelation than the nature of God as love, wisdom, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence. There is no higher teaching than "If you abide in the Word and let the Word abide in you, you will bear fruit richly," and "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." There is no higher revelation than "If I love my neighbor as myself, I am loving God."

The Bible says, "If you say you love God whom you have not seen, and you do not love your fellow man whom you have seen, you are a liar." There is no God separate and apart from man, for man himself is the very manifestation and expression of God. So it is folly to say we love

God, but not love man by praying for sinners and enemies, by forgiving, and by providing for the needs of our fellow man. The whole Christian teaching is one of love. Loving man proves your love for God.