

How and Why Do I Practice the Presence?¹

In the Introduction to *Practicing the Presence*, Joel recounts his discovery of “the secret of all successful living,” which he said was “making God a part of his very consciousness, something which Paul describes as ‘praying without ceasing.’” He tells us:

“Every person who has known dissatisfaction, incompleteness, and frustration will some day learn that there is only one missing link in his entire chain of harmonious living. That is the **practice of the presence of God**—consciously, daily and hourly, abiding in some great spiritual truth ...”²

“Practice” is defined as “performing an activity repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain one’s proficiency.” So when we “practice” the Presence, we repeatedly and regularly bring our awareness to the Presence of God, to spiritual truth, in order to lift ourselves in consciousness and live by grace instead of by effort. Practicing the Presence has been described as “praying without ceasing,” “constantly having the listening ear,” and “**dwelling** in (not just occasionally visiting) the secret place of the Most High.” Some say it is following the scriptural directive to “abide in the Word, and let the Word abide in you,” or to “acknowledge Him in **all** your ways.” In other words, when we practice the Presence, we are continuously imbuing the mind with truth, and as Joel says, “a mind imbued with truth is a law of harmony unto our life.”³

Masters throughout the ages have agreed that that we are kept in peace by keeping our mind stayed on God, and Joel adds his voice in concurrence:

“The Infinite Way has really reintroduced into the western world the actual experience of **practicing the presence** of God and meditation. Now, none of these are new; none of these did I invent. These were all given to me in inner experience, in revelation ... Through my own experience, I quickly learned that in proportion as I **practiced the presence** of God, I lived and moved and had my being in an atmosphere of God, and the world did not penetrate it. The hates of the world, the fears of the world, the discords, the dishonesties of the world did not break through into me, because I was abiding in the Word, abiding in God, consciously having God abide in me.”⁴

¹ The quotations in this document are excerpted from books and recordings that are currently under copy protection. These quotations are used in this document for educational purposes under the Fair Use clause of the U.S. Copyright Act, exclusively for participants in the Goldsmith Global Online Tape Group.

² *Practicing the Presence* (1991 edition), p. 11.

³ *A Parenthesis in Eternity* (1963 edition), Chapter 18, “The Function of the Mind,” p. 206.

⁴ Recording #453, 1962 Mission Inn Closed Class, Side 1: “Special Reference for Study and Practice.”

However, Joel goes on to say that the question that is always asked is “**How** do I practice the Presence?” He answers that question in a very practical way in Chapter 2 in *I Stand on Holy Ground*:

“Living the spiritual life begins with **practicing the presence** of God, which means living in such a way that from the moment we awaken in the morning until we go to sleep at night, we have some conscious realization and acknowledgment of God. For example, on waking up in the morning, before jumping out of bed, wait for a few minutes and contemplate:

“This is a new day, which I had nothing to do with creating, nor had any man or woman. Where did it come from? Where, but from God? Therefore, this day must be the work of God, and if it is the work of God, it must include in it the works of God, the presence of God, and the power of God.

“I can begin with the activities of this day without worry and without fear because I know that since God has brought about this day, He will not leave it to its own resources. He created it and He maintains and sustains it. So I can safely trust this day to the government of God and to His presence and power.

“Only after such a realization should we make our preparations for the day. At breakfast must come the realization that there could be no food on our table or on any table but for the grace of God. Only God can bring forth crops and fruits. We can plant the seeds, but we cannot make seeds and we cannot make them grow after they are planted. Some kind of a law must take hold of a seed in order to bring forth apples from apple seeds or peaches from peach seeds. Therefore it is by God’s grace that the food we eat and drink is provided for us.

“As we go forward during the day, there is not a person who is not faced with some responsibility greater than he is able to care for. No one of us goes through life without having problems that we cannot humanly solve, and it is in these periods that we again contemplate truth as we know it, remembering that ‘*He performeth the thing that is appointed for me*’¹. . . *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*”² He that brought forth this day and will bring forth night after day performs that which is given us to do. The government is upon His shoulders.

“As the day unfolds, with each problem that arises or even if it is not a problem but in the normal course of business, we find a freedom if, instead of believing that we alone are responsible, we remember that there is a He within us that is greater than any problem in

¹ Job 23:14.

² Psalm 138:8.

the world. There is a He within us that gives us our ideas, strength, capital, experience, judgment, and wisdom.

“Most of us are aware of the dangers on the highways today stemming from traffic conditions, irresponsible drivers, and those who insist on driving while under the influence of alcohol. If we are merely trusting to luck or the law of averages to keep us out of trouble, sooner or later the average goes against us. Therefore, we should never get into an automobile, board a bus, a tram, or take any other form of transportation without the realization:

“God drives, He governs, and He controls. God is the mind of every individual and the intelligence. Safety and security are God’s responsibility, and God is the love enfolding all.

“Thus our safety is taken out of irresponsible or careless hands and placed where it belongs, in God’s hands.

“This is **practicing the presence** because we are **consciously** remembering, morning to night and night to morning, that we are not alone in this world, and that we have more than human relatives and human friends: we have divine companionship; we have an inner grace. What we call It makes no difference at all—God, the spirit of God, or the Christ—as long as we recognize that It is divine in nature and that It has a function in our experience.

“The kingdom of God is within. Is not Its function to go before us to ‘*make the crooked places straight*’¹ and to ‘*create mansions*’² for us? It is to go before us as protection and walk behind us as protection. What is to do this? The spirit of God, the presence of the Christ in us is to do this...

“Unless we are living in this truth morning to night and night to morning, praying without ceasing, we are not abiding ‘in the secret place of the Most High,’ and we become one of the thousand at the left or the ten thousand at the right.

“It is up to each one of us to determine how much safety we want, how much security, how much prosperity, and how much health. Only we ourselves can determine this. When we discover that as the son and heir of God we are entitled to health, harmony, wholeness, completeness, protection, and abundant supply, then it is up to us. No one can give these things to us, not even God. Only we can bring them into our experience by consciously realizing:

¹ Isaiah 45:2.

² John 14:2.

“This is God’s day, and it is His responsibility to govern it. He is with me wherever I go, for He and I are one. In that oneness are found my safety, my security, my protection, my maintenance, and my sustenance. In my oneness with God I find my completeness.

“If we are not rehearsing that morning, noon, and night, then we are shutting God out of our conscious experience. When the Prodigal Son wandered away and ended up in that feast with the swine, it was not that his father had left him: it was that he had left his father. The very moment he turned back, the father was there to greet him with the jeweled ring and the royal robe.”¹

From time to time in his classes and his writings, Joel speaks about practicing the Presence as the practice of what he calls “ten-second meditations”:

“To begin your journey on the spiritual path, you must have at least three periods a day for prayer, meditation, and inner communion. Eventually you will increase these periods to from twenty to thirty each day. True, some of them may be one minute or even as short as ten, twenty, or thirty seconds, but they will bring the realization:

“Thank You, Father, for omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. Thank You, Father, that besides You there is no other power. There is no power of destruction, no power of time or place, no power of age, no power of sin, no power of disease, no power of the carnal mind—just no power but the power of God’s grace here where I am.

“One minute of this twenty times a day would change your life so rapidly that soon your friends and relatives would not recognize you. But that is where the difficulty comes in. You intend to do it twenty times a day and forget eighteen times. That makes no difference, since tomorrow you will probably forget it only seventeen times. By the end of the week, you will not forget so often.² Then when the fruitage begins to roll in, you will never let it get away from you.

“Through these short meditations, you have the assurance in the midst of your normal day’s living that you are continuing in and under God’s grace. To practice meditations of only a few seconds’ duration, you do not have to close your eyes, nor do you even have to sit

¹ *I Stand on Holy Ground*, Chapter 2, “From Practicing the Presence to the Prayer of Listening,” pp. 17-22.

² Virginia Stephenson, one of the five teachers personally appointed by Joel to carry on the teaching, tells how she trained herself to practice the Presence: “In the beginning, it is very helpful to get yourself a timer or a wristwatch that has an alarm on it and set it for every twenty minutes. Then, every twenty minutes have a pause that refreshes; a pause when you look up and recognize, ‘I am not alone, and there is a holy purpose for me being here. This “He” that is within me knows that purpose and is guiding, governing and directing me every step of the way.’ Then have ten seconds of spiritual stillness in which you listen. It may be that you can have more than ten seconds. But do this all through the day, every twenty minutes. After a week, you will have a habit of listening inwardly as well as outwardly.” (From [Course 1: The Foundation of Spiritual Living](#), Tape 1, Side 2: “Live by the Spirit”).

down. You can pray while in your office working, at home cooking or housecleaning, or while you are driving your car.

“Regardless of what you are doing with your body, you can give ten seconds to this:

“I in God, and God in me. Where I am, God is.

“That is enough! Another hour:

“Underneath are the everlasting arms.”¹ Here where I am, God is.

“And that meditation, too, is enough! Another hour:

“I live, not by might nor by power, but by God’s grace. I can rest in the assurance of that Grace.

“Another hour you may look at a tree and realize:

“Day and night, the life of God is animating that tree, and even though it seems barren at this moment, the very activity of God is the assurance that in due season there will be fruit. So, too, if at the moment I appear to be barren of health, wealth, or opportunity, I realize that the presence of God in me is the assurance that in due season I, too, will bear fruit richly.

“Never less than once in every hour must there be these ten seconds of conscious remembrance:

“I in God, and God in me. I live by Grace, not by might nor by power. So let me be still and know that I in the midst of me am God.

“Just ten seconds now and then are enough to keep you consciously in the atmosphere of God, to serve to fulfill Scripture in your experience, and to maintain the contact between you and your Source. Wherever you are, you must have a ten-second period every little while to remember:

“The grace of God is upon me. I have meat to share with all who are here, spiritual meat, spiritual bread, and those who are accepting it will never hunger. I can give to those in this room spiritual water, and those who accept it will never thirst again. ‘I and my Father are one,² and the Father is pouring the allness of the Godhead through me to you and to this world.

¹ Deuteronomy 33:27.

² John 10:30.

“Those of us who are trying to live the life of prayer engage in all the natural and normal activities that are a part of everyday living, and we do all things that for the time being are necessary. We eat our breakfast, luncheon, and dinner because they are as much a part of our day’s life as is our daily bath. Then we dismiss these routine activities from our mind, so that the rest of our time can be spent in prayer. This does not mean that we are praying all the time: it means that we are in prayer.

“To be in prayer means to be in a listening attitude, in an inner stillness, not cluttered up with outside noises.”¹

How Do We Benefit from Practicing the Presence?

Joel says that there are two major benefits from practicing the Presence. The first is that practicing the Presence prepares us for meditation. Joel saw that meditation was difficult for many students, but he also learned that practicing the Presence quiets the mind and is a natural preparation for meditation:

“If we practice the presence of God for just a few months religiously and devotedly, automatically we are bringing about an inner stillness and quietness. We lose our fears of the outer world with its alarming newspaper headlines and epidemics because we have come to see that in the presence of God, epidemics have no power. Where God is consciously realized, there is freedom from the sin, the disease, the lack, and the limitations of this world.

“Inner quietness and stillness prepare us for the next experience, which is that of meditation. By having three periods every day of four, five, or six minutes duration, eventually these periods stretch out to seven, eight, nine, or ten minutes. Then we are dissatisfied with only three in a day, and we squeeze in a fourth. Before long, we are apt to find that we are having ten, twelve, or fourteen of those periods, and they may be anywhere from two minutes to ten minutes each, but each one of them is a complete relaxing from personal selfhood and placing us in the position of hearing the still, small voice. This, of course, is the goal of the spiritual life: to live so that we receive impartations from God.

“Christianity is a mystical religion because it includes the teaching that it is possible for us to receive answers to prayer, to hear the still small voice, and to receive impartations from the Spirit. This is the goal of the Christian life. When we reach that goal, we will be able to say with Paul, *“I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”*²

“If we have something to take care of during the day, we close our eyes for a moment and instantly the guidance comes to us as to what to do or when, or whom to see. If we are

¹ *The Altitude of Prayer* (1975 edition), Chapter 6, “Pray without Ceasing,” pp. 65 – 67.

² Galatians 2:20.

composers and master the art of meditation, from the inner source melodies will flow such as man has never heard before. If we are in business and require new ideas, new inventions, or new designs, once we have achieved the ability to be still inwardly, these will flow into our experience, and we will be guided, led, directed, inspired, and protected. The stillness, the peace, and the assurance of God's presence that come to us through the practice of the presence of God now lead us into the second stage of deeper quiet, deeper stillness, until we do make contact and begin to receive impartations, directions, orders, wisdom, and light from within."¹

The second major benefit is that the constant, continuous practice of the Presence lifts us higher and higher into the fourth dimensional consciousness. Joel says:

"Every time we are faced with two powers in the world and remind ourselves that there is but one Power, the power of the Spirit within us, we are lifting ourselves higher in consciousness. Every time we remind ourselves that we are not using God to do something to evil, but rather that we are recognizing the nothingness of the appearance of evil, we are developing the fourth-dimensional Consciousness. Every time we impersonalize evil and nothingize it, realizing that it is no part of man but is the universal belief in two powers, we are destroying a part of the third-dimensional consciousness and developing that much more of the fourth-dimensional Consciousness.

"Every time we consciously impersonalize and realize that neither sin, disease, nor false appetite is a part of our being, but that it is merely a universal belief in two powers, that too is developing our spiritual or fourth-dimensional Consciousness. Every time we recognize that *I* in the midst of us is God—that this *I*, the individualization of God within us, is really the Source of our supply, health, and harmony—part of the old man is 'dying,' and part of the new is being reborn; part of mortality is being put off and immortality is being put on.

"Every time we meditate, even if it is only a ten-second meditation, just enough time to create that vacuum and to listen, we are developing our consciousness to the fourth degree. An onion skin of mortality is dropping off, and we are that much closer to immortality.

"Every effort we make to gain more of the fourth-dimensional Consciousness through reading and hearing the words of a spiritual message is destroying some mortality in us, and at the same time, clothing us with immortality. Every meditation that turns us within to let the hidden splendor flow is lifting consciousness to that fourth-dimensional Consciousness.

"We become aware that we have a strength, a power, a dominion, and a joyousness that the world knows not of. It knows not the Source, because these spiritual qualities do not arise from external circumstances. It is not because of something in the outer world: it is because

¹ *I Stand on Holy Ground*, Chapter 2, "From Practicing the Presence to the Prayer of Listening," pp. 23-24.

of Something within that we ourselves have no knowledge of beyond the fact that we have reached the place where we know that consciousness is what we are. We become conscious of an indwelling Spirit, a divine Presence living within us, going before us, doing all things for us, and bringing to us everything necessary to our spiritual life.”¹

By practicing the Presence, we can realize the scriptural promise, *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.”*²

¹ *Consciousness Is What I Am* (1976 edition), Chapter 11, “The Fourth Dimensional Consciousness,” pp. 123-125.

² Isaiah 26:3.