

Optional Study and Practice for The Eight Most Important Chapters, Revisited Session 8: “Love Thy Neighbor,” from *Practicing the Presence* Recording 390B: “The Mystical Life Through the Two Great Commandments”

What Joel Said About This Chapter

In the recording that we used as an introduction to this study series (453A), Joel said this about the chapter “Love Thy Neighbor” in *Practicing the Presence*:

“Then in that same book [*Practicing the Presence*] we have the chapter ‘Love Thy Neighbor,’ and in *The Art of Spiritual Healing*, ‘The Relationship of Oneness.’ Now, these two chapters apply to human relationships and how to overcome the discords of human relationships and how to bring about harmony in human relationships.

“Now, there is no ‘abracadabra’ that will make you live happily at home, or in business, or out in the world. There is a transformation that has to take place in your consciousness. The first question that comes up is, ‘But what about the other fellow?’ And that’s what you learn here. There is no other fellow! If you are having discords, don’t blame it on anyone else. It’s no one’s fault but yours. You are the one who determines not only what your relationships to this world will be, but what the relationships of this world will be to you. But you have to do that through a conscious practice.”

In other classes too, Joel emphasized the importance of this chapter. To view, print or download a document with some of his additional comments about “Love Thy Neighbor,” [click/tap here](#).

Essence of the Chapter

If you read the document referenced above, you will see that when Joel talks about this chapter, he emphasizes that the essential principle given is that there is but one Self, and that is the God-Self. In our study chapter “Love Thy Neighbor,” he captures that when he says:

“God is our Selfhood. God is my Selfhood, and God is your Selfhood. God constitutes my being, for God is my life, my Soul, my spirit, my mind, and my activity. God is my Self. That Self is the only Self there is—my Self and your Self. If I rob your Self, whom am I robbing? My Self. If I lie about your Self, about whom am I lying? My Self. If I cheat your Self, whom do I cheat? My Self. There is only one Self, and that which I do to another, I do to my Self.”

What is a Neighbor?

In this chapter, Joel gives us a rich definition of “neighbor”:

“Let us understand that anything of which we can become aware is a neighbor, whether it appears as a person, place, or thing. Every idea in consciousness is a neighbor. We can love that neighbor as we see him—or it—possessing no power except that which comes from God. When we see God as the cause, and our neighbor as that which is in and of God,

then we are loving our neighbor, whether that neighbor appears as a friend, relative, enemy, animal, flower, or stone. In such loving, which understands all neighbors to be of God, derived of God-substance, we find that every idea in consciousness takes its rightful place. Those neighbors who are a part of our experience find their way to us, and those who are not are removed. Let us resolve loving our neighbor into a spiritual activity, beholding love as the substance of all that is, no matter what the form may be. As we rise above our humanhood to a higher dimension of life, in which we understand our neighbor to be pure spiritual being, God-governed, neither good nor bad, we are truly loving.”

How Can I Practice Loving My Neighbor Spiritually?

Raising Up the Christ in Others

In the 1964 Chicago Special Class titled “Raising the Son of God from the Tomb,” Joel gave students a clear and practical way to raise up the Christ in another. When we studied the eight important chapters in 2018, we prepared a document relating that Chicago class to the chapter, “Love Thy Neighbor.” You might find it helpful to review the document. To view, print, or download it, [click/tap here](#).

Recommendations from the Study Chapter

You may recall a class in Portland, Oregon, in which Joel was working with the students on Bible passages. Each day he gave them just one Bible passage to be held consciously in thought, pondered, and spiritually worked with for twenty-four hours. There was great fruitage from that approach.

In our study chapter, Joel calls us to action, suggesting several ways to practice loving our neighbor. One idea for practice with this chapter would be to use an approach like the one Joel used with the Portland group. Take just one practice point each day and focus solely on that one for the entire day. Then take another the next day, and so on through the week. We have identified several practices, based on quotations from the chapter and complementary Bible passages, and suggested such a “one-a-day” method below. You will probably find other practice points in the chapter that speak to you, which you can add to or substitute for the ones given here.

For Monday

Morning, noon, and night **watch your thoughts, your words, and your deeds** to make certain that you are not responsible for anything of a negative nature which would have undesirable repercussions, remembering that whatever of good or of evil you do unto others, you do unto the Christ of your own being. There is only one Self, and any injustice you do to another, you do to yourself. Any lack of thoughtfulness that you show to another, you show to yourself.

No matter what an individual does to you, refrain from striking back. When you resist evil, retaliate, or seek revenge, you are acknowledging evil as reality, and you are not praying for those who spitefully use you or persecute you. You cannot say that you acknowledge God as the only power if you hate your neighbor or do evil to anyone. Christ is the true identity of every individual, and to recognize an identity other than Christ is to withdraw yourself from Christ-consciousness.

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:44-45)

For Tuesday

Set aside specific periods to pray for those who spitefully use you, to pray for those who persecute you, to pray for those who are your enemies—not only for personal enemies, because some people have no personal enemies, but for religious, racial, or national enemies, too. Pray: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Pray that their eyes be opened to the Truth. Acknowledge within yourself, “I stand in relationship to God as a son, and therefore, I stand in relationship to every man as a brother.”

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:21-22)

Begin this practice with your personal relationships. If there are individuals with whom you are not on harmonious terms, turn within and pray that brotherly love and harmony be established between you, and that you come into a relationship of spiritual brotherhood with them.

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24)

For Wednesday

Wherever you go, **realize that everyone you meet is the same One that you are**, that the same life animates him, the same Soul, the same love, the same joy, the same peace, the same desire for good. Recognize that the same God sits enthroned within all those with whom we come in contact. At the moment, they may not be conscious of this divine Presence within their being, but they will respond as we recognize It in them:

I am you. My interest is your interest; your interest is mine, since the one life animates our being, the one Soul, the one Spirit of God.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Matthew 22:37-39)

For Thursday

Live in a consciousness of no judgment, persecution, hate, condemnation, or criticism. The Christ-mind beholds the Christ of God as every individual. As human beings, we are good and bad; but spiritually, we are the sons of God, and through spiritual consciousness, we can discern the spiritual good in each other. There is no room in spiritual

living for persecution, hatred, judgment, or condemnation of any person or group of people. It is inconsistent and hypocritical to talk about the Christ and our great love for God in one breath, and then speak disparagingly of a neighbor who is of a different race, creed, nationality, political affiliation, or economic status. You are the child of God only as you live in a consciousness of no judgment or condemnation.

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20)

For Friday

Do not bear false witness against your neighbor by holding him as a human with failings, by holding that he is something less than the very Son of God. Realize that the Christ is your neighbor, that your neighbor is a spiritual being, the Son of God, just as you are.

If you say, "I have a good neighbor," you are bearing false witness against him just as much as if you said, "I have a bad neighbor," because you are acknowledging a state of humanhood, sometimes good and sometimes bad, but never spiritual. Every time we acknowledge our neighbor to be other than the Son of God, we are bearing false witness against him.

If I say that you are poor, I virtually am saying that I am poor. There is only one *I* and one *Selfhood*, and whatever truth I know about *you* is the truth about *me*. If I accept the belief of poverty in the world, that reacts upon me. If I say that you are sick or that you are not kind, I am accepting a quality apart from God, an activity apart from God. In that way, I am condemning myself, because there is but one *Self*. Ultimately, I convict myself by bearing false witness against my neighbor and I am the one who suffers the consequences.

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

For Saturday

Never accept a human being into your consciousness who needs healing, employing, or enriching because if you do, you are his enemy instead of his friend. If there is any man, woman, or child you believe to be sick, sinning, or dying, do no praying until you have made peace with that brother. Ask forgiveness for making the mistake of sitting in judgment on any individual, because everyone is God in expression. All is God manifested. God alone constitutes this universe; God constitutes the life, the mind, and the Soul of every individual.

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John 7:24)

For Sunday

Be an avenue for the outflow of divine love. Serve others, expressing love, devotion, and sharing, all in the name of the Father, but seek no glory for yourself. "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." If you express love for your fellow man, realizing that you are giving nothing of yourself, but that all is of the Father from whom every good and perfect gift comes, you will be able to give freely and discover that with all your giving, there yet remain twelve baskets full left over. True giving comes when giving is a recognition that "the earth is the Lord's," and that whether we give of our time or our effort, we are not giving of our own, but of the Lord's. Then are we expressing the love which is of God. Everyone is here on earth but for one purpose, and that purpose is to show forth the glory of God, the divinity and the fullness of God.

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25: 34-40)