

THE KNOWING OF GOD

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Contents

1. Our Evolving Understanding..... 1
2. The Story of Creation.....11
3. What God Is (and Isn't).....23
4. The Personal Knowing of God.....43
5. Pathways Home.....51
6. The Inner Pathway.....71
7. Our Right Relationship with God...101
8. Initiation by Inner Light Ministries.125

Chapter 1

Our Evolving Understanding

For millennia, mankind has been evolving in our understanding of who we are, why we are here, and what this life is all about. In our Western culture, we have progressed through a variety of beliefs and understandings – some true, some not true, and some only partly true. Often, the truths we have come to accept are like single pieces of a jigsaw puzzle – helpful perhaps, but only to a limited extent. Like the many pieces of any puzzle, they really do not make complete sense until *all* of the pieces are arranged and the wholeness of the puzzle is seen as it really is.

The truth about God and His creation is similar to this jigsaw puzzle: it can only be fully known in its entirety. As we focus on particular

aspects in the process of study, it is important to remember that we are looking at *pieces*, and the individual aspects of truth are always just that – pieces taken from a greater wholeness which is never really separated.

In this book, we will explore some of the many “pieces” of the nature of God with an emphasis on how we can all develop a fuller realization of His living presence within us.¹ Of course, the subject of God is truly every bit as vast as all-that-is itself. We can say a little about Him, but the reality of God is like so many spiritual subjects we might explore – something that really must be *experienced* to be known. The knowledge and understanding of the mind will always be limited, because the mind is only a limited tool and only one small aspect of our greater selves. It is *experience* we must have if we are to come into the true knowing of God; our real purpose in this book is to offer some new directions towards this experience.

¹ God in Spirit is neither masculine nor feminine but is loving and neutral. In this book, we will refer to god in the masculine as it is most often accepted in written and spoken word.

THE OPEN HEART

In the study of all things spiritual, we come to an “edge of reason,” a certain point in our explorations where things can only be known within the knower – where knowledge springs from an inner source of truth, as opposed to concepts or logic alone. God may be described and explained by the mind, and He may be sought through study and reason. But He will only be found by what can be called the “open heart,” the open heart that seeks to know His presence within, the heart that seeks to know its truest self. Indeed, God dwells within us, and it is through a childlike openness and innocence that we come to know this great truth; this is why it is said we must “change and become like little children” so that we can enter the kingdom of heaven.²

When the open heart “knows,” it can give meaning to the mind, but when the heart does not know, the thoughts and words of the mind are empty and devoid of understanding. So, we have to strive to understand God with more than

²Mt 18:3. Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical references are taken from the New International Version (NIV), Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, 1979. Because of the greater familiarity of certain phrases, we will at times also refer to the King James Version (KJV).

just our minds; we must strive to experience and know Him, with an *open heart*. When Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mk 12:30), he emphasized the role of *all* these aspects of ourselves in just this way – as vehicles for the seeking and the service of God.

BIBLICAL CONTRADICTIONS

If we look only to books for an understanding of God, we find a variety of teachings that are unclear, confusing, and sometimes contradictory. This is even true of The Bible. Let’s look at just a few examples.

Most of us believe that there is only one God, yet the Bible contains many references to *other* gods, some of whom are actually mentioned by name.³ Most Christians believe that Jesus was the only Son of God, but the Bible refers also to *other* sons of God.⁴ We have learned of heaven as the residence of God, but the Bible speaks of *many*

³Ex 34:14; Judg 8:33; 1 Ki 11:33; Ps 82:1; Dan 11:36-39; etc.

⁴Gen 6:2-4; Ps 82:6; Hos 1:10; Jn 1:12 (KJV); 1 Jn 3:1-2 (KJV); etc.

rooms in the “Father’s house.”⁵ Does He live in all of these rooms or only in some of them? That we are created “in the image of God”⁶ is well-accepted and widely taught, but what does this really mean? And how can we understand our own true nature if we don’t really know the God in whose image we are created?

The Bible consists of many such mysteries and uncertainties. Throughout time, many religious scholars have offered ideas to reconcile the apparent contradictions and to present a comprehensive framework of understanding, but most of these explanations have been incomplete, and have often been so complex as to be beyond the understanding of the common individual. In truth, we are still very much searching, still hoping for a more complete, meaningful, and practical understanding of ourselves, our Father, and of creation.

⁵Jn 14:2; “many mansions” in KJV.

⁶Gen 1:27.

BASIC PREMISES

Every philosophy, every teacher, and every person holds certain basic beliefs about “reality.” Whether it is a group philosophy accepted by millions or a personal philosophy embraced by just one, every system of beliefs has its basic premises – the ones from which all others have been developed. Not all philosophies, however, are clear and “up front” about their basic beliefs, and so a lot of ideas have been presented as absolutes without any clear or well-established foundation, except that they have always been accepted as true.

Our own Bible is a good illustration in this regard: from the one same Bible, there has evolved a tremendous number of different Christian denominations, each having different philosophies with their own points of emphasis and their own basic premises. Throughout history, there has often been a wide gap between what the Bible actually says and what the various denominations have chosen to focus upon as well as how their different teachers have chosen to interpret it. As a result, many of us have become disillusioned in our spiritual studies because the teachings we have been given have often been so

conflicting and, more importantly, because they just haven't been very helpful in the world of our daily experience.

A basic premise underlying what will be presented in this book is that:

All is ultimately of God, from God, and an aspect of God, growing into the greater experience, expression, and enjoyment of Himself.

Without this understanding as the basis for *any* explorations, a real and full knowledge of self and others, of life and living, and of God and His Spirit can never be complete.

Another cornerstone of what is presented here is that we, as human beings, have four basic expressions; this relates to the well-known "holistic" concept which presents man as having a physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspect to his nature. We go beyond this familiar understanding and add that:

Man's spiritual nature is his truest identity; his mind, emotions, and body are merely vehicles for the expression of Spirit.

To be fully in balance and to express our true potential, we “enroll” in a course of study that is ultimately designed to help us express the God-presence within us. As individualized aspects of His wholeness, we are all growing into a greater awareness and expression of our inherent oneness with Him. In other words:

Life on earth is designed to help us more fully know and express God’s living consciousness within us.

It is only in so doing that we can “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48), and come into our own wholeness as individual sons and daughters of God.

In the pages that follow, we will explore these basic premises, along with some suggestions and techniques for allowing the light within us to be revealed into the world – how we can use our God-given powers and our God-given abilities for the purpose of creating as God creates with an abundance of love, joy, peace, and prosperity.

No part of this book is intended to impose. Each reader is encouraged to form his or her own

conclusions, to accept or reject according to what he or she feels comfortable to do. This is what life is really all about – the process of our own individual journeys, with our own unique experiences and discoveries that lead us all, eventually, into the fuller knowing of God. So, the idea here is sharing, and that is all we really want to do. In love and friendship, we offer thoughts, ideas, and techniques. Use them as you wish, because this, in itself, is another core belief and a very basic principle:

We are co-creators with the Divine, all pursuing our own unique and sacred journeys into the common destiny we share – the ever-greater realization and expression of our oneness with God and His sacred creation.

Chapter 2

The Story of Creation

“In the beginning was the Word...” So begins the Biblical gospel of John, and, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” is the opening line of the book of Genesis. But what does John mean by “the Word”? And if God lives in heaven, then where was God before He created it? In these passages, the Bible points to a time when there was no heaven or earth, and that it all began with “the Word.” But what is “the Word” in this context? To begin our journey and to make sense of this mystery, we must begin our own journey through this book with the story of Creation.

THE PURENESS OF GOD

“In the beginning God...” is perhaps the best way to begin Bible study. Because the Bible contains a valid story of creation, science will

someday discover a version of this truth as well. Although their terminologies may be different, what is true in religion must also be true in science and philosophy, or it cannot really be “truth” at all. And so, in fact, in the beginning was only God. Period. In other words, there was a time in which nothing whatsoever of any kind existed except the pure beingness of God.

We can look around ourselves and see all sorts of things that have subsequently been created – tables and shelves, animals and plants, clouds and sky, and the multitude of “things.” Some things were created by man, some by machinery and technology, and some, like nature, were created “by God.” But if we are open to the idea that once there was nothing but God, then we can begin to consider that absolutely *everything* has been created by God, either directly or indirectly – directly by God (as in love, energy, or time) or indirectly by God through some aspect of His creation (such as man, who creates machinery that creates automobiles; or nature, that creates rivers that create canyons; and so on).

And if God was once all there was, then how can anything be not “of God”? We will see as we continue that everything that

ever was, everything that is now, and everything that ever will be, is that *same* God who is continuing to create, continuing to experience and express Himself, and continuing to bring forth according to His “Word.”

THE NAME OF GOD

Jesus began his “Lord’s Prayer” by saying, “Hallowed be thy Name.” What is this Name of God? Most of us are aware of the ancient Hebrew “name” for God: *Jehovah*, or *Yahweh*. But these two Hebrew words are not really names at all. Instead, they are both merely acronyms taken from four Hebrew letters that represent “is, was, and will be.” In other words, this ancient name for God is merely a symbol of His eternal beingness and “all-ness.” This is also implied in an important passage in Exodus:

Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

[Ex 3:13-14]

There was once a time when nothing existed except the pure beingness, the “I AM” of God, and from His pure beingness has come everything we see around us (and a great deal more which we do not see). If once there was nothing but God, then of what but God can anything have been created? Yet even God had to begin His creation *somewhere*, and He did so by “sending forth” from His pure and primal beingness certain attributes of Himself. From these attributes all else in creation has been made manifest – as beings within the beingness of God.

So let’s begin our journey by looking at God’s initial outpouring of Himself. We will see how many things often thought to be “not of God” *are* in fact God in His multitude of expressions, continuing to manifest His Word – the divine intention to experience, express, and enjoy Himself in all the realms of His being. It is in this way that He comes to know Himself more fully and to see Himself reflected in everything that is.

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Creative Potential	Mercy/Grace
Time and Space	Compassion/Forgiveness
Love	Action/Experience
Power	Truth
Will/Intention/Desire	Wisdom/Knowing
Joy/Happiness/Bliss	Peace
Light and Sound	Faith/Fearlessness
Enthusiasm	Righteousness/Justice

As we said, when God began to create, He did so by sending forth from His pure being certain attributes of His own Self, and He did so in order to experience, express, and enjoy His own Being. In doing this, He gave part of His own Divine creativity over to that which He created; while at the same time, all of creation remained ever and always an expression of Him as its source. Thus, although there is *organization* to the universe, *separation* is always an illusion, because the ultimate reality is always oneness with God. Like individual droplets in a greater ocean, the part is always

one with the whole from which it comes, and everything that is, everything that ever was, and everything that ever will be is always God in one or another of His multitudes of Self-expression.

THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL

One of the attributes that God “poured forth” was creative potential. Because creative potential is itself a creation (a “thing”), it too originated in God, and He offered this creative potential to all that would arise from Him. We see this at work in everything that is – from the subatomic, through the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, and it is shown most clearly in man. Even for a rock to form a crystal, a plant to send out roots, or an ant to form an anthill, creative potential is being manifested. This potential to create is a primary aspect of the divine Creator within all of His creation.

TIME AND SPACE

Also among God’s initial expressions of Himself was the creation of time and space, which are, of course, universal features of life on earth – so much so that it may be difficult for some of us to even *imagine* a realm in which they do

not exist. The thought process by which we “make sense” of our world and direct our lives is *itself* designed upon this structure of time and space which is why we must move beyond our limited thoughts and concepts if we want to reach the higher level of true understanding. This, again, is the greater knowing of the heart which we spoke of earlier.

Even our physicists are coming to understand that time and space are, in many ways, illusions, and to see instead that energy in motion is the basic building block of all forms or creations. Everything physical is composed of atoms, which are in turn composed of subatomic particles. But these particles are *not* solid and fixed. Instead, they are energies, moving in and out of material form – from energy into matter and from matter back into energy. This energy is dynamic, changing, and by itself formless, and is actually part of one frequency level of the sound and light of God. But it is more than just an energy emanating from God the way sunlight, for example, radiates outward from the sun. This energy actually *is* God; thus, within everything that has been whatsoever created is the living presence of God, the Source.

There is an ancient teaching that “the part reflects the whole,” or that “the microcosm reflects the macrocosm.” Its basic meaning is that within any sample taken from the whole, we can find the truth of the wholeness itself. We see reflections of this in many areas: in water samples that tell us about the purity and “health” of a river or lake; and in medicine, where just a single cell can tell us a great deal about the human body from which it was taken. But, as remarkable as such scientific achievements may be, they are only limited reflections of a greater reality; if we could actually see spiritual energy residing within any one thing, we would find the wholeness of God within it. Khalil Gibran, the Lebanese poet, spoke of this great truth when he said that “in one drop of water are found the secrets of all the endless oceans; in one aspect of *you* are found all the aspects of *existence*.”⁷

If we had a zoom lens powerful enough to see into these subatomic particles and then broad enough to see beyond the known heavens, we

⁷From *Secrets of the Heart* as quoted in Joseph Sheban’s *The Wisdom of Gibran*, Philosophical Library, Inc., New York, 1966, page 55.

would see a spiritual dance going on within every level of being, and that the living Spirit of God is *still* “hovering over the waters” (Gen 1:2) in a creative self-expression. We, here on earth, see with a very limited vision in only one small arena of the totality of God’s creation. But it is from God that *everything* has come and by which we all “live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

THE ILLUSION OF SEPARATION

With the formation of time and space, a very significant event took place. Unlike any others of His primary attributes, time and space present an inherent duality. That is, with the creation of time and space came the appearance of separation: of here and there, now and then, this and that, you and me, and so on. When we remain focused within this aspect of God, we lose sight of the true and greater reality – the reality of the oneness and beingness of which time and space are only parts.

In order to “return” to the knowing of Truth, we must therefore look beyond the illusions of

time and space ... and to do this we must simply begin to “seek ye first the kingdom of God” (Mt 6:33) as a living presence within our own being. In that beingness within every one of us we find the peace, the love, the compassion, the forgiveness, and *all* of the qualities of God which never change with time or circumstance. As we go through our experiences in the world while at the same time remembering who we really are in God, we fulfill the very purpose of life – to know and express His living presence in us. But whenever we *forget* who we really are, we become caught up in illusions and are likely to lose our way.

Losing our way is always possible as part of this journey of self-discovery. As the parent who allows his child free choice, God allows His creation the freedom to experience, express, and enjoy itself however it chooses, thereby truly living in the “image and likeness” of Him. And yet, all the while, as we live and express in His image, He lives and expresses *in us*. Thus, in our every worldly experience, God is present and experiencing as well, and our own individual lives are always aspects of the greater Life that is God’s.

This may be hard to understand, and from this has come a lot of misconceptions about the

nature of God and “not God.” The universe and all of its beings are not like puppets on strings, without any choice of their own. However, the universe is the very form of God’s own Self-expression, and it is inevitable that, in time, that which has been created will come to know its real Self. On our individual journeys of expanding awareness, we will all, eventually, come into the realization of our truest identity, and we will find it in God’s living presence within us. Time is an aspect of God. It is not divorced or separate from Him, and therefore whatever time it takes doesn’t really matter – the unfolding process of experience is the most important thing, and He is very much present, involved, and actively experiencing in absolutely all of it.

GOD’S DIRECT OR INDIRECT EXPRESSION

We are all living as children of God, even though we are not completely *aware* yet of this great and simple truth. And so there are many of us who, although are very much aspects of God, are using our Godliness in ways that are of “our own” design, and are not fully expressing the Divine identity that is always our own. Thus, in the ongoing experience, many of the sources of His power are using their power (that is, His power in them) in ways that reflect

their own will independent of His. In the ultimate sense, God's will is being done all the time, in that all life is evolving towards the realization and expression of its oneness in Him. In a more limited sense, however, His unobstructed will and intentions may not be served because of the free choice and limited awareness of those to whom He has given His own creative potential.

And so we see all around us tyranny, injustice, abuse, and straying from God's loving character and His inherently joyous nature in this physical creation. But, at the very same time, His intention for all creation to experience, express, and enjoy His creation is always being fulfilled. When we, as human beings created in His image, come to know the true pathways "home," we can then overcome our pain and limitations, we can overcome the patterns of thought and action that have kept us from knowing Him, and we can find our way back into His Loving, grace, power and truth – to all the attributes that are His in us. This is the ultimate theme of our story: finding His living presence within us, serving Him directly through our own thoughts and actions, and thereby experiencing, expressing, and enjoying the fullness of our greater wholeness here and now, wherever we may be.

Chapter 3

What God Is (and Isn't)

If we ask a group of people, “What is the first commandment?” many of them will reply, “To love God, and to love your neighbor as yourself.” What they are quoting is not really the first commandment of Moses, but rather the ‘great commandment’ of the *New Testament*,⁸ and when Jesus said this, he was not really presenting something new. Instead, he was referring to two important teachings that were already well-accepted parts of the Jewish philosophy – from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. What he was teaching was really a clarification of the Old Testament’s first commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.”⁹ Consistent with so much of

⁸ Mt 22:36-40; Mk 12:28-31 (see also Lk 10:25-28).

⁹ Ex 20:3.

his ministry, Jesus was emphasizing a return to the basic purpose of Judaism, the worship and service of the one true God, and away from an excessive focus on outer rituals and traditions. But now, more than 3,000 years since the commandment to have “no other gods before me” was given, do we understand who this “me” really is, and how He differs from the “other gods” and metaphysical powers mentioned in the Bible and in other religious writings?

MANY “GODS” AND MANY POWERS

Most ancient religions involved the worship of many gods. Many of our planets are named for Roman gods: Venus, the goddess of love; Mars, the god of war; and Neptune, the god of the sea. Some of our days of the week are named for Norse gods: Thursday from Thor’s day; Tuesday for Tyr’s day; and Friday for the goddess, Freya. Among the Greek gods were Athena, goddess of wisdom; Pan, god of fields and forests; and Dionysus, god of wine. For the Egyptians, there was Iss, goddess of fertility; Hathor, goddess of love and joy; and Osiris, god of the lower world. Nearly every ancient culture had a variety of gods and/or goddesses,

and in the many sources of power that he observed and relied upon, early man saw himself at the mercy of these many gods.

We usually think of “other gods” as a phrase that shouldn’t be taken too literally – that it really refers only to “getting off track,” whether it’s when the Israelites made the golden calf a god, or when we, today, make money, success, or power a “god.” But if we think of the many Biblical references to Satan, for example, it is obvious that, according to the Bible, there is a source of power that is not God’s in the pure and direct sense, and that this source is capable of influence, guidance, and manifestation as a ‘lesser’ and perhaps even false god. Although he is known by many names,¹⁰ and even though he may be the most familiar to us, Satan is not the *only* lesser god presented in the Bible. There are actually *many* different gods and goddesses who are mentioned there by name.¹¹

¹⁰ Lucifer (Is 14:12, KJV); Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron (2 Ki 1:2); Beelzebub (Mt 10:25; 12:24); prince of this world (Jn 12:31); god of this age (2 Cor 4:4); etc.

¹¹ Baal-Berith (Judg 8:33); Dagon (Judg 16:23); Chemosh (Judg 11:24, 1 Ki 11:33); Molech (1 Ki 11:33); Nisroch (2 Ki 19:37); Artemis [Diana in KJV] (Acts 19:27); etc.

In the Bible, we also read of angels who have powers given to them by God, and of “fallen angels” who serve not God, but the devil.¹² The Bible speaks of other supernatural powers: the dead appearing to the living, the practice of sorcery, the apostles performing miracles, etc.¹³ All of these indicate that beyond the ordinary powers of man there exist super-natural powers that may or may not be of the one true God.

And *still today* we see powers, even what seem to be “miraculous” powers, everywhere we turn. Life itself is full of miracles and wonders. We take so many of them for granted that we either don’t notice them or else we just aren’t awake to what they truly represent. It’s worth taking some time to look at a few examples of these powers, because the more we understand of “magic and miracles,” the more we understand of God, and the more we understand of God, the better we understand our own selves as well.

¹² Mt 25:41; Rev 12:7.

¹³ Mt 27:52-53; Acts 8:9; Ex 7:11-12; Acts 2:43.

NATURAL LAW

The powers of nature are a very obvious example. Many of them have by now been well-studied, such as rain, lightning, eclipses, and earthquakes. But there was a time, not so very long ago, when man saw even these as miracles and as expressions of one or another of the gods. In more recent times, we have found ways of measuring and exploring a great many of the powers of the natural world. The result is that what we once thought of as the activities of the gods, we now understand to be among the many universal and predictable laws of nature. With this greater understanding, we are better able to live in harmony with those laws, and we no longer think of lightning, for example, as bolts thrown from heaven when Jupiter, the Roman thunder god, is angry with us.

Modern medicine has given us insights into the miracles of the human body. This has led us to a better understanding of illness and a greater ability to influence the course of our healing. Again, things that were once attributed either to magic, miracle, or the whims of “the gods” are now understood in terms of the science of the human being on a physical level.

We used to think of emotional problems as coming from the devil's influence, "bad blood," the "evil eye," or God's punishment for sins. As we have grown in our understanding of psychology, we no longer accept such superstitions. Instead, our emotional disorders are usually seen as responses to stress – how we have learned to cope with, or perhaps avoid, the challenges of living that have felt overwhelming to us.

Nearly everywhere we turn, we see that man has been continually evolving, discovering universal principles in what was once believed to be magic, miracle, destiny, luck, or coincidence. Where God, or the gods, were seen as deciding our every fate, we have moved forward into a greater awareness that it is how we use these universal principles that most determines our experiences in life.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION AS ONE

In the past, we tended to make a choice between believing in science and believing in religion, as if we can put our faith in one or the other but not really in both at the same time. However, mankind is slowly beginning to realize

that there is no real difference – that the truths of science are the very laws by which God has manifested His creation. In other words, *true* science and *true* religion are one and the same, just different perspectives on the same events.

There are many other powers that we are just beginning to explore – ones that are *not yet* incorporated into our understanding of science. We are beginning to recognize the power of love, compassion, and forgiveness; the power of joy and laughter; and the power of our unspoken faith. In business, we have devoted a lot of time to studying the powers of suggestion and influence, the power of a plan of action, and the power of determination. Although we may not yet call these “science,” we are coming to see that more and more areas of successful living are matters of how we work with universal principles, and that these are ultimately the laws of life that God alone has established.

But there are many powers that mankind *still* tends to think of as superstition, magic, or the work of the devil, or with similar terms by which we have always categorized what we don’t understand. We hear more and more about such

“magical powers” as extra-sensory perception, trance channeling, psychic healing, dowsing, tarot cards, crystal balls, Ouija boards, witchcraft, astrology, numerology, and on and on. These, and a great many more, have become familiar to many of us. Some have become part of our daily vocabulary, and a few are even available to us now through 1-800 and 1-900 phone numbers or over the Internet. But where is God in all of these? Are they all just superstition and foolishness?

As we read such a list of today’s “magical arts,” we probably have positive reactions to some of them and strong negative reactions to others. We may immediately consider some of them to be very “ungodly” and some to be very acceptable. We may think of them all as just “the devil’s work.” But are they valid or just nonsense? And how, if at all, do these relate to what God is and isn’t?

NO MIRACLES; ONLY LAW

First of all, we need to recognize that in the ultimate sense there is no such thing as magic, miracle, or coincidence; absolutely everything is a matter of Divine order and universal law. There

is an old saying that “miracles do not contravene the laws of nature, only what we know of the laws of nature.” And the laws of nature, we will always find, are the laws of the one true God and the design of His creation. When we really understand any so-called god, power, magic, or miracle, we will discover that, wherever we find something that really works, we have found a pathway to the understanding of God, and that any true power can be a pathway by which to express our co-creatorship with Him.

ALL POWER IS GOD’S

Because God resides within everyone and everything, His creative power is shown to differing degrees at every level of creation and in everything that is – people express greater or lesser degrees of this power, angels embody and express varying degrees of power, discarnate (not embodied) beings and even ascended masters express more or less power. In a very real sense, we are all “gods” and “all sons of the Most High” (Ps 82:6). Yet, although there are many sources of power, the power behind all powers and the Source behind all sources is always the same *one* God.

If we look closely at the many sources of “superhuman powers,” we find that they fall into a number of categories. There are those that are simply superstitious misunderstandings. Others can be called “thought forms.” And still others are very much as we have always thought of them – as lesser gods. And yet, no matter what the category, there remains only the one power of God.

Rain, for example, has never been a gift of the gods, as such. Instead, it has always been a matter of physical laws and principles. And yet, physical laws and principles *can be* influenced by metaphysical (above physical) energies, and these metaphysical energies will someday be found to follow scientific and predictable laws as well. Thus, even physical matter responds to mental powers such as thought, belief, expectation, faith, emotion, and visualization. Because of this constant interaction, there are always many powers that contribute to the events of our daily lives.

Early man saw this interactive effect at work. He found that his prayers, his sacrifices, and his rituals had results. Not fully understanding the nature of the universe, he gave names to

the sources he believed were guiding and assisting him, or punishing and ignoring him. Some of these powers that he named were mythical, and from these false or only partially accurate understandings have grown the tremendous array of mythologies that have been passed down throughout the ages. And yet, to some extent, whatever we believe in and invest with our faith has a transient reality – as a “thought form,” which can be real and even powerful. This is true of so-called gods as well. However, for our purposes we’ll just consider that these many so-called powers only exist as energies created and sustained by those who believe in them. They have no independent and lasting validity, and they dissipate when we stop believing in them and stop feeding them our own creative energy, which is the substance of their survival.

There are other so-called gods and powers that are not, however, thought forms. Satan is a good example. He really does exist, although not necessarily in the form and with all the various characteristics that we have attributed to him. He has been called “the tempter” and “the lord of the underworld.” In a real sense, it is his task to hold us bound to the worldly realms by tempting us

to follow false pathways that *seem* to take us into our hearts' desires but really lead only to disillusionment, unfulfillment and entanglement. But Satan is an important teacher to us as well, as he holds us to the lessons we have drawn to ourselves so that we can rise *above* the things of this world and move into the greater life of Spirit. It is worth noting that the Bible quotes him as saying, "I will make myself like the Most High" (Is 14:14), and we must carefully discern the true God from this real, but lesser, "god."

Satan is not the *only* lesser god or source of power. There are in fact *many* beings who work with the invisible energies that influence our daily experiences. This brings up a vast subject that may be difficult for some of us to accept, yet the basic pattern is no different from any other powers we might study.

"Mother Nature" is not a god, although there have been those who have considered her as such. And yet, she has a great deal of power, and without her, we could not survive on planet earth. But, as we've seen before, her power is only an aspect of God's power; her laws are the

laws of God’s physical creation. In a sense, “she” is a lesser god, acting as a servant of the one true God, and working with His energies at a certain level in a certain time and place.

In a similar way, there are those who also serve God but do so from the invisible realms.¹⁴ God’s *pure* being resides far above the energies of the physical, mental, and emotional realms in which we are primarily experiencing. In loving kindness, He has, therefore, provided us with a whole hierarchy of the “heavenly host,” whose role it is to “step down” His radiant light into a form that we can more readily perceive and use. Thus, for example, there are the angels who work with, serve, and guide us as we go through life’s experiences in the physical realm, and who help us to grow in our knowing of the Spirit of God.

In addition, there are ascended masters, human spirit guides, saints, and spiritual teachers in the higher levels who also assist us as we evolve. Most of them have specific tasks. Some work with us as individuals; while others, especially the higher ones, work with us

¹⁴ Discussed in detail in *Staff of the Shepherd*.

collectively – with mankind or with the planet as a whole. From these higher levels, these “enlightened ones” are usually involved in focusing a specific aspect of God’s pure light. Although some of them really do have great power, they are always only intermediaries who work with the higher light that is God’s.

As an example, there are ascended masters who work with the love aspect of God, “channeling” it, in a sense, so as to make it more easily available to those of us who seek it. Others focus on the healing, wisdom, or creative energies of God. If this seems far-fetched, just think of the many familiar “patron saints” who have long been associated with different aspects of God’s love, protection, and power: St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland; St. Christopher, of travelers; St. Nicholas, of Christmas; St. Luke, of healing; St. Francis, of animals. And even Jesus said of himself, “I do nothing on my own” (Jn 8:28) and “it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work” (Jn 14:10).

While there are many possible sources of power, *all* power, whatever its source, can only come from God; there really is *no other* power.

Throughout the course of history, we have perceived some of these sources of His power, and, in our faulty understanding, we have given them names and have worshiped them. We have given our allegiance to them. We have made sacrifices to them. We have attached ourselves to them and have even gone to war for them. And because we did *not* know who they were, we have lived in awe and fear of them. We did not know that they were only different expressions of the One.

In some ways, we are still doing this today – attaching ourselves to any number of “other gods,” and forgetting that they are only aspects of the one Father of us all and the only *true* source. We do this with power, money, and personal comfort. We do this with religious and political leaders, and with national, cultural, and racial interests. In reality, we do this whenever we attach ourselves to anyone or anything but Him.

Because there is no power but God’s, the power we have worshiped in any other source, visible or invisible, human or angelic, mythical or real, is always and only His power in them. This is

the cornerstone of both Judaism and Christianity
in the Old Testament commandment:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord
is one. Love the Lord your God with all
your heart and with all your soul and with
all your strength. These commandments
that I give you today are to be upon your
hearts. Impress them on your children.
Talk about them when you sit at home
and when you walk along the road, when
you lie down and when you get up....

[Dt 6:4-7]

LOVE IS THE KEY

Referring to the two Biblical Testaments,
there is a worthwhile saying that “The New is
contained in the Old, and the Old is explained
in the New.” What this means, of course, is that
the New Testament helps to clarify some of the
more confusing teachings of the Old Testament,
while, at the same time, its basic messages can
already be found in the Old. As mentioned
before, one of Jesus’ main missions was to lead
the people of Israel into a clearer understanding
of the philosophy they already had. This is
so important for an understanding of what

God is, because when Jesus gave as the great commandment “to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves,” he also made it very clear that “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Mt 22:40).

MANY DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD

The Old Testament presents such a wide variety of teachings about God that it only stands to reason that people may be confused by it. It seems to describe a jealous and punishing God, a God to be feared, and an angry, rejecting God.¹⁵ In other passages, however, it seems to contradict itself, saying that God “does not despise men,” that He is “merciful” and “will not abandon or destroy you.”¹⁶ So, what really is the truth – is He all of these things, or are only *some* parts of the Bible “infallible words”?

To make sense out of these conflicting passages, we need only recall that God has a directly expressed and an indirectly expressed nature. Whenever His nature is directly expressed, it is characterized by the love that Jesus so strongly emphasized – for example, in his

¹⁵ Ex 20:5; Lev 19:14; Ps 78:59.

¹⁶ Job 36:5; Deut 4:31.

analogies of the loving father bringing gifts to his children; of the good shepherd with his flock; and of the gardener, the true vine, and the branches.¹⁷ All of these analogies were intended to illustrate the character of kinship and loving, which is the true relationship between God, as Source, and us as His children and expressions.

There are indeed many possible sources of power, and there are many who have been seen or might be seen as gods. These *are* also of God, but in His *indirect* expression. But the *true* God, the source of all-that-is, the source of all the “gods” is always the God of Love. There are two Biblical passages, one from the Old Testament and one from the New, which address this issue:

God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the “gods.”

[Ps 82:1]

Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

[1 Jn 4:7-8]

¹⁷Lk 11:11-13; Jn 10:11-16; Jn 15:1-17.

It really is so very simple: in order for us to come to know, serve, and express God, we must also come to know, serve, and express His Spirit of Love. There is ultimately only one power in the universe. And the hallmark of His unobstructed presence is always...Love. It is only through the Loving that we *fully* express the God-presence within us.

Chapter 4

The Personal Knowing of God

No one is going to really know God or experience His Holy Spirit by reading books (not even this one); and yet, anyone who really wants to find His presence within them can do so. It isn't really difficult. God *is* there for all of us. He isn't hiding, and He makes no demands or judgments or conditions. He just "waits," lovingly, patiently, and constantly, for any of His beloveds to seek Him. In Matthew 7:7, Jesus said, "Seek and you will find"; and it really is just that simple:

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

GOD MAKES NO DEMANDS

When we say that He “waits,” we have to put it in quotes, because He isn’t really waiting. He just IS. He just is *there*, radiating His Love on a constant and unconditional basis. And in the purity of His loving, He makes no impositions and no demands whatsoever: not even that we seek Him, not even that we want Him, not even that we recognize Him. He allows us the fullest freedom to be however we would make ourselves. He has given each of us a measure of His own creative potential, and He loves, forgives, accepts, and understands us *no matter what* we choose to do with it. This is an important part of God’s design for all creation: that we freely exercise our individual creative potential and come to know, express, and serve Him in our own time, on our own paths, and in our own ways.

WE CANNOT LOSE GOD’S LOVE

The apostle Paul writes a beautiful passage in one of his letters about God’s Love and the absolute impossibility of our being ultimately cut off or separated from it:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[Rom 8:38-39]

Many have made a great error in placing the emphasis here on Jesus, rather than on the love of God that is *in him*, which he so perfectly expressed. That same Love of God is in all of us. It is available to us constantly, and as Paul says, nothing whatsoever can separate us from that Love.

But we have to prove this for ourselves. We have to want to find that love and experience it on a personal level. It is not difficult, and yet so many of us have not found it. Many of us still feel so lost, alone, and empty. How can this be when the greatest love in all-that-is is within us just waiting to be found?

DOES ANYONE KNOW GOD'S LOVE?

If we ask ten people whether they know God's love, a few will raise their hands and say, "Oh yes." If we ask them to say more about it, they will usually describe it far short of its real fullness. It may be only an occasional thing – perhaps when they were really centered and peaceful, or maybe when they were really upset or troubled. Maybe it was when they were at a special sacred place, or when they were with a special someone. In other words, there is often some limitation of time and circumstances.

Some will say, yes, they know about God's love because they've been reading about it for years, or attending lectures and seminars. But this, by itself, is not real knowing – only an intellectual understanding, a mental *concept*.

When we ask those who say they do not know, there will be a few who would really *like* to know and are truly open to the pathway to find Him. But then there will be some who are so full of fears, doubts, or other obstacles, that they do not even really *want* to find Him. They may feel unworthy. They may fear that if they let God

into their lives, they will have to give up some things that mean a lot to them. They may fear being judged, controlled, or dominated, and in their fear, they decide not to “ask,” or “seek,” or “knock.”

In our imaginary group of ten people, we can see a number of the common obstacles that may keep us “separate” from God’s presence and His love – the obstacles that keep us from really knowing who He is, where He is, and therefore who we, ourselves, really are as extensions and expressions of Him.

LIMITING SUBCONSCIOUS BELIEFS

As mentioned earlier, we all already have some sort of understanding about God. We may have adopted the understanding of our parents, our peers, or our religious training. Because there are so many different interpretations of the Bible, we may have grown up with a limited or limiting view of God. We may have learned that He is harsh, punitive, impersonal, or any of a long list of adjectives that portray “other gods,” but not the one and true God, the God of Love. These attitudes are often subconscious. They are often hard to overcome, and they can keep us from

moving into a more complete experience of God until we make a conscious effort to explore the beliefs that we carry, and then to reevaluate and change them.

What we believe about God can be very important in determining what we experience of God and His abundant blessings. Part of our Divine heritage is the creative power of faith, and what we believe and expect is what we tend to “call” into our personal experiences. Although what we believe about God never changes the reality of what He is or what we are, our beliefs, both conscious *and subconscious*, are like magnets that either draw to us or push away from us the experiences that we consciously desire.

But not all of our beliefs come from others. In our years of growing up, we also formed our own beliefs and judgments about God. When we got hurt or abused or bullied as a child, when a loved one died, when we didn’t get what we really wanted for Christmas, we made decisions and judgments about God. This may have happened so long ago that we may not even remember it now, but if we take the time to look back in our lives, we may well find things that we held God responsible for, things that we took as proof of what God is “really” like. Maybe we decided

that He doesn't even exist, because if He did then "this or that" could not have ever happened. In any case, we made judgments, and with those judgments, we used our own creative potential to put walls between ourselves and God. But do we know of these walls? Do we still want to maintain them? Are we ready now to begin to take them down?

IN FORMER LIVES

There are also walls that we built before we were ever born into this physical life. We all come into embodiment in this world with experiences from former lives, which, however, we rarely remember on a conscious level. Many people have fears about exploring God, about living a spiritual life, or about loving and being loved, because of this part of our pasts. History is full of persecutions, ostracisms, and even torture and death as man has tried to control the beliefs and practices relating to God; and so, many of us carry subconscious fears because of what *other people* (never God) may have done to us as we searched with more open hearts than to come into the real and personal knowing of Him. These may be the very fears that we need to overcome in this life if we truly desire to know Him now.

Whatever the reasons that we turned away from God (because He has never, ever, abandoned or turned away from us), the pathway “home” is always the same – it goes back, once again, to that very simple teaching: ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the “kingdom of God within” will be opened to you.

Chapter 5

Pathways Home

Assuming that we really do want to find God and to know His loving presence inside us, how then do we go about seeking Him? It has long been taught that there are three major pathways to the knowing of God. These are the path of study, the path of service, and the path of prayer and meditation. They are not always separate, and they are not always formal, and when we are ready to actively pursue our spiritual growth, we will probably work with all three of them together.

In the ultimate sense, life *itself* is a pathway toward the knowing of God. Inherent in the design of all life, we are all on the path of evolving toward this greater knowing. But some of us have chosen an “accelerated

program” in which we sincerely desire to know ourselves and the Spirit within, and to more fully understand and take command of the lives that we lead. Others of us have not yet made such a decision. Although we are all on a journey of growth and discovery, there are those who are learning more passively, with no conscious direction, no fervent desire, and no real interest. A similar spectrum of commitment can be seen in any high school or college, as an analogy, where there are those students who are sincerely interested and involved in their courses of study, while others are just plodding along. In life, the “plodders” will evolve through trial and error over eons of time, but they are unlikely to be reading this book, so let’s focus more on the “accelerated program” and see what we can offer to those who really do want to know themselves and to find the Spirit within.

THE PATH OF STUDY

The path of study involves the active participation in learning about God. It is not just a matter of reading about God, going to lectures, or attending Bible classes. Any of these may be valid and helpful, but they are not by themselves

the path we are talking about. The study we are referring to is the study of life – in every aspect of experience. It involves opening our eyes, opening our minds, and opening our hearts to an ever-greater awareness of God, His presence, His principles, and His ongoing Self-expression. It means becoming a student of Life, in the broadest sense of the word, and on this pathway, almost any “thing” can be our teacher.

The students of life may read books but, more importantly, they also go beyond the written word and into the real meaning within it. They will pray and meditate for understanding. They will look at how a new concept has meaning in the practical living of their everyday lives. They will maintain a high level of self-awareness, growing into an ever-deepening understanding of the relationships they have with others and the relationships they have within themselves. A person can be on the path of study and *never* read a book or attend a single lecture. Whatever they do and wherever they are, though, they will glean all that they can from their ongoing experiences and use them as opportunities to move into the fuller knowing of God – into a deeper inner awareness, which is then reflected in their outer expression.

SPIRITUAL DIARY

There are many techniques we can use on the path of study. One involves keeping a journal or a “spiritual diary.” To do this, we just carry a notebook and make entries about the significant dreams, insights, and experiences we have, always with the intention that they help us progress towards greater knowing. The very process of keeping such a journal represents an unspoken request for assistance on our pathway of growth, and whenever we ask, we are always heard and always answered. Often our answers come through intuition. It is also very common for “coincidences” to start happening that are not really coincidences at all.

For example, we may “accidentally” come across a book or a movie that really helps us with some question or issue that’s been troubling us. We may start meeting people unexpectedly who have something important to say, or some part to play in an experience that ends up being especially meaningful for us. By keeping our eyes and ears open through the use of our notebooks, we begin to realize that every sincere seeking receives a response, and we begin to see the illusions of life on earth with its appearance

of separations. We begin to see the oneness that is being demonstrated all the time in our everyday experiences, and to realize that everything that ever happens to us is, in one way or another, an outward reflection of our inner relationship with God. By making ourselves students of life, we begin to discover its secrets.

On the path of study, when we read a book or watch a movie, we do so from a different perspective than before. We begin to look for what it has to teach us, not just on the surface level of what it says or what happens, but on a deeper level of what it really means – how this episode or topic holds a lesson in living. We continually open ourselves to such questions as, “How does this relate to the issues I’ve been facing? What laws of Spirit are reflected in this story? How could this help me move closer to God?” Again, we can use our journals to help us hold to our focus on growth and then to record whatever insights we find.

We can also use prayer and meditation. If we just close our books, put down our mail, turn off our televisions and computers, and go within, it is often amazing what insights will come forward. By holding regular periods of

inner silence and opening ourselves to the higher consciousness of Spirit, we can tremendously accelerate the course of our learning, whatever it is we are studying. Our sleep and dreams, and our periods of stillness and rest, also allow us to be more receptive to what Spirit *will* bring to us if we just ask – on any subject we are exploring.

EVERY SUBJECT IS SPIRITUAL

It is not uncommon for people to think that Spirit is only involved in our learning about love, truth, forgiveness, and similar “officially spiritual” subjects. But such is not the case. In reality, all subjects are equally spiritual to God. All subjects are part of His wondrous creation, and any subject can bring us closer to Him. Any subject is therefore worthy of His help. So, whether the subject of our studies is physics, gardening, dreams, personal relationships, or even stamp collecting or auto mechanics, all we need to do is ask and then just open ourselves to receive. Our own sincere desire will always open the channels through which God’s blessings will come.

THE PATH OF SERVICE

The path of service is the path of actively living the principles of Spirit by giving loving assistance to self and others. But before we go out into the world and serve others, we must know that the greatest action of service we can possibly do is to ourselves – by doing our life in a more responsible way, and by doing our meditation. Then, we can be of service out in the world serving others in some way.

Whether we are doing our meditation or serving others, it is not a matter of burden or duty, nor is it mechanical or ritualistic. It is simply living the qualities of Spirit and learning by doing. “Every good and perfect gift is from above” (Jas 1:17), and as we express God’s love, joy, peace, forgiveness, and so on, the true image and bounty of God are reflected in us, and we become the bearers of His “good and perfect gifts” unto others.

There is no real love but God’s love. There is no forgiveness but God’s forgiveness. There is no peace, or joy, or enthusiasm, or faith, or compassion, or understanding except that which

God provides through His Spirit in us. So, whenever we are truly loving, we are allowing His loving to flow through us. When we are truly living at peace, we are living in the peace of His Spirit in us. When we are truly forgiving of self or others, we are allowing the forgiveness of God to move through us. The path of service is this path of “letting our light shine,” and that light is always God’s light in us, which is why Jesus said:

You are the light of the world let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

[Mt 5:14-16]

There is an interesting story that relates to the path of service, illustrating how our good deeds really are the goodness of God being expressed through us:

There once was a woman who was feeling very alone and troubled. So, one day she went to a nearby chapel, hoping for a few minutes alone in prayer. Seeing no one else around, she began to pray aloud.

“Dear Father, if you hear me, show me a sign. Show me that you are really there and are really a God of kindness and compassion.

I feel so alone and just don't know what to do.”

At that very moment, the minister was walking by at the back of the chapel, and when he heard her distress, he reached out a hand and touched her gently on the shoulder.

Thinking it was the hand of God, she looked up, startled for a moment, until she realized it was just the minister.

“Oh,” she said, “It's only you.”

“Yes,” he replied with deep understanding, “and whose but the hand nearest you could our Father use to answer your prayer?”

Truly the goodness we show *is* God's goodness through us, and we, if we choose, can become His agents, the hands through which He reaches out to help and uplift in a troubled world. And on the path of service, we come into the fuller knowing of God by more fully *being* the expression of God. This must be a free, sincere, and selfless expression, however. If we have any other motivations, then it is not really service at all. Thus, volunteering at a church, working for a charity, or raising a family are not necessarily service, as we use the word here. Any of these *may* be valid avenues for service, but it is loving the *spirit* of service that makes it what it is.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

[1 Cor 13:2-3]

SERVING ONLY GOD

The path of service can take many forms that are not at all what we might think of as service. Very few people thought of Jesus as serving them when he confronted the temple officials, when he overturned the tables of the moneychangers, when he allowed himself to be crucified, or when he did so many of the things which surprised the people of his day because it wasn't what they expected – it was not what they thought service should be. But that's just it: service is the expression of Spirit as it moves within us, independent of the values, judgments, or reactions of others (or even of ourselves). It means living the love of God for the ultimate well-being of others. Service is serving. Period.

Jesus understood the importance of serving God, and only God, and he demonstrated this again and again in his ministry. It is shown in a

key passage from Mark:

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.

Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

[Mk 3:31-35]

SERVICE AND PERSONAL SACRIFICE

Some of us become confused about service because we think of it as a personal sacrifice. In a limited way, it is, because we are sacrificing the things of the "personal self," the ego and its attachments to the world, for the greater joy of living Spirit. But when we attach ourselves only to God and focus ourselves in our higher consciousness, above the mind and ego, then service becomes our true *desire*. We freely choose into it and truly delight in it. We begin to actively seek out new ways to express our service, and we rejoice in the opportunities that we find. Through service, we ourselves are uplifted,

and it then involves no sacrifice, regret, or sense of loss at all. If service feels like a burden, or if we resent whom it is that we are serving, then the real spirit of service is missing.

SERVICE TO OURSELVES

A related issue here is service to ourselves. Unless we are serving ourselves, we cannot truly be serving others, and whenever we neglect ourselves, then imbalance is sure to develop, which results in the stress, illness, emptiness, and unhappiness that so many of us experience. It is therefore very important for us to come into a greater awareness of what “service to ourselves” really means, and who our “inner selves” really are.

There are three aspects of the self that warrant our attention here. These can be called the child self, the conscious self, and the higher self, which are explored in more detail in the ILM book, *Love and Loving*. The first of these aspects is the playful, spontaneous, inner child, whose inherent nature it is to share the joy, enthusiasm, and loving that always characterize the child within, if an environment is provided in which he or she can feel free to express in

safety. Thus, one way to serve ourselves is by paying attention to that inner child and creating a loving environment in which he or she can laugh and play, and feel valued and accepted. So take some time each day (or at least each week) to just “kick back” and *play!* Doing this is not childish or selfish, as so many of us have grown up believing. In fact, it is an important aspect of taking care of ourselves, which then gives us the ability to offer greater service to others as well.

The second aspect, the conscious self, is the “awake and aware” part of ourselves that we usually identify with and think of as “you” and “me.” The conscious self also requires respect and nurturance. Very often we suffer because we are neglecting this aspect – usually because we are looking out for the needs of others at the *expense* of ourselves, rather than staying in balance by taking care of ourselves as well.

The third aspect of ourselves is the higher self. It is a mediator between the conscious self and the divine soul within each of us. It serves to guide the experiences of our lives, and to communicate into the conscious self the love, joy, and wisdom of the soul, which we can then

bring into the world through our relationships with others. The key feature of serving the higher self are really twofold: opening ourselves to it through prayer and meditation, and thereby learning to discern its true nature and “voice”; and establishing an open, loving, and healthy relationship with the inner child, which is the pathway through which the higher self communicates with us on a conscious level.

The world will keep calling us to act outside, to do outside and to fulfill outside, making us believe that the outer service is more important than the inner service. And yet, what we are really looking for isn't outside ourselves – it's inside. It's important to not get so caught up in the outer service that we forget the first service, which is to Spirit, inside of us. And then from that place of connection, we can go and be of service into the world in whatever form that may be.

So, the first line of service is to ourselves, and then to our mate or partner if we have one in our lives, to our children, then to our extended family, then our friends, and then out into the world. We might find that this line of service will extend out “just so far.” We don't need to stretch ourselves beyond that because we may stretch too

far and throw ourselves out of balance, lose our center, lose our focus, and then begin to make service outside ourselves more important.

When we are truly taking care of these three aspects of ourselves, then service becomes a natural part of our self-expression. The light of our souls can now begin to shine ever more fully through us. As we begin to share this light of love, joy, and abundance with others, we'll discover the greatest fulfillment we can ever find on earth. It is never a trade-off of serving self OR serving others; when a genuine and spontaneous desire to share is really the source of our service, then serving self and serving others really become one and the same.

THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

When our service comes from a pure heart and a sincere desire, we have an opportunity to find the true *joy* of service, and the goodness we bring forth to others we, also, share within ourselves. On the other hand, when an inner-directed and heartfelt desire is missing, then our service can never bring us real joy, and when this happens, how can we possibly truly be in service to ourselves?

Most of us have had the disappointing experience of trying to serve others in ways that were *not* comfortable, not fulfilling, and not uplifting to ourselves. Perhaps we were acting from the belief that we *should* do “this or that.” Maybe we were following the voice of our fears, or guilt, or sense of obligation, or maybe we were allowing ourselves to be persuaded or coerced by others. Often our motivations have been colored by subconscious expectations – to be loved, rewarded, or appreciated. None of these can be the source of true service, which can only originate in a pure heart and a sincere desire to serve – freely and without thought of return. If we associate our experiences of service with pain or loss, we would benefit from retracing our footsteps and looking into what other factors may have been involved.

True service is always more a reflection of our inner relationship with God than our outer relationships in the world. It is the effortless and joyous expression of Spirit as it flows outward from within us. In this way, our service, like Jesus’, stands independent of the responses or reactions of the world. Because the same Spirit that moves in us also moves in all creation, there will *usually* be a positive response

from those we serve, but we have to be careful not to expect or rely on this, nor to judge our service based on its outcomes in the world. Instead, we must “judge” (that is, discern) our service based only on its origin in the purity of loving within our own hearts.

FORMS OF SERVICE

The outer forms of service that any one of us might choose can vary greatly. Some of us may provide service to the environment or to nature. Some may serve their family and friends. Others may work on a planetary level, offering service toward social, political, or economic reform. For some, their service may be formal, like joining Big Brothers or Big Sisters. For others, it may be very informal, like picking up the litter that they see on the sidewalk, or making a point to give words of kindness or encouragement to others wherever they go. Some may work more on the “inner planes,” offering prayers and blessings on behalf of others or even humanity as a whole. Whatever the form, what these all have in common is the active and joyful expressing of God’s Loving into the world through them – simply giving for the sake of being of service.

There is a familiar saying that “we can’t really give what we don’t really have,” and yet we all have *something* to give. We may not believe this, and yet all of us are *already* giving; it may just be a few minutes of our time – in a word or act of kindness, in listening to others with caring, or in just offering a simple smile. As long as we are giving, we are opening ourselves to the Loving of God, even if we don’t think of it as such or feel it in any dramatic way. This “little” giving can be a starting point from which the path of service can bring us into the greater knowing of God and His active loving.

Truly, as we open ourselves to the Loving of God that flows through us to others in service, we receive all that we need to continue to give. When we are “about our Father’s business,”¹⁸ all that we need comes to us almost magically as we need it, and this includes not just the intangibles – the loving, the inspiration, the understanding, and so on, but also all the *material* things that we need for our service. But of course this isn’t really magic – it is another demonstration of the oneness of all, and another indication of God’s greater life being lived through us.

¹⁸Lk 2:29 (KJV).

This is why Jesus so often emphasized the importance of seeking God, seeking only God, and taking “no thought”¹⁹ for anything else. When we are centered in the Spirit within ourselves, we are centered in the Spirit of God, and everything else is taken care of. There really is no reason to worry or doubt or fear.

When we are living the spirit of service and sharing the spirit of loving with others, we feel at least as much of the fullness of that loving as they do. When Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), he was referring to this joy that just naturally comes to us as we participate in *God’s* service and as we allow ourselves to be instruments of His loving. When we are living the spirit of service, the joy we bring to others is also shared within, and the peace we bring to others is also felt within. This is an important key to the truth of service: we “get back what we send out,” and in giving to others we truly give to ourselves as well. It isn’t a trade-off. It’s just living the oneness we all share in God, and this by itself is the greatest joy there ever can be.

¹⁹“Take no thought for your life” (Lk 12:22, KJV); “do not worry about your life” in NIV.

Chapter 6

The Inner Pathway

The third major pathway to the knowing of God is the path of prayer and meditation. This is the path of the inner journey. It is the active pursuit of the Spirit within by spending time each day in communion with God. There are many forms of prayer and meditation, and various schools of thought have defined the terms differently. We use the terms here as ways of focusing our complete attention on Spirit as it resides *within us*, rather than Spirit as it expresses itself in the outer world.

Prayer and meditation are both very broad subjects that warrant whole books being written about them. The basic understanding behind both, however, is revealed in two Biblical passages:

The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you.

[Lk 17:20-21]

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

[1 Cor 3:16]

We can think of the kingdom of God as a palace, and the Spirit of God as the king who lives within it. In prayer and meditation, we seek to focus our complete attention into that kingdom and the Spirit of God, so that we can have firsthand experience of Him, and see, hear, feel, and know Him as a living presence within our own being.

This is a process that takes time, discipline, and ongoing commitment. It's not just something we do once or twice and then we're done. In both prayer and meditation, we move through successive stages, and we learn to avoid the distractions that surface as we focus ever more deeply into the silence and stillness of the Spirit within – the distractions of the physical body, the distractions of our thoughts and emotions, and the distractions of the many wonderful, yet

potentially misleading “mansions” or “lower” psychic realms, and beings²⁰ in the many levels of God’s vast inner creation.

PRAYER AS A FORM OF COMMUNION

In a very broad sense, any wish or desire can be considered a prayer. Whether secret or shared, silent or aloud, conscious or even subconscious, our desires are aspects of a creative process, and that which we desire we “call” into our experience. But this is a very loose application of the term *prayer*. Although our wishes and desires are important aspects of our creative potential, they do not necessarily have anything to do with our evolving relationship with God on a conscious, intentional level, and so this is not included here in our discussion of prayer as a pathway to Him.

In a similar way, there are those who teach that our thoughts, expectations, and beliefs are prayers. They recognize that every thought we hold, whether positive or negative, helpful or limiting, conscious or subconscious, promotes the experiences that accord with them.

²⁰“In my Father’s house are many mansions” (Jn 14:2, KJV). This subject is covered in detail in the ILM book, *The Staff of the Shepherd*.

While this process does occur and again reflects our creative potential, it does not necessarily relate to our conscious relationship with God. By defining prayer and meditation in terms of the active pursuit of the Spirit within, we can limit our focus to that which is more useful as one of the three major pathways of spiritual growth.

THE INNER SANCTUM

From this perspective, prayer begins by creating a special place within us where we can meet and share with God in the silence of our own “inner sanctum.” A *sanctum* is “a sacred place” or “a private room where one is not to be disturbed,”²¹ and this is very much what we want to create within ourselves for our time of sharing with God. Jesus referred to this as our “closet”:

When thou prayest, enter into thy closet,
and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to
thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father
which seeth in secret shall reward thee
openly.

[Mt 6:6, KJV]²²

²¹ Webster’s New World Dictionary, Warner Books, New York, 1990, paperback edition, page 520.

²² “When you pray, go into your room...” in NIV.

By creating such a special place inside us, we provide an avenue through which it becomes easier and easier to find our inner silence and to attune ourselves to the Spirit within us. Before long, all we need to do is focus on our inner sanctum, and we will instantly feel the subtle response of Spirit, wherever we are and whatever we are doing in the “real world” of our daily activities.

When we pray, we then go to that special inner place and simply share with Him. We can just talk, silently or aloud, about anything whatsoever that is of interest or of concern to us. It might be about our daily lives and what we’ve been doing. It might involve asking God for things that we desire in our lives, or describing the things that we’d like to see changed. In this time of inner communion, we can also offer prayers for other people, asking God to assist them towards greater peace, health, wisdom, or prosperity. We can also simply “hold, in the light” any person or situation that we would like to see uplifted into the peace, wisdom, and healing of Spirit. We could, for example, visualize a troubled area of the world, or even the planet itself, surrounded and uplifted into the loving presence and guidance of God.

Whenever we pray, though, we should be aware that we, at this level, only see a small portion of all that is ever involved, whether in our own lives or the lives of others, and so the “attitude of release” is important no matter what it is we are focusing upon. Jesus expressed this attitude when he said, “Not as I will, but as you will” (Mt 26:39), and such a statement of release is a good way to end any of our prayers. In truth, prayer is really for us – prayer acts as a means to remind us of God, and it serves as a means to draw ourselves closer to Him throughout every moment of our day.

LIMITING BELIEFS ABOUT PRAYER

Some of us have grown up believing that only certain things are worthy of God’s time and attention. We might feel guilty or ashamed to talk with Him about the “little things,” or the private things that concern us. And yet, there simply is no thing too small, too petty, or too private to share with Him. His infinite Loving and Understanding are always offered to us, and in having the courage to share openly with Him, we can begin to experience and participate in a similar loving and understanding of ourselves and others as well.

There are also many of us who have grown up believing that prayer is something formalized—that we have to recite certain prayers for this and other prayers for that, as though it is not okay to just talk from our hearts to God as a wise and caring friend, who understands us no matter how simply or informally we express ourselves. The fact is that He lovingly understands us before we even speak, and anything we sincerely share with Him will always receive His compassion and response.

But prayer does not have to involve talking at all. We can go into our inner, private place of stillness and simply be with God, sharing our loving with Him and allowing ourselves to be uplifted in His Spirit. It is said that the deepest friendships can simply and joyously be shared in silence; that no words need to be expressed for true friends to share comfortably together. Such fulfilling moments of sharing in silence can certainly be part of our “friendship” with God as well, and *friendship* is actually a very meaningful analogy.

No truly loving friend would judge us, condemn us, or seek to control us. No truly loving friend would laugh at us or belittle us.

Nor would any truly loving friend turn us away when we feel in need. Naturally, God does not do any of these things, either. God is indeed all-loving, all-forgiving, all-compassionate and understanding. All we need to do is invite Him to share with us, and then we will see how true this really is.

HOW MEDITATION DIFFERS

Although prayer and meditation are aspects of the same inner pathway towards the knowing of God, they are not really the same. A simple way of delineating the difference is to say that prayer is a way of talking to God, while meditation is a way of *listening* to God; but this is only partly true. It is more accurate to say that whereas prayer involves talking and sharing with God, meditation is a way of moving our consciousness into the direct *experience* of God. While prayer involves the perspective of “I” interacting with “Thee,” meditation allows us to experience from the perspective of the oneness we share in Him.

As with *prayer*, the term *meditation* has been used with a variety of meanings. In the broadest definition, it has referred to the focus of our attention, whether as a formal discipline or

just as a matter of subconscious habit. It has also (very often) been applied to a variety of structured exercises, such as relaxation, self-suggestion, and creative visualization techniques. While any of these exercises can be very helpful, they do not always or necessarily relate to the active pursuit of Spirit. Just as with *prayer*, we will therefore reserve the term here to refer to the conscious and intentional development of our inner relationship with God.

In contrast to both prayer and the various exercises that have been *called* meditation, true meditation always begins with concentration on a single point of focus. If we are using meditation as a pathway to God, we will choose a particular point of focus on this path, such as the love of God, the compassion of God, the sound or light of God, or simply the presence of God.

In fact, there are four aspects of meditation, which can be summarized as: concentration, contemplation, passive meditation, and active meditation. It is worth taking a moment to clarify what each of these involves, and then to present an exercise that may be helpful for those of us just beginning on this powerful pathway to the knowing of God.

CONCENTRATION

Concentration involves holding the mind still and centered on a single point of focus. It is an important beginning step for the more advanced levels of meditation, because it helps us to discipline the mind and body so that we really *can* become still and receptive to Spirit, within us. The practice of concentration offers many benefits just by itself – relaxation, inner peace, greater self-awareness, and a greater ability to distinguish our true selves from the many other voices that can play on the “screens” of our minds. But, as wonderful as it is, there is so much more, and to stop here would keep us from moving on into the ever-greater blessings that lie ahead. Thus, the best way to think of concentration is really as a way of making ourselves *ready* to move on towards the ever-greater discovery of the God-presence within.

In concentration, we can choose almost any thing as our focal point. It could be the flowing in and flowing out of our breath. It could be a musical tone or a chanted mantra. It could be a spot on the wall. There really is no end to the list of possible subjects for a concentration exercise, although

the most productive ones are those that not only help us to discipline our minds and bodies, but that bring us into greater alignment with Spirit as well. Thus, concentration on the presence, the qualities, or on the “sound and light” of God are most recommended.

Concentration is really the all-important first step at *every* level of meditation. Without a strong ability to hold a chosen point of focus, we run the risk of being sidetracked into any of a variety of possible detours that keep us from the experience of God at the highest levels. That is, without the ability to hold to the subject of our meditation, it is easy for us to be distracted, and this is more than just the physical, emotional, or mental distraction we might expect.

As we move beyond concentration into the higher levels of meditation, we begin to follow an energy current – for example, the radiant loving of God. In a way, it’s like swimming up a river in which only a very strong and determined swimmer has a chance to reach the source. As we move higher and higher in our meditations, we begin to find so many places of interest that it

is tempting to stop and explore them, even though the “river” moves further and further beyond. But we must avoid the temptation to stop and linger if the Source is what we really desire, and it is concentration that gives us the strength we need to reach to the *highest* levels within. It is concentration, paired with sincere desire that takes us into God. And the challenges involved in concentration become more and more subtle, and thus more and more demanding, as we move ever higher within.

CONTEMPLATION

Once we have learned to become still and to hold a focus, we are ready to move on into contemplation. As we use the term here, contemplation involves a union of consciousness with the subject of our focus – actually moving into a state of oneness with it so that we can discover its “secrets” and reach an inner knowing of it. It is a process that is hard to describe to someone who hasn’t experienced it, and yet this inner union is entirely possible.

Although we could contemplate anything whatsoever in creation, the contemplations that will be most helpful to us are those that, as in concentration, relate to the Spirit of God. But

contemplation *differs* from concentration in that it is not so much the specific point of focus that steers the course of our experience but our sincere desire that takes us where we want to go.

Thus, for example, we could contemplate anything from a light bulb or a tomato, to a particular person or some moment in history. We could contemplate an illness or contemplate a problem. We could also contemplate a quality, such as love, acceptance, forgiveness, or compassion. Obviously, there is no end to possible subjects, and we really could *literally* contemplate our navels. As we've said, however, contemplation is very much directed by what it is we are hoping to accomplish, and not just by the subject of our focus. Thus, a farmer contemplating a tomato so as to have a better harvest and make more money will have a very different experience than the person who contemplates the same tomato as a vehicle for learning about God and His creation.

When I was a child and was learning about the different aspects of meditation, one of my teachers told me to take a mustard seed, hold it in my hand, and ask the mustard seed to talk to me about faith and about growth and about life.

At first I thought, “This is really odd,” but I did it, and for several days I spent time in my inner silence with this mustard seed.

After several days of focusing my attention on it through concentration, I began to move into a new level in which I could start to really sense the life within it. I was moving beyond concentration into contemplation. As I got more and more into the experience of that seed, I began to “hear” a wisdom that I never knew existed in nature. But it wasn’t really hearing at all; it was just coming into an inner realization that gave me a deeper understanding and a deeper respect for all life.

From such a simple exercise, I began to see how I could move beyond myself and start to receive from other parts of the universe, whether it was from a seed, a tree, other solar systems, or even other spiritual planes. All the while, though, I knew this was just another stage in my learning – that I would be moving on into something more, although I didn’t know then just what that “more” would be.

After a while, I began to understand that, with all its power and beauty, contemplation, like

concentration, has its limitations: no matter what it is we contemplate, or even why we may have chosen to contemplate it, this aspect of meditation always involves learning *about* God and the many aspects of His creation. It never moves us into the real, direct experience of God. This experience, I later found out, was what my teachers were preparing me for, and I would never get there through contemplation alone.

PASSIVE MEDITATION

The next aspect of meditation is passive meditation. Here, we simply make ourselves like a TV satellite dish, a “receiving dish” that is open to any and all things that may be coming to us, without necessarily knowing the source of the energy or influence we are receiving.

Passive meditation is what underlies a great deal of psychic phenomena, and although such phenomena may be fascinating, there is a potential danger to making ourselves *passively* open and receptive: what we receive in this type of meditation can often be very misleading because of the lack of control over what exactly is coming to us and from what level it really has come. We mention passive meditation here simply because

it is so commonly practiced, and we should consider it in the broader perspective of how it compares with the other forms of meditation.

If we use the analogy of a swimmer once again, it is concentration that allows him to stay in the current and develop the strength he will need to begin to move upstream. Contemplation allows the swimmer to choose a particular place in the river and to rest there by moving towards it and then holding on to it. Passive meditation allows him to float, and so to experience the river wherever it might take him. But active meditation, like active swimming, is the only way he will keep moving towards the source. It is thus concentration, contemplation, and *active* meditation that are the progressive levels of self-development on the inner pathway to God.

ACTIVE MEDITATION

In active meditation, we consciously and continually hold the desire to find God at the highest levels and to avoid being led into anything else. Holding this desire during meditation is like the paddling of our swimmer as he strives to move upstream; and with this focused desire, we

hold to the inner spiritual current no matter what colorful, interesting, or seemingly meaningful distractions arise along the way. When we develop our “strength” through the practice of concentration, we’ll have all that we need to awaken into Spirit and to awaken into our own soul.

There is an ancient saying that, “we become like that upon which we meditate,” and as we select God as our point of focus, we do indeed become more like Him. So, in meditation, the idea is to actively and continually ask only for God. With the opportunity available to find Him within us, why ask for things in the world? Why ask for relaxation or for understanding by themselves? Instead, we can ask for God, ask to experience God, ask to know God, ask to hear and see God. As we do this with sincerity, real openness, and persistence, it is truly amazing what begins to happen for us. In God, there is no lack, and in terms of the things that we *really* need,

... your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

[Mt 6:32-33]

Through our practice of concentration and contemplation, we learn to discern the current of the “river.” And we develop the ability to hold a focus in the flow of His loving radiance. In active meditation, we then follow this loving energy, allowing it to lift us ever higher into Him.

Again, this is something that is hard to describe to someone who hasn’t experienced it, but the power and potential of active meditation are truly awe-inspiring. Through its practice, so much that has always been theory will be proven to us as fact. We will come to really know His living presence within us. We will come to know of our oneness with Him and all life. We will have the direct experience of God. How can that possibly be described in words?

A CONCENTRATION EXERCISE

What follows is one example of how to begin to meditate on the presence of God. Of course, meditation is a discipline that should be practiced at least daily. For newcomers, it may be some time before results are seen but results *will* come. For some people, these results may

be more dramatic, while for others they may be more subtle. But, and this is very important, we must practice meditation as a pure discipline – free of all attachments and expectations. It is by letting go of anything that keeps us from being fully in the moment that we discover the Spirit within us, and it is only in this way that meditation can bring us its gifts.

Find a quiet and comfortable place where you will not be disturbed for half an hour or so. Because we tend to be creatures of habit, it is worthwhile to choose a *regular* time and place, such as before work each morning, sitting in the living room.

Begin by lighting a candle in front of you, to provide a point of focus which we will be referring to later in this exercise. Then, allow yourself to become very still, sitting in a chair or on a cushion on the floor. The exact posture is not so important, as long as the spine is straight, not leaning back, and the head is erect. With experience, we find the position that works best for us, but sitting is recommended, at least for beginners. If you find that you have a tendency

to fall asleep, sitting on a cushion on the floor or sitting at the edge of a bed may work best.

Then, close your eyes and begin with a simple prayer, such as:

Lord God, in this moment, I sincerely ask to find Your presence within. I open myself to You, making myself available on all levels within me: physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. I ask to remain awake and aware throughout this meditation, and to bring back to my conscious awareness the full memory and knowing of my experience.

Such a prayer can be a very helpful way to begin, although the exact words are never as important as the attitude of sincere desire and true openness.

Next, mentally examine your physical body. Just slowly observe each area, and wherever you find tension or tightness, allow yourself to relax and let it go. It might be helpful to affirm a few times, “I *am* relaxed and comfortable. I allow myself to be fully at peace.”

Some readers may find this very easy, while others may need to practice just these first steps through several sessions. Until the physical body is still, there is little point in going any further; so physical stillness is important to master. Don't worry – it will come with practice. An exercise that can help us relax is to simply observe the flowing in and flowing out of our breathing. Our minds may begin to wander, but if this happens, gently returning to a focus on the breath is all that is necessary to bring us back into the exercise.

Once we are still and relaxed, we begin to concentrate on a selected point of focus. For this example, we'll use the image of the candle flame, although other images can work just as well. So, imagine a candle flame shining gently in the center of your head, just above the eyes in what has been called the "brow center" or "third eye center." We will refer to it as the "spiritual eye center." Focusing our attention at the spiritual eye center is important because it is just above the physical eyes that we find the seat of the spiritual levels within us.

If you have trouble visualizing the candle, open your eyes and look at the real candle for a few moments. Then close your eyes again and see the image of the candle at the spiritual eye center. With practice, you should more easily be able to visualize the candle flame whenever you wish. Let that flame represent the Spirit within. Remember that this is just a focal point; our real focus is on Spirit which the candle flame only serves to represent.

Before moving on, we should emphasize that not everyone is equally adept at visualization. Some people may find it easier to simply *feel* the presence of the Spirit within, and holding their attention on the flame, even in a non-visual way, will help them connect to this inner presence. So, if you are able to visualize the flame, that's fine, but if not, just allow it to bring you into attunement with the presence of Spirit through its inner feeling.

As you now begin to focus on this image, let yourself be receptive, and again express your loving and purpose, perhaps with a silent

prayer such as, “Heavenly Father, I open my heart to You. Fill me with Your Holy Presence that I may find Your Self in me.”

And now, begin to observe the image of the candle flame. Hold this focus for as long as you comfortably can. At first, it may be only a very few minutes. Whatever time it is, though, is a fine beginning from which to build through continued practice. Gradually extend this time period, just holding a focus on the image of the flame and offering an open heart to the presence of Spirit. Don’t push or force it. When we are really tired or really fighting within ourselves, it is usually better to pause, and to come back to it, once again, a little later.

COMMON CHALLENGES

Although an exercise like the one described above might seem very simple, it can be very challenging for us in the beginning. We often find our bodies complaining that they’re tired or hungry or uncomfortable, so the first challenge for us is disciplining the body. This comes naturally with practice. We may also find our

emotions “complaining” – perhaps some anger or fear or sadness we didn’t even know was there begins to surface into our awareness. If so, don’t judge or fight it. Just allow it to be part of the process of moving deeper into the stillness; let the feelings rise and move on through, but don’t dwell on them and then lose sight of the exercise.

One of the most common and persistent challenges is the wandering of the mind, which we’ve alluded to before. We may find ourselves drifting away into thoughts about our work, or our families, or the time, or the purpose of the exercise. We can think of any number of things, however this is a time for concentration – we can do our thinking and planning later. So, whenever the mind begins to wander, just return to the image of the candle flame. Gradually the mind will become disciplined and will stop trying to pull us away.

The mind presents a challenge in another regard, however. As we become more skilled at concentration, we literally begin to move our consciousness inside ourselves and “go within.” As we do so, we begin to actually see and feel the opening of the channels that connect us with the higher levels within us. We may begin to hear

sounds, like the tinkling of bells, the chirping of birds, the sound of a conch, or a chorus of angels. We may hear voices or see “film strips” that play on the screens of our minds. We will often see lights and colors that are truly fascinating.

Sometimes these experiences will have value for us, but often they are not what they seem, and we can easily be distracted from our purpose of seeking “the kingdom of God.” Whatever the source or nature of these inner experiences, our response should always be the same: to experience whatever is happening without letting the mind start thinking about what is happening. In other words, we must strive to remain as disinterested observers, staying as relaxed as possible while maintaining the attitude, and the desire, to go *only* to God.

Remember that God’s real nature is one of Loving Beingness, and any words or images are therefore at best just *reflections* of His presence. So, go for the real Presence. Go for the Loving in which all else is found. And the way to do this is to constantly choose back into the stillness, and allow the sights and sounds to draw the conscious awareness ever higher into the pure God-Presence within.

CONCENTRATION EXERCISE SUMMARY

To summarize this meditative exercise, find a quiet, comfortable place, and then:

1) Light a candle, close your eyes ... and ask inwardly to be uplifted into Spirit.

2) Relax as fully as you can ... focusing on your breathing if necessary to bring you into a place of quiet and rest.

3) Open your eyes and rest your vision upon the candle flame, then close your eyes and imagine a candle flame at the spiritual eye center ... hold your attention in strict concentration on this single point of focus.

4) Avoid physical, emotional, and mental distractions ... by gently returning to the image of the flame.

5) Maintain the “role of the observer” as you begin to go within ... and actively hold your loving focus on God.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Those of us who are able to achieve inner stillness and hold our focus of concentration are ready to move on into active meditation. But if this is still difficult, then continuing to practice an exercise such as the one described here will help us to become ready for more advanced techniques.

Through concentration exercises like this one, we will eventually, suddenly, and almost “magically,” find ourselves “within.” Then, as we maintain the role of the observer and maintain the desire to find only God, we’ll begin to feel drawn to one or another avenue that will take us ever higher into His Spirit. This avenue may be a shining and radiant light. It may be a sound, like a large gong or the rushing of the wind. It may be a feeling of inner peace or an uplifting presence of love. Any of these can then become pathways by which we can move into the active meditation that will take us directly into God; once we have our “river,” we can begin to “swim upstream” and follow it to its Source.

These pathways really are much like inner rivers, and the way that we actively “swim upstream” is by continually holding a fervent and

ever-strengthening desire for God and only God. As we do this, we actually allow Him to pull us upwards and towards His “kingdom” within us. With persistence and sincere desire, we will find ourselves moving higher and higher into His loving heart. Paul alluded to this journey in saying:

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face-to-face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
[1 Cor 13:12, KJV]²³

For some of us when we first begin meditation we may find that the life flow is a down and out movement into experience and that when we begin to meditate it feels like we’re going upstream against the current. As we practice active meditation on a daily basis, it is the loving current of the Holy Spirit that will lift the soul upward out of the down and out currents of the world. Once we actually find that “river” of Loving inside, moving in us and through us, we will eventually begin to move more

²³ In NIV: “Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

easily with the current inwards and upwards, instead of feeling like we're always fighting against it. We will also begin to "bring back" His loving, healing radiance when we return to an outer focus at this level of our being, and will thus begin to take the Loving with us into our experiences in the world. But this is not something we can learn by reading. It is something we can only discover by doing.

Chapter 7

Our Right Relationship with God

Many of us feel a long way from experiencing God's Loving and from living in constant alignment with God. Maybe we haven't really been dedicated students of life. We may not be meditating every single day. Or at times we may get so caught up in everyday life that it is we who forget God altogether. We may then begin to feel guilty or inadequate, and think that we've lost (or never even found) our "right relationship" with God. Perhaps we want now to experience His Loving and live as His children, but this may seem so hard or so very far away. Yet such thoughts of limitation are always a myth because we are all children of God *right now*, and any guilt or inadequacy we may be feeling is not coming from God, who sees us *only* with love and acceptance.

Our right relationship with God really is whatever it is right now. As soon as we decide that our relationship with Him is “wrong,” we separate our personal awareness from Him. We enter into negativity and judgments, which then create barriers between ourselves at this level of our being and the loving Spirit of God within us. God doesn’t judge us. He doesn’t separate Himself from us. But as soon as we decide that our relationship with Him is somehow wrong, we step into our worldly and judgmental selves, seeing things in terms of the world’s dualities of good and bad, right and wrong, better and worse, and so on. Whenever we do this, we step aside from His loving Spirit of acceptance, forgiveness, and infinite understanding. This stepping aside then causes us to distance ourselves from the very presence of loving with which we are now seeking to reestablish a right relationship.

So, the first step in establishing our right relationship with God is to see it as “right” right now. Our relationship with God will always be right; it will always be what perfectly represents our unfolding understanding and expression of Him, and *this* is what He most wants for us. This is how He has created us to be, and if we are to become more like the God in whose image we

are created, we must begin to adopt the same attitude of loving acceptance of ourselves and of others, free of demands, free of judgments, and free of expectations.

Every human being is an expression of God. Every one of us is living as a child of God and in the light of God *now*. The difference, however, is in the degree to which we *know* ourselves to be His children, and in the thoughts and actions we express as we develop this awareness of our true identity. The only way we can really begin to come into the full awareness of ourselves is to adopt the same loving understanding towards ourselves that He has already.

Many of us may not realize how necessary it is to establish right relationships within ourselves *before* we can establish right relationships with others, or with God. But this really is true, and it is equally amazing how all of the relationships *outside* ourselves reflect something about the relationships we have *inside* ourselves. As we develop and grow within ourselves, we often see our relationships with others evolving, growing, and changing as well. But this is no coincidence. It can be said that “the world is our

mirror,” and, if we look closely, we can see how the world is *constantly* “reflecting” back to us that which we send out into it.

THREE KEY LAWS OF SPIRIT

There are three simple laws of Spirit that characterize God’s relationship with us, and give us a framework within which to begin to relate, first to ourselves, then to others, and then to God. These three key laws are Acceptance, Enthusiasm, and Understanding. They are basic and eternal characteristics of how God, in His Loving, relates to us and to all of His creation.

THE LAW OF ACCEPTANCE

God’s Spirit is a radiating light of Love, and in His constant Loving, He fully accepts all that is, right here and right now. There is no judgment. There is just the knowing that His plan is unfolding for each of His children to experience all that they desire and all that they choose as they come into the greater knowing of their oneness in Him – their oneness as living expressions *of* Him.

We can choose to live our lives with this same spirit of acceptance. We can make a

decision to live in the here and now, without judgments of any kind. Instead of judging, we can begin to look at ourselves, at others, and at all life with loving, which is how God looks at *everything*. As we do so, we begin to experience more and more of the loving and accepting nature of God as it resides within us. In a real sense, living the law of acceptance moves us into the love that is God's Loving.

As we begin to love and accept ourselves and others, changes are sure to happen in the world around us. We may find that others just naturally seem to become more respectful, more accepting, and more loving of *us*. We may find the world reflecting to us the loving we express. Even if we never say a word about what it is we are trying to change inside, others usually seem to notice and respond accordingly.

Many of us have spent years and years looking for love, respect, and acceptance from others, and so often we have been disappointed. For some, this has become a vicious cycle: we keep getting discounted or rejected; we then find it ever harder to feel loving and accepting of ourselves; and our lack of self-acceptance then

continues to be reflected in *more* lack of acceptance from others. So we start to look for new ways to “win friends and influence people” – but it can never really work this way. On the other hand, when we begin with the loving acceptance that is already there in the Spirit within us, then the world quickly begins to mirror the loving acceptance we now have of ourselves.

THE LAW OF ENTHUSIASM

The second key law of Spirit is enthusiasm, and indeed God radiates a joyous enthusiasm and a true delight in the dancing interplay of life on every level. Seen from His perspective, there is no real death; there is no lasting sorrow or tragedy. Absolutely everything is a purposeful choreography of unfolding experience. “Play, have fun, enjoy yourselves!” is the attitude of enthusiasm that constantly emanates from the Spirit of God inside us. But we don’t always hear it. We don’t always trust it. We don’t always share in that same joy of self-expression and that same wonder of life. This is never God’s doing; it is ours.

In the paths of learning and experience that we have chosen, we often become separated from

the awareness of His joyful presence within us, but at any time we can begin to rekindle our enthusiasm. We can choose to laugh and play and to find again the wonder in living that characterizes the child inside us. We can let go of the burden and struggle of life and have faith in God, knowing that *our lives are His life in us* and all that we need *will* be provided for us. We can stop taking life *so* seriously and begin to just enjoy the adventure of learning, because that is what this life is really all about. “Play, have fun, enjoy yourselves!” can become an attitude that we adopt as well.

By developing our own enthusiasm, we begin to move ourselves into the joy of God within us, just as acceptance moves us into His Loving. Without enthusiasm, it is hard for us to find true joy, because we are then living under the pressure of what we “have to do” instead of what we freely choose into and really *want* to do. Instead of following the radiance of Spirit as it moves within us, we then live under “the tyranny of the shoulds,” and our lives become a drudgery. An important key, therefore, is to let our inner enthusiasm guide us in the things that fill our days. It is what we do with enthusiasm that can lead us to the joy we seek.

Once again, though, many of us have become caught in a vicious cycle of looking to our outer experiences in the world to bring us enthusiasm. We have not yet realized *how much* enthusiasm we already have within us and need only look within and find it. As soon as we begin to express it, then the world acts as our mirror; we then begin to find enthusiasm for so many people, places, and things, and as we now become more enthusiastic, more and more joy begins to come to us as well.

Most children, for example, are inherently enthusiastic – full of creativity, curiosity, and spontaneity. They seem to just bubble with enthusiasm. To them, everything is filled with fascination and wonder, and they seem to find joy in the littlest things. It is this childlike energy and zest for living that characterizes enthusiasm, and this is what we can strive to find once again within us.

It is interesting that the origin of the word *enthusiasm* is the Greek *en* (in) + *theos* (God), which means to be inspired or possessed by God. We all have God within us, and thus we can all be enthusiastic. All we need to do is remove that which blocks us from our experience of His radiant, creative energy that is alive within us all.

But how do we find enthusiasm if we're not experiencing it now? There really are many ways – we'll look at three of them, any of which can be a powerful tool if we work with it with persistence and sincere desire.

THE “REFERENCING” TECHNIQUE

Referencing is a technique that involves searching our memory for a time when we felt a particular feeling and were able to call it by its name. In this case, we are looking for a time when we experienced enthusiasm and recognized it as such.

At first, we may think, “Well, I can't remember *any* time when I felt that way,” but we have all experienced enthusiasm. Maybe it was when we were children on Christmas morning, and we were just overflowing with eagerness to get to the presents that were waiting for us under the Christmas tree. How about when we first moved to a new town, started a new job, or first met our partners or spouses? The enthusiasm may or may not still be there, but if we look, we can surely find a time when it was.

It really doesn't matter what the memory might be; it just needs to be an incident that helps us reconnect to the awareness of enthusiasm and what it feels like within us. Once we have that awareness, we can always choose back into it wherever we are, because enthusiasm is of the Spirit within us, not actually of the memory by itself.

As a young child, I used to go with my parents for drives in the country almost every Sunday afternoon. We would just enjoy the scenery and then stop for something to eat. It was a special time for me, and I used to look forward to it because it was always so much fun.

When I think back and remember how I felt as I looked forward to the adventures we would have when Sunday came around, I can even now feel a certain movement within me – a certain eagerness and an “Oh, boy!” Such a memory reconnects me to my enthusiasm, and I can use this memory whenever I get stuck in the routine or the busyness of everyday life. I just “reference” into that feeling and then apply it to whatever I'm doing in the here and now. I find the enthusiasm inside me by looking into the past,

and then I bring it forward into the present in whatever I'm doing now. In this way, I usually find that whatever I'm doing becomes more of an adventure and much more fun.

CONTEMPLATING ENTHUSIASM

A second technique we can use to develop enthusiasm is to contemplate it, as a quality of the Spirit within us. We simply choose a point of focus that represents enthusiasm and then concentrate on it for, say, twenty minutes or more. The subject of our contemplation is enthusiasm, but our focal point might be a radiant light, a bubbling brook, an inner chord of music, or even just the word *enthusiasm*.

As we focus our attention on the point we have chosen, we will gradually start to feel the movement of that quality of enthusiasm within us. This technique may require practice, especially if it is hard for us to be still and to stay focused, but the enthusiasm is already there; all we are doing is bringing our conscious awareness into alignment with that inner presence. With practice, we will feel our enthusiasm begin to grow stronger and stronger, and we'll find it becoming more and more a part of our ongoing

experience; we can then take this creative energy of joyous self-expression out into the world and share it with others.

THE “JUMP-START” TECHNIQUE

“Jump-starting” is, of course, a term that relates to starting a car that, because of a drained battery, just doesn’t seem to want to turn over. When it comes to having enthusiasm, we often feel drained as well, and it can seem so hard for us to muster the energy to go out, get started, and do. With the following “jump-start” method, we simply make an effort, however small, to project some enthusiasm into an area of our lives, and then allow the enthusiasm to grow from this little “boost.” We can let this be like an experiment in living, just trying something new and then observing what happens – both for ourselves and for others involved as well.

For example, as an exercise, we could purposely choose to do something new and creative in the workplace – perhaps bringing some flowers to brighten up the space, making a point of giving our co-workers some extra praise or encouragement, or even something as simple as offering people a warm and caring smile. We will often find that our own effort to bring some

new interest, energy, and excitement to others begins to spark an enthusiastic response in them as well. Then the energy of enthusiasm begins to multiply, and we come to see that we not only have the power to rekindle *our own* enthusiasm, but that this energy can also be “contagious.”

We can make an exercise, like this one, a new adventure. We can make it a game. So, *do* something! Take a risk! Give it a go! And then watch how the creative, active energy of enthusiasm begins to come back to you. You’ll begin to see that it has always been alive within you – just obstructed perhaps by a “drained battery” that can benefit so much from a boost.

THE LAW OF UNDERSTANDING

The third key law of Spirit is the law of understanding. God’s Spirit is one of total and *constant* understanding. In His knowing of the real purpose and meaning in all experience, He sees everything-that-is as a valid aspect of His unfolding Self-expression. God’s understanding is inherently loving, joyous, and accepting, and that’s what our true understanding really is also: openly embracing whatever it is that we face, assured in the knowing that all is okay right now and that all

experiences are stepping stones in an unfolding adventure towards the knowing of our oneness with God.

As we move towards the knowing of our inherent oneness with our Father, we begin to realize that there is no real reason for fear. There is no reason for judgment. There is no reason to doubt, because God is always present, and all things exist in God. All needs are met in God. In God there is no lack. As we come to understand this and then to live it, we begin to move into the true peace of God, the peace “which passeth all understanding.”²⁴

RENEWING OUR MINDS

Most of us still have our fears, our doubts, and our judgments. How can we get from where we are now to where we want to be – more fully awakened in His image and likeness? How can we make His law of understanding more a part of how we live our own lives?

There are two key teachings that answer these questions. One, again, is simply to ask – “seek His kingdom” by putting God first in our

²⁴ Phil 4:7 (KJV).

lives, and always looking to Spirit to guide and uplift us in whatever situation we may find ourselves. The other key is expressed in Paul's important teaching:

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
[Rom 12:2, KJV]

In other words, our judgments, doubts, and emotional reactions, which keep us from living the law of understanding, all originate in our old ways of thinking. To change this and begin to become more of what we now *want* to be, we have to take command of our minds and start to renew them. We need to stay aware of the thoughts we are holding, and begin to release the limiting beliefs and negative thoughts that keep us from living in the knowing that *all* experience is ultimately God's own Self-expression. There are many techniques we can use to help us live in harmony with this law. Some of them involve the use of affirmation.

AFFIRMATION

Affirmation is a popular and very powerful technique, and it is the basic method underlying many of the self-help books and CD's that we see for sale in most bookstores. An affirmation is a statement made with force and sincerity as a way of training our subconscious minds to hold new thought and belief patterns. This retraining is a little bit like computer programming, and it can be very, very helpful.

By recognizing that we *have* minds but *are not* our minds, we can open ourselves to the idea that our minds really are like computers, with some helpful “programs” and with some limiting ones as well. All we are doing with affirmation is replacing those programs that keep us from living the law of understanding with ones that make better use of the creative power of our thoughts and of our faith.

In using affirmations, we make up a list of beliefs that we want to accept – ones that also relate closely to what we want to let go of. We then repeat them to ourselves until they become part of our new subconscious habit patterns. They should be short, rhythmic, and in the present tense.

A list of affirmations, which can help us develop our ability to live according to the law of understanding, might look something like this:

- 1) I am a loving child of God.
- 2) I am a being of peace and joy. I choose into the Loving.
- 3) I live God first and God only in my life.
- 4) God is my constant companion. I walk always in His light.

Your list can be short or long, and will likely include some affirmations of your own, ones that are more specific to the challenges in your own life. Keep them short, clear, and in the present tense – not what will be, but what already *is*. Even if it isn't yet true, by seeing it as true *right now*, we strengthen the power of our minds to help it come into being, and then, “According to your faith will it be done to you” (Mt 9:29).

What if our affirmations are not effective? An honest self-appraisal may be in order. Is our heart really in it – does what we are going for in our affirmation really “line up” inside? Is our

inner desire really to align with God’s plan for us, or are we trying to get God to align with our plans?

In working with affirmations, it is also important to understand that the subconscious mind has several different aspects, and the messages it readily accepts usually have not only verbal but also visual and kinesthetic (feeling) components to them. To maximize the effectiveness of affirmations, we therefore want to make them as rich in quality as we can. So don’t just repeat the words – try to *see*, *hear*, and *feel* your affirmations. Let them be as real and vivid as possible. Although Jesus was giving an important teaching in reference to prayer when he said, “Use not vain repetitions,”²⁵ this can also be applied to affirmations as well.

AFFIRMATION TECHNIQUES

One way to work with affirmations is to read your list into a recorder and then play it back while you sit relaxed and attentive with your eyes closed. You could also take a few moments to read through your written list, then set it down and silently, but *with faith and firmness*, repeat the affirmations to yourself. As always, the exact words are never as important as an open heart and

²⁵ Mt 6:7 (KJV); “do not keep on babbling” in NIV.

sincere desire, and practicing this technique for even ten minutes, twice a day for a week, can produce some very powerful results.

A related exercise could be called “pre-sleep affirmations.” Here, we repeat one or all the affirmations on the list to ourselves as we fall asleep at night. We are already relaxed and inwardly focused just before sleep, and the subconscious mind is particularly receptive at this time. For centuries, we have taught our children to pray at bedtime, and it really is an important way to end our day and to focus our minds on positive thoughts and on the Spirit of God.

A third affirmation technique involves using a journal. In this technique, we divide a page into two columns. Then, every time we catch ourselves thinking something negative or limiting, we jot it down in the left-hand column under a heading such as, “Whenever I say...” In the right-hand column, we then write a more positive alternative – another way of thinking about the same situation from the perspective of the all-knowing, all-loving Spirit. This column could be under the heading, “Let me say instead...” In just a short time, we might have a list that looks similar to this one:

WHENEVER I SAY...

LET ME SAY INSTEAD...

I can't handle this.

I am a child of God, and with God all things are possible.

You're being ridiculous.

I see with eyes of loving. I live in acceptance and true understanding.

I'm scared.

I am a being of strength and confidence. God fills me with His love and power.

I blew it again.

I accept myself to be just where I am, knowing I am growing ever closer to Him.

This simple but worthwhile exercise can really help us stay aware of the negative and limiting thoughts we are holding. And we can begin to change them by looking for more loving, more positive, and more God-like alternatives.

Although we have presented affirmations as a way of developing our ability to live within the law of understanding, we can also use them in regard to all three of the key laws of Spirit – note that the second and fourth examples of affirmations

apply to the law of acceptance, and the third applies to the law of enthusiasm. In fact, we could use affirmations to help us overcome *any* limiting beliefs that block our pathways into the greater knowing of God. It was long ago that the apostle Paul recognized the supreme importance of the “renewing of our minds” on our journeys of discovery, growth, and transformation. Indeed, this renewal applies to *every* aspect of Spirit-Centered living.

LIVING MORE “RIGHT” EACH DAY

As we begin to live by these three key laws of acceptance, enthusiasm, and understanding, we will be able to live more and more “right” with God each day, in the sense of being more in alignment with His Spirit within us. We will be able to see ourselves more in the way that He sees us all: with constant loving, peace, and joy. As we do this, we will begin to realize that nothing is ever really wrong at all – that everything is always exactly perfect for where we are on our paths right now. And, of course, this is true for all others as well.

It really is just this simple. Spiritual principles are something we can only learn by doing, not by reading. As we strive to live by these three laws,

we'll begin to see how His love, His joy, and His peace start to become *our* love, *our* joy, and *our* peace – a powerful demonstration of the oneness we share with God.

GOD'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

In His loving, God never imposes, but that does not mean He is uncaring or uninvolved in our lives. Again, our lives are His life being lived through us. He does more than observe; He is fully present, and all we need to do is recognize the living presence of God that is there and invite Him in – invite His participation and His active involvement with us. We always have a right relationship with God. We may not always have an open one. We may not always have a conscious one. We may not always feel the loving partnership with God that we desire, but this is always of our own doing, never of His ... and as soon as we ask, this loving partnership with God that we so long for begins to come forward; as soon as we ask, it is given.

One important way to develop a greater conscious relationship with God is to give some time to Him each day. Talk with Him. Walk with

Him. Play with Him. Listen to Him. Meditate daily. Open yourself to Him, and allow yourself to know the loving and the blessings He offers to us in every moment of our lives.

By striving to live in acceptance, enthusiasm, and understanding, we choose into the same loving attitude with which God sees and relates to us all. Then, in all our activities, we remain open to the awareness of His loving presence in us, and we make ourselves vehicles through which His Spirit can be expressed in the world. It is the adopting of these three key laws that allows us to “live Spirit” in everything we do each day; and the three major pathways of study, service, and meditation are the techniques that show us how this can be done.

Through these three pathways, we are constantly opening our hearts and minds to Him. We are training ourselves to remember His presence and to listen always for His voice. We are seeking to return to the very heart of God, that we may stand in His loving presence and then express Him in our every thought, word, and action. If this is not our heartfelt desire, then the paths we are

walking are, for the most part, barren and empty. It is when the pursuit of God *is* our hearts' delight that the pathways back to the heart of God will open before us.

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but Him. To love Him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

[Mk 12:28-34]

Chapter 8

Initiation by Inner Light Ministries

Inner Light Ministries (ILM) offers initiation into the meditation practice of “The Path of Sound and Light.” This path is an inner journey of spiritual awakening to the knowing of one’s true self as Soul. For those interested in becoming initiated into “The Path of Sound and Light” through ILM, the following materials and events are suggested in order to understand this spiritual path and to familiarize oneself with Jim Gordon and Brian Yeakey, and with ILM:

1. ILM books, *The Staff of the Shepherd*, *Love and Loving*, and *The Knowing of God*, by Jim Gordon (and other books as they become available);

2. ILM audio recordings and CDs: *The Path of Sound and Light*, *Understanding the 'Inner' Pathway*, *A Simple Way – The Path of ILM*; and *Keys of Initiation with Jim and Brian* (and other recordings on initiation as they become available);

3. ILM Newsletters;

4. Attendance at ILM lectures, classes, workshops and retreats.

APPLYING FOR ILM INITIATION

If, after studying about *The Path of Sound and Light* and ILM, a person wishes to become initiated by Jim Gordon and Brian Yeakey, the following is asked:

1. Write a Letter of Intention to Jim and Brian, stating one's desire for initiation, and affirming one's understanding of the practices for ILM initiation and one's willingness to follow these practices. Send the letter to Jim Gordon and Brian Yeakey to the address at the front of this book. ILM will answer the letter, confirming that the person is 'on the path' to ILM initiation, and confirming the instructions on what to do next.

2. Spend one year further studying ILM materials, and attending ILM events when possible; also spend the year practicing the following:

PRACTICES FOR ILM APPLICANTS:

ILM applicants are asked to practice the following:

1. A regular daily, period of meditation, following the directions in the Appendix.

2. Abstaining from alcoholic drinks and ‘recreational’ drugs. The reason for this abstinence is that ‘alcohol and drugs’ inhibit one’s inner awareness and growth. Note: prescription drugs taken under the direction of a medical doctor are acceptable.

THE INITIATION PROCESS

After the year is completed, applicants are asked to write a second letter to Jim Gordon and Brian Yeakey asking for initiation, and confirming the fulfillment of the “Practices for ILM Applicants and Practices of the ILM Initiates.

PRACTICES OF THE ILM INITIATE:

Again, from the ILM book, *The Staff of the Shepherd*:

Individual teachers will usually establish a particular set of guidelines for their students to follow in their daily living in the world. Before a student is formally accepted as an initiate, he or she must be willing to take on the 'discipline' of that teacher. Some teachers may require specific dietary practices, certain standards of moral conduct, and/or the study of prescribed written or recorded materials. Many will require a defined routine for daily prayer and meditation. Before being accepted as an initiate, the student may be asked to follow these disciplines for a certain period of time, and to demonstrate both a readiness and a willingness to commit to this path and this teacher.

The following Practices are asked of Initiates in Inner Light Ministries:

1. To perform the meditation prescribed at initiation, daily, for 2 ½ hours each day (that is, 1/10th of the day). An initiate may gradually work up to this daily meditation time. Also, the daily meditation may be broken up into more than one period.

However, the goal is for one period of 2 ½ hours of meditation a day. The meditation may be done during any time of the day; however, early morning is suggested as this is the part of the day when the world and one's mind are quietest. Note: one is not required to meditate 2 ½ hours a day in order to be initiated.

2. To abstain from alcoholic drinks and 'recreational drugs.' Note: prescription drugs taken under the direction of a medical doctor are acceptable.

Also, it is recommended that the initiate keep a daily 'meditation journal' for his or her own personal use (not to be sent to Jim or Brian). This can help the initiate become more spiritually aware and awake.

APPENDIX:

MEDITATION FOR THE ILM APPLICANT

(For those who have written a Letter Of Intention to Jim Gordon and Brian Yeakey for initiation.)

The daily period of meditation asked of ILM initiates is 2 ½ hours. Since this is a fairly lengthy

period of time, Jim and Brian ask that, during the year leading up to initiation, applicants practice a daily period of meditation as follows:

1. Sit or lie in a comfortable position. Because we tend to be “creatures of habit,” it is worthwhile to choose a regular time and place to meditate. If it is possible to create a special meditation place that is quiet and free of distractions, this can be helpful as well.

2. Allow yourself to become very still. The exact posture is not important – for some people, sitting in a chair works best, but for others, lying down actually works better. With experience, you will find the position that works for you; sitting is generally recommended to begin with because when we lie down we tend to fall asleep. If you find that you do have a tendency to fall asleep, try sitting on a cushion on the floor or sitting at the edge of a bed.

3. Close your eyes and focus your attention on the spiritual eye center, which is located above the eyebrows and in the center of the head.

4. Chant, either silently or aloud, the Sanskrit word, “Hu,” or the Sanskrit phrase, “Ani-Hu,” repeatedly. After initiation, initiates are directed to silently chant the “Name of God” given at the time of initiation.

5. Hold this focus at the spiritual eye center while chanting (repeatedly) the “Hu” or “Ani-Hu” as long as possible. If you become distracted, simply bring your focus back to the spiritual eye center and continue chanting.

6. Throughout the meditation allow yourself to observe and listen to the Spirit within.

Repeat this practice daily, increasing the time as the year goes on. For example, you can start out doing as little as fifteen minutes a day, then increasing the time by fifteen minutes every month. Thus, by the time of initiation, the applicant will have gradually worked up to practicing this meditation for two and a half hours or more a day.

NOTES

NOTES

ALL ARE WELCOME IN ILM

All persons are welcome to share in ILM's classes, workshops, etc. ILM honors all persons and paths, and does not believe in exerting pressure on anyone to follow 'our path of initiation' over any other spiritual pathway. Every and all persons who feel they can find benefit in our programs are invited to come and participate with us!

If you want to know more about ILM contact us at:

Inner Light Ministries
A Path of Sound and Light
P.O. Box 164332
Austin, TX 78716-4332
512-306-1056
www.ilm.org

**ILM BOOKS IN THIS
SERIES**

The Knowing of God

Love and Loving

The Staff of the Shepherd



JAMES R. GORDON is the founder and President of Inner Light Ministries (ILM). He has dedicated himself to the encouragement, spiritual upliftment, and guidance of all those who seek his help. Jim has given lectures and workshops around the world, sharing his unique gifts of spiritual insight, and teaching the path of individual spiritual unfoldment by initiating persons into the meditation practice of “The Path of Sound and Light.”



BRIAN J. YEAHEY is the Vice President of Inner Light Ministries (ILM). Since 2000 he has joined together with Jim Gordon to travel the world giving lectures, workshops and retreats, teaching the path of individual spiritual unfoldment by initiating persons into the inner meditation practice of “The Path of Sound and Light.”

ABOUT INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES

Inner Light Ministries (ILM) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching spiritual awakening through an inner practice of meditation. This meditation practice is an inner path through which the soul transcends the physical realms of creation to its true home in Spiritual realms within the heart of God. In spiritual teachings and literature this inner path is often referred to as “The Path of Sound and Light,” “The Path of the Holy Spirit,” “The Path of Love,” or simply as “The Path” or “The Way.” ILM offers initiation into this meditation practice enabling one to fully experience this inner journey of awakening.

To provide support for those individuals interested in this path, Inner Light Ministries offers numerous publications, materials, programs, and services, which encourage devotion to God and support a life-long practice of prayer, meditation, spiritual study, and service.

For further information, please contact:

Inner Light Ministries

P.O. Box 164332

Austin, Texas 78716