

God Is, I Am

Nurturing a Personal Relationship with the Divine

Developed by Reverend Jane Beach

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Dearest Beautiful One,

Welcome to “God Is, I Am.” This class is designed to be a place so safe that you can let down your defenses and relax into your personal relationship with the Divine. We are all walking the journey together, opening our minds and hearts to include God, whatever we call Him/Her/It.

You have been called to take this class because you are a devoted spiritual seeker, wanting more out of life than a new job, a better relationship, greater health or more money. Somehow you sense the inner peace that accompanies a personal connection with the God of your understanding. The job, relationship, health and money become by-products of that inner peace.

“How do I do that?” you might ask, “I don’t even know what Spirit looks like.” Remember your active imagination as a child? Bring it back, let it surface, and pretend! Pretend that Spirit is real. Pretend It is the sunrise, the rain on your face, the rainbow, the music you hear, the food you eat. Pretend It is what moves the blood through your body, beats your heart and tells your fingernails to grow. See and feel It everywhere!

Pretend that It is for you and never against you, and that It wants only your complete happiness. Pretend that this great power and love is within you, and that you have an internal wisdom that will always know what to do and how to do it.

The God of your understanding is alive and well in every aspect of your life, just waiting for your attention. You are taking this class because you have a hunch that you don’t have to wait until you think you are spiritual enough to feel the connection; instead you are already as spiritual as you will ever be! Just for today, pretend that you know it for sure, and watch what happens.

With happiness and love,

Jane

God Is, I Am

Nurturing a Personal Relationship with the Divine

Course Overview

- ➔ Week 1 Open to Love
- ➔ Week 2 Accepting Love
- ➔ Week 3 Learning to Love
- ➔ Week 4 Embracing Change
- ➔ Week 5 Changeless Reality
- ➔ Week 6 Seeing Good
- ➔ Week 7 Mystic Heart
- ➔ Week 8 Grateful Heart

Textbook:

Creative Ideas: A Spiritual Compass for Personal Expression by Ernest Holmes

Prerequisite:

Foundations or Beyond Limits

Student Agreements

Attendance and Active Participation

Every person who is “Called” to sign up for this class has done so at the silent urging of Divine wisdom. There is something in it for you. Therefore, attendance and active participation are the foundation of the journey, crucial for the experience that lies ahead.

Assignments

This is your journey to the deepening of your relationship with the God of your understanding. The journey is fluid, with no ending of one class and beginning of another. It is set up so for logistical purposes only. It is recommended that you start on the next week’s lessons as soon as you complete the previous class, as the reading and exercises are meant to take you deeper into your journey. Thus, doing a little each day and giving yourself time for reflection will make your experiences richer. You will get as much out of this class as you put into it, so bring yourself wholly into the experience.

Final Project Thought Paper

Your final project is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “God Is, I Am.” You will have reflected on the idea of “God Is, I Am” during the course of the class; this paper is a culmination of your insights. Within the body of the paper you will contemplate and answer the questions, “What is God to me?” and “What am I to God?” These questions will help you give language to your deepening relationship with the God of your understanding, whatever you call It and whatever that looks like.

Your presentation will last between 3-5 minutes and will be presented on the last night of class. You can read your paper or talk about it. Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your walk with the Divine.

The Importance of Sharing

You will find that sharing your insights and experiences and learning from others is an important part of the class. The purpose of sharing is multifaceted. It provides an opportunity to:

- Acknowledge your breakthroughs and wins in life and receive recognition for them.
- Recognize the negatives (opportunities) in your life and start moving away from those experiences.
- Develop the ability to listen and really hear other people, and to benefit from their sharing.

Every part of this class is designed to assist you. A good question to ask yourself is, “What am I to know through this sharing?”

Guidelines for Sharing

Confidentiality – Very important in the process of your and others’ spiritual development in this course is having a safe space for evolvment. Your part in this is your commitment to observing and practicing confidentiality. For confidentiality to be maintained it is important for each person to do the following:

- Speak about your own feelings and experiences and not about what someone else has shared as their feelings or experiences.
- Actively listen while another person is sharing and then refrain from commenting or giving advice.
- Keep your sharing short (two to three minutes). If you tell only the important facts, it will give everyone who wants to share the time to do so.
- Respect the rights of others and share one time only in each sharing opportunity. If you later remember something wonderful you intended to share wait until everyone else has had a turn to share.

How to Support Sharing and Maximize Listening

- As sharing begins, center yourself in love and compassion.
- Become aware of the precious gift being given when someone has the courage to share him/herself.
- Make the space for listening when other people are speaking without categorizing what you are hearing as positive or negative, or good or bad.
- Be sensitive to the Divinity underneath the roles and games we all set up.
- Be sensitive to the amount of class time you spend in sharing. If sharing is easy for you hold back in order to allow time for others. If sharing is more difficult for you, learn to speak up and share yourself.

There is a living Spirit at the center of your being. The Original Author of all life is in and around you – not a God who was, but a God who is.

- Ernest Holmes

Week 1

Open to Love

This Week

This week is about accepting that Spirit is real ... alive and awake, fully present in every aspect of your life. It is who you are, expressing as you. Your personal relationship with God fosters the beauty of who you are, and who you are is a beautiful thing.

When one door closes, another opens, but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us.

- Alexander Graham Bell

As you gain more and more access to your true nature, you will also spontaneously receive creative thoughts, because the field of pure potentiality is also the field of infinite creativity and pure knowledge.

- Deepak Chopra

Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.

- Carl Jung

God Is, I Am

Nurturing a Personal Relationship with the Divine

By Jane Beach

I'm being courted by God. And so are you.

As a lifelong atheist, if anyone would have told me that one day I would become a minister, I would have laughed! For the first 50 years of my life I never talked about God because why talk about something that doesn't exist?

Then something happened. In 1998 my 30-year marriage was crumbling, and I finally found the courage to return to Al-Anon. I had tried Al-Anon 25 years earlier, but I couldn't find a meeting that wasn't centered on the concept of a Higher Power, so I quit. Now, at this low point in my life, a shift in consciousness occurred when one day I asked myself, "Is this it? Is this all my life is about?" At that moment, a tiny crack in my defiant, defensive armor appeared. I knew I needed to return to Al-Anon and deal with that God-thing.

My Al-Anon sponsor taught me about using a God Box, which is a sacred container designed to give your worries to your Higher Power. You write down what you want and then place the note into the box. By giving it over to God, you are supposed to be done worrying: "Let Go and Let God." Most people seal their box closed so that they won't be tempted to open it up to look at their problems again. God Boxes are generally decorated with pictures, symbols and words of personal significance and then put in a special place. While I agreed to make one, it was beyond my capabilities to make it "sacred" – heck, I didn't even use words like "sacred!" I made mine out of a shoebox, taped it closed with duct tape, cut a slit in the top and threw it on the closet shelf. There it sat for about a month, unused.

Then something happened. On July 4, 1998, I awakened with a feeling of agitation that I couldn't shake. What was up? I think it stemmed from the fact that I was missing out on the quiet summer I had come to rely on. As a teacher I had summers off and used that time to renew. However, this particular year my husband wasn't feeling well and consequently was home with me all day, every day. I was resentful.

For the first time I used my God Box – what was there to lose? I didn't begin the letter with "Dear God" because I didn't believe in God; instead I wrote "I need tolerance." With an almost defiant, "Whatcha gonna do about this?" attitude I stuck the note in the God Box, threw it back up on the closet shelf and got on with my day. Instead of getting better, my day got worse! Nothing I did could make that uneasy feeling go away. I felt completely out of control. So much for trusting God! I was grumpy, argumentative and just wanted to be left alone. I made meals for my husband, who was lying on the couch, but I didn't eat with him. By evening I realized I had pretty much ignored him all day and I felt ashamed.

Then I came up with a solution! Because I used sleep as an escape in those days, I decided that I would spend 30 minutes watching television with him before heading to bed. Maybe in the morning things would be different.

Divine Grace

That evening I had my first conscious awareness of the Divine. I walked into the living room where my husband was lying on the couch, made a bit of small talk and then sat down in a chair to watch TV with him. The moment I sat down, a feeling of peace like I had never known before enveloped me. It was incredible! Gentle, loving energy filled me and also wrapped itself around me, like a soft cocoon. It was soft, and at the same time powerful. I silently asked, “What is this?” I didn’t understand it, but I wanted it. I leaned into what I was feeling, breathing it in, although I felt like I was barely breathing. In the fullness of this inexplicable great peace, I changed. When the 30 minutes was up I gave my husband a kiss goodnight because I *wanted* to – my feelings toward him had gone from resentment to acceptance. Incredible! I felt like I floated to bed, my feet not even touching the ground; I was being carried by the peace that held me.

Awakening

My husband fell asleep on the couch that night so I was alone with my experience. That same unbelievable peace was still there in the morning, and there was something new – it was a feeling of profound Love. Then I got it! I finally understood that what I was feeling was the presence of God. Softly, gently and with great purpose, the Greatest Love of All had entered my life in a way I could recognize. In an instant I knew that 1) What I was feeling was God. 2) I was profoundly loved and always had been, no matter what I had ever said or done. 3) All this time God had been patiently waiting for me to notice It.

I sobbed with the enormity of this simple and yet powerful revelation, drenching my pillow with tears that washed away years of disbelief. In the process I was held by the one I now call the Beloved – I could actually feel Spirit’s presence on my skin, in my hair, and even in the covers – It *was* the covers! I knew It would never leave me and that I was cherished just because I existed. I was cradled in Its love as if I were a most precious infant. It wasn’t until later in the day that I remembered the God Box, my reluctant first step toward the shift in consciousness that allowed my Higher Power in.

Without any intellectual understanding of God, my walk with the Beloved One has been purely experiential. Beginning that night my relationship with a Presence I knew as pure love became the most important part of my life. When I didn’t know what to do, I learned that there was a part of me that did. It was as if the Beloved had given me the gift of knowing myself, “My cherished one, here is the gift of recognizing your own beauty, your own perfection. It is the part of you that is of me. You are me and I am you.”

Our philosophy promises us that any person who lives in close contact with the Indwelling God may become a revealer of Truth. Knowing the Beloved may be closer than you think. It is courting you this very minute, finding a way to catch your attention. As your eyes

dance over these words and your heart stirs with possibility, It is loving you beyond measure.

This class is about nurturing a personal relationship with the Divine ... the God of your understanding. It is unique to each of us.

You now know a bit of my story. During the course of this class I will continue to share from my personal experiences, and your facilitator(s) will do the same. I hope this creates a doorway as your own personal dance with Spirit surfaces, blossoms, strengthens and grows. Then as you share your experiences, you give permission for others to do the same.

There are many ways for The Beloved to emerge.

What's beautiful is asking yourself the question.... how is It going to emerge through me?

One Life

From *This Thing Called You*

By Ernest Holmes

The wick of your individual life runs deep into the oil of pure Being. There is but One Life and that Life is your life now. No matter what confusion appears at the surface of your life, there is always a place of calm at the center of your being. No matter how turbulent the waves may be on the ocean of your experience, beneath there is a changeless peace. Your being is submerged but not lost in the Infinite.

When you become confused, stop and listen to your inner calm. Turn from the confusion to that deeper something within. Say:

*I am submerged in peace,
I am surrounded by peace,
I am immersed in peace,
There is nothing but peace,
Peace – deep, calm, undisturbed.*

You will find that the confusion disappears. The light which the storm seems to have extinguished again becomes steady. Peace comes from a sense of union with the whole. Confusion comes from a sense of separation. Confusion comes because you are looking only at the surface. If you put a straight stick in a pool of water and then ruffle the surface of the pool, the stick will appear bent. It is not bent, however; it is merely a disturbance at the surface of the water that causes it to appear bent. If you swim under water beneath the disturbed surface and open your eyes, you will see a straight stick. The bent stick really was an illusion.

So it is with confusion. It exists as a condition but not as a reality. The mirage is in your own consciousness. If confusion comes, take your intellect and dive deep into your pool of peace. Through an act of faith open your eyes and you will see that there is no confusion.

Rising above confusion, you will affirm the Divine Presence in all Its beauty, power and peace. From this fundamental affirmation your consciousness becomes imbued with a sense of power as well as of peace. You are now in a position to turn to any specific condition of discord, and speaking with complete authority, to know that your word will reverse it.

Say:

*The Spirit within me makes all things new.
Every negative thought or condition is
erased from my experience.
I am aware of my union with Good.
I am conscious of my oneness with Life.
I expect more prosperity, more happiness,
more harmony than ever before.
I walk in the joy of ever-increasing good.*

Perfect Reflection

From Dare to Be Yourself

By Alan Cohen

Because you are divine, you can have no attributes other than those of God. God is love, and therefore by nature you are a loving being. God is eternal, and so you have all the time in the world and beyond it. God has all the resources of the universe available at the command of His word, and so do you. God is the only power in the universe (What could threaten Spirit?) and therefore you have nothing to fear. Affirm that all that is good belongs to you, and slice away anything that is unlike love. Lack of any kind is unbecoming to the child of a beneficent king.

Imagine a circular room with a wall of sheer mirrors. The entire wall of mirrors reflects what is in the room. In the center of the room stands a crystal table, so clear and pure that it is almost invisible. On the table stands a crystal vase which is also translucent. In the vase rests a beautiful red rose. This rose is perfect in every way. Behold this magnificent flower in its richest blossom, with its velvety petals fully open. Every aspect of the rose is healthy, radiant, and vibrant with life. Take a moment to close your eyes and clearly visualize this image.

Now observe the reflection of the rose in the mirror. The mirror reflects the rose and only the rose. Each portion of the looking glass captures a different aspect of this glorious flower. The mirror is perfectly smooth and accurate in its reflection; the only image that exists in the room is the rose in many different facets of splendor. Focus on this vision in your mind as a meditation.

The rose represents the perfection of God, and we are in the mirror. God's absolute perfection cannot be fully replicated in this world, but it can be reflected in such clarity that God is seen and known here. When we open our heart and mind to real vision, we find God walking among us, as us. As offspring of God, we carry His attributes only and always. Without the distortion of fear and its progeny, the smudge of guilt, we recognize that God lives fully in us. Because God is the truth of our being, our nature is to express love, kindness, joy, compassion, and gentleness. All else is unlike our self, and springs from illusion.

The Power of the Word is Yours

The most powerful words in our language are "I am." "I am" is the creative seed thought of God's power on earth and in heaven. The Bible tells us that "In the beginning was the word." All that we create begins with our word – specifically, the words, "I am."

Be careful how you complete the sentence that begins, "I am ...". In your completion you will find your reality and conceive your destiny. With this sentence you will literally

sentence yourself; you will choose whether you will live in strength, power, and dignity, or in the weakness of fear. These are no idle words. Your statements, mental and verbal, conscious and subconscious, are the key to all you will ever become.

When you speak the words, “I am,” you must tell the truth. If you say that you are lost, unworthy, or unloved, you have uttered a great untruth. You will have to live out the experience of these false identities until you discover that you are greater than you have thought or spoken. If, however, you align yourself with your divinity and affirm that you are a powerful Child of God unto whom is given infinite power, the richest abundance, and undying love, you call to expression the mightiest – and only – force in the universe. With your decree you summon the power and presence of every great soul who has reached the mountaintop of life and discovered God to live in his heart. Be aware of the mighty forces you set into motion with your words. Your words will make or break you. Let them be of God, as you are.

New Ideas and Creativity are Mine

From *Creative Ideas*

By Ernest Holmes

“Since God is all there is – the only presence, the only power, and the only mind or intelligence – when we conceive a new idea, we are thinking directly from the creativity of God. It is not our isolated, limited human personality that projects this new idea. We are merely the instrument through which this projection takes place.”

If every new idea comes from the creativity of God, how does this affect your personal relationship with the Divine Power that exists as you?

How might this understanding change the way you move through the world?

“Today I expect new ways of doing things. I expect everything in my experience to enlarge, deepen, and broaden. I expect more good, more enthusiasm, more accomplishment than ever before. There now opens up before me a world of new ideas, new thoughts, new people and new situations. Today is a new beginning.”

Do you have the courage to accept this world of new ideas, people and situations? Are there any feelings of fear or unworthiness that might be holding you back?

Are you willing to let go of old habits, patterns and beliefs in order to accept this new beginning? What next steps can you take?

What might happen if you became willing to trust? Can you truly rely on your own Inner Wisdom to guide you into and through this new beginning?

As you make way for new ideas to flow through you, do you have the courage to act on them?

Your courage is a God gift. How can taking action deepen your personal relationship with Spirit?

During the week be open to new thoughts and ideas. Keep your journal or a small notebook handy and write them down, even if they seem far-fetched or silly! You are stretching consciousness and embracing your relationship with Spirit as you invite Divine Wisdom to flow through you.

I Went into a Mountain

From the *Science of Mind* textbook
By Ernest Holmes

I Went into a Mountain

I have discovered a Secret Place within, where the thought goes
into a mountain high above the din of the world.
I have found in this mountain a Place of Peace and rest,
A Place of Joy and comfort to the heart.
I have found that the Secret Place of God is within my own Soul.

I will listen for Thy Voice.

Home Study for Week 2

READING

- Read a prayer each day from *Creative Ideas*
- Workbook** Week 1 pages 1 – 17 and Week 2 pages 20 – 30

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Each week** Meditate and journal on the results of your “God Is, I Am” activity.
 - What does this mean for you?
 - How does it show up in your life?
 - How are you changing because of this Truth?
 - Can you feel the presence of the Divine guiding you? What does the guidance look like/feel like?
 - Are you willing to take action on the guidance that comes up? If yes, why? If no, why not?
 - Remember, old beliefs and patterns of behavior may surface because you are now spiritually ready to look at them. Congratulations! Be gentle with yourself as you move forward ... and keep moving forward.

- Throughout the course of the class** Meditate and journal on the answers to workbook pages 14 – 16 “New Ideas and Creativity are Mine.”
 - Your answers to these questions may change as your experience of Spirit deepens and grows.

WRITING to be retained in workbook (not to be turned in)

- Workbook pages 25 – 27 “The Ladder of Consciousness.” Be prepared to share next week.

Week 2

Accepting Love

The marvelous richness of human experience would lose something of rewarding joy if there were no limitations to overcome. The hilltop hour would not be half so wonderful if there were no dark valleys to traverse.

- Helen Keller

This Week

This week is about accepting the Love that seeks your attention in every second of every day, whispering to you, “I am here, and I adore you, just as you are. Feel my presence as the sun on your face and the breeze in your hair. Know I am at the core of your desire to laugh out loud. I am the comfort you find when you finally release your tears. I am here, and I love you.”

God is in you and in me. Therefore we each must penetrate more deeply into our own nature, and just so surely as we do, we will have a very marvelous experience.

- Ernest Holmes

No one knows his name – a man who lives on the streets and walks around in rags. Once I saw that man in a dream. He and God were constructing an extraordinary temple.

- St. Francis of Assisi

What a man thinks of himself, that is what determines, or rather indicates, his fate.

- Henry David Thoreau

Accepting Love

By Jane Beach

These days I accept the love of a God who adores me, and I've never been happier! Life is what you make of it, and I choose to make my life joyous! The Universe stands ready to fulfill desires I didn't even know I had, just because I opt to stay focused on Love ... The Beloved ... God ... Higher Power ... Source ... whatever you choose to call the Great Invisible Everything. In doing so I am continually guided to my highest good. Most importantly, my relationship with The Divine is my life – I'm having a love affair with the greatest love of all. What could be better than that?

If you are asking, "Sounds good! How do I start?" my answer is to start where you are. Love will meet you there in unconditional love and complete acceptance, even if you think your life looks really messy. Stop complaining that who you are is not good enough. In changing your outlook, you will find many ways to move forward! Don't compare what you have to what others may have. Just do the best you can do. Start from where you are, with what you have, and patiently do what is in front of you. Doors will open, and there is no limit to where you can go!

Just As It Is

Once I started courting the Divine within me, my life changed. My perception of the world (and myself!) became one of acceptance.

When looking for the good in everything became part of my daily life, it was easier to get there when life's big challenges hit. On Halloween night, 2006, I had the opportunity to do just that. Upon returning home I found that my house had been ransacked and burglarized. This was a first for me, and I was quietly curious about how I would move through it. My first reaction was, "I am safe, and these are just things." I have always felt the peaceful, loving energy of God's presence in my home, and it was just as strong on this night. Somehow there was no fear or feeling of being violated. It was as if The Beloved was simply giving me a human experience with which I could practice, and It would guide me through it.

Once the police left and some semblance of order had taken place, I lay in bed. I wondered about the person or persons who might have done this. My heart softened as I thought about the thousands who are troubled and driven to such acts. I remembered the days when I was an elementary school teacher, aware that some of the children in my classroom were going home to pure hell, the classroom the only place where they felt safe. Some of those children are now adults, doing the same things that had caused them such misery as children simply because they never learned how to do life differently. A feeling of compassion arose for the one who had

broken into my house ... and then there was something more. I realized that because we are One, I am the person who entered my house. I am also the sadness, fear and despair that may have come before the act. Most profoundly, I knew that underneath all of it was Pure Love, for that is what created us. As I snuggled into the softness of the covers, I gave thanks for the guest who had visited my home that night. God surely is good.

You are a Spiritual Broadcasting Station

From *Living the Science of Mind*
By Ernest Holmes

Did you ever stop to think that you are a spiritual and mental broadcasting station, and that messages are going out from you in all directions, perhaps even while you are asleep – messages which have an influence on your environment and the people around you? And since everything moves in circles, the messages your broadcast will come back to you.

We are all broadcasting stations, whether or not we know it. Our thoughts, feelings, and emotions, our faiths and fears, tend to make an imprint on our environment. We are also receiving sets, but it does not follow that we must tune in to every program being broadcast. When we want to listen to a certain program we tune our radios to its wavelength. The program already is within the ether of the room, but it does not affect our instrument until we tune in to it.

It is fascinating to think that we are both mental broadcasting stations and receiving sets. And it will be even more wonderful when we learn to broadcast only the kind of messages that we wish to have return.

If a person's mind is filled with animosity and resentment people will feel it, whether or not he says a word. This animosity arouses within others who have resentment and animosity a feeling like his own. His thoughts tune in to theirs, and theirs immediately respond by flowing back to him. One accentuates the other.

On the other hand, if you are surrounded by people who have resentment and animosity, but you have none, you will not tune in. Their vibration bypasses you, and their antagonism does not arouse an equal antagonism in you because you are not broadcasting on the same mental wavelength.

It is the same with everything in life. A person whose thought is filled with the fear of failure tunes in to and picks up the vibrations of failure wherever he contacts them; to his own negative thought there is added a great mass of negative thoughts, until finally it seems that the only thing he can think about is failure. In a way both his will and his imagination become hypnotized, because he is tuning in to so much negation. When a person's mind is upset, disturbed, and unhappy, all he mentally hears is discord because his inner ear is listening to a continuous turmoil.

Conversely, a person whose thought is filled with the idea of success, who has faith and confidence in himself and what he is doing, will tune in to the successful thoughts around him, the thoughts of faith and optimism and happy expectancy.

A person who confidently expects good things to happen, who expects everyone to like him, and who expects to find happiness in life wherever he goes, will not only be broadcasting these thoughts which will make other people happy; he will be receiving them in return. Because he feels friendly, people will respond with friendliness.

Let us find a new wavelength. We shall discover that we are not only helping ourselves but we are helping everyone around us. Let us tune our mental instruments to success and happiness, to the idea of physical wholeness, and above everything else to the comforting thought that there is a Love in the Universe which by Its very presence dissolves all hate; there is a faith that neutralizes all fear; there is a confidence that brushes aside every doubt.

God never deserts us, and we shall never have to convince God to be Good. All we have to do is reverse our whole mental and spiritual outlook on life and then the miracle will take place, because what goes out must return.

The Ladder of Consciousness

From *How to Change Your Life*
By Ernest Holmes

We are now self-conscious individuals, which means that we not only know, but *know* that we know. We can think about our own consciousness, and we now have the power of choice – the very summit of life’s upward striving.

Now, however, if individuals are to continue to progress, we must take things in our own hands and *choose* to continue our climb. From now on, we ascend because we ourselves have chosen to do so. In order to do this, we must clearly realize that there is no separation between humankind and God. Remember, *everything is Spirit*, and expression of the infinite God Consciousness. There is nothing in the Universe that can hinder your upward climb, your increased awareness of Oneness with God ... unless you decide to stop climbing. The vast expanse of an ever-widening upward reach is available to you.

Your Inner Divinity

Each of us has the privilege and the responsibility of being a clear channel for the flow of God through us, as us. What then, are these qualities which must be ours? Read this list and consider it carefully:

Life

Love

Wisdom

Intelligence

Peace

Creativity

Beauty

Joy

Unless all of these are experienced fully in your life, you need to become *more aware* of your unity with God. The God-qualities are an integral part of you; they lie deep within you, whether you admit it or not.

Your Infinite Possibility

So far these qualities may not have been showing up in your life very clearly, but they are there. So your task now is to *consciously* bring these inner qualities forth, so they can be expressed, used and experienced. You may not have been very good at it previously. Perhaps you have had negative habits of thinking, feeling and acting which kept blocking the right and full expression through you of your Divine nature. If this has been so, do not now concentrate your attention on what you want to get rid of. Instead devote your efforts primarily to the development of the good qualities you already possess, but have not been using.

Questions to consider:

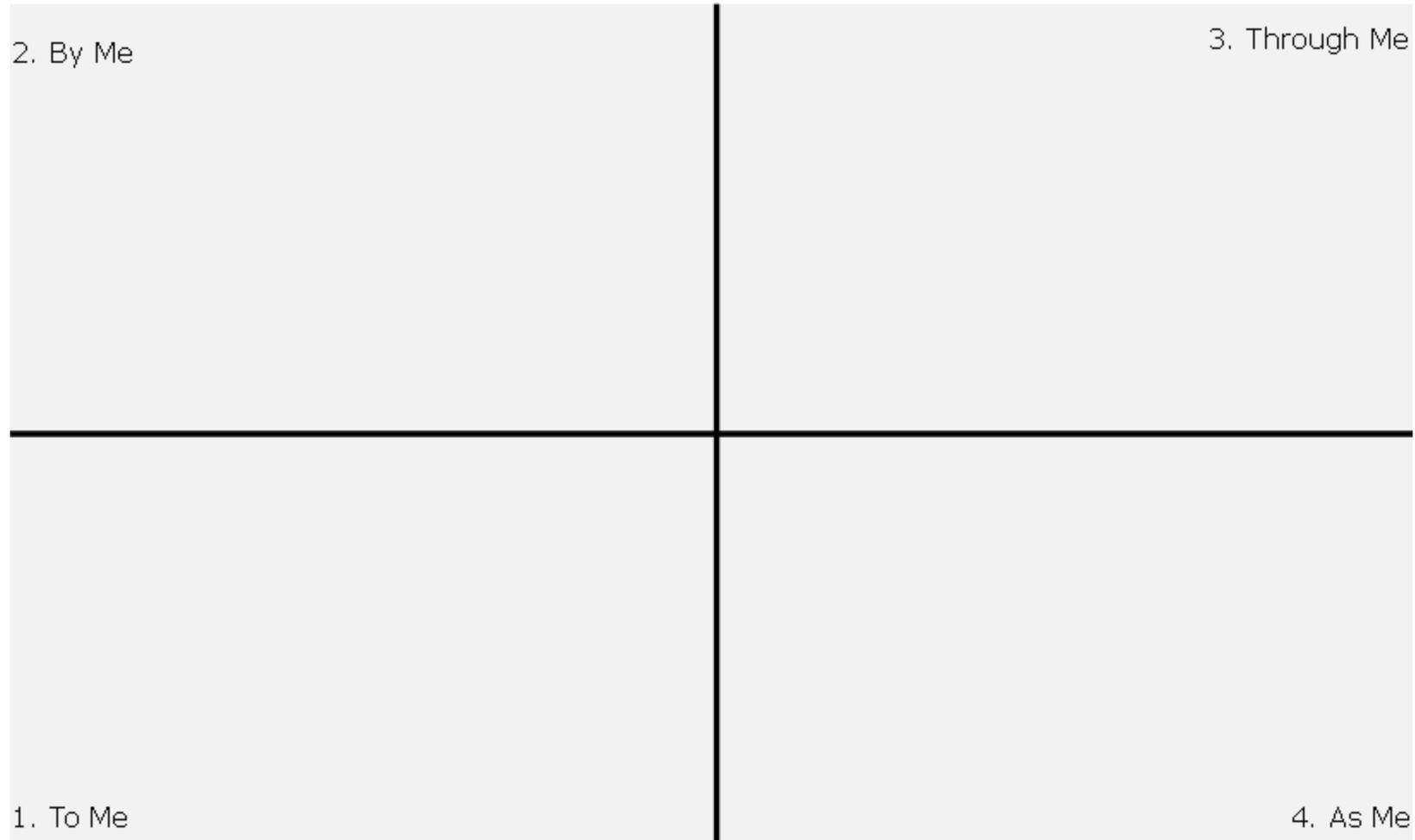
With your focus on complete and non-judgmental acceptance of your life, exactly as it is, what does this reading mean to you personally?

Is there an area of your life in which you can more fully bring forth the right and full expression of your Divine nature? If so, take it into the silence, forever deepening your personal walk with the Beloved.

Life invites you to shine! What next steps can you take to follow Love's guidance and open up to the peace, joy and grace that resides within you?

Check-in with your personal relationship with God. Is it changing? Are challenges coming up? Is there a new element of excited expectation? All of it is good – every single bit of it. Trust the process ...

The Four Stages of Spiritual Growth (in class discussion)



Love

From the *Science of Mind* textbook
By Ernest Holmes

Love

The Love of the All Good is within me and through me.
That Love goes out to meet all who come into my atmosphere.
It radiates to all and is flowing through all.
My love within me is Perfect.

Thy Love within me is Perfect.

Home Study for Week 3

READING

- Read a prayer each day from *Creative Ideas*
- Workbook** Week 3 pages 32 – 48

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Each week** Meditate and journal on the results of your “God Is, I Am” activity.
 - What does this mean for you?
 - How does it show up in your life?
 - What insights, questions or next steps are emerging?

- Continue** Meditate and journal on the answers to workbook pages 14 – 16 “New Ideas and Creativity are Mine.”
 - Your answers to these questions may change as your experience of Spirit deepens and grows.
 - If new ideas are surfacing note them – your consciousness is stretching and growing!

WRITING to be retained in workbook (not to be turned in)

- Workbook pages 35 – 43, “I Am Complete in You.” The questions are numerous, thought provoking and spiritually deepening. You will want to spend time each day with them. Be prepared to share next week.

Truly, it is in the darkness that one finds the light, so when we are in sorrow, then this light is nearest of all to us.

- Meister Eckhart

Week 3

Learning to Love

Happiness is a butterfly which when pursued is just beyond your grasp but if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.

- Nathaniel Hawthorne

This week

This week is about leaning into the Lover of your soul, the Keeper of your spirit. It is about learning to trust what you can't see but is more real than your breath. It is about accepting the glory of your personal relationship with a God that adores you completely and forever. It is about letting down your defenses and letting Love in.

It's only our story that keeps us from knowing that we always have everything we need.

- Byron Katie

I believe that to have world peace we must first have inner peace. Those who are naturally serene, at peace with themselves, will be more open toward others. I think this is where the very foundation of universal peace lies.

- The Dalai Lama

The Ways of Truth

By Jane Beach

Early on I discovered Ernest Holmes' *I Am Complete in You*, and I was overjoyed! Somehow I knew that this man must have had a glorious relationship with the one he calls, "Lover of my soul, Keeper of my spirit." I could somehow picture him leaning into God, worshiping the glory of Spirit.

*Guide me into Your ways and from Your wisdom teach me the ways of Truth.
Help me to follow Your Guidance and not pursue the paths of my own counsel.*

I asked myself, what is, "Your Guidance" as opposed to, "my own counsel?" Simply, how do I know when it is God and when is it my human mind? I discovered that following the guidance of the Divine happens when we honor our own wisdom. When the message we hear is affirming, one of hope and possibility for everyone concerned, then it certainly comes from the space of love that is our true nature. We let go of the need to control the outcome and relax into trusting that Life really is good, and we will always be okay in it. We remember our own power, our own brilliance, and we live our lives from that space.

Because we are living this lifetime on the human plane of existence, we are going to have countless human experiences, from the thrill of riding a roller coaster or the joy of singing out loud to the grief loss brings or the pain of abuse. Because Spirit's love is unconditional, whether we have been the abused or the abuser, we will never be judged in the eyes of The Beloved. It forever whispers to us, "Know how loved you are, for you are my cherished one." When we are deep in despair, there It is. Even when we can't sense Its presence, It holds us in great reverence. Sometimes the periods of horrible pain become our greatest blessings. When our backs are against the wall and we have run out of answers, we seek It. There we find peace, courage and hope. It's all right if we're still afraid. We will get what we need to move through our fear and take the next step anyway. When the time comes, the part of us that has never been hurt or afraid will guide us.

Forever saying yes to the creativity of our thoughts, our life is full of choices! Our job is to pay attention to our inner guidance so that we know what to do with what we've chosen. Sometimes we pay attention and sometimes we don't. It doesn't matter to God; Its only response is complete love and acceptance.

When we take to heart the message of, "Change your thinking, change your life," we make a conscious choice to focus on and be grateful for the positive in life. We choose to cultivate love, joy and peace rather than hate, fear and anger in ourselves and others. When we do this, we are honoring the God within us, the part of us that

teaches us the ways of Truth. We are listening to Spirit and letting Its beauty shine through us, as us, as the love that we are meant to be.

We are guided by the knowledge that at any given time, we will know what to do, when to do it, and when to be still. “*Help me to follow Your Guidance...*” No more do we need to worry – we know that we’ll know. Our outlook is forever changed as we realize without a doubt that Life is on our side. Staying open to our own perfection takes time. Some important questions emerge:

- How much am I willing to invest to have a personal relationship with God?
- What kind of time am I willing to give it? Is it worth an hour of my day? More?
- Am I willing to put my relationship with God/Spirit/The Beloved at the top of my priority list?
- Am I willing to put ME at the top of my priority list?
- Am I willing to accept the truth that God is ready for my attention at any given moment?
- Am I willing to consider alternative ways to experience The Beloved One (ie. while dancing, jogging, showering, washing the dishes?)
- Am I willing to be in the silence? Am I willing to turn off the CD player, the radio, the TV?
- What will it take?

I Am Complete in You

Adapted from the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

Mighty Spirit, Eternal One, Infinite Good, Maker of all things and Keeper of my Life,
You are All There Is.

Infinite Presence, The One in whom all life lives,
Joy Supreme that floods all there is with gladness,
I adore You.

Eternal Peace, I feel Your calm.
You Who inhabit Eternity and dwell within all Creation,
You Who lives through all things and in all people,
Hear my prayer.

I would enter Your gates with joy and live at peace in Your house.
I would find a resting place in You, and live in Your presence.

Guide me into Your ways and from Your wisdom teach me the ways of Truth.
Help me to follow Your Guidance and not pursue the paths of my own counsel.

Eternal and Blessed Presence, illumine my mind and command my will.
Refresh my Soul and renew my life.
As deep cries out to deep, so my thought cries out to You.
And You answer.

I am renewed and refreshed.
My whole being responds to Your love.
I am complete in You.

All my ways are guarded and guided, and I shall live with You eternally.
Lover of my soul, Keeper of my spirit, we cannot be separated.
We are One.

Your Wisdom guides me.
Your Presence dwells within me.
Your Love keeps me.
Your Life envelops me now and forever.
I rest in You.

I Am Complete in You

Mighty Spirit, Eternal One, Infinite Good, Maker of all things and Keeper of
my Life,
You are All There Is.

What does Spirit look like to you? What does It feel like? What do you call It? In what instances are you most apt to feel the presence of the Maker of all things and Keeper of my Life?

Infinite Presence, The One in Whom all life lives,
Joy Supreme that floods all there is with gladness,
I adore You.

Can you feel the presence of the Infinite One cherishing you? To what extent can you answer with a feeling of adoration? Trust? Is there anything holding you back from accepting and responding to Spirit's love?

Eternal Peace, I feel Your calm.
You Who inhabit Eternity and dwell within all Creation,
You Who lives through all things and in all people,
Hear my prayer.

I would enter Your gates with joy and live at peace in Your house.
I would find a resting place in You, and live in Your presence.

To what extent are you willing to find a resting place in Spirit? Is there anything limiting your willingness to rest in Eternal Peace, trusting your life to the All Good? Are you afraid to let go? Are old beliefs holding you back?

Guide me into Your ways and from Your wisdom teach me the ways of Truth.
Help me to follow Your Guidance and not pursue the paths of my own
counsel.

What is the difference between “the ways of Truth” and “my own counsel?” Tell about an instance when you followed the ways of Truth. Tell about another in which you followed your own counsel? How did each turn out? What did you learn about yourself?

Eternal and Blessed Presence, illumine my mind and command my will.
Refresh my Soul and renew my life.

As deep cries out to deep, so my thought cries out to You.
And You answer.

*What does “illumine my mind” mean? What does it mean to “command my will”?
The two go together; to what extent are you willing to let Spirit command your will in
order to illumine your mind? What does it feel like when God answers in your life? Be
specific.*

I am renewed and refreshed.
My whole being responds to Your love.
I am complete in You.

In what ways does your whole being respond to God's love? What does "I am complete in You" mean to you?

All my ways are guarded and guided, and I shall live with You eternally.

Lover of my soul, Keeper of my spirit, we cannot be separated.
We are One.

*To what extent do you believe that God is the “Lover of my soul, Keeper of my spirit”?
In the past, what has left you feeling separate from Spirit? Is that still true today? If so,
what next steps can you take to know “We are One”?*

Your Wisdom guides me.
Your Presence dwells within me.
Your Love keeps me.
Your Life envelops me now and forever.

I rest in You.

*Today can you focus on your light, or do you tend to look at the shadows of your life?
What do you think would happen if you completely rested in God?*

Questioning

From *Fire in the Heart*
By Deepak Chopra

Today, do two things that may sound like opposites: Ask yourself a new question and answer an old one. The new question is easy to find. Pick up any book about human nature, maybe a novel or a book on psychology or relationships. Find a part of the story where two people are in conflict, perhaps a couple who are fighting. Ask yourself, “If I had to decide this argument, which side would I pick?” Then pick the other side and ask why it is right instead. Questioning keeps your mind sharp and focused.

But the mind also needs to settle on answers. So take a question that nobody seems to know the answer to: Is there a God? Does Satan exist? What happens after we die? Give yourself an answer and watch what happens. The instant you answer a question, many new possibilities come to mind. It’s a sort of reverse psychology, because the instant you are sure you know something, a little voice inside can’t help but chime in with, *Maybe, but what about X?* Baba taught me to respect both sides of questioning.

“People say you should never stop asking questions, but I only half believe that,” he said. “You should also keep accepting answers.”

“I don’t see how they can go together,” I said.

“They can, once you see that questions aren’t meant to last forever. If someone spends a lifetime looking for God without finding him, that would be a terrible waste.”

“It happens all the time,” I pointed out.

“The problem is doubt,” said Baba. “Doubt doesn’t lead to answers; it only breeds more doubt. Many people would like to know that God is real, but they aren’t willing to give up their doubts along the way. They would rather keep them intact until God gives them a sign.”

“How do you get around that?” I asked. “I mean, their doubt is real.”

“Let one answer unfold at a time,” said Baba. “When you make a best friend, he doesn’t have to prove himself all over again every time you meet. Yet you make God go back to zero when anything goes wrong.

Be more accepting. When you see a reason to think that life is good, believe in that reason and don’t go back on it. The next reason will be even more convincing. Going back to doubt every time is what turns life into one big question. Keep your eye on the answers. They are coming your way all the time, in small hints and clues.”

I've tried to live that way, but one small step - worry - keeps returning, so I'll bring it up here. I've met hundreds of people who don't believe in a personal God. Some tell me that they believe in a higher self. Some use the word *spirit*, and they pray to the universe the way other people pray to God. All of them, however, feel a higher purpose. They aren't willing to settle for a world without spirit.

So I stopped saying, "I am looking for God." I don't often hear myself saying, "I believe in God," or even "There is a God." To really know the truth about love or faith or the soul itself, trust in small answers first. Let them grow instead of being smothered at birth by your doubts. Then an amazing thing can happen. You can wake up one morning to discover that everything God stands for is true. God is real by any name you use, or none at all.



God Would Kneel Down

By St. Francis of Assisi
From Love Poems from God
Translated by Daniel Ladinsky

I think God might be a little prejudiced,
For once He asked me to join Him on a walk
through this world,

and we gazed into every heart on this earth,
and I noticed He lingered a bit longer
before any face that was
weeping,

and before any eyes that were
laughing.

And sometimes when we passed
a soul in worship

God too would kneel
Down

I have come to learn: God
adores His
creation.



Peace, Poise and Power

From the *Science of Mind* textbook
By Ernest Holmes

Peace, Poise and Power

Peace, Poise and Power are within me, for they are the witnesses of the
Inner Spirit of all Truth, Love and Wisdom.
I am at peace within me, and all about responds to that Great Calm of the
Inner Soul which knows its rightful place in the All Good.
Power is born from within me and passes into my experience
without effort or labor.
I rest in Security and Peace, for the Inner Light shines forth
and illumines the way.

I rest in Thee.

Home Study for Week 4

READING

- Read a prayer each day from *Creative Ideas*
- Workbook** Week 4 pages 50 – 62

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Each week** Meditate and journal on the results of your “God Is, I Am” activity.
 - What does this mean for you?
 - How does it show up in your life?
 - What insights, questions or next steps are emerging?

- Continue** Meditate and journal on the answers to workbook pages 14 – 16 “New Ideas and Creativity are Mine.”
 - Your answers to these questions may change as your experience of Spirit deepens and grows.
 - If new ideas are surfacing note them – your consciousness continues to expand!

WRITING to be retained in workbook (not to be turned in)

- Workbook pages 54 – 57 “Being in Transition” and page 58 “Choice within Change”. Be prepared to share next week.

Week 4

Embracing Change

This week

This week we accept that we are magnificent, powerful creators! Held in love as we move into our greatness, we become aware of what drives our behavior. Next we become willing to change. Embracing a life of happiness, we learn to accept every situation as a precious gift, brought to us by a gracious universe in order to practice being who we choose to be. We move forward in gratitude!

What you do for yourself – any gesture of kindness, any gesture of gentleness, any gesture of honesty and clear seeing toward yourself – will affect how you experience your world. In fact, it will transform how you experience the world. What you do for yourself, you're doing for others, and what you do for others, you're doing for yourself.

- Pema Chodron

What I am is good enough if I would only be it openly.

- Carl Rogers

Even the Spirit does not seek to control us; It lets us alone to discover ourselves.

- Ernest Holmes

Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

- Howard Thurman

It's All in How We See It

By Jane Beach

When I was eleven I got my first pair of glasses. On the way home from the optometrist's office, I found a whole new world waiting for me! I noticed leaves on the trees where before there were hazy green blobs. There really were planes in the sky leaving those white trails everyone talked about! A new level of awareness and confidence was born that day simply because I literally saw the world through new eyes.

A spiritual awakening is kind of like putting on that first pair of glasses. Before the awakening, our life's vision is blurry, causing us to bump into walls and trip over obstacles in the way, with the spillage generally making a mess of things. We keep stumbling along wondering what we're doing wrong, comparing our life to others who certainly seem to be on the right road, when we can't even find the path!

A consciousness of God opens our eyes to a relationship with the Divine essence that is alive and well within us and all around us; we just didn't know it. We have struggled with relationships, looking for love, unaware that the most important relationship of all is the one we have with ourselves. Suddenly, as our spiritual essence comes into focus, we begin to have an awareness that life is conspiring for our highest good. The Infinite One sacredly holds the big picture of our life. There are a million ways the vision can express, fulfilling the intention for a glorious, full experience that is ours by Divine birthright. It is our gift. Our potential is never gone from us, no matter what our life circumstances. We will sense it when we are feeling happy and fulfilled.

Our Personal Guide

The Beloved is our personal guide as we move toward our vision, even when we can't sense Its presence. For those born into war-torn countries, poverty or abuse, the power of Its love is what kept us alive as children. Helping us put one foot in front of the other, It was the inner light that let us know that somehow we would be okay. It found avenues for hope, whether it was in the imaginative play with a favorite toy or noticing the clouds in the sky. In reality, the Beloved was the toy. It was the clouds. It was our internal comforter when we couldn't find comfort in the physical world. It gave us the courage to move through our fear when we didn't think we could make it. Today, the Beloved offers gentle direction as we contemplate forgiveness. It continues to help us notice the beauty of what is around us, and especially the beauty of who we are, as we move through each day. It gives us hope that we really can move past our anger and pain to find the serenity we instinctively know exists.

In allowing ourselves to be guided to our greatest happiness, we will be called upon to let go of old ways of being that are holding us back. The question is: How do we take the first step? How can we begin to embrace something as elusive as inner peace when we have been steeped in sadness, irritation and regret for so long? Generally there are three basic steps,

each guided by Spirit's patient and unconditional love. With the Beloved's guidance, we can embrace our past in order to allow it to become a series of essential milestones that brought us to our spiritual awakening.

Taking the First Step

The first step is to become *aware* of what drives our behavior. If you move through the world with anger and resentment, trying to control everyone and everything around you, you are probably dealing with underlying fear. Gently, and with great compassion, allow yourself to feel your fear. Let the Beloved nurture you while you hold the feelings of your fear with respect, for it is a significant aspect of who you have been. It is not wrong. You are not wrong. You are beautiful in the eyes of the Beloved. Nothing you have ever done or ever could do would cause Love to turn Its back on you. Let the Beloved surround you and hold you close while you recognize and honor your fear. You will be guided to an understanding that it is this fear that guides many of your thoughts and subsequent behaviors. It is what underlies your pain today, not the other people or events in your life. This acceptance is part of your conscious awakening, your invitation to see life through new eyes of hope and possibility.

Embracing Change

The second step is to become *willing* to change. Setting the intention to lay down past beliefs and behaviors sometimes stops people because they begin to ask, "As much as I want my life to change, if I let go of who I've been, who will I be? If I let go of anger, resentment and self-blame, what will be left of me? If I can no longer control another, what will become of my relationships?" Even though our life isn't working, at least it has been familiar. The unknown road to peace is often so scary that sometimes we unconsciously sabotage our journey. Ernest Holmes is encouraging, "The universe is made up of love and law. God is love. Love is givingness; love is also forgivingness. There is a law of cause and effect that automatically compels man to reap as he sows. The day he ceases to sow error he will begin to reap truth. When he stops sowing hate he will reap love. When he stops sowing unforgivingness he will be forgiven. When he stops sowing fear he will reap faith." The promise in these words is that we can replace who we've been with who we were born to be. As you consciously practice letting go of anger, your natural state of acceptance will be ready to take its place. There is a whole new side of you just waiting to emerge, and it's someone you will like!

Choosing Our Focus

The third step is to *accept* every situation as a precious gift, brought to you by a gracious universe in order for you to practice being who you choose to be. The situation is in your life anyway, so why not look at it as an opportunity to practice instead of a reason to be annoyed? How will you know inner peace if you don't have an opportunity to be peaceful? In every circumstance, we can choose where to put our focus. Our focal point can be harmony, love and acceptance, or we can let judgment run rampant and focus on frustration, bitterness and victimization. It's up to us. Our focus directs our attitude, and our

attitude guides our actions. It begins with the conscious decision to see through new eyes. Surrendering to the love of a God that adores us is a big step. In order to truly accept and embrace every circumstance, we must believe that God is inherently good, and that life is on our side. In any moment you can choose to say, “My life, in this very instant, is a gift from the Beloved One who cherishes me. I am grateful for everything in my life right now, including this experience.” Then begin looking for things to be grateful for, from the fact that you woke up this morning with food to put in your stomach for breakfast, to having toothpaste to brush your teeth afterward. How long has it been since you told your deodorant you were grateful for it? Do it! Everything counts!

It takes as long as it takes to have a spiritual awakening. It took me 50 years, and I’m grateful for every single second of that time, no matter what it looked like. “It’s all in how we see it,” reminds us that by surrendering into the love of a God that adores us we can choose to look for the blessings in every situation. In Eckhart Tolle’s *A New Earth* we are reminded that, “Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness. How do you know this is the experience you need? Because this is the experience you are having at this moment.” The present moment is when you get to consciously choose your perspective. There is a reason that in this moment you are reading these words. Is something stirring in you now? Pay attention to it! I bet it has to do with seeing the world through the spiritual spectacles of love. It is your open invitation to live your highest potential, your greatest happiness. The path is yours to take, knowing each step is blessed. In doing so you are choosing love. You are choosing you.

Being in Transition

From *Transitions*
By William Bridges

Few people stop to reflect on the radiating waves of change in their lives. When they do, they may find that apparently minor events have had major impacts. They may find that puzzling and hard to identify distresses that they are feeling can be traced back to incidents or situations that set off the transition process in their lives. Sometimes they involve new beginnings that require unforeseen endings. Sometimes they involve endings with no new beginnings in sight. The big events – divorce, death, losing a job, and other obviously painful changes – are easy to spot. But others, like marriage, sudden success, and moving to your dream house, are forgotten because they are “good events” and therefore not supposed to lead to difficulty.

We expect to be distressed at illness, but it is a shock to find recovery leading to difficulty. We know that overwork is hard, but how can a big vacation lay us low? And how shall we account for the puzzling chains of events, none of which are especially big or traumatic, that make our lives look like Rube Goldberg machines, with one piece setting another into motion and the end result being way off in the corner somewhere. When a child enters school, a woman is free to take an outside job, and that additional money makes possible the first big vacation in years – at which time the husband decides to change jobs. It’s not very elegant mechanics, but it is in fact the way life works.

What are the events that have brought change into your life in the past year? And what are the areas of your life in which the changes are evident? Following are some categories and guidelines to help you to answer those questions.

Losses of relationships What relationships have gone out of your life in the past year – list everything from a spouse’s death to a friend moving away. Include children leaving home or the alienation of a former friend. What about the death of a pet, or the loss of some admired hero, or anything that narrows your field of relationships?

Changes in home life Getting married or having a child; having a spouse retire, become ill (or recover), return to school, change jobs, or go into a depression; moving to a new house or remodeling the old one; experiencing increased (or decreased) domestic tension – anything that changed the content or quality of life in your home. (I would also add the increase or decrease of physical clutter).

Personal changes Getting sick (or well again); experiencing notable success (or failure); changing your eating habits, sleep-patterns, or sexual activities; starting or stopping school; changing your life-style or your appearance markedly.

Work and financial changes Getting fired, retiring, or changing jobs; changes within your organization; increase or decrease in income; taking on new loans or mortgages; discovering that career advancement is blocked.

Inner changes Spiritual awakening, deepening social and political awareness, or psychological insights; changes in self-image or values; the discovery of a new dream or the abandonment of an old one; or simply one of those nameless shifts which cause us to say, “I’m changing.”

Choice within Change

By Jane Beach

At every given moment we are at choice. What we think about any situation moves us toward success and happiness or failure and discontent. When we choose to look for the good, we can feel in control because it is our expectation that it will work out. We don't need to figure out or control how it will happen; we only know that it will. We take the time to listen ... really listen ... to the wisdom that is within us. Only then do we act, taking our cue from the spiritual voice within that speaks only of Truth and Love.

What is this voice? For me, it is not really a voice, it is more of a feeling ... a knowing. It is different for everyone. What is the same is that it reminds us that we are worthy, that we can do it, and that we will know what to do and how to do it as we move forward. People have asked me, "How do you know when it is Spirit and when it is mind chatter?" My answer is that when it is God / Spirit / The Beloved (whatever you choose to call It), you will always feel uplifted, cherished, respected, and come away with an "I can do it" attitude. When it is mind chatter (ego) you will be reminded of failures in the past, you may compare yourself to another who is better, you will hear all the reasons you can't, and fear sets in. When it is a God-thing, you are championed by your own personal cheerleader! You will know the difference.

We get what we expect. If we think life is hard, we get to be right – it will be. If we have joyful expectation of abundance, good health and loving relationships, then that will be our experience. Thinking positively shifts where we put our attention. It takes practice. Whenever a negative thought enters our mind, we can choose to replace it with an optimistic one, or find something to be grateful for.

It is within our power to become as cheerful, contented and successful as we make up our mind to be. Most importantly, the journey is one of self-discovery, nurturing a personal relationship with the God that adores us. Our outward lives simply become a reflection of that relationship. Try it! You will be glad you did.

Being held in Divine guidance and love this very moment, what gifts have this year's changes brought to you?

Know Yourself as a Creator

From *Power, Freedom and Grace*

By Deepak Chopra

Know yourself as a creator, not a victim. You realize that the world is a mirror of your thoughts, your feelings, your desires, your interpretations. You know that every situation, every relationship, every event you experience is mirroring something inside you. When you don't like what's happening in your world, you don't try to correct it by looking outside yourself. That would be like polishing the leaves of a plant instead of watering the roots.

If something you're experiencing in life is causing you to be unhappy, you recognize that it's your creation. Otherwise you stay in the victim mode: *Poor me. This is happening to me, and I am powerless to change it.* Why wait for the world to change when, in fact, you are creating the world? Whatever is happening is because you are creating it, so you ask yourself, *What do I need to shift inside of me so this doesn't happen?*

No problem on Earth can be solved by addressing it at the level of the problem, but every problem can be solved at the level of spirit. So you go beyond the world of illusion, the mask of appearances, to the invisible world of spirit. In the world of spirit, you find the creator of both the personal body-mind and the cosmic body-mind. At this level, you do not even struggle with the problem; you rise above the problem. And in doing so, you create a new solution.

No circumstance can overshadow the experience of unboundedness that comes from experiencing pure consciousness. And the only way to really experience pure consciousness is to transcend thought and enter into silent communion with your soul.

Believe and It Shall Be Done

From *Can We Talk to God?*

By Ernest Holmes

The simplest approach is always the most direct – “Believe and it shall be done,” accept and let it be done; convince the mind and no longer deny the greater possibility. “Act as though I am and I will be.” We must abandon our ideas to the Supreme Cause and wait for the harvest time with joyful expectancy.

There should be a definite and conscious expectancy; we should feel as though the entire power of the universe were for us and never against us; all conversation to the contrary must be set aside.

Remember that mental treatment is neither wishing nor willing; it is an affirmation of the presence, the power and the willingness of the Divine Law to specialize Itself for us, to meet every human need. It is not through human determination, not by “power or by might,” but by the silent workings of the Spirit through organized thought that the Divine imparts Its power to each person. We are chemists in the laboratory of the Infinite; what shall we produce?

Love Dissolves All Fear

From the *Science of Mind* textbook
By Ernest Holmes

Love Dissolves All Fear

Greater than fear is Love.
Love dissolves all fear, casts out all doubt and sets the captive free.
Love, like the River of Life, flows through me and
refreshes me with its eternal blessings.
Love cannot be afraid; it is fearless and strong,
and is mighty in its works.
It can accomplish all things through the Inner Light of that faith
in the All Good,
Which fills my very Being with a Powerful Presence.

Love casts out all fear.

Home Study for Week 5

READING

- Read a prayer each day from *Creative Ideas*
- Workbook** Week 5 pages 64 – 75

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Each week** Meditate and journal on the results of your “God Is, I Am” activity.
 - What does this mean for you?
 - How does it show up in your life?
 - What insights, questions or next steps are emerging?
- This week** Practice the “Courage/Serenity Meditation Exercise” on pages 72 – 73.

WRITING to be retained in workbook (not to be turned in)

- Workbook pages 65 – 69 “Focusing on God in Every Moment.” Answer the questions and be ready to share your answers next week.

Remember ... Be open, honest and gentle with yourself on your spiritual journey. You are not alone – the greatest Love of all walks with you.

You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.

- The Buddha

Week 5

Changeless Reality

This week

This week we settle into the rhythm of an ever changing world, within which is the changeless reality of the Greatest Love of All. As our attitude shifts from judgment to acceptance, the wrinkles of our life begin to smooth out. Being fully present in the moment, we realize that it is the *experience* of God that is important ... it is the *experience* that transforms us. The healing that comes from it is simply the natural outcome of the experience.

Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.

- George Bernard Shaw

With love you cannot bargain there, the choice is not yours. Love is a mirror; it reflects only your essence, if you have the courage to look in its face.

- Rumi

Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Through the Power of this indwelling Spirit I am a blessing to myself and others.

- Ernest Holmes

Focusing on God in Every Moment

By Jane Beach

The eternal, changeless peace, joy and wisdom of the Divine are who we are by Divine birthright. It's our Truth. In *Creative Ideas* Ernest Holmes reminds us:

“Neither the will of God nor the nature of God can change.

Reality is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Everyone's real nature is spiritual, it is of God.

Though the real self is changeless, we live in a changing world.

It is wonderful to know that something permanent, substantial, and eternal stands in the midst of our being, and I believe, watches with joy the eternal unfoldment taking place.”

Created from love, there is nothing else for us to be, and yet our human lives are intoxicating! We have become attracted to drama, shifting away from the truth residing within us. We listen to what's on the news and a sense of hopelessness stirs. We fall in love with someone's potential only to be disappointed again and again by their actions. We strive to understand what the statisticians tell us if X, Y, or Z happens so we can be prepared. We are shocked to hear what our neighbor has done! Soon our lives are filled with stress and worry instead of hope and possibility. Because our human life is always changing, we are in a continual process of letting go ... transition ... from realizing we no longer fit into that pair of jeans to the need to look for a new apartment. We seem to have a human resistance to change, which causes our focus to be on what we don't want, and anxiety creeps into our thoughts.

On occasion, our judgment about ourselves causes our worst suffering. Humans are creatures of habit, often staying in past beliefs or present conditions which are not serving us because they are preferable to the unknown. We feel frustrated and impotent when old ideas don't work, and yet we are not ready to trust the change we sense needs to take place in us. Inwardly we ask, “What will happen if I am willing to be in the present moment with my unforgiveness, my humiliation, and my secrets? If I let go of the mess that I am now, what will I be – Swiss cheese with holes where the old me used to be? My old drama may not serve me, but it's mine! And what's more, how can I possibly be loveable with all I've done? This is not enlightenment, its sheer terror!” Sound familiar? The Buddha tells us, “Hate never ceases with hate, it only ceases with love.” Focusing on God in every moment brings us to love. As we no longer need to deny or condemn any part of our human lives, we begin to entertain a new intention, “I want to love me the best I can – all of me.”

Forever is a very long time, and because we are eternal, we will have endless experiences on many planes of existence. With each life expression it is normal and natural to bump up against our physical body's acceptance of the beliefs and emotions that come with that particular lifetime. Our soul, which we may call our inner wisdom or intuition, harkens us back when we stray from remembering who we really are. Yet we were

created with the invitation to live our lives freely, without judgment, no matter what outside body suit we don. While our soul reminds us that peace is ever-ready for our attention, free will enables us to listen to our soul's summons ... or not.

Being Fully Present

When we pay attention to the guidance of the indwelling Spirit, we pave the road to revelation. Rarely can we predict the moment of enlightenment. A profound spiritual awakening can happen in a state of heightened excitement or in the midst of everyday activity. Just as often, and perhaps more so, revelation occurs when a crisis hits and we feel lost. Life as we knew it falls away as a relationship ends, financial disaster looms, an accident happens or a health challenge appears. Fear, hopelessness, anger and despair are triggered. Our back against the wall, we run out of answers, terror sets in, and we can't even think straight. This may be a good sign!

Our philosophy teaches the power of now, being fully present in the moment. Fear often takes us there because when we are afraid we are absolutely fully present in our fear, even though we would wish otherwise. Some panic-stricken part of us finally opens up to the Divine because there is no where else to turn; we shout to God, "That's it! I can't do this anymore – you take it!" For many this has been a blessed moment because a personal relationship with the Beloved is at hand. It is the *experience* of God that is important ... it's the *experience* that transforms us. Ultimately, it has nothing to do with healing the situation that brought on the crisis – the healing is a natural outcome of the intimate bond with a love so vast that it defies description. Today, more and more of us are seeking the personal connection which brings about such transformation; the sure knowing that when we keep our focus on God, everything else will take care of itself. Whatever gets us to the experience becomes a blessing.

Asking for What We Need

Sometimes the crossroad to enlightenment appears when we are a mess, our human emotions laid out on the table like a slab of meat on a platter. When a loved one becomes ill or dies we may feel like our foundation has crumbled, and life doesn't make sense anymore. It's okay to feel that way. We needn't hide from the God that adores us; It senses our grief even before we do and sends us waves of comfort. We may sense Its presence in the silent squeeze of a friend's hand, a well-timed phone call or a good night's sleep.

In times of crisis, our reactions are varied and may bring to light an awareness of how we move through the world. Where we give freely to others, we may find that we are not so good about asking for help, even though a strong shoulder to lean on is exactly what we need. Once we've begun to have open communion with Spirit, asking for what we need becomes easier, "What am I going to do to take care of myself today? Am I willing to ask a friend to go to the movies with me or take a walk in the park, even if I cry the whole time? Can I say I need help?" We get past the notion that we are bothering people, understanding that asking is a gift, allowing them to step into compassionate

service. There is power in connecting authentically through our feelings with one another.

Staying focused on God allows us to accept what's in front of us instead of labeling it wrong and resisting it. Freeing us from enslavement to our minds, it creates a conscious pathway to truth. We discover that by keeping our attention on Spirit, everything else seems to fall into place. If we need to make a decision wisdom guides us, even when our life appears to be a mess. If a potentially difficult conversation is at hand we remember to simply breathe, and it is approached with a sense of inner peace. The presence of peace is in all things, awaiting our attention.

By accepting the love that awaits us, we put one foot in front of the other, and we begin to trust the presence that accepts us without condition and without reservation. It only takes one “Ah-ha!” moment of revelation to cause us to seek it again and again. Certainly, the changes don't happen overnight. Instead, it's about our willingness to take the first step. In *This Thing Called You*, Ernest Holmes writes,

*“In this peace that holds me so gently
I find strength and protection from all fear or anxiety.
It is in the peace of God in which I feel the love of a Holy Presence.”*

It is okay to be afraid, to feel shame and to be angry. They are all part of the expression of our lives as spiritual beings having human experiences. Our feelings will change with the ebb and flow of our lives because change is always at hand. It's what we do with the change and how we see ourselves in it that is important. When we honor every aspect of ourselves we can be sure of the one constant in life, and that is the love of the Holy Presence where peace awaits. One step at a time, we need only be willing ...

When have you been caught up in or swayed by human conditions? Explain.

Have you ever hit a low point in your life, and look back at it as a blessing? Where was the blessing? Did it change your relationship with the God of your understanding?

How willing are you to ask for help when you need it?

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 struggling and 10 complete acceptance, where are you in your willingness to let go of the outcome in the midst of change?

What if you could trust Spirit/Universe/Life so much that you could “Let go and let God?” How might your life change?

Faith

From *Faith and Will*

By Julia Cameron

Faith is attractive. Far from having the joyless, resigned quality that we may fear from it, faith brings to the believer a renewed vitality, a sense of camaraderie and adventure. Seen through the eyes of faith, the world is a safe place. Life is a great unfolding adventure. Strangers are friends that we have not yet met. Optimism prevails. Seen through the eyes of faith, there is nothing to fear in this world. When challenges arise, we will have the inner strength to meet them. Walking through the valley of the shadows, we will have the confidence in our God's benevolent protection. We will not, perhaps, be shielded from all harm, but we will be given the wherewithal to meet any adversity.

The question arises: How, exactly, do we manage to see through the eyes of faith?" This is where the daily work comes in, the daily choice to believe. It is possible to either believe or disbelieve. It is possible, too, to want to believe and to have difficulty in believing. This is when we must reach out. Belief is contagious. Morning reading that poses belief is a positive way to begin the day. The prayer, always, is "Lord, I believe. Help my disbelief."

For each of us the path to a daily belief will be different. I begin my day with three pages of long-hand morning writing. This tells God where I am and what I am needing his help with. Others of us can start with a favorite prayer. It matters less what we do than that we do something. We are trying to hook our consciousness to God's. We are trying to make conscious contact. This begins with the acknowledgment that there is something greater than ourselves to which we wish to relate.

The day stretches ahead of us. There will be tiny choice points in which we are free to move closer to God. We can be kinder, more generous, more good-humored. The choice is ours.

We are not nudging for our own way. We are listening, trying to hear what path God would have us take. It begins to seem possible that we are in the right place at the right time and that our unfolding is happening according to a divine scheme.

Letting the Cycles Flow

From **The Language of Letting Go**

By Melodie Beattie

Life is cyclical, not static. Our relationships benefit when we allow them to follow their own natural cycles.

Like the tide ebbs and flows, so do the cycles in relationships. We have periods of closeness and periods of distance. We have times of coming together and times of separating to work on individual issues.

We have times of love and joy, and times of anger. Sometimes, the dimensions of relationships change as we go through changes. Sometimes, life brings us new friends or a new loved one to teach us the next lesson.

That does not mean the old friend disappears forever. It means we have entered a new cycle.

We do not have to control the course of our relationships, whether these be friendships or love relationships. We do not have to satisfy our need to control by imposing a static form on relationships.

Let it flow. Be open to the cycles. Love will not disappear. The bond between friends will not sever. Things do not remain the same forever, especially when we are growing and changing at such a rapid pace.

Trust the flow. Take care of yourself, but be willing to let people go. Hanging on to them too tightly will make them disappear.

The old adage about love still holds true: “If it’s meant to be, it will be. And if you love someone, let them go. If they come back to you, the love is yours.”

Today, I accept the cyclical nature of life and relationships. I will strive to go with the flow. I will strive for harmony with my own needs and the needs of the other person.

Courage/Serenity Meditation Exercise

From The Wisdom to Know the Difference

By Eileen Flanagan

Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the Serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
and the Wisdom to know the difference.*

Choose a quiet spot where you will not be interrupted for five minutes. Turn off phones and anything else that makes noise or gets your attention. Find a comfortable place to sit. You may choose a chair with a straight back, like a kitchen chair, or a pillow on the floor. In either case, you should sit with your back erect and your head relaxed, but not slumped over. Let your hands rest comfortably on your legs, palms up. The idea is to become relaxed, but not so relaxed that you get sleepy.

Let your eyes close most of the way and take a deep breath. Exhale slowly, blowing out the stress of the day. Allow your next breath to come at a natural pace, simply paying attention to each inhalation and exhalation.

As you breathe in, think of the word, “courage” as you feel your chest fill. As you exhale, repeat the word “serenity,” as if you are exhaling all worry and stress. Repeat this with each breath for five minutes. The cycle of repeating “courage” and “serenity” should calm your mind and take it off everyday concerns that cause anxiety, making you feel both more peaceful and better able to function in the world.

As you meditate, other thoughts may come into your mind: the phone call you forgot to make, the embarrassing thing you said at work, or even how proud you are of yourself for meditating. Use the words, “serenity” and “courage” to gently bring your attention back to the present moment. Don’t feel bad if distractions continue to come. That is very normal. Just gently push the distractions aside. If you find the words themselves distracting, just focus on your breath.

After you are finished meditating, you can jot down in a journal or meditation log how it went and what distractions arose for you. Sometimes the thoughts that come up in meditation are things that you need to deal with, but by meditating first, you will often be more clearheaded in handling what needs to be handled.

Start by trying this exercise five minutes per day. Over time, you can gradually increase the time you spend meditating. Thich Nhat Hanh points out that, “breathing is the link

between our body and our mind ... when we breathe consciously we recover ourselves completely and encounter life in the present moment.”

Stillness and Receptivity

**From the *Science of Mind* textbook
By Ernest Holmes**

Stillness and Receptivity

I am still and receptive to Life.
I let Life flow through me into all that I do, say or think.
I shall let my Life be what it is, and shall not worry nor complain.
I am now entered into the Secret Place of the soul
where complete quiet reigns supreme
and where God talks to me.

I receive.

Home Study for Week 6

READING

- Read a prayer each day from *Creative Ideas*
- Workbook** Week 6 pages 76 – 86

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Each week** Meditate and journal on the results of your “God Is, I Am” activity.
 - What does this mean for you?
 - How does it show up in your life?
 - What insights, questions or next steps are emerging?

WRITING to be retained in workbook (not to be turned in)

- Workbook pages 80 – 81 “The Will of God is Always Good.” Answer the questions and be ready to share your answers next week.

REMINDER: FINAL THOUGHT PAPER

Your final project is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “God Is, I Am.” You will have reflected on the idea of “God Is, I Am” during the course of the class; this paper is a culmination of your insights. Within the body of the paper you will contemplate and answer the questions, “What is God to me?” and “What am I to God?” These questions will help you give language to your deepening relationship with the God of your understanding, whatever you call It and whatever that looks like.

Your presentation will last between 3-5 minutes. You can read your paper or talk about it.

Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your walk with the Divine.

Go often into your garden. Sitting under the Tree of Life in cool, quiet communion, you will find fresh inspiration. God Himself will go forth anew into creation through you.

- Ernest Holmes

Week 6

Seeing Good

Friendship with oneself is all important, because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world.

- Eleanor Roosevelt

This week

This week we are being gentle with ourselves during this time of change. We are embracing all aspects of our life, seeing each circumstance as an opportunity to have an actual experience of the peace and love that is God. Spirit meets us at the center of our biggest worries and our greatest fears. To The Beloved we are a glorious manifestation of Its love, exactly as we are! Welcome to God's world ...

This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.

- Dalai Lama

Tenderly, I now touch all things, knowing one day we will part.

- St. John of the Cross

Embracing Ourselves

By Jane Beach

Not long ago I had a discussion with a friend who has cancer. Do you know what most worried her? She was afraid to be afraid. She believed that if she had periods of weakness and fear, unable to keep positive thoughts in her mind, she would not be able to beat the cancer. I thought, “Ah, that’s where we begin this conversation, with the truth about the transformation that takes place when we have a personal experience of God’s love.” Ernest Holmes has challenged Religious Scientists to stay open at the top. I believe the next step in our spiritual evolution is to consciously seek the Love that is forever seeking us. It is more than getting the things that make us happy and fulfilled – it is in living lives that are real and authentic, honoring every aspect of our human-ness, seeing each circumstance as an opportunity to have an actual experience of the peace and the love that is God. With my friend I asked, “Do you know one reason I trust God so much? To the Beloved, there is no right or wrong; my happiest moment is no better or worse than the nightmare that awakens me at night. We needn’t try to hide our fear, our anger, our self-blame or anything else from Spirit, for it already knows us better than we know ourselves, including all our human feelings. It meets us at the center of our biggest worries, our greatest fears and in those dark days when life feels like a cesspool of muck. When our scary places are touched by pure love, transformation takes place.”

Going to Our Dark Place, with Love

As my friend and I dialoged about her illness, we talked about the beauty of surrendering to what we can’t see and yet is everywhere ... the Unseen Guest. We don’t need to stay strong all the time because the Beloved is right there as our own inner strength, being strong for us when we can’t do it for ourselves. Being scared is okay, a natural part of the human experience. If we are terrified, our job is to keep focusing on God the best we can, allowing Its love to fill and surround us.

I asked my friend to try this visualization: Picture Spirit becoming a soft blanket which holds you in comfort and compassion, keeping you safe. Feel Its gentle, powerful energy around you as you pull the soft fabric to you. Visualize the setting – where are you? Are you standing, sitting or lying down? Is the coverlet pulled in close or loosely draped over your shoulders? What kind of a blanket is it – a silky comforter, cool to the touch? A patchwork quilt of many colors? Create it in your mind, for God is all of it! If you are very panicky, tuck your head inside like a turtle, hiding within the folds of faith, completely supported and protected by this great, soft shield of grace. Do you feel it now? Can you sense yourself embraced by the God that adores you? No matter where you are, this powerful love is part of you. At any moment, you can choose to pull this blanket of strength around you, whether

you are in the waiting room of the doctor's office, a meeting at work or in the privacy of your own home.

To God there is no good or bad, and yet we humans are full of judgment about our thoughts and feelings. It takes courage to embrace the shadows of our life. We seek a healing, and yet how can we know if God's unconditional love is really in our dark place if we don't go there? Just as Ernest Holmes challenged people to "Try it yourself," as he brought Science of Mind to the world, we can do the same by honoring our human feelings and experiences.

If you are angry, set your intention to honor your anger, if you are full of judgments about your childhood abuse, set your intention to honor your judgments, and if you are ill, honor your illness. Within God's blanket of love, knowing you are absolutely safe, look at each with complete acceptance, the way the Beloved sees them. Acknowledge that what you are feeling is a perfectly normal and natural part of your human experience – please don't make it wrong. Lean into the Beloved One, allowing It to hold you as you ask:

- Where did I get this fear, worry, anger?
- How long have I had it?
- Why have I had it?
- Is it left over from an old belief that is no longer true?
- Is it moving me toward living my highest potential?
- Something else?
- What do I feel about it?
- How do I want to feel about it?
- What are my next steps?

Tucking your imaginary God-blanket around you even tighter, knowing you are secure in God's love, meet the feeling with respect, for it is part of you, and who you are is a beautiful thing! Let this experience take place with no expectation for the outcome; simply let it be. Each time you practice this moment of unconditional self-love, at some point you will have a sense that everything is going to be okay. You will know you have been touched by the God that cherishes you, exactly as you are, and you will be changed. If it is your fear that brought you here, then your fear has become a blessing. If it was your shame, then your shame has been your avenue to peace.

It often takes drastic times to bring us to a place of willingness. My friend with cancer is practicing relaxing into knowing she can stop being afraid that her fear will halt her healing. In keeping her focus on God and embracing her fear instead of resisting it, she is allowing the experience of her fear to transform her life; her healing will be a natural outcome. Today, she is focusing on God in every situation, aware that love is right smack in the middle of it.

Every part of you is perfect to the Beloved. Suddenly you will understand that the very aspect of yourself that you were most condemning has become your greatest gift, for in it you found God. When you are done with this quiet God-time, visualize placing your feelings into a most exquisite box, holding it close for a moment before putting it on a shelf in your heart. You are free to take it down and open the box at any time, honoring those feelings just as you would your happiness or creativity, for it is all part of the perfection that you are, and to God, you are quite good enough!

The Will of God is Always Good

Science of Mind textbook

By Ernest Holmes

All nature conspires to produce and manifest the freedom of the individual, that it may unloose its own energy...

But this teaching should not be confused with the idea that we can show people how to get what they want, regardless. True prayer must be, “Thy will be done,” but the implication relative to the *Will of God* in this prayer is not a submission to the inevitability of evil or limitation; it is a knowledge that the Will of God is *always* GOOD.

How do we know what the Will of God is? We do not, other than this: The Will of God cannot be death. Why? Because if we assume God to be the Principle of Life, the Principle of Life cannot produce death without destroying Itself. The Will of Life has only to BE life.

The Will of that which is Infinite can never be finite. Everything then should tend to expansion and multiplication in the Divine Plan. THAT is the Will of God. It has to be beauty, truth and harmony, as Troward said, “as this is the true relationship of the Whole to the parts and the parts to the Whole. Therefore, we should interpret the Will of God to be everything that expresses life without hurt.” This seems to be a fair, logical, sane and intelligent criterion.

Anything that will enable us to express greater life, greater happiness, greater power – so long as it does not harm anyone – must be the Will of God for us. As much life as one can conceive will become a part of his experience.

Questions

At this point in my life, what do I believe is God’s will for me? Can I trust that it will always be good? What will I do about it?

Knowing that the will of God is always good, and since I am one with that Goodness, how can I lovingly embrace my doubts, fears and worries as part of my perfection?

Ernest Holmes invites the Will of God to express through us as greater life, greater happiness and greater power. What will it take for me to accept this Divine invitation and express it in my life today?

Is my relationship with Spirit changing? If so, how?

Is my relationship with myself changing? If so, how?

Today I Will Judge Nothing that Occurs

From *Love is Letting Go of Fear*
By Gerald Jampolsky

Have you ever given yourself the opportunity of going through just one day concentrating on totally accepting everyone and making no judgments? Most of us think we would find that a very difficult task, since it is a rare occurrence to spend a few moments, let alone a whole day, with someone without making a judgment. When we think about it, many of us will be appalled at how often we condemn others and ourselves. We may even feel that it is almost impossible to stop being judgmental. However, all that is really necessary is our willingness to begin practicing being non-judgmental, without expecting instant perfection. The relinquishing of old habits that we do not want comes with repeated and sustained practice.

Most of us manifest a condition which could be called “tunnel vision.” We do not see people as a whole. We see just a fragment of a person and our mind often interprets what we see as a fault. Most of us were brought up in a home and school environment where emphasis was placed on constructive criticism, which actually is usually a disguise for faultfinding.

On those occasions when we observe ourselves repeating this same mistake with our spouses, our children, our friends, or even someone seen only casually, it may be helpful for us to quiet our minds, observe our thoughts, and become aware that being a faultfinder is totally dependent on our past experiences.

Evaluating and being evaluated by others, a habit from the past, results at worst in fear and at best in conditional love. To experience unconditional Love, we must get rid of the evaluator part of our self. In place of the evaluator, we need to hear our strong inner voice saying to ourselves and others, “I totally Love and accept you as you are.”

As we reinforce our decision to be only Love finders, it becomes easier for us to concentrate on the strengths of others and overlook their weaknesses. It is important that we apply this lesson to everyone, including ourselves. That means that we can also see ourselves in a Loving way.

Not judging others is another way of letting go of fear and experiencing Love. When we learn not to judge others – and totally *accept* them, and not want to *change* them – we can simultaneously learn to accept ourselves.

Everything we think, say and do reacts on us like a boomerang. When we send out judgments in the form of criticism, fury or other attack thoughts, they come back to us. When we refrain from making judgments and send out only Love, it comes back to us.

The Power of Kindness

From *The Power of Kindness*

By Piero Ferrucci

The little old lady no longer bothered to eat. Alone in the world, she felt forgotten by everyone. She was so depressed, she could not even swallow. The very idea of ingesting food was too much for her. Closed in her silent sadness, she was simply waiting for death.

At this point, Millina enters the scene. Millina was my aunt. Every afternoon she would do her rounds, taking care of homeless people, the elderly and forgotten in nursing homes, neglected children, the outcasts and the maladjusted, the dying. She would try to make them feel a little better.

Millina meets the lady who no longer eats. She talks to her and gets her to talk a little too. In a faint voice, the old lady tells Millina about her sons and daughters, how they are too busy to look after her. No one comes to visit anymore. She has no illness. She is merely exhausted because she cannot manage to eat, and she cannot manage to eat because she is too exhausted.

“How would you like some ice cream?” Millina asks. It’s a strange idea, giving ice cream to a dying person. But it works. With every spoonful, ever so slowly, some color, voice and life return to the old lady.

It’s simple, it’s ingenious: Give a tasty, easily ingested food to someone who finds it hard to eat, and it will give her a quick lift. But this explanation is only part of the picture. The ice cream solution came to Millina only because she had taken the woman to heart. Because she had seen that this lady needed not only food, but above all care and attention – just what all of us need, as we need oxygen. Before the ice cream, it was the warmth of solidarity that the lady received, and what brought color back to her face was not merely food but, more significantly, a simple act of kindness.

Kindness? It may strike us as absurd to even approach the subject: Our world is full of violence, war, terrorism, devastation. And yet life goes on precisely because we are kind to one another. No newspaper tomorrow will tell of a mother who read a bedtime story to her child, or a father who prepared breakfast for his children, of someone who listened with attention, of a friend who cheered us up, of a stranger who helped carry a suitcase. Many of us are kind without even knowing it. We do what we do simply because it is right.

The Shining Path

From the *Science of Mind* textbook
By Ernest Holmes

The Shining Path

The Pathway of Life shines before me unto the
Perfect Day.
I walk the pathway of the Soul to the Gate of Good.
Nothing need be added to and nothing can be taken
from the
All Good which is forever expressing Itself in me.
Daily shall I receive Its great blessings and
my Soul shall rejoice forevermore.

I am now entered into my good.

Home Study for Week 7

READING

- Read a prayer each day from *Creative Ideas*
- Workbook** Week 7 pages 88 – 99

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Each week** Meditate and journal on the results of your “God Is, I Am” activity.
 - What does this mean for you?
 - How does it show up in your life?
 - What insights, questions or next steps are emerging?
- This week** Be in the silence and journal about how Spirit’s goodness, acceptance and love shows up in your life. How are you changed because of it?

WRITING to be retained in workbook (not to be turned in)

- Workbook pages 92 – 93 “Mysticism: Paying Attention.” Answer the questions and be ready to share your answers next week.

Remember ... Be open, honest and gentle with yourself on your spiritual journey. You are not alone – the greatest Love of all walks with you.

Mystical experience is always available – like the divine grace it is – to any who really want it; and all human beings are given in the course of their lives glimpses into the heart and soul of the real which they are free to pursue or forget.

- Andrew Harvey

Week 7

Mystic Heart

This week

This week we are accepting the fact that we already are mystics. We have all had mystical experiences. We are now paying attention to the guidance of our soul ... our own Inner Wisdom, and with it comes a new reverence for everything and everyone, including ourselves. We are a gentler presence in the world because we look at it through the eyes of Love.

Hate never ceases with hate, it only ceases with love.

- Buddha

A tool in your hand I am, dear God, the sweetest instrument you have shaped my being into. What makes me now complete – feeling the soul of every creature against my heart. Does every creature have a soul? Surely they do; for anything God has touched will have life forever, and all creatures He has held.

- St. Francis of Assisi

If you look deeply into the palm of your hand, you will see your parents and all generations of your ancestors. All of them are alive in this moment.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Courting the Mystical You

By Jane Beach

“Me, a mystic? Of course not!” you declare. I would ask you to stay open to the possibility, for there may be more for you to know ...

Mystics aren't just people who sit on a mountaintop, waiting for revelation. They are everyday people just like you and me and the neighbor next door. Anyone who experiences or seeks to experience God on a personal, intimate level is a mystic, whether they know it or not, whether they believe it or not, whether they would use that word to describe themselves or not. Ernest Holmes says, “. . . the great mystics have been intensely and pre-eminently sane people, sound people.” Anyone who courts the Divine has opened himself or herself up to mysticism.

What is mysticism? Microsoft Encarta gives this definition: “Mysticism is an immediate, direct, intuitive knowledge of God or of ultimate reality attained through personal experience. Wide variations are found in both the form and the intensity of mystical experience. The authenticity of any such experience, however, is not dependent on the form, but solely on the quality of life that follows the experience. The mystical life is characterized by enhanced vitality, productivity, serenity, and joy as the inner and outward aspects harmonize in union with God.”

We have all had experiences of mystical awareness, though we might not have been aware of it. Have you ever had a need to follow a hunch that was so strong you simply had to do it, and then you found out it was exactly the right thing to do? For example, you decide to go check out that church you've been thinking about and you run into a long lost friend. That's mysticism. It's a direct impulse from Spirit within you, and in paying attention and following your hunch, you had a mystical experience.

Think back on a time when you perceived the truth about something without any process of reasoning; you just knew. That's it again – a mystical experience. You see, you already have it . . . you are already a mystic . . . you've had it all along. Your job now is to trust, on an ongoing basis, that those experiences are more valid than anything your human intellect could have conceived. When you commune with the essence that flows through all of life, you are listening to the absolute perfection that you are. The minute you try to figure it out intellectually, you let doubt take over, and you may lose it. Instead, practice trusting that you know what you know. Because we are all One, part of the magnificent whole of Life, when you pay attention to the guidance of your own wisdom you become open to a new reverence for everything and everyone, including yourself.

A Personal Relationship

According to Ernest Holmes, “The teaching of the mystics has been that there should be ... conscious courting of the Divine Presence.” When you take notice, you’ll discover the essence that connects you with all of life. Having a personal relationship with the wisdom within you takes time. It’s much like cultivating any loving relationship. It involves wanting to know everything about them, paying attention to thoughts and feelings as the closeness that emerges is fostered. The more time you give to The Beloved, the more you feel your life change. Your love affair with The Unseen is in motion.

Having a love affair with Spirit is like having a love affair with the perfect lover. Nothing you can ever do will convince Love to change Its mind. Because we are living this lifetime on the human plane, we filter everything through our human intellect, feelings and past experiences. We get so caught up in our human-ness that we forget that our nature is peace, joy and love. In very difficult situations we might ask, “Where is God? Why does God allow this to happen?” We forget that when God created, It did so with great, joyous confidence, giving us the free will to create and explore each life experience without judgment. The Beloved One will not judge when our life looks messy, nor will It judge when we are celebrating our successes. To the question, “Where is God in this?” the answer is that God is at the center of it, as pure Love. If we choose to look for Love, our life will reflect our expectations, and we will see the splendor of the life that is around us. There is power in focusing on possibility ... in looking for the good in everything ... in finding something to be grateful for ... in trusting that Life is on our side ... in allowing our own perfection to guide us.

Sometimes it’s scary. Mysticism is forever calling us to be more than we have ever been before. And we don’t even know what the end result will look like! We may ask ourselves, “Why should I follow my own intuitive voice, when every speck of logical reasoning points me in the opposite direction?” Yet there is beauty in supplementing the power of our mind with the wisdom of our soul. Fear of the unknown will hold our voice back, when all the while the mystical connection is telling us, “Lift your voice up! Let it show up in how you move through the world and in what you say to yourself as you look in the mirror. Believe that goodness is all around you, and you will always be safe. Most of all know how Loved you are. You were born of it. It is you.” Even if you are afraid, the part of you that has never known fear will give you the courage to do what is important to you, and It will show you how to do it. Your stomach dancing with the butterflies of possibility, you will let your voice be heard with the faith that comes from knowing you have something important to say.

The Goodness of God

Having hope in the goodness of God is a solid beginning. Experiencing the goodness of God is better. Fully embracing the goodness of God is what brings us to mysticism because it allows us to trust. Unless we believe that God is good, why would we even want to directly experience It? Why would we trust The Beloved One with our biggest fears, our greatest challenges? Why would we want to surrender the outcome of our lives to It?

Recognizing the presence of Spirit in everything allows us to live the goodness of God. It's our choice as to whether we look for good or not. Knowing that we are adored by an Unseen Guest that loves us without reservation gives us the opportunity to change our perception of every single event in our lives. Although It appears to be unseen, we begin to see It everywhere. It is in a child's face, nose pressed against the window, wishing there was somewhere else to go. It is in the seed of the dandelion, determined to live as it pokes its head through a speck of dirt in the crack of a sidewalk and in the glistening trail of the snail headed home after feasting on the neighbor's ivy. We experience knowing that The Beloved is at the center of everything, including disappointment and tragedy. It is just as present deep in the recesses of the convalescent home as It is in the birthing room filled with a healthy newborn's cry. When we practice communing with Love in our everyday lives, we remember It is with us always. Everywhere we look, there It is. When circumstances are frightening or filled with grief it's easier to move into the comfort, courage and peace that is our true nature.

Mystics embrace the contradictions of the human experience, feel Divinely loved in the midst of them and begin looking for the good in each situation. Instead of asking, "How did this happen?" they ask, "How can I have this be answered prayer?" As emerging mystics, we practice seeing Love wherever we are. We might not be aware of God's presence because we have preconceived ideas about what It is supposed to look like, when in reality invitations to walk with It are all around us, with each sunrise, every breath, every laugh and every tear. The question is, are we willing to take the time to notice?

Mysticism: Paying Attention

By Jane Beach

As your personal experience with The Beloved grows, try adding these activities to your daily spiritual practice and notice how your relationship with the Divine unfolds:

- When you awaken and open your eyes say to yourself (or aloud), “I’m grateful for the gift of this day,” no matter how you feel or what’s going on in your life.
- Within just a few minutes of arising, sit down and talk with God in any way that’s comfortable for you. Your conversation may go something like this: “Dear One Who Cherishes Me, today I feel You in so many ways, and your presence brings me joy and peace (or courage and strength, etc.) My intention is to feel you in everything I see and do as I move through my day. I will look for the good and be grateful.”
- THEN PAY ATTENTION.
- As you shower, notice the drops of water as The Beloved’s touch upon your skin, “Feel Me, I’m here. The water that caresses your body is my gift to you.”
- As you towel dry feel Spirit asking, “Isn’t this invigorating? I give this awareness of renewed energy to you because I love you.”
- When you decide what to wear, choose something you really like, even if you wore it two days ago. If you love it, wear it again! If you wear a uniform, choose fun underwear and know that as you move through the day, you and the Divine share a wonderful secret.
- Turn the TV and the radio off, allowing the beginning of your day to be spent in conscious communion with The God That Adores You.
- Practice having conversations with Spirit as you move through your morning routine. Ask questions like, “What am I to do about _____?” Soon you will begin to trust that you have your own answers, and when the time comes you will know what to do; there’s no need to spend time worrying about it.
- If you live with someone else, whether it’s a person, a pet or a plant, don’t leave the house without touching them and saying something kind. It’s The Beloved’s way of reminding you we’re all one, and your love has much power.
- When you get into the car and a song you really like comes on, smile big and know that’s God’s gift to you, too.
- When you come to the first red light, think of it as an opportunity to practice patience, and perhaps take a moment to look around you to notice something new that you can be grateful for.

- Even if this conscious communication feels silly in the beginning, do it anyway. God is with you constantly, every single second of your day, waiting for your attention. Magic happens when you open the door.

And so it goes. Once you start to pay attention, you'll find your outlook on the world changing. Suddenly, you are excited about adding a candle or a plant in your bathroom, simply because the idea nurtures you. You may decide to make your usually unkempt bed because you are worth the few minutes it takes to bring order to your world. You will make that phone call you have been putting off, knowing that something new will come from it. If you feel an early morning compulsion to go walking or jogging in the silence before dawn, follow it – revelation may be waiting. If you find yourself noticing the bare branches of a tree in winter, considering the renewal of life within them, it's once again Love seeking your attention. If you are in a difficult situation, you will be conscious of how you move through it, knowing that you have the choice to like yourself in it. You will realize that the goodness of God resides in you, and you will live your life from that space.

As the mystical you emerges you will become aware that you are a gift; that you are cherished by a God that knows only good and loves you completely. You will view yourself in a new light ... softer and gentler. You will also understand that Life is to be treasured, no matter what the circumstances, because you look at it through the eyes of Love. More and more, you will find yourself surrendering to the One that guides you, and your level of trust will grow. Mystics live a life of trust. Trust is followed by surrender, and surrender invites a life of fulfillment and joy. Such is the life of the mystic, and it's you.

How are you paying attention to the God of your understanding today?

What next steps will you take?

What Is a Mystic?

From the *Science of Mind*

By Ernest Holmes

Mystics and Psychics

A *mystic* is not a mysterious person, but is one who has a deep, inner sense of Life and of his unity with the Whole. *Mysticism* and *psychism* are entirely different. One is *real* while the other may, or may not, be an illusion. There is nothing mysterious in the Truth, so far as It is understood, but all things seem mysterious until we understand them.

A mystic is one who intuitively perceives Truth and, without mental process, arrives at Spiritual Realization. It is from the teachings of the great mystics that the best in the philosophy of the world has come. Who was there who could have taught such men as these? By what process of mentality did they arrive at their profound conclusions? We are compelled to recognize that Spirit alone was their Teacher; they were indeed taught by God.

The mystic *does not read human thought*, but rather he senses the atmosphere of God. The mystics of every age have seen, sensed and taught THE SAME TRUTH! Psychic experiences, on the other hand, bear the exact opposite testimony, as they more or less contradict each other, for each psychic sees a different kind of mental picture. But the mystic experiences of the ages have revealed ONE AND THE SAME TRUTH!

A psychic sees largely through his own, or another's, subjective mentality. Consequently, his impressions are more or less colored by the vibration of his own or another's thought. He is subject to hallucinations and false impressions of every description. That is why, generally speaking, no two psychics see the same thing. Mystics have all sensed one identical Reality, and their testimony is in no way confusing, because the Spirit within them has borne witness to the same Truth.

The mystics have been perfectly normal people. They did not think of themselves as mystics, that was their language. It was natural to them – perfectly normal. They have been people like Jacob Boehme, a cobbler, pegging away at his shoes, who, looking up, saw in the geranium plant the reflection of the Cosmos – the very soul of God; like Jesus looking into the heart of nature; like Moses reading God's Law from a burning bush.

The teaching of the mystics has been that there should be *conscious courting of the Divine Presence*. There should be a conscious receptivity to It, *but a balanced one*. As one of the Apostles said, in substance, that he would rather speak ten words with his understanding than ten thousand with confusion. "God is not the author of

confusion but of peace.” Unlike the psychics of the ages, who have been more or less confused, the great mystics have been intensely and pre-eminently sane, sound people.

The philosophy of Jesus will remain sound when the belief in a material universe shall have been rolled up like a scroll and numbered with the things once thought to be real. So will the philosophy of Buddha, Plato, Socrates, Emerson and Walt Whitman, and the philosophy we are writing about today. But the more or less unconscious disclosures of most psychics are not entirely true, even in the day in which they are given. While psychism is a most interesting field of study, we should understand it for what it is worth.

It is through the teachings of the illumined that the Spiritual Universe reveals Itself, imparting to us what we know about God. What we directly experience ourselves, and what we believe others have experienced, is all we can know about God.

Jesus taught a Power transcendent, triumphant, absolute, positive, against which lesser laws meant nothing. *By Its very Presence it heals.* The mystics did not contend or argue with people. There was nothing to argue about. THEY SAW and KNEW. They are the great revealers to man of the nature of the universe, and the relationship of man to God.

Pray Without Ceasing

From *The Foundation of Mysticism*

By Joel S. Goldsmith

The God experience is not a mental one, not an intellectual one. All that we know mentally or intellectually is merely a footstep leading to the experience of God contact, or God realization, whatever word you wish to use for the actual experience of being in the presence of God and knowing it.

You see, prayer in its true sense is a communion with God. It is not begging or beseeching God, it is not asking God. It is a communion with God. Even though at the start of the communion we may find it necessary to mentally rehearse, to remember consciously, some of these passages of scripture that help bring concentration to the mind to help quiet it, communion with God can only be experienced in silence. When this quiet does descend upon us, the experience of prayer or communion begins in which we feel, rather than say, “Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth. I am listening for that still small voice.” Then, with a receptive heart, with a quiet mind, we are still – one minute, two minutes, maybe three – and eventually there comes that inner feeling of peace or release.

Often, the voice itself is heard with specific messages. Most often it is not the voice, but an awareness, a feeling, of a presence within, a gentle presence, a restful or peaceful influence. Sometimes it comes as a release, as if all of a sudden the weight is gone off our shoulders, and oh! then we know that we’re in the presence of God and that presence goes before us to make the crooked places straight. That presence is with us and performs that which is given us to do. Now we can say, “The house will be built, the watching will take place, for God is on the field.”

To pray without ceasing – and this is the sum and substance of the spiritual or mystical life – means that on every occasion of the day and night we permit ourselves to have conscious thoughts of God. It means that regardless of what we’re doing, there is an area of consciousness always alive and alert in which we are receptive to whatever thought of God may come at any hour of the day or night. It really means that upon retiring at night, we dare not fall asleep without consciously realizing, “My Father worketh even when I’m asleep. I am receptive and responsive to the divine impulse, even while I’m sleeping. I am never so deeply asleep that I cannot be quickly wakened by the Spirit if it has a message for me, a direction, a protection.”

When we arrive at that place in consciousness where we no longer live by might or by power, when the grace of God performs our tasks through us and within us, and

is ever at hand to advise, to instruct, to lead, then we have reached the goal of our spiritual life.

I Was Told to Live

From the *Science of Mind* textbook
By Ernest Holmes

I Was Told to Live

By some inner mystic Presence,
I was told to live and to love, to laugh and to be glad.
I was told to be still and know of the One Almighty Power,
in and through all.
I was told to let that Power work through me and in me.
I believed that voice and I received my Good.

I am healed – The joy of Life.

Home Study for Week 8

READING

- Read a prayer each day from *Creative Ideas*
- Workbook** Week 8 pages 100 – 108

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Each week** Meditate and journal on the results of your “God Is, I Am” activity.
 - What does this mean for you?
 - How does it show up in your life?
 - What insights, questions or next steps have emerged during the course of this class?
- Throughout the course of the class** You meditated and journaled on the answers to workbook pages 14 – 16 “New Ideas and Creativity are Mine.”
 - How did your answers change over the course of the class?

WRITING to be retained in workbook (not to be turned in)

- Workbook pages 101 – 102 “Redirecting Our Thinking.” Answer the questions and be ready to share your answer, “Where is God today?” next week.

REMINDER: FINAL THOUGHT PAPER

Your final project is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “God Is, I Am.” You will have reflected on the idea of “God Is, I Am” during the course of the class; this paper is a culmination of your insights. Within the body of the paper you will contemplate and answer the questions, “What is God to me?” and “What am I to God?” These questions will help you give language to your deepening relationship with the God of your understanding, whatever you call It and whatever that looks like.

Your presentation will last between 3-5 minutes. You can read your paper or talk about it.

Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your walk with the Divine.

Week 8

Grateful Heart

Praise and thanksgiving are salutary. They not only lighten the consciousness, lifting it out of sadness and depression; they elevate consciousness to the point of acceptance. They are attitudes of the Divine Presence, the Divine abundance and the Divine givingness.

- Ernest Holmes

This week

This week we are in deep appreciation. Appreciation calls us to live fully in the present moment. Instead of judging the situation we say, “This is the perfect time. I am in the perfect circumstance.” Appreciating the moment we ask, “How can I learn and grow from this? What aspect of my Divine nature can I bring to this situation? Peace? Acceptance? Wisdom?” The more we stay centered on the spiritual gift that is emerging within us, the more the “problem” dissolves! We do indeed have much to be grateful for!

If the only prayer you say in your whole life is “thank you,” that would suffice.

- Meister Eckhart

The most powerful agent of growth and transformation is something much more basic than any technique: a change of heart.

- John Welwood

This is what binds all people and all creation together – the gratuity of the gift of being.

- Matthew Fox

Redirecting Our Thinking

By Jane Beach

Recently I was teaching a Foundations class in which I introduced the concept of affirmations. Affirmations are short statements we make about our life and ourselves. I explained that our thought is creative, but since most of our thinking is not conscious; we mostly think the same thoughts we had yesterday. Because the Law reproduces the bulk of our thinking, we get the same results we have always gotten, even though they may not be what we want. Affirmations redirect our thinking. Some examples are, “My body is healthy and energetic,” for a person currently having health challenges, or “I am loving and loveable,” for someone struggling with self-esteem. Affirmations speak to the truth of who we really are, not the temporary life circumstances that we may be experiencing.

In this particular Foundations class, a man named Jim chose the affirmation, “I am a peaceful man.” In the past Jim had reacted with anger to many situations and he was making a conscious decision to change. In class the next week Jim told us about an incident that allowed him to practice. During rush hour traffic he and a friend came very close to being in an accident as another car cut them off, almost clipping their bumper. Judging by the hand gestures of the driver of the other car the man behind the wheel was clearly angry, although it was he who brought about the near-accident. Jim’s passenger was incensed and wanted to engage with the other driver. Jim, who had been saying his affirmation 200 times a day, had a spiritual breakthrough. He quietly said, “You are okay. I am okay. Let’s just let it go and get on with our day. I am a peaceful man.” And then they did just that; they let it go and got on with their day! In class Jim went on to say, “The gentleman driving the other car made a mistake. He was embarrassed, and he covered up his embarrassment with making others wrong.” Jim understood because in the past he had done the same thing. He now sees through eyes of understanding and compassion.

Do you see how beautiful the change can be? Jim is not creating a new part of himself; instead he is consciously allowing his spiritual nature to shine. Peace is a normal and natural part of who he is, and one step at a time, he is accepting his own inner beauty. When we let the Beloved in we begin to know how loved we are. Because we are accepted without condition, we see that we can do the same for others. We are not so different, after all.

Everything that has been part of our past is important, for it has led us to who we are today. This includes old behaviors, which are outward expressions of inner thinking spawned from beliefs and experiences that happened when we were asleep to our spiritual magnificence. We didn’t know how divinely loved we were. We didn’t understand the power of our own thinking. Now that a shift in consciousness has cleared our vision, we are no longer victims because we choose not to be

victims. We can decide to take to heart the message of "change your thinking, change your life," and make a conscious decision to focus on and be grateful for the positive in life.

What was the worst thing that ever happened to you? Where was God?

What was the best thing that ever happened to you? Where was God?

Where is Spirit today?

Gratitude

From *The Language of Letting Go*
By Melody Beattie

Say thank you, until you mean it.

Thank God, life, and the universe for everyone and everything sent your way.

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. It turns problems into gifts, failures into successes, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. It can turn an existence into a real life, and disconnected situations into important and beneficial lessons. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.

Gratitude makes things right.

Gratitude turns negative energy into positive energy. There is no situation or circumstance so small or large that it is not susceptible to gratitude's power. We can start with who we are and what we have *today*, apply gratitude, then let it work its magic.

Say thank you, until you mean it. If you say it long enough, you will believe it.

Today, I will shine the transforming light of gratitude on all the circumstances of my life.

Engage Your Life Force

From *The Power of Appreciation in Everyday Life*

By Noelle C. Nelson

Things are going along pretty well at work and at home – no immediate crises or problems, you’re just cruising along through your ordinary day-to-day. You think you should be satisfied – after all, isn’t this the contented life you’ve always longed for? And yet, you’re antsy, restless. So you shop ‘til you drop, adding zeros to your credit-card balance so fast that you make yourself dizzy, or you party your brains out for a couple of days, or you flirt outrageously with that cute young thing who occupies the cubicle next to yours.

The next thing you know, you’re struggling to pay off a mass of debt on stuff you don’t really want but you’re too embarrassed to return, you said some really stupid things to people when you were wasted and now no one will return your calls, and you’re up on sexual harassment charges from that cute young thing.

You’re in crisis! Suddenly life is incredibly busy, you’re scrambling to get yourself back on an even keel, but when you finally do, guess what? You’re antsy, restless. And the whole cycle starts all over again. What’s going on? You’re beginning to think you’re a crisis junkie, yet you’re not happy when you’re at the bottom trying to find the pieces so you can pick them up. So what gives?

It’s simple. You don’t know how to engage and channel your life energy. That’s all. You are blessed with a wonderful energy, your life force, a basic desire to be and do and have – and you don’t know how to capture this energy and use it constructively.

Being antsy or restless is your Inner Self’s or your Soul’s way of saying to you, “Hey, you’re not using your life force appropriately. You’re operating at about 10% of what you’re capable of, and that’s not what life’s about.” It’s as though you owned a Ferrari which you only use as a golf cart – it wouldn’t make sense. A sports car is meant to race. A human being is meant to live fully.

Unfortunately, what happens too often is that you grab on to whatever will engage your energy right away, whatever will give you a feeling of being alive at the moment. Shopping, partying, or flirting are all ways – among others – of getting your adrenaline going, ways of engaging your life force. And certainly, they work! For a time, you’re neither restless nor antsy. Too often, however, you shop, party or flirt without thinking, “Is this constructive or destructive?” Since you’re not thinking ahead, well, the “ahead” part runs its own course, which more often than not ends up being destructive.

What to do?

- 1) Recognize your feelings of being antsy or restless for what they really are: an indication that you are operating way below your own level of being alive.

- 2) Take responsibility for those feelings. Don't mindlessly shop, party, flirt, or do whatever you ordinarily do to quell the antsy feelings.

Say to yourself, "Hey, I'm operating at half power here. I'm unfulfilled because I'm not filling myself up with the 'right' stuff for me."

- 3) Deliberately choose ways to engage your life force that are constructive as well as satisfying.

For example, get involved in a new hobby; participate in a new sport; challenge yourself at work; read a book you'd never ordinarily read; change your habits; drive a new way to work; make new friends; volunteer your services; write a screenplay. In other words, reach, stretch, and grow yourself! That is the true solution to the "antsy restlessness." Reach, stretch and grow.

When you're a child, your parents and teachers are there to make sure you do reach, stretch and grow, but once you're an adult, you become your own parent. It's up to you to challenge yourself – no one else can do it for you. Use your antsy-restless feelings positively, as a reminder that you're settling to be less than who you truly are, and have the fun of becoming the full and vibrant human being you were always meant to be.

Gratitude Makes Us Feel Good

From *Attitudes of Gratitude*

By MJ Ryan

Mental sunshine will cause the flowers of peace, happiness, and prosperity to grow upon the face of the Earth. Be a creator of mental sunshine.

- Graffiti on a wall in Berkley, CA

Tom comes from a family of highly successful business people who taught him to climb the ladder of success by criticizing him whenever he did something wrong. He learned early on that life is “hard work,” that it’s a “dog-eat-dog world,” and that to get ahead he had to never make a mistake. While he did succeed, including getting an M. B. A. from a top business school, he was never happy. To him, work seemed only drudgery; he spent much of his time noticing what he did wrong: he didn’t assert himself at the meeting; he should have made more calls. Most of the time he felt lifeless and depressed.

Finally Tom went to a therapist to ask for a prescription for Prozac. But since he really didn’t want to take an antidepressant if he didn’t have to, at the therapist’s suggestion, he agreed to first try something else for one month. Before he started work in the morning, he was to ask himself, “What do I feel grateful for about myself?” In this way, he reminded himself of his resources, strengths, and talents. Then, at the end of the day, he was to finish work by asking, “What did I do today that I feel good about?”

“Do you know what I discovered?” he told me. “Gratitude is a natural upper. It works so well that now, whenever I feel my energy going down during the day, I ask myself, what do I feel grateful for in this moment?” By concentrating on what he’s doing right and what he appreciates about himself, Tom overcame his depression and has begun to look forward to work.

Gratitude makes us feel good because it helps us widen our frame of vision. Under depression or stress, we can develop tunnel vision, seeing only this problem or that difficulty. We can get overtaken by a heavy, dark feeling of despair. But when we experience a sense of gratitude, we give ourselves a dose of mental sunshine. Suddenly the world seems brighter, and we have more options.

And the greatest thing is that as we experience the mental sunshine of gratitude, we begin to glow with sunshine ourselves. Suddenly not only is the world brighter, but we are too. Soon we notice that our lives are full of people who want to be around us because we exude peacefulness, happiness, and joy.



Rumi, Pay Homage

By Jalaludin Rumi
From *Love Poems from God*
Translated by Daniel Ladinsky

If God said,

“Rumi, pay homage to everything
that has helped you
enter my
arms,”

there would not be one experience of my life,
not one thought, not one feeling,
not any act, I
would not
bow
to.



Thanksgiving and Praise

From the *Science of Mind* textbook
By Ernest Holmes

Thanksgiving and Praise

I will give thanks to my Inner Life for all Its
Marvelous Wonders,
and for all Its Wonderful Works.
I will sing and be glad, for I know that I am hidden
with Truth
in a Perfect Life.

The fullness of Joy is mine.