

High Consciousness

Developed by Reverend Jane Beach

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High Consciousness

Dear Facilitator Friend and Colleague,

This curriculum is designed to take the student into a conscious connection with their soul. The textbook, *Entering the Castle*, by Carolyn Myss, is based on the life of St. Teresa of Avila, a powerful woman far ahead of her time. Our textbook is based on Teresa's masterpiece *The Interior Castle*, in which we are invited to travel into the center of our being ... the territory of our soul.

I have made the teaching agendas as easy to follow as possible, even for very beginning facilitators. As in my other classes, you will see an italicized section preceded by "Say:" or "Ask:" This is your signal that the following material can be read. Hopefully it will help you lead the discussion.

I did my best to give you possible answers (in parentheses) to questions you might ask, as well as page numbers from the readings which support your discussion points. Often, page references include a decimal number that refers to the paragraph on the page, for example p. 27.2 means page 27, second paragraph.

Logistically, I print out my teaching agendas on colored paper for easy recognition and I print the handouts on white paper for duplication purposes.

Please use the facilitator guides as *guides* – they are not set in stone. Pick and choose what works best for you, and let the experience be fluid.

I believe that if the facilitator is comfortable, the participants will also be comfortable. I welcome any suggestions for improvement.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask!

With gratitude and love,
Jane

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Week 1 Teaching Agenda

Pre-Class Checklist

- Registration forms, payment guidelines
- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes for marking special pages in textbook or workbook, colored pencils and crayons – sometimes words cannot convey the experience (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*
- “My Spiritual Baseline” handout
- “Where Do I Encounter God?” handout

Week 1: Approaching the Castle

Evocation

Welcome

- Say:
 - *Our soul seeks to forever draw us inward. This class is about answering that Call to consciously experience that highest part of ourselves – our soul. Our textbook, Entering the Castle, uses this metaphor for soul. It is our spiritual castle, with many mansions and many rooms within those mansions. In each we meet different aspects of ourselves, as we journey to an ever-deepening relationship with the Divine.*
 - *The metaphor is based on the teachings of St. Teresa of Avila’s seven mansions, where you experience your soul through seven stages of consciousness and an ever-deepening faith.*
 - *This class delves into the topic of mysticism and our place as modern mystics living an everyday life in today’s world; we are mystics without monasteries.*
 - *Before we begin, I want to cover some class logistics – it’s important that everyone feel comfortable.*

Class Logistics

- **Introduce teaching assistant**
 - On whiteboard or flip chart, write down TA phone number & email address.

- Explain the teaching assistant's function in keeping all records of attendance, homework, makeup work and other requirements.
- The TA is also available to help with class work and homework questions. Feel free to call her/him/them for prayer.
- **Go over Student Agreements** – Workbook p. 5-6
- **Take care of yourself**
 - Take restroom breaks as needed, stand if you need to, etc.
 - We will have a short break about half-way through the class time.
- **Journal**
 - Say: *You will want to keep a journal for this class, as new thoughts are going to come up for you. You will also do journal exercises at home, some of which you will share in class. Please bring your journal to class each week.*
- **My Intention**
 - Say: *It is my intention to create such a safe atmosphere for you that you can relax into consciously walking the journey to the center of your soul. The road will be different for everyone, and every journey is perfect. In this class you will be met with acceptance, support, and unconditional love. It is a judgment-free zone.*
- **Are there any questions or comments?**

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 1. Tell us your name.
 - Classes are community-building, and making sure everyone knows each other's names is imperative. If the class is small, students may only need to say their names for the first couple of weeks. If it is large, this practice may be continued each week.
 - Name tags are good!
 2. Tell us what you hope to get out of this class – your intention.
- Say: *It is always okay to pass instead of sharing, but do say your name so we can get to know you.*

Discussion – Preparing for the Journey

- **Overview**
 - Say: *I want to begin by giving an overview of our textbook and the basic concepts that lie within it.*
 - Read the first paragraph of the Forward, p. xiii, beginning, “Entering the Castle is many things ...” Say: *This is the basic objective of this course, to walk the road, and do the personal work that takes us to an ever-deepening experience of our soul and the God of our understanding.*
 - Say: *In the Forward we are also given seven of the most central themes of mysticism.* Have students turn to Forward, p. xix, and take turns reading the numbered themes, beginning with #1 “We each have ...” and ending with p. xxi.1, “... just ... like ... that ... ”

- Finally, read Introduction, p. 19.4: “Could you be a mystic without a monastery?”
- Say: *As you can see it’s a big topic! Are there any questions before we move on?*
- **Preparing for the Journey**
 - Read p. 27.2, beginning, “The mind, however ...” Ask: *What does the statement, “The mind is useless in finding a way into mystical waters,” mean to you?* (Basically, the mind can only think about God – it cannot experience God).
 - Read p. 28.3, the middle of the paragraph, beginning, “We need the insight that comes from intimacy with God.” Say: *This is the intention of this class – to have the faith of a mystic in our everyday lives ... having a personal relationship with our soul ... with our God ... that is present always. We know that we are watched over by a Divine Presence in every moment.*
- **Spiritual Paradox**
 - Read p. 32.3, beginning, “We are rarely open ...” through p. 33.3, beginning, “In the first mansions ...” Ask: *Why do you think people are afraid of getting too close to God?*
 - Elicit as many responses as possible and list them on the whiteboard. (God will change my life too much; I might have to travel to do missionary work / give up current job or relationship / actually do something about my addiction / quit controlling others; I’m afraid of who I will become if I give up who I am now)
 - Say: *You might find yourself in every single answer on the board! You are not alone. This is a journey of discovery, and the more honest you are with yourself, the richer the rewards.*

“My Spiritual Baseline” handout (meditative CD)

- Depending upon the length of the discussion, this exercise may be done before or after the break, or you can do the exercise before the break and the small group discussion about it after the break.
- Questions 2 & 3 on the handout came from *Entering the Castle*, p. 34.
- Say: *This handout is an invitation to see where you are right now, at the beginning of the class. Remember, the more honest you are with yourself, the deeper and richer your experience will be.*
- Pass out the handout, go over it and then invite the students to sit in the silence for a moment or two before beginning it, giving them time to become centered so that they come from their inner knowing instead of their rational, logical mind. They can begin when they are ready.

Small Group Sharing (20-25 minutes)

- After some students have finished writing ask them to quietly move to the back of the room to meet up with other students to form groups of 3 to share their writing and thoughts.
- Remind them that what is said in the small group remains confidential to those in the small group.

- Say:
 - *Be sensitive to the amount of 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, this is a great opportunity to practice speaking up.*
 - *The TA or I will let you know when there are about 5 minutes left so the group can finish up.*

Break

Discussion – Approaching the Castle – “Where Do I Encounter the Divine?” handout

- Read pp. 49.2–50.2, beginning, “Yet, even with the help ...” Say: *You may want to put a Post-it note on this page – it is a helpful overview of the journey. It is also a good distinction between your soul and “soul as Castle.” Does anyone have any questions or comments about what we just read?*
- Say: *One thing we need to know before we begin the journey is where we see God.* Read *Entering the Castle*, pp. 69.4–70.2, beginning, “This brief contemplative exercise ...”
- Pass out the “Where Do I Encounter the Divine?” handout, and give students a few minutes to fill it out.
- When most are finished, say: *Take another couple of minutes to complete your thoughts, knowing you can take it back into contemplation at home.*

Whole Group Discussion

- Depending upon time, either have each person share one thing that came up for them or ask for 2-3 volunteers.

Review Home Study for Week 2

- Have students turn to the Home Study assignments for next week, Student Workbook, p. 13.
- Guide them through their Home Study assignments, answering questions as necessary.

Benediction

Week 2 Teaching Agenda

Pre-Class Checklist

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes, colored pencils and crayons, (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*
- “Resisting Change” handout
- “Guidance for Detaching” handout

Week 2: Crossing the Drawbridge

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 - Tell us your name
 - Share two things you need from your journaling list (from *Entering the Castle*, p. 78, Contemplation)

Discussion – Preparing for the Journey

- **Mystical experiences**
 - Read *Entering the Castle* p. 70.3-4, beginning, “Mystics see the presence ...”
 - Say: *Mystical experiences can happen anywhere, at any time, to any person. Ask: In your opinion, what is a mystical experience? Volunteers answer. (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.”)*

- *Have any of you had what you would call a mystical experience? Volunteers answer. How did your life change because of it? Volunteers answer.*
- **Resisting change**
 - Say: *From our sharing (Share two things you need from your journaling list from *Entering the Castle*, p. 78, Contemplation) we heard that each of us wants to let go of the old and embrace the new.*
 - *Why do you think that hasn't happened in our lives yet – why are we still wanting it and not having it? (fear of moving forward or letting go, worry about what others will think, not yet ready to trust Spirit)*
 - Ask: *Why is it so hard to trust what we can't see (God)? (fear, we want to control what it looks like, don't yet believe that Spirit is absolutely trustworthy, our ego gets in the way)*
 - Ask: *What are the powers that keep you from being open to change? What holds power over you? What do you attempt to control or have power over? (money, material goods, attachments that “stem from fears of abandonment, isolation, loneliness, starvation and poverty, ” *Entering the Castle*, p. 91)*
 - Ask: *Why do we hang on to what we don't want? (see pp. 89-91) (We hang on because of fear, even though it causes suffering.)*
 - Spiritual detachment invites us “to become a conscious human being whose spirit, mind, and body are integrated and whose actions are congruent with your values.” (p. 89)
 - “Spiritual detachment is the means by which you withdraw from distractions of power so you can experience the authentic power of God that is pure love.” (p. 90)
 - **Sharing** Ask for volunteers to tell about a time when they resisted change because of the need to hang onto some sort of power in their lives. Be ready to share your own story, and ask the teaching assistants to do the same.
 - Ask: *Why is detachment a spiritual necessity? (Your life must be congruent – you must live the life that matches your values – the life you say you want.) Read *Entering the Castle*, pp. 91.2-92.2, beginning, “Detachment is a ...”*

Contemplation – “Resisting Change” handout (meditative CD)

- Go over handout and ask for questions.
- Once most people have finished let them know they can take a break.

Break

Contemplation – “Guidance for Detaching” handout (meditative CD)

- Bring the group back together.

- Pass out the “Guidance for Detaching” handout, and then ask students to put aside until you have had a few moments of contemplation.
- Have the students relax, close their eyes, and listen while you read “A Moment of Contemplation: Guidance for Detaching,” pp. 92.3 – 93.
- Invite them to reflect upon the questions very honestly and write their answers on the handout.

Small Group Sharing (30 minutes)

- When some people are done, ask them to move to the back of the room with both of their handouts. As others finish, form groups of 3 for sharing.
- Say:
 - *Keep an eye on the time. Each person will have 7-8 minutes to share.*
 - *The TA or I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left. This may be a good time to take prayer requests for each other’s next steps with detaching.*

Whole Group Discussion

- Have each person share one insight that came up in the writing or in the small group discussion.

Reflections on the Reading

- *Ask: Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

One Final Question – Shall you cross the drawbridge to discover the power of your soul? (from homework journaling)

- Each person answers and says what that means to them.

Review Home Study for Week 3

- Have students turn to the Home Study assignments for next week, Student Workbook p. 22.
- Guide them through their Home Study assignments, answering questions as necessary.

Benediction Read the prayer on *Entering the Castle*, p. 98, to close out this session.

Week 3 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes, colored pencils and crayons, (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*
- “In All Things” handout

Week 3: God In All Things

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 1. Tell us your name
 2. Share one insight from the Soul Work you did this week.

Small Group Discussion – “The First Mansion: Rooms for Finding God, Rooms 1-4”

- Read *Entering the Castle*, p. 151.3, beginning, “In this next suite of rooms ...”
- Say:
 - *In these rooms is your invitation to deepen your relationship with the God of your understanding.*
 - *This week you visited the first four Rooms for Finding God. Hopefully you were able to give your journey a good amount of quiet, reflective time.*
 - *At this time we will break into groups of 4 to discuss your revelations and insights. Try to get into a group of people you do not know well.*
 - *You have 45 minutes; please make sure that those who speak up easily make time for those who tend to be quiet. If you are one who tends to stay quiet, please use this time to stretch a bit out of your comfort zone and let your voice be heard.*
 - *I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left. That may be a good time to take prayer requests, so that you can hold each other in prayer this week.*
 - *Are there any questions?*

Whole Group Sharing

- Say: *I'd like to go around the room and have each person share one insight or next step.*

Break

Contemplation – “In All Things” handout (meditative CD)

- Bring the group back together.
- Pass out the “In All Things” handout, and then ask that it be put aside until we have had a few moments of contemplation.
- Have the students relax, close their eyes, and listen while you read “In All Things,” by St. Francis of Assisi (you will find it on the handout).
- Ask:
 - *Looking back at your life, in what ways have you seen or sensed the presence of the Divine in your challenges? (2-3 minutes)*
 - *In the challenges of others? (2-3 minutes)*
 - *What have you learned about your personal relationship with Spirit? (2-3 minutes)*
 - *What have you learned about your personal relationship with yourself? (2-3 minutes)*
- Invite them to now write their thoughts on the handout.

Whole Group Discussion

- Have each person share one insight that came up in the contemplation or the writing.
- If there is time, ask: *What is one thing you know for sure about the God of your understanding right now?* Everyone answers.

Reflections on the Reading

- Say: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Review Home Study for Week 4

- Have students turn to the Home Study assignments for next week, Student Workbook p. 30.
- Guide them through their Home Study assignments, answering questions as necessary.

Benediction

Week 4 Teaching Agenda

Pre-Class Checklist

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes, colored pencils and crayons, (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*
- “Melting Away Doubt” handout

Week 4: Life Gifts

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 1. Name (If the class is small and people have now learned each other’s names, this part can be omitted.)
 2. From your Soul Work, p. 158:
 - What gift most caught your attention?
 - Which one most surprised you?

Small Group Discussion – “The First Mansion: Rooms for Finding God, Rooms 5-8”

- Say:
 - *This week you visited the last four Rooms for Finding God. We are getting ready to break into small groups, just as we did last week, to share and listen to each other’s journey. It is sacred work, and we listen with reverence and love. Does anyone have any questions or comments before we break into our small groups?*
 - *At this time we will break into groups of 4 to discuss your revelations and insights. You will be with a new group of people. Again, try to get into a group of people you do not know well.*
 - *You have 45 minutes; please make sure that those who speak up easily make time for those who tend to be quiet. If you are one who tends to stay quiet, please use this time to stretch a bit out of your comfort zone and let your voice be heard.*
 - *I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left so that you can take prayer requests. The group will hold each other in prayer this week.*

- *Are there any questions?*

Whole Group Sharing

- Say: *I'd like to go around the room and have each person share one insight from their Soul Work or from their sharing within the group.*

Break

Contemplation – “Melting Away Doubt” handout (meditative CD)

- Bring the group back together.
- On the whiteboard draw a line with 1 and a face with a scared expression at one end and a 20 and a happy face at the other end.
- Say: *Now you have some idea of where you are on your personal journey to surrender. It's a process, isn't it? At this time I would ask you to honestly consider where you are on the journey; the number is a point of reflection. You can look back at where you were a year ago and know that you are moving forward, in your own time and in your own fashion. There is no right or wrong!*
- Pass out the “Melting Away Doubt” handout.
- Invite the students to write their thoughts on the handout.

Whole Group Discussion

- Have each person share one insight or next step.

Reflections on the Reading

- Say: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Review Home Study for Week 5

- Have students turn to the Home Study assignments for next week, Student Workbook p. 39.
- Guide them through their Home Study assignments, answering questions as necessary.

Benediction

Week 5 Teaching Agenda

Pre-Class Checklist

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes, colored pencils and crayons, (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*
- “Committing to the Divine” handout

Week 5: Illumination

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 - Name one area where you observed and appreciated God in the details of the small things around you (from *Entering the Castle*, p. 173).

Discussion – “The Second Mansion”

- Read *Entering the Castle*, pp. 173.3-174.2, “The Practice of Illumination.”
- Ask: *With the understanding that everything is as it should be, no matter what it looks like, were you able to look for God and shed light on the darkness of a situation this week?* Volunteers answer.
- Read *Entering the Castle*, pp. 175.2-175.4, “The Stirring of Inner Vision.”
- Ask: *Did any of you have an experience of mystical quiet, insight, or a feeling of bliss, where you realized that your life is a gift? Sometimes such events are hard to put into words – we will do our best to feel the essence of the experience as you share it.* Volunteers share.

Small Group Discussion

- Say: *We will take this feeling of sacredness into our small groups to share and listen to each other’s journey. You will share your experience of the Soul Work assignments for this week, as well as anything else that came up for you on the journey.*

- Break up into groups of 3 this time to save time because of the whole group sharing that just took place. We want to make sure to leave plenty of time after the break for the contemplation exercise.
- Say:
 - *You have 30 minutes; please make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to share.*
 - *I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left so that you can take prayer requests. The group will hold each other in prayer this week.*
 - *Are there any questions?*

Whole Group Sharing

- Say: *I'd like to go around the room and have each person share one insight from their Soul Work or from their sharing within the group.*

Break

Contemplation – “Committing to the Divine” handout (meditative CD)

- Bring the group back together.
- Pass out the “Committing to the Divine” handout and go over it. Say: *We all realize that our willingness to surrender is a journey, and we hold the sacred space for each other while we walk it individually and together. Wherever we are on the journey is perfect.*
- Invite the students to write their thoughts on the handout.

Whole Group Discussion

- Have each person share one insight or next step – there will likely be similar feelings and experiences.

Reflections on the Reading

- Say: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Review Home Study for Week 6

- Have students turn to the Home Study assignments for next week, Student Workbook p. 50.
- Guide them through their Home Study assignments, answering questions as necessary.

Benediction

Week 6 Teaching Agenda

Pre-Class Checklist

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes, colored pencils and crayons
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*
- “Surrender: The Ultimate Test” handout

Week 6: Surrender

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 - This week I saw and felt the Presence in _____.

Pre-Small Group Discussion – “Soul Work: The Third Mansion”

- Say: *You are getting ready to break into small groups to discuss the Soul Work you did this week.*
 - *In Entering the Castle, pp. 223-224, you consider the power of reason, which belongs in our culture of law and order, versus forgiveness, which is a mystical necessity.*
 - *On pp. 229-230 you look honestly at the doubts that are surfacing ... you want to believe ... you want to take that next step that leap of faith ... and yet you hesitate. We are reminded that “Even the great mystics suffered through periods of doubt and despair.” (p. 229.3)*
 - *Finally, on pp. 232-233, you look at your call to service, “Service requires that you give of yourself in a way that stretches you beyond your comfort zone and improves the lives of one or even many others.” (p. 232.1)*
 - *Soul gifts: You were to make a list of your soul gifts, the 10 gifts within yourself that you have never identified before, using three full descriptive sentences per gift. This was probably a stretch for many of you, causing you to dive deeply into the message of your soul ~ that is the purpose!*

Small Group Discussion

- Say: *In your small group, you will share your experience of the Soul Work assignments for this week.*
- Break up into groups of 4.
- Say:
 - *You have 45 minutes; please make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to share.*
 - *I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left so that you can take prayer requests. The group will hold each other in prayer this week.*
 - *Are there any questions?*

Whole Group Sharing

- Say: *I'd like to go around the room and have each person share one insight from their Soul Work or from their sharing within the group. If there is not enough time for everyone to share, ask for several volunteers to share.*
- Another possibility is to ask if anyone had questions or comments to be directed to the whole group about possible next steps, etc. We are all on the journey together!

Break

Contemplation and Journaling – “Surrender: The Ultimate Test” handout (meditative CD)

- Bring the group back together.
- Pass out the “Surrender: The Ultimate Test” handout and go over it. Say: *Teresa reminds us that surrender is the ultimate test of the human experience (p. 212). We continue our personal journey of surrender by openly and honestly considering the following questions from the Third Mansion.*
- Invite the students to write their thoughts on the handout. If they don't have time to finish, it can become part of their homework.

Whole Group Sharing

- Have volunteers share one thought or insight – it is liable to be shared by many as this deep work progresses.

Reflections on the Reading

- Ask: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Review Home Study for Week 7

- Have students turn to the Home Study assignments for next week, Student Workbook p. 63.
- Guide them through their Home Study assignments, answering questions as necessary.

Benediction

Week 7 Teaching Agenda

Pre-Class Checklist

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes, colored pencils and crayons
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*
- “The Mystical Heart” handout

Week 7: The Mystical Heart

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 - Name one way that your relationship with Life has deepened.

Whole Group Discussion – “The Power of Your Cosmic Soul: The Fourth Mansion” (*Entering the Castle*, pp. 250-253)

- Read *Entering the Castle*, p. 250.5, beginning, “Here in the Fourth Mansion ...”
- Say: *On page 251, Karen’s story is shared. She overcame her feelings of insecurity about her singing in order to become a channel of cosmic grace for the newborn and his mother. Have any of you had similar experiences in which you knew what to do or say without any logical explanation? Volunteers share. Be ready to share from your own experience.*
- Read p. 252.2, beginning, “Cosmic perception ...”
- Ask: *What has been your reaction to becoming a channel for cosmic grace? Did you have an emotional or even a physical reaction to the experience? Volunteers share. Be ready to share from your own experience.*
- Read pp. 252.3-252.4, beginning, “Hearing an inner voice ...”
- Ask: *As you allow yourself to become a channel, how is your inner life changing your outer life? To what extent are you willing? Do you have periods of resistance? Volunteers share. Again, be ready to share from your own experience.*

Reflections on the Reading

- Ask: *Before we break up into small groups, are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Small Group Discussion

- Say:
 - *You are getting ready to break into small groups to discuss this week's writing.*
 - *In *Entering the Castle*, pp. 253-262, "Rooms for Receiving God," you were to choose two rooms and practice the exercises, journaling your results. During your small group session, please share your insights, questions, and doubts, if you had any.*
 - *Also share anything that came up for you during your meditation practice this week, as you meditated on either "The Centering Prayer" on p. 249 or "I'm here. I'm listening," on p. 253.*
- Break up into groups of 3.
- Say: *You have 35 minutes. I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left so that you can take prayer requests. The group will hold each other in prayer this week.*

Whole Group Sharing (if time)

- Ask for volunteers to share one insight from their homework this week or from their small group discussion.

Break

Guided Meditation / Visioning "The Mystical Heart" handout (meditative CD)

- Bring the group back together.
- Pass out the "The Mystical Heart" handout and ask students to place it comfortably in front of them. Say: *After we settle into the meditation, I will ask you the series of visioning questions that you see on your handout. After each I will give you time to write or draw what comes up for you.*
- Read "The Mystical Heart" guided meditation that follows this teaching agenda.

Whole Group Sharing

- Have volunteers share their answer to one question.

Review Home Study for Week 8

- Have students turn to the Home Study assignments for next week, Student Workbook p. 75.
- Guide them through their Home Study assignments, answering questions as necessary.

Benediction

The Mystical Heart

A Guided Meditation

Read

In this sacred space, take a moment to get comfortable in your chair.

Take a deep cleansing breath in, exhale and relax.

As your breath slows and deepens, notice any tension you are holding in your body and gently let it go.

Know that you are in a safe, calm place.

You are peaceful and you are loved.

And knowing this absolutely, without a doubt, let your mind wander to a place deep within your self. Go to the place where Spirit resides within you. The place that is pure, perfect and complete.

As your eyes gaze upon this place, they become struck with the brilliant light of beauty.

As your heart embraces this place, it becomes filled with the essence of pure loving-kindness.

As your body succumbs to this place, it becomes relaxed in perfect peace and harmony.

(pause)

And as you leave any and all fear, worry and anxiety far, far behind, notice what it feels like to surrender completely to Spirit's embrace.

(pause)

You are The Mystical Heart. As such you are a powerful, creative being, and there is a purpose for your existence in this time and space.

(pause)

Say

I am The Mystical Heart, and I know my life has a purpose. Listening to Divine guidance, I now ask: What is Spirit's highest purpose for my life?

(Pause 3-4 minutes, giving students time to catch the vision and write or draw about it. Toward the end of that time, repeat the question).

What aspect of my Divine nature must I embrace in order to live this purpose fully?

(Pause 3-4 minutes, giving students time to catch the vision and write or draw about it. Toward the end of that time, repeat the question).

What must I release? What old beliefs or patterns of behavior must go?

(Pause 3-4 minutes, giving students time to catch the vision and write or draw about it. Toward the end of that time, repeat the question).

What's my next step?

(Pause 3-4 minutes, giving students time to catch the vision and write or draw about it. Toward the end of that time, repeat the question).

Is there anything else I need to know?

(Pause 3-4 minutes, giving students time to catch the vision and write or draw about it. Toward the end of that time, repeat the question).

Prayer – Close out in a prayer of gratitude for the gifts of awareness that have been given.

Say

And when you are ready, bring yourself back to this room, open your eyes and continue to either write or draw about your experience.

Week 8 Teaching Agenda

Pre-Class Checklist

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes, colored pencils and crayons
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*
- “Dissolving Into Your Soul” handout

Week 8: Dissolving Into Holiness

Evocation – This week is all about the willingness and readiness to change, so be sure to include that in your evocation.

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 - Name one aspect of your life in which you are releasing ego’s hold on you.
- Before sharing begins, read from *Entering the Castle*, p. 267.3, beginning, “Dissolving into holiness” Then ask students to share their response to the statement on the whiteboard.

Whole Group Discussion – “Soul Work: The Fifth Mansion” pp. 287-291

- Say: *You are getting ready to break into small groups to discuss the Soul Work you did this week, all taken from the last four rooms in the Fifth Mansion. You asked yourself some deep, probing questions, staying open to revelation, which leads to transformation.*
- Read *Entering the Castle*, p. 292, “A Moment of Contemplation.”
- Say: *You are empowering yourself within the world. Within your small groups you will talk about the process and where you are in it as you discuss this week’s Soul Work.*

Small Group Discussion

- Break up into groups of 4. Say: *You have 60 minutes, as there is a lot to share this week (They had four Soul Work assignments.)*

- *Please make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to share. I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left so that you can take prayer requests. The group will hold each other in prayer this week.*

Whole group sharing

- Say: *I'd like to go around the room and have each person share one insight from their Soul Work or from their sharing within the group.* If there is not enough time for everyone to share, ask for several volunteers to share.

Break

Contemplation and Journaling “Dissolving Into Your Soul” handout (meditative CD)

- Bring the group back together.
- Pass out the “Dissolving Into Your Soul” handout, and go over it. Say: *In last week's contemplation, “The Mystical Heart,” you looked at Spirit's highest vision for your life. This week you are looking at your willingness to change in order to step into that vision. Areas to consider may be self-esteem, relationships, health, abundance, and anything else that is significant to you.*
- Invite the students to write their thoughts on the handout. If they don't have time to finish it can become part of their homework.

Whole Group Sharing

- Have volunteers share one thought or insight.

Reflections on the reading

- Say: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Review Home Study for Week 9

- Have students turn to the Home Study assignments for next week, Student Workbook p. 83.
- Guide them through their Home Study assignments, answering questions as necessary.

Benediction

Week 9 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance.
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes, colored pencils and crayons
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*

Week 9: Mystical Experiences

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 - Name one thing you appreciate about (1) your past, (2) the present, (3) your future.

Pre-Small Group Discussion – “Soul Work: The Fifth Mansion”

- Say:
 - *You are getting ready to break into small groups to discuss the Soul Work you did this week in the Sixth Mansion in the Rooms of Gifts, the Rooms of Secrets and Rooms with Divine Communications. In each, you chose the room, with its corresponding Soul Work, that most spoke to you at this place on your personal spiritual journey.*
 - *In our groups you will share what came up for you in each of the rooms you chose.*
 - *Does anyone have any questions or comments before we begin?*

Small Group Discussion

- Break up into groups of 3.
- Say:
 - *You have 45 minutes for your group discussion. As always, please make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to share.*
 - *I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left so that you can take prayer requests.*

Whole Group Sharing

- Say: *I'd like to go around the room and have each person share one insight from their Soul Work or from their sharing within the group. If there is not enough time for everyone to share, ask for several volunteers to share.*

Break

Discussion – “The Five Characteristics of a Genuine Spiritual Voice” (*Entering the Castle*, pp. 311-314).

- Bring the group back together and turn to *Entering the Castle*, p. 311.
- Read p. 311.4, beginning, “Teresa, one of God’s great conspirators ...” Say: *I imagine that as you read this section that some characteristics of a genuine spiritual voice rang true for you. In the past you may not have even realized that it was the Presence speaking to you.*
- Have students take turns reading each bullet point and the corresponding examples. You will finish with p. 314.2. Reading all of it at once refreshes the students’ memory and gives students an opportunity to collect their thoughts for the discussion.
- **If the group is small:** Ask: *Which of these characteristics has been active in your life, at least once? Will you tell us about it? Please keep it within 2-3 minutes to give everyone a chance to share.*
- **If the group is large:** Break up in pairs to share, after which the group comes back to have volunteers share with the whole group.
- At the end of the discussion, say: *It is clear that we are becoming more aware of our spiritual connection. We sense the Presence that was always there because we are paying attention! It feels good, doesn’t it?*

Reflections on the Reading

- Ask: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Final Thought Paper and Optional Light Desserts

- Ask: *Are there any questions about your final Thought Paper for next week?*
- You may want to suggest light desserts for the break next week.

Review Home Study for Week 10

- Have students turn to the Home Study assignments for next week, Student Workbook p. 93.
- Guide them through their Home Study assignments, answering questions as necessary.

Benediction

Week 10 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Candles, flowers
- Facilitator copy of *Entering the Castle*

Week 10: Divine Marriage

Evocation – Include the understanding that we can no longer deny the spiritual guidance of our soul ... that as a class we rejoice in it for ourselves and for each other! Each person's journey is perfect.

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 - Share one thought that you have tonight.

Presentation of Final Thought Papers

- I have found it best to let students self-select the timing of their thought paper. Say: *Who would like to go first?* Follow that person by asking: *Who would like to be next?*

Break – Include light desserts, if this option was decided upon by the class last week.

Continuation of Presentation of Final Thought Papers

Sharing (if time)

- Each person shares one thing that they absolutely know is true.

Benediction – Include the merging of our human minds with our spiritual essence, our willingness to stay open to the Truth that comes from listening to the wisdom of our soul, committing to use the beauty of that Truth to be of service to the world.

Following are the student handout pages

Where Do I Encounter the Divine?

Silence is an invitation to come forward, to reveal itself to you – as a presence more than an active guidance.

Entering the Castle p. 68

Where do I encounter God?

My Spiritual Baseline

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me, Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” (Psalms 23:4) Once you open yourself to God, once God shines a direct light within your soul, your life becomes a journey of faith.

Entering the Castle p. 18

As I begin this class, let my open and honest answers be my spiritual baseline.

At this moment in time, how strong is my faith? How does it show up in my life?

What is the greatest purpose and meaning of my life?

How am I meant to be of service?

Notes

Resisting Change

What was one time that I resisted change in the past? Why was I resisting? How did it feel?

What was the outcome?

In hindsight, what could I have done differently?

Guidance for Detaching

Think about a situation, person, or memory that qualifies as an attachment for you today – you have not been able to let it go.

Get past your hurt, your pride, your ego, your fear, and face the attachment. What is the reason you hold onto it?

Ask, “How can I get free?”

Now imagine detaching completely. What will happen? What will change?

If you receive guidance that compromises your physical comfort zone, would you be willing to follow it? Why or why not?

In All Things

*It was easy to love God in all that
was beautiful.*

*The lessons of deeper knowledge, though, instructed me
to embrace God in all
things.*

- St. Francis of Assisi

How are you learning to embrace Spirit in all things?

Melting Away Doubt

Deep in our cell tissue, we know that a mystical experience of the divine melts away doubts. We want it, we fear it, we know that it will empower our souls to reorganize our lives and priorities. We know instinctively that the more mystically we see the world, the more we will be inspired to take action. So, to keep this mystical consciousness at bay, to keep the status quo, we deliberately nurture doubts in ourselves and in God.

Entering the Castle p. 33

“Surrendering your all to God is the final act of trust.” (*Entering the Castle p. 160*)

On a scale from 1 – 20, with one being very fearful and twenty at full surrender, where are you on your journey to surrender? Why?

What are your next steps?

Committing to the Divine

Einstein was once asked what he thought the most important question was that a human being needed to answer and he replied, “Is the universe friendly or not?”

If we believe the universe is unfriendly life becomes a continuation of struggles, we are always bracing ourselves for the next crisis, and we wonder why our back hurts or we can't sleep. If we believe it is friendly we know that God / Good is in everything that happens, and we trust the outcome, even though we can't see it. We learn to accept life's contradictions – difficulty and ease, pain and pleasure, birth and death.

Ask yourself the question, “Is the universe friendly or not?” and then explain how your answer influences your life today.

Where are you in your commitment to make the leap and release your life into the embrace of the divine?

Surrender: The Ultimate Test

From *Entering the Castle* pp. 212-213

Again and again, you feel the mystery. Surrender is the ultimate test of the human experience.
What are you surrendering?

What are you actually surrendering to?

Where are you with the following statements?

Christ Consciousness means that you empty yourself of ego so that the spirit can come in...you engage fully in your life.

You are fearless, full of faith, and possessed by an active, mystical purpose.

You live in the present moment.

You follow guidance, releasing your expectation of what the outcome will be.

What does it feel like to abandon yourself into the mystical arms of the divine?

The Mystical Heart

I am The Mystical Heart, and I know my life has a purpose.

What is Spirit's highest purpose for my life?

What aspect of my Divine nature must I embrace in order to live this purpose fully?

What must I release?

What's my next step?

Is there anything else I need to know?

Dissolving Into Your Soul

The notable shift that occurs within the Fifth Mansion is that you gain the strength to allow yourself to change. You progress from relying on your physical senses to relying on the interior wisdom of your soul.

Entering the Castle p. 273

In what ways have you allowed yourself to change?