

Joel's Comments about Chapter 5, "Love Thy Neighbor," in *Practicing the Presence*

In the Introduction to Practicing the Presence, Joel says that the book will give us the principles of spiritual living. In our current study chapter, "Love Thy Neighbor," he focuses on spiritual living with respect to relationships. Joel felt that this chapter was extraordinary. Here are some of his comments about it.

"In the New Year, I ask every student to study daily the chapter, 'Love Thy Neighbor,' in *Practicing the Presence*. This will open a limitless vision, if you will continue to ponder, contemplate, and assimilate the essence of this chapter. It is deeper than you think."¹

* * * * *

"Always remember the chapter 'Love Thy Neighbor' in *Practicing the Presence*. If you remember that, you will have a guide to life that will never let you go far astray, for you will remember this: The Self of you is the Self of your neighbor, for there is only one Self. God is your Self; therefore, God is the Self of your neighbor, and when you bear false witness against your neighbor, you are bearing false witness against God, and do not be surprised if there is a sharp reaction upon you. Do you see that?

"That is why it is so necessary in our work that we watch that we are not malpracticing, and I don't mean consciously directing evil at our neighbor. That's only one form of malpractice, and it's a form that we're not ever apt to indulge in. But there is the unconscious malpractice when you say, "My neighbor is sick; my neighbor is sinning." That's a lie. God is your neighbor, and you're lying against God, and if that sickness happens to pop out in your own body, you will have done it to yourself. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these brethren, ye have done it unto yourself. Therefore, it behooves us to remember that God is the Selfhood of our neighbor, and then speak of our neighbor as if we knew that, and not gossip about his human identity—whether it's sick or well, poor or rich, so forth and so on. Always remember that."²

* * * * *

"One of the greatest chapters of all our writings [is] the one 'Love Thy Neighbor' in *Practicing the Presence*. It's one of the great ones. Why? I can't even remember when it came to me—don't know when. I don't know what the circumstances were, and I know I didn't realize its importance until years later—actually, until it was in print, and I saw it in the book. That's when it struck me. I can remember that.

"I was in Johannesburg, South Africa when the first shipment of ten copies came down there by air mail from Fowler's, and I opened and read that book cover to cover. But when I hit that chapter, I knew that I had hit the great *I Am*, and ever since then, that chapter is just indelibly impressed upon me, and over and over and over I recommend it to our students. Why? Because it says in it that if I do any good to you at all, it isn't—I have done it to myself. If I injure you, I haven't—I have injured myself. If I lie to you, I haven't—I have lied to myself.

¹ *The Heart of Mysticism, Volume V, 1958 Infinite Way Letters*, Chapter 2 (February), "Problems Aren't Problems Any More."

² Recording 213B: 1958 Second Chicago Class, "Questions and Answers on the Mystical Life and Healing, Part 2."

"The Master says, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me; inasmuch as ye have not done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have not done it unto me.'³ And so, if ever I were tempted to shirk one iota of my responsibility in this work, I would fear to do it because I know that I would be doing it, not unto you, but unto myself. And so it is that I do not hesitate to undertake any work for our students at any time under any circumstances, because I'm not being good-natured. I'm really not doing it for you. Inasmuch as I have done it unto you, I have really done it unto me.

"Now, when you commence to perceive that truth, you will know that the *I* of me is the *I* of you; the *I* of you is the *I* of me, for we are one in Christ Jesus."⁴

* * * * *

"In that chapter [*Love Thy Neighbor in Practicing the Presence*], I bring out this point: Any good that I do for anyone, anywhere in the world, I'm not really doing for them at all. I'm doing it for myself, and that good rebounds to me. Any injury that I do anyone, regardless of its name or nature, I'm not doing nearly the amount of injury to them that I'm doing to me, because the injury that I do to another rebounds to me. It must. That is karma, the law of cause and effect.

"When I live under grace, I can't do harm to another, for I'm recognizing there is no other, but when I'm under the law of believing that there are two, then whatever I do, whether of good or evil to another, I am doing unto me, and the reaction is upon me. Therefore, it is a part of spiritual wisdom that we destroy material sense for this world, for in destroying it for the world, we destroy it for us. What good would it do to break it for us if we had to live in a world all alone with everybody else in material sense? We'd soon be crying for a demonstration of companionship. But that's the purpose."⁵

* * * * *

Speaking about his experience in the Marines in World War I, Joel said:

"A miracle took place as far as I was concerned. I was transferred from one place to another, from one duty to another; and never once during the war was I sent anywhere near where I could shoot anybody or be shot at. I saw then that not only was there protection for me, there was also protection from me. Since then, I have learned a tremendous lesson, which I have set forth in the chapter '*Love Thy Neighbor in Practicing the Presence*. The principle is that there is but one Self, and that is the God-Self.

"The life of God is my life and yours; the soul of God is my soul and yours; the spirit of God is my spirit and yours; the very selfhood of God is my selfhood and your selfhood, and that means we are one in spiritual sonship. Anything that benefits me must benefit you; anything that harms me must harm you, for we are one. Anything I do that is a blessing to me must be a blessing to you; and anything that is a blessing to you must be a blessing to me, for we are one.

"If I do anything destructive to you, I am doing it to myself, for there is but one. If I do anything of a withholding nature, I am not withholding from you; I am withholding from me. If I do anything

³ Matthew 25:40.

⁴ Recording 200B: 1958 Sydney and Melbourne Closed Class, "No Power."

⁵ Recording 213B: 1958 Second Chicago Class, "Questions and Answers on the Mystical Life and Healing, Part 2."

destructive, I am not destroying you; I am destroying me, for we are one. We often wonder why we are paying the penalty of sickness, sin, or poverty, not realizing what we have done to humanity."⁶

* * * * *

"There is no 'my' supply and 'thy' supply. There is only the infinity of good, which is God. But that which is God is yours and mine. Therefore, we need not quarrel about it, sue for it, or fight for it. Ultimately, we will realize that this Self which I am is the selfhood of this entire universe, and therefore there are no people anywhere on earth who can fight [each other], for It is only the one Self, conscious of Its true identity.

"For the purpose of attaining a fuller awareness of this, I will ask you to make a continuous meditation, contemplation, of the entire chapter, 'Love Thy Neighbor' in *Practicing the Presence*, and of the [chapter] 'Protection' in *The Infinite Way Letters of 1955*. To ponder these, to contemplate them, to realize them, will ultimately bring you to the absolute conviction that if you wrongfully deprive anyone of a penny, you are depriving yourself. And on the other hand, every bit of good you do unto the least of these, you are really doing only unto yourself. For there is but one Self, and I am He.

"Remember this: I am inseparable and indivisible from my mind and my body. I am equally inseparable and indivisible from the *I*, God, which I am. And therefore I am inseparable and indivisible from the *I* which you are. We are one in Christ Jesus. There is no quarrel between thy house and my house, for we are one, and I am, thou art, that One."⁷

* * * * *

"One of the major problems that is brought to us as practitioners is that of family relationships, human relationships. It may have to do with man and wife, or parent and child, or brother and sister, or it may have to do with employer and employee. It may have to do with neighbors. But in some way or other, probably the major problem that comes to us is that of human relationships. Well now—and you'll find the answer to this in particular in the chapter 'Love Thy Neighbor' in the book *Practicing The Presence*. You will find all of the principles embodied in treatment work on the subject of human relationships at any level, in that chapter.

"So when we are presented with a problem of that nature, the very first thing we have to remember is that since God is infinite, we are not dealing with two people, four people, eight people. We are dealing with one infinite God, one infinite divine love, one infinite intelligence, infinitely manifested. And so it is, that there is only one life, one will, one desire, one satisfaction, one being, and in that oneness, harmony is restored in all forms of relationships."⁸

* * * * *

"Now, in *Practicing the Presence* there is a chapter 'Love Thy Neighbor,' and in the new book *The Art of Spiritual Healing*, there is one 'The Relationship of Oneness.' I'm sure you

⁶ *Awakening Mystical Consciousness*, Chapter 1: "The Atheism of Material Power."

⁷ Recording 805A: 1957 Inner Working Group Series, "Assume Conscious Dominion of Mind and Body."

⁸ Recording 275B: 1959 London Closed Class, "Treatment and healing Work of The Infinite Way."

can find, as I have, that every problem of human relationship can be worked out with these two chapters if you will yield yourself to them. In other words, don't hold off and want exceptions, or to be separate or apart. You have to yield. It makes no difference whether the relationship is capital and labor, or whether it is within the family, or within the club, or the society. Wherever there are relationships between men and men, women and women, or men and woman, or men and women and children, you will find that the principles in those two chapters apply."⁹

* * * * *

"You will find this subject [of forgiveness] covered quite at length in the chapter 'Love Thy Neighbor' in *Practicing the Presence* and in the chapter 'Relationship of Oneness' in the new book *The Art of Spiritual Healing*. And incidentally, those two chapters are the chapters that I use and recommend for all problems of human relationships at any level, and for that reason—that in the last analysis, we do have to see that *I*, God, is the individuality of all being. *I*, God, is the life, being, the qualities and quantities, of individual being."¹⁰

* * * * *

"Now, when you come to working out problems of human relationships—it can be family, marital, parental; it can be business, human relationships in business, or art, or profession, public—you will find that if you will refer to the chapter 'Relationship of Oneness' in *The Art of Spiritual Healing*, or if you will refer to the chapter 'Love Thy Neighbor' in *Practicing the Presence*, you will have all of these principles that have to do with relationship, and they're all based on the secret of *I*. I am you, and what I do unto you, I do unto me. And therefore, when we have problems of human relationships, we have got to work from the basis, "I am you." Then you'll find out how quickly these problems will be solved."¹¹

⁹ Recording 290B: 1959 New York Closed Class, "The Blessed I, Part Two."

¹⁰ Recording 339B: 1960 First London Closed Class, "The Two Great Commandments—How to Live Them."

¹¹ Recording 377B: 1960 Melbourne Closed Class, "The Nature of *I* and Secrecy."