

Joel's Comments about "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 many 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

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"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

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"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?

¹ *The Heart of Mysticism*, February 1958 Letter, "Problems Aren't Problems Any More"

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

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.

"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

³ Matthew 25:40

⁴ Recording #200, 1958 Sydney and Melbourne Closed Class, Side 2, "No Power"