

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM JOEL (3/2/19)¹

Q: Please explain how to distinguish the difference between the Presence and an emotional sensation.

A: By the fruitage. When you have a spiritual experience and God becomes very real, the Presence becomes very real, or there is an inner stirring or awakening, there are always signs following so that you cannot mistake the way. I would say this: If there is a question in your mind, be assured you haven't had the experience, for when the experience takes place, there is no question. I really have never met anyone who has had the experience and had a question as to whether or not it was real. Many a time, some have felt that they had an experience and then doubted it. But always they found later it was not the experience. It was either an emotional one or an occult one—one from the mental realm, not the spiritual.

God is positive. God never leaves one in doubt. God may make us wait at times. Ah, yes, in the spiritual life there are long periods of waiting—waiting between one step and another, waiting between one unfoldment and another, waiting between one experience and another. They don't come every day of the week just by turning on and turning off, or by closing the eyes for meditation. And the spiritual experience is one like plateaus, steps. You reach a certain plateau and you seem to stand there. You have an activity and you do it. You perform it, and then all of a sudden you seem to be making no progress. You just wait, and there's nothing to do but wait. You can no more hurry a spiritual experience than you can hurry a rosebud into a rose. It must take its normal, natural time of unfoldment. So with a spiritual experience.

That is why, there are these experiences that are called "the dark nights of the soul." They are periods of anguish because they are periods of barrenness. And in those periods, you become absolutely certain that God has forsaken you; that you're unworthy; that you've made a mistake; that you've committed a sin and God has cast you into outer darkness. But there is a reason for this. It isn't that God has thrown us off. It is only that a greater, deeper light is coming, and there must be an emptying out process before that greater light can come.

You see, God is infinite being, and God just does not add a little to us today, and a little tomorrow, and a little the next day. This doesn't take place in the spiritual realm. In the spiritual realm, you have an experience, and it's deep and it's rich. It's bright; it's light. And it gives you a vision beyond anything you've ever known before, and then you live with that and you work with it and you dream with it. And whatever works are given one to do, these works are performed.

But then, when the next step is ready for still higher experience, still higher unfoldment, it seems that everything is taken away, and there comes this emptiness, this vacuum, the sense of absence from God, sense of separation. And with this comes that experience that's called the dark night of the soul—when there is real anguish within. And then out of this comes a deeper experience, a richer experience, further light, further illumination. And so it goes. There are many dark nights of the soul on this path until the final one. The final one, of course, is the real

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night of the soul. And that's the one that very nearly costs men and women their lives until they are past that particular experience and come out into the full realization of the light.

Now, these experiences are not given to us lightly, nor do we earn them lightly, nor can we ever deserve them. They come by grace. But each such experience demands that we fulfill life at the level of that realization until, by grace, the next one is brought along. Now you can't doubt these experiences, nor can you tell them. It may surprise you, because you've probably read a lot of books about spiritual experiences and about initiations and about the lives of the great masters. Don't be surprised if I tell you there isn't one authentic one. No master has ever revealed the inner secrets of his spiritual life. Not in the history of the world is there a manuscript or a book revealing the inner life of a mystic.

There is one book, written by a man who had a great mystical experience, who tells whatever is known of the mystical experiences of other mystics, and that, of course, is Dr. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*. He tells us that Jesus was a mystic; that Walt Whitman was a mystic. He proves to us by the fruitage of their lives that they were mystics. But in no case does he reveal the experience or the experiences that made them mystics. And of his own experience he only tells us that he was in a carriage, riding across England at night, when the whole city became illumined. The whole place where he was, the whole street, was illumined and full of light. And that's all he tells us. But be assured there's more to it than that. So it is.

Even though the mystical experience may not come to you, it is really unlikely that you are on this path without the prospect of having some measure of spiritual experience. The very fact that you have been led to a spiritual path would indicate that there is something in store for you in that line. But when it happens, regardless of how small the experience may be or how light or how brief, don't share it with anyone. Don't tell anyone, because you're virtually assuring yourself that it won't happen again, and that it won't bear fruitage. If you have a spiritual teacher who has played a part in bringing you into the light, you may share your experiences with your teacher, and thereby be led into greater experience because your teacher knows how to hold your experience in secrecy, hold it sacred, and deepen and enrich that experience. But no one else under the sun—not a wife, not a husband, not a child—should ever share the depth of a spiritual experience—no one but your teacher, if you have one.

So it is that you will find spiritual experiences come forth within those who hold the subject of God sacred—not to be used, not to be flaunted before the world, not to increase one's ego, not to make one seem great before one's friends—because in the end, the opposite takes place. Friends and relatives think we've gone off center. Friends and relatives begin to doubt our sanity, because those who have never had a spiritual experience do not speak this language. Therefore, they have no way of understanding what we're talking about.

So it is that instead of wanting God or spiritual experience to make one a healer or teacher, forget all of that. Forget all of that and be so satisfied to have the experience for the experience's sake. And then, if so be God will let you go off and never reveal it to the world, and never have to go out into this world and work with it, you'll be grateful many, many, many times. Many times, because you'll know what it is to have the inner experience, the inner communion with God, and never have it disturbed by the outer world influences. But there have been very few in the history of the world who have ever been permitted to go away and live in a cave or by the side of the sea after a certain degree of illumination. That is why the Master left this word with his disciples: "*Remain in the world, but not of it.*" Be no part of this world and its joys or its sorrows. Just walk through this world as a light, helping those who are temporarily in its joys and shadows, and help them into the higher light.