

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM JOEL (12/7/19)<sup>1</sup>**

**Q: How does one stop conscious thought from racing through one's mind during meditation?**

**A:** You don't, and you have no right to. You don't—just let them race. They haven't any power. They can't do anything to anybody, not even to you. It is just as if there were radio stations buzzing through here, and a billion thoughts from that station go through the mind while I'm talking, but I'm paying no attention to them. They come and they go. Everybody has the experience of thoughts racing through their mind, most especially when they're trying to be quiet. We have been trained to live in the outside world, to see, hear, taste, touch and smell everything that's going on around us. So, the very moment we try to get quiet, all of these sense things race through our mind. And the strangest thing is this: they take so many different forms, as if there really were a devil determined that we weren't going to get to God.

Now, when the idea of meditation first came to me, I had no way of knowing how to learn meditation. I had to teach myself. One of the first things that I found in some of the literature on meditation was that you must try to stop these thoughts. And of course, I got nowhere fast with that. As I ultimately discovered, you can't stop them; there's just no way to stop them. They will come, and they will go. You might as well make up your mind to let them come and let them go and have all the fun they want with you. Just ignore them. Pay no attention to them. Let them come and let them go, because there is a you that is thinking about God in your meditation.

Now suppose I want to meditate, and I want to meditate on some statement of truth, and the thought comes to me, "*Son thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine.*" I want to meditate on that; Joel wants to meditate on that. So, there's an I here; there's a Joel here. "*Son thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine. Thou art ever with me.*" Then I think, "Yes, yes, Jesus said, '*I and the Father are one.*' Jesus said, '*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*' Yes, I can see that—that God is always with me." Then I can go back and think of other illustrations in Scripture where it was so evident that even in the valley of the shadow of death, he could fear no evil, for God was ever with him. I remember Hezekiah. His people were troubled because the enemy was so great in number that he said to them, "Fear not, be courageous. They have only the arm of flesh, but we have the Lord God almighty." There again was evidence that in all times, in all situations, the Father was saying "I am ever with thee."

But now, you see, while I have been thinking that—especially back in those beginning days—these other thoughts were coming through my mind. The body started to itch, first one place then another; then the top of the head and then the toes. I had to take my shoes off to get at the toes. Thoughts kept coming in, and I don't know how all people are, but some of mine were pretty bad. I used to feel very guilty about it because I thought they were my thoughts. I was a little surprised that a person could be so seriously intent on spiritual truth and be thinking such horrible mortal and material thoughts, and I wondered how that could be. Later, I found out that those weren't *my* thoughts. They were just human thoughts going through the air, and I was picking them up and putting the word "my" before them, thinking they were my thoughts. They

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never were my thoughts because in those years, my thought was very intent on finding God. I was just picking up other programs in the air.

So, I learned to ignore those thoughts and just keep my thought on "*Son thou art ever with me.*" And so, when these other thoughts would intrude, I would get right through them to that central point and keep my thought there. Rather than wander through these other thoughts, all I had to do was come back and say, "All right, wander away all you want, but I'll come back." Here I am: "*Son thou art ever with me.*" And I would begin all over again. If I wandered away, I'd come right back to my central theme and begin over again.

Now I have learned that the intruding thoughts are not power. Always remember this, especially if you've been studying forms of metaphysics where they teach that wrong thinking is bad and has power. Don't believe that anymore. Wrong thinking isn't a power. Bad thinking isn't a power. No kind of thinking is a power, not even good thinking. Thinking just isn't a power at all, so pay no attention to it. Concentrate on truth. Truth is power. "*Son thou art ever with me*" is a truth, and that is power. But if I were to *think* that God is with me, that's not a power. If I were to *think* that God is with you, that's not a power. If I were to *think* that the devil is with you, that isn't a power either. But if I *know* the truth, "*Son thou art ever with me,*" that is power. That's not a thought. That's an actual truth. That's as true as two times two are four. Thinking the truth or thinking about two times two isn't power, but two times two is four is power because it's the truth.

And so I say, "*Son thou art ever with me.*" That's truth; that's power. And all those other thoughts that are going through there are not power at all. Then I come along to the next statement, "*And all that I have is thine.*" And the minute I hear that word "I," it sets up a train of thought, and I go right back to all those statements as I've quoted to you: "*I am come that ye might be fulfilled. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Whithersoever thou goest, I go.*" Yes, that's true. Everything that *I* have, I have. "*All that the Father hath—that I of my being—is mine,*" and I am keeping my thought in line with that truth.

It doesn't mean that a thousand other things aren't going through my mind. Oh, they may be. They aren't this minute, because in the years that have followed, my thought has become such that these outside thoughts don't enter. I can sit down in the silence and go right to my main theme, and nothing comes in. That's why I can stand on the platform and while I'm talking, even though it hasn't been thought out in advance, you'll find we went from a premise to a conclusion. We just didn't wander away. The reason is that now everything is shut out except the idea that's in my mind. But that comes with practice, and the practice of it is to learn to disregard these other thoughts.

Certainly, while you are pondering the deepest truths, you may fear that you are going to die. You may fear for your supply or for your job. You may fear for your children or your grandchildren. But don't stop your meditation on that account. Let those fears go right on; let those thoughts go right on. You just get through them. Break through them and hold to your central theme, and when you lose the thread, don't get mad at yourself. Don't think that you're failing. You aren't. You're having the same experience that everyone else has had. Just gently go back and pick up your theme again and begin all over. And of course, don't be concerned if it takes you six or eight or nine months before you are able to really sit down and hold steadfastly to the truth of being. Your benefit comes from the very first minute of your meditation. From the very first minute that you turn your thought to God, your new consciousness begins to develop. From then on, it's merely a matter of stick-to-it-iveness, as it is for any other phase of existence.