

Optional Study Suggestions for Chapter 2 in *The Art of Spiritual Living*

1. “Training Consciousness”

This chapter is about remolding our consciousness to the point where we do not accept appearances, do not accept two powers or resist evil, and live by the truth that my individual consciousness—and the consciousness of every individual—is infinite God consciousness; that the kingdom of God is within. So, it is fitting to ask the question, “**How** can I remold my consciousness? What can I do?”

In the class, Joel gave one example of how we can remold consciousness when he said, “*Start a regular program of **training your consciousness to accept one power, and that one, Spirit, and of course resist the temptation to use that power on anything** because there isn’t any other power to use it on.*” He went on to say that “*as we train ourselves, ... we are letting old beliefs die out of our consciousness and allowing truth to be born into our consciousness.*”

So, how can we “train our consciousness” as Joel recommends? By taking this question within and pondering it, an idea for some activity will come to you, and since it comes from within, it will be tailored perfectly for you.

For example, one idea is to commit to watching our behavior throughout the day. Probably we have all observed that if we watch a person’s actions and speech, we can infer fairly well what beliefs they hold. So, we might similarly observe ourselves by pausing every hour or every few hours to review our own thoughts and actions during that period of time to see whether we are acting and speaking from a consciousness of truth or a consciousness of error and two powers. We can ask questions such as:

- “Were there times when I accepted appearances?”
- “Were there times when I accepted two powers?”
- “Were there times when I behaved in a way that denied or contradicted the truth that God is my consciousness and I am divine, infinite being?”
- “Were there times when I behaved in a way that denied or contradicted the truth that God is the consciousness of every other individual and they are divine, infinite being?”
- “Did I resist evil in any way or try to overcome it instead of dismissing it?”

And then we can ask:

- “What are the principles of truth that I should bring to mind in such situations?”

We can also “track positives” by noticing when we succeeded:

- “Were there times when I was faced with an appearance and did **not** accept it?”
- “Were there times when I was tempted to accept two powers, but held fast to one power?”
- “Were there times when I recognized the truth that God is my consciousness and I am divine, infinite being, and acted from that truth?”

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- “Were there times when I recognized the truth that God is the consciousness of every other individual, and acted from that truth?”
- “Was I tempted to fight or resist an evil appearance, but did **not** do so?”

The ways in which we accept appearances, or accept two powers, or deny our spiritual heritage, can be very subtle, so we have to look carefully and not be timid about identifying them. As Joel points out, the belief in two powers and the belief that we are “merely human” have been ingrained in us, and it is not easy to divest them. So, in reviewing our thoughts and actions, we refrain from self-condemnation or discouragement, both of which hamper spiritual progress. Rather, we should commend ourselves for doing the difficult work of remolding consciousness. As Joel said in this chapter,

*“Now we are asked to go back to the teaching given the world two thousand years ago and begin to remold our consciousness to the point where we do not resist evil, try to overcome it, or seek to get a God-power to do something to it. **It was difficult then, and it is difficult now.**”*

Yet, the effort is surely worthwhile because as Joel points out in this chapter, our consciousness creates our universe, and as we develop a consciousness of truth, that consciousness will outpicture as a beautiful universe.

The example given above is just a suggestion of one way to “train consciousness.” As was said before, when you go within and ask for guidance and counsel on how you can remold or train consciousness, something will come to awareness that is unique and perfect for you.

2. Recommendations in “Across the Desk”

In this chapter, Lorraine Sinkler provided a good study suggestion in the “Across the Desk” section at the end of the chapter. She said:

*“Our need is not for things or persons but for a greater awareness of the infinite nature of our being as pure consciousness individualized. **Therefore, let us have more meditations in which we contemplate the limitlessness of that consciousness and then live out from that awareness.**”*

“A study of the following chapters in Joel’s writings will facilitate such contemplation and practice:

*Chapter 8, “Invisible Life Fulfills Itself Tangibly and Visibly,” in *Consciousness Is What I Am*
Chapter 4, “The Infinite Nature of Individual Being,” in *Practicing the Presence*
Chapter 4, “The Indissoluble Union,” in *The Art of Meditation.*”*

Joel would certainly agree that we ought to have more such meditations. And, while Lorraine recommends reading any or all of these three beautiful and excellent chapters, we should also remember that Joel often cautioned students about reading and studying too much at the expense of practice. He emphasized that it is **practicing** the principles that accelerates spiritual progress:

*“You develop this [spiritual] consciousness by the **practice** of specific principles and by working with them, whether you take them in through the spoken or the written word. You*

will not make spiritual progress merely by reading books and hearing truth. It is what you do with truth after it has touched your consciousness that determines the degree of your realization. You must take these truths and live with them, ponder, meditate upon them, and keep them ever alive in your consciousness, until one day they will fall from the head into the heart. After that, they are always present as a realized state of consciousness.”¹

“I have often stressed: Do not do too much reading. When you come to a passage in whatever it is you are reading that stands out, sit and meditate on it; ponder it; get the inner meaning of it.”²

*“The mere fact that I tell you these things or the mere fact that you hear them later on tape isn’t going to do you a bit of good. It’s only what registers in your consciousness and what you develop **through constant practice** that’s going to do you good.”³*

*“The study of truth is the smallest part of our life’s demonstration. Far too many students study too much. It takes a very small statement of truth to spark our consciousness into action, and then it is that action that brings about the development of our spiritual consciousness. It is not what we read that does it: **it is what we do with what we read** that does it.”⁴*

Of course, Joel also has said that there is great value in reading the writings and listening to the recordings, so we should not hesitate to do so, and at the same time remember that he emphasizes that the difference between students who make progress and those who do not is the degree to which they practice and apply what they learn. So we can strive for the right balance.

¹ *Consciousness Is What I Am*, Chapter 10, “The Consciousness of Truth is the Healer”

² *Consciousness Unfolding*, Chapter 12, “Questions and Answers.”

³ Recording #645A, “Nature of Error and Specific Treatment”

⁴ *Consciousness Is What I Am*, Chapter 7, “Attaining a Measure of Spiritual Consciousness”