

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM JOEL (6/19/21)¹

Q: Please enlarge on the statement “Take no thought.” How may we avoid this human planning?

A: And here again, we have that same old thing of words. Take no thought. “Take no thought” has no reference to taking thought, because it’s impossible to live without thought, and it’s impossible to live without taking thought. So when we say, “Take no thought,” it doesn’t really mean take no thought. What it means is, “Take no thought.” (*Laughter*) And that’s quite different!

And now for instance, tomorrow afternoon at five o’clock we are to be on a plane bound for Hawaii. And don’t you know, we’re taking thought about that today, because we have to go to the airplane company; we have to fill out forms; we have to get a tax release guaranteeing the government that we’re not taking the treasury with us. And we have to take thought. We have to plan. We have to be sure that everything’s packed and in order. We have to make sure that all the details of this work are closed. There’s a lot of taking thought about that.

And, in the same way, before we left home, my wife had a whole gang of people into the house to have the painters do this, and the decorators do this, and the furniture covered to do this. It took a lot of thought, and when we get home, there’ll be a freshly painted house and some newly decorated furniture. And you know, that took thought. Every woman knows you can’t do that in a household without taking thought.

But, where the “take no thought” comes in is this: Take no *anxious* thought. Don’t be concerned; don’t be fearful; don’t be worried. Plan what you are doing, but always with the realization that there is something greater than you working through you and be willing that even though you’re taking thought and making your plans and arrangements, be perfectly willing that they be changed.

In other words, regardless of how right a move may seem to you that makes you plan ahead, even buy tickets, don’t ever be disturbed if at the last moment or before the last moment, something comes up to change those plans entirely, because it will merely mean that there is some reason behind it, some reason which couldn’t have been known a month ago or a year ago, whenever the planning was done.

In other words, let me give you another illustration. I never go on a trip; I never go anywhere or do anything without first receiving inner instructions. Now a year ago this month, our entire ten months of travel was not only planned for 1960, but we had our hotel reservations made; we had our reservations for lecture halls, classrooms. We had our airplane tickets all made. In fact, last April they were paid for for the entire year. Every ticket was arranged; every single thing was done, even to the return ticket that we’re using tomorrow. Even that was all settled a year ago. The only thing that was unsettled was the hour of departure. In other words, the plane schedules have to be made up every three to four months, and sometimes you have to

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wait for that. But aside from that, the day and the date were settled a year ago, and nothing has interfered with a single one of these dates. We have made this entire ten-month trip on schedule. We have never had to wait over an extra day; we have never had to postpone; we have never been delayed. Everything is on schedule.

But now on the other hand, here is 1961 ahead for us, and I have only five weeks of work planned for next year. Every other date except those five weeks is completely free. My appointment book is empty, except for those five weeks. Why? I have received no instructions. And be assured, I'm going to take no thought about it. I'm not going to try to plan. I'm not going to try to think. I'm just going to do my meditations each day and wait. And when the Voice speaks, I will go out, and I will make my reservations, and I will go forward. If for any reason it should be canceled at the last moment, it will not disturb me. I will just understand that whatever it is that's guiding, directing, protecting, from the within is on the field.

So it is that "take no thought" has nothing to do with planning, the orderly planning of your life. That really must be done. And you must know in advance probably, when to arrange for your holiday, or if you're going to make a trip to a class somewhere, or something like that. But even though you are making those arrangements, hold yourself in readiness for a cancellation without concern, because you must be trusting the fact that there is an invisible Presence that knows far more than you do and can govern and guide.

And one of the reasons that we are so careful about our meditations is this, and I'm going to give you two instances of it. In the first, I was in swimming in Hawaii, and while in the act of swimming out, the Voice spoke to me and said, "In a few days you're going to be in trouble, but do not fear because I will be there." And I can assure you that I took no thought about it. That was the end of it. A few days later, I had to make a trip to California, and I left by air. We were only out one hour when I heard one of the engines starting to flutter. And of course, after you've traveled enough by air, you get to know every single movement of those engines, the same as with your automobile. If you're driving an automobile any length of time, you know right well when something's beginning to go wrong. Your ear picks that right up.

And so I thought, "Uh-oh, this might be it." But the pilot seemed to pay no attention to it, and we went on. And again that noise came from the engine, and I thought, "Oh that's very strange." And the Voice came again, "He'll turn the next time." And on the very next time when that fluttering came, he turned right around and went back to port. Now you might say I took no thought. On the other hand, you can see that thought was brought to me, and that I leaned back in a reliance on the fact that "I will be with you." That's all that concerned me. If "I" is with me, I have no other worries.

Well now, on my first trip to Australia, we were in the midst of a closed class in Melbourne, and I was sitting here just like this, conducting the class, when all of a sudden, the Voice spoke and said, "Your next air trip is going to be trouble." And I stopped, and I said to the class, "Let us stop for a moment. I've just been told inwardly that my next air trip is trouble, so let's do something about it. Let's meditate." And we cut off the machine, and we sat there, and we meditated, and I got this feeling of "all-rightness," the feeling of Omnipresence, and we went on with our classwork.

Well, on the very next trip between Melbourne and Perth, we were just about half or three-quarters of an hour out of Perth when one of the engines stopped. And I was sitting right next to it and therefore noticed it instantly, but many of the passengers didn't. The pilot sent for the

stewardess to come down to the front, and then she came back and went back and took her place by the exit and stood there.

Now all of this time within me there was no fear. There was no concern because I had been warned, and then I had been given the “assurance.” And then within a few moments, this pilot started to jiggle the plane, make it dive this way and make it dive that way, and the engine started up again. And the only thing that happened was we were twenty or thirty minutes late getting into Perth. Aside from that, nothing happened.

And here again do you see that you don’t take thought, and yet something is brought to you, and you do something about it. And you say, “Well, you took thought when you stopped the class and meditated.” No, we didn’t take thought. What we did was meditate for the assurance of God’s presence. You might call that taking thought, and probably in a sense it was. We acknowledged that a warning had come, and we acknowledged that the thing to do is stop whatever you’re doing and get this realization of God’s presence before you go on. So in this sense you see, you take thought, only on the other hand, it’s not really taking thought. It is really sitting back for the assurance.

Now when you govern your life as we do in this work, entirely by meditations, meditating twelve, fifteen, twenty times in a day—sometimes thirty, if you count twenty-four hours as a day, because we’re awake many, many hours of the night meditating—then of course, you are so in attunement or at-one-ment that anything can impinge itself on you, reveal itself to you, and you are aware of things that the rest of the world is not aware of, and then you can do something about it.

Perhaps I can tell you this right now, without causing any one of you to be fearful or take thought, that we were warned two months ago that there was going to be an earthquake out here in the Pacific Ocean that would result in a tidal wave that would hit Auckland, and that it would be very severe, and that it would take place by the end of November. And we have a group of students all around the world—we call them our Inner Group—who are continuously working for harmony in world affairs, and more especially whenever anything of a destructive or important nature like that takes place. And so within twenty-four hours, an airmail letter went to every one of our students in this group, numbering probably two-hundred-and-fifty people—in all parts of the world they’re stationed—telling them of this warning that we had received about this expected event out here, and telling them to pray daily, meditate daily, over this situation and abide constantly in the realization of God’s presence, until whatever is to be or not to be will have passed. And from that day to this, every one of these students have been in daily prayer about this expected turmoil in the ocean and tidal wave.

Now, when you are living this kind of a life, you might say that is “taking thought.” Maybe it is, but it’s not taking thought; it’s not worrying or fearing; it’s not planning on anything. It is being alert to whatever appearances are given us from the world, and blessing really, that we have advance notice and can prevent it. We can prevent it, or we can lessen its activity, in the degree of the dedication of our students to the task. We can either prevent its happening, or vastly lessen any erroneous effect of it. On the whole, we could completely prevent any destruction. Here and there, something may slip through, because remember, there’s a whole world of mortal thought, and we sometimes must be satisfied with the fact that at least eighty or ninety percent of the effect has been prevented.

But of this then be assured, that for these two months, at least 250 Infinite Way students have been taking thought about this situation in New Zealand. Do you see that? But not taking

thought in any human sense, merely going within daily to realize God's government and God's grace.

So we are doing with every major world event that takes place. This group of students is meeting, either in their homes or when they come together once a week. In each city, there might be two, three, five. In some cities twenty-five, and once a week they come together. The rest of the week they do all of the work in their homes. But they take up specifically every major situation that comes to our attention around the world, and they do the same for it as they do for their individual private lives. That is, they turn within to receive the assurance of God's presence, Emmanuel, God on the scene. More than that no one can do. Once you've realized God's presence, the rest is with God.