

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM JOEL (11/6/21)¹

Q: Do not judge of your spiritual progress by any material sign. Then what are we to judge by?

A: Well, why judge? Why judge at all? Why be concerned even? As long as we are living according to our highest standard of our spiritual awareness, studying to the highest of our capacity, and meditating to the highest of our capacity, can we do any more than that? Of course we cannot. Therefore, there is no way to hurry our progress. The only thing that should disturb us is if we have to acknowledge, “Well, I must admit I am not doing the best that I am capable of,” or “I am wasting time in things that represent a waste.” Then, of course, we have to make an adjustment.

But the progress—try not to judge of that. I can tell you definitely that there is no way to judge of one’s progress. You may today have a complete feeling of frustration, barrenness, or insufficiency, and tomorrow be lifted right up to cloud nine. You have no idea of what lies ahead of you an hour from now, or a day from now, or a month from now. You have no idea of your progress, and it is for this reason: that just as in nature we can be watching our crops, trees, and flower bushes in the spring and see not a sign of a bud or a leaf, and then decide that we’re not doing well at all, and it may be just tomorrow that those buds begin to appear, those leaves, those blossoms. And then we realize that there is no way of watching progress until it happens. When it happens, we’ve seen the progress. Before that, we had no way of knowing what was what.

And so it is with us. I’ve witnessed in my own experience that I could seem to be a million miles away from spiritual demonstration, and then, really in a twinkling of an eye, the entire picture changes. I have witnessed with healings what appeared to me to be no progress whatsoever, and then all of a sudden, again, in the twinkling of an eye, the change took place. I have no way of understanding it. That’s why in none of my books do I explain it. I have no way of understanding it. I merely know that it is a fact that if I am living up to my highest concept of spiritual principles, that undoubtedly there is an inner progress going on.

Probably the reason that I can’t feel progress is that I can’t feel spiritual. I never have felt spiritual. I don’t know what it’s like to feel spiritual. I can only feel that I am myself. If that’s spiritual, make the best of it. If it isn’t, I still have to make the best of it. But I don’t know what it is to feel spiritual, and therefore, I have no way of knowing whether I’m more spiritual one day than another day, because I didn’t feel any less or more yesterday.

I do have periods of feeling “barren.” Ah, that’s quite a different thing. That feeling of barrenness is always a prelude to a greater unfoldment. I never have a greater unfoldment of principles without there first being a period of barrenness, and sometimes a period of barrenness when I wish that God would take the whole blooming message of The Infinite Way and give it to somebody else!

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But as long as I can be patient through that, and sometimes it really requires more Emma's being patient than me, because I can get very uppity and say, "I'm going to bed," and just hide my head in the pillows, and that's that. What else is there to do? I can't fight City Hall, and so the only thing for me to do is just give up and wait. And when I do, as a rule, something very fine happens.

It happened on this trip that I had one of those periods when I felt sorry for Emma, because I really was ugly and in no mood for anything or anybody and finally just did decide to go to bed. And I stayed in bed all afternoon and evening and then in the middle of the night I had the vision. Then I woke her up and told her about it, and that made up to her.

But try, try not to be too elated when these great spiritual revelations come. Rejoice, yes, yes, yes. Rejoice, but don't be too elated because the feeling isn't going to last. There's going to be a settling back into normalcy, and then eventually there's going to be barrenness again and you'll have to fight the whole thing all over again. So learn to accept that and learn to accept the fact that the reason for it is that I of my own self am nothing. It's only by the grace of God that these messages come, and therefore I must learn to accept them in the way that I can accept them, whatever that way is.