

## Part I: "ABIDE IN ME..."

### CONCEPTION

#### LESSON I

"In the beginning God" -- these first four words of the Bible serve as a constant reminder of the Truth that, as we awaken to it, sets us free.

God is the Creator and the Sustainer of all creation. "In the beginning God" is not a reference to a point in time but refers to God as the First Cause of all being. Throughout this course and beyond, hold in mind and heart a God centered creation. Hold to a concept of life well beyond and above the visible form alone. This understanding is a rock on which we build our meditation practice.

Meditation is the practice that enables us to become open to and aware of Truth. Meditation as an experience is the awakening from within. The practice may begin with external reminders or following outer form but that only serves temporarily.

This class can only offer to support your own practice. The actual practice depends on you and your receptivity to the everpresent God and God activity.

#### ESTABLISH A PURPOSE

It is essential that from the beginning we establish a stated purpose for our practice. We can change or refine our purpose from time to time as our understanding grows. Having a purpose enables us to return again to the reason for this activity each time we become distracted. Many people are interested in how to meditate, but why we meditate is more important. From knowing why, then the understanding of how will come. Goals of meditation may range from rest and relaxation through to union and communion with God. Be clear about your own goal and purpose.

#### ESTABLISH A SCHEDULE

Set an established early morning and late evening time for regular meditation. Being constant is more important than being extreme. It is necessary to begin where we are in understanding, knowing that Guidance will come from within as we become more attuned to God's Presence. We become more attuned by constant practice.

#### ACTIVE MEDITATION

Having a purpose supports our meditation practice as active meditation. In a passive meditation, the mind and thought may be open to everything rather than only choosing to focus on the highest that we know. Truly the work is done by God but we prepare the way.

## STEPS

Meditation may initially be thought of as having steps. These may not necessarily apply to each session but it can serve as a starting point for beginners. The sequence of gradual, progressive steps would be:

- rest and relaxation
- contemplation
- concentration
- surrender/silence
- thanksgiving
- gradual return

### Rest and Relaxation

This step is preliminary preparation and may begin with reading Scripture for inspiration and focus. This includes a physical quietness of body, closing the eyes to minimize distractions. Sit in a comfortable position and become aware of a change in focus from the outer activity in our everyday lives.

### Contemplation

To focus our attention and direct the mind, we consider one subject area (an inherency of God for example) or one passage in the Bible. We may consider a subject area or statement by holding it in mind through careful restatement or by paraphrasing or considering its application in our life. At this level, we may tend to think of ourselves as the subject and God as the object.

### Concentration

This activity is more than a refined form of contemplation although it may start as that. Instead of just a more specific focus of attention to one word or narrow topic, it is a subtle but distinctly different approach. Instead of just relating the subject to ourselves, we relate ourselves to it. It is as though God becomes the subject and we the object.

### Surrender/Silence

This phase is complete relinquishment of thought and word, a total surrender to Spirit and God's will. The Silence is the heart and soul of meditation where At-one-ment may occur. We sit at the door of the Most High and wait. It is here that God is revealed as both the Subject and the Object. "...when God speaks, the earth melts in submission..."

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### Thanksgiving

Gratitude is the natural response for the Infinite blessing of God's Presence and we give thanks fully and freely that we may know that this is so.

### Gradual Return

We slowly return to an awareness of physical dimension and the outer elements. Keep with you the peace and joy of the experience that you have had – let it be a reminder of God's immediacy.

### ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON I

Carefully consider and identify your purpose for meditation and state it in writing. Practice meditation at least twice each day.

Read *The Spirit of Prayer, Chapter I – Primitive Prayer*

Through the week contemplate all or any part of Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." At the end of the week write a statement (75 words or less) of your own understanding of the meaning of this sentence.

You may wish to re-read the first four paragraphs of this lesson through the week. Why is the lesson titled "Conception"?

Identify any questions that you may have about your practice at this point. List up to three questions for later discussion.

## Part I: “ABIDE IN ME...”

### BIRTH

#### LESSON II

“Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”

In Genesis 1:26-27 we are told, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion...over all the earth... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

The phrase, “Let us make man in our image” refers to God as Creator and His idea, man. Our life is “made” or experienced in our own image (whatever we “imagine” or believe ourselves to be). Notice that everything in the first chapter of Genesis is brought forth after its kind. As we become aware of our true nature as Spirit, then we realize that we are already made in God’s image. God’s image of man is Perfection. Dr. A. B. Fay says, “God expresses His identity in man, and (man’s work) is to see God’s omnipresence expressed in all.”

The phrase, “male and female created he them,” describes the flow of the creative process. The “male” is the idea or thought that is extended. The “female” then either accepts or refuses this seed of new life. If the thought or idea is accepted, then it is the “female” that nurtures it. The union produces offspring or results which are manifested.

God’s “chosen people” are those who realize that they have been given the gift of choice. We claim our inherited birthright by choosing to recognize what has been given to us and by affirming that continually with our thoughts, words and deeds.

To relate to God’s nature is to trace our lineage directly to Spirit, taking no thought for the things and conditions of the world. We are given dominion in the conscious awareness of our true nature as Spirit and in the acceptance of our role as expressions of God. This enlightened understanding dawns slowly but as we practice becoming still and turning inward, we are lifted up.

### THE GOAL

Meditation is not the goal. It is only the vehicle to reach the true goal, which is conscious union and communion with God. We are created of God and ever one, but we must know this Truth consciously to be set free.

## APPROACHES TO MEDITATION

In different teachings, the practice of meditation may be referred to by many names; these include meditation, contemplation, prayer, attention, awareness, concentration, focus, mindfulness, stillness, the silence, listening, and practicing the Presence. There are other techniques for practicing meditation based on different beliefs. In Divine Science, meditation does not include the use of external items, (candles, mantras, incense, etc.) except for the Bible. This inward focus helps to remind us that God is within us and is ever available.

Only if it is limited to use in the early part of your practice, you may make an audiotape of Scripture or some other inspirational reading. This would be used to lead into meditation so that you can relax and be receptive to listening. This tape should be in your own voice and statements of your own choosing or of your own creation rather than a tape by someone else. This audiotape may be useful only if you do not rely on it over time.

## PRACTICE REGULAR CONTEMPLATION

Begin to practice contemplation throughout the day as well as at set times of quiet meditation. Our thoughts often wander aimlessly unless we direct our attention to that which is worthwhile. Focus over time on a statement of Truth and abide in it. This is done with a listening attitude instead of vain repetition.

## ASSIGNMENT FOR LESSON II

Continue your practice of daily meditation. Include at least two sessions of quiet meditation each day in addition to the contemplation described above. Contemplate a brief phrase or statement that moves you.

Read Genesis Chapter 1 through Chapter 2:3. Read slowly and read for inspiration and understanding. This describes not a physical creation but the process of all creation and an awakening consciousness. Re-read these passages as often as you can during the week.

Read, *The Art of Meditation, Chapter I – The Way*

At the end of the week, write a paper of 100 words on what Genesis 1:26 and 27 mean to you.