

IMAGE-FINDING

Greetings in the name of the Lord. I bring you blessings, my dear friends. Blessed is this hour.

The material world constantly presents you with obstacles that prevent you from seeing the world as it really is. These obstacles include time, space, and motion. Time, space, and motion are completely different in the spiritual world than in your world of manifestation. You have definite periods of time and invariable, objective measurement. A year is a year; a month, a week, a day, an hour exist independently of personal attitudes. The same applies to distance. You also have definitely designated directions -- right, left, up, and down. In the spirit world this is not so.

I have a good reason to mention these notions of time and measurement tonight. Scientists have sensed and found some of this truth through nuclear physics and outer-space exploration. In the not too distant future, exploration of outer space will be as commonly accepted as air travel is today. When pilots sit in an ordinary airplane, they do not need instruments to indicate whether they are ascending or descending. When explorers finally fly through outer space, this will not be so, and you will all come to see the truth of what I tell you. The moment you leave the gravitational field of earth, you will not be able to determine whether you are going up or down. When the plane ascends, you will be under the impression that it is descending, and vice versa. This is very significant, my friends. For even though you still live in the world of manifestation, when you explore outer space by technical means, you approach the laws of the spirit. These phenomena should open the eyes of a thinking person.

I have talked to you a great deal about the necessity of exploring your soul and, particularly in the last lecture, I discussed the inner images, the wrong impressions and conclusions that a human being forms over the course of several lifetimes. I spoke about the importance of finding these images. That is the only way you will be able to understand yourselves and everything that has happened and will continue to happen until you dissolve the images.

As in outer space, so in your own development: Only by going down can you go up. Only by exploring the depths, the deepest regions of your unconscious mind, can you develop spiritually and ascend in the true sense. Temporarily you will appear to regress. Depressions are almost unavoidable, temporarily, in the search for what and who you really are. But, my friends, think of the analogy between space exploration and self-exploration, which will soon be confirmed by human science. You have to descend into your unconscious in order to reach the liberation and clarity of absolute truth as far as you are able to perceive it while still in the body.

I promised you that tonight I would continue my discussion of image-finding. A few facts are important for pursuing a diligent search. What I say here will not mean very much to those who still

feel reluctant about embarking on this path and who merely listen to these words. Perhaps they will gain a little more understanding of the Pathwork principles. These glimpses may eventually open the door for the active, personal search so necessary for complete purification, to voluntarily step across the threshold from the darkness into the light. I beg any of you who has not started yet, but is willing, to ask one of the people of the inner group to work with you, for it cannot be done alone. Arrangements will be made; guidance will come. Anyone truly desirous of spiritual growth will find help; of that you can be sure.

Now, my dear friends, before you start searching for your images, you need to know several important facts. The first is that you do not approach your unconscious with a moralizing attitude. Your unconscious does not like it and will resist. It will fight against you and make it all the harder for your willing consciousness to come to terms with it. In your development so far, you have realized the importance of purification and self-knowledge. You have all started to think about your mistakes, your shortcomings, and your weaknesses. The same holds true on all levels of your being.

When I say, "all levels of your being," I mean that there are several layers, not merely a conscious and an unconscious layer. In fact several degrees of consciousness and being exist about every conceivable attitude, about your faults and weaknesses, as well as about your qualities and strengths. In the last analysis, the wrong inner impression exists as a rigid form that controls all the events in your life. It also consists of the faults you may consciously know quite well. You may not realize that these same weaknesses exist on a separate level, however. So, if you approach the search with the attitude of self-moralizing, you will have difficulties. That is why I have advised you to start with a different approach.

The best way to begin is by thinking about your hurts, conflicts, and problems. Regard your wrong inner attitudes as ignorance and error. Actually, that is what all faults really are! Think about your idiosyncrasies, your prejudices, your tight emotions in certain domains of life. Think how you react emotionally to certain things and when and how these reactions repeat themselves throughout your life. Review the disappointments that apparently have nothing to do with your actions and reactions. Afterward, when you recognize a pattern, you will be able to see the connection with an inner attitude that may so far have escaped your consciousness. Only after you have gained some understanding of your inner reactions and their bearing on outer events will you see that these reactions actually are nothing less than a fault, or several faults that exist on a deeper level, quite apart from your outer personality.

Once you realize that your inner reactions come from a faulty attitude, there are two possibilities. Each represents an obstacle best removed by awareness. One possibility is that you find the same faults that you have already recognized on a superficial outer level. You may even have overcome some of these faults to some degree. You will be all the more shocked to find the same trends all over again. You will either react by saying that you already knew that you had this fault, thereby preventing yourself from realizing that you have come across something quite new, although you are aware of its outward existence. But it is necessary to approach this fault as something new, in spite of your familiarity with its outer existence. Unless you approach it this way, you cannot experience and relive the original feelings that led you to form the attitude in the first place, and without reexperiencing them you cannot gain the necessary understanding. When you come across known reactions or faults in your inner images, beware of the attitude that you already know about them. You may know about them, but they still exist on another level, and you must

approach them with as much freshness as you would if you were encountering them for the very first time. Remember this, my friends.

The second possibility is that you encounter tendencies that are completely contradictory to the self you consciously know. Again, this may be a hindrance because you may be tempted to say: "Oh, but this cannot be so. I do not have this fault. As a matter of fact, the direct opposite is one of my most significant virtues."

Let us take a few examples to make this a little clearer. Consider the people who have a strong sense of responsibility in their lives. Their family and business contacts know that they are thoroughly responsible. Yet when they try to understand their lives and themselves and begin to look for their images, they may be shocked to find that in certain ways they are irresponsible. The resulting puzzlement could lead such people to reject the new findings as wrong because they contradict another part of their being. In their confusion they might quickly cover up again what they were just about to bring out of hiding.

Or let us take people who are known to have a great deal of courage. By uncovering certain emotional reactions, tendencies and inner conditions, they come face to face with the cowardly part of their personality. This realization may come as quite a shock. People then will say to themselves that this cannot be so. They may cite a number of instances where they have proven their courage. Yet their discovery of certain cowardly emotional reactions is also valid.

So it is important for you, my friends, to realize that in the deeper layer of your images you may find faults that you do not have outwardly. Outwardly you have exactly the opposite reactions, and genuinely so -- not only as a mask. You always tend to think in either/or terms. Humanity has learned by now that it is wrong to say a person is good or bad. That far you have come. But the need to exclude an either/or judgment also holds true for every individual tendency -- good or bad. If you have this general understanding, my friends, if you impress this knowledge on your mind, it will be much easier for you to reach the goal. In this way, when you delve into the deeper realms of your being, you will eliminate difficulties that exist only because you ignore some facts of the life of the soul.

People nowadays talk about depth psychology. Your self-search is exactly that. But in order to win the battle, you also have to learn depth prayer, depth meditation, and depth thinking, my friends. At first your prayer or meditation is an intellectual pursuit, but when you arrive at the findings on the level of the inner self, you have to go deeper. There are rare moments when you are filled with God and the laws of truth. Such moments may occur long before you have discovered deeper levels of consciousness. This feeling cannot be forced; it cannot be controlled. It is grace, my friends. And it will become a more or less permanent state once you have made conscious all unconscious falsehoods and have cleansed yourself of them.

What I mean by "depth prayer" or "depth meditation" or "depth thinking" is that you take everything you have found out about your hidden reactions -- whether they concern trends you find repeatedly or whether you come across quite different reactions from your known outer ones -- and think about their effect on yourself and others. Compare them with spiritual law as you now know it. Think from both the spiritual and practical points of view. Work with the newly-found knowledge by reexperiencing the feelings it evokes. Then think about it again as objectively as you

know how. Pray to God for further enlightenment and strength to change your erroneous reactions. Simply shift your thinking to a deeper level and apply it to the knowledge you have found.

This may not be easy for some of my friends to understand, particularly for those who have not started on the search. But I am sure that most of my friends who have advanced in this direction will understand what I mean. It is a very subtle and important matter.

Do not leave the newly-found understanding alone, for you may then very well slip back into the same old pattern. You can easily deceive yourself and think that, merely because you have found out an important and significant piece of knowledge about your soul, nothing more is necessary. You can have the theoretical knowledge and still go right on reacting the same old way. It is not sufficient to find an inner understanding about your hidden trends and reactions and leave it at that. The work only begins after such recognition. And that is the meditation in depth, on the deep emotional level you have discovered. If you do neglect this meditation, you may retain what you have found, but gradually it will become more remote, a merely theoretical knowledge in your brain, while underneath you go on reacting as before. In that case you have not succeeded in integrating and unifying your erring emotional reactions and wrong conclusions with your intellectual knowledge.

Emotions are more habit-bound than outer tendencies; moreover, they are so elusive that in spite of your efforts, your old patterns may go right on and escape your attention. You are so used to shoving uncomfortable knowledge into your subconscious that you cannot get rid of the habit from one day to the next. Breaking the habit requires a great deal of training, concentration, and effort. New habit patterns have to be established until you recognize the signs of the hidden trends that must be made conscious. You have to develop a special sensitivity for them -- and this takes time, of course.

It is also possible to go to the opposite extreme, which is just as harmful as the old reaction and just as bound by your images. This may happen either because you are unconsciously impatient and want to correct your soul tendencies in a hurry by drastic means -- which, of course, is not feasible. Or it may happen because you are angry at yourself and act in a spirit of defiance, against yourself as well as the world at large. This reaction is just as wrong as the old established pattern. You merely use a different manner of operation.

Beware of these two pitfalls, my friends. The only way to work is with the understanding you have gained, quietly, patiently, and steadily accepting your temporary inability to react differently, knowing that slow growth is the only possible way. Take the newly-found knowledge and view it from various angles. Pray and meditate on the deeper level of this new knowledge rather than on the outer level on which you have worked before. You may also have established habits in prayer and meditation. They were useful in the last phase of your development, but now you have to shift to a deeper realm.

Another point of equal importance I want to bring to your attention is that, strangely, everything connected with these distorted inner images causes you acute shame, even when the image is about something that is not shameful, objectively speaking. There might not be any justification for the shame; you would not feel that such behavior deserved shame if you encountered it in others. Once you have the courage to bring your feelings out into the open, you

will see for yourself how the sense of shame and embarrassment completely vanishes. But before it is out, while you are still struggling with it, you will feel the shame very strongly.

You may have a fault that is infinitely worse than what you are ashamed about, but since you discovered it a long time ago, you have accepted it by now; therefore, you do not feel ashamed of it anymore. You may even be able to discuss it openly with others. Some much lesser fault or tendency that has no apparent connection with a fault or sin causes you acute shame, however, as long as you have not come to terms with it. Let us say, you discover that you were very strongly influenced and dependent on one of your parents, something that is in itself nothing to be ashamed of. Until now you ignored how much and in what manner you were influenced and how dependent you still are on the emotions your dependency has created. When you first come across this realization, it causes you acute embarrassment.

This is a typical image reaction, my friends. And if you expect this to happen, you will make things easier for yourself. You will not be under the emotional, subjective impression that you alone have such feelings. For that is what you unconsciously believe when you feel so ashamed. You have created separateness for yourself with all your inappropriate defenses. But if you realize that this feeling of isolation is common to everyone, that it is a symptom to be expected, you will be able to counteract it by not giving much heed to it. You will free yourself of the separating wall that encloses you in darkness, loneliness, fear, guilt, and false shame. Only in this way can you evolve as a free person and hold your head high, instead of being governed by your false impressions and shame. It takes only a moment of courage to go through what seems so shameful and face yourself as you are. This is the only way to discover your phantom world of fear and shame that has no reality whatever. Remember that.

Thus, my dear friends, you see that when you go inward and downward, you gain an understanding of the shadows in your soul and comprehend how they came to exist. When you look at your erroneous emotional conclusions, you will discover that fighting your imagined shames and resistances with the tools of patience, sound endeavor, and willpower is, in truth, the only way to ascend in spirit. Thinking you can avoid this apparent descent and yet attain spiritual growth is utterly unrealistic. It is self-deception and wishful thinking. You cannot avoid it.

QUESTION: You said humans were all given the same amount of time. Does that mean that time is something different to each individual spirit?

ANSWER: What I mean is this: Let us say you have an hour. An hour will remain an hour, regardless of how it appears to you. This is true whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. You can measure it and it still remains objectively an hour. Your own impression, what you think and feel during that time, is subjective and has no bearing on the objective hour that has passed. Now in the spirit world it is exactly the opposite. Subjectivity validates the spiritual attitude; every measurement or any other value is subjective in spirit. Is that clear?

COMMENT: Yes, thank you very much.

QUESTION: I find it hard to understand meditation and prayer in depth. If you have approached a problem already, how can you approach it on a deeper level?

ANSWER: Reaching the same old problem on a deeper level happens organically as you continue to work. But once you have uncovered a new approach to a problem, you have to think, meditate, and pray with the new findings all over again. Whether you discover the same tendencies that you were already aware of, or partly aware of, or whether you discover some completely new reactions, you have to approach them with a spirit of newness, a new outlook, so you vibrate with the experience of the realization. And then you have to think about it. Pray to assimilate the new material properly. Pray that you will be able to integrate it with your personality, so that you will become well rounded. A new finding usually does not fit into the mental picture you have of yourself. It calls attention to itself. To make the distorted emotions whole and healthy, one has to work on one's findings in the way I have explained in this lecture.

QUESTION: You wanted to talk tonight about the problem of desire versus renunciation.

ANSWER: On a previous occasion I said that desirelessness can be very easily misunderstood, especially if you happen to have an image which makes you afraid to live, afraid to feel, and afraid to love. The outer intellectual knowledge you may gain through spiritual teachings may support this very image and can be used as a rationalization for the pseudo-solution of withdrawal from life because the negative unconscious is constantly on the lookout to use such arguments to justify itself and its image.

With the knowledge you have gained since, you will now understand better why I said at the time that desirelessness has to be approached carefully, otherwise it will do more harm than good. People with this kind of image are very afraid to face the world, their feelings, and the unavoidable disappointments, so they withdraw and use desirelessness as a camouflage to fit their image. This is a very common phenomenon. Only those who have no such fear can understand the true meaning of desirelessness and renunciation.

Wherever fear of life is embedded in an image -- and many people have it to some degree -- the only way genuine desirelessness can be attained is by facing the fear of life and love. To risk the hurt and bear your fear that your desires will not be fulfilled, rather than trying to forcefully prevent yourself from going through this necessary stage of development, is important.

Only after having tasted voluntarily the hurts connected with desire will you be able to leave desire behind. You cannot do it by going around it, my dear friends. You cannot force yourself into a state of "desirelessness" you have not yet attained; this would amount to a lie and even to cheating. As long as you still have desires, you have to acknowledge them and go through them in order to honestly grow out of them. Gradually, in the organic growth that spiritual development always is, the hurts will become less, not because you fear and avoid them but because you are willing to face them. That is the only way renunciation and desirelessness can be obtained without error and self-deception. And only you, the individual, can be the judge of how useful it is to meditate about desirelessness at the moment.

Only if and when you are completely fearless of hurts and disappointments is the time ripe, my dear ones, and not before! If you have forced yourself into a state of resignation, you have chosen with the unconscious motive of escaping what you fear. This is the only valid procedure: accepting that you still have desires and accepting their price. Because of the acceptance, your desires will differ from the desires of people who have no spiritual aims. Those people will let their

self-will push ahead. Controlled by their desires, they will rebel against everything and everyone who stands in the way of the gratification of their desires.

But you who are on this path can evaluate these currents, viewing them from a distance and consciously controlling them, neither giving vent to them nor suppressing them. If you listen within yourself and interpret your feelings, you will be able to see where your self-will, pride, and ego claim gratification that your higher self deems wrong. Those who know that the purpose of life is not the gratification of self-will and that the sole purpose of life is not happiness, but that life is given to you to learn both from happiness and unhappiness, will not give in to the desires of the lower self. If you cannot help giving in to the lower self at times, you will learn an additional lesson from that. Only those who do not escape unhappiness can become happy. And only those who do not escape unhappiness can achieve true desirelessness, though perhaps only much later. So there lies the answer, my friends. And hearing these words, I hope you will not use the idea of desirelessness and renunciation to rationalize away your inner fears of life, of love, and of being hurt. Is that clear?

COMMENT: Yes.

QUESTION: What about the problem of selfishness in prayer?

ANSWER: I have discussed that on various occasions, but I will do so again, perhaps with a slightly different slant, my friends. I know that many people are afraid that their prayers are selfish. But that depends very much on how you pray. You cannot say of any act that it is selfish or not without examining it. Aside from crass instances, it is your motive that counts in all desires and attitudes. Selfishness always depends on the how. To determine this is really very simple. If you pray for things solely because you want them and because it would be pleasant to have them and for no other reason, then, of course, it is a selfish prayer and it will do no good at all. For only a pure spiritual force coming out of your soul will have an effect. A selfish prayer indicates a misunderstanding of life and is therefore made in untruth, even though you are not deliberately dishonest. Nevertheless, an untrue thought, innocent and in good faith as it may be, cannot meet with the true forces of the cosmos. Like attracts like, and this law cannot be changed.

One of the first things you learn on this path is to ask yourself about your motives for desiring a certain thing; to ask yourself about the why of some of your emotional reactions. If you do not find the answer, it is a good beginning to pray for the will to recognize yourself fearlessly and truthfully. Thus, in such an instance, you would pray that your motives should become purified. This cannot be construed as selfishness. Furthermore, it is certainly not selfish to pray for the good of other creatures. If you can bring yourself to pray for those who have harmed you -- and mean it -- that in itself is an act of purification. And if you pray for strength and understanding to overcome your cowardice to face yourself and to overcome your resistance to developing yourself, there is nothing selfish in that. If you believe that wanting the happiness that inevitably results from purification, after a certain point is reached, is self-serving, then remaining unpurified and unhappy would seem to be a higher aim because it would seem selfless!

In this connection you must understand how God's laws work: Only those who are happy can bring happiness to others. I do not mean cheap and easily obtainable happiness, but the real thing that comes only by hard labor and that no one can take away from you. You will never see an unhappy person who can truly bring happiness to others. That is impossible. An unhappy person

may do a good deed, a single unselfish act, but cannot possibly make another person happy. Therefore, your purification and development should be the main intent of your prayer, apart from praying for others, and consider the resulting happiness a byproduct, a means to an end, rather than the end itself.

If selfishness, namely the desire to become happy, enters your motivation a little bit at the beginning of your upward climb, recognize this, but do not mind it too much. Accept yourself as you are, as still imperfect. Even if the selfish motive is not as pure as expecting happiness only as a byproduct, it is still a step forward in the realization of truth. Only by purifying yourself can you become happy. The person who has a lower degree of consciousness, however, believes that happiness results from giving in to all the desires coming from the lower nature.

If you are not free from selfishness -- and scarcely a human being is -- it is certainly healthier to see this clearly instead of forcing it away; in that way it will only hide in your soul and cause you more harm than the clear and courageous recognition of its existence. Know that the aim is a higher one, and know that you are emotionally not there yet.

Also realize that secluded happiness is impossible. The separating wall must crumble, and that is what all of you are afraid of; it threatens you. You do not realize that by keeping your separating wall you defeat your own purpose and you contradict your desire to develop, which exists just as strongly as your fear of it. You all desire happiness and you all desire to give happiness, yet you cannot achieve either one without losing your separateness.

And how do you lose your separateness? By doing the very thing that seems hardest to you. Perhaps it is giving up your pride, going through your apparent shame. When you approach the problem this way, you will realize that in this kind of prayer there is certainly nothing selfish. For God wants you to be happy. It is a long tradition of misunderstanding, often unpronounced, that to be godly means to be unhappy and severe. To be godly is supposed to be martyrdom. This image is engraved in humanity as a whole. No, my friends, it is not so. So do not feel guilty if you also become happy. But do not pray directly for happiness. Pray for the strength and ability to remove the obstacles you have placed between yourself and happiness. This means going through the unhappiness, self-inflicted by error and ignorance. The outcome will be the clear light of peace, harmony, beauty, and joy that will be yours regardless of other people's actions. That is the spirit you should have when you pray.

QUESTION: May I ask why is it so difficult at times to start praying at all?

ANSWER: You all know that your development does not proceed upward or downward along a steady line. It fluctuates, going up and down in spirals. And sometimes, while you are on a downward curve, you do not realize you are a step higher than the last upward curve you were on. Although the last upward curve was, on the whole, lower than the present downward curve, every upward curve feels better. You felt an elation and a liberation that you do not feel on the downward curve, which you have now worked yourself up to. Whenever you are on a downward curve, you encounter conflicts that you have not yet resolved. They disquiet you; they make you restless and fearful until you have laboriously worked them out and understood them; until you have fitted them into as much of the whole picture as is available to you now. When this is done, the upward curve sets in again, and you enjoy the clear air of a gained truth a little further.

But when the downward curve comes again, you must delve into the darkness of your confusion and error, and that cuts you off from the divine stream. You may oversimplify this by saying: "Things are depressing; I experience unpleasant things and that is why I am cut off from the divine flow." You are only half right, and that is always dangerous. The unpleasantness you are experiencing is only a reflection, a necessary effect of the cause you have within yourself that waits to be dug out. And that is why, when you are on the downward curve, which may vary in length according to the personality and the inner problems to be solved, the flow is cut off. You are surrounded again by the strong impressions of the world of manifestation. You can no longer connect with the feeling of reality you have tasted at other times. The disconnection is necessary; it provokes a battle on your part to attain victory again. Every victory means a new upward curve.

It is quite natural that in such periods of temporary darkness you cannot feel God's absolute truth, that you do not vibrate with it. This cannot be forced by your will. But what you can and should do during these periods is to think clearly and reasonably about your findings in the light of what you now know, although temporarily this knowledge sits only in your brain, and to wait until you become filled with this knowledge again.

Be blessed, my dear ones.

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