

Workbook 2 - SSS



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Inner Transformation

Second Module

This is the second workbook of our program. It was developed to help us work on our inner transformation. It is based on the beatitudes proffered by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount, one of the most famous episodes from Jesus' life on earth containing beautiful teachings about improving our spiritual lives, and is also based on the list of thirteen virtues listed by Benjamin Franklin as a way of attaining moral improvement.

The Beatitudes

In the Gospel of St. Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount is a compilation of Jesus' sayings, epitomizing his moral teaching. According to chapters 5-7, Jesus of Nazareth, in approximately 30 AD, gave this sermon, while standing on a mountainside, to his disciples and to a large crowd. The best-known written portions of the open-air sermon comprise the Beatitudes, found at the beginning of the section. The sermon also contains the Lord's Prayer and the injunctions to "resist not evil" (5:39) and "turn the other cheek", as well as a version of the Golden Rule. Other lines often quoted are the references to "the salt of the earth", "the light of the world" and the warning to "judge not, lest ye be judged."

It has been said that no sermon delivered, before or since, in the history of the world has so captured the attention and imagination of its audience as the Sermon on the Mount. After hearing it, "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." (Matt. 7:28,29)¹

The people listening to Jesus that day must have been mesmerized from the very beginning. They must have been enthralled by the very opening sentence, for Jesus was telling them things that, on the surface, seemed absurd.² Yet, the Sermon on the Mount not only affected the original audience in a profound manner, but has also continued to have a similarly stupendous effect upon those who have read its message throughout history. As a matter of fact, the Sermon on the Mount has, itself, molded history. Since the second century no block of Scripture of comparable size has exerted so great an influence as the sermon. In the pre-Nicene period, passages from this discourse were quoted or alluded to more than any other part of the Bible. To the present day, these words still profoundly challenge Christians and non-Christians alike. They caused Tolstoy to change completely his social theory and influenced the development of Gandhi's use of nonviolence as a political force. Even Nietzsche, who objected to the teachings of the sermon, did not ignore

¹ http://www.grace4u.org/Topical/Beatitudes_intro.htm#FTNT3

² Hendricksen, William. "New Testament Commentary: Matthew," (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), pg. 264.



them.³

Mahatma Gandhi spoke highly of the beatitudes, and was deeply influenced by their depth! Open your Bible to Matthew 5 and you will never be the same. Both Gandhi and King have called these passages, which begin with the storied Beatitudes, the grandest manifesto of nonviolence ever written. Truly, they are grand for a number of reasons—for their poignancy and conciseness, for their sheer poetics, for their morality and practicality.

For Gandhi the whole sermon might just as well have been considered apart from the historical person of Christ. "It does not matter to me," he once said, "if someone demonstrated that the man Jesus never lived and that what we read in the Gospels is nothing more than a production of the author's imagination. The Sermon on the Mount will always remain true in my eyes."

Many Christians believe that the Sermon on the Mount is a form of commentary on the Ten Commandments and that it portrays Christ as the true interpreter of the Mosaic Law. A majority of Christians also believe that it contains the central tenets of Christian discipleship.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with the nine Beatitudes. These laws supplement the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Old Testament laws speak of those things one must not do, and convey a sense of severity. The New Testament laws, on the contrary, speak of those things that must be done, and communicate the fragrance of love. The ancient Ten Commandments were written on stone tablets and mastered through external education. The New Testament laws are also written on tablets, but they are the tablets of a believing heart. If any one will piously and soberly consider the sermon that Jesus Christ spoke on the mount, as we read it in the Gospel according to Matthew, he or she will find in it, so far as regards the highest morals, a perfect standard of the Christian life, and we can gather this from the very words of Jesus Himself;

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
3. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
5. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
9. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.
10. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:3-12

³ Burke, C. T. "Sermon on the Mount" article in "Evangelical Dictionary of Theology" Walter A. Elwell, editor, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), pg. 1005.



The Thirteen Virtues

When in his late 20s, Benjamin Franklin listed thirteen virtues that he felt were an important guide for living. These virtues can be divided into those related to personal behavior (temperance, order, resolution, frugality, industry, cleanliness, and tranquility) and those related to social character traits (sincerity, justice, moderation, silence, chastity, and humility). Franklin tried to follow these guides in his life, although he often went astray. These virtues may be worthwhile to consider following in your own life.

In 1726, while on an 80-day ocean voyage from London to Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin developed a plan and corresponding chart for regulating his future conduct.

His plan consisted of a chart of thirteen virtues. He committed to giving strict attention to one virtue each week - so after thirteen weeks he moved through all thirteen virtues.

He would repeat the course four times a year.

He kept a daily chart of these 13 goals, and placed a dot next to the ones he failed to fulfill during the day.

So, let us embark on this journey to get to know ourselves better and to work on our new self, or, as Franklin himself said⁴, so that we *may appear In a New and More Elegant Edition Revised and Corrected By the Author*, even in this lifetime. There is no time to waste.

- **Temperance.** Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
- **Silence.** Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
- **Order.** Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
- **Resolution.** Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
- **Frugality.** Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.
- **Industry.** Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
- **Sincerity.** Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
- **Justice.** Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
- **Moderation.** Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
- **Cleanliness.** Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.
- **Tranquility.** Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
- **Chastity.** Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
- **Humility.** Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

⁴ The Epitaph of Young Benjamin Franklin

The body of B. Franklin, Printer (Like the Cover of an Old Book Its Contents torn Out
And Stript of its Lettering and Gilding)Lies Here, Food for Worms.
But the Work shall not be Lost; For it will (as he Believ'd) Appear once More
In a New and More Elegant Edition Revised and Corrected
By the Author.



Topics - Beatitudes and Benjamin Franklin's 13 Virtues		Weekly Assignment
1.	Know Thyself - SINCERITY	• Spiritist Insights
2.	Humility, Modesty, and Sobriety X Pride - HUMILITY	• Message Sermon on the Mount Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet
3.	Resignation in Adversity - Pain and Loss - TRANQUILITY	• Moments of Glorious Transition
4.	Meekness, Patience X Anger - SILENCE	• Patience
5.	Righteousness, Virtues - FRUGALITY and TEMPERANCE	• The Spiritist Character
6.	Forgiveness, Understanding and Tolerance - MODERATION	• The Spirits' Teachings - Forgiveness of Offenses
7.	Moral Perfection - CLEANLINESS and CHASTITY	• The Characteristics of a Moral Person
8.	Blessed are the peacemakers - RESOLUTION	• Pacification
9.	Blessed are you when people insult you - JUSTICE	• The Cure of Hatred
10.	You are Light - INDUSTRY	• Let us kindle our Light
11.	Seek and You shall Find - ORDER	• We will always find
12.	Examples of Inner Transformation	• Let us also work • Knowing and Doing

♥ Spiritism is a miracle only when it touches your heart. The miracle is your transformation, your wakening, your conscious return to love, respect, freedom, compassion, and the balance which is so sorely needed for your growth.



Lesson 1

Self-Knowledge – Silence and Sincerity

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: Self-Knowledge – Silence and Sincerity or read the text below with the participants allowing for the exchange of ideas around the subject: (45 minutes)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Know Thyself

The Ancient Greek aphorism "Know Thyself" was once inscribed in golden letters in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. From that time onwards it has left an indelible mark on all minds, in all cultures, and its influence in modern times is stronger than ever. The phrase '*Know thyself*' has become synonymous with self-realization and self-knowledge.

The origin of this famous aphorism has been attributed to at least six ancient Greek sages:

- Chilon of Sparta (Chilon I 63, 25)
- Heraclitus
- Pythagoras
- Socrates
- Solon of Athens
- Thales of Miletus

In *The Spirits' Book*, question 919 and 919a, Allan Kardec asks the Spirits about self-knowledge. The enlightened reply comes from the spirit of St. Augustine.

919. What is the most effective means for improving ourselves in this life and for resisting the draw of evil?

A sage of antiquity has told you: 'Know thyself'.

Socrates' guiding rule, "Know Thyself," is of eternal significance. No better advice has ever been given to a man or woman. When one begins to explore this dictate it leads to profound understanding about all of creation.

The Socratic approach begins with the assumption that a lack of knowledge of the self is simply a form of ignorance, which must be overcome in the same way that every other form of ignorance must be overcome -- that is, by replacing ignorance with knowledge. "The soul,...must be cross-questioned out of its ignorance and into itself."¹

¹ Hopper, S. R., *The Crisis of Faith* (New York: Abington Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 261.



919a. We comprehend all the wisdom of that maxim, but the difficulty is precisely in knowing ourselves. By what means can we do so?

Do what I used to do when I was living on the earth: at the end of each day I examined my conscience, reviewed what I had done and asked myself whether or not I had failed to fulfill some duty and whether or not anyone had reason to complain about me. It was thus that I arrived at knowing myself and in seeing what there was in me that needed to be reformed.

Those who, every night, recall all their actions during the day, and ask themselves what good or evil they have done, praying to God and their guardian angel to enlighten them, will acquire great strength for self-improvement, because, believe me, God will assist them.

Therefore, formulate your questions, ask about what you have done and towards what aim you acted in a particular circumstance, whether you have done anything for which you would find blame in others, and whether you have done anything that you would not dare to confess. Also ask: if it pleased God to call me at this moment to enter the world of spirits, where nothing is hidden, would I cower at anyone's glance? Examine what you may have done against God, then against your neighbor and, lastly, against yourselves. The answers will be either repose for your conscience, or an indication of a wrong that you must amend.

Self-knowledge is, therefore, the key to individual improvement. But, you will ask, how do we judge ourselves? Won't we be under the illusion of vanity, which exalts our faults and makes them excusable? Misers think they are simply being thrifty and foresighted, while proud individuals think they are only full of dignity. All of this is quite true, but you have a means of control that cannot deceive you. When you are indecisive as to the quality of any one of your actions, ask how you would judge it had it been done by someone else. If you would condemn it in others, it cannot be any more legitimate for you, for God does not use two measures for justice. Also, seek to know what others think about you, and do not neglect the opinion of your enemies, because they have no interest in disguising the truth. Frequently, God places them beside you as a mirror in order to warn you more frankly than a friend would. Therefore, let those who are truly willing to improve themselves examine their own consciences in order to uproot from them their evil tendencies as they uproot weeds from their gardens. Let them balance out their moral workday like business persons do with their profits and losses, and I can assure you that there will be more profits than losses. If you can say that your workday has been good, you can sleep in peace and fearlessly wait for your awakening in the other life.

*So formulate clear and precise questions and do not be afraid to add to them; you would do very well to devote a few minutes to securing eternal bliss. Don't you work every day to accumulate what you will need for your rest in old age? Isn't this rest the object of all your desires, and the goal that enables you to endure temporary fatigue and privation? Well then, what is the rest of a few days, troubled by the infirmities of the body, compared to what awaits the moral person? Isn't it worth a little effort? I know many will say that the present is positive but the future is uncertain. That is precisely the thought we have been charged with tearing down in your minds, for we desire to enable you to understand that future in such a way that no doubt can remain in your soul. This is why we first called your attention to us through the phenomena of nature, which touch your senses, and later we gave you instructions that each one of us has the duty to spread. It was with this purpose in mind that we have dictated *The Spirits' Book*.*

Many faults that we commit pass by us unnoticed. In fact, following the counsel of St. Augustine, if we



would interrogate our conscience more frequently, we would see how often we fail without noticing it by not having scrutinized the nature and motive for our deeds. The interrogative form is somewhat more precise than a maxim, which we do not usually apply to ourselves. It requires categorical, yes-no answers that leave no room for alternatives. They are personal assertions and from the sum of those answers, we can compute the sum of the good and the evil that exists in us. (Allan Kardec)

HOW CAN WE KNOW OURSELVES BETTER?

Sincerity, one of Benjamin Franklin's 13 virtues, can help us in the process of self-knowledge. Through the use of just a little self-analysis we can easily ascertain that sincerity is an absolute necessity, for it's not by trying to deceive ourselves or by being condescending with our mistakes that we will acquire self-knowledge and thus be able to work on the areas that need improvement.

The maxim "know thyself" looks good on paper. But those who have tried it know that one of the greatest hurdles is being able to see oneself objectively and sincerely. We all have built-in biases about who and what we are, and these biases can color our self-images. It's very difficult to see ourselves as others see us. We often cannot be objective about our emotional selves because we have built up defenses that hinder accurate self-evaluation.

Our 'insights' about ourselves usually contain a number of convenient blind spots. The self-actualized individual, who can speak freely and honestly of her or his faults and abilities, is rare.

Knowing one's self is actually a lifelong journey and a journey that should be embarked upon with total trust in the personal observations and personal experiences we have experienced so far..

For the most part, self-study has focused on the accuracy of introspection about one's own internal states (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, emotions, traits, motives). But the topic can be apprehended more broadly to include questions of memory (re-calling one's past internal states) and prospection (predicting one's future internal states). Knowing who we were, who we are now, and who we will be in the future are all important facets of self-knowledge.

It seems to be to our advantage to discover what is under our mental hoods. But how can we do so, when so much of our mental lives is unavailable for introspection? It's not easy, but a number of routes are open to us. First, we can try to be objective observers of our own behavior (Bem, 1972). We can try to see ourselves through the eyes of other people, or at least consider the possibility that they have picked up on something about us that we have missed.

We can try to learn about ourselves by reading and assimilating findings from psychological sciences. Most of us already pay attention to medical findings that inform us about our bodies (e.g., that smoking is harmful), and it is but a small stretch of the imagination to realize we can learn about our psychological selves in the same way.

There are yet other aspects that need to be analyzed when we talk about self-knowledge: self-enhancement and self-verification.

Self-enhancement is when a person focuses on positive central traits over negative ones. Self-verification, on the other hand, refers to preferring accurate information about the self, whether positive or negative. Essentially, it seems that people self-enhance more than they self-verify. For instance, we prefer accurate information about positive traits of ours over negative ones. We're also



more likely to invalidate negative traits that are central to our identity as opposed to those that are more peripheral. When people view us as more positive for a certain trait, we view ourselves as positive on the trait. And when we view others that are positive on a trait, we again self-enhance. As we connect themes, our self-concept is a story that our unconscious mind makes up about ourselves, and it may not be a true story. It's hard to access accurate information about ourselves. Not much comes from introspection and deliberation. Instead, it's a story we use to feel better about ourselves and get along better with group members.²

Self-Knowledge and Inner Change³

In order to start processing the changes we need to see in our lives it's essential that we find ways to increase the amount of self-knowledge we have. If we look inward we can see our inner world of thoughts, feelings and emotions, and as we see them we understand them. Additionally, we are able to recognize what leads us to feel sad, happy and even spiritual. Using this assessment technique we can begin to program our inner transformation. Thus, we can work on what needs to be changed in our actions, our lives, and in the way we relate to others. We are able to unlock our inner secrets and embark on an incredible journey of self-transformation.

But, it is crucial to remove certain concepts that are rooted in ourselves that put us down, such as: "*I will never get better*"; "*I will never get what I want*," or "*I will never be happy*." Whatever we work on improves. Most often, we find what we're looking for. But we need to recognize it when we find it. Those who believe they'll never find it often miss what is right under their noses.

Here is a story to illustrate the point: A man is sitting on the roof of his house as the whole village is flooded, including his house. The water level is still rising. A man comes on a boat and asks him to get in, but he says he's waiting for God to rescue him. A little later, a helicopter circles around and drops a rope and a chair for him to get aboard but the man says he wants only God to rescue him.

"The man drowns, goes to heaven and asks God, "*Where were you when I needed you.*" God answers, "*I sent you a boat and a helicopter. Where were you?*"

If there is a will, you will find the way to get there, or as close to it as possible. If there is a will to change, you can most certainly change. If you lack the will to change, nobody can show you how. Remember, it is easier to change ourselves than someone else, but we must be willing to change.

Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power.
Tao Te Ching

An unquestioned life is a life that doesn't deserve to be lived.
Plato

²<http://likealake.blogspot.com/2009/02/selfenhancement.htmlspot.com/2009/02/self-enhancement.html>

³ <http://www.wendag.com/forum/showthread.php/333-Self-Knowledge-and-Inner-Change>



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the text below
2. Highlight the statements that have touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

Noble sentiments are not fully expressed in today's world, as people fear misinterpretation or misjudgment, given prevailing societal values. A noble sentiment might be perceived as weakness instead of strength. or looked upon with smiling condescension; it could even be misinterpreted as a mental or personality disorder.

It is imperative to have the courage to break away from dominant societal values that promote malice, pessimism and aggressiveness among fellow human beings. We must adhere to and follow the brotherly and uplifting teachings of Jesus.

The revitalization of Christianity in our time is basically a task of re-education geared towards the eradication of old misguided behaviors. It is like shaking off the accumulated dust, which is emblematic of erroneous learned behaviors in order for the light of Christianity to shine through once again.

Many testimonials will be necessary in order to attest to the excellence and superiority of Christian concepts. It is best exemplified by the optimistic and cheerful behavior displayed by those who engage in this new endeavor of revitalization.

It is well understood that the same demands were made of early Christians. They were constantly humiliated and persecuted for their beliefs, yet, blessed with composure and equanimity under the most difficult of circumstances, they maintained their faith. A faith that helped them set an example even for people who were antagonistic to their beliefs.

Everyone who is aware of the immortality of the soul and the elevated purposes of the reincarnation process must act with vitality and certainty. This must be done lest the forces of stagnation divert us from fulfilling our goal and cause us to miss the moment we might refer to as the time of arrival. Missing this opportunity is akin to missing our front seat in the eternal ride called progress.

(From the book *Spiritist Insights* - by the spirit Vianna de Carvalho through the medium Divaldo Pereira Franco - Translated by Jussara Korngold & Marie Levinson)



Lesson 2

Humility and Pride

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: *Humility X Pride* or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes)
(This lesson should be developed in two sessions)
3. Quiz: Divide the class into groups and ask them to answer the questions. (10 minutes)
4. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
5. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To analyze the importance of being humble, having as basis the first Beatitude taught by Jesus at the Sermon of the Mount, and to correlate this teaching with one of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: Humility.

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew, Chapter 5: 3)

Many were confused about whom Jesus had in mind when he referred to the "poor in spirit". He did not mean to imply that they were unintelligent; rather, he meant that in order to enter Spiritual Life on good terms, a person must cultivate simplicity of heart and humility of spirit. He also wanted to make it very clear that, as long as a person has just two special qualities: simplicity and humility, that person, even an ignorant one, has a better chance to do well and prosper in the Spirit World than a knowledgeable individual who thinks him or herself cleverer than God. Jesus thinks of humility as a virtue that brings people closer to God and pride as a vice that distances them further and further from Him, for humility leads to submission to God whereas pride fuels rebellion against Him.

This teaching of Jesus is the consequence of the principle of humility, which he unceasingly presents as the essential condition for happiness. The same fundamental thought is found in the maxims, "**Let the one who wants to become the greatest be your servant,**" and, "*whoever humbles himself will be exalted and whoever exalts himself will be humbled.*"

If Jesus promises that the poor and lowly will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, it is because wealth and power too often fuel pride, whereas an obscure and laborious life is far more likely to be conducive to moral progress. In the fulfillment of daily tasks within such a life, a worker is less frequently beset by temptation and unwholesome desires because there are frequent opportunities to meditate and to develop one's conscience. The worldly individual, on the contrary, is absorbed by the frivolous pursuits of pleasure and/or speculation.

Generally speaking in our world, knowledgeable men and women consider themselves so erudite that believing in God, or anything spiritual for that matter, is beneath them. In fact, some go as far as to believe themselves so all knowing that they can deny the existence of God, asserting that anything in this world can be explained by their sciences, without recourse to God.

Because they cannot accept that things can happen beyond their vision or scope of action, they cannot



accept the existence of invisible worlds. And they're so convinced of their own wisdom that it is quite beyond them to conceive of rewards reserved exclusively for those who are "poor in spirit" and, unlike themselves, humble.

Pride is also the originator of our sufferings in the life beyond the grave, for its consequences reach beyond death. Spiritism shows us that those who occupied highly important positions in earthly life often find themselves in sharply reduced circumstances in the spirit world. On the other hand, many who did not have important positions on earth, but spent their time cultivating spiritual virtues, find themselves, upon entering the spirit world, occupying very elevated and comfortable positions. By the same token, Spiritism demonstrates the fact that some people, who were dominated by pride and ambition when they held influential positions in a particular earthly life, end up having to live in humbling circumstances during a future incarnation. A little thought and wisdom can preserve us from these tribulations.

All people, from the highest to the lowliest, are made of the same clay. Whether attired in silk or rags, their bodies are animated by the same kind of spirit and all meet in the future world. Then and only then, and by their moral value alone, will they be distinguished. The greatest here below may become a beggar in space, and conversely, the beggar may wear a dazzling robe. Let us despise no one, and let us not be vain - for no one knows what tomorrow may bring.

2. HUMILITY - Imitate Jesus and Socrates

Conscious that his character needed improvement, Benjamin Franklin set about the task of writing a list of virtues. He contrived a written plan, and in this plan he identified the virtues he thought important. His advice to achieve humility is so simple, yet so profound: Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Benjamin Franklin's original list of virtues was actually comprised of only twelve virtues instead of thirteen. Here he explains: *"My list of virtues contained at first but twelve; but a Quaker friend having kindly informed me that I was generally thought proud; that my pride showed itself frequently in conversation; that I was not content with being in the right when discussing any point, but was overbearing, and rather insolent, of which he convinced me by mentioning several instances; I determined endeavoring to cure myself, if I could, of this vice or folly among the rest, and I added Humility to my list, giving an extensive meaning to the word.*

"When another asserted something that I thought an error, I denied myself the pleasure of contradicting him abruptly, and of showing immediately some absurdity in his proposition; and in answering I began by observing that in certain cases or circumstances his opinion would be right, but in the present case there appeared or seemed to me some difference, etc. I soon found the advantage of this change in my manner; the conversations I engaged in went on more pleasantly. The modest way in which I proposed my opinions procured them a readier reception and less contradiction; I had less mortification when I was found to be in the wrong, and I more easily prevailed with others to give up their mistakes and join with me when I happened to be in the right.

*"In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for, even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility."*¹

¹ The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin by Benjamin Franklin. [Thus far written at Passy, 1784.]



3. Pride

If anyone has a right to be proud, it must be God. After all, He created the world without any help from you or me. He Himself is uncreated, eternal, and utterly faultless. He Himself dwells in unapproachable light, He is mighty, glorious, perfect in beauty and splendor, omniscient - no one and nothing can compare to Him. He is the only One qualified to be proud. And yet, He is humble.

Pride is the greatest plague of humanity. Pride is the motivation that lives in the belief that Self must come before all else and everyone else. Pride is what leads to hatred, to envy, to lust, to murder and all other things that place the importance of Self ahead of all else. Pride seeks to take what it desires from others, whom it considers less than itself, in order to satisfy self.

Pride has several faces. It can be seen in selfishness, with attitudes like, "how will this affect me?" It is visible in disobedience, as a power struggle against authority no matter if it be a parent, teacher, boss, or ultimately God. A proud person hates the fact that someone is above him. He thinks this lowers his position.

The proud are offended easily, hold grudges, and are unwilling to forgive. They become defensive and do not receive correction well; they begin to rationalize their frailties and failures. They are intractable, and stubborn. They won't change their minds to accept truths, because to do so implies they have been wrong. The proud refuse to learn humility and instead live their lives based on themselves as a priority, whereas anyone else's life is beneath theirs, and is secondary to their own wants and desires.

The mind of a proud individual seeks to construct everything in his internal world to provide continual adoration and praise to the self, to the ego. All a person's accomplishments and achievements are marshaled before his own internal gaze, and he views them with self-satisfaction. If others seem to excel more, the proud individual can find a way to belittle that person or find fault. Pride has many symptoms and features. The difficult thing about it is that it is so hard to see in oneself! Often the people who hate pride the most in others are those who are the proudest themselves.

Not only does pride undermine the possibility of receiving affection from our neighbors, but also it renders improvement impossible, by misleading us as to our value and blinding us as to our defects. It is only by a rigorous examination of our thoughts and actions that we can hope to reform. How can the proud individual submit to such an analysis? Of all people the prideful person is the last to know himself. Amazed with his personality, nothing can open his eyes since this person is careful to avoid those who might enlighten him.

Pride obscures all truth from us. In order for the study of the universe and its laws to be fruitful, simplicity, sincerity and straightforwardness of heart and mind are necessary above all - none of these qualities are familiar to the proud person. The thought that so much transcends him is intolerable, and his pride promptly discards it. Such a vain individual suffers under the delusion that his opinion encompasses the limits of the possible, and the very idea that his knowledge and understanding can even have limitations is difficult for him or her to imagine.

Ironically, by refusing to accept the fact that there is an intelligence and scope of action vastly larger than their own - God's universal intelligence - they sabotage the process of their own intellectual



progress as well as the expansion of the knowledge they so highly prize.

The one who is simple and humble of heart attains to truth, in spite of one's possible mental inferiority, more quickly than the presumptuous individual who is vain about one's earthly knowledge and rebels against the law that lessens one's importance.

All humans are equal on the divine scales and only their virtues distinguish them from one another in God's eyes. All spirits are of one and the same essence and all bodies are made of the same substance. Charity and humility are the only titles of nobility that matter in the Spirit Life.

Pride is a vain attempt to meet a deep emotional need that we have for significance, but if we can realize that we are already immensely significant to God, who weighs our actions and their consequences very carefully, we can be freed from pride.

4. How can we overcome pride and become humble?

The answer is quite simple. We can practice humility. Humility in action combats pride. Pride is our nature and humility is something we must learn. Humility is not a trait that comes naturally. Therefore, humility must be conscious choices that we integrate into our daily attempts to improve the way we live our lives. Every encounter we face can bring an element of pride with it, and a chance to practice humility. We can choose to be forgiving, to receive counsel and render service to others, and to esteem others as much as ourselves. We can become builders, lifting others as high as, or higher than, we are. We can start anew each time the need arises.

"No one ever choked to death swallowing his pride."
Anonymous

The list below was excerpted from the website www.wikihow.com,² and offers us great insights on how to be humble.

1. **Appreciate your talents.** Being humble doesn't mean you can't feel good about yourself. Self-esteem is not the same as pride. Both come from recognition of your own talents and qualities. Pride, however, the kind of pride that leans toward arrogance, is rooted in insecurity about yourself. Think about the abilities you have, and be thankful for them.
2. **Conduct an honest evaluation of yourself.** Honesty with yourself is the best policy. If you know you are weak in a certain area, your enemies will not be able to have that power over you.
3. **Understand your limitations.** No matter how talented you are, there is almost always somebody who can do something better than you. Even if you are the best in the world at doing one thing, there are other important worthwhile things that you cannot do, and you may never be able to do some of these things. Recognizing doesn't mean giving up on learning new things, or improving your existing abilities. It does mean coming to terms with the very real limits of your abilities.
4. **Recognize your own faults.** We judge others because it's a lot easier than looking at our own faults. Unfortunately, it's also completely unproductive and, in many cases, harmful. We make judgments about others all the time, and we often don't even realize it. As a practical exercise, try to catch yourself in the act of judging another person or group of

² Originated by: Waited, Sondra C, Eric Wester, Anonymous



people, and whenever you do, judge yourself instead and consider how you could improve yourself.

5. **Stop comparing.** Why? Because, it's just about impossible to be humble when we're striving to be the "best" or trying to be "better" than others. Let go of meaningless, simplistic comparisons, and you'll be able to enjoy doing things without worrying about whether you're better or worse at them than others.
6. **Appreciate the talents and qualities of others.** Challenge yourself to look at others and appreciate the things they can do and, more generally, to appreciate people for who they are. You will still have your personal tastes, your likes and dislikes, but train yourself to separate your opinions from your fears and you will appreciate others more--you will be humbler.
7. **Don't be afraid to make mistakes.** Never be afraid to admit that you made a mistake. Part of being humble is to understand that you will make mistakes. Understand this, and understand that everyone else makes mistakes, and you will have a heavy burden lifted off of you. Why do we make mistakes? Because we don't know everything.
8. **Don't be afraid to defer to others' judgment.** It's easy to acknowledge that you make mistakes and that you're not always right. Somewhat more difficult however, is the ability to acknowledge that in many cases other people--even people who disagree with you--may be right. Deferring to your spouse's wishes, to a law you don't agree with, or even, sometimes, to your child's opinion raises your recognition of your limitations to a different level.
9. **Seek guidance.** Contemplate moral texts and proverbs about humility. Pray for it, meditate on it, do whatever it takes to get your attention off yourself. If you're not into spirituality, consider the scientific method. Science requires humility. It requires that you let go of your preconceived notions and judgments and understand that you don't know as much as you think you do.
10. **Think about yourself under different circumstances.** Much of what we give ourselves credit for is actually a product of destiny. We reap what we sow in this life or the lives to come.
11. **Help others.** A big part of being humble is respecting others, and part of respecting others is helping them. Treat other people as equals and help them because it is the right thing to do. It's been said that when you can help others who cannot possibly help you in return, you have learned humility.
12. **Remain teachable.** Find people you aspire to be like in certain areas, and ask them to mentor you. An unteachable spirit is a proud spirit, which is the opposite of humility.
13. **Practice gentleness.** Gentleness of spirit is the sure path to humility. Whenever possible when faced with conflict, absorb the venom from others attacks and react with gentleness and respect.

Keep in mind that being humble has many benefits. Humility can help you be more content with your life, and it can also help you endure bad times and improve your relationships with others. It's also essential to being an effective learner. If you think you know it all, you won't be open-minded enough to seek out new knowledge. Humility is also, somewhat counter-intuitively, an excellent tool for self-development in general. After all, if you feel superior, you have no incentive to improve.



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the texts below
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

On the proximity of the Sea of Galilee, a group of men marched unattended. They were thieves trying to gain advantage of the pilgrimages of the way. They heard a prophet was preaching in that area and that seemed to be a wonderful opportunity to make some profit.

They followed the multitude and waited for the best occasion for unburdening those believers of their possessions.

Their hearts were hardened; life had been difficult for them. Many were abandoned at an early age and had to learn to fend for themselves, while others faced overwhelming challenges. They were so completely despised by their fellow beings that there was no place in their hearts for pity. They believed they had no choice but to ruthlessly take the most they could from life.

They waited until the people had calmed down, sitting peacefully as they waited for the prophet to speak. Then a voice, strong, yet tender, was saying: *...Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the Earth... Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

As the man continued they felt paralyzed; some of them wanted to move and to escape from the torpor that invaded them, piercing their souls. Those captivating words, spoken with so much love and compassion, froze them in their place, while the people all around them, bathed in tears and completely in awe, tried to absorb the meaning of the words the prophet was saying. They felt an uncontrollable desire to cry, and tears were rolling down their faces.

Who was that man? It seemed that he was looking straight at each one of them. They could see his eyes meeting theirs. They could hear his voice dominating their being, and they felt caressed, protected and loved like never before.

My friends, we are far from understanding the power and love of Jesus. We are far from feeling the same expression of love that came from Jesus' heart, but we can still help our brothers and sisters, as Jesus did.

Remember that the criminals and wrongdoers of this Earth lack love and affection. Do not refrain from praying for them and for all who are forgotten or hated by the world, because the Master, Jesus Christ, is always with us, providing his strength and his love whenever we assist our destitute siblings.

Do not tire of loving and giving your affection and you will be surprised at the transformation your giving will bring about within all those who were able to receive your kind words and prayers.

May the love of God be with you, and may the compassion of Jesus be your perennial source of inspiration.

Sister Catherine,

Automatic writing received by Jussara Korngold during
SGNY's mediumship meeting - New York - Dec/15/2008



Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet - The Greatest Lesson on Humility

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.[a]

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God. He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "*Lord, are you going to wash my feet?*"

Jesus replied, "*You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.*"

"No," said Peter, "*you shall never wash my feet.*" Jesus answered, "*Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.*"

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "*not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!*"

Jesus answered, "*A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.*" For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "*Do you understand what I have done for you?*" he asked them. "*You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*" (BibleGateway.com)

"Humility without subservience.
Dignity without pride.
Devotion without attachment.
Joy without excess.
Freedom without promiscuity.
Confidence without cockiness.
Faith without exclusiveness.
Reasoning without harshness.
Sentiment without sentimentality.
Charity without presumption.
Cooperation without demand.
Respect without being a yes-man.
Value without ostentation.
Courage without temerity.
Justice without intransigence.
Admiration without envy.
Optimism without illusion.
Peace without laziness. "

(Andre Luiz, book '*Spiritist Path*')
Translated by Alexandre Marques



Quiz

Please choose the correct answer:

1. What does “poor in spirit” mean?
 - a. In order to enter spiritual life on good terms, a person must be poor.
 - b. In order to enter spiritual life on good terms, a person must cultivate simplicity of heart and humility of spirit.
 - c. All of the above

2. Why did Benjamin Franklin write a list of thirteen virtues?
 - a. Because he was conscious that his character needed improvement.
 - b. Because he was conscious that his friends’ characters needed improvement.
 - c. All of the above

3. Why is pride considered to be the greatest plague of humanity?
 - a. Pride is what leads to hatred, to envy, to lust, to murder and all other things that place the importance of self ahead of all else.
 - b. The proud are offended easily. They hold grudges and are unwilling to forgive.
 - c. All of the above

4. How can we overcome pride and become humble?
 - a. Conduct an honest evaluation of yourself.
 - b. Stop comparing.
 - c. All of the above

ANSWERS

(1) b; (2) a; (3) c; (4) c



Lesson 3

Acceptance in Adversity - TRANQUILITY

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: Acceptance in Adversity - TRANQUILITY or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes) (This lesson can be developed in two sessions)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To analyze the importance of accepting losses that are dear to us, having as basis for this analysis the second beatitude taught by Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount, *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*, and to correlate this teaching with one of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: Tranquility.

1. Acceptance

Acceptance usually refers to cases where a person experiences a situation or condition (often a negative or uncomfortable situation) without attempting to change it, protest against it, or escape from it. The term is used in spirituality, in Eastern religious concepts such as Buddhist mindfulness, and in human psychology. Religions and psychological treatments often suggest the path of acceptance when a situation is both disliked and unchangeable, or when change may be possible only at great cost or risk.

Notions of acceptance are prominent in many faiths and meditation practices. For example, Buddhism's first noble truth, "All life is suffering", invites people to accept that suffering is a natural part of life. The term "Kabbalah" means, literally, acceptance. In addition, acceptance is the fifth stage of the Kübler-Ross model (commonly known as the "Stages of Dying").⁵

Many believe that acceptance means giving up, or being passive. That is not what true acceptance is. Acceptance is letting go of the belief that the struggle mentality around or against something is necessary. When we struggle against something, we are exerting a lot of effort that can be used better someplace else. We are so busy fighting and pushing away that we are unable to see the problem for what it is and find a solution. When we push something away we deny its existence and cannot find a solution for it.

Judo teaches how to work with the "energies" of push and pull. It teaches that when someone pulls us towards them, we should move in their direction instead of resisting or trying to pull away; we should use the momentum they have provided in order to deny them power over us. Acceptance, likewise, involves going with the flow, using the energy present in a situation, regardless of how adverse it may seem, as a partner in our healing process.⁶

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acceptance>

⁶ Linda White



We can also learn acceptance from the story of the oak and the reeds: A very large oak tree was uprooted by the wind and thrown across a stream. It fell among some reeds, which it thus addressed: "I wonder how you, who are so light and weak, are not entirely crushed by these strong winds." They replied, "You fight and contend with the wind, and consequently you are destroyed; while we, on the contrary, bend before the least breath of air, and therefore remain unbroken, and escape."

When we experience storms, we can either respond as the oak tree, fighting and contending and begging God to remove it from our life, or we can bend and sway as the reeds do. We can allow God to carry us through the wind, unbroken and ultimately stronger in the end.

2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Matthew, Chapter 5: 3)

These words could also be translated like this: You should consider yourselves fortunate to suffer, because your pains in this world are the debt of your past wrongs. And these pains, if borne patiently while you are on Earth, will save you from centuries of suffering in the future life. Hence, you should be happy because God has reduced your debt by permitting you to repay it now, which will guarantee you tranquility for the future. (GAS - Chapter 5, Item 12)

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." Martin Luther King, Jr.

3. Acceptance in Adversity

In the early days of our planet, suffering was man's sole stimulus and the "school of hard knocks" was man's only school. Now, our times are less harsh than those of the past. Human beings have subdued the elements, lessened distances and conquered the Earth. Everything evolves and progresses. Slowly but surely, the world, even nature itself, is improving, and we can be sure that suffering will one day no longer be part of our planet. We are marching towards progress; spiritual progress and the consequent progress of our planet. The spirits tell us that Earth is passing through a period of transformation, from a world of tests and atonements to a world of regeneration, where goodness is going to prevail.

However, suffering is still part of our world. In all conditions, at all times, in all climates, humans have gone through ordeals. The rich person, as well as the poor, suffers both in flesh and spirit. And in spite of social progress, millions of human beings are still bent under the weight of suffering.

Even when we understand that we can only grasp some fleeting shreds of happiness on this Earth, those that aspire to a purer life and a better world, have some intuition whispering to them that this world is not the end of all things. For those imbued with the philosophy of the spirits this intuition becomes a certainty. They know where they will go; they comprehend the reason for their afflictions and the cause of their suffering. Beyond the shadows and sorrows of the Earth, they perceive the dawn of another life.

One cannot clearly judge something unless one can foresee its every ultimate consequence; no one can comprehend life if neither its object nor its laws are understood. Therefore, in order to weigh the blessings and the ills of this life, in order to ascertain what true happiness is and what unhappiness is, one must rise above the narrow circle of terrestrial existences. The knowledge of the future life, and of the destiny that awaits us, enables us to measure the consequences of our acts and their influence upon our future.



With this perspective, the individual no longer sees suffering in the loss of friends, in privation, or in distress; On the contrary, he or she sees suffering in all that degrades or lowers, and hinders progress. To those who merely consider the present moment, unhappiness may, indeed, consist of poverty, infirmity, and sickness. To the transcendent spirit who can impartially view passing events from a lofty standpoint, unhappiness arises from a love of amusement, from pride and from all other concomitants of a useless and possible guilty life.

When Job's world was falling apart all around him, his "friends" all thought he must have done something wrong. Even his wife told him to give up, saying, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not accept adversity?" (Job 2:9-10)

Adversity is the great school, the laboratory of golden transmutation. Through its teachings, evil tendencies are gradually changed into generous deeds and pure intentions. Our ignorance of the universal laws is alone responsible for the lack of acceptance we manifest towards adversity. If we could only know how necessary adversity is to our own advancement, if we could learn to love its very bitterness - then we would cease to consider it a burden in our existence. Nevertheless we all dread pain, the necessity for which only becomes evident when we have left the world, its domain. Notwithstanding, it fulfills an inestimable function, bringing the seeds of love, pity and tenderness to light, which might have lain forever dormant within us. In our blindness, we dare to complain that our life is obscure, monotonous or sad. But if we lift our eyes above the Earth's low-lying horizons we would distinguish this life's real motives. We would discover that such existences are precious and indispensable to help us with our spiritual ascension.

Homer wrote, "*Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant.*" Problems unlock our creativity. There's a story about a chicken farmer whose land kept flooding and killing his chickens. In despair he told his wife, "*I've had it; I can't afford to buy another place and I can't sell this one. What can I do?*" Calmly she replied, "*Buy ducks!*"

The adversities we face in life are not only the result of our past misdemeanors; they also represent challenges that can help us raise ourselves from one level to the next. The difficulties we have to overcome stimulate and develop our intelligence. However, when our efforts are in vain, when we are, at last, brought face to face with the inevitable, then is the time that we must summon acceptance to our side. There is no power that can avert the consequences of our past. To rebel against moral laws would be as senseless as to oppose the law of attraction or gravitation.

The unwise individual might struggle against the immutable laws of nature, whereas the judicious one discovers in one's trials a means of self-improvement and of strengthening one's faculties. An intrepid spirit accepts the evils of fate, but by one's intellect one rises superior to them, and makes them a stepping-stone to virtue.

In 1832, French engineer Ferdinand Marie de Lesseps was traveling on the Mediterranean Sea. One of the passengers on the ship came down with a contagious disease and the ship was quarantined. Lesseps became very frustrated. To help kill time he read the memoirs of Jacques-Marie Le Père who had considered the feasibility of building a canal from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. In 1869 the Suez Canal was completed. It was built following Lesseps' design and under his leadership. It was during that quarantine thirty-seven years earlier that the plan for the Suez Canal germinated and was conceived by Ferdinand Marie de Lesseps. The entire world has reaped the benefits ever since.

The deepest and most harrowing affliction, when accepted with the humility and tranquility to which



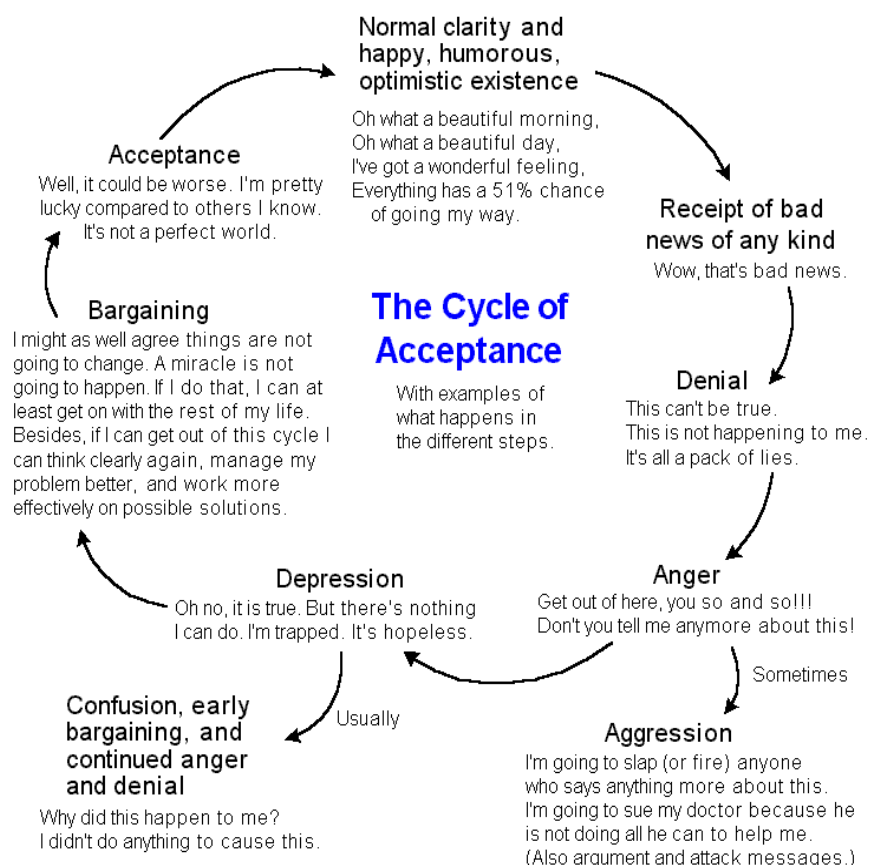
both heart and reason consent, usually indicates the end of our evils, the repayment of the last fraction of our debt. This is the decisive moment when it behooves us not to abate our firmness, but to summon all our resolution and moral energy, so that we may emerge victorious from our trial and reap the benefits of our victory.

The wise advice of Benjamin Franklin, as a way of attaining inner transformation, can be a very important tool in our lives when we face adversities. We should remain tranquil and not be disturbed by occurrences that are common or unavoidable.

The Cycle of Acceptance⁷:

This model gives examples of what happens in different steps. The cycle applies to individuals or organizations. Most of the examples are for an individual. The cycle begins with receipt of bad news.

1. Normal Existence
Capable of objective, valid reasoning, unclouded by doubt and undue emotion.
2. Receipt of Bad News
Wow, that's bad news.
3. Denial
This can't be true. This is not happening to me.
4. Anger
Get out of here! This is crazy! I can't stand news like this!
5. Depression
Oh no, it is true. There is nothing I can do. It's hopeless.
6. Bargaining
I might as well accept that things are not going to change. If I can do that at least I can go on with the rest of my life. Besides, if I can get out of this wallowing in misery and avoidance I can think clearly again, manage the problem better, and work more effectively on possible solutions.
7. Acceptance
Well, it could be worse. I'll just have to make the best of it. And hmmm, this is starting to look like a blessing in disguise. I'm glad this happened.



In the 4th step, anger, we sometimes see aggression as well: I'm going to slap anyone who says anything more about this. I'm going to sue my doctor because he is not doing all he can do to help me. (and various other forms of attacks, such as shooting the messenger.) In the 5th step, depression, we usually see confusion, early bargaining, and continued anger and denial: Why did this happen to me? I

⁷ <http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/CycleOfAcceptance.htm>



didn't do anything to cause this. What am I going to do?

Many times we wonder what is going to happen to us, and quite often we feel impotent and uneasy when thinking about events that will next occur in our lives. The fact is that we are always the true artisans of our destinies, and whatever we sow today is what we reap in the future.

Some may say that they do not remember what happened in the past and therefore cannot assess the true facts, or understand the consequences they face at this time. . Our reply is that God has deemed it unnecessary for us to recall our past in order to progress. This knowledge is irrelevant for our progress and work towards spiritual betterment. The important thing is that today we already understand the mechanisms of life's cycles, and we are able to realize that whatever is in our way follows determinations we acquired for ourselves before the present incarnation.

Therefore we should accept the many challenges and adversities that still come our way, as a result of past errors and in preparation for the new era of peace and spiritual growth that will abound in our planet. Let us then place our faith in the power that directs the universe. Our limited intellect could hardly comprehend the totality of its intentions. God alone has an exact notion of that rhythmic cadence, that necessary alternation of life and death, of night and day, of joy and sorrow, from which the happiness and the elevation of His creatures are finally evolved. With love and faith in our hearts we are on the way to success and to finally put behind us the sequence of regrettable actions that had been obstacles before. We will then blossom like a renewed flower reaching for the tender rays of the sunrise that illuminates our new disposition and our growth toward a new path of luminous deeds.

*"You have to accept whatever comes and the only important thing is that you meet it with courage and with the best that you have to give."
Eleanor Roosevelt*

Self-Acceptance

Finally, it is important to mention another important side of acceptance: self-acceptance. Self-acceptance is being loving and happy with who you are NOW. It's an agreement with yourself to appreciate, validate, accept and support who you are and what you have at this moment.

Self-acceptance leads to a new life with new possibilities that did not exist before because you were caught up in the struggle against reality. People have trouble accepting themselves because of a lack of motivation. Some have this misconception that if you are happy with yourself you won't change things about yourself. This isn't true, you don't have to be unhappy with yourself to know and actively change things you don't like. Acceptance could be called the first step on the path of in change.

Allowing yourself to be loved (by loving yourself), is the most important part of acceptance, and what makes it a extremely powerful healing tool. Love is the energy that underlies all of life. Love heals. When you love what is, you find the healing it contains. You do not have to go searching for answers or techniques. The pain and anguish of denial and struggle go away.

Remember, the most powerful and wonderful healing tools are often the ones that manifest around you in everyday life. This is because they work! Sometimes it is easy to miss them because they are not flashy or popular, or because they are misunderstood. Healing does not have to be a struggle.

"We must have strong minds ready to accept facts as they are;"



rather than how we would like them to be."
Harry S. Truman



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the texts below
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

Humans can either soften or increase the bitterness of their trials according to the manner in which they view earthly life. Their suffering is greater if they consider its duration to be long. Consequently, those who look at things from the standpoint of the spirit life understand corporeal existence at a glance. They see it as a dot in the infinite; they grasp its brevity, and they tell themselves that this painful moment will soon be over. The certainty of a happier future that is not far off sustains and encourages them, and instead of complaining, they thank heaven for the pains that enable them to evolve. On the other hand, for those who see only corporeal life, pain seems unending to them and it presses on them with all its weight. The result of the former way of looking at life is that it decreases the importance of the things of this world, leading humans to moderate their desires and to be content with their station in life without envying others', thereby attenuating the mental effect of the setbacks and disappointments they experience. Thus, they derive from it a calmness and resignation as useful to the health of the body as to that of the soul, whereas with jealousy, envy and ambition they willfully give in to torment and thus increase the misery and anguish of their short existence. (GAS - Chap 5, item 13)

It is necessary to have a firm belief in the kindness of God as the basis for deep faith. You have heard it said many times that God does not put a heavy burden on weak shoulders. The burden is always in proportion to the strength, just as the recompense depends on the degree of resignation and courage. The reward will be greater than the affliction is painful. However, one must merit that reward, and that is why life is full of tribulations.

The soldier who is not sent to the front is discontented because the repose of the barracks does not bring him a promotion. So then, be like a soldier and do not desire a repose in which your body would weaken and your soul would become numb. Be content when God sends you to battle. This battle is not one of gunfire but of the bitterness of life, where sometimes more courage is needed than in bloody combat, since those who remain firm before the enemy might weaken under the duress of mental pain.

Humans are not rewarded for this kind of courage, but God reserves victory laurels and a glorious place for them. When a reason for trouble or vexation touches you, try to lift yourselves above it, and when you have managed to control the impulses of impatience, anger and despair, say to yourselves with just satisfaction, 'I was the stronger'.

"Blessed are the afflicted" may be translated thusly: blessed are those who have the opportunity to test their faith, firmness, and submission to God's will, for they will receive a hundred times the joy they lacked on earth, for after labor will come repose. LACORDIARE (Havre. 1863) (GAS - Chap 5, item 18)



MOMENTS OF GLORIOUS TRANSITION

We're now at the cusp of a new period.

These days mark a very special time in the evolution of the planet. It's the time for shifting from a world of trials to a world of regeneration.

The great night that assailed earth is giving way to a dawn of blessings. It's no longer possible to retreat.

Sons and daughters of my soul, you had avowed a commitment to Jesus before you became immersed in the carnal body. It was a commitment to serve him with abnegation and dedication.

You promised to be loyal to him even if you had to sacrifice.

Let's exult together as the horizons of this dawn expand and move toward the plenitude of the day for both you and the discarnate spirits who walk through a world of shadows. But beyond the rejoicing that resonates in all of us, let's keep in mind the grave responsibilities that are the motives for our existence both in the body and out of it.

We must relive the unforgettable days of the era of martyrdom. We'll be invited, not just for the applause, enthusiasm, and rejoicing, but also for our witnessing. It's a silent testimony from the inner panorama of our souls. It's the testimony of love for those who don't love us. It is also the testimony of abnegation as we endeavor to help people who persist in attempting to create difficulties as they try, in vain, to create obstacles for the purpose of slowing the march of progress.

As the great transition starts, we arrive at the summit, with the exact understanding that physical, geological, and moral changes are unavoidable. Let's be those Spiritist spirits who show the magnificence of Jesus' love in our lives.

Let others argue, complain and rage. Let's keep the commitment to love and always love deeply in our souls, bringing Jesus back with all the strength of those bygone days which are so very close at hand.

Oh beloved daughters and sons, Jesus waits for us!

May our love be our shields, our tools love, and our lives a hymn of love.

They're the wishes, from the Spiritist spirits present here, who suggested we represent them in front of you.

With much affection; the most humble and paternal servant, of always.

Bezerra

Much peace, daughters and sons of my heart!

(Channeled message received by the medium Divaldo Pereira Franco at the closing of the centennial celebration of Chico Xavier's birth which took place at the Ulysses Guimarães Convention Center in Brasília, on 04/18/2010.) (Translated by Elza D'Agosto)



Lesson 4

Meekness and Patience X Anger - SILENCE

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: Meekness and Patience X Anger- SILENCE or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes) (This lesson can be developed in two sessions)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To analyze the importance of meekness, according to The Beatitudes taught by Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount, *Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth*, and to correlate this teaching with one of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: Silence.

1. Definition of Meekness¹

A modern English dictionary or thesaurus makes it clear why meekness is associated with weakness. Notice its synonyms as listed in the Reader's Digest - Oxford Complete Word finder: tame, timid, mild, bland, retiring, weak, docile, acquiescent, repressed, suppressed, spiritless, and broken. And we are not alone in our misperception of the word meekness. The ancient Greeks did not rank it as a virtue either, except in a very narrow circumstance. At best, they used it as we use "condescension" today and confined its use entirely to describing people's external relations with other people. Jesus, while retaining its reference to human beings, lifted it from its narrow context and made use of the word to refer primarily to our relations with God.

Some have tried to use "humility" as the equivalent of meekness, but both Hebrew and Greek have specific words that are synonyms for humility. Besides, humility does not fully reflect the meaning of meekness even though the association of humility and meekness is natural, and is yet another facet of meekness. Whereas humility deals with a correct assessment of one's merits, meekness includes a correct assessment of personal rights. Another word associated with meekness is "gentleness," but, like humility, it, too, does not embrace the full meaning of meekness. Both partially embrace the meaning of meekness, but fall short of its fullness. The characteristics and usage of meekness are much more involved than either word.

1. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

When Jesus introduces this maxim, he combines gentleness, moderation, docility, affability and patience as attributes of the law. Consequently, he condemns violence, anger and even any discourteous expression regarding another person. (GAS - Chapter 9, Item 4)

Jesus was not the first to state the importance of meekness, but he was the first to collect, in what

¹ John W. Ritenbaugh - November 1998-<http://cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/PERSONAL/k/237/The-Fruit-of-Spirit-Meekness.htm#ixzz0oK4deAAV>



we call *The Beatitudes*, an organized list of the characteristics of the perfect human being. Meekness is so important that it is the third characteristic he mentions in his foundational teaching, the *Sermon on the Mount*. One commentator, Emmet Fox, author of an entire book about the *Sermon on the Mount*, states that this Beatitude "is among the half dozen most important verses in the Bible."

We should recognize that, when Jesus presents meekness, in Matthew 5:5, as a highly desirable quality, he prefaces it with "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (verse 3) and "Blessed are those who mourn" (verse 4). He places it within a context that contains qualities, which are similar to meekness. Alexander MacLaren² writes in his comments on verse 5, "[Meekness] is the conduct and disposition towards both God and the individual which follows from the inward experience described in the two former Beatitudes, which related only to ourselves". In other words, meekness is the active fruit of the other two, but whereas being poor in spirit and mourning are both internal in operation, meekness is both internal and external in its execution in one's life. Though this is not a complete description, it does lay a good foundation.³

On the surface, this beatitude seems to have little meaning and appears to contradict the plain facts of everyday life. Obviously, the world's ideal of the perfect individual is very different from that of Jesus. Given the way that modern people look upon those who are meek, Jesus' statement about meekness is almost incomprehensible. The world would instead word it this way, "Blessed are the strong, who can hold their own." The world favors more conspicuous and so-called heroic virtues. Those who are strongly—almost fiercely—competitive, aggressive and assertive are the ones who receive recognition, admiration and reward. Do they not seem to end up on top of the pile, possessing the most and best despite other obvious, and perhaps even offensive, flaws in their character?⁴

In fact, Jesus points out that up till now the things of the Earth have been monopolized by aggressive individuals to the detriment of those who are gentle and peace-loving; that the latter often lack even the barest necessities, while the former live in superfluity, but he promises that justice will be rendered to the gentle and peace-loving, on Earth as in Heaven, for they shall be called children of God.

What we need to understand at this point is why Jesus says that those who are meek will inherit the Earth when he also says that one should renounce the things of this world. The answer is quite simple; it is on Earth that we have the opportunity of growing, spiritually speaking, and advancing towards God. And while waiting for the things of Heaven, humans need the things of the earth in order to live. We could achieve this state more easily if we didn't have to struggle with adversity and contradictory emotions on a daily basis. Upon working for our inner transformation, we will see, little by little, a general transformation of our planet's moral standards, and everyone will benefit from it. When *the law of love and charity is finally the law of humankind, there will be no more selfishness and the gentle and peace-loving will no longer be exploited or crushed by the strong and aggressive. Such will be the state of the Earth, when, according to the law of progress and the promise of Jesus, it becomes a blessed world through the expulsion of evil individuals.* (GAS - Chapter 9, Item 5)

2. Meekness, Patience and Silence X Anger

² (Expositions of Holy Scriptures, vol. 6, "St. Matthew," p. 130)

³ John W. Ritenbaugh - November 1998-<http://cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/PERSONAL/k/237/The-Fruit-of-Spirit-Meekness.htm#ixzz0oK4deAAV>

⁴ John W. Ritenbaugh - November 1998-<http://cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/PERSONAL/k/237/The-Fruit-of-Spirit-Meekness.htm#ixzz0oK4deAAV>



Patience and meekness, as well as silence of thought and speech, derive from charity. Patience is the virtue that enables us to silently submit, not because we are either placid or indifferent, but because we have learned to seek further consolations, beyond the boundaries of the present, that render the tribulations of this life secondary and futile.

We should, at all cost, be constantly on our guard against anger, *which awakens brutal instincts, those legacies of a dark past that civilization and progress are striving to eradicate. When we lose our self-control, crazed by anger, nothing stops us, not even murder. The person who is prone to anger must be very careful, especially regarding one's excessive sense of ego; the individual must refrain from speech or action as long as he feels himself to be under the influence of this sinister passion.*⁵

It is at this point that the wise counsel of Benjamin Franklin comes to our rescue: **Silence - *speak not but what may benefit others or yourself, always avoiding trifling conversation.*** This counsel is important for both parties, i.e. for the one who is momentarily taken by anger and for the one who is the recipient of these manifestations of anger.

A meek person feels the wrong done to him and feels it bitterly. But because the person is not thinking of himself, his meekness does not allow his spirit to vent and to engage in vindictive anger that tries to "get even." Such an individual silences and collects himself in prayer or meditation, seeking ways to help the other to be released from this pitiful state. In this manner, a meek person is able to bear patiently and silently the insults and injuries received at the hands of others, and endures provocation without being angered by it. The person remains cool when others become heated. He knows that God's justice prevails always. He seeks to remain true to his calling and, in so doing, is able to meet God's standards. Good returned for evil disarms the enemy. Hatred is converted into surprise, and surprise into admiration; by awakening the somnolent conscience of the adversary, a deep impression may be produced upon the individual. Thus, we shall perchance, through enlightenment, save a soul from perversity.

Meekness, patience and silence cast a peaceful spell upon people, drawing them to us and inclining them to hearken to our good advice; whereas anger repels and pushes people away. Meekness thus lends us a sort of spiritual authority over the soul that we endeavor to touch and set aright. Let us then make of it the torch, by which we hope to kindle, no matter how feebly, even the most obscure intelligences; a heavy undertaking surely, but to love all things is possible. (Here and Hereafter by Leon Denis, Chap. 48)

*Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.
Abraham Lincoln (1809 - 1865)*

3. When should we be silent?

In the *Gospel According to Spiritism* the Spirits advise us that we should only comment about behaviors of others with the aim of helping them overcome their flaws or when their behavior put others' lives in danger.

There is a very interesting article entitled *Are you sharp-tongued*⁶ that proposes the question: Must

⁵ Based on Chapter 48 of the book *Here and Hereafter* by Leon Denis.

⁶ Read more: <http://www.cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/RA/k/16/Are-You-Sharp-Tongued-Part-Two.htm#ixzz0qquSzHkZ>

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the Truth Hurt?

The article explains that among the more dangerous pitfalls in life concerning the use of the tongue are the excuses we use to justify and continue habitual behaviors. The most common excuses are:

- "Honesty is the best policy," or "I'm only being honest."
- "The truth hurts."
- "Wrong is wrong, and it must be corrected."
- "I've been through a lot, so it comes out when I express myself."
- "It's just my sense of humor. Don't take it seriously."

Unfortunately, each of these excuses is probably painfully familiar. If they are, we must work on examining how we speak to others and what motivates us. Once more, we can benefit by following the steps outlined in the thirteen virtues espoused by Benjamin Franklin, and doing so will help us to understand when our comments are just a bit too much: **Silence - *speak not but what may benefit others or yourself, always avoiding trifling conversation.*** Usually, we spend a great deal of time talking about trifles; thus, we spend unnecessary energy and also connect ourselves to a level of energy that is very low.

"Saying nothing...sometimes says the most." Emily Dickinson

In Matthew 18:15 we read, "If your brother sins⁷ against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." Of course it is possible for us to express ourselves honestly, bluntly or kindly. Jesus is blunt with sin but kind and patient with sinners. What a great example he left us. Once we have decided that some sort of intervening action is necessary, we need to remember to reprimand with kindness, to discuss without heat, and to judge all things with both benevolence and moderation. Our focus should always be on solving the problem, not just talking about it, condemning it, or gossiping about it. Get as few people involved in the matter as possible—in fact, no one else needs to know about it unless it escalates. Concentrate on the matter at hand and do not bring up past grievances. Do not burn any bridges or threaten the other with ultimatums. Remember that we are not trying to lose, but to gain our brother or sister!

However, to deal honestly with a brother or a sister regarding an offense, without telling others, is a great challenge. When irritated or offended, the first thing we want to do is to talk about it! We don't want to be silent; we want to receive encouragement, comfort, understanding, or just get it off our chests. It is critical, though, for us to temper our honesty with gentleness and patience, in order to solve our differences with words that heal, encourage, and enable greater affection to grow.

Another important point to consider is: Can we accept someone being as honest with us as we are with him or her? What a challenge! It is often difficult to embrace the idea that honesty must be reciprocal in order for others to respect it. Jesus instructs us to deal with each other as we would like them to deal with us, and this most certainly applies to how we communicate to resolve conflicts when they arise.

What we think about reveals itself in what we say. A mind fed by godly wisdom will be better able to follow this advice and control the most wild of all members, the tongue. As we grow in that great

⁷The Greek word for "sins" is hamartano, which can also be translated as "trespass," "commit a fault," or "offend."



wisdom, our words become fresh and reliable. We lose the sharp edge from our tongues. Our speech is not duplicitous, like grapes growing on a fig tree or bitter waters emerging from a freshwater spring. Once we emerge out of the ruts of human habit in our communication, we truly begin to express what is true, noble, pure, lovely and good. Our words convey virtue and offer praise to God, uplifting those who hear us.

Until then, a good alternative is to keep silent, because as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said:

*In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.
Martin Luther King Jr. (1929 - 1968)*

Aesop⁸ and the Tongue

Once Xanthus, a philosopher, asked Aesop, his slave, to bring him the best meat from the market. Aesop brought him a tongue. When questioned by Xanthus about his choice Aesop replied: "But I would like you to tell me what is better or sweeter than tongue. Because certainly every doctrine and every art and philosophy is established and ordered by tongue. By tongues do men exalt themselves, you will find nothing more salutary that has been given by the immortals to mortals than the tongue."

The next day Xanthus told the servant to bring him the worst piece of meat from the market. Aesop brought a tongue again. "What?" Xanthus said. "When I ask for the best piece of meat, you bring a tongue and then you bring the same thing for the worst piece of meat."

Aesop replied: "Very true are the things you say, but I ask you if you can find anything worse or more stinking than tongue. All men perish by the tongue; by the tongue men come into poverty; by the tongue cities are destroyed. All evil comes from the tongue."

"You are right," Xanthus said. "Let us be masters of our tongue!"

⁸ Aesop was an African slave and story-teller who lived in ancient Greece between 620 and 560 BC. His fables are some of the most well known in the world.



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the text below
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

Patience

Once there was a man who knew nothing about agriculture and came to a farmer to learn about farming. The farmer took him to his field and asked him what he saw. He saw a beautiful piece of land full of grass and pleasing to the eye. Then the visitor stood aghast as the farmer plowed up the grass and turned the beautiful green field into a mass of brown ditches.

"Why did you ruin the field?" asked the man.

"Be patient and you will see," answered the farmer.

Then the farmer showed him a sack full of plump kernels of wheat and asked him what he saw. The visitor described the nutritious inviting grain and then once more watched in shock as the farmer ruined something beautiful. This time he walked up and down the furrows and dropped kernels into the open ground wherever he went, then he covered them up with clods of soil.

"Are you insane," the man asked, "first you destroy the field, then you take this beautiful grain, and you throw it underneath."

The farmer answered, "Be patient and you will see."

Time went by, and once more the farmer took his guest out into field. Now they saw endless straight rows and green stalks sprouting up from all of the furrows.

The visitor smiled broadly and said, "I apologize. Now I understand what you were doing. You made the field more beautiful than ever; the art of farming is truly marvelous."

"No," said the farmer, "we are not done, you must still be patient."

More time went by and the stalks were fully grown, then the farmer came with a sickle and chopped them all down as his visitor watched openmouthed, seeing how the orderly field became an ugly scene of destruction. The farmer bound the fallen stalks into bundles and decorated the field with them. Later he took the bundles to another area, where he beat and crushed them until they became a mass of straw and loose kernels. Then he separated the kernels from the chaff and piled them up in a huge hill. Always he told his protesting visitor, "Be patient we are not done." Then the farmer came with the wagon and piled it high with grain, which he took to the mill. There this beautiful grain was ground into formless choking dust.

The visitor complained again, "You have taken beautiful grain and transformed it into dust." Again he was told to be patient. The farmer put the dust into sacks and took it back home. He took some dust and mixed it with water, while his guest marveled at the foolishness of making whitish mud. Then the farmer fashioned the mud into the shape of a loaf. The visitor saw the perfectly formed loaf and smiled broadly, but his happiness did not last. The farmer lit a fire and put the loaf into the oven. "Now I know you're insane, after all that work you burn what you make." The farmer looked at him and laughed, "Have I not told you to be patient?" Finally the farmer opened the oven took out the freshly baked bread crisp and brown, with an aroma that made the visitors mouth water. "Come," the farmer said. He led his guest to the kitchen table where he cut the bread, and he offered his now-pleased visitor a liberally buttered slice. "Now," the farmer said, "Now you understand."



There is no way I can resist
This voice, this call
That resonates and persists
Reaching us all.

A voice sweet and tender
That impregnates my entire being
Unavoidably I surrender
To the strong force of the unseen.

The whisper reaches my ears,
And I feel rid of my fears
A light heart, joy, no tears
A new direction bright and clear.

Light of the lights
My divine ally
The reason to fight
To have you nearby.

Oh Jesus, my sole guide,
I am ready to follow you this time
To work with you by my side,
And to let your heart beat in mine.

A.

Automatic writing received by Jussara Korngold during
SGNY's mediumship meeting - New York - July/16/2007



Lesson 5

Righteousness, Virtues - FRUGALITY and TEMPERANCE

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: Work, Sobriety, and Continence - FRUGALITY and TEMPERANCE or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes) (This lesson can be developed in two sessions)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To analyze the importance of being righteous according to the Beatitudes taught by Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, and to correlate these teachings with two of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: FRUGALITY and TEMPERANCE.

1. Definition and Bible Quotations

Righteousness (also called rectitude) is an important theological concept in Judaism and Christianity. It is an attribute which implies that a person's actions are justified, and can be interpreted to mean that the person has been "judged" or "reckoned" as leading a life that is pleasing to God.⁹

Righteousness has an ethical/moral meaning and it implies a right relationship with God. It also means to be in complete accordance with what is just, honorable, and Godly. Righteousness is comprised of those things that are upright, virtuous, noble, morally right, and ethical. We could say that righteousness is a lifestyle that is in complete conformity to God's will.

There are several examples in the Bible that demonstrate the importance of being righteous:

- He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor. (Proverbs 21:21)
- What the wicked dreads will overtake him; but the righteous desire will be granted. (Proverbs 10:24)
- "For the Lord is righteous; He loves righteousness; And the upright will behold His face". (Psalms 11:7)

All men's souls are immortal, but the souls of the righteous are immortal and divine.
Socrates

2. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Beatitudes presented by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount (recorded in the book of Matthew 5: 3-12) present nine different attitudes of the heart that come with a promise of blessing. The fourth

⁹ Wikipedia



beatitude is: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

The idea of hunger and thirst speaks of a deep longing and strong desire that aches desperately to be satisfied. There are no words that would serve better than hunger and thirst to express this strong desire to obtain the righteousness that we ought to feel. No needs are so keen; none so imperiously demand supply, as these.

In using the imagery of hunger and thirst, Jesus communicates how important righteousness is to our lives. In doing so, Jesus extends his blessing to those who desire righteousness as a profoundly urgent priority in their lives, recognizing its vital importance, and he reiterates this priority in Matthew 6:33 when he says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” before anything else. Surely that is basically the same as saying, “Hunger and thirst for righteousness” as a first principle in life.

Righteousness is as necessary to our spiritual lives as food and water are to our physical lives. Without food and water, the body suffers and may die. Without righteousness, the soul feels empty and unhappy. As the body has its natural appetites of hunger and thirst for the food and drink suited to its nourishment, so has the soul; as the body depends upon its nourishment to be healthy and strong within the physical realm, so also does the soul need spiritual nourishment. When the uneasy sensation of hunger takes place in the stomach, we know we must find food or perish. When the soul is awakened to a sense of its own desires, and begins to hunger and thirst after righteousness, which is its proper food, it will neither rest nor find peace until it is satiated.

*To hunger and thirst for righteousness indicates a constant desire to search out something that the person knows is good for them. Newborn babies intrinsically know that food will satisfy their hunger. They do not think twice about the validity of their physical needs, nor do they neglect their need to eat. They simply cry out for what they know is good. The same is true for those who seek spiritual evolvment; there should be no question of the necessity of spiritual food. Nor should one neglect the need for fulfillment. Instead, God desires for spiritual seekers to cry, as babies cry, to Him and allow Him to generously provide for their needs.*¹⁰

The eighth beatitude is: *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Like the fourth one, it also talks to us about the importance of righteousness, even to the point of overlooking persecutions of any kind, and continuing in the straight path.

Persecution is the systematic mistreatment of an individual or group by another group. The most familiar forms are religious persecution, ethnic persecution, and political persecution, though there is naturally some overlap between these terms, which have in common the inflicting of suffering, harassment, isolation, imprisonment, fear, pain and exclusion.¹¹

Nowadays, persecution frequently comes in verbal form, usually by way of unkind mockery and reproachful language, or through cruel deeds such as confiscation of goods, or banishment from a group. It may even occur in the workplace where one may be fired, demoted, or criticized because of one's faith. In today's society the act of revealing that you are somehow religious or spiritual may bring on smirks and laughs, rude and disgusting comments, alienation, and even retaliation. But the important thing to do is to follow Jesus' advice and persist in doing good and being righteous, because only through this persistence will we achieve spiritual improvement.

¹⁰ <http://www.faithclipart.com/guide/books-of-the-bible/the-beatitudes/>

¹¹ Wikipedia



While it is very true that those who suffer persecution endure hardships and troubles, it would be well to remember that we should never bow down to error and should always live by the moral and ethical values that we learn from human laws, remembering, above all, those that we learn from God's laws, thus demonstrating our constant awareness that we dwell in eternity.

*I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary;
the evil it does is permanent.
Mahatma Gandhi*

3. The righteous person

Jesus embodies righteousness and righteous people will try to follow Jesus' teachings during their lives. For righteous people, all their daily actions, everything that they think about, every decision that they make, everything that they read and look at, will be done in the same way that Jesus would have done them. The righteous person will know immediately whether something is right or wrong, just or unjust, godly or ungodly.

Jesus, who dwells within the righteous person, communicates constantly with that person's heart, conscience, soul, and spirit. For the righteous person, righteousness saturates every single aspect of one's life and he or she seeks to lead a righteous life in every moment of every day. Hunger and thirst are appetites that return often, requiring our frequent attention throughout the day. Similarly the righteous person is in constant need of sustenance via meals of righteousness to do one's daily good work. When a person hungers and thirsts after righteousness he or she becomes a new individual and this new individual approaches God.

A righteous life is what also fills righteous persons with peace and joy. And because of their spiritual enlightenment they realize that nothing can be more perfect, more pure, or more pleasing to Our Heavenly Creator than living in righteousness.¹²

It is interesting to notice that this beatitude does not say, 'Blessed are the righteous'. Rather it says 'blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled'. It seems that there is implied in this blessing an understanding that we are being challenged to commit ourselves to a process, a journey, an ongoing reaching out for the righteousness of God.¹³

But we should not worry about the ordeals we may find in our way because as Jesus promised to us:

- "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14) (See Annex 1)
- "I am the bread of life." (John 6:48)

*True religion is real living; living with all one's soul,
with all one's goodness and righteousness.
Albert Einstein*

4. Caring for the body and the spirit

¹² <http://robertwells.tripod.com/Beatitudes.html>

¹³ <http://www.holytrinity.gen.nz/Pages/sermons/hungerandthirst.htm>



Expanding our studies about the fourth beatitude and the need for temperance and frugality, let us turn to a passage in *The Gospel According to Spiritism*, in which a protecting spirit *explains about the need for careful maintenance of the body, which, as demonstrated by the consequences of health and infirmity, influences in a very important way the soul, which must be regarded as a prisoner of the flesh. In order for this prisoner to live, move about and even conceive of the illusion of freedom, the body must be sound, of good disposition and vigorous.* For this very reason, it would be a mistake to interpret Jesus' teaching, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled*, as something physical, implying we should starve our bodies in order to reach spiritual perfection.

In the book *Genesis* (Chapter 11, item 11) Kardec explains that (...) It is the spirit that molds its envelope (body), and appropriates it to its new needs. It brings it toward perfection, develops and completes the organism by measure as it experiences the need of manifesting new qualities.

*Spiritism helps us understand the importance of the relationship between the body and the soul, and tells us that they are both necessary for each other and must be cared for. Therefore, we should love our soul but care also for our body, the soul's instrument. Being heedless of the needs that are indicated by nature itself means to be heedless of the law of God.*¹⁴

Nevertheless, those who desire to possess a clear conscience, a robust mentality and a well-balanced mind need to learn to be frugal and temperate. One needs to avoid overindulgence in eating, which upsets body and mind. This is also valid for over-drinking, which entails the loss of all dignity and the over-stepping of all bounds; a frequent repetition of either inevitably leads to sickness and infirmity.

*We need to grant to the body that which it requires in order for it to remain a useful servant, and nothing more; this is the wise person's rule. To curtail the budget of its material needs, to subdue the senses and master the base appetites, is to shake off the yoke of inferior forces, thus preparing the way for the spirit's emancipation. To have few needs is, likewise, a form of wealth.*¹⁵

After all, perfection lies entirely in the transformation to which we submit our spirits, and our bodies are sacred vessels that should help us to achieve this.

4. Frugality and Temperance

Benjamin Franklin tells us about the importance of frugality and temperance:

- Frugality: Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.
- Temperance: Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

Being Frugal is to strive to Live Within Your Means. Don't squander your money on fun and frolicking, and don't waste the resources God gave us.

Being temperate is avoiding the extremes. Don't drink or eat to excess, or indulge in anything beyond what is healthy. Find the middle ground and learn Self-Restraint.

If we have to indulge in something let us indulge much in meditation, and let us seek to apply this Eastern adage:

¹⁴ Georges, A protector spirit (Paris, 1863)14. (*The Gospel According to Spiritism* – Chap. ... item 11)

¹⁵ *Here and Hereafter* by Leon Denis



ANNEX 1

Jesus Talks With a Samaritan Woman¹⁶

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

¹⁶ BibleGateway – NIV – John 4:1-26

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the texts below
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

THE SPIRITIST CHARACTER

The Spiritist practitioner cannot live differently from others. One will be influenced by one's own conscience to live in accordance with one's spiritist convictions, which will give oneself a special awareness for each of one's actions.

Work - not as the unconscious worker led by his or her uncontrolled ambitions, destroying oneself without any benefit. One acts constructively.

Earn - not to hoard money or other resources as a miser. One possesses to assist others.

Study - not to transform oneself into a hanger full of academic medals of no value to humanity. One learns by serving.

Preach - not to participate in a lecture seeking acknowledgment or aggrandizement. One speaks uplifting words.

Manage - not for the sake of ostentation without assuming responsibilities. One directs by being obedient.

Teach - not to transform others into slaves guaranteeing social and economic benefits. One teaches through one's examples.

Write - not to display the pomposity of the dictionary or exalt the extravagances of writers who utilize the literature to indulge their pride. One writes nobly.

Cultivate Faith - not with the pretentious intent of increasing the number of steps to Heaven with the erroneous idea that God can be compared to a tender tyrant full of whims and privileges. One believes by serving.

The true spiritist lives one's life as others do, but one will always be called upon to serve others through one's attitudes.

Emmanuel-Andre Luiz / Francisco C. Xavier
Opinião Espírita (Spiritist Opinion)

DECALOGUE FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Lessen your needs and further your concessions.
2. Intensify your work and minimize your spare time.
3. Elevate your thoughts and gain full mastery over sudden impulses.
4. Free "the present self" on the path of Jesus, and imprison "the old soul" that still lives within you.
5. Be vigilant with your gestures, understanding the gesture of others.
6. Persevere in the noble study, recognizing that life is the sacred school which leads us in our ascension to God.
7. Be critical of yourself, but readily forgiving of others.
8. Speak with humility, and listen attentively.
9. Meditate as you work, and pray as you serve.
10. Trust in Eternal Love, and fulfill the daily obligations that He bestowed upon us.

Andre Luiz / Francisco C. Xavier



Lesson 6

Forgiveness and Mercy - MODERATION

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: Forgiveness and Mercy - MODERATION or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes) (This lesson can be developed in two or more sessions)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To analyze the importance of being merciful and forgiving according to The Beatitudes taught by Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount, *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy*, and to correlate this teaching with one of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: Moderation.

1. Forgiveness and Mercy

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. (Mt. 5:7)

Mercy is the complement of meekness, because whoever is not merciful cannot be meek and peaceable. Mercy consists in forgetting and forgiving offenses. It is proper for the advanced soul to forget offenses, and to be above the insults that might be directed towards it.

Woe to those who say, "I will never forgive," because if they are not condemned by other human beings, they certainly will be by God. By what right will they beg forgiveness for their wrongs if they themselves do not forgive the wrongs of others? When Jesus says to forgive others not seven times but seventy times seven, he teaches us that mercy should have no limits. (The Gospel According to Spiritism -Chap. 10)

In order for us to further understand the need for forgiveness we need to reflect upon Spiritism's main motto: Without Charity there is no Salvation, and charity in its full expression encompasses forgiveness as stated by the Spirits in question 886 of *The Spirits' Book*:

What is the true meaning of the word *charity*, as Jesus understood it?

"Benevolence towards everyone, indulgence towards the imperfections of others and forgiveness for offenses."

We have all learned about the importance of forgiveness from an early age, but oftentimes we are only told to forgive; we are not shown how to forgive and mean it. The point is that all of us have been hurt and wounded at some point in our lives - some of us, many times - and we may feel a lot of resentment, anger, even hatred towards the people who were responsible. Our religious education may have taught us "to forgive our enemies" or "to turn the other cheek," but we may find it very difficult to do so, even if we're willing. In the Lord's Prayer we ask God to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," but, in reality, we would be content with forgiveness for ourselves only. The point here, however, is that it is as hard for us to forgive others as it is to forgive



ourselves:

"How many times do we pay for one mistake? The answer is thousands of times. Humans are the only animals on earth who pay a thousand times for the same mistake. The rest of the animals pay once for every mistake they make. But not us. We have powerful memories. We make mistakes, we judge ourselves, we find ourselves guilty, and we punish ourselves. If justice exists, then once should be enough; we don't need to do it again. But then every time we remember, we judge ourselves again, we are guilty again and we punish ourselves repeatedly. A wife or a husband may also remind us of our mistakes, so that we end up judging ourselves, punishing ourselves, and finding ourselves guilty yet again. Is this fair?

How many times do we make our spouse, our children, or our parents pay for the same mistake? Every time we remember the mistake, we blame them again and send them all the emotional poison we feel at the injustice, and then we make them pay again for the same mistake. Is that justice?"¹⁷

It is essential to recognize that it is not your job – and you have no right – to repeatedly punish another person or yourself for making a mistake. As a human being, it is only your job to forgive, to love, to heal, and to grow and, of course, to forgive always.

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you.
Unknown

2. Forgiveness and Health

A gift of flowers is often sent to gain forgiveness, but recent research indicates it may be better for your health to forgive without the benefit of gifts. A study conducted at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research concluded that people who forgave others experienced reductions in feelings of nervousness, restlessness and hopelessness.

Learning to forgive is an art as much as a science. It is a habit, a way of living, and an attitude more than a one-time act. Many studies have shown that although anger can be a healthy release of pent up energy, hostility is not healthy, and it is the number one emotional risk factor for premature death from cardiovascular accidents (stroke and heart attack). The boost to one's health from forgiveness can include lower blood pressure and heart rates, a reduction in chronic pain and fewer symptoms from anxiety, depression or stress.

The key to becoming healthier through forgiveness, experts say, is the recognition that any mental or physical distress you feel now about a situation or grudge comes from current hurt feelings, not from the original offense or hurt experienced in the past. Letting go of these current feelings can help make you feel healthier.¹⁸

Negative emotions are recorded in our cellular memory. They remain constantly in the background affecting our health, producing traumas and emotional blockages.

¹⁷ *The Gift of Forgiveness-A Magical Encounter with don Miguel Ruiz* by Olivier Clerc.

In his Book, *The Four Agreements*, Don Miguel Ruiz explains the importance of forgiveness in the chapter "The Toltec Path to Freedom". It's done out of self-love and not so much because the other person deserves it. Forgiveness brings with it freedom because by forgiving those who victimize, people cease to be victims.

¹⁸ <http://gardensofforgivenessnetwork>



Dr. Frederic Luskin, a specialist in learning to forgive, explains that:

"The practice of forgiveness has been shown to reduce anger, hurt, depression and stress and leads to greater feelings of hope, peace, compassion and self confidence."

Dwelling on a past conflict and the damage inflicted by another person "doesn't hurt them, but it hurts you like heck," Luskin said. "They own your nervous system, and they aren't good landlords."

In his research, Luskin, a senior consultant in health promotion at Stanford University, has implemented his forgiveness therapy with people affected by the violence in Northern Ireland¹⁹ and Sierra Leone and with people affected in this country by the events of Sept. 11, 2001. His findings showed that those who went through forgiveness therapy, in general, lowered their blood pressure, gained more optimistic views on life and achieved significant levels of peace with the past. Luskin said hostility is a factor in cardiovascular disease and that when a person thinks negatively "your heart has just gotten a jolt from that negativity."

Luskin said some people avoid forgiveness because it can be easier to blame their current problems on past conflicts. "Many of us try to stay stuck because we don't want the responsibility of our own life."

Practicing forgiveness leads to healthy relationships as well as physical health."

Dr. Luskin's presents 9 Steps to Forgiveness²⁰:

1. Know exactly how you feel about what happened and be able to articulate what about the situation is not OK. Then, tell a trusted couple of people about your experience.
2. Make a commitment to yourself to do what you have to do to feel better. Forgiveness is for you and not for anyone else.
3. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation with the person who hurt you, or condoning of their action. What you are after is to find peace. Forgiveness can be defined as the "peace and understanding that come from blaming that which has hurt you less, taking the life experience less personally, and changing your grievance story."
4. Get the right perspective on what is happening. Recognize that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts and physical upset you are suffering now, not what offended you or hurt you two minutes--or ten years ago. Forgiveness helps to heal those hurt feelings.
5. At the moment you feel upset practice a simple stress management technique to soothe your body's fight or flight response.
6. Give up expecting things from other people, or your life, that they do not choose to give you. Recognize the "unenforceable rules" you have for your health such as how you or other people must behave. Remind yourself that you can hope for health, love, peace and prosperity and work hard to get them.
7. Put your energy into looking for another way to get your positive goals met than through the experience that has hurt you. Instead of mentally replaying your hurt seek out new ways to get what you want.
8. Remember that a life well lived is your best answer. Instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving the person who caused you pain power over you, learn to look for the love, beauty and kindness around you.

¹⁹ See movie *Five Minutes of Heaven* that depicts a situation of forgiveness resulting from the conflicts in North Ireland.

²⁰ <http://learningtoforgive.com/9-steps/>



9. Amend your grievance story to remind you of the heroic choice to forgive.

*An eye for an eye will make the whole humanity blind.
Gandhi*

2.1 FORGIVENESS - How to Release Toxic Emotions²¹

Dr. Deepak Chopra says: “Forgiveness is a powerful tool for personal healing and spiritual transformation, but it is a skill that must be learned. By practicing the STEPS for releasing toxic emotions, we can make forgiveness a functional part of our growth instead of just a moral dictate.” The best way to understand forgiveness is to realize that to forgive and to ask for forgiveness is the best use of one's energy and also one of the most important paths to self-healing. Hostility is an inflammatory emotion and causes physical inflammations as well, which can result in inflammatory cardiovascular episodes and is also linked to autoimmune disorders. It is more than remembered pain; it is also rumination over a past hurt.

If you kick a dog and hurt it, it will remember that and if you encounter the dog many years later it may attack you in the interest of self-preservation. However, unlike human beings, the dog will not plan for years on how to get even. Because human beings ruminate over past hurts and have the ability to imagine and plan the future, they are capable of enormous violence against themselves and their fellow beings. This is one good reason to learn to forgive.

Learning how to let go of toxic emotions such as hostility is the essence of learning how to forgive, because forgiveness is basically releasing your attachment or identification with the conditioned response. There are a few well-developed psychological techniques for releasing toxic emotions that are based on the premise of gaining objectivity and clarity on the emotion before one can release and forgive.

Here is a 7-step process that is known to work:

1. Taking responsibility for your emotion.
2. Witnessing the emotion.
3. Defining or labeling the emotion.
4. Expressing the emotion.
5. Sharing the emotion.
6. Releasing the emotion through ritual.
7. Celebrating the release and MOVING ON.

Once you have located the discomfort in your body, feel it for several minutes. Ask yourself, Who is most damaged by holding on to this toxic energy?

The answer, of course, is obvious--you are hurting yourself more than you are hurting another.

*“Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”
Nelson Mandela*

2.2 FORGIVENESS - Health and Happiness

²¹ <http://blog.beliefnet.com/intentchopra/2008/12/tools-of-personal-transformati.html#ixzz10ThR2yAr>



Everett L. Worthington, Jr., Ph.D., professor of psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, says: *Forgiveness is both a DECISION and a REAL CHANGE IN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE. That change in emotion is related to better MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH.*

Dr. Worthington has not only studied the radical act of forgiveness at the University of Virginia Commonwealth. He has taken his own medicine, forgiving the perpetrators of the brutal murder of his elderly mother in 1996. He refers to the forgiveness process as REACH.

1. Recall - Recall the hurt as objectively as you can. Don't judge the other person by adding labels like "evil" or "bad." Breathe deeply as you do this
2. Empathize - Try to understand the other person's point of view. This may not be easy but try to find some plausible explanation for the other's way of thinking that resulted in their hurtful actions. For example, when people feel threatened or afraid, they may strike out in violence. Importantly, you are not excusing the other person's behavior. You are just looking for their point of view.
3. Altruistic gift - "A" stands for giving the altruistic gift of forgiveness. Again, this may not be easy. Think of a time that you may have hurt someone, when you felt guilty and were forgiven. That forgiveness was a gift. Now give the gift of forgiveness for the benefit of another person. It will set YOU free when you can give this gift without holding a grudge.
4. Commit - Commit yourself to forgive publicly. Dr. Worthington has his clients write letters of forgiveness, write in a journal or tell a friend what they have done.
5. Hold - Hold on to the forgiveness. As memories of the hurtful event resurface, which they surely will, hold on to the fact that you have forgiven the person. Forgiveness does not erase the event and memories do not mean that you are unable to forgive. Forgiveness is a powerful choice to change the energy that a hurtful memory carries. Let go of thoughts of vengeance or revenge. Hold on to the forgiveness.

"Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it."
Mark Twain

Let us remember that by forgiving others we will not necessarily become great friends with people who've done bad things to us, but at least we will stop shutting down our hearts and imprisoning ourselves in resentment, anger, and other isolating feelings. We don't have to actively love our enemies, or even like them; we just need to stop shutting down our capacity to love them, to stop using them as a reason for shrinking our hearts and progressively drying up our love.

3. Moderation and Forgiveness

Benjamin Franklin expressed eloquently the importance of moderation *when he said "Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve."* He understood that one way of attaining spiritual involvement was to learn to forgive injuries, and let go of grudges, thus avoiding actions that could lead to greater damages.

"Moderation in all things -- including moderation."
Benjamin Franklin

4. Jesus and Forgiveness

When Peter approached him and said, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he has



sinned against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered him, "I do not tell you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven times."²²

This teaching reminds us about the story of a lady who came to Chico Xavier and told him about her difficult family, saying she couldn't stand them any longer. Her husband was too aggressive and her children drove her crazy.

Chico reminded her that Jesus recommended that we must forgive not only seven times, but seventy times seven. But she replied to Chico: "Look Chico, I am aware of the amount and I have already forgiven my relatives over four hundred and ninety times. I have already done enough."

"Well, my daughter, Emmanuel is by my side and he asks me to tell you that we must forgive seventy times seven in each type of offence. There is still much more to forgive."²³

"To forgive our enemies is to ask forgiveness for our own selves; to forgive our friends is a proof of friendship; to forgive the offences of others is to confirm and demonstrate that you have become a better person."

Emmanuel

Let us also learn to forgive our brothers and sisters and follow the examples of Jesus. At the most excruciating time of his life his thoughts were addressed to us, his brothers and sisters, when he uttered the words that until today resonate in our hearts:

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Luke 23:34

²² (Mt. 18:15, 21-22)

²³ From the book *Endearing Gems of Francisco Cândido Xavier* by Jussara Korngold & Marie Levinson



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the texts below
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

The Spirits' Teachings - Forgiveness of Offenses

How many times should I forgive my brother or sister? Not seven times, but seventy times seven. This is one of Jesus' teachings that should strike your mind the hardest and speak to your heart the loudest. Compare these words of mercy with the prayer so simple, so concise and so great in its aspirations which Jesus gave to his disciples, and you will discover the same thought. Jesus - righteousness par excellence - responds to Peter: You shall forgive without limit; you shall forgive every offense as many times as it is committed against you; you shall teach your brothers and sisters that forgetfulness of self, which makes them invulnerable to attack, evil behavior and insult; you shall be meek and humble of heart without ever measuring your kindness; in short, you shall do for others what you would want your heavenly Father to do for you. Has he not forgiven you often? Does he count the number of times his forgiveness has descended to wipe away your wrongs?

So, listen to Jesus' answer, and, like Peter, apply it to yourselves. Forgive, be indulgent, charitable, generous - even lavish - with your love. Give, because the lord will repay you; forgive, because the lord will forgive you; abase yourselves, because the lord will lift you up; humble yourselves, because the lord will sit you at his right hand.

Dearly beloved, go study and comment on these words I am addressing to you on behalf of the one who, from the heights of the heavenly splendors, always watches over you, and continues with love the ungrateful task that he began eighteen centuries ago.¹ Therefore, forgive your brothers and sisters, as you yourselves have need of being forgiven. If their actions do you personal harm, it is one more reason for you to be indulgent, for the merit of forgiveness is proportional to the seriousness of the evil. There will be no merit in forgiving the errors of your brothers and sisters if they have done only little harm.

Oh spiritists, never forget that in words as well as in actions forgiveness of wrongs must not be an empty expression. If you say you are spiritists, then be so; forget the evil that has been done to you and think of one thing only: the good you can do. Those who enter upon this path must not wander from it even in thought, because they are responsible for their thoughts, known by God. Therefore, empty your thoughts of any sentiment of rancor. God knows what lies at the bottom of each one's heart. So, happy are they, who can go to sleep every night, saying: I have nothing against my neighbor.

Simeon (Bordeaux, 1862)

The Gospel According to Spiritism - Chap. 10, item 14



The Parable of the Lost Son²⁴

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

" 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "

²⁴ Luke 15:11-32 – Bible Gateway (NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION)



Lesson 7

Moral Perfection - Cleanliness and Chastity

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: Moral Perfection - CHASTITY and CLEANLINESS or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes) (This lesson can be developed in two or more sessions)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To analyze the importance of having a pure heart according to The Beatitudes taught by Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount, and to correlate this teaching with two of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: Cleanliness and Chastity.

1. Perfection²⁵

The oldest definition of "perfection", which is fairly precise and distinguishes the various shades of the concept, goes back to Aristotle. In *Book Delta of the Metaphysics*, he distinguishes three meanings of the term, or rather three shades of one meaning, but in any case three different concepts. That is perfect:

1. which is complete – which contains all the requisite parts;
2. which is so good that nothing of the kind could be better;
3. which has attained its purpose.

To Aristotle, "perfect" meant "complete" ("nothing to add or subtract")²⁶

The notion of perfection, as an attribute of God, entered into the theological purview only in modern times, through René Descartes – both as a singular concept and in the plural, as the "perfections" of God.²⁷ After Descartes, other great 17th-century thinkers upheld this idea of perfection as a principal concept in philosophy.

There is a story of a disciple of a great Indian guru who asked the great master "How many lives must I live to achieve perfection?" The master pointed to the great tree under which he was sitting and replied "You must live as many lives as there are leaves on this tree." Upon hearing this answer the disciple began sobbing uncontrollably. When the master asked him why he was crying he exclaimed "So few! So few to reach perfection!"

2. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

The sixth Beatitude we find on the Sermon on the Mount is: *Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.*

²⁵ Wikipedia

²⁶ Tatarkiewicz, "Perfection: the Term and the Concept," *Dialectics and Humanism*, vol. VI, no. 4 (autumn 1979), p. 7.

²⁷ Tatarkiewicz, "Ontological and Theological Perfection," *Dialectics and Humanism*, vol. VIII, no. 1 (winter 1981), pp. 190-91.



Let's start by analyzing the word "heart". In today's world the term heart is used mainly to describe the emotional aspect of the individual. The Webster's Dictionary defines it as: "the seat of the emotions: said of the moral side of human nature in contradistinction to the intellectual; as, he was all head and no heart."²⁸

*In the Bible the term heart describes every aspect of the inner person. It describes the whole self, i.e. the essence of personality. Thus the word "heart" refers to the whole mind of the individual, including the intellect, the emotions and the will. There is no more comprehensive word used in the Bible to describe every aspect of the function of the individual's mind, consciousness or self. The heart is the very center and source of all that we are and all that we do. Therefore, the state of the individual's heart is central to one's relationship to God.*²⁹

When Jesus talks about pureness of heart, he is inviting us to work on our inner transformation so that we can reach moral perfection. We know quite well what we, as human beings, are capable of presenting in our hearts, from ill thoughts, greed, slander and arrogance, to love, compassion and fraternity. The negative constructions that come from our hearts are what make it impossible for us to see and feel God's presence.

Purity of heart is inseparable from simplicity and humility, and excludes every thought of selfishness and pride. For this reason, using very simple and direct words, Jesus said to his apostles: *Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.*³⁰ Jesus uses childhood as a symbol of such purity, just as he uses it as a symbol for humility.

This passage shows us that unless we attain pureness of heart, removing pride, prejudice and hatred from our essence, we will not be able to go to God, that is to say, to experience and reach perfection.

This comparison might not seem just, considering the fact that the spirit of a child may be quite old, and that upon being reborn to corporeal life it brings with it the imperfections that it has not gotten rid of in its previous existences. Only a spirit who has reached perfection could give us a model of true purity. However, the comparison is precise from the point of view of the present life, because, having not yet manifested any perverse inclinations, little children offer us the picture of innocence and candor. Furthermore, Jesus does not say that the kingdom of God is for them literally, but for those who are like them. (GAS Chap 8, item 3)

During the first few years, the spirit is truly a child, since the ideas that will form the basis of its character are still dormant. During this time it is more malleable and therefore more accessible to the impressions that can modify its nature and enable it to progress, which in turn renders the task imposed on the parents easier. The spirit wears the tunic of innocence for a while, and Jesus is correct when, notwithstanding the soul's previous lives, he uses the child as the symbol of purity and simplicity. (GAS Chap 8, item 4)

One of the most important questions that we can ask is how can we be truly pure in our hearts? How can we be pure in our imaginations, in our thoughts, in our words, in our decision-making, and in our desires? *True purity is not only displayed in one's actions; it is also displayed in one's thoughts, for those who have a pure heart do not even think about evil. (GAS Chap 8, item 6)*

²⁸ Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary: Unabridged, 836.

²⁹ Copyright © Brian Schwertley, 2007

³⁰ Mark 10:13-16 (New International Version) and Luke 18: 15-17.



So, how can we think what God thinks, will what God wills, and desire what God desires, and love what God loves? In other words how can our hearts be pure hearts, free from errors like pride and envy, free from evil thoughts and evil deeds?

Many people have tried to purify themselves through asceticism or leading a life of complete self denial, or by other methods such as going away from the world and living in solitude, or permanent silence, or beating their bodies with whips and clubs. They have tried to cleanse themselves through celibacy, fasting, and prayers. But such asceticism will not result in purity of heart.

So the first point we must be aware of is this: the path to a pure heart begins with the realization that we are on the way to perfection and therefore we still harbor negative feelings in our hearts. We learn from the teachings of Jesus and from the Bible that the way to God has nothing to do with our external appearance, our behavior, or our achievements. It does not matter what level of education, intellect, business success, or social position, the person has achieved. These factors have no effect on pureness of heart.

In the Parable of the Wedding Feast,³¹ the servants, after having invited and gathered together all those, both good and bad, whom they met in the streets, to sit at the tables and fill up the wedding hall, saw the King enter and ask a man: *“My friend, why have you come in without a wedding garment?” The man remained silent. Then the king told his servants, “Bind his hands and feet and cast him into outer darkness; where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called but few are chosen.”*

We learn from this parable that *it is not enough simply to be invited; it is not enough simply to take the name of Christian, nor to sit at the table to take part in the heavenly banquet. Before anything else and as an express condition, it is necessary to be dressed in a wedding garment, which means to have a pure heart and to practice the law according to its spirit.* (GAS Chap 18, item 2)

So, what can we do to attain pureness of heart? For starters we have to learn to see ourselves for what we truly are, following the advice we received from the spirits when Allan Kardec asked them³²:

919. What is the most effective means for improving ourselves in this life and for resisting the draw of evil? “A sage of antiquity has told you: ‘Know thyself’.”

909. Could humans always overcome their evil tendencies through their own efforts?

“Yes, and sometimes with very little effort; what they lack is will power. How few of you make such an effort, however!”

As a rule, we are very quick to excuse transgressions, making all sorts of rationalizations in order to justify our thoughts and actions. Until we recognize the complete inadequacy of dealing with our imperfections through the use of half-way measures we cannot hope to overcome them. If we are serious about personal change, we must not hang on to any known imperfections we have.

Keeping our hearts pure will require a total commitment at every moment. We must seek purity of heart right now in the present; otherwise, godliness will elude us. We have to commit ourselves every day to at least making the attempt not to err at all. Our inner thoughts will permeate and control our

³¹ (Mt 22: 1-14)

³² The Spirits' Book by Allan Kardec



whole character. We should heed Paul's command: "Whatever things are true...noble...just...pure...lovely...[and] of good report...meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

Upon being honest with ourselves we will be able to accomplish our moral transformation. *In every human being, somewhere - in mind or conscience - are engraved the rudiments of the moral law. The performance of a good deed causes us to experience an innate satisfaction, which we experience as a pleasant sensation of warmth and expansion, whereas our errors are usually attended by bitterness and remorse.*

The spirit is ever and universally what it has made itself to be. When it violates the moral law it befogs its own conscience and faculties, forging its own chains as it becomes increasingly materialized. By practicing the law of righteousness, by dominating its lower instincts, it grows lighter, and hence draws ever nearer to the higher and happier zones.

Thus considered, the moral life imposes itself as an undeniable obligation for all who give serious thought to their future destiny. This opens our eyes to the necessity of nurturing and sustaining a culture of the soul, by the light of which our every deed will be weighed, and by which we will be aided in our efforts to maintain our spiritual forces in a state of perfect harmony and equilibrium.

*With the addition of spiritual philosophy, our outlook immediately changes and our horizons expand.*³³ The knowledge of life's true aim is of incalculable service in furthering our elevation and improvement; once we know where we intend to go, our steps become firmer and our every motion is quickened into a vigorous outreaching towards the ideal objective.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. " (Pr. 4:23)

3. Cleanliness and Chastity

Benjamin Franklin, one of the world's greatest minds and a proud pillar of America's national heritage, began his adult life with a very ambitious goal. He wanted to achieve moral perfection. Most people think, on a conscious level, only about their family, their friends, and their work. When it comes to achievement, they think of money or fame or even happiness. But for Franklin, morality was a way of behaving that resulted in a balanced life, composed of the best of all possible human experiences.

The purpose of Franklin's list of virtues was to separate right from wrong by delineating boundaries around everyday activities so that people could avoid unhealthy trains of thought. In his autobiography Franklin noted how difficult a process it was to cement a strict code for a virtuous lifestyle; every time he identified one of his faults, another would pop up in its midst. From his own experience, Franklin passed on an important lesson when he said that "contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct." His autobiography proves that, with determination and dedication, attaining moral perfection is within anyone's grasp; we just have to start working on our personal changes.

Two of the thirteen virtues presented by Benjamin Franklin, cleanliness and chastity, are important resources in our study of pureness of heart, but in terms of achieving moral perfection we must strive to achieve all of them.

³³ Here and hereafter by Leon Dennis, Chap 42.



Let's analyze each separately:

Cleanliness: Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.

We know that the way we feel as spirits will be reflected in the care we are going to provide to our physical body and the environment around us. There is a natural connection between the order of our environment and the state of our mind, i.e. the progress of our spirit. Clutter will weigh us down and stress us out. A clean, well-organized environment will lift our spirits.

Jesus once expressed that: *What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them. But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*³⁴

From this teaching we learn that true cleanliness starts from within, when we commit ourselves to remove all traces of the imperfections that fill up our hearts.

Chastity: Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.

Of all the virtues, chastity is probably the least popular these days. But here we are not simply talking about chastity as it relates to celibacy and sexual relationships. We can expand upon our understanding of this virtue to include seeing it as a means to attaining purity. The Merriam Webster's dictionary defines chastity as also being: purity in conduct and intention, and personal integrity. It is in this sense that we have to remain chaste as spirits to achieve pureness of heart.

4. Spiritism's 3 "R's" - Repentance, Reparation, Regeneration

In the process of renewing and achieving purity of heart one has to go through the stages of Spiritism's 3 "R's" - repentance, reparation and renewal.

Purity of heart refers to persons who, as a consequence of regeneration, have truly repented and repaired their errors and are not leading hypocritical lives. The true disciple of Christ doesn't put on an act only in certain situations, but strives to be pure in his or her mind, conversation and actions at all times.

When will we be pure in heart? As we identify the impurities still present within our hearts we can start the process of becoming cleansed from them. We have to sincerely and thoroughly analyze ourselves identifying our weak points and the errors we have committed because of them. We can only maintain and increase heart purity through diligently examining our hearts and actions in the light of God's Law. As we learn from Jesus' teachings we must apply our new knowledge to the scrutiny of our hearts so that we will be better able to cast off the old self and put on the new. The catharsis generated by our self-analysis will lead us to repentance, repair and regeneration.

Repentance is related to heart purity because it is an inward, sincere state of the heart or mind that sees the exceeding wrongness of an error committed. The words for repentance in the New

³⁴ (Mt. 15:11, 18-19)



*Testament mean a change of mind (metanoeo, e.g. Mt. 3:2; Mk. 1:15) or heart (metamelomai, e.g. Mt. 21:29; Heb. 7:21), which is sincere and leads to a change in one's life (metanoia, e.g. Mt. 3:8; 9:13; Ac. 20:21). True repentance is known by its permanency and its completeness.*³⁵

The process of repentance will lead us to purgation. But there can be no purgation unless we are willing to make amends and repair the errors we have committed. This represents the second stage of our inner process of spiritual evolvement. It requires courage to face the consequences of our actions and to admit them publicly whenever necessary. But in the end, if we are able to follow the inspiration of our hearts and also fulfill the needs of our hearts, we will reach the third stage, which is to find ourselves completely renewed in a process of regeneration.

It is then that we will be able to look at ourselves without shame or remorse, because we have persevered in following the path of regeneration, thus enabling ourselves to feel and to say as did the Apostle Paul: "It is no longer I that live, but it is Christ that is living in union with me". (Galatians 2:20)

³⁵ © Brian Schwertley, 2007 - <http://reformedonline.com/view/reformedonline/SermononMount7.htm>



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the text below
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MORAL PERSON

918. By what signs can we recognize in individuals the real progress that will raise their spirit within the spirit hierarchy?

“The spirit proves its progress when all the acts of its corporeal life consist in practicing the law of God, and when it understands the spiritual life beforehand.”

Truly moral individuals are those who practice the law of justice, love and charity in its most complete purity. If they interrogate their conscience concerning their actions, they will ask if they have not violated that law, if they have not committed any evil, if they have done all the good that is within their power to do, if no one has a complaint against them, and, finally, if they have done to others what they would want others to do unto them.

Those possessed by the sentiment of charity and love for their neighbor do good for its own sake, without hope of reward, and they sacrifice their self-interest through justice.

They are good, humane and benevolent towards all, because they see their own brothers and sisters in all humans regardless of race or belief.

If God has given them power and wealth, they regard it as A DEPOSIT that they must use for good, but this does not make them vain, because they know that God, who has given these things to them, can also take them away.

If the social order has placed persons under their care, they treat them with kindness and benevolence, because they are equals before God. They use their authority to build them up morally, and not to crush them with their pride.

They are tolerant of the weaknesses of others, for they know that they themselves need tolerance, and they remember the words of Christ, “Let him that is without sin cast the first stone”.

They are not vindictive: following Jesus’ example, they forgive offenses and only remember benefits, because they know that they will be forgiven as they have forgiven.

Finally, they respect in others all the rights that the laws of nature have granted them, as they would desire their own to be respected. (SB Item 918)



Lesson 8

PEACEMAKERS - RESOLUTION

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: Peacemakers - RESOLUTION or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes) (This lesson can be developed in two or more sessions)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To analyze the importance of being a peacemaker according to the Beatitudes taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, and to correlate this teaching with one of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

1. Peace and peacemakers.

In our common English usage the word "peace" is often associated with the meaning of words like serenity, quietness, and tranquility. Along with that we understand the word itself to mean an absence of conflict, trouble, dissension and war. We might also think of peace as that state wherein people get on reasonably well together. However, as fitting as these meanings may be for modern usage, they do not approximate the Biblical meaning of the word "Peace". To truly understand the Beatitude "Blessed are the peacemakers..." from a Biblical perspective, we need to contemplate the meaning of the word "Shalom".

In Hebrew peace is not merely a negative state; it never means only the absence of trouble; instead it always means everything that makes for a person's highest good. For instance, when one individual says to another, "Shalom," the speaker does not mean to wish for the other only the absence of evil things but, rather, wishes for the other the presence of all good things. In the Bible, as well, peace means not only freedom from all trouble but also enjoyment of all that is good.³⁶

During religious services the mutual exchange of the wish for "Peace" - means we are giving and receiving a blessing and a prayer, to and from the other, that both they and we may have all that is good and best for us and them - that we may all share in God's "Shalom", peace!

This characterization begins to give us some insight into why peacemaking, just as with all the other characteristics expressed in the Beatitudes, is a standard both lofty and difficult to attain. Peacemaking is a far more encompassing term than it first appears to be. Since it means, "everything which makes for an individual's highest good," it is another, more specific term for love, and to love, under any circumstance, is not easy.

³⁶ William Barclay's Daily Study Bible Series (vol. 1, p. 108)
<http://www.cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/PERSONAL/k/156/The-Beatitudes-Part-7-Blessed-Are-Peacemakers.htm#ixzz17YUpXv1>



2. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)

When Jesus proclaimed, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” he was affirming that those who go about their lives intentionally doing what they can to promote, further and in every way bring about the highest good for others, including individuals, families, nations and even the world, may justly be called the “children of God”. The phrases “children of God” and “sons of God” -are common Hebrew expressions. They refer to individuals who have the qualities and characteristics of God, or are considered “Godlike”. Jesus said a peacemaker is called “a child of God,” for the simple reason that peacemaking is a fundamental aspect of the nature of God, and, thus, it follows that peacemakers are doing the things that reflect God’s nature.³⁷

Jesus’ concept of peacemaking revolves around the idea of being at peace, first with God, and then with our brothers and sisters. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:18 that, “As much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” We know quite well, considering the volatile nature of the human personality, how difficult the achievement of this goal can be at times.

It is no wonder, then, that so many were disappointed with Jesus’ teachings. His message, “*Blessed are the peacemakers,*” must have sounded odd to the people who were gathered there to hear him. Those listening to Jesus that day were Jews struggling to live under the dominion of Rome. Many of them wanted to see Rome defeated and run out of their country. Most believed that the only way there would be peace in Israel was through hostility.³⁸

But do we really believe that Jesus was unaware of the social and political injustices of his time? Could he have been so blind, for instance, as not to have noticed the oppression of the Roman Empire over the Jews? When the Pharisees challenged Jesus with a question about the justice of taxes to Tiberius Caesar, he turned it into a personal command aimed right at our own hearts: “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:15-21). Jesus always called us to peace.

Nevertheless, the unfortunate reality is that our society is still filled with conflict and violence of every sort. But this is not a recent fact; it has always been so. In 1968, a major newspaper reported that there have been 14,553 known wars from 36 BC to date. Since 1945, there have been over 70 wars and more than 200 significant outbreaks of violence. From 1958 to the present, over 100 nations have been involved, in one way or another, in armed conflicts of some kind. Numerous countries fight political and economic problems. Certain racial and ethnic groups charge bias against others. In short, much of the world seems to reside in a boiling pot about to spill its contents over its sides and into the fire. There has always been conflict. Many believe there always will be. A writer by the name of Frederick Jezegou once wrote: “Peace is that brief, glorious moment in history when everybody stands around reloading.”³⁹

Over the recorded history of the last four thousand years, only about three hundred of them have passed without a major war. Peace, though it is the thing most desired by everyone, is also the most elusive goal to attain; this is probably because the act of peacemaking is, itself, one of the most unnatural activities for the human race to engage in.

If everybody longs for peace, what is the reason for so much strife, for so much tension, bitterness,

³⁷ <http://www.holytrinity.gen.nz>

³⁸ <http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org>

³⁹ <http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org>



conflict, violence, bloodshed and war across our nation and across our world? Why is peace one of the most significant words in our human vocabulary, yet it's one of the most elusive words in human experience? The answer is this - the human heart; the human heart is the heart of the problem!

In 1948 Albert Einstein observed, in a lecture on the threat of nuclear warfare, that, "It is not a physical problem, but an ethical one. What terrifies us is not the explosive force of the atomic bomb, but the power of the wickedness of the human heart - its explosive power for evil!"

The fact is that we struggle constantly with the turmoil that is all around us; and, at the same time, we have our own conflicts to deal with, but Jesus' teaching, *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God*, becomes a great motivator for us to be resolute and to work on our inner transformation. Saint Augustine once said that only by following the teachings of Jesus, bestowed upon us in the Sermon on the Mount, would we find happiness.

*"There was never a good war or a bad peace."
Benjamin Franklin*

3. Resolution

One of the thirteen virtues presented by Benjamin Franklin, resolution, becomes a pivotal resource in our quest to find peace and to become peacemakers. It says: Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

Peacemaking is more complex and involved than it first appears to be because it is intimately connected with the way we live our lives; it will call upon our constant determination, vigilance and self-control. This process of peacemaking produces peace both passively and actively: passively, because we are not a cause of disruption, and actively, because through our good resolutions we create peace by drawing others to follow our example as they seek for the tranquility and pleasure that they perceive we have achieved as a result.

*Though human nature guarantees that peace-breaking "offenses must come" (Matthew 18:7), it is our duty to resolve and to ensure that our conduct produces no just cause of complaint against us. It is first for our own peace that we do so, for it is impossible to be happy while involved in arguments and warfare. Contention produces disunity. It is therefore urgent that we be diligent to guard against intolerance, intemperate fanaticism, judging, impatience and a quarrelsome spirit.*⁴⁰

Peace can only be achieved when the involved parties resolve their problems and become friends. Conflicts cannot be resolved unless the underlying issues are dealt with openly and honestly. For instance, when two people are at war with each other they shouldn't be separated so that they can't see each other. Rather, the cause of their conflict needs to be resolved so that they can come together in love.

Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

Individuals can search the world over for peace, going from counselor to counselor, gathering at summits, writing treaties, flitting from one religion to another - but they will never find it apart from the Divine Laws that rule humanity. Very seldom does the world honor a peacemaker who helps prevent a war. Society today considers heroes to be those who lead parades, promoting their rights

⁴⁰ <http://www.cgg.org/index.cfm>



and stirring up contention. We are constantly motivated to get all we can for ourselves and not let anyone take anything from us. That kind of thinking precipitates strife. It's no wonder the world fights against peace and relegates to obscurity the precious teaching: *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.*

But in spite of all this, a true peacemaker uses one's good resolution to become a force for positive change. As Mahatma Gandhi once said:

We must become the change we wish to see in the world

4. Peace-breakers, Peace-fakers and Peace-makers⁴¹

There are THREE TYPES OF PEOPLE:

- Peace-breakers
- Peace-fakers
- Peace-makers

1. PEACE-BREAKERS

Peace-breakers are those people who go out of their way to break down relationships, thus causing trouble and division. They're those who like deliberately confronting others - they have to disagree with everything. But their motivation is selfish; they are manipulative and self-seeking.

One can be a peace-breaker without even knowing it! Most peace-breakers don't realize what they're doing - they feel justified in themselves.

2. PEACE-FAKERS

When referring to this beatitude, *blessed are the peacemakers...* a common problem that occurs is that we misunderstand it. We think that peacemaking is about making things look good, plastering over the cracks, covering up the rust and the rot, making out that everything is fine, when it isn't! That's what is called "peace-faking". Peace-fakers are those who prefer "peace" over truth. Peace-fakers see "peace" as simply the absence of any kind of argument or discord. They will go to great lengths to avoid any kind of conflict/confrontation/unrest. In doing so they settle for a counterfeit peace that is based on avoiding the real issues.

For example, we may have a close friend whose life may be taking a bad turn, and we want to shake him to bring him to his senses, but every time you approach the subject it causes an argument and you'd rather just be at peace with your friend. So after a while you just let it go. You avoid the issue, and talk about more agreeable subjects. But when we do that we may see our friend's life go down the drain. So, instead of backing off and saying, "SORRY, I'll never mention this again." We should say: "I don't care if you are going to be mad at me. I'm going to stay on your case because I'm concerned about your future, my friend."

3. PEACE-MAKERS

Peace-makers are prepared to put others' well-being above their own need for comfort. They deal with the real issues and don't avoid them. And because of that, peacemaking must be undertaken with all the wisdom and grace that only a spiritual heart can give, regardless of whether it is in the home, or a religious temple, or a business or even the golf club.

Peacemaking is not easy, but that's all the more reason why we shouldn't give up on it.

Peacemakers build bridges between people.

⁴¹ <http://www.holytrinity.gen.nz> and <http://www.sermoncentral.com>



Peacemakers are motivated by love - real love. If there is any other motivation behind what one is doing or saying then one is NOT acting as a peacemaker.

A way to help us be more committed to peace-making would be to remember and reflect on, and apply to our lives, the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi,
“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand; To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

5. “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (Mathew 10:34)

*I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire except that it be lit? I must be baptized with a baptism, and how I am in a hurry for it to be accomplished!
Do you believe that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I assure you, but on the contrary, division; for from now on if there are five persons in a home, they will be divided against one another: three against two and two against three. The father will be divided from his son and the son from his father; the mother from her daughter and the daughter from her mother; the mother-in-law from her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law. (Luke 12:49-53)*

When Jesus stated, “Do not believe that I have come to bring peace, but division,” his thought was the following:

“Do not believe that my doctrine will be established peacefully; it will bring bloody battles, using my name as a pretext, for humans will not have understood me or will not have wanted to understand me. Separated by their beliefs, brothers will unsheathe their swords against one another and division will reign in the midst of the same family, whose members do not share the same faith. I have come to cast fire upon the earth to clean it of error and prejudice, just as fire is put to a field in order to destroy the weeds; and I desire for it to be lit so that the purification may be quicker, for out of conflict the truth will emerge triumphant. Peace will follow war; universal fraternity will follow sectarian hatred; the light of faith will come after the darkness of fanaticism. Then, when the field has been prepared, I will send you the consoler, the Spirit of Truth, who will reestablish all things; that is, given to understand the true meaning of my words, more enlightened individuals will finally be able to understand, and will put an end to the fratricidal battle that divides the children of the same God. Finally, weary of a combat without result, which has left only desolation in its wake and has brought trouble into the midst of families, human beings will realize where their true interests lie regarding this world and the other. They will see on which side the friends and enemies of their peace of mind are located. All will then shelter themselves beneath the same banner, the banner of charity; and all things will be reestablished on the earth in accordance with the truth and principles that I have taught.”⁴²

We must love peace and work for peace. We must pray for our enemies, do good for them, accept and embrace them, and long for the barriers between ourselves to be overcome. But we must never abandon our allegiance to the truth, no matter how much animosity it brings down on our heads.

⁴² GAS -Chap 23 – Item 10



The point of personal issues in the Sermon on the Mount is to make crystal clear that every individual capable of understanding the teachings of Jesus must become a new person in order to achieve spiritual evolvement. One must have a new heart. Without a merciful, pure, and peacemaking heart one cannot be called a child of God.

“When in despair I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won; there have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end they always fall.” Gandhi



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the text below
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

PACIFICATION (Chapter XXI)

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Matthew, 5: 9).

But what did Jesus mean by the words "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," when He had recommended that mankind renounce all worldly goods after having promised those of Heaven? (Chapter 9, 5).

You listen to condemning accusations about an absent colleague.

You, however, provide information with discretion and kindness, emphasizing your colleague's good side without adding to the intrigue in the hope of building in silence always with as much harmony as possible. And in so doing, you assume small duties in the sphere of obligations that were not yours to begin with...

...and without any impulsive hint of reprimand you look after those very same tasks in the certainty that we all experience lamentable distractions.

You notice your friend's mistake...

...and forgetting all preoccupation with censorship, you attend to your friend's unfinished duties in the hope of simply substituting them without any demonstration of superiority.

You realize your neighbor's fault...

...and without spreading the word around about their impropriety, you assist them at the precise moment of need without giving yourself airs of high virtues.

You receive bitter complaints that inflict deep anguish in your soul...

...but you listen to them with patience, and while restraining yourself from pushing our brothers who are along the way into the shadows, you work incessantly in order to dismiss those very same shadows.

You are the focus of calumnies that injure your reputation...

...and yet you tolerate all the condemnations with great serenity, without animosity or thoughts of revenge, and you answer to them with an even stronger self-denial in the service for the greater good, thus dissipating the unhappy prejudices of your own detractors.

You recognize the existence of deluded or obsessed companions, who create perturbations or scandals that disrupt the cultivation of harmony and light. It is quite reasonable that you do not applaud their behavior, but neither do you aggravate their lack of balance through sarcasm. And you pray for them, supporting them in their process of readjustment by means of renewing and uplifting thoughts.

If you thus proceed, you will truly place yourself among the peacemakers who are blessed by the Divine Master, for you will finally understand that a human being alone cannot guarantee peace in the world on his own, but that each and every one of us is both able and obliged to keep the peace within ourselves.

Excerpted from the *Book of Hope* by the Spirit Emmanuel through the mediumship of Francisco Xavier
Translated by Júlio C. Padovan, Ph.D.



Lesson 9

Blessed are you when people insult you - JUSTICE

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: Persecution - Justice or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes)
(This lesson can be developed in two or more sessions)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To analyze the importance of being a sincere follower of truth and justice according to the Beatitudes taught by Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount, and to correlate this teaching with one of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

1. Blessed are you when people insult you... (Matthew 5:11)

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Definition of Persecution - In Matthew 5: 10, the root phrase in the Greek, "who have been persecuted" is *dediōgmenoi* which literally means "to put to flight or to pursue". The word "persecute" means to pursue with hostile intent; thus, to be persecuted is to be ridiculed, denounced, ill-treated, threatened with death, or to have injury inflicted upon you. In the New Testament it is used to signify the inflicting of pain and suffering upon people who hold differing beliefs.

Noble sentiments are often not fully expressed in today's world, as people fear misinterpretation or misjudgment, given prevailing societal values. A noble sentiment might be perceived as a sign of weakness instead of strength. It might even be looked upon with derision, accompanied by a joking frown; sometimes it may even be interpreted as a mental or personality disturbance.

This is the reason why those who try to lead a noble and righteous life have always faced hard criticism and persecution. If they follow beliefs that teach them to live a moral life, people will mock them, laugh at them and even persecute them. People will find them to be annoying due to the simple fact that they are different and will find their adherence to moral principles irritating. People who do not share their moral zeal will not understand the reasons behind the actions undertaken by them and everything they do will seem worthless and even foolish. There will be times that people will get mad at them for no reason at all. They will hate them because of their love and respect for God. Followers of the truth very seldom please people on Earth. However, it is imperative to have the courage to break away from those prevailing societal values that promote malice, pessimism and aggressiveness among fellow human beings.

In order for us to meditate upon how we should behave when facing insults, persecution and calumny, let's refer to one of Jesus' teachings: *You have learned that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a*



tooth for a tooth.” I am telling you not to resist the evil that others might want to do to you; but if someone strikes your right cheek, offer him the other also. (Mt. 5:38-42)

The world’s prejudices concerning what has conventionally been called the “point of honor” causes that somber susceptibility that is born from pride and the exaltation of the personality, leading people to payback injury for injury, offense for offense, in what seems like justice to those whose moral sense has not risen above the earthly passions. That is why the Mosaic Law stated, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” a law that was in harmony with the time in which Moses lived. Christ came and said, “Repay evil with goodness,” and stated further, “Do not resist the evil that others might want to do to you; if someone strikes your right cheek, offer him the other also.”⁴³

Oftentimes we may feel like answering back the offenses we endure with vengeance, but vengeance is a sure indication of the backwardness of those who indulge in it. Thence, we should eradicate this sentiment from our hearts. Vengeance is often accompanied by falsehood and wickedness. The attack by vengeful individuals upon those they want to harm will be directed at their enemies’ honor and affections; such persons do not recoil at slander, and their perfidious insinuations, skillfully sown on the four winds, grow larger along the way. Consequently, when those who are being persecuted appear in places where their persecutor’s poisonous breath has passed, they are astonished at encountering cold faces where they used to find friendly and benevolent ones. They are stupefied when hands previously extended now refuse to shake theirs. Finally, they are shattered when their dearest friends and relatives avoid and run from them.⁴⁴

When someone is aggressive and rude with us, making statements about our character and faith, our first reaction may be that of engaging in confrontation, getting defensive, and answering the accusations. But if we stop for a minute we may come to the realization that oftentimes people engage in these personal assaults because somehow they are feeling incredibly hurt and express their pain by attacking us. We will learn that being patient with them, allowing them to vent, and thus being sympathetic to their pain is another way of practicing charity.

We can find a precious teaching, completely in agreement with Jesus’ teachings, about the art of interacting with others in the book *Endearing Gems from Francisco Xavier*⁴⁵, when he says: “It saddens me when someone is offensive to me, but I would, with certainty, feel worse if I had been the offender. It is terrible to be hurtful to anyone.”

To the proud, Jesus’ counsel, “If someone strikes your right cheek, offer him the other also.”, seems like cowardice, because they do not understand that there is more courage in bearing an offense than in avenging oneself. (...) However, the words of Jesus did not interdict self-defense, but condemned vengeance. By suggesting that one should offer one’s cheek when the other has been struck, he is saying, in another way, that we should not repay evil with evil; that people should humbly accept everything that tends to lower their pride; that it is more glorious to be wounded than to wound, to bear patiently an injustice than to commit one; that it is worthier to be deceived than to deceive, to be ruined than to ruin others. (...) Only faith in the future life and God’s justice - which never leaves injustice unpunished - can provide the strength to bear patiently the blows directed against our interests and self-centeredness. That is why we constantly state: Focus your gaze on the future ahead; the more you lift yourselves above the material life through thought, the less you will be

⁴³ (GAS Chap. 12, item 7)

⁴⁴ Jules Olivier (Paris, 1862) - GAS Chap. 12, item 9

⁴⁵ Written by Jussara Korngold and Marie Levinson, published by SAB, Inc.



disheartened by things of the earth.⁴⁶

Let us remember the precept: “love one another,” and when we receive the blow given out of hate, we will respond with a smile, and to the offense, with forgiveness.

When someone provokes you into irritability, have a glass of water, drink a little and conserve the rest in your mouth. Don't swallow it or dispose of it. While the temptation of answering persists, keep the water bathing the tongue.... This is The Water of Peace.”

An advice from the Spirit Maria João de Deus to her son Francisco Cândido Xavier⁴⁷

2. The Writings of Benjamin Franklin: A Parable Against Persecution⁴⁸

Among the many things Benjamin Franklin accomplished during his life, there is one not many people know of, which is that he wrote a parable to illustrate a beautiful moral, utilizing a remarkable imitation of Scriptural language.

1. *And it came to pass after these Things, that Abraham sat in the Door of his Tent, about the going down of the Sun.*
2. *And behold a Man, bowed with Age, came from the Way of the Wilderness, leaning on a Staff.*
3. *And Abraham arose and met him, and said unto him, Turn in, I pray thee, and wash thy Feet, and tarry all Night, and thou shalt arise early on the Morrow, and go on thy Way.*
4. *And the Man said, Nay, for I will abide under this Tree.*
5. *But Abraham pressed him greatly; so he turned, and they went into the Tent; and Abraham baked unleavened Bread, and they did eat.*
6. *And when Abraham saw that the Man blessed not God, he said unto him, Wherefore dost thou not worship the most high God, Creator of Heaven and Earth?*
7. *And the Man answered and said, I do not worship the God thou speakest of; neither do I call upon his Name; for I have made to myself a God, which abideth always in mine House, and provideth me with all Things.*
8. *And Abraham's Zeal was kindled against the Man; and he arose, and fell upon him, and drove him forth with Blows into the Wilderness.*
9. *And at Midnight God called unto Abraham, saying, Abraham, where is the Stranger?*
10. *And Abraham answered and said, Lord, he would not worship thee, neither would he call upon thy Name; therefore have I driven him out from before my Face into the Wilderness.*
11. *And God said, Have I born with him these hundred ninety and eight Years, and nourished him, and clothed him, notwithstanding his Rebellion against me, and couldst not thou, that art thyself a Sinner, bear with him one Night?*
12. *And Abraham said, Let not the Anger of my Lord wax hot against his Servant. Lo, I have sinned; forgive me, I pray Thee:*
13. *And Abraham arose and went forth into the Wilderness, and sought diligently for the Man, and found him, and returned with him to his Tent; and when he had entreated him kindly, he sent him*

⁴⁶ (GAS Chap. 12, item 7)

⁴⁷ From the book *Endearing Gems from Francisco Xavier*, written by Jussara Korngold and Marie Levinson, published by SAB, Inc.

⁴⁸ This parable was printed in the *Boston Chronicle*, 1768, and six years afterwards in Lord Kame's *Sketches of the History of Man*. It was then included in Mr. Vaughan's edition of Franklin's writings. From that time it was repeatedly reprinted.



away on the Morrow with Gifts.

14. And God spoke again unto Abraham, saying, For this thy Sin shall thy Seed be afflicted four Hundred Years in a strange Land:

15. But for thy Repentance will I deliver them; and they shall come forth with Power, and with Gladness of Heart, and with much Substance.

3. Justice

Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty. This precept is part of Benjamin Franklin's set of thirteen virtues and it invites us to refrain from being the cause of injuries to others.

We find, in *The Spirits' Book*, Part 3, Chapter XI, questions proposed by Allan Kardec to the Spirits, the answers to which enlighten us regarding the law of justice.

873. Is the sentiment of justice to be found in nature itself or is it the result of acquired ideas?
"It is so natural that you revolt at the thought of an injustice. Moral progress undoubtedly develops this sentiment, but it does not create it - God has placed it in the human heart."

874. If justice is a natural law, how may it be explained that people understand it so differently, and that what one individual considers just appears unjust to another?

"It is because passions usually mingle with judgment, altering that sentiment, as happens with the majority of the other natural sentiments, causing one to see things from an erroneous point of view."

875. How may justice be defined?

"Justice consists in respecting the rights of others."

a) – What determines these rights?

"They are determined by two things: human law and natural law. Since humans have established laws that are appropriate for their customs and character, such laws have established rights that can vary with progress. Obsolete rights, which seem monstrous to you now, appeared just and natural at that time. Therefore, the rights of humans do not always conform to justice. They only regulate certain social relations, while in private life there is an infinity of acts that are the exclusive jurisdiction of the court of conscience."

876. Outside the rights consecrated by human law, what is the basis of justice founded on natural law?

"Christ has told you: 'Do unto others whatsoever you would have them do unto you'. God has placed in the human heart the rule of all true justice through the desire that all have to see their rights respected. If you are uncertain of what you should do for your neighbor in any given circumstance, ask yourself what you would wish others to do to you in a similar situation. God could not give you a safer guide than your own conscience."

879. What would be the character of those who practice justice in all its purity?

"That of true justice, after the example of Jesus, because they would practice both charity and love towards their neighbor, without which there is no real justice."

"He who has no reason to criticize me deserves no response; whoever does have it, is being truthful, and we are powerless to go against the truth.

This is what Emmanuel has been teaching me. For this reason, during my entire life I have



tried to listen in silence to the truths and lies that have been said about me."
Francisco Cândido Xavier

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the texts below from the book *Our Daily Bread* (lessons 166 and 47).
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

THE CURE OF HATRED

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head."*
Paul (Romans, 12:20)

The individual, generally speaking, having decided to be in the service of righteousness, will encounter rows of gratuitous adversaries wherever he or she goes, as invariably occurs to the light besieged by the antagonism of the shadows.

But sometimes, due to errors of the past or to a lack of understanding of the present, more powerful enemies who become a constant menace to their tranquility confront them. To have enemies of that kind is to endure a painfully intimate illness, as the individual has not, as yet, become molded by living experiences in the Gospel.

As a rule, the good and faithful apprentice will develop his own strength to the maximum in favor of reconciliation; nevertheless, the greatest effort appears to be in vain. Impenetrability characterizes the heart of the other, and the most loving gestures pass by unperceived by him.

However, in order to counter that type of situation, the Divine Book offers a healthy recipe. It is neither advisable to aggravate differences by way of further confrontational discussions, nor should the well-intentioned individual resort to flattery. Wait for the proper opportunity to manifest goodness.

From the moment that the offended individual forgets the cause of dissension and returns toward love, the work in the service of Jesus is restored; meanwhile, the perception of the offender is slow, and in most cases, he only understands the new light, when it is distorted to his own personal advantage.

A sincere disciple of Christ easily frees himself from those inferior attachments; however, yesterday's antagonist can persist for a long time in the hardening of the heart. For this reason, by extending to him an abundance of goodness at the opportune moment, the disciple of Christ provides the means for heaping the renovating fire upon his head, thereby, curing his hatred, though it be filled to the brim with infernal expressions.

By the spirit Emmanuel, through the medium Francisco Xavier, from the book *Our Daily Bread*, item 166, translated by Jussara Korngold



THE DIFFICULTY OF PLEASING OTHERS

*"If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."
Paul (Galatians, 1:10)*

Sincere disciples of the Gospel would do well to preoccupy themselves with their own endeavors and conscientiously accomplish the tasks, which they were called upon to fulfill daily, learning to overlook the irrational opinions of the world.

The great multitude will not know how to display warmth and admiration except to those who satisfy their demands and gratify their whims. In the inevitable conflicts, which the apprentice will no doubt encounter along the way, the faithful disciple of Jesus will be a different kind of worker than anything which the vast majority of people have encountered before and which they will not be able to comprehend, even on the most basic of levels.

The messenger of the Glad Tidings who shows too great a concern regarding how the world likes or dislikes him will display great inexperience and lack of vigilance. When he finds himself materially wealthy and prosperous, owing to the fact that the Master has conferred upon him greater economic comfort, some malicious neighbors will attempt to bring into question the cause of his successful triumphs; but, when he encounters poverty and difficulties, people will attribute these problematic experiences to a retreat from sublime ideals that had formerly been embraced.

It is indispensable to strive, on behalf of human beings, as one who is aware that the integral task belongs to Jesus Christ. The world will eventually recognize the great efforts of the sincere devotee; however, that will come at another time, when the world's level of awareness has sufficiently evolved.

Popular opinion, more often than not, is nothing more than ill-conceived utterances by infantile gatherings of people who do not tolerate highly inspired educators on the subject of order and evolvment, work and achievement.

Let therefore, the sincere laborer for Christ strive without concern for the erroneous judgments of the masses. Jesus knows who he is, and that is all that matters.

Our daily Bread - From the Spirit Emmanuel through Francisco Xavier - Item 59



Lesson 10

You are the light of the world - INDUSTRY

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: You are the light of the world - INDUSTRY or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes) (This lesson can be developed in two or more sessions)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To understand the possibilities that were given to us and to put them to service, correlating this teaching from the Sermon on the Mount with one of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: **Industry**. Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

1. You are the salt of the earth

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. — Matthew 5:13, New International Version

"Salt of the earth" has become a common English expression. It means thoroughly good types. The origin is the Bible, from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, quoted in Matthew's gospel. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, 'the salt of the earth' is now used to describe 'a person or persons of great kindness, reliability or honesty'. Thus, it refers to a person or group considered as the best or noblest part of society.

In Biblical times, salt was used for several purposes:

CEREMONIAL USES OF SALT - Salt played a major role in Old Testament sacrifices and offerings.

SEASONING - People would use salt to bring out the inherent flavor of foods. By comparing His followers to salt, Jesus indicated that they were to add flavor, or seasoning, to society.

PRESERVATIVE - Since primitive times, salt has been used to preserve meat and other foods. In the same way, Jesus taught His followers to point others to a righteous way of life, thus preserving themselves from failures.

DISINFECTANT - Salt has long been used as a cleaning agent. Infected body parts may be soaked in salt water for disinfecting. Jesus could have been urging His followers to help clean up a godless world by living godly lives and setting an example for others.

BURIAL - Salt was one of the spices that were traditionally used to prepare a body for burial.

UNIT OF EXCHANGE - The Romans paid their soldiers an allowance of salt called a *salarium* - hence our word salary, and the phrases 'worth one's salt' and 'true to one's salt'. And if you 'salt a mine', you add valuable ore or something similar to make potential buyers think that they're getting something worthwhile.

MELTING ICE - Salt has always been useful for thawing and melting ice. In our day, we spread salt on roadways for this purpose. By serving as salt, and loving others, Jesus' followers might thaw people's hearts with their kindness, making them open to friendship, relationships, and to God's truth.



One commentator on this passage mentions for example that “Salt is refined, and therefore it implies we must have impurities removed from ourselves.” Furthermore, he says that salt “Creates thirst. There should be something about us that makes other people want to have what we have. He says that salt “Brings out flavor. There should be something about us that brings a little more meaning into people’s lives and provides zest and flavor to their activities.”

In Jesus’ day salt was a rare commodity. Greek aristocrats had a custom of buying their slaves with salt. If the slave did not meet the purchaser’s expectation, that slave “was not worth his salt.” Whence the expression, “He is not worth his salt.” As salt followers of Jesus’ teachings we are extremely precious “commodities” in this world.

We find in the book *Missionaries of the Light*⁴⁹ mentor Alexandre explaining to Andre Luiz: *We cannot do without salt in our diet. Our physiological organism is essentially comprised of sixty-percent saline, whose composition is almost identical to that of seawater with its sodium, calcium and potassium. In the physiological realm of a reincarnated person the taste of salt can be found in the blood, sweat, tears and other secretions. The corpuscles acclimated to warm seas would live comfortably in the organic fluids.* We gather from this passage another understanding of Jesus teaching, *You are the salt of the Earth*, because in fact, our most important instrument of evolvment, the human body, is basically composed of salt.⁵⁰

2. You are the light of the world

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. — Matthew 5:14-16, New International Version

In Jesus’ day, lamps were simple and made from clay. They had a reservoir for olive oil and a “nozzle” where the wick would rest. Household lamps were small enough to be carried in the palm of the hand. When it was dark enough to light a lamp, people would set it high enough to illuminate everything around --- on a shelf in the stone wall of their home or on a wooden lamp stand in the center of the room.

There is a simple story of a man who drove his team and wagon swiftly and safely on a road through a dark forest. Afterward he was asked how he knew where all the trees were along the road so that he could miss them as he drove the narrow road. He replied that he did not know where they were. He added, “I looked up at the opening between the tree tops and knew that if I followed the light above I could be safe.”

⁴⁹ Written by the spirit Andre Luiz through the medium Francisco Xavier, chapter 13, page 280, 1st edition - ISC

⁵⁰ This paragraph about salt makes us think of the fact that all life comes from the sea. We are also reminded that the human embryo re-enacts all the evolutionary stages of development before finally assuming the human form. It also make us think of Gandhi's march to the sea to make salt, in defiance of the British government. We may be led to believe the Great Salt March was a symbolic gesture meant to remind the British that there is something greater than themselves and greater than any nationality. (R.B.)



And that is how we should interpret the teaching of Jesus when he asks us to *let our light shine before men*. Our spiritual journeys, and the spiritual accomplishments we possess, can serve as a guiding light to greatly reduce the difficulties and the darkness that prevent others from finding their way to God.

Letting our light shine is not a mere abstraction. Jesus speaks of the necessity of performing deeds. We must engage in concrete behavior. Our light shines by the way we live, the choices we make, the attitudes we exhibit. Its presence is evident when we are courteous, and respectful to others, when we respect life in general, and when we refrain from reckless and risky behavior. Our light shines when we cleanse our souls, when we are charitable, and when we strive for justice. Our light shines when we love instead of hate, when we seek reconciliation, and pray for our enemies instead of seeking vengeance. Our light shines when we walk uprightly and speak the truth in love, without compromise.

Your life is something opaque, not transparent, as long as you look at it in an ordinary human way. But if you hold it up against the light of God's goodness, it shines and turns transparent, radiant and bright. And then you ask yourself in amazement: Is this really my own life I see before me?
Albert Schweitzer

Oftentimes, in contemplation of our own limitations, we stop to think about this particular teaching and we feel so powerless, so impotent, and so small, that it seems quite difficult to believe that we, one day, will be able to have even a little light to shine. But we should never despair and never lose hope. In fact, this same thought already demonstrates our spiritual improvement, because we feel humble and recognize our need to grow. We are neither inadequate nor powerful beyond measure. However, there is a powerful light of truth and goodness that exists inside of us. If we allow this light of ours to shine brightly it will unconsciously allow others to do the same.

One evening a man took a small candle from a box and began to climb a long winding stairway. "Where are we going?" asked the candle. "We're going up higher than a house to show the ships the way to the harbor." "But no ship in the harbor could ever see my light," the candle said. "It is so very small." "If your light is small," the man said, "just keep on burning brightly and leave the rest to me." When they reached the top of the long stairs, they came to a large lamp. Then he took the little candle and lit the lamp. Soon the large polished mirrors behind the lamp sent beams of light out across the miles of sea.

The story above teaches us well that we do not need to shine so bright in order to save or help the world, even our flickering flame is enough to do the task that was bestowed to us. We are part of God's creation, and as an analogy we could say that we are God's candles. Our job is to keep on shining. The success of our work is in God's hands. A tiny candle or match can start a forest fire. The little flame of our good example can actually change the lives of others without us even realizing that. Be a light to them like the beacon light in the story, which guided the ships to safe harbor.

Someday perhaps the inner light will shine forth from us, and then we'll need no other light.
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

3. Industry

One of the thirteen virtues presented by Benjamin Franklin, industry, works in unison with Jesus'



teachings contained in Matthew 5:13-16. It says: **Industry** - Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

If we are committed to work for our personal enlightenment there is no time to waste, we should use every opportunity that life presents to us to learn and to grow. We should prevent ourselves from engaging in reproachable actions or any actions that may hinder us from siding with goodness. There is one question Allan Kardec asks the spirits in *The Spirits' Book* that can be considered a wake-up call in relation to how we should conduct ourselves in this life.

642. In order to be pleasing to God and to insure our future situation is it enough to simply not do what is evil?

"No. All must do good to the limit of their abilities, since all will answer for all the evil that has resulted from the good that was left undone."

We do not need the world's permission to shine our light upon the dark and to do good works. As we take in the truth and light of Jesus' teachings, we grow and mature just as plants grow when they take in sunlight and water. The light changes us and purifies us. We blossom with godly character. We become rooted in the truth to withstand the storms and other hurdles we may find in our ways. We follow Jesus, filled with joy, thankfulness, and peace. We are the light of the world and as such, we are here to use our Light to uplift and transform all things with peace, love, harmony and goodwill. To close, let us quote a poem written by Marianne Williamson⁵¹ which may inspire us to find ways to let our light shine and support others, as well:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.
Elizabeth Kübler-Ross

⁵¹ Marianne Williamson from *A Return To Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the text below from the book *The Pathway, the Truth and Life* (lesson 180).
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

Let us kindle our light

*You must shed light among your fellows.
Jesus - (Matthew, 5:16)*

In view of the glory of the evolved worlds and sublime spheres that fill up the Universe, the narrow field in which we live, on the Planetary Crust, constitutes a limited circle of action.

However, if the problem were solely that of space, we would have nothing to lament.

The small and humble house, bright with sunshine and joy, is a paradise of happiness.

The anguish of our plane comes from the shadow.

Darkness invades the paths in all directions. Shadows are born from ignorance, wickedness and foolishness, and envelope peoples, institutions and individuals. Mists assail consciences, reasoning and sentiments.

In the middle of the long night, it's necessary to kindle your light. It is impossible to find the way to liberation without it. Without the shining irradiation of our own being, we will neither be easily seen by the Divine Messengers, who help in the name of the Almighty, nor effectively help anyone.

It is indispensable to organize the inner sanctuary and shed light on it so that the shadows will not take over.

It is possible to march by the light of others. However, without our own brilliance, we are constantly under the threat of falling down. The owners of the bright lamps may go a different way from ours, summoned by the hills of the ascension that we as yet do not deserve.

Take advantage, therefore, of the sources of light on the way and use the wick of goodwill, with the oil of service and humility, to light up your torch for the journey. Thank those who light your way for an hour, for a day or for many years, but do not neglect your lamp if you do not wish to lose your footing on the precipices of the long journey!

The fundamental problem of redemption, my friend, does not limit itself to spoken and written words. It is very easy to make beautiful speeches and give excellent information while maintaining, nonetheless, the blindness in our eyes.

Our basic needs consist in self-enlightenment, inner understanding, self-education, and in a substantial conversion of the "self" to the Kingdom of God.

You can talk beautifully about life, discourse with grand eloquence about faith, preach the values of the creed, eat the bread of consolation, exalt peace, gather the flowers of good, taste the fruit that grows from the generosity of others, conquer the ephemeral crown of easy praise, and pile up many titles that adorn you in your transit through the valleys of the world.

In reality, all of these things can be done by the spirit that delay itself, indefinitely, on certain corners of the road.

However, it's impossible to advance without light.



Lesson 11

Seek and you shall find - ORDER

Duration: 1 hour

1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
2. Present the PPT: Seek and you shall find or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes)
(This lesson can be developed in two or more sessions)
3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

To understand the possibilities that have been given to us and to put them to service, correlating this teaching of Jesus with one of Benjamin Franklin's thirteen virtues: Order. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

1. Seek and you shall find

1. Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock at the door and it shall be opened to you; for whoever asks receives, and whoever seeks finds, and it shall be opened to the one who knocks at the door.

Also, who is the man among you who will give a stone to his son when he asks for bread? Or if he asks him for a fish, will give him a serpent? If, therefore, you, being evil as you are, know how to give good things to your children, it is even more reasonable that your Father, who is in heaven, will give good things to those who ask him. (Mt. 7:7-11)

2. From the earthly point of view, the maxim: Seek and you shall find is analogous to this one: Help yourself and heaven will help you. It is the principle of the law of labor and, consequently, the law of progress, because progress is the child of labor, and labor sets in motion the latent power of human intelligence.

During humankind's infancy, humans applied their intelligence only to the search for nourishment, the means to shelter themselves from the inclemency of the weather and to defending themselves against their enemies. However, God has given them the unceasing desire to better themselves; it is this desire that drives them to seek out means of improving their situation. Through their research, their intelligence expands and their morals become purified. The needs of the body are followed by the needs of the spirit. After physical nourishment, humans need spiritual nourishment, and it is thus that humans pass from the primitive to the civilized state.⁵²

3. If God had exempted humans from bodily labor, their limbs would have atrophied; if God had exempted them from intellectual labor, their spirits would have remained in infancy, in the state of animal instinct. That is why God made labor a necessity, and said to them: Seek and you shall find; labor and you shall produce. In this way, you will be the children of your deeds; you will derive merit

⁵² The Gospel According to Spiritism – ISC publication



*from them and you will be recompensed according to what you have done.*⁵³

4. *It is due to the application of this principle that spirits do not come to spare humans the work of research by bringing them discoveries and inventions that are completed and ready to produce.*

(...) Spirits come to show them the objective they must reach and the way that will lead them to it, saying to them: Press on and you shall arrive. You will find stones under your feet; look and remove them yourself. We will give you the strength you need if you wish to use it. (The Mediums' Book, pt. 2, chap. XXVI, nos. 291 ff.)

5. *From the moral point of view, these words of Jesus mean: Ask that the light may enlighten your way and it will be given to you; ask for the strength to resist evil and you will have it; ask for the assistance of the good spirits and they will come to accompany you, and like the angel of Tobit, they will serve as your guides. Ask for good counsel and it will never be refused to you; knock at our door and it will be opened to you; but ask sincerely, with faith, fervor and trust; present yourself with humility and not arrogance; otherwise, you will be left to your own devices and your failures will be the punishment for your pride.*⁵⁴

The problem here is that we lack trust and faith in God and the assistance of the good spirits. We justify this position by saying that oftentimes we have prayed and asked for help and help was not provided to us. But we have to sincerely reflect upon what we have been asking for. In light of Jesus' teaching, "who is the man among you who will give a stone to his son when he asks for bread? Or if he asks him for a fish, will give him a serpent?" would it be just to believe that our beloved Creator could overlook our needs and leave us to our own luck? What happens, oftentimes, is that we do not see God's involvement until we are well along with a new chapter in our life. But this does not mean that we haven't been helped.

The lack of trust in an almighty God is reflected in the story of a nine-year-old boy returning from Hebrew school who tells his mother about the day's lesson.

"Well, the rabbi told how God sent Moses behind the enemy lines to rescue the Israelites from the Egyptians. When they came to the Red Sea, Moses called for the engineers to build a pontoon bridge. After they had all crossed, they looked back and saw the Egyptian tanks coming. Quick as a flash, Moses radioed headquarters on his walkie-talkie to send in the bombers to destroy the bridge, and that's how he saved the Israelites."

His mother, astounded, said to the boy, "David, is that really the way the rabbi told that story?" "Well, not exactly, Mom. But if I told it his way you'd never believe it!"

The story is humorous because it's all too true. When things are bigger than our own life experience, we "translate" them into what we consider to be understandable dimensions.

Incredible things come our way every day, but we overlook them because we are too busy just looking at the negative situations we may currently be experiencing. Each new day is a blessed opportunity for spiritual growth and enlightenment. When you open your mind and heart to joy, you can find it everywhere, just by looking up to life, and here it is joyful!

⁵³ The Gospel According to Spiritism – ISC publication

⁵⁴ The Gospel According to Spiritism – ISC publication



On the other hand, we find a beautiful example of faith displayed by Veronica of Caesarea Philippi in one of the passages of the New Testament narrated to us by Matthew (9: 20 to 22):

As Jesus was going through the multitudes through a narrow street, he suddenly stopped, exclaiming, "Someone touched me." And when those who were near him denied that they had touched him, Peter spoke up: "Master, you can see that this crowd presses you, threatening to crush us, and yet you say someone has touched me." What do you mean?" Then Jesus said: "I asked who touched me, for I perceived that living energy had gone forth from me." As Jesus looked about him, his eyes fell upon a near-by woman, who, coming forward, knelt at his feet and said: "For years I have been afflicted with a scourging hemorrhage. I have suffered many things from many physicians; I have spent all my substance, but none could cure me. Then I heard of you, and I thought if I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall certainly be made whole. And so I pressed forward with the crowd as it moved along until, standing near you, Master, I touched the border of your garment, and I was made whole; I know that I have been healed of my affliction." When Jesus heard this, he took the woman by the hand and, lifting her up, he said: "Daughter, your faith has made you whole; go in peace." It was her faith and not her touch that made her whole. He desired all to know that it was her pure and living faith that had wrought the cure.

2. K.N.O.C.K. and the Door Shall Be Opened⁵⁵

We see in Matthew 7:7 "...Knock and the door shall be opened to you." If the end result of knocking is that the door will be opened, it must have started in a closed state. Too many times we see closed doors as a bad thing, hanging our head in defeat, going into panic mode, or trying to use other peoples' keys to get in. We are encouraged to simply knock. Knock means more than the initial inquiry; it means that you wait for the response. Some doors don't open as quickly as others, but they can and will open eventually. Here are a few thoughts on how to K.N.O.C.K. successfully...

Keep your faith: The same faith it takes to knock is the same faith required to keep you standing at the door. When most are ready to walk away because it's taking too long or because other things with immediate benefit are more easily accessible what will you do? It takes faith to stand and wait, to hold onto a vision that no one else can see but you. Keep your faith by tending to it like a gardener cultivating award-winning roses.

Never give in to doubts and fears: It is okay to have doubts and fears. The key here is to not allow those feelings to move you from your position. This happens when you try to reason with doubts and fears, which are simply feelings (not truth).

Out the ordinary: If you are looking for the door to be opened the ordinary way or only the way you think it should happen, you may miss your opening. Think of all the ways a door might open: It could open from the bottom like a garage door, spin like a revolving door, slide open, or maybe there is a small opening at the bottom and you will have to shrink to fit under it (maybe losing the ego and attitude will help you fit).

Choose: We have so much power in our ability to choose: choose to stand your ground, choose to be grateful, choose to forgive, choose to be genuinely happy for other people, choose to do what's uncomfortable if it will get you to what's next. When we don't realize the value and power of our ability to choose, we unconsciously tie our potential to our feelings. Limitless living is fueled by

⁵⁵ <http://reclaimyourbrilliance.com/knock-and-the/>



choosing to act and think regardless of what and how we feel. Refuse to do things by default.

Keep your heart and mind guarded: Be careful of what you allow in and who you allow to sow into you. If you are standing at a door, waiting for it to open, you need your cheerleaders, those who have been shoulders for you to stand on, and those who will patiently wait with you passing the silent time with words of encouragement. Read, find inspiring music, watch inspiring movies, do whatever you must to keep your mind and heart prepared for what awaits you on the other side of the door. While some closed doors are meant to lead you down another path, others are meant to be opened.

*"When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us."
- Alexander Graham Bell*

3. Positivity of Pain in our Lives

To knock requires a positive and active attitude. We cannot expect things to happen to us without us committing to do our part. God doesn't help this way. God provides us with the necessary tools for us to achieve our ultimate goal, which is to evolve and to become pure spirits. Sometimes the only way we can achieve this is by going through challenges that may come in the form of suffering and struggling in our lives. We can see from items 3 and 4 of *The Gospel According to Spiritism*, mentioned above, that it is through labor that we develop our intelligence, and, as a consequence, that we develop ourselves spiritually as well.

We have to learn the true value of suffering, challenges and difficulties in our lives and embrace them as blessed companions that will lead us to enlightenment and, as Benjamin Franklin once said when referring to reincarnation, *to become a better version of ourselves*.

In the book *Victory over Depression*⁵⁶, the spirit Joanna de Angelis, through the mediumship of Divaldo Franco says:

The pain is always an unwanted companion, as it afflicts with its sensations and disturbing emotions. However, many blows of suffering have psychotherapeutic functions for the Spirit, because they help one awaken to the reality of being immortal, even while moving about in one's material wrapping, always of ephemeral duration.

A pearl is torn from its cloister through the vigorous strokes of tools that open the clamshell. While guarded in its sanctuary, the pearl does not reflect the soft light that it possesses.

In a similar way, the awakening of consciousness in humans can occur through a slow progress that propitiates enrichment, with its strokes of pain and distress that drive an individual to the reality of his or her current stage of evolvment.

Suffering is bad; however, it is not an evil, because it offers valuable resources for the acquisition of permanent good.

Without pain, humans would still be in the lower stages of their anthropo-socio-psychological development, without the necessary balance to successfully navigate the confrontations of the evolutionary process.

⁵⁶ Published by LEAL in 2010, not yet translated into English.



Crossing the river of problems from one to the other shore, where the activities of beautiful moral grandeur are to be found, is the task of the intelligent person who longs for the conquest of happiness.

When Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is within us, he indicated the possibility that through inner enlightenment, the individuals have already entered it and experienced it.

It doesn't matter how much effort we have to put in and how much pain we have to endure in order to succeed, and accomplish good things because, as Thomas Edison said: *Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.* He also said: *I never did anything by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident; they came by work.* And for those who wanted to point out his failures he would answer back in a positive way by saying:

I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.
Thomas A. Edison

And in the end we all know how well he succeeded!

*When difficulties multiply around you, causing you embarrassments and struggles...
When the vicissitudes appear to be so unbearable, that abandoning your obligations seems to be the only way out...*

*Then, and only then, will you have reached the golden moment to give testimony of your faith, because serving and acting upon facing fatigue and tribulations, you can be assured that due to your work and dedication, God will come to your aid with the unanticipated assistance and the unexpected light.*⁵⁷

God doesn't require us to succeed; He only requires that you try.
Mother Teresa

4. Be Pro-Active - Help yourself and heaven will help you

It is already readily accepted in our society that there is a need to recycle paper, metals, fabrics and other items that previously went to waste or were worthless in our homes. But to extend this healthy practice and apply it to ourselves by recycling what we think is still in its initial phase of development in human behavior. Obviously, the process of changing our ingrained habits needs our collaboration, which begins with the recognition of how we are acting and why; it involves the conscious choice of our way of thinking, and it requires persistence in tracing and closely monitoring the results achieved. Ah, yes! We must also face our internal resistance, i.e., the mental laziness related to the necessary effort required to produce changes, and the external resistance, reflected in the disapproval and discontentment of those who dislike our changes.

When we say "Help yourself and heaven will help you", we are summarizing a good posture in which we realize that we need to change something in our lives and we understand that it starts by thinking about what needs to be changed in our way of thinking. We can "recycle" our thoughts. Is there any other way to see the same situation? Are we limiting our focus without realizing that there are many angles which can show us a more adequate and efficient solution? Will there be so much pride within me that I will not let myself see, feel and think differently than I am thinking now?

⁵⁷ From the book *Endearing Gems from Francisco Xavier – The Golden Moments*. Published by SAB.



We need to become more attentive with what goes on inside of us, analyzing ourselves and redoubling our attention; we must become more flexible regarding prejudices; examining how we feel and what triggers our reactions. But we have to do that without blaming ourselves and at no charge! We are in an evolutionary process, and mistakes have nothing to do with shameful acts.

Working for a living is already part of our lives. To work to improve ourselves still requires positive action.

Habits take advantage of inattention; inclinations often overpower reason. Our mere speculative conviction that it is in our own best interest to be completely virtuous, is not sufficient to prevent our slipping; our contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, and uniform rectitude of conduct.

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat. Theodore Roosevelt 1910

5. Order

In his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin, said: As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employed in guarding against one fault, another often surprised me; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative conviction that it was our interest to be completely virtuous was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct. For this purpose I therefore contrived the thirteen virtues method.

To follow the program established by him, Benjamin Franklin had to rely first on ORDER - Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

When addressing the issues we have to resolve, unless we follow a list of priorities, always putting ahead of monetary or financial gains, heart and home, we will be unable to succeed in a satisfactory way.

Understanding our potential and purpose requires order, patience, determination, and daily achievement. Facing challenges is really a matter of having faith in our own ability to be positive about life. May we never lose sight of this important truth: none of us can be truly great until we put God first, and gain knowledge of ourselves.

*What lies behind you and what lies before you are tiny matters
compared to what lies within you.
Ralph Waldo Emerson*



6. Ask and it shall be given to you

The spirit Joanna de Angelis, through the mediumship of Divaldo Franco, in the book *Victory over Depression*⁵⁸, says about the efficacy of prayer:

Each being is, in reality, the outcome of growth in the realm of intellect. The concentration of their idea on rehabilitation or deterioration will take them to the vibrational levels in which they draw energies corresponding to the ones they emit.

It was for no other reason that Jesus said: All you ask of the Father in prayer, He will grant you, demonstrating that the establishment of full harmony with the powerful Source of Life produces a correspondence between the Divine Father and the one who prays.

When someone prays, they open up their psychic fields, which become malleable so as to record the heavenly answers.

If human beings knew the transforming power of prayer they would, whenever possible, seek to establish through prayer a connection with the higher realms, drawing, via this exchange, healthy energy to sustain their existential victories.

To cultivate, therefore, uplifting thoughts, seeking to live in a manner consistent with the higher goals of life, is the duty of everyone who longs for health, peace, and happiness.

And remember, when you open your mind and heart to joy, you can find it everywhere, just by looking up to life, for here it is joyful!

*When life gives us a hundred reasons to cry,
may we show life that we have thousands of reasons to smile.
Anonymous*

⁵⁸ Published by LEAL in 2010, not yet translated into English.



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the text below from the book *The Pathway, the Truth and Life* (lesson 109).
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

We will always find...

*For everyone who asks, receives; anyone who seeks finds.
- Jesus (Luke, 11:10)*

When the believer faces the necessity of questing after some truth, he or she automatically remembers the Master's promise that an adequate answer will be given to anyone who asks.

It is important, however, to know what we are looking for. Naturally, we will always receive, but it is indispensable to know the significance of our request.

Jesus said: "anyone who seeks, finds."

It is equally true to say that anyone who seeks evil will find it.

There is a perfect attunement between our soul and the soul of things. We are not talking about a hypothesis but, rather, examining a law. For those who search for thieves, listening only to the false appeals issuing from their inner world, every person they encounter will be found to be dishonest. This is also true for those who aspire to have a religious belief but approach religious groups with suspicion. They will never experience faith since everything they investigate will be tainted by their beginning point of view. They insist upon so many pre-conditions, while constantly manipulating the inferior purposes from which they nourish themselves that they do not actually discover anything other than the disillusionments they were expecting to find in the first place.

In order to find goodness, it is necessary to search daily for it.

Undeniably, in fields of struggle such as may be found on Earth, the search for evil is swiftly accomplished, due to the preponderance of evil amongst human beings. On the other hand, finding goodness is not so easy. However, true goodness, invested with divine and eternal value, will eventually be found if one is diligent.

Therefore, it is indispensable to be prudent when seeking something, since the Master has affirmed: "anyone who seeks, finds." Moreover, we will always find what we seek.

By the spirit Emmanuel, through the medium Francisco Xavier, from the book *The Pathway, the Truth and Life*, lesson 109, translated by Publio Lentulos Coelho



Lesson 12

Inner Transformation Examples

Duration: 1 hour

- 1. Initial Prayer (5 minutes)
- 2. Present the PPT: Inner Transformation Examples or read the text below with the participants: (30 minutes) (This lesson can be developed in two or more sessions)
- 3. Distribute the Weekly Assignment
- 4. Passes, Final Prayer and Water

Objective

Through the analysis of facts that show the turning point in the lives of some of humanity's missionaries, we can gather strength to work on our inner transformation.

1. Inner Transformation Examples



Paul of Tarsus

In his popular volume, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, first published in 1912, Adolf Deissmann once said that the true historical investigator must rescue “the paper Paul of our western libraries.” Paul is a pivotal character in history. Having risen from relative obscurity in the first century of Christianity to world-wide recognition as a modern international figure, no one, aside from Jesus Christ himself, has been so influential.

Exactly when Paul began his bloody mission of savagery against the Christians is unknown with any degree of precision. Saul of Tarsus first appears in the biblical record as a witness to the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr to the cause of Christ—even “consenting” to his death (Acts 7:58; 9:1). Henceforth his persecution of Christians, as portrayed in the book of Acts via his own testimony, was relentless—though he sincerely believed he was fulfilling the will of Jehovah (23:1; 26:9).

In an interview given to *The Spiritist Magazine*⁵⁹, Mr. Divaldo Franco said that, *after exhaustive deliberation, he had come to the conclusion that Paul was a spirit of strong and ambitious personality who sought to be faithful to the Law of Moses, and was dominated by an obstinacy characteristic of those who wanted to attain the highest position in the Sanhedrin. Intuitively, he felt that Jesus was the Messiah and consequently experienced a psychological dichotomy: he both loved and hated Him.*

Saul became mentally open to Jesus when his betrothed, Abigail, told him about His spiritual greatness, but he felt an uncontrollable jealousy due to his relentless character. Soon thereafter, with the murder of Stephen made legal by the Torah, he experienced the courage and love displayed by Jesus' disciple in facing his death, and was deeply, and unexpectedly, touched by it. Still, he

⁵⁹ Volume 6



became even more resistant due to the foolish pride that dominated him.

According to Luke's historical record (Acts 9:1ff), Saul, armed with arrest warrants for those of the Christian Way, departed from Jerusalem on a journey to ancient Damascus, some 140 miles to the north. As he drew near to that city, a light brighter than the noonday sun suddenly engulfed him.

The encounter at the gates of Damascus was the powerful means utilized by Jesus to bring Saul to his cause. It is worth mentioning that the dialogue between them is one of the most beautiful examples of conversion to be found in the religious history of mankind. After being asked by Jesus why he persecuted Him, Saul inquired as to who He was and, upon being informed, yielded as one who recognizes his master. He neither argued nor displayed any apprehension, but simply gave himself to Jesus, asking: - What do you want me to do?

... And he obeyed.

The Conversion Motive⁶⁰

Even to this day many question the veracity of the accounts related to Paul's conversion. Lord George Lyttelton (1708-1773) who was an Oxford educated, and also served with great distinction in the British Parliament, was, initially, highly skeptical of Christianity. He determined he would perform a critical examination and expose' of Luke's record of Paul's "conversion experience." In doing so he believed he could establish that Paul's radical transformation was grounded in base motives of self-interest. He knew there had to be some rational justification for such a major alteration of Saul's life. But, after carefully and thoroughly researching the matter in a thoroughly scholarly fashion, he reversed his skeptical view, having concluded that Paul's conversion was genuine. In 1747, Lord Lyttelton published his book, *Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul*, in which he argued for the truth of the Christian system. This book is still in print after 200 years—a rare phenomenon in publishing. Lyttelton concluded:

- The apostle was not an imposter who deliberately advocated that which he knew to be false; indeed, why would he suffer so much persecution for what he knew to be a lie?
- He was not an enthusiast who was given to "an overheated imagination"; he was a disciplined logical scholar of the first magnitude.
- He was not deceived by the fraud of others for he claimed his revelation to be independent of the other apostles. Even his critics acknowledged his rugged independence.

Although the word conversion is theologically accepted, Mr. Divaldo's commentary on the conversion of Saul was that *it was more like an acceptance of something he inwardly feared and which wound up actually happening. This etymologically defined sense of conversion represents the change of attitude, belief, and behavior, adopting another one that was opposed to it. This acceptance or conversion, however, presents itself in a thousand different ways, according to the moral and spiritual level of each human being.*

When Jesus tells Paul: "Do not be recalcitrant against the stings," it is evident that these words demonstrate an awareness of the steps in the process of reaching deep awareness. When we seek to deny a reality we are facing, it becomes a real sting, because we cannot free the unconscious self from its presence by forcing ourselves into a state of numbed consciousness. This is equivalent to saying that no one is able to flee from oneself indefinitely, that is to say from self-encounter, which leads, inevitably, to a deep immersion in full consciousness. Oftentimes this awakening occurs gradually, in stages, in view of the past spiritual fixations whose collective object is to keep us in

⁶⁰ The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus BY WAYNE JACKSON <http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1372-the-conversion-of-saul-of-tarsus>



ignorance. The awakening of the Self is very painful to the ego that has been perfectly contented to immerse itself in the conventional, while the Self wishes to realize individuation, i.e. the numinous state.

In Saul-Paul we find the archetype of the hero, as conceptualized in Jungian psychology, who is asleep, and suddenly awakens, similar to what occurs in the parable of the prodigal son who goes in search of himself and returns to the paternal home to rehabilitate himself. We all carry this archetype that will manifest in a culminating moment, realizing the integration of Saul in Paul, and to whose reality one will offer one's existence without reluctance.⁶¹

We can read more about Paul's inner transformation in the superb book *Paul and Stephen*. The spirit Emmanuel, through the mediumship of Chico Xavier, describes one of the most emblematic moments of early Christianity: the story of Paul of Tarsus. Besides offering new information on Paul's conversion at the gates of Damascus, his escape to the desert and his travels, the book talks about the relationship between Paul and Stephen, the first martyr of Christianity. Paul and Stephen is considered one of the top ten Spiritist books of the 20th century.



Mary Magdalene or Mary of Magdala

Mary Magdalene or Mary of Magdala was one of Jesus' most celebrated disciples. She is famous because, according to the Gospels of Mark and John, she was the first person to see Jesus after he rose from the dead.

Since the late 6th century, Mary Magdalene has been identified in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church as an adulteress and repentant prostitute. Pope Gregory the Great made a speech in 591 where he seemed to combine the actions of three women mentioned in the New Testament and also identified an unnamed woman as Mary Magdalene. In 1969 the Vatican, without commenting on Pope Gregory's reasoning,⁶² implicitly rejected it by separating Luke's sinful woman, Mary of Bethany, and Mary

Magdala via the Roman Missal. Not only is she misidentified as the repentant fallen prostitute of legend, meditating and levitating in a cave, but she was not necessarily even a notable sinner: Being possessed by "seven demons" that were exorcised by Jesus, she was arguably more victim than sinner. According to Luke 8:2 and Mark 16:9, Jesus cleansed her of "seven demons."

Mary Magdalene is the leader of a group of women disciples who were present at the cross, when the male disciples (excepting John the Beloved) had fled, and at his burial. Mary was a devoted follower of Jesus, entering into the close circle of those taught by Jesus during his Galilean ministry.

In order to understand the grandiosity of this spirit and the sacrifices she went through in order to reach inner improvement let's read the enlightening message of the Spirit Emmanuel describing Mary of Magdalene:

Magdalene⁶³

⁶¹ The Spiritist Magazine, volume 6.

⁶² Williams, Mary Alice. "Mary Magdalene." PBS: Religion and Ethics. November 21, 2003. Episode no. 712. Web: 22 December 2009 - Wikipedia

⁶³ By the spirit Emmanuel, through the medium Francisco Xavier, from the book *The Pathway, the Truth and Life*, lesson 92, translated by Publio Lentulos Coelho

“Jesus said to her: Mary! She turned toward him and cried out: Master.” (John, 20:16)

One of the most significant facts of the Gospel, which invites us to a substantial and meticulous meditation, is the first apparition of Jesus when resurrected.

For what deep reasons would the Divine Master appear firstly to Magdalene, leaving aside so many people who were closer to Him?

Naturally we are compelled to ask why He would not have appeared to His altruistic and loving mother, or even to His beloved disciples?

However, Jesus’ attitude is deeply symbolic in its divine essence.

Among the important figures of the Gospel, no one has employed so much effort in trying to change him or herself, so as to be able to follow the Savior, as did the disturbed and unforgettable Magdalene. Not even Paul of Tarsus, who had a character deeply linked to the Law but not to the vices, accomplished so great a change.

Magdalene, however, knew intimately how difficult it was to extirpate the bitterness of wrong habits, thus remaining “dead” by sensations which paralyze the soul. Nevertheless, for her it was enough to simply meet the Christ in order to abandon everything and follow His steps. She was faithful until the very end, as evidenced by her acts of self-denial, remaining firmly resolute in taking up her own cross so that she could benefit from the redeeming Calvary of her bitter existence.

It is understandable that many students should express curiosity as to the reason why the Master did not appear to Peter, John, His mother or His friends. Nevertheless, it is equally reasonable for us to recognize that, with His unforgettable love and compassion, Jesus confirmed that His doctrine is for all of His followers, from novices to those who have tried to live by his teachings all their lives, and is the golden code by which lives are transformed for the glory of goodness. And it may fairly be said that nobody has yet transformed his or her life in the light of the redeeming Gospel as Mary of Magdalene did.



Saint Augustine

Augustine of Hippo (November 13, 354 - August 28, 430) was Bishop of Hippo Regius. He was a Latin-speaking philosopher and theologian who lived in Roman North Africa. His writings were very influential in the development of Western Christianity. In the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, he is a saint and pre-eminent Doctor of the Church.

In his early years he was heavily influenced by Manichaeism and afterward by the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus. After his conversion to Christianity and baptism (387), Augustine developed his own approach to philosophy and theology, accommodating a variety of methods and different perspectives.

As a youth Augustine lived a hedonistic lifestyle for a time, associating with young men who boasted of their experience with the opposite sex and urged inexperienced boys, like Augustine, to seek out experiences with women. At a young age, he developed an affair with a young woman in Carthage. She was his lover for over thirteen years and gave birth to his son Adeodatus.

At age thirty, Augustine had won the most highly prized academic chair in the Latin world, at a time

when such posts gave ready access to political careers. He was already moving away from Manichaeism while still residing in Carthage but it was in Milan that Augustine's life truly changed. His mother, who had followed him to Milan, pressured him to become a Christian. Then later, in the summer of 386, after having read an account of the life of Saint Anthony of the Desert, which greatly inspired him, Augustine underwent a profound personal crisis, which led him to convert to Christianity, abandon his career in rhetoric, quit his teaching position in Milan, give up any ideas of marriage, and devote himself entirely to serving God and to the practices of priesthood, which included celibacy. Key to this conversion was a childlike voice he heard singing from a nearby house. He paused to give thought to how and why such a child would sing those words and then left his garden and returned to his own home. There he picked up a book written by the Apostle Paul, which contained the Epistle to the Romans, and opened it and instantly read: (Romans 13: 13-14) "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, in concupiscence." He would detail his spiritual journey in his famous Confessions, which became a classic of both Christian theology and world literature.

We have already included in our studies, in Lesson One of this workbook, the wise counsel given by Saint Augustine, one of the spirits who helped with the Spiritist Codification, regarding the importance of achieving self-knowledge in order for us to work on our inner transformation. We find in *The Spirits' Book*⁶⁴ a question asked by Allan Kardec concerning the difficulties we encounter in attempting to know ourselves, and he asks how we can achieve it. Saint Augustine's reply is:

Do what I used to do when I was living on the earth: at the end of each day I examined my conscience, reviewed what I had done and asked myself whether or not I had failed to fulfill some duty and whether or not anyone had reason to complain about me. It was thus that I arrived at knowing myself and in seeing what there was in me that needed to be reformed. Those who every night would recall all their actions during the day, and would ask themselves what good or evil they had done, praying to God and their guardian angel to enlighten them, would acquire great strength for self-improvement, because, believe me, God will assist them.(...) Therefore, formulate your questions, asking about what you have done and towards what aim you acted in a particular circumstance, whether you have done anything that you would blame in others, and whether you have done anything that you would not dare profess.(...) Examine what you may have done against God, then against your neighbor and, lastly, against yourselves. The answers will be either repose for your conscience, or an indication of a wrong that you must amend. Self-knowledge is therefore the key to individual improvement.



Francis of Assisi

Francis of Assisi was born in 1182, son of Pietro Bernardone, a wealthy cloth merchant of central Italy. Of his mother, Pica, little is known, but she is said to have belonged to a noble family of Provence.

Pietro's worldly success had secured for the young Francis a care-free life of material comfort. Francis was a popular youth, often the center of attention, who could be found engaged in sport, frequenting the piazza of the city, or confidently serenading the young women of Assisi.

Francis eagerly sought the glory and honor of battle and in 1201; at the age of 19 he joined the war with Assisi's rival, Perugia. After an abrupt

Allan Kardec, Part 3 – Chapter 12 – question 919a

defeat, Francis spent nearly a year as a prisoner while his father raised the money to pay his ransom. In 1205 he again tried to outfit himself as a knight, but after suffering another illness, he had a vision that marked the beginning of his conversion. He was 23 years old.

He returned to Assisi where his initial depression soon became an emotional crisis. His evident dissatisfaction with the material comforts of his life frustrated his father, particularly as Francis spontaneously began to share his family's wealth with the poor.

Born of a crisis of human understanding, his search for inner peace and new direction put Francis on the road to conversion.

We are all well familiar with the most divulged prayer of Francis of Assisi that represents a true lesson on fraternity. In fact, the entire second part of the prayer of Francis of Assisi is a testament to the truth that we find joy by giving joy to others, when he starts saying: O Divine Master grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console... But we are going to present in this lesson a prayer uttered by the spirit Francis of Assisi dictated to the medium Divaldo Pereira Franco by the spirit Manoel Philomeno of Miranda, in the book *Planetary Transition*.⁶⁵

Sublime Master Jesus,

*Make us understand your will and not ours, rendering ourselves to your strong hands to lead us;
Allow us to carry out the duties that were assigned to us, but not according to our desires;
Cast your gaze upon us, so that we may have the clarity of your tenderness, and not the shadows of our ignorance;*

Bless our purposes to serve you, when we have only concerned ourselves with using your holy name to serve us;

Involve us in the sanctification of your projects, so that we may be You in us, because we still have no possibility to be in You;

Subdue our desires for power and pleasure, sustaining us in the real achievement of renunciation and selflessness;

Help us in understanding our labors, sustaining us in our difficulties and assisting us when we find ourselves immersed in the mortal cell;

Bestow upon us the gift of your peace, so that we may distribute it wherever we go, and all may identify it, understanding that we are Thy dedicated servants...

... and because death restored to us the glorious life so that we may continue through the path of enlightenment, grace us with your wisdom for our prosperous journey to ascension, even if it means dipping often in the shadows of matter, However, we will have with us the compass of your kind heart pointing us in the right direction.

Lord!

Intercede with the All-Loving Father, for your brethren in the rearguard, who are almost all of us, the apostates of duty.

There are so many more examples of profound inner transformation that we could have mentioned on this lesson, such as the stories of Moses, Buddha, and Mohammed, but their telling would take too long for the purpose of this study. However, we advise all those interested in finding further inspiration to

⁶⁵ This book was not yet translated to English. The Portuguese edition was published by LEAL in 2010. You can find this excerpt on pages 133 and 134 of this edition.



read about them and so many others.

*“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.” Marcel Proust*



2. You



Now it's time for you to apply cognitive therapy⁶⁶ in your life and to begin to internalize the lessons you learned in this course. Remember, we are talking about starting with baby steps.

*"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."
(Lao Tzu)*

Let's practice eliminating the A.N.Ts (automatic negative thoughts and/or tendencies) that hold us back. Automatic negative thoughts will crawl into our brain, if we allow them to, and diminish our will power, jeopardizing our chances of success.

Henceforth the idea is to fix on one thing at a time. Little things can lead to big things, and good can lead to great. Whether it's becoming less selfish, or developing more compassion, or even becoming less attached to material things, it can be daunting -- almost paralyzing -- to focus on the final goal. It can feel like a destination you can never possibly reach. With that perspective almost anyone would give up before they began. The only thing it takes is the one thing everybody has the power to do. Commit.

What's the one thing you'll commit to doing this week?

Good sentiments are encouraged, stimulated and honored today, more than at any other time, and as you embark on your personal re-creation process, you will realize that you are not alone. There are many people already seeking after a more comprehensive and spiritual way to lead their lives. Many have preceded you and are waiting along the road to give you a hand. But it will still be up to you to come up with your own roadmap and you are going to have to keep walking until you reach your objective. You may be able to find shortcuts along the way, but you are still going to have to start and you are going to have to keep going until you reach your objective.

You will be surprised to meet your new companions on this road. And you can count on us being among them.

May God bless us all on this incredible journey!

⁶⁶ Cognitive therapy seeks to help the patient overcome difficulties by identifying and changing dysfunctional thinking, behavior, and emotional responses. This involves helping patients develop skills for modifying beliefs, identifying distorted thinking, relating to others in different ways, and changing behaviors. Wikipedia



WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT

The participants should:

1. Read the text below from the book *Our Daily Bread* (lesson 33) and from the book *The Pathway, the Truth and Life* (lesson 49).
2. Highlight the statements that touched you the most and write in a notebook the one that you feel you need to work on the most.

LET US ALSO WORK

*“Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you.”
(Acts, 14:15)*

The exhortations of Paul and Barnabas echo resoundingly to this day amidst the faithful students of Christianity.

The Christian family quite often has desired to perpetuate the illusion of the inhabitants of Lystra.

The missionaries of the Revelation do not possess privileges with regard to the services they must accomplish. The achievements that we might think of as conferring grace or special prerogatives are only expressions of a most profound effort on their part to learn and to put the teachings into practice, together with Jesus.

Christ did not found a Doctrine involving gods and devotees, separated from one another. He created a vigorous system of spiritual transformation for the supreme good, destined to come to the aid of all hearts thirsting for light, love and truth.

In the Gospel we are shown Magdalene weighed down by painful deceptions, Paul, blindly pursuing impossible ideals of salvation, Peter, denying the Divine Friend, Mark, battling with his own hesitations; but, even as we contemplate these errors of human judgment, we are then witnesses to the powerful transformations that cause the daughter of Magdala to be renewed and pursuing a redeeming path, the great persecutor to be converted into a messenger of the Glad Tidings, the fragile disciple to be conducted to the path of spiritual glory, and the hesitant companion to be transformed into an evangelist for the entire human race.

Christianity is the blessed fountain for the restoration of the soul's connection with God.

The error committed by many apprentices stems from the idolatry in which they become involved as they venerate the valiant exponents of living faith, who are simply those who accepted the need for sacrifice as the true formula for spiritual evolvment; they imagine the objects of their idolatry sitting upon fanciful thrones while they bow at their feet, feeling confused, inept, and miserable, overlooking the fact that the Father concedes the required energy for a successful victory to all His children.

Logically, we should all pay respect to and love the great representatives of the Christian path; on the other hand, we cannot forget that Paul and Peter, as was the case with many others, began their journeys in the throes of human weakness, and progressed, through sacrifice and suffering, toward the celestial gifts that God bestowed upon them. We, too, can discover that the terrestrial Planet is a school of illumination, power, and triumph, any time that we seek, in our own moment of epiphany, to understand its great mission.

By the spirit Emmanuel, through the medium Francisco Xavier, from the book *Our Daily Bread*, translated by Jussara Korngold



KNOWING AND DOING

*Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.
(John, 13:17)*

There is a big difference between knowing and doing. Nearly everybody knows but just a few do.

In general terms, all religions teach goodness. All of them have assistants, believers and disseminators. However, their apostles are becoming more and more rare.

There are always voices indicating the pathway. They transmit to us the words of those who know.

Very rare are those who courageously go forward in the daily struggle. Many times, they are left in silence, abandoned and misunderstood. This is the supreme trial of those who do.

Jesus understood the vacillation of the children of Earth and transmitted to them the words of the truth and life, producing a maximum exemplification through arduous sacrifices.

The existence of an elevated theory creates the necessity of experience and work. If an edifying action was unnecessary, then the most humble theory of goodness would be fruitless.

John observed the Master's teaching with wisdom, telling us, in the verse, that only those who practice Jesus' teachings can be blessed. Here, in the Christian service, resides the difference between culture and practice, and knowing and doing.

By the spirit Emmanuel, through the medium Francisco Xavier, from the book *The Pathway, the Truth and Life*, translated by Publio Lentulos Coelho

