ANNOTATIONS

Series I    Lesson 1

"PRAYER"

UNITY

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL LESSONS

UNITY SCHOOL OF CHRISTIANITY

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1. What is the difference between spiritual understanding and intellectual understanding?

1. This subject was covered very extensively in the eighth lesson of Lessons in Truth, especially annotations one, two, five, six, and eight. We can say that the difference between these two types of understanding is the difference between that which is revealed by Spirit within and that which is apprehended through the use of the senses and the thinking faculty (intellect). Intellectual understanding may present information about God, but spiritual understanding knows God.

When our consciousness is attuned to Spirit we receive ideas direct from Divine Mind within ourself, where all is Truth, order, and perfection. As we learn the value of these divine ideas, and learn also to use them in the right way, we attain spiritual understanding.

When our consciousness is directed only toward the external world we receive information through the five senses, which information is then handled by our intellect, or thinking faculty. It is here that we observe ideas, things, people, even beliefs about God, for the intellect (thinking) is the realm of choice and judgment. Too often through ignorance we judge from the appearance of some manifestation, not from the reality. Intellectual knowledge acquired through the five senses and handled by the intellect may be good as far as it goes, but in accepting such knowledge as final we stand in danger of weakening our conscious contact with Divine Mind and putting our dependence on the external world. Unless intellectual understanding has become blended with Truth, it can fill an individual's life with restlessness and dissatisfaction, giving him a sense of insecurity.

We must come to see the true relation of intellectual understanding and spiritual understanding, and perhaps the following words of Charles Fillmore found on page 155 of Keep a True Lent help to make this clear:

"Intellectual understanding comes first in the soul's development, then a deeper understanding of principles follows, until the whole man ripens into wisdom."

2. What is God?

2. In the absolute sense, God is infinite Being, the one Presence, the one Power in the universe; the Creator, the Sustainer of all life. God is the originating Cause and continuing Source of all being, all creation. He is the one universal Principle, unchanging Law, the unlimited and absolute Good; He is Truth, Spirit, omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience.
In the relative sense, God as Spirit individuated in man becomes to man the personal, loving Father who always welcomes His child, who cares for him, guides, protects, shelters, feeds, clothes, comforts, and sustains him. He is to man the Presence and the Power that is his help in every need.

God is dependable Principle both in an impersonal, universal way and also in a personal, specific way. The divine Creator as Spirit and as unchanging Principle in the universe moves as the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and loving Father in each human being just as soon as man turns within to God and puts his dependence on Him as the one and only source of all his good.

3. What is true prayer?

Our lesson material states emphatically that true prayer is "conscious communion with God." When we consciously turn our attention to the Father within, placing our faith in Spirit (God), then we are acknowledging the one Presence and Power within our own being. We thus become receptive to divine inspiration in the form of God ideas, and there is no room for any limited concept to find entrance into our mind.

When our consciousness is free from worry or tension we are an open channel for the inflow of the inspiration and enlightenment of Spirit.

"In eagerness 'we wait in singleness of heart' for the revelation, inspiration, or illumination from the Father. When God 'speaks' it is the movement of Divine Mind on our mind expressing divine ideas that are absorbed by our waiting consciousness. We have now come to the place where we know!" (Annotation Four, Annotations for Lesson Ten, Lessons in Truth).

4. What is the "secret place of the Most High" (Psalms 91:1)?

The "secret place of the Most High" is

"a place of meeting between the Christ at the center of your being, and your consciousness—a hidden place into which no outside person can either induct you or enter himself" (Lessons in Truth, p. 92).

The "secret place of the Most High" is the name the Psalmist uses to designate the "place" within our own being where we may retire to feel God's presence and power. It is where the human consciousness merges with the divine consciousness and Spirit meets spirit (the first phase of our threefold nature). The "secret place" is the point at which we are able to silence all limited thoughts and desires that seem to entice us into sin, and acknowledge the supreme Source of our being. We are then able to contemplate our unity, oneness, and sameness with Divine Mind, the Father within.

Anything is "secret" when it is hidden; the "secret place of the Most High" is that which is hidden from all who are not in the "Most High" state of consciousness.
In our metaphysical study we find that the "secret place" can be explained simply as being the Silence, that phase of prayer when God "speaks" and we "listen" to His revelations.

"When we pray in spiritual understanding, this highest realm of man's mind contacts universal, impersonal Mind; the very mind of God is joined to the mind of man. God answers our prayers in ideas, thoughts, words; these are translated into the outer realms, in time and condition" (Christian Healing, p. 78).

5. What is meant by "enter into thine inner chamber, and ... shut thy door" (Matt. 6:6)?

5. It is important that we realize that the instruction given by Jesus to "enter into thine inner chamber" and to "shut thy door" is not something mysterious but a simple turning within to our loving Father. The instruction telling us to "enter" also advises us to "shut thy door," meaning that we are to close the mind to anything of the outer that would intrude upon this meeting with our Father.

"What we need to know above all is that there is a place within our soul where we can consciously meet God and receive a flood of new life into not only our mind but also our body. . . . Quietly entering the inner chamber within the soul shutting the door to the external thoughts of daily life, and seeking conscious union with God is the highest form of prayer we know" (Teach Us to Pray, p. 5 of Foreword, and p. 17).

Once we have entered the "inner chamber" which is God's Presence in us, it becomes a simple matter to close the mind to all that would call our attention away from the light, life, and love of God that permeates and enfolds us; yet it often requires discipline to control our thinking and feeling. The five senses need to be controlled so that the physical eyes are closed to all outer objects or situations; the physical ears no longer listen to the noises of the objective world. This also means that the mind must be controlled so that past thought forms or psychic phenomena must not be allowed to interfere with this sacred meeting with our Father.

6. What is the meaning of the expression "going into the silence"?

6. "Going into the silence" means just what the previous annotations brought out—turning within to the indwelling Presence of God, our "inner chamber," closing the mind to all outside distractions, and waiting in stillness for God's revelations to us.

Charles Fillmore gives very definite statements about "going into the silence" in Teach Us to Pray, pages 24-25:

"The first step in scientific silence is simply to still . . . outer intellectual thoughts so that the consciousness may become subservient to the Spirit within. . . . God works in the stillness. As man comes into the presence of God with his prayer in the form of an affirmation of Truth . . . he is
aware only of the soundlessness of God's word as it weaves itself in and out through the whole soul and body consciousness."

7. How may one bring his thoughts under his conscious control?

7. The highest way for one to bring his thoughts under his conscious control is by constantly aspiring toward the divine standard and daily practicing the presence of God. This may involve much denial of error (as being reality) and affirmation of the Truth, in order to train the mind to stand firm on the divine standard for right thinking and feeling.

It is possible for a person to consciously control his thoughts by fixing his attention on an object or on an idea, and by wilfully opposing all diversions. However, resisting the forces that may distract attention takes energy and wears a person down, diminishing his power to produce according to the idea he is holding in mind.

Desire is a great factor in making thought productive; the more intense the desire, the greater is the onward impulse of the thought and the greater is the power to produce desirable results. However, the desire must be one-pointed in order that Mind substance may assemble around the single idea to support it and give it body. When a single God idea fills the consciousness, there is no room for other thoughts to enter; one's entire interest and attention is given to it and no energy is expended in resisting other thoughts. For this reason, we take some statement of Truth into our mind, dwell on it until its inner meaning becomes a realization. Then the idea is free to do its work in and through us.

8. Explain the meaning of the statement "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

8. By this statement Paul was endeavoring to make clear to the people of Athens that God is a living presence and power, the cause or originating essence of all life as well as the sustenance of every living creature during its existence in a bodily form. He pointed out to them the statement made by one of the Greek poets (and recorded in our Scriptures), "For we are indeed his offspring" (Acts 17:28), making plain to them that God is not a human being apart from them, nor, as verse 29 says, "like gold, or silver, or stone." Rather God is the everywhere-present intelligence, the all-pervading Spirit substance, the one Mind essence in which are inherent all the qualities (ideas) of God. It is out of this one substance through the power of Spirit moving on the ideas that beast, bird, fish, and man are created.

Job stated:

"In his hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10).

The fish lives in the water and from it obtains everything needful for its existence; the bird, the beast, and the body of man maintain a physical existence in the air by a natural process of breathing air substance. The soul of man lives in omnipresent Spirit substance
by means of divine thought action, the Word, Spirit-breathing (inspiration), through which man is inspired by prayer with God ideas. It is the right use of these ideas that enables man to express and manifest himself as a divine being instead of just a human being.

9. What benefit comes to us from praying to God as "our Father" (Matt. 6:9)?

9. The benefit which comes to us from praying to God as "our Father" reaches into all areas of our life. Recognizing God as "our Father" causes us to see ourself as heir to the qualities (also termed ideas, truths, principles) that make up His nature.

Primarily, a father is one who has begotten a child. The word beget is made up of "be," which is to enter into a living relation with an object or an idea and "get," meaning to cause to be. God as "our Father" has entered into a living relationship with us as His son, His idea of Himself in action. A father is also called a generator; to generate is to produce a being similar to the parent. Man is a spiritual being because, created by and of God, he is similar to his Parent; he is God's image, patterned after His likeness. A father performs the office of a parent through affectionate care, maintenance, counsel, and protection. In like manner, God as "our Father" maintains us, supplies us with all that is essential for a full and complete expression and manifestation of our spiritual nature. God shows His affectionate care for us by all that He has provided for our well-being.

"See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (I John 3:1).

The possessive adjective our in "our Father" links us with all humanity as brothers. Because there is but one Creator, all men have the same Father; every human being belongs to the family of God and each is an heir to God's estate of good. Consciously recognizing God as "our Father" inevitably moves one into the larger perception of the brotherhood of all men where God is recognized as the universal Father of all,

"One God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:6).

10. What and where is heaven?

10. Heaven is the poised and balanced wholeness existing in man and in the universe through a conscious realization of the presence of God—Absolute Good.

We find the word kingdom used in two ways:

"The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21 A.V.).

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2; 4:17).

The kingdom of God, then, must be the realm of God within the individual, the very Presence of Absolute Good or God's own nature in every man. The kingdom of heaven is the realm of harmony resulting
from the right use of the ideas that make up the kingdom of God. Harmony (heaven) is always "at hand" ready to be brought into manifestation when we handle rightly the Truth (ideas) of God.

"The kingdom of heaven . . . is a state of consciousness in which the soul and the body are in harmony with Divine Mind. . . .

"Teachers of metaphysics find that their most difficult work is getting students to recognize that heaven is a condition of mind" (Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, p. 266).

The Kingdom of God is neither a state of mind nor a condition of mind, but it is the God nature; the kingdom of heaven is that good state or condition of mind that produces in the outer life a sense of harmony, causing us to feel that we are truly "in heaven."

When we say "our Father who art in heaven" we can see that this universal Father of all, who is also our loving, individual Father, could only be harmony, wholeness, perfection. We must become conscious of and obedient to the God ideas, and make right use of them (handle them rightly), in order to dwell in this "home" of God and experience the heavenly state of joy, order, and harmony that stem from the "kingdom of God . . . within you."

11. What is it to "hallow" the name of God?

11. To "hallow" the name of God means to recognize God's nature (name) as wholeness and perfection. To hallow is to consecrate and hold in reverence; to make holy, or whole. The name of God is the nature of God, thus to use the name (nature) of God only in relation to that which is good is to "hallow" the name of God. (See annotations two and three of Lesson Three, How I Used Truth.)

God is to each person whatever that person can conceive Him to be—whatever the person's concept of God is. Regardless of the way one may conceive Him, God is Absolute Good in all its perfection and wholeness. The name of anything is its whole nature; it bespeaks the thing's character, its power, its authority. Therefore, when we speak of or to God we must recognize and reverence Him as Absolute Good—this is "hallowing" the name of God.

We must come to understand that God is Principle, Law, and that He bestows no new favors upon man for hallowing His name. Man simply opens the door of his mind, his heart, and through this opening Absolute Good in its fullness pours into his whole being. By this "hallowing" of God's name or nature, we make contact with the highest good that we are capable of receiving and sublimate or refine our human (moral) nature so that it becomes a fit channel for the expression of our divine nature, our real Self.

12. What is "God's will" for man?

12. God's "will" is God's purpose, intent, plan, or law for man. His beloved son; and God being Himself Absolute Good, His will is always good, because He could only plan that which is good for His creation.
"For man, God's will or plan is that he shall express and manifest his true spiritual nature, imaged for him at creation" (annotation nine, annotations for How I Used Truth, Lesson 1).

Because our spiritual nature (called the Christ, or I AM, or our real Self), is God's own nature in us, we often refer to God's will in man as I AM, for it is His plan that man bring forth this nature. A right understanding of God's will for us does away with any tendency on our part to think that anything unpleasant could be "God's will" to which we have to submit.

As brought out in the above reference from How I Used Truth, God's will does not apply to man alone, but to all species of creation, operating under the law for each species. As we learn to seek guidance in carrying out God's will in every area of our human experience, we begin to cooperate with the rest of creation with very satisfying results. We come to realize that God's will has resulted in definite laws in our world and that only obedience to these God laws can bring about the harmony, peace, and happiness we all seek.

"God's will is always perfection and all good for all His children; perfect health in mind and body; abundance of every good thing including joy, peace, wisdom, and eternal life" (The Revealing Word, p. 87).

13. What is "our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11)?

13. The lesson material brings out very clearly that according to our teaching "bread" is representative of all the divine ideas that "feed" the soul. These ideas inhere in divine substance and the following from The Revealing Word, page 29, covers this point very well:

"Bread--Representative of universal substance... Our daily bread is the sustenance for spirit, mind, and body. Some of this daily bread is appropriated in the form of food. There is substance in words of Truth, and this substance is appropriated by prayer and meditation on Truth."

Most people feel it is vital to feed the body daily with physical food, and certain periods are set aside for mealtimes. When one becomes aware of the needs of the soul, he realizes that the soul (i.e., the mind) has need of its "daily bread" in the form of divine ideas, otherwise the soul is starved for the only sustenance upon which it can really "feed."

Bread has been referred to as the "staff of life." A staff is a stick, carried in the hand, upon which one may lean for support. In Truth study, substance ("bread") is the support that God has provided for all states of man's being. Life could not be made manifest unless it were "embodied," hence the necessity of substance through which to give expression and manifestation to life, to give it "body."

We are threefold beings--spirit, soul, body--and each phase of
our being has need of its special food; needs to be nourished, sustained, and satisfied in order that we may be channels for the expression and manifestation of the God nature.

Let us consider other words of Scripture related to food:

"It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

"He . . . fed you with manna, which you did not know . . . that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone" (Deut. 8:3).

"Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34).

"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life" (John 6:27).

"I am the bread of life . . . This is the bread which comes down from heaven" (John 6:48, 50).

From these sayings it is clear that our concern should be to feed, through prayer, upon the Word of God—the I AM—the living substance that is within every human being, providing him with the necessary sustenance for both the inner and outer life.

To sum up the meaning of "our daily bread," we say that it is the spiritual ideas, inspirations through which we enlarge our consciousness of God and His creatures. It is through "our daily bread" that we have the courage and the strength to meet our experiences as opportunities to do God's will and thus to make Him manifest in the world of visibility.

14. Explain why it is necessary to pray believing that we have received.

It is necessary to pray believing (with faith) that we have received the good we desire, because our believing opens the door of our consciousness to receive the idea that is back of our desired good. This believing (faith) goes further than our consciousness or mind; it acts like a magnet to draw the outer forms that can fulfill our desire.

We live, move, and have our being in divine substance which is provided for our use in satisfying our longings and fulfilling our every need. All good is ours now and always has been, just as all air is ours to breathe freely.

We often refer to divine substance as the presence of God. To each of us is entrusted the power to mold this substance into the forms that fit our needs. But in order to lay hold of this substance, we have to believe (i.e., perceive through our faith faculty) that it is inherent in us as part of our divine inheritance. Through prayer we are able to appropriate this substance, in which inhere the ideas that are our "daily bread," and this appropriation should be as
spontaneous and effortless as the appropriation of the air that we breathe. The mental attitude of faith, or believing, seems to correspond to the physical action of breathing air into the lungs.

The abundance that we call divine substance has always been ours, but we have lost sight of it. Because of this and our need for "daily bread," we feel the impulse to pray. When we do pray believing, our attitude becomes positive and expectant toward the answer. We are able to act as though we had already received the answer in the outer. It is through our faith, or believing, that we make way in consciousness to accept the fulfillment of all of the promises of God to us as His beloved children. It is only our faith in God as our Source and in His promises that we are able to mold rightly the omnipresent substance into the forms ("our daily bread") that can meet our needs.

15. What is affirmation?

15. Affirmation is making firm in consciousness that which is true of God and man; it is declaring as true in human experience that which is already true in Spirit.

An affirmation is a statement of Truth, spoken silently or audibly, or written for use by an individual. The word affirm comes from the Latin prefix af, an assimilated form of ad, meaning to add to or intensify, and firmare, meaning to make firm, stable. Affirmation is the claiming of what we believe (have faith) is already ours. If we have not felt our oneness with God and the spiritual principles, or laws of God, that we call divine ideas, we affirm in order to establish them as a conscious part of our mind or soul consciousness.

The constant repetition of Truth adds firmness to firmness, strength to strength, and causes a divine principle to become established in our subconscious (heart) or feeling nature. When both the conscious phase of mind (intellect, thinking faculty) and the heart (subconscious, feeling faculty) have accepted the truth behind the words of the affirmation, then the true meaning is established in our consciousness.

The power to affirm, to say "yes" to any idea, belief, or concept that comes to him, is a part of every man's divine heritage. However, too often man has misused his spiritual and mental powers and has affirmed or said "yes" to false beliefs and wrong concepts. By this wrong use of mind activity, he builds up a false standard that produces inharmony and discord in his mind, body, and affairs. For this reason we each need to be ever alert to affirm or say "yes" only to that which is true of us as a son of God; affirm only that which we desire to see manifest in our life. (See annotations for Lesson Five, "Affirmations," of Lessons in Truth.)

16. How are we helped by affirming Truth?

16. As explained in annotation 13, through the practice of affirming Truth, we consciously "feed" our soul with the substance of God, our "daily bread," in the form of divine ideas. As we daily affirm words of Truth, we are making our mind a storehouse of the principles
of Being (God). However, our conscious phase of mind, the thinking faculty, which is constantly in touch with the outer world through the five senses, needs disciplining and help. Affirmation of Truth keeps the consciousness up to the Truth level whenever we are tempted to think or feel that which is not true. Affirming Truth (eating of our "daily bread") gives us courage and confidence to meet the experiences of daily living, and stimulates us to reach for higher goals.

The greatest help to be received from affirming Truth is that it causes us to arrive at the state of consciousness where we no longer find it necessary to say actual words—we think the Truth habitually; we feel Truth habitually; we act habitually in accordance with Truth. We have identified ourself with Truth until it is manifested through us both consciously and subconsciously. Just as the eating of our food each day provides the body with the various elements it needs as it goes through the processes of mastication, digestion, and assimilation, so our mind can "eat" of words of Truth masticating, digesting, and assimilating the ideas that are back of the words.

17. How does one come into conscious unity with God?

17. One comes into conscious unity with God first by thinking about God and man's relation to Him, then letting the Truth become a part of the feeling nature so that one no longer merely thinks about God, but feels His indwelling presence.

"Conscious oneness with the Father" means that we are able to feel—not merely think about—the Christ or God-presence within, the 'Father' of our human consciousness. With the revelation of God as immanent in us, we come to know with deep feeling that our true nature is one with and the same as the God nature. . . . there is a vast difference between merely being intellectually aware of Truth principles and actually knowing Truth (God) and rightly using the principles. We can see, then, that we have to add feeling to our thinking in order to reach the state of knowing that is "conscious oneness with the Father." (annotation five, Lesson 11, How I Used Truth).

Conscious unity with God comes from identification with God. We identify ourself with God through I AM. "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10). We silence or quiet all that is "of the earth earthy" and contemplate that which God is. We let our human consciousness expand to encompass God's greatness, His power, His might. Then we let our heart dwell on His love for the "little things," the tiny insects, the blade of grass, for all are the object of His love and care. From the greatest to the least, all are expressions of God's Being—therefore, each one of us is one with all life. Each can say for himself: "I am all that God is; God is Mind; I am idea; and I live to be, to bring this idea into manifestation in all the fullness and glory of the likeness of God. I am consciously the son of the Almighty."

18. What is meant by "holding a thought" as used in connection with prayer?

18. "Holding a thought" as used in prayer means taking into the
silence of our being a statement of some spiritual good that we desire to see manifest. The statement "holding a thought" is the same as "holding to the Truth," and we find further explanation of this in annotation one, Lesson Eight, "Trusting and Resting" in How I Used Truth:

"By this familiar statement, we mean holding words in mind that declare the reality of God, a person, a situation, or a thing until the meaning of the ideas back of the words becomes clear to our consciousness (thinking and feeling). . . . If we are 'holding to the Truth' with a sense of anxiety concerning the answer to our prayer, then we are not knowing that God is in charge. . . . When we 'let go and let God' we are releasing everything erroneous or limited from our thinking and feeling and letting our consciousness be open and receptive to the inspiration of God ideas."

At first the thought or statement is viewed intellectually only. By affirming it over and over (silently or audibly), mentally studying its meaning, and from time to time excluding (denying) all other thoughts from our attention, we give all our interest to this statement in absorbed concentration. Meditating on the ideas embodied in each word of the statement or prayer holds the mind steadily focused and helps us attain a fuller understanding of the context of the statement or prayer—and thus we are "holding the thought" or "holding to the Truth." Meditation and concentration enable one to obtain mental control; this activity is carried on in the brain. But to reach the desired good requires more than this. It is through contemplation in the heart, or the feeling side of the soul, that we come in conscious contact with the intuitional state of our being that leads to illumination. The "spirit" (i.e., the meaning) of the thought in the statement becomes alive to us, and we begin to see with the inner eye.

"For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6 A.V.).

This coming alive causes every area of our life—thinking, feeling, speaking, acting—to express and manifest the spirit of the statement.

19. Give three affirmations that help one to realize his unity with God.

19. One point to be remembered is that "unity" means oneness, same-ness, likeness. It is through knowing God that conscious union is made. Bear in mind that a keyword here is realize. We need more than an intellectual approach (talking about God)—we need a spiritual approach (talking to God).

20. Name and explain the eight necessary conditions of true prayer that are mentioned in the final paragraph of this lesson.

20. We must
1. Direct our prayer to the Lord within our own being, God's Presence in us.

2. Acknowledge God as the Father-Mind which contains, constitutes, creates, sustains, and governs all that is.
3. Know that each of us is the son-idea, forever one and the same as the Father-Mind—His image-likeness.

4. Enter the "inner chamber," the very core of our being, the innermost recess of our soul.

5. Close the door to both physical and psychical phenomena. (We are seeking Spirit, not phenomena of any kind.)

6. Seek to know, to understand the substance of Being, the kingdom of God, and the laws governing its presence and use.

7. Have faith that Absolute Good, God, is the one Presence and the one Power in the universe and that the good we especially desire is now being manifested.

8. Realize that the forgiving love of Jesus Christ, the love of God intelligently active in us, dissipates and dissolves all that is unlike the nature of God. We are to exercise that spirit of love by forgiving all shortcomings (sins) in ourself and in all other persons.

Christus

Let us, then, labor for an inward stillness—
An inward stillness and an inner healing;
That perfect silence where the lips and heart
Are still, and we no longer entertain
Our own imperfect thoughts and vain opinions,
But God alone speaks in us, and we wait
In singleness of heart, that we may know
His will, and in the silence of our spirits,
That we may do His will, and do that only!

—Longfellow