Pathwork Lecture 25: The Path: Initial Steps, Preparation, and Decisions

This lecture is given in an expanded poetic format, what I call a Devotional Format of the lecture, and in that sense this is my interpretation of the intent of the lecture. I may have interpreted portions differently from you, and I ask you to ponder the words for your own interpretation. I did this Devotional Format so I can take the words into my heart, phrase by phrase, much as I would in reading poetry – that is, devotionally.

The blessings to me in developing this format have been truly profound, and my wish is that this Devotional Format will be a blessing to others. I invite you to slowly read and ponder this format of the text – with an open heart to experience the Guide’s Presence and Love emerging from among the words such that the wisdom comes to LIVE you.

For clarity: The original text is in bold and italicized. [My adds of commentary/clarification/interpretation are in brackets, italicized, and not bolded.] To learn more of my Devotional Format and see the lectures I have done in this way, go to https://www.garyvollbracht.com/pathwork-lectures/pathwork-lectures-devotional-format/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>03</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tr>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>in the name of</td>
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<td>• God and</td>
<td>• Jesus Christ.</td>
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<td>I bring blessings</td>
<td>for all of you, my friends.</td>
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<td>From all my preceding lectures</td>
<td>you will have understood one thing clearly:</td>
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<td>the necessity for self-development</td>
<td>on this earth plane which exists for that very purpose.</td>
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<td>No matter how difficult life may be at times, only those who fulfill this purpose can find peace in their souls.</td>
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I have promised
to start this course on development
so that
each one of you
can find your way
by learning
• how to go about it,
• where to begin, and
• what is involved in doing the work.

Moreover, I want to tell you
before I begin
that many of the words I shall give you
in these particular lectures
can be treated
as a meditation.

You should
retain
these words
and not just
read them once,
for that will not be enough.

You should
meditate on
these teachings,
so that
this knowledge
may eventually grow
from
being
• superficial and
• intellectual
to
reaching
• the deeper regions of your being.

Only then
will they be really beneficial to you.
Everybody knows

that it is important

• to be a decent person,
• not to commit so-called sins,
• to give love,
• to have faith, and
• to be kind to others.

However,

this is not enough.

In the first place,

• knowing all this

and

• actually being able to act on it

are

two different stories.

You may be able

by voluntary action

to refrain from

committing a crime

such as

• stealing or
• killing,

but you cannot possibly

force yourself to

feel

that you do not

want to harm anybody,

ever.

You may

act

kindly

toward another,

but you cannot force yourself to

feel

kindly.

Neither can you

force yourself

• to have love in your heart or
• to have real faith in God.
Whatever pertains to emotions is not dependent upon your direct actions or even on your thoughts. Changing your feelings requires the slow process of self-development and self-recognition.

You may realize that you do not have enough faith, but realizing this and trying to force yourself to have it [i.e., to have enough faith] by telling yourself, "I must have faith," will not bring you one step closer; quite the contrary.

Superficially you may be able to talk yourself into it [i.e., talk yourself into having faith], but this does not mean your faith or your ability to love is real.
It is already a great accomplishment for people of lower spiritual development if they can be brought to not committing wrong deeds, but this is certainly not sufficient for any one of you here.

More is expected of you.

Primarily this path is about changing your innermost feelings.

How to go about that is the question that we have to begin with.

There I can show you the way.

In the first place, my friends, you cannot change anything as long as you do not know what is really in you.

The greatest difficulty on this path is that people tend to fool themselves about who they really are.
Now I am not only talking about the subconscious mind which you all know exists.

I will not even go as far as that.

Between
• the conscious
and
• the subconscious mind
there is
• another layer
which is much closer to the conscious mind.

However, you are still unaware of this layer [between the conscious mind and the subconscious mind] because you want to be unaware [of this in-between layer].

You escape from it [i.e., from this in-between-layer of consciousness] although its
• symptoms and
• signs may be right under your nose.

People flee from such awareness because they mistakenly think that what they do not know does not exist.
You may not think so [i.e., you may not think that what you do not know, in fact, does not exist] in exactly these words, but feelings of this sort [i.e. feelings of the sort that what you do not know, in fact, does not exist] go on in you without your quite realizing them.

However, these hidden feelings [i.e. hidden feelings that what you do not know, in fact, does not exist] exist.

Even if you turn away from your own inner reality – your temporary reality of this present time – this layer [between your conscious and subconscious layers of consciousness] is still part of

• the reality of your life and
• your present state of development.

You may all remember the lecture I gave some time ago about

• the higher self,
• the lower self; and
• the mask self.

What I have explained [here as the layer of consciousness between the subconscious and conscious layers and which is closer to the conscious layer] is part of

• the mask self,
but it is not only a mask.

I may call it the exterior self which does not always correspond to the inner person.
All of you know
that it is wrong to
• do or
• think or
• feel
certain things.

If these [wrong] feelings
still exist in your lower self,
you turn away from them,
thinking you have
thereby
eliminated
what you recognize as wrong.

• Avoidance or
• denial

[of such wrong feelings in a person]
is the greatest mistake
a human being can make,
for it [i.e., for avoidance or denial of such wrong feelings]
causes
infinitely
more
• trouble,
more
• problems, and
more
• inner and
• outer
conflicts
than
anything you know
in your
conscious
mind.
I have often mentioned the various spiritual laws which are constantly being violated by human beings.

The process I have just described [i.e., the process of avoiding or denying wrong feelings in you] violates one of these laws.

It is the law of facing life.

To face life's reality means to be able to face yourself as you are with all your imperfections.

If you do not face life first, you can never develop.

No system trying to teach ways to jump over this hurdle [of facing yourself as your really are with all your imperfections] can ever be really successful, for seeking such shortcuts [by avoiding the step of facing yourself as you really are] violates a spiritual law.
All of you are unconsciously following this harmful process [of not facing yourself honestly as you really are with all your imperfections] all the time, even though some of you may have already gained a certain amount of self-knowledge.

There is not a single one of you
• who has not had at least one realization about an inner trend, • who has not made this trend really conscious.

Nevertheless, in many other areas your conscious mind still flees from facing the inner truth.

You may even know your shortcomings, but you certainly do not know all your real motives.

You do not understand why you have certain • opinions, • tastes, or • idiosyncrasies; even your good qualities may be partly influenced by an unconscious • fault or • wrong inner current.
These
• trends and
tendencies
about which
you have hitherto deceived yourself
have to be understood
with respect to the
• influences and
• connections
they have.

There is nothing in the human soul
that comes
totally
from
• the higher self
or
• the lower self,
because
everything
mixes constantly.

Purification
means to
• separate,
• understand, and
• rearrange
in conscious understanding
all these various trends,
thus purifying
the basic good trends
from
• all masks of
self-deception and
from
• influences caused by
character weaknesses.
The higher self in you
says,
"I want to be perfect.
I know this is the will of God."

But it is
the ignorance
of the lower self [i.e. the lower self’s ignorance]
that makes you think
perfection can be attained
by
• turning away from
  your imperfections and
• disregarding
  them.

It is also
the lower self
that always wants to have everything
so comfortable.

The lower self
wants to be
in a high position,
but for different reasons
than the higher self.

Your higher self
seeks to advance
for [the sake of, or motivated by] the love of God
by way of
• recognition and
• enlightenment,
  aware that
only when you are perfect
will you be truly capable
  of loving your fellow creatures.

But your lower self
wants to be perfect
in order
• to have more ego-gratification and
• to swell its head,
• to be admired.
All of you, without exception, also feel this way [i.e., feel a desire to be perfect].

Here is an example where both
• the higher
and
• the lower self
want the same thing [i.e., both want to be perfect],
but their motives are entirely different [i.e., the higher self is motivated by the love of God in order to love others, and the lower self is motivated by a desire to be admired].

It is of utmost importance for
• the purification of your personality and
for
• the sake of a
• healthy and
• harmonious soul
• to separate these [higher-self and lower-self] motives and
• to recognize their voices.

Do not feel I am blaming you, nor should you blame yourself when you begin to recognize these [negative lower-self] trends in you.
I am stating
• a fact,
and one of the basic requirements for your path
is that you accept
• the fact
  of many negative trends
  still existing in yourself.

Only from this premise [i.e., only from accepting the fact that there are many negative trends in you]

can you go on
and change
the impurity
of your motives.

You must also recognize
the reasons
why
your lower self
turns you away from
facing yourself.

One reason
is that
to recognize yourself
as imperfect
is unpleasant.

The other [reason why your lower self turns away from facing yourself]
is that
the lower self
• is lazy and
• never wants to work [to improve and purify itself].

Yet
it requires work
to face
what is in you,
especially when it comes to
facing
the unpleasant things.
So the first step, my friends, in your decision to walk the path of self-development and purification is to become clear about this [i.e., clear about your conflicting motivations and the work of facing unpleasant things in yourself].

It [i.e., the decision to walk this path of self-development and purification] is the greatest decision a human being can ever make.

It [i.e., the fight between the higher self and lower self on this path of self-development and purification] is the noblest of all fights humanity can ever engage in.

But you must do so with open eyes; therefore realize what you ought to expect and what you have to search for.

Do not start to search for perfection immediately.

This again would be unrealistic because you cannot attain perfection quickly without having spent much time and effort.
This search [for perfection through much time and effort spent in self-facing] is the
• first and
• most important
half
of the truth
of the path.

If you proceed well
on this part of the path,
you have won
• half
the battle already, and
• even more,
my friends!

If you realize this [i.e., If you realize that in proceeding well on this part of the path you have won more than half the battle of self-development, purification, and perfection],
you will not be discouraged
when you are
busy on this first half of the work
that is necessary.

You can
reach perfection
only by going
through
your imperfections,
not by going
around
them.

You should
meditate on this
daily
until
• such knowledge
becomes part of you and
until
• you are imbued
with this truth.
Furthermore, prepare yourself that going on this path does not mean a constant and smooth improvement of yourself and your life conditions. This again is completely unrealistic.

It is necessary for you to face the fact that the path is long and that repercussions and times of testing will not cease as quickly as you would like to believe.

I might say at this point that a great deal of harm is being done when people are led to understand that by following certain rules of metaphysical teachings their problems will altogether cease, or that if they [i.e., if their problems] appear to cease for a time, that [very cessation of their problems] will prove a sign of success.

There are many people who appear to have no outer problems whatsoever.
Such people [who appear to have no outer problems whatsoever] are certainly not on this path.

They [i.e., people who appear to have no outer problems whatsoever] may be entities of lower development
• of whom less is expected in this incarnation and
• who have been given a chance to prove what they can do with an easy life.

If they do not do their best now, they will have more difficult times in a future incarnation, perhaps so they can prove themselves.

But to imagine that going on this path of purification will immediately lessen your
• troubles or
• problems is very
• immature and
• childish.

Certainly your
• outer and
• inner problems will
• lessen and finally cease,
but only
• after a long time,
• after you have first
• thoroughly understood your inner makeup and
• rearranged your inner currents.
In this way [i.e., by thoroughly understanding your inner makeup and rearranging your inner currents]
you will
dissolve
inner images
that are
directly responsible for your conflicts.

Once you have attained some victories over yourself you will fully realize this truth [i.e., realize that your inner images are directly responsible for your conflicts],
but it will take
• a long time and
• years of work.

Then [after years of work]
very gradually the times of trial will lessen in
• impact and
• frequency,
• as harmony grows in your soul and
• as you
• take charge of yourself and
• become aware of who you are.

When I say "aware of yourself,"
I mean knowing your lower self
• utterly and
• completely,
which does not have to mean that you have overcome it [i.e., that you have overcome your lower self] completely.
When you start on this path, my friends, 
you ought to 
meditate every day 
before you do anything further.

Meditate on the fact 
that you can expect to find aspects of yourself 
you may be shocked about.

Expect this 
and meet it halfway 
instead of 
• hiding and 
• escaping 
from it [i.e., instead of escaping from 
what shocks you about yourself].

Expect that 
just as you have had tests 
before you even started on 
this direct path, 
tests 
will still come your way 
for quite a time.

The only difference 
is that a person 
who is on the path 
will, 
after some successful work, 
understand that 
• each testing and 
• each time of woe 
means something very specific.

A particular message 
that there is something 
quite special 
to learn about the self 
is conveyed 
by 
• each difficult period and 
• every hardship.
Only after a considerable time will your mind be trained in this direction [i.e., in the direction that every difficult period has a particular lesson for you] so that you will find out faster and faster what the lesson is.

The moment you understand the significance of these [difficult testing] periods, this particular testing will cease.

As long as you have not understood it [i.e., not understood the significance and lessons of these difficult testing periods], the testing will be there.

It [i.e., the testing] may recede after a while, but it will come back in the • same or • similar form until you have learned the lesson.
Those who have experienced what it means
  • to understand the message of a particular hardship,
  • to really understand it to its core,
will realize what a blessing it [i.e., the hardship] is!

Then what I am saying here will not merely be
  • words,
  but
  • a deep experience.

Meanwhile, the person who
  • is not on this path or who
    • has perhaps not completely found his or her way to the path and
  • is still in the first stages,
will be at a loss.

Not knowing why he or she has to go through all this makes the hardships infinitely more difficult to bear.
Before you can come to the point in your development when
• testing periods and
• times of trouble
  will cease,
you must first
go through the stage of completely understanding these periods of difficulty, and
then
meet them [i.e., meet these periods of difficulty]
in a spirit of
• courage and
• wisdom.

When you can do all this,
• the transition period will begin and
• outer
  • conflicts and
  • problems
    will no longer
touch you to the quick.

You will remain
• quite calm and
• serene
  • inside
during
• outer hardships.

Only after this condition [of remaining calm and serene inside during outer hardships]
has been reached can hardship begin to cease altogether.
[Regarding hardships and trials.]
You ought to be clear about
• the timing and
• the stages.

So prepare yourself [by realizing]
that these trials
will not cease.

Your life will
outwardly
continue for a while
as before,

until
you learn from it [i.e., until you learn from your life and its hardships]
that which is so necessary
for you to know.

• If you
  expect it [i.e., if you expect your life]
to be this way [i.e., to have trials and hardships] and

• if you
  go on the path
  in this frame of mind [i.e., the frame of mind that
  their will be trials and hardships on this path of development],
you will not be disappointed.

If [on the other hand]
you go on it [i.e., go on this path]
• like a blindfolded child,
• full of wishful thinking,
then
you will be
disappointed –
not only
• in God and
• in what you have somehow
  unconsciously
  expected from Him
  when you chose to follow this path,
but also disappointed
• in yourself and
• in your endeavors.
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<td><strong>This path</strong></td>
<td>is</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• not a fairy tale;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it is</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• reality</td>
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<td><strong>It is</strong></td>
<td>• utter reality.</td>
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<td><strong>Reality</strong></td>
<td>is not only</td>
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<td>• hard and</td>
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<td>• dark,</td>
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<td>but is also</td>
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<td>• more beautiful</td>
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<td><strong>The beauty of reality</strong></td>
<td>is,</td>
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<td>the puny beauty</td>
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<td>the escapist imagination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>concocts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>to get away from</td>
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<td>unpleasant reality.</td>
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<td><strong>Remember that!</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Another thought for meditation:</strong></td>
<td>when you go on this path,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>you must also</td>
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<td></td>
<td>prepare yourself</td>
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<td>to abide by</td>
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<td>another of the spiritual laws,</td>
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<td>which says that</td>
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<td>there is a price</td>
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Whoever tries to avoid this [spiritual law that there is a price to be paid for everything] will finally pay a much heavier price.

Every single person is doing this [i.e. avoiding paying the price required initially and paying a much heavier price in the end] constantly in one way or another;

some do it more
• obviously,
others more
• subtly and
• secretly.

Many people are not doing it [i.e. are not avoiding paying the price required initially and paying a much heavier price in the end]
• outwardly,
but
• psychologically
you are all doing it [i.e. you are avoiding paying the psychological price required initially and paying a much heavier psychological price in the end], particularly when you approach this path with only half-open eyes.

Realize that there is a price [to be paid for everything], but the price is well worth it!
When you buy a house
and you want
a beautiful mansion,
you are reconciled
to paying
an adequate price.

You will not expect
• a mansion or
• a palace
for the price of
• a shack.

On the
• material
  level,
  you have no quarrel with this truth,
but on the
• emotional,
• psychological, and
• spiritual
  levels
you wish for
• a palace
for the price of
• a hut –
  and sometimes
  you do
  not want to pay
  any price at all.

That [not wanting to pay the price]
is part of
your sick soul.
The price you pay
by going on
this path of development
is certainly
a high one,
but there is absolutely
no other means
• on earth or
• in heaven
to gain
• harmony,
• love,
• happiness, and
• complete inner security
where
nothing evil
can ever
• touch you or
• throw you off balance.

The price is:
• no self-pity,
• no self-delusion,
• utter severance
  with the little ego,
• time,
• effort,
• patience,
• perseverance, and
• courage.

What you will
receive for this price
is indeed
a hundred times worth it,

but
do not expect to see the reward
right after you start [this path of development].
By start [on this path of development before you begin to see the reward]
I mean a period of
at least two years of work
in this manner,
provided
you do not work
half-heartedly.

In other words,
and speaking symbolically,
your money
must first
be paid
in full.

I know, my friends,
that my words
are not
what a self-indulgent person
likes to hear.

There is
• no easy method and
• no magic formula
by which
you can obtain
the happiness
you all seek.

I cannot
promise you
the precious gifts of
heaven
• on earth and
• in the spiritual world
if you
merely
do certain prayer exercises.
If I were to tell you such things [i.e., such things as, “you could have the precious gifts of heaven if you merely do certain prayer exercises”],
you would be
well justified
in being
• suspicious and
• doubtful,
even though
you might
undoubtedly
prefer to hear this.

What I am offering you is
• real and
• true.

Each one of you
has the chance to find out for yourself
• by trying and
• by following
  my advice.

My advice to begin with is:

Meditate upon
the words I have given you here.

Consider
• what the price
  must be, and
• what you
  must expect.

Then
make your decision.
Are you willing
to take this path?

Oh, you may say,

"It may take
a few more lives.

I am too tired."

I can only answer
that this again
is very shortsighted;

if you are
  * tired or
  * weak,

it is because
your inner forces
  exhaust themselves
    in the wrong channels
so that
your strength
  cannot
    organically
      renew itself
as it does
  in a soul
    that functions well.

If you would only
  * start and
  * not be dismayed
    by the first struggles,
you would
  finally succeed
    in setting the inner current right.

By doing so,
you would set free in yourself
  * a wonderful life force and
  * a spark
    that will change your life completely.
I cannot promise you that all your problems will cease, for they are
• a necessary part of your path to begin with,
• a challenge you can learn from if you meet them maturely.

However, I can promise you that after you have fulfilled certain fundamental conditions, you will not be depressed any more by
• your life and
• your difficulties.

I can promise you
• that your tiredness will cease, and
• that you will have the strength
  • to go through your difficulties and
  • to bear your cross in the right way, knowing
    • why and
    • what it is all about.

• The most difficult thing for you and• the most weakening aspect of your life is that you cannot see the reason for anything that happens to you.
Only on a path into yourself will you find out the reason [why things happen to you], and this alone will give you the strength you need.

Furthermore, I can promise you that after a certain time on the path you will enjoy life in spite of your difficulties even before they [i.e., even before your difficulties] have actually begun to cease.

You will come to relish life in a way you have never been able to do before.

I can promise that you will be vibrantly alive – first • at intervals, and later • more consistently.

To the extent you • understand yourself and • begin to put order into your soul, this vibrant life force will fill you.

Life will be beautiful to you in all its reality.
So I say to you truly,  
    do not postpone this work  
    for another life.

It [i.e., this work]  
    will not  
    be easier for you  
    then [in another life], and  
you can never  
    get away  
    with not doing the work,  
for it has to be done.

No matter  
    how late  
    you think it is,  
    it is  
    never  
    too late.

Whatever you accomplish  
    on this earth  
    will have  
    an eternal value.

And when I speak of  
    accomplishment,  
I do mean  
    the conquering of  
    your lower self.

Here is another thought, my friends,  
    for this initial decision  
    which you must approach with open eyes:

distinguish  
    the three necessary types of work  
    involved in  
    purifying yourself  
    on this path.
One [type of work involved in purifying yourself on this path]  
is your outer behavior:  
the [conscious] recognition of  
• your apparent  
  • faults and  
  • qualities,  
• everything  
  that is on the surface.

The next phase [i.e., the next or second type of work involved in purifying yourself on this path]—

and these phases often overlap—
is tackling  
that [in-between] layer of yourself  
• that does not belong  
  directly  
  to your subconscious,  

but  
• which you are unaware of  
  because you are  
  deliberately  
  escaping it.

This [second] layer  
has to be treated in a different manner  
which I will show you.

The third  
and equally important  
layer  
is your  
subconscious mind.

Do not believe that  
what is in the subconscious  
is so far away  
that it has  
no effect on you.

You are  
constantly  
dominated by  
your subconscious  
without knowing it.
It is very possible to find out, 
slowly 
but surely, 
what is in 
your subconscious, 
at least to some extent.

Distinguish
the trends in you
which
• stand in direct relationship to
  your conscious will and
• are thus
directly controlled
  through
  an act of will.

You will also discover
trends in you
which
• are connected with
  your emotions and
• cannot be
directly forced
  to respond to your wishes.

The world of
emotion
can only change
by
• organic growth,
  not by
• pressure and
  • voluntary action,
  except in an
  indirect
  • way.
Let us assume
  you find out that
depth down
  you are lacking
  • faith or
  • love.

You cannot
  force yourself
to have
  • faith or
  • love,

no matter
  how hard you try
directly.

But what you
  can make yourself do
  is
  • to walk this path,
  • to follow these steps,
  • to overcome perhaps
  a lack of discipline
    that makes it so hard for you to
      • work diligently on your path,
      • tackle whatever else
        stands in your way quite directly,
        for instance
        to work daily on
        your quota of
          • self-observation and
          • meditation
            in a detached way.

By doing so,
  you will
  not
  work directly on
  your lack of
    • love or
    • faith,
      for instance,

but you will simply
  • get to know yourself and
  • find out
    why you lack these attributes [of love or faith].
When you gradually understand this [i.e. understand yourself and why you lack love or faith] without forcing yourself directly to have
• love or
• faith,
eventually the life force
• will fill you and
• will automatically generate these feelings [of love and faith]
without any direct endeavor on your part.

If your emotions begin to change after a few years, you can consider it a wonderful success.

The change will happen so naturally that you may not even be fully aware of it at first.

Study these words now; think about them deeply.

Take them to God and ask Him, if you have doubts.

He will answer you provided your heart is really open.
Believe me, my friends,

- all this
  is neither as difficult
  as it may seem to you now,
- nor is
  the path
  a miracle
  that will
  procure happiness for you
  without
  demanding from you
  all you have
  in
  - honesty,
  - willpower, and
  - effort.

I want to say something else to you about this phase of
- preparation and
- decision:

expect to have a fight
with
yourself.

It [i.e., this fight with yourself]
will be the fight [within you concerning your true identity, a fight]
between
- the lower self
and
- the higher self,
and
your conscious self
will determine
which side [i.e., either the lower self or higher self]
will win [in the battle concerning your true identity].

It [i.e., your conscious self and its fight to identity with the higher self]
cannot win
without such a fight.
It [i.e., this fight within yourself, this fight to identify with the higher self] must be a long fight

which at first will manifest itself perhaps by preventing you from following this path at all.

The lower self may send messages [to your conscious self, planting statements] such as,

• "I do not believe in it," [i.e., “I do not believe in this path”] or,
• "It [i.e., work on this path] may not be necessary after all," or
• "I am too tired," or
• "I have no time."

It is necessary for you to

• recognize these messages [from the lower self sent to your conscious self] for what they are, and
• understand where they [i.e., where these messages from the lower self within you] come from.

Use them [i.e., use these messages from the lower self within you] as a starting point to delve deeper into your soul.

Try to see clearly what [i.e., either the higher self or the lower self] is really speaking within you when you receive these hidden excuses [for not following this path] and pretenses.
If you expect this struggle [in choosing your true identity – between choosing to identify with the lower self messages or the higher self messages] beforehand,
you will
• be able to
• look and
• listen and
• will have
  a first victory [over the temptation to identify with and follow the lower self].
Also,
you will have learned already
to some degree
the process of
uncovering
your
  • masks and
  • wrong motives,
which will stand you in good stead
later on
when
  the lower self
  will try to
  obstruct your path
  by other means.
It [i.e., the lower self]
  will simply
  try to hold on to
  individual soul-currents.
By then
  you will already know
  how to deal with it [i.e., how to deal with your lower self]
  a little better.

Do not just put the superficial excuses [for not working on your spiritual path and dealing with the lower self]
aside.

Test them [i.e., test the messages that come to you],
deal with them,
examine them.
Many of you are scared: "What may come out of my lower self?" [i.e., having identified the lower self as being you and expressing the lower self as "my" lower self]

You may not fear this consciously in concise thought, but it is important that you learn on this path to

- interpret and
- translate
  - your feelings
  into
  - concise thoughts.

This fear [of "What may come out of my lower self?" ] is an important reason why a person shies away from meeting the self.

It is childish to imagine that whatever you do not cherish in you does not exist because you avoid facing it.

The lower self is

- immature and
- ignorant – its very nature is
  - faults and
  - distortions.
So I say to you:

Do not shy away from
what is in you!

Many people go to psychiatrists
and sometimes
suffer a breakdown
when they come face to face
with their lower self
in the course of the treatment.

This [i.e., suffering a breakdown when you come face to face with your lower self] cannot happen
to those of you
who know that
• your lower self
  is not
• your ultimate being.

However,
in psychoanalysis
the mistaken idea
that
• they [i.e., people in psychoanalysis]
  are really
• their lower self
can lead people
to such
• self-rejection and
• self-disgust
that they break down.

All of you here
know
that the lower self
is merely
a temporary
layer
and does not
constitute
your entire personality.
It [i.e., the lower self] is here now to be dealt with, but is not the real you – at least not entirely.

Your higher self, which is partly free, already manifests through your
• good qualities, your
• generosity, your
• kindness, or
• whatever else there is in you that belongs to the higher self.

But even where it [i.e., even where your higher self] cannot manifest as yet because it is deeply hidden behind the lower self, your higher self still exists in its shining perfection.

How can you reach it [i.e., how can you reach your higher self] unless you penetrate the lower self?
So
• do not be afraid;

• do not be shocked
when you
  first encounter
your lower self
where heretofore
you had
no idea of it [i.e., you had no idea of your lower self].

It [i.e., your lower self]
is a
• necessary
• temporary
  formation,
but it
never, never
represents
the ultimate you.

As a matter of fact,
reaching the stage
where you are
shocked about
some of its [i.e., some of your lower self] facets
that you had not suspected,
constitutes
a sign of improvement.

It [i.e., reaching the stage of being shocked about
  some of the facets of your lower self]
strongly implies
good progress,
for without going through this stage [of shock concerning your lower self],
painful as it may be
for a while,
you can have
no further
• victory and
• success.

This is part of the path,
my friends.
If you
• meditate upon
  these words
and at the same time
• try to be aware of
  • your fear of
    your lower self, and
  • your shame of it [i.e., your shame of
    your lower self], and
if you
• learn to live with this
  • truth and
  • knowledge
    [concerning your lower self],
you will conquer.

Then
• you will meet your fear [of your lower self]
  realistically, and
• you will not be hiding from it [i.e., not be hiding from
  your fear of your lower self]
  as you are hiding from
    a few other things in you.

This is what I have to say to you tonight.

And now, my dear friends, I am ready for your questions.

QUESTION:
Would you mind telling us
what the spirits do for recreation?

ANSWER:
Well, my friends,
it is extremely difficult
for humans
to imagine that
spirits
• live and
• laugh and
• enjoy themselves –
  and work.
Spirits
  in the higher realms
do all that [i.e., spirits live, laugh, enjoy themselves, and work], of course,
in perfect harmony.

What their
recreation is
depends entirely
on their
• personalities,
on their personal
• tastes,
• talents, and
• inclinations.

There may be one spirit
who is intensely interested in
music.

This one may live,
at least occasionally,
in a sphere
where it can enjoy
this particular pastime.

Another may be drawn to
• art,
another to
• science.

Others enjoy
just the beauty of Creation,
still others
will express themselves
perhaps in
• dancing, or in
• creating certain
• worlds or
• parts of
  • worlds,
  • spheres, or
• certain forms
  in accordance with
  their own particular individuality.
So there are
all forms
of recreation
in the spirit world.

There is
the art
of interchange
through
• conversation and
• play.

All that you have here
is only
a very crude copy
of what exists
in the spirit world.

As a rule,
I do not like to talk about this too much,
particularly because
the intellectual type
will not accept it easily.

Such a person will say,

"Oh, this is
• childish and
• primitive."

But the primitive ideas
some people have
may be wrong too,
because they
• see or
• imagine
the spirit world
in a way which is
too
• human or
too
• unreal.
The primitive person who tends toward superstition is not right.

Neither are the intellectual people right to deny that anything they consider concrete can exist in spirit, because they accept only what is considered abstract as being part of the spirit world.

They forget that • concrete and • abstract are one in spirit, as everything is one in spirit, at least in the highest spheres.

So I do not like to discuss this topic because the right words do not exist to express the spirit world in all the finer shades of its reality, and this [i.e., the right words not existing to describe the spirit world] may lead to dangerous misunderstandings [of the spirit world].

I realize that my description will not really give you an adequate picture [of the spirit world in all the finer shades of its reality].
QUESTION:
I would like to ask whether
the Christ spirit
is
• an all-pervading spirit
  like God
or
• an individual spirit?

ANSWER:
It [i.e., the Christ spirit]
is exactly the same
as with God.

The
• substance of Christ
is the same as
• God's substance;
it is all
• the divine substance.

It is
• the same substance
  you have in yourself.

Whether you call it [i.e., whether you call this substance]
• the divine substance,
• God's substance, or
• Christ's substance
makes no difference.

God has given
most of this substance
to His first creation,
the spirit
of Jesus Christ.
All other beings have received some of this substance and it is up to them to
• unfold it and
• enlarge it with the power
  given to them.

Do you understand that?

If you develop yourself, you make your higher self free of the
• shadows and
• layers of the lower self.

That [i.e., your higher self] is the presence you have constantly in you if you can develop it.

And this
• divine spark or
• higher self is the substance to which we are referring.

The presence of
• God or that of
• Jesus Christ as a person is something else again.
Christ can be felt
  in person
  as a presence,
  in his personification,
but that is something
  altogether different from
  the divine substance
  in you.

The presence
  of your own divine substance
  inside you
can only be unfolded
  by following
  this very path
  onto which I am now leading you.

To feel
  the presence of God
  in His personification –
    which is almost
    never the case
    with a human being,
  but it is possible
    for spirits –
or to feel
  the presence of Jesus Christ
  as a person
is an occasional grace
  that can come
    • unexpectedly,
    • without any
    • knowing or
    • understanding
      why.

These [i.e., the presence of God or Jesus Christ in their personification and the presence of your own divine substance]
  are two
  entirely different things.

Is that clearer now?  
  QUESTIONER: Yes.
QUESTION:
I would like to ask something in connection with the fall of the angels.

In Isaiah it is said that
God created
• good
and
• evil.

Did God create
• the evil forces and
• the Luciferic powers too?

ANSWER:
That is a great error, and you will readily understand it now when I remind you of one of the last lectures, The Fall [Lecture 21], that explains how this error could have happened.

You will remember my explaining that God created the power which He then gave to each of His created spirits.

This power could be used in any way depending on the individual spirit's free will.

Now that explains
• why or
• how
this error [i.e., the error that God created evil] could have occurred.
It is technically correct
to say that
God created
• evil,
but it would be
more [nearly] correct to say that
God created
• the possibility for evil
if
with their free will
people –
or spirits –
use this power
against
divine law.

Is that clear?

QUESTION:
Yes,
but there is always the contrary
to each extreme...

ANSWER:
Certainly
the opposite
of divine law
exists,
but that does
not mean
that God
created evil.
There is a great difference between
- creating evil,
  or
- giving
  - free will and
  - power
to God’s creatures who can then use the power
  - according to divine law
  or
  - not.

I have explained very thoroughly why God gave to all beings the possibility to choose freely.

Logically, free will includes the possibility of using it [i.e., using free will] wrongly.

If this possibility [of using free will wrongly] did not exist, there would be no freedom.

And if God's creatures are supposed to become godlike, they must be free, for freedom is a divine aspect.
The wrong use of the power
ultimately
  led to evil
  through a slow process,
even if it [i.e., even if the wrong use of the power]
did not become evil
  at the first deviation.

I have explained all this very thoroughly.

If you read that lecture [i.e. Lecture 22: The Fall]
you will understand.

There is no sense in going into this further now
because I think it is clear to most of my friends here.

Is it unclear to some of you?

QUESTION:
No, I believe the passage in Isaiah
  may be a wrong translation –
    that the Lord created evil.

In other words,
  He gives
    the possibility for it,
  but He
    does not create it.

ANSWER:
Exactly.

You see,
  the omission of one word
    very often makes a great deal of difference
      in the meaning of a sentence.

If instead of saying
  • "God created evil,"
it had said,
  • "God created the possibility of evil,"
the meaning would have been correct.
QUESTION:
How is it possible
    that a person on this path
    can be so strongly affected by
    environmental influences?

Can you help me in this respect?

ANSWER:
Well, I can only help you
    by showing you
    how to walk the path properly,
    and I am doing that.

The reason why
    environmental influences
    are strong
can be manifold,
    since there are
    different reasons
    for different people.

They [i.e., the differences]
    are primarily
    psychological.

When the soul
    is strongly influenced
    by outer happenings
    of whatever kind,
it is a sign that
    the soul is not yet free
    from its own entanglements.

If the
    inner forces
    are not used
    according to
    divine law,
the soul
    is not free.
With one person this [i.e., the soul’s lack of freedom due to inner forces not being used according to divine law] will manifest in the way the environment affects you, with another it will be different.

Whenever the soul is not
• healthy and
• mature,
certain occasions will bring this [manifestation] out and the soul will produce definite symptoms.

QUESTION:
But why do these symptoms occur, as in my case, when there is high humidity in the air?

ANSWER:
This happens because everybody's different odic forces [ref. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odic_force].

The odic force is composed differently in each individual and thus responds to different outer challenges.
With one person,
  • the cosmic influences
    affect the soul more strongly;
with others,
  • human influences
    will have a stronger effect,
and so on.

If you have
  this particular sensitivity [to high humidity],
it is because
  in your own way
    there is distortion
      in your soul
        which tends, perhaps,
          to cause sluggishness
            and takes the first opportunity
              to make the soul
                react in this way [i.e., react with sluggishness].

The soul
  is such a complicated mechanism
that there are
  no two souls alike.

Certain basic problems
  are alike,
but
  • how all these various
    • trends and
    • currents
      work,
  • what plays into
    the lower self or
  • what the lower self
    will use as an excuse
      to reinforce a negative trait
        like sluggishness, say, or
  • where the higher self
    is diluted by
      currents of the lower self
        to constitute a
          • mask or
          • subterfuge,
vary with each person.
The possibilities are infinite, since no two people react the same way.

But the fact remains that this [reaction to the environment] is a sign of a disturbance within the soul.

The only remedy is • to continue this path to the very end, • to follow this course I have outlined here.

If you were entirely • purified and • healthy, you would not be sensitive to • weather or • anything else that might come your way from outside.

QUESTION: Then I would not be here, I suppose.

ANSWER: That is right.

QUESTION: Can you tell me if there is any spiritual • significance or • reason for the different races?
ANSWER:
Oh yes, indeed.

There is no such thing as coincidence.

I should like to state briefly that human beings have to go through karmas. For instance, if a person is born into a certain race in which there is much collective suffering, it is of course due to this particular soul's karma.

The more unified humanity becomes through spiritual development, the more will different races cease to exist.

You can begin to see even at this time the slow but sure development in the direction of eliminating racial differences.

In a few thousand years from now, perhaps in about fifteen hundred years, the effect of this development will be very noticeable; • nations, • religions, and • races will have few of their differences left.
This [blurring of national, religious, and racial differences] will be a sign of
• unification and
• spiritual improvement.

However, until such time, there
• will be and
• must be
differences,
for only by
encountering obstacles
can you grow.

This holds true for
the individual's life,
and it certainly applies also to
the development of groups.

You may wonder why
certain races
do not suffer from
being different from others.

Then you might ask,
"What can they learn from that?"

Indeed, they [i.e., those who do not suffer from their differences from others], too,
have something to learn.

Perhaps they need to
learn the responsibility
that arises from
being spared sufferings
that other peoples may have.

Besides,
this angle [i.e., the angle of learning responsibility from being spared suffering] is not the only one to be considered.
A spirit
can be born into a
• race or
• nation
because
• spiritually,
• emotionally,
• characterwise and
• psychologically
it
• belongs to this group
and therefore
• has the best opportunity
to unfold there.

Differences will exist
as long as
• disunity
  exists on earth and
• humanity
  has not learned
to overcome it.

As any
• difficulty or
• apparent disadvantage
  can be a cure,
  which it must be
    if the person is on the right path,
• advantage
  can be a cure, too.

Through differences of
• race,
• religion,
• nationality, or
• various other categories,
humanity can
• become stronger and
• advance faster
  in spiritual development
  precisely because
  frictions exist.
Without friction, development can never proceed.

It is only a question of
• how the difficulty is met, always;
• how is it met
  • individually and
  • collectively.

Is that clear?

QUESTIONER:
Yes, thank you.

QUESTION:
But is not
the variety of
• different races and
• their trends
  part of
  the beauty of life?

ANSWER:
Yes,
the variety
is fine,
but
variety
on your earth
means
  • friction and
  • hostility.
In spirit there is infinite variety in everything, but it [i.e. but variety] is unlike that on your earth where you have what you call • "better races" and • "inferior races."

That [i.e., “better” and “inferior” races], of course is karmic for both groups and not only for the groups which are sometimes persecuted.

That is also a thought upon which you can now meditate.

**QUESTION:** Is there something wrong if, working on this path of development, you find that • you have one particular fault and • you are trying to overcome it through • meditation and • prayer and yet • you don't seem to get further along?
ANSWER:
I will
not say
that there is
something wrong,
but I would
say
that
• some method or
• some key
  that you need
  is lacking.

You try hard,
again and again,
in one particular direction
perhaps
too forcefully.

Your lower self
resists that [forceful effort in that one particular direction].

Maybe I can help you
by saying this:

My dear friend,
you must realize
one thing.

When I
• spoke about
  the battle and
• said,
  fight,
I meant
  just that.

It takes the lower self
a very long time
to become ready
to give up
• its faults,
• its resentments,
• its sluggish ways.
You must realize
that this lower self
lives in you
strongly,
even though
you
• are not aware of it
  consciously and
• do not see
  its significance,
because
consciously
you only know
your good will
  to work in the right direction.

This realization [that this lower self lives in you strongly]
is the first essential step.

Without making this realization [that this lower self lives in you strongly],
you can get
nowhere,
no matter
how good
the will of
your conscious being
is.

What most people
do not accept,
at least not until
a pretty distant point is reached
on this path,
is the discrepancy
in themselves:
• how one part
can want one thing,
• while another part
  wants exactly the opposite.
This conflict of opposite desires, which at first is always subconscious, must be taken out of the darkness of the subconscious and brought into the light of consciousness.

Without this essential step there can be no further success.

Therefore, my advice is to not try for the moment to force yourself to feel what you have been so far incapable of feeling.

Instead, use your efforts in the direction of making that part of you conscious that is responsible for your lack of success so far.
Relax completely, not only physically but also emotionally.

Then [when your are completely relaxed both physically and emotionally] try to let your lower self come to the surface, so that you can actually become aware of it [i.e., so you can make your lower self conscious].

When your enemy [here your lower self] becomes visible, you can fight successfully; as long as your enemy is invisible, you cannot succeed.

So do not be afraid to let out what is in you.

Very quietly say

• to yourself and, in your meditations,
• to God:

"This is the way I am now.

At least a part of me is this way, the part I do not like or cherish.
I want to accept this aspect as part of my being, knowing that I cannot change anything without doing so freely.

I realize that what will manifest is not my whole being.

But there are two contradictory forces in me, and I have to become aware of both, including the one I have so far ignored.

In order to become what I would like to be, I must first, without

• fear of shame and
• vanity,

face what is in me."

Ask God to help you to achieve that end, and then let the lower self come out.
Listen to
your feelings
in connection with incidents
that have
always
brought out
this [lower-self] trend in you.

Then try to
translate
these feelings
into
concise
• thoughts and
• words.

Do this
costantly
and you will be
successful
in this respect.

You will then
come to the point
when you can
quietly
realize
these
two contradictory currents
in you:

• the one in which you see
  your imperfection, and
• the opposite one,
  where you
  know in theory
  how you would
  like to
  • feel and
  • react,
  even though
  you cannot as yet do so.
First compare these two [opposite contradictory] currents and learn for the time being to accept your present imperfection in comparison with the perfection you know to be right.

Accept this imperfection with humility.

If you do that constantly, your feelings will change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>• self-observation and • self-honesty will have a surprising effect on you.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By following this procedure [of self-observation and self-honesty], you will learn to follow the law of reality, • accepting yourself as you are and thus • learning • true humility.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This awareness [of your lower-self aspects] will generate a new strength in you even before you have attained perfection in this respect [i.e., in respect to these lower-self aspects].
After a period of this kind of training [in self-observation and self-honesty], very gradually your feelings will begin to change.

This [constant self-observation and self-honesty] is the only way [to overcome your resistant faults, your lower self], my dear.

I meant to talk about this topic [i.e., this topic of how to overcome stubborn faults through self-observation and self-honesty] in a following lecture, but since your question came up, it is good for all of you that I answered it now.

I will come back to this because it [i.e., because this topic of self-observation and self-honesty] constitutes the method of purification of emotions not influenced by an act of direct willpower.

This [topic of how to overcome stubborn faults, your lower self, through self-observation and self-honesty] cannot be emphasized enough.

It often takes some time until this method [of self-observation and self-honesty] is clearly understood, but once it is, it cannot fail to bring results.
Some of you may get bored hearing this again and again, especially those of my friends who have heard this from me in their private sessions, but I cannot say it often enough.

Many of you have understood this process only in your brain, but your inner self has not yet

• perceived or
• understood it entirely.

Do you understand?

QUESTION: Yes.

How do you get your inner self to understand the emotional self?

ANSWER: Do not try to make it [i.e., do not try to make your inner self] understand to begin with.

Let it [i.e., Let the emotional self] out first.

That is the first half of the process.
You cannot
• educate or
• reeducate
your emotional self
before
it is
completely
on the surface.

To be
in a hurry
to change these emotions
is not only
an impossible goal
and therefore
your hurry
is
• futile and
• unrealistic,

but this period of
constant
self-recognition
where you
make comparisons
between your emotions
which conflict with
what you have long recognized
as being
right [emotions]

teaches you
humility.

To accept yourself
as an imperfect being
is accepting yourself
in the right way,
without
• guilt feelings and
• self-abuse.

The latter [i.e., guilt feelings and self-abuse]
are
• unhealthy and
• unproductive.
You must learn to take yourself realistically and say,

"In so many respects,
     I am still imperfect.

In so many others,
     I have reached perfection.

If in the work on this path
     I should find out
     that I am less perfect
     than I thought,
     I will accept this too,
     in order to be able
     to change it."

Realize that before your imperfections can change, you have so many other things to learn from this very imperfection in you.

Learn the proper attitude with which to meet your lower self, accept your inability to change something by a mere effort of will.
All this [work, understanding, and attitude toward and acceptance of the lower self] is necessary on your path, and therefore the still existing imperfections fulfill a definite purpose.

This does not mean that you should
• nurse them [i.e., nurse your still existing imperfections and faults],
• justify their existence,
or, worse,
• become lazy and not do anything about them.

This [i.e., nursing your still existing imperfections and faults, justifying their existence, and not doing anything about them] would be the wrong opposite extreme.

To find the right middle path in everything is part of the path.

Learn to accept yourself without
• fear,
without
• shame, and
without
• pride.

Where you still discover these [lower-self] trends, • examine what is behind them and • gain further understanding about yourself.
If you
  • follow this system [of self-observation and self-honesty]
    for a while and
  • ask
    at the same time
    for God's grace
    to help you,
you will get
  further
  and further,
although
  you will
  not
  change these [lower-self] currents
  immediately.

You
  will
  grow in
  • self-recognition and
  • self-understanding,
    however.

  This [growth in self-recognition and self-understanding]
  is fundamental.

The proper spirit
  of accepting the lower self
  with the necessary humility
is of
  much greater importance
  than any of you realize
  as yet.

You mistakenly
  want to skip this phase [of accepting the lower self with humility] altogether,
and by so doing
  you will
  inevitably
  become discouraged
  eventually
because your endeavors
  will always wind up
  in a dead-end street.
And now I will retire, my dear friends.

God's blessings go
• to all of my dear friends far away and
• to all of my dear friends in this room, as well as
• to those who have found their way to us for the first time tonight.

May this be a turning point in their lives.

Peace be with you; be in God!

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