Greetings in the name of God and Jesus Christ. I bring you blessings, my dear friends.

The last time [Lecture 25 – The Path: Initial Steps, Preparation, and Decisions] I talked about
• the difficulty of this path and
• the dangers of approaching it with the illusion that
  • a few meditations and
  • some miracle-formula will make
    all your earthly troubles disappear.
It is equally far from the truth
to overestimate
the difficulties on this path.

I can see that
some of my friends
have become a little afraid [of embarking upon this path],
and this
unjustified fear [of this path]
serves as an excuse
for the lower self
that always
wants to avoid
• purification and
• improvement.

Now, my dear friends,
let us examine
the fears [of embarking upon this path]
you may have.
Certainly
the path is difficult,
but
God is
• wise and
• just
and He will
not give you
more than you can
• bear or
• accomplish.

That [i.e., what your are given to bear or accomplish], of course,
varies
with each individual.

The higher
your development,
the stronger you are
and therefore
the more
can be expected of you.
But if you are still weak, perhaps the smallest effort will be sufficient for you.

At any rate, none of you can truly achieve happiness in this life if you do not accomplish, spiritually speaking, the maximum according to your destiny.

This path with my instruction and guidance should help you reach this end [i.e., reach true happiness by accomplishing the maximum, spiritually speaking, according to your destiny].

Therefore, the proper attitude for you to take, if you happen to fear that this path is too much for you, is that you put yourself into the hands of God and ask Him.

Let Him decide for you [whether or not this path is too difficult for you].
But how very few people do this [i.e., put themselves into the hands of God and ask Him to make this decision for them] when the mood of doubt overtakes them!

Then [i.e., when the mood of doubt overtakes you] you are all very quick to make your own decision, albeit a temporary one in many cases, that this path is too much for you, and the thought does not even occur to you to ask God for His will in this respect.

Another great misunderstanding is the mistaken idea that to follow the path I am showing you means neglecting your life in other ways.

You see, my dear friends, I can observe the forms of your thoughts and feelings.
I can see
your lower self
that fights
constantly
against
the right decisions,
delivering all sorts of
• excuses and
• pretexts,
while you
remain unaware of
• why you have these thoughts [i.e., why you have these lower-self excuses and pretexts] and
• what is really behind them.

Some of you may believe
that a certain amount of
• time and
• effort
for your
spiritual development
will take too much time
away from
your daily struggle for livelihood;

you think you
may not have enough strength left
for your
professional efforts
and thus fear that
your finances may suffer.

Another may believe
that not enough time remains
to enjoy life,
and so on.
But this way of thinking is so very wrong because

• spiritual development in general, and
• this path in particular,

is not an extra activity in your life that you simply add on to your other activities, thus diminishing the

• strength,
• time,
• effort, and
• zest

that would otherwise be available to you for all your other

• duties and
• pleasures.

Actually, it is quite the contrary, my friends.

The truth is that this path of purification represents the foundation of your life.

It [i.e., this path of purification] is the ground you walk on, symbolically speaking!
When you decide
to take it [i.e., to take this path of purification],
you simply
shift the tracks of your life,
if I may say so,
into different channels.

After a while,
even though
your main problems
will not disappear
from one day
to the next,
this [i.e., taking this path of purification]
has the effect of
awakening in you
a new life spark
that furnishes you
with a heretofore
unfamiliar
• strength,
• acumen,
• vitality, and
• ability to enjoy life
as you have never done before.

Thus
* you will do
  better work
  in your profession;
* you will get
  more benefit from
  your times of leisure;
* you will get
  more pleasure out of life
  whatever you may do,
whereas
now
life is still
more or less flat
for most of you.
These [better results in all areas of your life – your profession, your times of leisure, and the pleasure in your life]

are the results
I can promise
if you work
spiritually
in the way I am showing you.

They [i.e., these better results]
won’t become apparent
at once,
but only
• after a certain time,
• after some
  inner
  victories.

Then you will see
that this path
is well worth taking,
• even from
  your selfish point of view, and
• even though
  your main conflicts
  will have not yet disappeared.

This [i.e., this path being well worth taking]
is so
because
on this path
you will
  eventually
  find out
where
  in your
  • deeper feelings,
  • reactions, and
  • thoughts,
  if not in your
  • deeds,
you have broken
  many a spiritual law.
This realization [that you have broken many a spiritual law in your deeper feelings, reactions and thoughts]

will enable you to
gradually
change

• inner currents and
• emotional reactions,

and this will
automatically
free a

• strength and
• life force

that was previously

• locked or
• blocked.

So I do
not promise you
a miracle

that will be given to you
as a reward
from heaven,

but show you

• plainly and
• logically

that this path
cannot help but work out
because
it is based on
the law of

• cause and
• effect

which works quite

• naturally and
• impersonally.
So I ask you 
not to consider 
the decision to take this path 
as some additional activity in your life, 
such as 
taking up some new kind of lessons 
that might rob you of 
• time and 
• effort 
you could give 
to other 
• necessary or 
• desirable 
things.

Consider rather 
this path 
as the foundation of your life; 
it is supposed to 
make it [i.e., make your life] 
into a well-integrated whole.

For if you can solve 
your 
inner 
• problems and 
• errors, 
as you can 
only 
do on this path, 
you must eventually also solve 
your 
outer 
problems.
Because you have often wasted many lives, and because wrong habits of thinking and feeling have implanted themselves deeper and deeper in you from one incarnation to another, the knots have become tighter and more tangled.

Therefore it must take time to dissolve these knots, to loosen them up, to understand the workings of all your inner currents in relationship to spiritual law and truth.

However, if and when you have accomplished this [i.e., if and when you have understood the working of all your inner currents in relationship to spiritual law and truth] to some degree, your outer problems must cease.
This [cessation of your outer problems]
will certainly
not happen
when you
merely
put more
• effort and
• concentration
on the
outer
problem alone,
instead of
finding out
the corresponding
inner
problem
which is
always
the cause
of the
outer
one.

By the same token,
you will get so much more out of
all the good things in life –
• happiness,
• joy,
• pleasure –
• if your soul
becomes healthy again,
• if your
inner
reactions
can conform to
spiritual law.

Only then [i.e., only when your inner reactions
conform to spiritual law]
will you be capable of
happiness.
For how many people are capable of happiness?

Very few, my friends.

The majority of people are actually as scared of
• happiness
• unhappiness.

You desire great happiness, all of you, but
the farther out of reach it is, the more desirable it seems to you; whereas
if once in a while there seems to be a chance to actually realize such happiness, you then shrink away from it.

Oh yes, my friends, this is so.

Think back in your life; examine your feelings in these rare moments [i.e., in these rare moments where there was a chance for you to realize the happiness you long for]; analyze them [i.e., analyze your feelings in such moments] from this angle [from the angle that you are afraid of happiness and ultimately shrink away from happiness when happiness becomes possible] and you will see that I am right.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**This** [shrinking away in fear from a chance to realize the happiness you long for] is, of course,
  a symptom
  that the soul
    • is sick and
    • has deviated from
      one or more
        spiritual laws.

For
  only those
    who follow
      a very important spiritual law,
      embrace life
        • wholeheartedly,
        • without fear,
        • without self-pity,
        • without being afraid of being hurt.

And only those who **can do so** [i.e., who can follow a very important spiritual law]
  are capable of
    experiencing
      real happiness.

**So everything you do in life**
  will have
    more
      • flavor,
    more
      • awareness, and
    more
      • life spark
  if you
    • follow
      the path of
        • self-knowledge and
        • perfection, and
    • do what God wants you to do.
It [i.e., following the path of self-knowledge and perfection, and doing what God wants you to do] will not take more time than is reasonable according to your life circumstances.

All of you without exception are capable, with
- a little willpower and
- determination and
- proper organization of your everyday life,
to spend an average of half an hour a day on your spiritual development.

You spend time on your physical body,
- feed it,
- rest it, and
- cleanse it;
you certainly do not feel that this takes something away from your
- other duties or
- pleasures.

You take it for granted that this [care of your physical body] is a
- necessary,
- self-evident part of your life.
Yet,
when the question arises
whether to do the same
for your soul —
and less time is necessary for that
than for your body —
then
• fears,
• doubts, and
• questions
bar your way.

But they [i.e., But fears, doubts, and questions]
cannot do so [i.e., cannot bar your way to spiritual development and caring
for your soul]
if you take the trouble
to think reasonably
about
this matter of spiritual development,
my friends.

You are
not
thinking reasonably
about it [i.e., about your spiritual development], however
because
you do not evaluate
these doubts [concerning your soul and your spiritual development]
as to their [i.e. as to these doubts’]
proper merit.

Instead
you have them [i.e., you have these doubts concerning your soul
and your spiritual development]
because
you are inspired by
your own
lower self.
As long as
you do not
recognize
• how the lower self works,
• how it manifests, and
• in what devious ways
  it hides behind handy excuses [i.e., excuses not to commit to this
  path, that is, excuses not to commit to your spiritual
  development that is needed to expose
  the lower self and its devious ways],

you will
not
be able to master it [i.e., not be able to master the lower self],
regardless
how sincere
your love for God may be.

Love for God
is wonderful
if it manifests
in beautiful
• prayer and
• meditation.

But
the work
has to be done
too.

What is the work?

This is the work, my friends.

To master
your lower self
is the work
that Jesus meant mainly.

To do good
to other people
is also part of it.
But can you do really good to other people as long as your impure currents force you into thinking things that are not according to truth?

No.

You may be able to perform a good act and consider this a good deed.

Yet it is not really a good deed if it is not supported by purified feelings.

And purified feelings are your goal on this path, for which you do not need more than

• a certain amount of time every day,
• a certain amount of willpower, and
• a certain amount of detached and reasonable, common sense thinking.
Some of you have really made this wholehearted decision [to follow this spiritual path of purification and thereby to master your lower self].

Some of you have not.

But for both groups [i.e., for both those who have made this wholehearted decision to follow this path of purification and for those who have not],

it is important to understand how to deal with the lower self that

• works in the subconscious mind and
• sends only subterfuges [i.e., expedients used to evade a rule, or to escape a consequence] to the surface [i.e., to awareness and consciousness].

For even those of you who are sincerely willing to walk this path of purification will have many fights with this lower self of yours along the way.

Perhaps not any more [fights] as far as taking this path on the whole is concerned, but [fights] about individual

• currents and
• trends within you which the lower self does not want to part with.
So it is important that you train yourself to understand what is underneath these doubts or fears that want to lead you away from the path of purification – or at least make it more difficult for you to gain the necessary self-understanding.

So this [i.e., So having fights with the lower self that would keep you from progress on this path of purification] is one factor, my dear friends, that you have to deal with in the first place, and keep in mind at all times.

Learn to see through your doubts and your hesitancy;

learn to see the real meaning of an occasional stubbornness when you do not want to understand something.
And the more you come to know
• your own entire personality,
• what you really are and
• who you are,

the easier it will become for you to overcome whatever is in your lower self that constantly draws you away from this inner work.

Here are thoughts I could observe in some of my friends between the last lecture and tonight:

• "Isn't it enough if I am a decent person?"

• God loves us all and if I just try to
  • be good and
  • behave right, that should be sufficient.

• Why do I have to go through all this [work of purification and dealing with the lower self]?

No, my dear ones,
it [i.e., this limited way of thinking about your spiritual life] may be sufficient for some people, but
do not ever forget that for anyone who is guided to hear this [lecture], there is also an obligation involved.

And this obligation means that more is expected of you than just being what is commonly considered a decent person who does not harm other people.

That the fulfillment of this [larger] obligation works out for your own good, because by overcoming your lower self you free yourself of your own chains, is something else again.

But let us remain for the moment with the argument that I have observed among some of you [namely,] that it should suffice for spiritual development if you [merely] • are good and • do not harm others.
What constitutes "harm to others"?

To harm others is not only
  • to steal from them, or
  • to say ugly things behind their backs, or
  • to kill, or
  • anything like that.

You may harm another person by not having enough love.

And no
  • outer and
  • forced kindness to make up for this lack [of love]

will change the fact that this love is still missing in your soul.

Or, you may harm another by not having enough understanding, by being blind.
For
    if you are blind
to yourself [including blind to your faults and weaknesses],
you are perforceblind
to your surroundings.

And
each individual fault of yours [to which you are currently blind]
stands in the way of
unfolding
pure
• love,
• insight, and
• understanding.

In this way
you do harm others.

But it is not as simple
as all that,
my friends.

Imagine
• the love of God,
• this marvelous light
  that lives
  in the soul
  of each individual.
And imagine how
the lower self
stands
in-between
• you
and
• this light [i.e., this light and love that lives within you] and
• the beneficial effect
  it [i.e., this love and marvelous light that lives within you and
  its beneficial effect, if made available.]
could have
on your surroundings.
You not only cause harm through actual
• bad deeds, and
• bad thoughts, and
• impure feelings, but also by lacking the
• love and
• understanding you could be capable of having if you fulfilled your maximum potential in this incarnation.

That [i.e., fulfilling your maximum potential in this incarnation] means following this path of self-development.

Not only those traits which are commonly called faults • are a hindrance for you, and thus • directly or • indirectly • harm others, but also your fears, which are not generally considered to be faults.
You do not realize that your fears cause great harm, not only
• in your own life but also
• in the lives of others.

Your fears also hide your light of
• love,
• understanding, and
• truth.

So, being on this path is not only a matter of overcoming your character weaknesses.

Overcoming your own fears is of equal importance, for as long as there is fear in your heart, you harm other people.

[With fear in your heart] You actually send out certain rays that have a very unsavory effect.

Do you know that, for the spirit, fear has a very ugly smell?
And do you know that

• your spirit,
• your subconscious mind,
• smells the fear of others all the time and
• is affected by it constantly?

You can only guard yourself against

• this fear emanation of others and
• your own consequent negative reactions

if you oust your own fear [and its emanation to others];

for then

• you will consciously understand the fear of others and
• it [i.e., the fear of others and its emanation toward you] will not harm you any more.

You will make your instinctive awareness of their fear into an intuition that will reach your entire consciousness.
But as long as you live
  • instinctively,
  and therefore
  • unknowingly,
    • you remain unaware of all fears,
    • you are gravely affected by them [affected by all fears]
  and thus
  • you will, in turn, produce bad effects on others.

Thus
  a vicious circle
  is set in motion that can only be broken if
  • self-awareness and
  • understanding about these facts are gained in sufficient degree.

If this [inner work of self-awareness and understanding] is not done, the fears of others reaching you will increase your own fears; this sets up a hard wall between • you and • your fellow-creatures that eliminates all divine aspects that could be spread outward from • your own soul, as well as from • the souls of others.
For there is nothing as contagious as inner currents, be they • positive or • negative.

So do not believe that it is sufficient to be merely a decent person.

This term [“decent person”] varies greatly according to
• a person's overall spiritual development and
• what he or she is capable of delivering in
  • fulfillment and
  • purification.

I mean that God evaluates each individual differently.

Furthermore, do not imagine that you do not harm anyone by simply refraining from the more obvious evil deeds.
As long as there is fear in your heart you do harm in subtle ways that are not obvious, but are nevertheless just as damaging.

Now, my dear friends, I want you to think about all that I have said to you.

And, if you really want to follow this path, it is not sufficient for you to read this lecture just once.

You will find that you will need to
• reread certain sentences several times and
• meditate on them [i.e., meditate on these certain sentences] so that you gain
• enlightenment and
• deeper understanding.

Do not just read the lecture once and forget it.

Some of these sentences have deep meaning for you personally, and therefore it is important that you work with them.
Often
it may be
very necessary for you
to go back to
a few previous lectures,
if there is any particular point
which you
• still have
  not quite digested and
• still need
to deliberate on.

You yourself
will know when this is necessary.

I have promised to show you
how you should go about
actually starting on this path.

There are
many ways,
and each individual
reacts to them differently.

Of course,
in these general lectures
I cannot give
• individualized or
• personal
guidance
  for the manner in which
each of you
can work on this path.

But
I will give you certain basic facts to go by
as you make
your own plan.
You do not have to work according to my words to the letter; certain details of • method and • timing may vary for each one of you.

This can be all right as long as you keep the basic structure in mind.

You all know that to gain self-knowledge is of imperative importance.

Now, how can this be done?

The first step will be to think as objectively as you possibly can about • yourself, about all your • good qualities and all your • faults.

Write down a list, as I have often advised, because this writing down • helps you to • concentrate on and • condense what you have found out so far and • will prevent your losing your hold on the knowledge.
The written words in black and white can
• shed a new light of understanding, and
• promote a tiny little bit of detachment in your consideration of yourself.

Later on, when you have gained further knowledge about
• yourself and about
• your subconscious trends, you will be able to combine certain factors of your first-found knowledge, provided it is
• clearly and
• concisely expressed.

After you have done this conscientiously, the next step would be to ask
• someone else,
• someone who knows you very well, to tell you what he or she honestly thinks about you.

I know that it takes courage to do that.
Consider this
your first effort
to overcome
a little bit
of your pride.

By doing so [i.e., by thus overcoming a little bit of your pride],
you will have attained
some victory
that will already
free you
of one little inner chain.

I would suggest, my friends,
that
• all of you
  who are here, and
• all of you
  who
    • read these words and
    • cannot be present at these sessions personally
      but are also willing
        to walk this path,
get together with
  one or two other friends
  who are interested in
    reaching the same goal.

Some of you
  who read these words
    may not be able
      to belong to this group.

If you
  • are all alone
    in this spiritual quest, and
  • wonder how to find
    the proper person to work with,
I advise you
  to pray for guidance.

You will see what happens.
For whoever
  • needs help and
  • knocks on the door,
    knowing how to ask,
will be answered.

I can promise you that
  if your wish
    is sincere,
you will be guided.

As far as
  my friends who are here
  are concerned,
you should not have a problem
because
  you can always
    • arrange to get together with
      one other person here
    and perhaps
      • meet once a week
        to discuss things
          pertaining to
            your work on this path.

For,
  in many ways,
    it is very important
      not to do this work
        completely alone.

In the first place,
  there is a spiritual law, my friends:
    • to be able to open up,
    • to really open your heart
      to another person
        brings a spiritual help
          that you
            could not
              receive by yourself.

  It is
    the law of brotherhood.
For people who are always alone,

no matter
• how hard they work,
no matter
• how intelligently they
  • read or
  • study,
no matter
• how much self-honesty they try to have,
become locked in a certain vacuum that bars a complete
• understanding and
• evaluation of the self,
an understanding that automatically flows into them if they can open themselves to another soul.

By remaining all alone, you violate the law of brotherhood in some subtle way.

Not isolating yourself requires a certain amount of humility which does not come easily at the very beginning, but after some time it becomes second nature through a fruitful cooperation with another person.
Soon you will be able to
  • talk openly
    about
      your
        • difficulties,
      your
        • weaknesses and
      your
        • problems,
  and
  • receive criticism.

The latter [i.e., receiving criticism], of course, is equally healthy for the soul.

Each one of you who has already tried opening up will confirm that merely discussing a problem you have kept to yourself without hearing good advice, will cause it to all of a sudden lose • its exaggerated proportions, and • some of its fearful aspects.

By being yourself • as you really are with at least one person, • with the minimum of • masks and • defenses possible, you imbibe a very healthy medicine for yourself.
At the same time
[by being yourself as you really are]
you offer
an act of love
to the other person
whom you help
more by
• showing your own human weaknesses
than by
• trying to appear superior.

Your
• partner or
• co-worker
will do the same
for you.

So
try to organize this
with each other.

You will see
after a while
how
• helpful and
• fruitful
this will be.

• It will give you
food for thought;

• you will
help each other and

• you will
learn a lot
in
• brotherhood,
in
• humility, and
in
• detached understanding.
Asking others about your faults may not always be possible with the person you have chosen as your spiritual co-worker, because not all people who come here know each other very well.

Your own
• friends or
• family may not share your interest in this work, but they still
  • know you very well and
  • can tell you more about yourself than your new-found friends here.

I would advise you to ask those who know you really well.

No matter what they believe, they will respect you
• for your sincere endeavor
  • to improve,
  • to learn about your faults, and
• for listening to them.
You can ask in the right way, explaining to them:
- that four eyes often see more than two, and
- that you want to improve and will not be hurt or angry with them even if they say something that may seem unjust to you.

My friends, you know it is possible that by doing just that much, you can open a door to the very people you had hoped to convince and were unable to reach by merely lecturing them, by trying to prove a truth they could not see as yet.

When your friends or family do tell you your faults, think about them calmly.

Someone may say something that at first will seem entirely unjust and hurtful to you.
You may also,
for that matter,
be even more hurt
if
a truth [concerning a real fault in you]
is told to you.

Even if you have
the sincere conviction
that the criticism
is an injustice,
try to
evaluate it [i.e., evaluate the criticism]
nonetheless.

There may be
only one grain of truth in it;
the other person may
• just see you
  a little differently or
• see you just on
  a superficial level.

He or she
may not have
the full understanding of
• what lies underneath,
• why
  you react in this way, and
• all the complicated mechanisms
  of the workings of the soul.

He or she
may not choose
the right words.

But
the one grain of truth
in what is said
may open
a new door of understanding
for you.
It [i.e., the criticism or fault] may not even be something entirely new for you, but it is often necessary to consider the same • fault or • trait • from new angles, • under a different light, so as to understand the various effects this same fault may have on your surroundings.

When you • say your daily prayer and • do your meditation, this [i.e., this set of faults that others may see in you] is what you should concentrate on.

Perhaps it is better for you now to devote less • time and • concentration to general deliberations, and instead ask God for help to be able to recognize yourself • in truth, • without the distorted view the self generally reserves for itself.
Ask God
   to inspire you
      how to react rightly
         to enlightenment about yourself;

ask for help
   to receive
      unpleasant truth from others
         in a productive way.

If you start in this way,
   you have made
      a very good beginning.

If you take
   all the faults
      you are beginning to recognize
         more and more clearly
            into your daily meditation, and

if your wish [to know and react rightly to all your faults]
   is truly sincere,
you have made
   the best beginning imaginable.

And, my dear friends,
   if you do that [i.e., if you recognize, know, and react rightly to all your faults],
train yourself
   to observe
      your inner reactions
         when you deal with
            the unpleasant
               within you.

   This is of utmost importance.
I have begun this lecture
by saying that
the lower self
constantly
resists your endeavors.

Here [i.e., as you observe your inner reactions when you deal with
the unpleasant within you]
you have a wonderful opportunity
to observe
your undisguised
lower self
as it
• works and
• reacts.

Try to watch it [i.e., Try to watch your undisguised lower self]
as you would a third person.

Try to be
a little less involved in it [i.e., less involved in your lower self].

Try to put
a little distance
between
• your powers of
  self-observation
and
• the reaction of
  your
  • lower self,
  your
  • ego,
  your
  • hurt,
  your
  • vanity
that become involved
when you are dealing with
the unpleasant side of your personality.
By thus recognizing
your own reactions [i.e., reactions of your lower self, ego, hurt, and vanity when you are dealing with your faults, the unpleasant side of your personality]
and understanding them [i.e., understanding your own reactions to your faults],

perhaps
  • humoring them [i.e., humoring the reactions of your lower self to your faults]
  • not taking yourself so deadly seriously
    in this respect [i.e., in respect to your faults and your reactions to them],

you will gain
another step up
on the ladder.

But I admonish you
not to expect this awareness [of your faults and of your reactions to them] to happen from one day to the next.

It [i.e., to gain this awareness of your faults and of your reactions to them] means constant work,
and after some time of regular work each day,
let us say for only half an hour,
you will make progress.
You will come to the point when you feel quite clearly the distance between:

- the real you
- and your hurt little ego,

and you can humor it [i.e., humor your hurt little ego] a little bit without being so very much in it [i.e., without being in your hurt little ego].

Once you have accomplished this [i.e., accomplished putting distance between the real you and your hurt little ego], the door will open for further self-understanding.

This [self-understanding, understanding of your various reactions to your faults by working with a co-worker] might be a very good way to begin [your work of discovering your faults], dear friends.

Those of you who have not found as yet the right co-worker, as we might call it, can pray for guidance and you will be helped.
Then [i.e., when you have found the right co-worker]

- get together
  - once a week and
- tell each other
  - what
    - you have accomplished so far,
  - where
    - you still have difficulties,
  - what
    - your inner reactions are,
  and perhaps
  - plan together
    - what pertinent questions
      - you may ask
        - in the next general session here.

This will also
give great joy to you.

So, begin by

- making your own
  - inventory of faults.

After you

- have done
  - your best in this respect, and
- have also asked someone
  - who knows you really well
    - about your faults,

compare

- their observations
  - with
    - your own findings.

Complement

- the two lists,
  - work with them.

Take the results

to God

- in your daily prayer
  - to help you further.
These efforts [i.e., efforts of making your own list of faults, talking to another about your faults, comparing the two lists and taking the results to God in your daily prayer] are a wonderful beginning for everyone.

They [i.e., these efforts] will not be in vain, I promise you.

If every day you
• do some self-observation work, and
• meditate on some of the pertinent words I am giving here,
you will certainly be successful, long before actual results can manifest in your life.

A feeling of deep
• contentment and
• peace will come to you often,
  [a feeling of deep contentment and peace] that only those who work on themselves according to God's will can have.
On a day when you feel
• strong,
• alive and
• full of enthusiasm,
it is much easier
to find contact with
• God and
• His truth
within yourself.

Consider such days
a source of strength
that you can gather
for the more difficult times
that may follow.

Most important, however,
are the days
when you feel
• low and
• discouraged and
• doubtful.

Then [i.e., when you feel low, discouraged, and doubtful] it becomes imperative
for you to know how to fight against giving in to these moods.

Choose these [low] days to
• reread what I am saying here and
• consider it [i.e., consider what I am saying here] again, and
• take your problem to God.
It is most difficult for human beings to form • the right thoughts at • the right moment.

The practice of this is a training in itself.

To have • the proper thoughts at • the proper time is really nothing else but a habit that has to be formed.

So if you are • low and • discouraged, do not give in to your mood so easily.

[Rather.] Ask God for • proper understanding and • light in this moment [when you are feeling low and discouraged].

Perhaps you could make a mark on your copy of the lecture and put it in a certain place where you can easily find it.
Then,

if you still doubt [my words here],
ask God for
  • His truth and
  • His will
    for you;

ask Christ
to help you
  to be receptive to it [i.e., receptive to God’s truth and God’s will for you].

Pray:
  "Father,
    • is this
      thy truth?
    • Is this
      thy will for me?
  I am open
    to receive
      thy answer."

Nothing more
  is asked
when you are
  in doubt,
  my friends.

But

if you
  • do this
    • sincerely,
    • with your
      whole heart, and
  • disregard
    the resistance
      of your lower self
        that
          always
            lurks nearby
              in such moments,

then

you will have gained
  a major victory.
I want to impress this [work of discovering and dealing with your faults] upon you; take it with you tonight as the first • actual and • concrete beginning on this path.

Before turning to your questions now, I want to mention once more that everything you suffer from in your life, my friends, results • directly or • indirectly from your • shortcomings and from your • fears.

If you did not have any shortcomings, there could not be any fear in you.

It is • fear that makes you so miserable, • the same fear that makes you blind to the joys of life.
Remember that
   it is in
   your own power
   to break
   the chains of fear
   by following this path.

   It is in
   your own hands.

If
   you wish for
   this power [to break the chains of fear],
you will
   receive it.

No matter
   how busy you are in your life,
you will
   have the time,
   not only
   • to fulfill your duties
     as you have done before,
   but
   • to fulfill them
     infinitely better.

And
   you will have time
   to enjoy life
   infinitely better too
when
   you lose
   the constant
   • fear and
   • insecurity
   in your soul.

It [i.e., the fear and insecurity in your soul] spoils
   everything
   for you
   so much,
   my dear ones.
Do not think you will lack the strength for the necessary work on this path.

This strength will be given drop by drop for all your needs, • spiritual and • material, when you first decide to • choose this path and • trust God that He will give you what you need for it.

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

QUESTION:
Would you please tell us what Jesus meant by "the meek shall inherit the earth?"

ANSWER:
By "meek" are meant all who have no hatred, no resentment, no self-will, and no fear.
They [i.e., those who have no hatred, resentment, self-will, and fear] will be able to be
• understanding,
• loving, and
• humble

enough
not to have to prove themselves right
all the time.

Many people may lack the courage to put this [understanding, loving, and humble living] in practice, but
inside they feel frustrated when they are not able to do it [i.e., when they are not able to practice understanding, loving, and humble living].

To be like this [i.e., to be understanding, loving, and humble] is to have a very healthy soul, because this means having
• strength,
• power, and
• independence.

Such a person lives
• with the divine law that works for him or her,

instead of
• swimming against the stream of the law which then sets up very disharmonious currents.
On the other hand, it should be clearly understood that meekness in the way Jesus meant it does not mean that you should let the lower self of your brother triumph [over you].

Oh no.

Jesus Christ himself has not done so [i.e., has not let the lower self of another triumph over him].

Jesus Christ has fought many a time, and often quite strongly.

To fight evil
• in the other fellow, as well as
• in yourself, also includes
being able to accept a hurt, and perhaps learn from it.

But you must not allow the lower nature of others to take advantage of your meekness.
Finding 
the right course 
between 
these 
apparently contradictory 
courses of action 
is not as difficult 
as it may appear at first.

Test yourself 
first 
where 
• your own ego 
is involved, 
• your pride perhaps or 
• your self-will;

right then and there 
you should learn 
to accept humbly 
that 
your ego 
prevents 
your seeing 
the truth.

The fighting spirit 
that then arises 
• should be curbed 
and only 
• allowed to function 
if 
the ego [with its pride or self-will perhaps] 
can be neutralized.

After a while, 
with proper 
self-development, 
• objectivity and 
• impartial judgment 
are attained.
If
  • you can
clearly feel
how your ego
is gradually disappearing, and
• you are
not in the center
of your own universe
anymore,
you will be able to
• stand up
  for a right principle and
• know how to fight
  in the right way.

Of course,
  this cannot happen
  as long as
you allow
  anything that touches you personally
to influence
  your course of action.

When
  your small ego
stands in the center,
your judgment
  is always
  colored.

Until
  you can clearly distinguish
  if your ego is
  • still involved and
  • to what extent,
you will have to
  accomplish some work
  on this path.
For quite a time
you will find
that
• your reactions,
• your feelings and
• your views,
even on quite general subjects,
are at times
colored
by your own personal ego-stake.

Not
to have this ego
in the foreground any more
is
to have the humility
we are always talking about.

This is
the meekness
Jesus mentioned.

This humility
alone
will
• make you
really strong and
• give you
the power
to distinguish
• when to
• keep still
after a personal
• hurt or
• injustice and
• quietly forgive, and
• when to
• stand up and
• fight against
something evil,
whether or not
it touches your life.
To come that far,
• you have to be
  a keen detective of
    • your most hidden feelings and
    • their true nature;
• you have to
  train yourself
  to acquire
    the strictest possible
    self-observation.

QUESTION:
How do
the different main religions
continue their activities
in the spiritual world?

Do they fight each other?

And how far
can they influence
human beings?

ANSWER:
In all the spheres,
and
in every gradation within them [i.e., within the spheres]
from
• the highest
to
• the lowest,
the different main religions
are represented.

It is self-explanatory that
they [i.e., the main religions] work differently
in each sphere,
according to
the height
of their development.
Let us begin with
the highest spheres.

There [i.e., in the highest spheres],
the different religious denominations
also have
their own organization,
but
in a very different way
from what is often imagined
by human beings.

Those [spirits]
in the highest sphere
know the
• real truth
  of the unity of all,
as well as the
• falsehoods and
• truths
  of both
  • their own religious groups
    and
  • the others.

They [i.e., spirits of the highest spheres]
continue to work
for the Plan of Salvation
within their own group
because
they have their tasks to fulfill.

If spirits of the highest spheres
did not also
come to earth
within
the different religious organizations
via certain people
of a particular church,
the Plan of Salvation
could not function
• properly or
• efficiently.
By the same token, very high spirits also
• work and
• inspire
• groups,
• nations, and
• individuals
who are not bound to any religion.

There is so much to be fulfilled in this great plan that often has to be done
• through and
• around existing
• conditions and
• blindnesses.

Without such incarnations in different churches and groups it would be impossible
to tear down falsehoods.

Truth has to grow slowly.

Any religion on earth, therefore, will have emissaries born into it from all spheres who belong to this particular denomination.
They [i.e., the emissaries who are sent]
are ranged according to
• the development and
• the desire
of the individual in question [i.e., according to the development and
desire of the individual who is to be inspired by the emissaries],
and also according to
• their [i.e., the individual’s] openness to truth.

Thus,
the measure of inspiration [accomplished in a person]
always
depends on the person [who is being inspired].

You are
always
inspired
according to
your
• aims and
• attitudes.

In the highest spheres
the spirits
plan
with a long view,
knowing that
their inspiration [i.e., the inspiration the spirits offer to human beings]
has an ultimate purpose
that can rarely be understood
by human beings.
The spirits
cannot overcome
the human dogmas;

unless those people
heard the truth
from highly developed incarnated spirits
of their own religion,
they would not be open
for any inspiration,
because
their minds
are too strongly set.

Whenever this is the case [i.e., whenever people’s minds are too strongly set in their own beliefs or in their religion’s dogma],
the doors are closed to
inspiration
coming from the spirit world.

Nevertheless,
 enough sincere good will
may be present
to enable
the spirit world
to do good.

God's spirit world
needs workers
• in all groups,
• in all religions,
to attain
the one great aim
of
final unity.
We [in the spirit world] know that this unity cannot be accomplished as yet, but we work best for this goal
• not by trying to destroy,
• but by building upon that which counts.

In God's world, therefore, the different religions certainly do not fight.

They all have the same goal.

They know the limitations of spirits of lower development, and they try to slowly eliminate these limitations by building upon what is constructive.

However, in the spheres that do not belong to the world of God as yet, conditions are different.

There [in the spheres that do not as yet belong to the world of God] the various religions do not fight either, because they do not have an opportunity to do so for the most part.
There may be an exception
in an individual case
that is too complicated to explain here,
but
as groups
they [i.e., the various religions]
• have their own spheres and
• remain there.

I have often told you
that in the spirit world
you live among spirits
of your own kind.

That
diminishes
• friction,
but also
• the possibility to advance.

Let us take the case
of human beings
who have
fervently
believed in one particular religion.

In many ways
they
• are still imperfect
and therefore
• cannot reach higher spheres
after shedding their bodies.
When they enter the spirit world, they will always be surrounded by spirits, both • higher and • lower, who • are compatible with them and therefore • belong to this religious group.

The higher spirits may be trying to give certain • advice or • hints about • personal errors, as well as about • the errors of their convictions.

But if these happen to be • stubborn people, • very much indoctrinated with their own beliefs, they • will not be open for such words and • will reject all • advice and • hints as untrue.
Since free will is never violated, these people are free to go with those spirits who have not changed their own beliefs.

They would do so [i.e. They would go with those spirits who have not changed their own beliefs]
even less
• in the spirit world
than
• on earth;

in the latter case [i.e., on earth]
they at least had the
• knowledge and
• opportunity
• of seeing other means of reaching God and
• of learning something from that.

But in the beyond they live in their own world,
and it may take a very, very long time to change their views,
particularly if, due to their personal convictions, they are incarnated again into the same surroundings.
Some spirits in these spheres may be a little disappointed that their world is not more beautiful;

but then they may also realize, and rightly so, that this is due to

• their own imperfection
  and has nothing to do with
• their religious belief.

Only at a later state of purification does it occur to them that

• stubbornness and
  • narrow-mindedness are at the core
  of their lower self, and these traits [i.e., their lower self stubbornness and narrow-mindedness], among other things, were responsible for their one-sidedness.

As long as this stubbornness exists, no one of you can receive inspiration for something that may be contradictory to your own stubborn convictions, unless it is through an act of God's grace that may only come in rare instances.

Such grace has to be earned in other ways.
As I have often said,
it is possible
for a
  • person or
  • spirit
to develop
  in every religion.

Only if
  a certain point of development is reached,
will the realization dawn
that
  all truth
  meets
  finally
  in one universal form.

When you have reached this awareness,
you will see that
  • there is
    no division
    among religions;
  • there is
    no longer
    any attitude
    of
      "only
      this way
      is right
      and all others
      are wrong."

You will then see
  the many errors
  of particular religions,
and
  still
  work with
  the truth.
QUESTION:
What happens after death
to a person who was
an atheist,
for instance?

ANSWER:
There are
spheres
for every possibility.

You know very well
that the issue
is not so much
• what religion you believe in,
but
• whether or not
you fulfill the best
that can be expected of you
in your incarnation.

If people are
atheists,
they will be judged
according to
their accomplishments;

the same applies
to everyone,
of course.

These accomplishments
are measured
individually
according to
one’s previous
• incarnations,
• merits,
• omissions,
and so forth.
People
  may have been atheists
  and still have accomplished something;
  perhaps they have
  overcome
  • a particular weakness or
  • a hatred against
    someone sharing their last incarnation
    and this counts in their favor.

So those people
will be in the sphere
• that belongs to them,
• that they have built
  with their
    • feelings,
    with their
    • thoughts, and
    with their
    • general and
    • particular
      attitudes.

You tend to forget, my friends,
  that
  • the spheres are
    not
    out there and
  • you are
    not
    put into them.

The spheres
are your own creations.

You build them,
  and whatever you have built
is
  • your sphere,
  • your temporary home.
QUESTION:
I always thought that atheists remained in darkness because they are separated from divine light?

ANSWER:
Yes, this is so in most cases.

But here too, one cannot generalize.

There may be an instance where an atheist is not in darkness.

He or she will certainly not be able to live in a sphere of • bliss, • beauty, and • divine harmony, but they do not have to live in dire misery either.

It depends on so many considerations, my friends, for • the judgment or • the evaluation of a particular case is entirely relative.
Beings who are
still very undeveloped
have much less
expected of them.

Let us take for example
souls
• who are
  still very young,
• who have
  only had
  a few incarnations.

Their instincts
are still
• low and
• coarse.

Now such people
may be tempted
to give in to these instincts
and perhaps
kill someone.

If this temptation
can be overcome,
even though
such people
• do not believe in God,
• but have merely some sense of decency,
their souls
will have earned
great merit.

This
may be
• more in their favor and
may be
• of infinitely greater merit
  than what people
  of higher development
  acquire.
What counts
is the effort
to overcome
one's lower self.

Whether
the lower self
still contains
such dark trends
in a younger spirit,
or whether
the lower self
simply contains
the
• faults,
• weaknesses, and
• sick currents
  that any of you possess,
is
immaterial.

The
effort
counts.

Therefore,
atheistic souls
such as the ones I mentioned here
will have
• some light
  in their sphere,
• some bright spot
  that signifies
    • hope
    • encouragement or
    • a certain strength
      that will flow
        into them
          in their next incarnation.
In the spirit world
evaluation
is never
general.

It is
always
strictly personal,
and
judgment
is passed
on all personal considerations.

Everything
is taken into account,
and therefore
judgment
is always
completely fair.

For human beings
this [i.e., judgment being personal and where everything is taken
into consideration]
is hard to imagine,
since you tend
so very much
to
• oversimplify and
• generalize.

Now I
• will retire
  into my world and
• will leave you
  with God's
    warm blessings
    for each one of you.

Next week
you celebrate Easter [Note: Easter was April 6 in 1958, this lecture was given
on Friday March 28, 1958, the Friday before Holy Week].
It [i.e., Holy Week] marks the time of the greatest sacrifice that has been made, my dear ones.

Think of this sacrifice these days with particular gratefulness.

It [i.e., this sacrifice] was done for each and every one of you without exception.

Take the strength with you that was given to you this evening.

• May it fortify you, and
• may it fill you with
  • love and
  • courage.

Go your way in peace; be in God!

For information to find and participate in Pathwork activities world wide, please write:

The Pathwork® Foundation
PO Box 6010
Charlottesville, VA 22906-6010, USA
Call: 1-800-PATHWORK, or
Visit: www.pathwork.org

The following notices are for your guidance in the use of the Pathwork® name and this lecture material.
Trademark/Service Mark

Pathwork® is a registered service mark owned by The Pathwork Foundation, and may not be used without the express written permission of the Foundation. The Foundation may, in its sole discretion, authorize use of the Pathwork® mark by other organizations or persons, such as affiliate organizations and chapters.

Copyright

The copyright of the Pathwork Guide material is the sole property of The Pathwork Foundation. This lecture may be reproduced, in compliance with the Foundation Trademark, Service Mark and Copyright Policy, but the text may not be altered or abbreviated in any way, nor may the copyright, trademark, service mark, or any other notices be removed. Recipients may be charged the cost of reproduction and distribution only.

Any person or organization using The Pathwork Foundation service mark or copyrighted material is deemed to have agreed to comply with the Foundation Trademark, Service Mark and Copyright Policy. To obtain information or a copy of this policy, please contact the Foundation.