

## Wednesday Night Study Series – “The Power of Now”

**Prayer of Surrender:** Spirit of Truth, CARRY ME where you will; BRING TO ME what You will; TAKE FROM ME what You will; AWAKEN IN ME what You will. The Christ MAN is around me. The Christ MIND is in me. The Christ POWER flows through me. And, the Christ MYSTERY exists as me. I believe it. I perceive it. And, now I receive it! I am surrendered. Amen. And, so it is!

### The Key to the Spiritual Dimension

In life-threatening emergency situations, the shift in consciousness from time to presence sometimes happens naturally. The personality that has a past and a future momentarily recedes and is replaced by an intense conscious presence, very still but very alert at the same time. Whatever response is needed then arises out of that state of consciousness.

The reason why some people love to engage in dangerous activities, such as mountain climbing, car racing, and so on, although they may not be aware of it, is that it forces them into the Now – that intensely alive state that is free of time, free of problems, free of thinking, free of the burden of the personality. Slipping away from the present moment even for a second may mean death. Unfortunately, they come to depend on a particular activity to be in that state. But you don’t need to climb the north face of the Eiger. You can enter that state now.

Since ancient times, spiritual masters of all traditions have pointed to the Now as the key to the spiritual dimension. Despite this, it seems to have remained a secret. It is certainly not taught in churches and temples. If you go to a church, you may hear readings from the Gospels such as “Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself,” or “Nobody who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God.” Or you might hear the passage about the beautiful flowers that are not anxious about tomorrow but live with ease in the timeless Now and are provided for abundantly by God. The depth and radical nature of these teachings are not recognized. No one seems to realize they are meant to be lived and so bring about profound inner transformation.

The whole essence of Zen consists in walking along the razor’s edge of Now – to be so utterly, so completely present that no problem, no suffering, nothing that is not who you are in your essence, can survive in you. In the Now, in the absence of time, all your problems dissolve. Suffering needs time; it cannot survive in the Now.

The great Zen master Rinzai, in order to take his students’ attention away from time, would often raise his finger and slowly ask: “What, at this moment is lacking?” A powerful question that does not require an answer on the level of the mind. It is designed to take your attention deeply into the Now. A similar question in the Zen tradition is this: “If not now, when?”

The Now is also central to the teaching of Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam. Sufis have a saying: “The Sufi is the son of time present.” And Rumi, the great poet and teacher of Sufism, declares: “Past and future veil God from our sight; burn up both of them with fire.”

Meister Eckhart, the thirteenth-century spiritual teacher, summed it all up beautifully. “Time is what keeps the light from reaching us. There is no greater obstacle to God than time.”

With the timeless dimension comes a different kind of knowing, one that does not “kill” the spirit that lives within every creature and every thing. A knowing that does not destroy the sacredness and mystery of life but contains a deep love and reverence for all that is. A knowing of which the mind knows nothing.

The mind cannot know a tree. It can only know facts or information about a tree. My mind cannot know you, only labels, judgments, facts, and opinions about you. Being alone knows directly.

There is a place for mind and mind knowledge. It is in the practical realm of day-to-day living. However, when it takes over all aspects of your life, including your relationships with other human beings and with nature, it becomes a monstrous parasite that, unchecked, may well end up killing all life on the planet and finally itself by killing its host.

You have had a glimpse of how the timeless can transform your perceptions. But an experience is not enough, no matter how beautiful or profound. What is needed and what we are concerned with is a permanent shift in consciousness. So break the old patten of present-moment denial and present-moment resistance. Make it your practice to withdraw your attention from past and future whenever they are not needed. Step out of the time dimension as much as possible in everyday life.

Whenever you are able to observe your mind, you are no longer trapped in it. Be present as the watcher of your mind – of your thoughts and emotions as well as your reactions in various situations. Notice how often your attention is in the past or future. Don’t judge or analyze what you observe. Watch the thought, feel the emotion, observe the reaction. Don’t make a personal problem out of them. You will then feel something more powerful than any of those things that you observe; the still, observing presence itself behind the content of your mind, the silent watcher.