

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 State of Presence: It's Not What You Think It Is

The state of presence is not what you think it is. You can't think about presence, and the mind can't understand it. Understanding presence is *being* present.

Try a little experiment. Close your eyes and say to yourself: “I wonder what my next thought is going to be.” Then become very alert and wait for the next thought. Be like a cat watching a mouse hole. What thought is going to come out of the mouse hole? Try it now. Well?

You probably had to wait a long time before a thought came in because as long as you are in a state of presence, you are free of thought. You are still, yet highly alert. The instant your conscious attention sinks below a certain level, thought rushes in. The mental noise returns; the stillness is lost. You are back in time.

To test their degree of presence, some Zen masters have been known to creep up on their students from behind and suddenly hit them with a stick. Quite a shock! If the student had been fully present and in a state of alertness, if he had “kept his loin girded and his lamp burning,” which is one of the analogies that Jesus uses for presence, he would have noticed the master coming up from behind and stopped him or stepped aside. But if he were hit, that would mean he was immersed in thought, which is to say absent, unconscious.

To stay present in everyday life, it helps to be deeply rooted within yourself; otherwise, the mind, which has incredible momentum, will drag you along like a wild river. Being rooted within yourself means to inhabit your body fully. To always have some of your attention in the inner energy field of your body. To feel the body from within, so to speak. Body awareness keeps you present. It anchors you in the Now.

In a sense, the state of presence could be compared to waiting. Jesus used the analogy of waiting in some of his parables. This is not the usual bored or restless kind of waiting that is a denial of the present and that I spoke about already. It is not a waiting in which your attention is focused on some point in the future and the present is perceived as an undesirable obstacle that prevents you from having what you want. There is a qualitatively different kind of waiting,

one that requires your total alertness. Something could happen at any moment, and if you are not absolutely awake, absolutely still, you will miss it.

This is the kind of waiting Jesus talks about. In that state, all your attention is in the Now. There is none left for daydreaming, thinking, remembering, anticipating. There is no tension in it, no fear, just alert presence. You are present with your whole being, with every cell of your body. In that state, the “you” that has a past and a future – the personality, if you like – is hardly there anymore. And yet nothing of value is lost. You are still essentially yourself. In fact, you are more fully yourself than you ever were before, or rather it is only now that you are truly yourself.

“Be like a servant waiting for the return of the master,” says Jesus. The servant does not know at what hour the master is going to come. So he stays awake, alert, poised, still, lest he miss the master’s arrival. In another parable, Jesus speaks of the five careless (unconscious) women who do not have enough oil (consciousness) to keep their lamps burning (the ability to stay present) and so miss the bridegroom (the Now) and don’t get to the wedding feast (enlightenment). These five stand in contrast to the five wise women who have enough oil (the ability to stay conscious).

Even the men who wrote the Gospels did not understand the meaning of these parables, so the first misinterpretations and distortions crept in as they were written down. With subsequent erroneous misinterpretations, the real meaning was completely lost. These are parables not about the end of the world but about the end of psychological time. They point to the transcendence of the egoic mind and the possibility of living in an entirely new state of consciousness.

Affirmation: I am not my thoughts. I am not the thinker of my thoughts. I am the observer witnessing the thinker thinking the thoughts. Tonight, I am not the voice in my head or any limitation of an inherited collective cultural conditioning, religious indoctrination or even my past experiences. This week, I will mind my mind, free my mind, be free of my mind and surrender to practice “no mind.”