



THE MARK

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FORGET IT!

by Tim Cook

After two years of Liberal Arts studies at Boston University; I was required to choose a major. I had no idea what I wanted to do with the rest of my life and I felt totally claustrophobic about having to enclose my entire future into an unsought particular career. My guidance counselor suggested that I go over to the BU counseling center to take some aptitude and psychological tests.

Dr. Mary Ellen Hodges Ph.D. ran a total of 24 hours of various tests on me, which revealed that my interests and abilities best-suited me to life as a farmer, salesman or minister. I was not drawn to any of them. So at the end of our work together, as I was about to leave; Dr.Hodges asked me, “When was the last time you were happy?” When I was unable to recall one, she replied, “You are the unhappiest person I have ever met.” I felt strangely justified by her professionally authoritative recognition of my chronically depressed state. I was miserable and I was always aware of it. Now it was even official.

But looking back I can see that, in truth, I wasn't constantly aware of my dark moods because

I took regular breaks from it. I learned how easy it is to forget myself and my troubles with a few simple common distractions. I could forget myself for a couple of hours by becoming entranced in a movie. I could lose myself in a fascinating girl ... for a while. Heavy drinking and wild parties were an absolutely reliable release from my sad bondage to my misery until the next day. These were the ways I forgot myself; but it always came back. I always remembered my depression again.

There have always been countless ways for us humans to forget ourselves and our troubles for a while; it was bread and circuses for the Romans. Today we still have all the old standbys like money, food, sex, possessions, and alcohol; but we also have greatly expanded opportunities through television, drugs and internet surfing on every conceivable subject.

However, the self that can be lost that way can only be the false-self; the seemingly separate self that we acquired in childhood. Kathleen Speeth, in her book *The Gurdjieff Work*, offers a poignant account of the process by which our childhood innocence, our essential

nature, is covered over by a false-self that, later in life, we attempt to forget through addictions and distractions.

“How is it possible to lose a self? The treachery, unknown and unthinkable, begins with our secret psychic death in childhood.... It is a perfect double crime.... The tiny self gradually and unwittingly takes part. He has not been accepted for himself, *as he is*. Oh they ‘love’ him, but they want him or force him or expect him to be different! Therefore *he must be unacceptable*. He himself learns to believe it and at last he even takes it for granted. He has truly given himself up. No matter now whether he obeys them, whether he clings, rebels or withdraws – his behavior, his performance is all that matters. His center of gravity is in ‘them’ not in himself – yet if he so much as noticed it he’d think it natural enough. And the whole thing is entirely plausible; all invisible, automatic and anonymous!

“This is the perfect paradox. Everything looks normal; no crime was intended; there is no

corpse, no guilt. All we can see is the sun rising and setting as usual. But what has happened? He has been rejected not only by them, but by himself. (He is actually without a self.) What has he lost? Just the one true and vital part of himself: his own yes-feeling, which is his very capacity for growth, his root system. But alas, he is not dead. 'Life' goes on, and so must he. From the moment he gives himself up, and to the extent that he does so, all unknowingly he sets about to create and maintain a pseudo-self. But this is an expediency – a self without wishes. This one shall be loved (or feared) where he is despised, strong where he is weak; it shall go through the motions (oh, but they are caricatures!) Not for fun or joy but for survival; not simply because it wants to move but because it has to obey. This necessity is not life – not his life – it is a defense mechanism against death. It is also the machine of death. From now on he will be torn apart by compulsive (unconscious) conflicts into paralysis, every moment and

every instant canceling out his being, his integrity; and all the while he is disguised as a normal person and expected to behave like one!

“In a word, I saw that we *become* neurotic seeking or defending a pseudo-self, a self system; and we *are* neurotic to the extent that we are self-less.”

However, God did not abandon us into a situation in which addiction and distraction are the only ways we can only find the relief we need from what Fr. Thomas Keating calls, “the homemade self,” which is that artificially conditioned self image that we adopted in childhood and that most of us take to be our only self. The spiritual journey helps us to progressively forget and eventually lose that encumbering burden through the process of Centering Prayer.

Please understand that a false-self is not a bad self; it is not a wrong-self or any other adjectives that we could attribute to it. It is not an actual self at all. In fact it does not even actually exist at all. It is a mirage. It's simply and utterly false, illusory, imaginary, a lie, a trance-induced habit that has

stolen our God-given identity. And the only intelligent response we can make, once we become aware of it, is to do what we can to forget it; not in the neurotic, immature and temporary and ultimately painful ways that I tried in my dark years, but in the permanent God-given transformation that every one of us is already hardwired for.

Through learning and applying the tools of The Work of Inner Christianity, self observation, non-identifying and (true) Self Remembering, we gradually see the deception that has enslaved us. And we undermine that illusory self in each and every period of Centering Prayer by forgetting it for 20 or 30 minutes, twice a day, every day. In the silence of prayer our awareness moves behind our superficial masks and sinks into the True Self that awaits our attention deeper than the dead homemade self. There we meet the Life, the Way and the Truth that is Christ. And we never look back because we experience the Self in Christ that we've been looking for in all the wrong places, all our lives.

And what happens to the false-self? We just forget it. ☺

IT WORKS IF YOU WORK IT AND YOU'RE WORTH IT

by Barbara Cook

The closing statement for the twelve step meeting I attend is: "It works if you work it and you're worth it." What a clear, simple and memorable phrase of truth that echoes our experience of Centering Prayer. It's like the Emotions Anonymous Program says, you don't have to do it perfectly, you just have to do it. It also works for our liberation. Sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly, it begins working in us for our healing and recovery and for deepening our Relationship with God or, as the twelve-steppers refer to it, our Higher Power.

In Centering Prayer we have been given a simple prayer that you can't mess up unless you get up and leave or don't do it. If we don't show up for God's graceful gift, we are choosing not to do our part and it can't "work." But if we sit in silence with God every day, twice a day, He begins to work in us, healing us and developing a feeling experience of intimacy with Him. And He quickens our recovery from our false-self and its programs for happiness that don't work. No matter how familiar and comfortable it is to us, the false-self

is our personal program for human misery that needs to be healed so that we can grow into our True Self, our experience of sonship with God.

Over my years as a Centering Prayer presenter and retreat leader, I've heard a lot of common misconceptions expressed. Most often, "My thoughts get in the way." is a complete misconception because in Centering Prayer our minds are not supposed to be empty, quiet or having a "Spiritual experience." Thoughts are inevitable, normal, and an integral part of the prayer. We are NOT attempting to have a perfectly quiet mind, empty of all thought. In Centering Prayer we learn to ignore thoughts. When we become aware that our attention is engaged with a thought, we simply and ever-so-gently remember our sacred word and renew our intention to just be open to God, not lost in thoughts. This may happen many times during a prayer period but each time we return ever-so-gently to our sacred word, we are committing an act of love to God. In Centering Prayer, thoughts are part of the healing process of the unloading of our unconscious mind!

So the prayer may go back and forth from stillness to thoughts and sometimes even floods of thoughts. That's just fine. It is our willingness and our intention to sit with God and be open to His presence and healing love that is important. Just to do it.

Another common misconception says, "Things come up in the prayer that I'm uncomfortable with, psychologically or physiologically, so it must not be right for me." This too is desirable and necessary because during all of our earlier life experience, our false-self has hijacked our minds and has dumped undigested, unexpressed energies into the body. So part of the process of healing is to evacuate those old unprocessed emotions, psychological debris, traumatic past experiences that have been repressed and stored in the body. As our regular prayer practice gradually relaxes us, those old thoughts and emotions begin to evacuate. Sometimes that can be an uncomfortable experience – bodily, emotionally or even psychologically. But we can be certain that it will pass. It is part

GIVE ME YOURSELF

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Job 1:21

Lord, these are the words you gave your servant Job to say as his troubles multiplied. How good you are to once again put those words in the mouth and in the heart of such a sinner as I! You once gave me health, and I forgot you. You have taken it away, and now I am coming back to you. Precious mercy, you are wrenching away God's gifts that were separating me from God, in order to give me God himself!

Lord, take away anything in me that is not you, provided only that you give me yourself. Everything belongs to you. You are the Lord.

Take charge of everything: worldly goods, honors, health, life. Tear away—down to the roots—everything that would take your place within me. ☸

The Complete Fénelon, pages 217-18. François Fénelon was a seventeenth-century French archbishop, controversial theologian and spiritual thinker. Surrounded by the splendor and decadence of the most powerful court in Europe, he chose a different path, one that took him through enormous inner suffering – he lost his job, his fame, his money, and many of his friends – and into a relationship with God that few have known. His words have been widely read for three centuries.

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of the healing.

We don't do this prayer to get peace. We already have that peace deep within. Jesus gave us his peace; peace that passes all our understanding. By persisting in this daily prayer communion over time, we will definitely uncover peace at the center. We do this prayer to be in relationship with

God through our routine daily experiences. And we do this prayer to participate in our transformation into Christ.

It works if we just do it. Sometimes it seems to work quickly and sometimes it seems to work very s-l-o-w-l-y. But you see that it works if you just do it and you're worth it. ☸

CCH BOOKSTORE

Community Reading
through mid-July

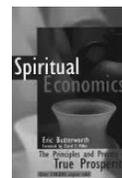


*Discovery of the Presence of God
Devotional Nonduality*
by David Hawkins

—
Titles supporting Self-Giving



Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit
by Thomas Keating



*Spiritual Economics
The Principles and Process of True
Prosperity*
by Eric Butterworth

*Radical Hospitality
Benedict's Way of Love*
by Lonnie C. Pratt with Fr. Daniel Homan

*St. Benedict's Toolbox
The Nuts and Bolts of Everyday
Benedictine Living*
by Jane Tomaine

—
Bookstore and Library Hours
Open Monday-Friday 9 am-4 pm
Sunday 9:30-10 am & 11:30 am-noon



ANNUAL AIM: THE SELF

KNOW THYSELF

All of us ... are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. 2 Corinthians 3:18

SELF-GIVING by Gay Bullard

Get the feeling
of being a channel
for the flow of good.

Think give, and you will receive.

Think of your work as giving.

Think of every relationship
as an opportunity to give.

Give to your children.

Give to your neighbors.

Give to passersby on the street.

Think give. Give way. Let!

...graciously, wisely, and without
thought of return

... not giving to

... rather giving from

... realizing you are simply giving
way to the divine flow.

Eric Butterworth, *Spiritual Economics*

~

*I have no silver and gold,
but I give you what I have.*

Acts 3:6

You give but little when you give of your possessions.
It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

*Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil
not, neither do they spin, but, yet I tell you, Solomon in all
his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Luke 12:27*

I was a young woman, probably 20, married with two small children, the oldest not yet two years old. My husband and I were living in a small town in Oklahoma. He was a schoolteacher and earned a small salary. The belief in lack of money, it seemed, had existed my whole life. There never was enough – to pay the bills, to buy groceries, or even the bare necessities. There were emergencies that arose at every turn: the unexpected expenses, the broken-down car, the children that

were sick and needed medical care. I woke up in the morning worrying about money and this continued through my day; it weighed on my shoulders constantly.

Then, my mother, who had become interested in spirituality, gave me a book – I don't even remember the title, but it quoted the scripture above about the lilies of the field. The book was about changing one's belief system. I remember clinging to this idea like a drowning woman to a piece of

driftwood. I wanted desperately to believe this, but the “evidence,” the numbers, never seemed to prove it to me. However, God had planted the seed. It took a long while for it to take root and grow.

Years later, four children grown, after a divorce and a new marriage, I arrived at the Church of Conscious Harmony. It is here that this plant has begun to flourish. Through the teachings, the talks, the small groups, the daily practice of Centering Prayer, I have learned something about the idea of reciprocal maintenance.

My understanding of reciprocal maintenance is that giving and receiving are all of one piece. That is, when I step out in faith, letting go of all evidence to the contrary, and begin to let God take care of everything, it is then, and only then, that I begin to receive that which is always pouring down on me and through me. It is only when I open up a channel of some kind that God’s grace can be manifested in my life.

When my husband and I started attending this church, I was still held in place by the belief in lack – that it was only my very careful attention to what was spent that assured my survival. I discovered in the language of the Work of Inner Christianity the idea

of being a “Good Householder,” which, among other things, has to do with discretion about how to spend one’s resources. But, when it comes to resources, there is this other, underlying principle or law. Actually, it is the other half of the principle, that is, reciprocal maintenance. When I give freely, I receive joyfully. The giving freely part is the key. Freely, sometimes means stepping out into the unknown, yet trusting that I am safe. I have to take my hands off the steering wheel and let God figure it out.

We began to tithe. My husband seemed to absorb the idea of tithing immediately. It took longer for me, but with his support and encouragement, I came on board, too. Each year, when the time came to decide on our tithe for the year, he would always suggest that we should increase it. I remember thinking, “But we are already giving enough, why not just keep it at that?” His gentle insistence would always win over. There was a part of me that knew, or wanted to know, that it was God’s love that had always met and would always meet all of our needs. I have to let go of my fear, my clinging to the thought that I am in charge of keeping everything afloat.

It is through the practice of

Centering Prayer, that I practice this letting go. It is such a simple, subtle thing – just letting go of the thought in each moment. Taking my mental hands off and returning to the void. Over time, the practice has begun to seep into my “walking around” life.

Thinking back now to the woman that I was, so desperate, so anxious, so worried; I can see that God’s love was taking care of me and my family, in spite of my worrying and anxiety. His love, the flow of Good was leaking through just enough to keep us afloat. His love was also growing me at the rate that I could handle.

I don’t believe that God is some spiritual Santa Claus. He is not there to rescue me from every trial, but his constant and ever-present love is available for the asking. So, I have to do my part. This doesn’t mean that more reading and study, more spiritual searching, more striving to be perfect, more doing of any kind will “cause” God to be more willing to be available. All those things have a place, but the true answer is to let go of the false self, little by little, through my daily spiritual practice. My Centering Prayer twice a day, my spiritual reading, my practice of the Work of Inner Christianity and my participation in my spiritual

community, keep me focused on my true identity, which is my identity in Christ. This is reciprocal maintenance.

When I was asked to write this article, I remember that the first thought was, “I’m not a good writer. I can’t do this. What do I know about self-giving anyway?” My second thought was, “God has always met and will always meet all my needs.” I now have experienced enough of God’s love meeting my every need that I went with the second thought. So first it was my “Yes,” then the doubt, then the trust. When the first thought would elbow its way into my consciousness, I would recognize it for the lie it was and replace it with the second one. Each time my thoughts would turn to writing the article, I would pray to allow God to speak through me.

A crude analogy of reciprocal maintenance could be like that of a water wheel and a swiftly flowing river. If the wheel is in the river, it will turn, producing energy. If the wheel is brought out of the flow and I’m trying to turn it by my own efforts – well, you can see the difference. God’s abundance is the river and it is always available, but I have to put the wheel in the river and get my hands off it.

Reciprocal maintenance works

in every aspect of my life, no matter what I am asked to give. Whether it is time, effort, attention, energy or material goods, I am learning that when I visualize this flow of good that is constantly available, it changes everything. I always seem to have enough time to do the things that need to be done, when and if I remember to relax and let go. If I am hurried, rushed, anxious or resentful, then the wheel is out of the water and everything seems to go wrong. When I can breathe in and out, bringing my attention back to the reality of God’s love, getting out of my imagination and fear, then time seems to expand and everything just seems to unfold. The principle works with patience, with kindness, with everything. God has an abundance of it and it’s all available to me when I remember to let it flow through me.

The key, for me, in moving from the first thought to the second thought has been to recognize the tightness in my gut as well as in my neck and jaw. The negative dialogue that begins in my head signals that the false personality, which is that collection of fragments that thinks it is in charge, is wanting to take over. These physical signs act as signals, like that of a red flag, showing that something needs to change inside.

Sometimes this awareness might take a day, sometimes an hour or sometimes even a few minutes or seconds. The recognition is now coming more quickly, that is the more I practice it.

God does have a sense of humor though; or perhaps, God is just giving me another opportunity to grow in faith. So even when I am aware of and trusting in His love, sometimes another seemingly impossible situation presents itself and I am called to a deeper faith and trust.

I look at my life now compared to my life then. It has been an ever-so-gradual growth of faith and trust. God is still growing me. I still forget, and then I remember. I still stumble and sometimes fall, but I get up again. I begin each day with a prayer of gratitude for what God has given and is giving me. What an abundance of riches He provides. It is certainly not anything that I have earned or achieved on my own. And each day, if I find that I am struggling with thoughts of lack of any sort, I pray to remember that...

“God’s love has always met and will always meet all my needs. I give freely and receive joyfully. And what a blessing it is to simply remember God.”
...and let the river do the work. ☺

GIVING AND RECEIVING

It is true that energy can be connected with the idea of giving and receiving. He who learns how to give away wisely all he has received will never have to worry about shortage of energy. In order to make a big jump, it looks as though we have to bequeath all our possessions—of knowledge, skill, understanding, habit, loyalty, affection. But as in making a will, one has to give away each quality to someone who can receive it and use it. Then one is free for new tasks. Ouspensky did this completely before he died. We have to get the habit now. Then we can begin receiving on a different scale. ☉

Rodney Collin, *The Theory of Conscious Harmony*, page 78.

GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE, GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Fr. Thomas Keating, in his seminal work
Open Mind, Open Heart,
lists 42 principles underlying the Christian spiritual journey.

Fr. Keating asks that these principles be read according
to the method of Lectio Divina.

One principle will appear in these pages each month.

12TH GUIDELINE



Personal sin is the refusal to respond
to Christ's self-communication (grace).

It is the deliberate neglect
of our own genuine needs and those of others.

It reinforces the false self.



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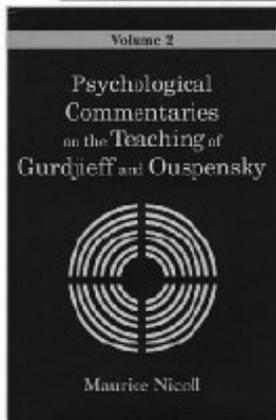
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THE WORK

OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

My Father is still working, and I also am working. John 5:17

THE SECOND LINE OF WORK

There are three lines of Work. The first line of Work is work on yourself in connection with what the Work teaches. The second line of Work is work in conjunction with other people who are in this Work. The third line of Work is work in relationship to what the Work is aiming at.

Let us take the second line of Work, work in connection with other people who are in the Work. Let me say to begin with that if you are in a group of people who are studying this Work and you make no endeavour to get to know them or to understand them, you are not doing the second line of Work. No man can work on the first line only. To work only for yourself would only increase your self-love, your self-vanity. As regards this working in conjunction with other people there are many things said in the Work that are very useful to remember. It is sometimes a matter of astonishment to me that people

who have been in the Work—or who imagine they have been in the Work—for many years never make the slightest attempt to connect themselves with other people except through their prejudices and buffers—that is, they only wish to know people of whom they approve, people who have the same buffers as they have. Such people make no progress in the Work—that is, they do not change. There is a saying in the Work that people whom you meet in groups and dislike at first are often those people whom you like later on, but his change only takes place through work on oneself and through evaluation of the Work, which always leads to work on the third line of Work. When a number of people met together they eventually tend to quarrel. Unless the force of the Work is behind a number of people who meet often together, they will break up into different forms of antagonism. As mechanical people, they are bound

to quarrel. This is why it is said that life as a Neutralizing Force always disunites people and makes them split up into antagonistic cliques. But the Third Force that comes down from a different channel altogether is a uniting force that can hold people together if those people value the Work. And this discipline, carried out through feeling the value of the Work, brings people together in unusual ways and enlarges their life, and they begin to form what is called an accumulator—that is, a group of people who forego some of their mechanical reactions and begin to a certain extent to obey the Work and thus transmit its influences. This is a wonderful thing. And it is exactly in this wonder of the Work that people begin to change and become healed internally. Ⓐ

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, page 779. For more information and experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the *Work of Inner Christianity* class held Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at The Church of Conscious Harmony.

SEEDS

In the economy of divine charity we have only as much as we give. But we are called upon to give as much as we have, and more: as much as we are. So the measure of our love is theoretically without limit. The more we desire to give ourselves in charity, the more charity we will have to give. And the more we give the more truly we shall be. For the Lord endows us with a being proportionate to the giving for which we are destined.

Charity is the life and the riches of His Kingdom, and those are greatest in it who are least: that is, who have kept nothing for themselves, retaining nothing but their desire to give.

He who tries to retain what he is and what he has, and keep it for himself, buries his talent. When the Lord comes in judgment, this servant is found to have no more than he had at the beginning. But those who have made themselves less, by giving away what they had, shall be found both to be and to have more than they had. And to him who has most shall be given that which the unprofitable servant kept for himself. ☺

Thomas Merton, *Seeds*, pages 105-106.

MULTI-DAY CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT AT CEDARBRAKE

Sep 11-16 6-day Forgiveness theme led by Mary Dwyer
\$615 (double rm) \$690 (single rm)

Contact the office to register. 512.347.9673

JULY CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

July 11

Intro to Centering Prayer
8:30 am-3:30 pm
+ 6 consecutive Thursday evenings 6-7:20 pm
July 16-Aug 20

July 25

Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
8:30 am-12:30 pm
\$10 no need to pre-register

MONTHLY

1st Sundays

Bring non-perishables for Caritas

July 21

Gurdjieff Music 7:30-8:30 pm

WEEKLY

Sundays

Lectio Divina 8-9 am
Worship Service 10-11:30 am
Youth Program 10-11:30 am
Fellowship 11:30 am

Wednesdays

Prayer Circle 9:15-10 am
Contemplative Lunch noon-1 pm
Contemplative Communion Service 6-7 pm

Thursdays

Work of Inner Christianity Class 7:30-9 pm

Fridays

Devotional Service 7:30-8:45 pm

DAILY

Mondays-Fridays 7-7:35 am

Centering Prayer Service in Theosis Chapel

Recordings of services are available
through the Bookstore and online at
www.consciousharmony.org



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ORDINARY TIME, EXTRAORDINARY JOY

*When He saw the crowds, Jesus went up the mountain,
and after He had sat down, His disciples gathered around Him,
and He began to teach them, saying:*

Blessed are the poor in spirit . . .

Blessed are they who mourn . . .

Blessed are the meek . . .

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness . . .

Blessed are the merciful . . .

Blessed are the pure of heart . . .

Blessed are the peacemakers . . .

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness . . .

Blessed are you . . .

Rejoice and be glad.

The time of the year not associated
with the major seasons
of the Church calendar
is known as ordinary time.

This period of ordinary time
is sometimes known as
the season of Pentecost.

It extends until the start of Advent.

It is the time of manifestation
of what Jesus taught by His Life,
Death, Resurrection and Ascension . . .
the fullness of the human possibility.

Ordinary life can be transformed
by the power of the Word
and become totally extraordinary.

Herein is eternal joy.

Mary Anne Best, *The Mark* July 2015

∞

Matthew 5:1-12

