

BIBLE LESSONS

Compiled by
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Correlated to *The Infinite Way* and
Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture
By Joel S. Goldsmith

Lesson 5: The Prodigal Experience

Introduction to the Bible Lessons

At Joel Goldsmith's 1962 Princess Kaiulani class in Hawaii, Joel invited Virginia Stephenson to give daily lectures on the Bible. To his delight, the whole class attended the lectures, and there was a great receptivity to them. As a result of these Bible lectures, Joel asked Virginia to make up a Bible study program that revealed the timeless, universal spiritual principles which are the basis of the Infinite Way. Joel wanted every student to be familiar with the spiritual thread of Oneness that runs through the Old Testament and the New Testament. Virginia's Bible Lessons originally appeared in Joel Goldsmith's Monthly Letters starting in January, 1963, and continued through April of 1965. They focused the students on the various principles and aspects of mystical unfoldment.

A mystical teaching like The Infinite Way requires study. It is not a religion in which you can find comfort in a church, temple or mosque. The way one comes to mystical realization is through study and meditation. These lead to illumination – that state of consciousness in which the presence of God is experienced. The tools we have for this kind of study go back to antiquity. Many great lights lived as transparencies for the Divine, and many of them left records of the principles for living in that mystical consciousness. Joel Goldsmith's work is a message of Christian mysticism, and he left a large body of work for people to study. To fully understand the principles he left to the world, it is helpful to know the Bible.

These Bible Lessons require the active participation of the student; they involve more effort than just reading from a book. They guide the student into finding the connections between the modern presentation of mysticism and its ancient roots. Not everything in the Bible is spiritual. Much of it describes the struggle of a people wanting to know God, and defines their concept of God and how man relates to the divine and to his fellow human beings. The mystical revelation in the Bible is hard to find, and often it is veiled behind a human agenda. Because of Joel's many years in Christian Science, where the Bible is essential to the service, Joel knew the Bible and was able to unveil its mystical thread. In his Infinite Way message, Joel continued to use the Bible as the foundation for mystical revelation.

How to study the lessons

To study these lessons, first read the Bible passages given in the box. These passages have been selected to emphasize the theme of the lesson. Then read the selection from Joel's book(s) that is given after the Bible passages. Read just one section at a time and contemplate and meditate on what you have read. In this way you will increase your knowledge of scripture, and you will discover the connection between the mysticism of The Infinite Way and its ancient root.

Studying these lessons can also be a group activity. Individuals can take turns reading the passages and the group can meditate after each section is read.

Please note that the page references for quotations from *The Infinite Way* (abbreviated “TIW”) are from the DeVorss & Company thirty-fourth printing of the book in 2006. Page references for quotations from *Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture* (abbreviated as “SIOS”) are from the DeVorss & Company twenty-fourth printing of the book in 2003. If you have older or newer versions of these books, the passage that is quoted may be on a different page. If you are using the e-book versions of the books, you may not have page numbers at all. However, you can use the “Search” function on your e-reader to search for the first few words of the quotation and easily locate the passage.

Each book reference is given in this format: [*Book Title, page number: paragraph number*]. For example, the reference “*TIW, p. 21: 1-2*” refers to *The Infinite Way*, page 21, paragraphs 1 and 2. The reference “*SIOS, p. 25: 2*” refers to *Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture*, page 25, paragraph 2.

The paragraph numbers refer to “whole” paragraphs. In other words, a partial paragraph at the top of a page is not counted as the first paragraph on that page. It is considered the completion of the last paragraph on the preceding page. So for example, the reference “*TIW, p. 34: 1*” refers to the first complete paragraph on page 34 of *The Infinite Way*.

All Bible quotations are from the King James Version. Today, there are many online Bible study websites such as biblegateway.com and biblehub.com that are rich with features to facilitate study. Most of them allow you to specify a Bible passage, and then read that passage in many different translations. While Joel always used the King James Version, it can be helpful to read the same Bible passage in a few different translations before contemplating the passage to discern the meaning.

Our Gratitude

We are most grateful to DeVorss & Company for their gracious permission to use quotations from *The Infinite Way* and *Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture* for these Bible Lessons.

Lesson 5: The Prodigal Experience

Part I

Luke 15: 11-24

- ¹¹ *And he said, A certain man had two sons:*
- ¹² *And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.*
- ¹³ *And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*
- ¹⁴ *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*
- ¹⁵ *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.*
- ¹⁶ *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.*
- ¹⁷ *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*
- ¹⁸ *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,*
- ¹⁹ *And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*
- ²⁰ *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*
- ²¹ *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*
- ²² *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:*
- ²³ *And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:*
- ²⁴ *For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

“The search for freedom from the trials and tribulations of human experience has begun. It is really a search for God and it begins at whatever place in consciousness the individual may find himself. If he has a deep religious sense with a church background, he may seek the Power in religious worship, in some creed or dogma or some particular form of worship. The intellectual will undoubtedly seek the Power in the realm of philosophy or one or another of the philosophical religious teachings. In more recent times, the search may turn to the metaphysical church teachings or oriental yoga practices. Without doubt, many go from one to another of these steps still seeking God, or the Power, which may eventually halt the reign of mortality.”¹

¹ *The Infinite Way* (DeVorss & Company, Thirty-fourth printing, 2006), p. 71: 1. Please note that all subsequent references to this book will be abbreviated as “TIW.”

Isaiah 30: 15-(:)

¹⁵ *For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.*

“There is a constant warfare between the flesh and the Spirit, and this will continue as long as we entertain any degree of corporeal sense. The attempt to bring Spirit and its laws to bear upon material concepts constitutes this war, and peace can only come when the structural sense of the universe and the corporeal sense of man have been overcome.

“Notice how often you try to apply some metaphysical truth to a human problem and you will discover the reason for the conflict within you. Our goal actually is the attainment of spiritual harmony rather than a continuation in a material sense of existence with more ease or comfort.”²

“The advancing student will gradually relinquish his attempts to improve humanhood or to improve beliefs in order that the truth of spiritual existence may unfold in his consciousness.”³

“O Students! Do not strive or seek for heavenly riches in human consciousness. Wait! Wait! *Seek a higher level of consciousness:* There the father’s treasures are as free as air.”⁴

Part II**Luke 15: 25-32**

²⁵ *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.*

²⁶ *And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.*

²⁷ *And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.*

²⁸ *And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.*

²⁹ *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:*

(continued)

² TIW, p. 65: 2-3

³ TIW, p. 66: 4

⁴ TIW, p. 160: 3

³⁰ *But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.*
³¹ *And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*
³² *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

“Any response on a lower plane than pure consciousness is from one’s self rather than one’s Self.”⁵

Luke 6: 37-38

³⁷ *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:*
³⁸ *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

“There is an invisible bond between all of us. We are not on earth to get from one another, but to share the spiritual treasures which are of God. Our interest in each other is, in truth, purely spiritual. Our purpose in life is the unfolding of the Spirit within.”⁶

“From the height of spiritual vision, we do not look upon each other as man or woman, as rich or poor, as great or humble. All human values are submerged in our common interest to seek and find the Kingdom within. We see each other as travelers on the path of Light; we share our unfoldments, our experiences, and our spiritual resources. We would not withhold any of these from each other.

“Likewise, there is no envy or jealousy of each other’s spiritual attainments. Let us even for a moment realize that whatever we possess of supply, position, prestige or power, health, beauty, or wealth is the gift of God and, therefore, equally available to all of us in the measure of our openness of consciousness – and you understand how we can carry our impersonal love out into the human world.

“Let us once catch the vision that whatever anyone possesses, even of what appears as material good, is but the expression of his state of consciousness, and it would be impossible to envy another’s possessions, or even to desire them. The first step in living by Grace, living in universal peace, must begin with the understanding that all anyone has is of the Father, that is, all that anyone possesses and all that anyone can ever own is the outpouring of his own infinite consciousness.”⁷

⁵ *TIW, p. 160: 2*

⁶ *TIW, p. 145: 4*

⁷ *TIW, p. 146: 1-3*

Part III**Galatians 4: 22-26, 31**

²² *For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman*

²³ *But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.*

²⁴ *Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.*

²⁵ *For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*

²⁶ *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

³¹ *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.*

“Spiritual illumination reveals that we are not mortals – not even human beings – but that we are pure spiritual being, divine consciousness, self-sustaining life, all-inclusive mind. This light destroys the illusions of personal self.”⁸

“Illumination dissolves all material ties and binds men together with the golden chains of spiritual understanding; it acknowledges only the leadership of the Christ; it has no ritual or rule but the divine, impersonal, universal love, no other worship than the inner Flame that is ever lit at the shrine of Spirit. This union is the free state of spiritual brotherhood. The only restraint is the discipline of Soul; therefore, we know liberty without license; we are a united universe without physical limits, a divine service to God without ceremony or creed.”⁹

Galatians 5: 1, 13-14

¹ *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

¹³ *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

¹⁴ *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

“We are all ‘joint-heirs with Christ’ in God; therefore, we all draw upon the resources of our own infinite consciousness and Soul, and we need not labor, strive, or struggle for that which is already divinely ours. All that anyone possesses at any time, even of what

⁸ *TIW, p. 38: 3*

⁹ *TIW, p. 39: 1*

seems to be of human value, is the unfoldment of his own state of consciousness and, therefore, belongs only to the possessor. That which we have is the result of the fruitage of our own state of consciousness; and what we have not yet achieved is our own lack of conscious union with God, our infinite Consciousness.”¹⁰

“The two great Commandments are cosmic law: Thou shalt have no other God or Power; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Cast *your* bread upon the waters.”¹¹

Part IV

John 15: 5-10

⁵ *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

⁶ *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

⁷ *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

⁸ *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

⁹ *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

¹⁰ *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

“The illumined walk without fear – by Grace.”¹²

“The light in individual consciousness reveals the world of God’s creating, the universe of reality, the children of God. In this light, the mortal scene disappears, and the world of concepts, ‘this world’, gives place to ‘My kingdom’ – the reality of things seen as they are.”¹³

¹⁰ *TIW, p. 147: 1*

¹¹ *TIW, p. 176: 2*

¹² *TIW, p. 39: 2*

¹³ *TIW, p. 40: 2*

I John 5: 7-8, 16-18, 20-21

⁷ *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

⁸ *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

¹⁶ *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*

¹⁷ *All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.*

¹⁸ *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

²⁰ *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*

²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

“Likewise, there is always the sense of an inner companionship. We feel an inner warmth, a living presence, a divine assurance. Sometimes we feel a strong hand in ours or behold a smiling face over our shoulder. We are never alone and we know it. This sweet Presence gives us an inner rest; It enables us to relax from the strain of the world and brings us the joy of peace. In truth, It is a ‘peace, be still’ to every problem or strain of human existence. It is a healing influence within us, and yet It is felt by all those about us.

“This inner Presence of which we are aware is Truth Itself interpreting Itself to us as presence, power, companion, light, peace, and healing influence – as the Christ. The consciousness of this inner Being is the result of our greater spiritual illumination, of our cultivated spiritual consciousness. This Truth is the God who healeth our diseases, and It goes ever before us to make smooth our path in life. This Truth is wealth and appears as our abundant supply. No human circumstance or condition can lessen our income and wealth while we abide in this consciousness of the presence of Love.”¹⁴

¹⁴ *TIW, p. 40: 3-4*

Notes: The Prodigal Experience