

Lesson 6

Celebrate Joy

This is the final lesson in the Celebration Series, so let us review the past five lessons...for in truth, they are all part of our celebration of joy.

I Celebrate Myself

To celebrate myself, I must develop a personal philosophy of life. This is a difficult process for each of us, because throughout our lives, we have been conditioned to accept the ideas of others, without question or examination. Yet out of the experiences life brings to us -- problems and achievements alike -- we must distill those values which each of us can call our own...a thimbleful of precious values which have meaning to us individually.

So often, we struggle through life, studying to obtain academic degrees, working long hours to achieve economic security, forgetting that the true "bottom line" is not material wealth, but joy. No matter how extensive your education, and regardless of how successful you may be in your business, what have you profited if you have not found joy?

Life is bleak indeed without recognizing the beauty that surrounds us every day. Life is for living! We must become active participants in life, going through the process of refinement on a daily basis -- always seeking the deeper, more delicate meaning, always looking beyond the superficial to that which is infinitely more satisfying, always expanding our awareness. We actually create our own lives, and we are responsible for 99% of what happens in our lives. We create our life experiences through the choices we make.

What are the choices you make each day? Do you choose to love? Do you choose to be happy? Do you choose to actualize yourself? If we do not enjoy what we have today, then tomorrow, we may lose it. So first, we must learn to enjoy our lives now, rather than putting off our happiness for some future time.

Secondly, we must recognize that we already have that which we seek. Whether you seek spiritual riches, intellectual enlightenment, health, success, wealth -- you already have it! It is only a matter of release, of discovery. We need only let it come forth from us! In so doing, in the very process of releasing, of expressing, we find joy -- in ourselves, in others, in God, in everything and everyone.

I Celebrate Others

We often sing, "The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you...loving you...serving you." If I am to celebrate you, I must first know you. How do I get to know you? To know you, I must first stop for a moment, and truly see you. I must listen to you, and consider you and your needs. Self-actualization and self-transformation do not in any way mean that we are to be selfish. For if we are self-actualized, we cannot help but share with others. And to know you, I must accept you -- without judgment or criticism.

When we truly celebrate others, we love them; we care about them. We are concerned about their needs, and we appreciate them. William James said that we all have a craving to be appreciated, and, as Walt Whitman said, "How it stings to be slighted!" If I am concerned about your needs, I will show appreciation for you; when I look at you, I am going to recognize you as an individual, and truly see you.

I see your deeper self within; I see the Christ -- God -- in you; I see beauty in you; I see the wonder of you. To see the Christ in you is to elevate you to the highest level. This can all take place simultaneously, and instantaneously. It is an attitude...an attitude that conveys to you that I care about you, I see you, I appreciate you, and I relate to you. At times -- when it is appropriate -- it may mean that I reach out to you and touch you, or hug you. We must be

willing to give of ourselves. We must be open, unafraid to be ourselves, unafraid of losing self-esteem, unafraid to communicate and share ourselves, unafraid to serve others.

We celebrate others when we serve them. A very simple way to serve others is to share our joy with them. Smile! An outer smile, practiced often enough, becomes an "inner" smile, becomes genuine, and reaches deep within to touch the soul of the other person. We serve others by helping them, by doing what we can to make their lives easier and more pleasant. We attune ourselves to others -- by paying attention to them, listening to them. And we serve others when we reach out to them, giving of ourselves. Finally, we serve others when we enlarge them, seeing beyond their behavior of the moment, and visualizing them as perfect children of God, with the God Source flowing forth from them.

In knowing, loving, and serving others, we can find great joy -- the joy of life!

I Celebrate Life

Life is a spiritual journey. How often we miss the wonder of life that is all around us! We know that there is something within us -- something we might call the life force, the God within - - that never changes, regardless of the many changes that take place in the exterior. The mysterious quality of life defies definition. It is the "soul" quality that is within every living thing. If we but have eyes to see and ears to hear, we will realize that everything in life has a spiritual dimension -- everything.

Life is not static; rather, it is an interchange -- a state of evolving. Life is fragile; paradoxically, it is also strong and tenacious. This paradox is part of the wonder and mystery of life, part of the dynamic balance that exists in the universe. In this interchange, in this balance, there is a unity. Everything in the universe -- including each of us -- is part of the whole, and it would not be complete without us.

Life is expression; it is given to us so that we may express the gifts we have each been given. As we expand our own consciousness, the doors of our perception are opened, and we are able to see God within everything, and to recognize that there is a grand purpose and design for

everything that exists -- including ourselves. We are here to manifest and express God, the Essence of the universe, in our own unique fashion.

I Celebrate Creativity

Each of us has the capacity to create; we fail to express that creativity because of fear, preconditioning, or because we are unaware of our own ability to create. There is no greater tragedy than to reach the moment of death and realize that we have not yet lived! Life itself is a creation! Somehow, we must recognize our creative capacity, and then find the courage to encounter it intensely and consciously -- not running away from life, but running toward life!

We can actualize our creativity -- and the first step is to believe in ourselves. Each of us is born with unlimited potential; we each have something unique and very precious to contribute to life. Beyond dreaming, we must act to bring forth our creation, to manifest our creativity.

Through the choices we make, we can transform our lives. By combining passion -- intense feeling -- with reality and reason, we produce a creative whole. The process of transformation is critical to the creative process. As we transform, or evolve, we move to ever-higher expressions of truth and beauty, moving toward oneness with the Source of our being.

I Celebrate Joy

Joy is actually all we have talked about thus far; the words are all interchangeable. Life is joy; joy is life...love is joy; joy is love...love is God; God is love...beauty is joy; joy is beauty...beauty is God...God is Presence, Power, Peace. What can life mean to us if we find no joy in living?

Joy is celebrating yourself, celebrating others, celebrating life, celebrating creativity. Joy is self-confidence, peace of mind, self-esteem, inner peace, achievement. There is something wonderful about achieving even small things. Every time we finish a project, we have a sense of joy -- the joy of accomplishment. Joy is maturing, growing up. When we refuse to let go of

childish attitudes or habits, we lessen our joy in life! Joy is allowing ourselves to become adults, to become mature.

Above all, joy is finding beauty in ordinary things, in ordinary events and experiences. Some of us may have to work at this -- but the results are well worth the effort. The beauty and wonder of life are all around us every moment we live. Finding them becomes a simple matter of focusing and attuning. Without a sense of inner joy, life is bleak indeed.

Joy is realizing the spiritual dimension of ourselves, the mystical dimension, the Source within us. Ideas, concepts, and beliefs can either enslave us or release us, and they actually determine the quality of our lives. So it follows that joyous thoughts, enthusiastic thoughts, creative thoughts -- produce the same results in our outer experience. We have control of our destiny -- because we can choose the beliefs, ideas, and concepts that direct our actions.

Joy is thankfulness. How many times as children we all heard the injunction to "count your blessings!" Being thankful for what we have -- and what we are -- is an important way we can produce joy in our lives.

Celebration -- knowing God within and in all around us -- is joy. We must know and act upon this truth. We are all on a spiritual journey, and the supreme discovery of life is knowing the presence of God -- the omnipresence of God. God simply is everywhere. So it follows that joy is everywhere!

Meditation

In Isaiah, we read, "Then shall your light rise in darkness, and the Lord will guide you continually. You will see, and your heart will rejoice." The Light within us is the Divine Spirit of God. In this we rejoice, and truly celebrate, for with this inner Light, we are never in darkness. Through our oneness with that Light, all we need is always available...wisdom, love, understanding, health, guidance, order, peace. Abundant life is ours, for the way of Spirit is the

way of joy. We feel the dawning of spiritual joy, our inner glory. Life and living become joyous and free, for we know God's harmonizing Spirit will bring to us all we seek, all we need.

Today, I celebrate the ever-present joy of God. I celebrate God in me.