

*The Cloud of Unknowing*  
*Annotated.*

*The Art of Contemplative*  
*Prayer*

*Joseph E. Mariconda*

I dedicate this book to my wife, Linda.

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First Edition 2002. Second Edition 2006.

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## ***Praise for this Book***

From: Fr\_Robert\_Hale@msn.com  
To: joemariconda@hotmail.com  
Subject : Recommendation for your book (The Cloud of Unknowing Annotated)  
Date : Mon, 23 Jul 2001

**I remain grateful for quotes from the Cloud and fascinating parallel passages from Scripture; thank you. Fr. Robert Hale, OSB Cam**

From: kenphelan@hotmail.com  
Date : Thu, 10 Jan 2002

**Your ability to find and expose the scriptural call for contemplative prayer has been breathtaking. Before your writings, I was able to find only limited appeals to the silent and quiet call for prayer. But your gift to perceive this call through both the old and the new testaments is extraordinary. Yours is a necessary book. I pray it finds the wide audience it deserves. God bless, and thank you so much, Ken Phelan OSB, Cam. Obl.**

From: jdevane@wi.rr.com  
Date : Thu, 10 Jan 2002

**This is an extraordinary piece and a gift. How can I thank you? I just came from a task force meeting this evening to prayerfully consider the formation of a leadership group to support the two coordinators of e-Contemplative Outreach of Wisconsin. As our area is growing and deepening well in Centering Prayer and Contemplative outreach. May God continue to inspire and bless you. John DeVane**

From : san15@juno.com  
Date : Mon, 7 Jan 2002

**Your book is an encouragement of the best kind for contemplatives. Since each person's journey is different, the thoughts sent only map out the terrain of contemplative prayer with its pitfalls with encouragement, while leaving the contemplative the freedom to respond to the unique and individual love offered by God. Sandra Fredette sfo**

From: AMurnaghan@telus.net  
Date: Fri, 11 Jan 2002

**Thank you so much for your commitment and diligence through the whole process of writing this material. I will be reading this for years to come. I know He will richly bless you for this way of showing how you love Him. Anne Murnaghan**

From: don\_n\_sue@juno.com  
Date: Thu, 10 Jan 2002

**Thank you very much for this precious gift. Sincerely Sue Wilmoth**

From: ShinAnnie@aol.com  
Date: Tue, 8 Jan 2002

**What I like the most about the readings is that one can meditate on each passage. That is very soothing. Annie!**

From: ABenton@aclife.com.au  
Date: Tue, 8 Jan 2002

**I really must thank you very much for taking the time to send the excerpts from the Cloud of Unknowing to me. They have helped me considerably in trying to develop my prayer life, or at least increasing my desire to improve my prayer life. Regards, Andrew Benton, Sydney Australia**

From: pcowlish@yahoo.com

Date: Mon, 7 Jan 2002

**As a creative and spiritual being, I have always struggled with the concept of 'Letting go and letting God.' Joe's book has been great in reminding me of how to 'empty' myself as opposed to always trying 'to do' and 'be something or someone' other than myself whom God created. His book reminds me of the Padre Pio quote, 'Empty yourself so that God can fill you up with Himself.' Thank you Joe. Philip Cowlishaw**

From: ewn@nwlinc.com

Date: Mon, 7 Jan 2002

**What your practice has encouraged me to let the poetry of the language of "Cloud of Unknowing" 'play' in my focused contemplative sessions, allowing the language to resonate into my daily life and environment. I've admired the way in which you counsel taking care with the kind of interpretations one makes of what is 'given'. There have been times when words you shared were so appropriate to what was going on in my life that I could only see God at work in them. Peace. Elizabeth Winder Noyes**

From: "Kurt Stallings"

Date: Mon, 22 Oct 2001

**This is a marvelous book for us all. I am a gang prosecutor who deals with violence, deception games and the hopelessness of trying to make things better in those poor neighborhoods. Your book really sets my day up and in spiritual perspective to read and review the Cloud of Unknowing message each morning. KURT STALLINGS**

From: rosemariemera@ivillage.com

Date: 6 Jan 2002

**I wanted to thank you for being a wonderful instrument of God. May your life continue to be centered in the Lord. Rose Marie Barrientos**

From: cambro1@home.com

Date: Sat, 27 Oct 2001

**Let me just say I work in a prison, and your prayerful attitude has helped me immensely. John**

From: mtj\_moran@yahoo.co.uk

Date: Fri, 25 Jan 2002

**First I want to say what a blessing your quotes from The Cloud of Unknowing have been. They've been great encouragement for me to be faithful to the practice of centering prayer. All the best, Michael Moran**

From: Karen@kandrews.enterprise-plc.com

Date: Sun, 13 Jan 2002

**Thank you so much for your unbelievably kind gift. I have just returned from visiting family in London and find your book in my email box. My husband is going to bring me home enough paper tomorrow to print it off. I can't wait to just sit and read and absorb it.**

**It feels like a cloud is gradually beginning to lift in my life. I would like the energy to start praying the Daily Office again. I think contemplative prayer will give me that space and energy that has been driven away. Thank you once again so much. May the peace of Christ dwell in your heart and spur you on continuously in your work, yours in Christ, Karen Andrews.**

From: daguerre0@yahoo.com

Date: Mon, 14 Jan 2002

**Thanks for the great excerpts! It's been a real pleasure to receive them on a daily basis, & I for one would enjoy continuing to receive the excerpts from the beginning. I made it a habit to read one every time I checked email. Especially on a stressful day at the office they reminded me to slow down & dwell in God for a few moments. Your excerpts have been a blessed gift. Are you going to press with the excerpts & Bible readings as a daily meditation? If so, please send me some info on the publisher & such- I would like to give such a book as a gift. May the Lord bless you & keep you, Wes Cheney**

From : mrose24@earthlink.net

Date : Tue, 15 Jan 2002

**I have been so blessed by your steady and untiring devotion to the Cloud of Unknowing. May you be continually showered by God's profound love and gracious mystery. You have truly given the fruits of your divine calling to many of us so that we may grow in the deep darkness and arise in the light of God's presence. In His Goodness we belong, Mary Rose**

From: Freimuth@compuserve.com

Date: Thu, 24 Jan 2002

**I look forward to being able to give friends copies of the wonderful resource that you have prepared. Melanie A. Freimuth**

From: sandytg@att.net

Date: Thu, 24 Jan 2002

**This will be a very valuable book. Peace, Sandy Guancial**

From: cmanning@scanningtech.fedex.com

Date: Thu, 24 Jan 2002

**Your book is a worthy project! Carole Manning**

## **Preface**

The Cloud of Unknowing represents the first expression in English that gathered up, remade, and salted with Christ's salt all that is best in Christian spiritual wisdom. This wisdom made written entrance in the Christian fold at A.D. 500, in the writings of "Dionysius the Areopagite". 350 years later, that writing was translated into Latin by John Erigena, and so became available to the ecclesiastical world of the West. 500 years later, during which their influence was felt strongly by mystics of European countries: St. Bernard, Victorines, St. Bonaventura, St. Thomas Aquinas. Any reader of Dante knows the part which they play in "Paradiso" (Paridise). In the 14th century, England's great mystical period led the way with a translation of this work. In "Dionise Hid Divinite", a version of "Mystica Theologia" (Mystical Theology), this spiritual treasure was made accessible to those outside the professionally religious class of monks and nuns.

I am reminded of the words of a monk, Willigis Jager, OSB:

“Religiously oriented individuals will instinctively try the way of experience. Institutionalized religion, however, finds this alternative significantly harder to adopt; it is averse to change because change is risky. It is not possible for it to predict with clarity what form such developments will take. Yet many individuals sense that ahead of them is a mainland on which they can better their lives. They are like swimmers who abandon an island in the conviction that there is a coast somewhere out there in the sea. The island soon disappears from sight while the mainland is still not yet visible. But the swimmers trust others who have reached the new land and have called to them that it is worthwhile to keep on swimming even when in the process they seem to have lost the support given by the old island of religion.”

## ***How to Pray***

Find a word or phrase from scripture - something short and meaningful - something that your mind can retain easily. Find a quiet place. Sit down with your back upright. Sit still. Gently close your eyes - gather all your desire into a simple word or phrase - and begin to recite your prayer word or phrase, silently, interiorly, and lovingly throughout the time of your meditation. Say it in equally stressed syllables. Fix it in your mind so that it will remain there - come what may. Use it to beat upon the cloud of darkness about you. Do not think about the meaning of the word or phrase. Use the word to subdue all distractions - consigning them to a cloud of forgetting beneath you. Keep this word or phrase wholly interior - abandon all thoughts and concepts. Just give your attention to the sound of it though out the time of your meditation, from the beginning to the end. When distractions arise, simply and gently return to your word or phrase. Meditate for 30 minutes each morning and each evening, every day of your life. Just say your word. Meditation or contemplation is a way of pure prayer marked by silence, stillness, and simplicity - this is the value of the contemplative journey. During prayer, remain in the Cloud of Unknowing within your heart every day for 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the evening, day in and day out. Abide with God every day in silence and He will abide with you throughout the day, and you will be like the 'tree of life' and live.

If you need to discuss the contemplative path, it is best discussed in person and on a face to face basis. Therefore, there are several means for this, for your consideration.

1) Go to [www.centeringprayer.com](http://www.centeringprayer.com) and find the listing for a contemplative group near you, and introduce yourself - and get involved; and/or

2) Go to [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org) and find a listing for a contemplative group near to you, and introduce yourself - and get involved.

Between these two web sites, you can find a contemplative group that regularly meets near you. They will make for wonderful friends on this path.

These groups support people who interested in praying the way monks and nuns of the Christian faith have prayed since earliest time of Christianity. This prayer is a way to love God thereby fulfilling Jesus' first commandment - to love God with all your heart. A vast number of Christians for over 1900 years have used this method of prayer. However, we must keep in mind that we should not forget the second commandment - that is to love our neighbor also. Therefore, we must try to keep a balanced approach to life. I find the following useful: it is a 20th century interpretation of this prayer by a Catholic monk, as found in Chapter 30: Distractions, 'New Seeds of Contemplation' by Thomas Merton:

*Soon after beginning contemplative prayer, the doors of your subconscious mind fall ajar and all sorts of curious figures begin to come waltzing onto the scene. If you are wise, you will not pay attention to these things. Remain in simple attention to God and keep your will peacefully directed to Him in simple desire, while the intermittent shadows of this annoying movie go about in the remote background. They will not hurt you - have no anxiety about these images. It is the divine work of God - do not meddle with His work.*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of work that never finishes. Pray and ask Jesus to help you to continue your contemplative prayer faithfully each and every day. If you know who you really are, is it possible to ever stop praying every day? How can a professional musician play sheet music? By measuring and using the silence, which is a "no thing" that is spaced between each musical note, so that the music can become expressible through an instrument. No regularly spaced moments of silence means that no music can be interpreted and expressed. Each sheet of music is distinctive when compared to what was ever written in the past and to what may be written in the future. No two sheets of music are the same, much in the same way that human DNA distinctively identifies every person. A blank page expresses nothing meaningful. Words on a page become an expression surrounded by empty space. The writing takes on a meaning because of the empty, surrounding space. No empty space means that there is no meaningful expression and is of no real value to others. Will you consent to sitting still regularly or daily so that you can experience your moments of silence so that the Master Musician can express your music in its fullness through the instrument of daily activity? Would it be satisfactory or beneficial to listeners to allow music to be partially interpreted and performed?

Contemplative prayer comprises moments of silence disposed between moments of action so that your life comes to a fullness, like music comprising silence disposed between notes so that the music can be read and played with full meaning and real expression. You could be like sheet music if you consent to letting God express the true you, like the way a musician expresses sheet music as it is written before it is played. Who are you? What are you like? Can music be partially expressed in a satisfying manner to those that are listening and experiencing the music? Would a life that is partially expressed be satisfactory or beneficial to others that are connected with that life? Would it be satisfactory or meaningful to partially read a book by reading only the letters and avoiding the spaces disposed between the letters? Would it be satisfactory or meaningful to anyone else to partially write a novel as a long string of letters having no spaces or pauses placed between the letters? Would it be a satisfying and full experience to partially walk through a forest by ignoring the moments of silence? Is it possible to dance without taking moments to pause between dance steps? Each of these activities of life requires moments of silence - a "no thing" - before the next movement can meaningfully and newly begin in which your true self becomes expressed in its fullest sense. Would you consent to becoming still for some moments so that you can follow the dance of life to the fullest and trust that your dance Partner leads the

way? Contemplative prayer is like dancing, in which you pay attention to your Partner's lead during pauses that occur between dance steps and accepting and trusting His cue about which direction the next step takes and following through to the next pause before beginning the next expression. "I am" could be God's expression or out-presentation of your true inner self - as you really are - in the present moment, if you humbly consent to an experience of this real expression moment by moment; otherwise, what you may be experiencing is you expressing your false self that is not a true expression of you as God may have intended to be expressed. God allows us to freely choose to consent to His true expression of us for the benefit of others around us. "I Am" is God as He is in the past, present and future.

Does contemplative prayer ever finish? If you consent to experiencing your true expression moment by moment for the benefit us and of others around us, why would you finish experiencing a meaningful, full, and true expression of the real you by avoiding experiencing moments of regular stillness or "no thing" between moments of life's active movements?

The following guideline is attributed to Thomas Keating who is a Catholic monk working for Contemplative Outreach. The guidelines for contemplative prayer are to choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within. When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes. An explanation of the guideline follows:

Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.

The sacred word expresses our intention to be in God's presence and to yield to the divine action. The sacred word should be chosen during a brief period of prayer asking the Holy Spirit to inspire us with a word suitable for you. Examples are: Lord, Jesus, Abba, Father, or Mother. Other possibilities include Love, Peace, or Shalom. Having chosen a sacred word, you do not change it during the prayer period, for that would be to start thinking again. A simple inward gaze upon God may be more suitable for some persons than the sacred word. In this case, one consents to God's presence and action by turning inwardly toward God as if gazing upon him. The same guidelines apply to the sacred gaze as to the sacred word.

Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.

"Sitting comfortably" means relatively comfortably, but not so comfortable that you encourage sleep. Sit comfortably enough to avoid thinking about the discomfort of our bodies during this time of prayer. Whatever sitting position you choose, keep your back straight. If you fall asleep, continue the prayer for a few minutes upon awakening if you can spare the time. Praying in this way after a main meal encourages drowsiness. Better to wait an hour at least before Centering Prayer. Praying in this way just before retiring may disturb one's sleep pattern. We close our eyes to let go of what is going on around and within us. We introduce the sacred word inwardly and as gently as laying a feather on a piece of absorbent cotton.

When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.

"Thoughts" is an umbrella term for every perception including sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, reflections, and commentaries. Thoughts are a normal part of Centering Prayer. By "returning ever-so-gently to the sacred word", a minimum of effort is indicated. This is the only activity you initiate during the time of Centering Prayer. During the course of our prayer, the sacred word may become vague or even disappear.

At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

If this prayer is done in a group, the leader may slowly recite the 'Our Father' during the additional 2 or 3 minutes, while the others listen. The additional 2 or 3 minutes give the psyche time to readjust to the external senses and enable us to bring the atmosphere of silence into daily life.

Some practical points

The minimum time for this prayer is 20 minutes. Two periods are recommended each day, one first thing in the morning, and one in the afternoon or early evening. The end of the prayer period can be indicated by a timer, providing it does not have an audible tick or loud sound when it goes off. The principle effects of Centering Prayer are experienced in daily life, not in the period of Centering Prayer itself. You may notice some physical symptoms such as slight pains, itches, or twitches in various parts of the body or a generalized restlessness. These are usually due to the untying of emotional knots in the body. You may also notice heaviness or lightness in the extremities. This is usually due to a deep level of spiritual attentiveness. In either case, you pay no attention, or you allow the mind to rest briefly in the sensation, and then return to the sacred word. Lectio Divina provides the conceptual background for the development of Centering Prayer. A support group praying and sharing together once weekly helps maintain one's commitment to the prayer.

## Extending the Effects of Centering Prayer into Daily Life

Practice two periods of Centering Prayer daily. Read Scriptures regularly and study the works of the saints, monks and nuns. Practice one or two of the specific methods every day. Join a Support Group or Follow-up Program (if available in your area) because it encourages the members of the group to persevere in private, and it provides an opportunity for further input on a regular basis through tapes, readings, and discussion.

### Points for further development

During the prayer period various kinds of thoughts may be distinguished, such as: Ordinary wanderings of the imagination or memory; Thoughts that give rise to attractions or aversions; Insights and psychological breakthroughs; Self-reflections such as, "How am I doing?" or, "This peace is just great!"; Thoughts that arise from the unloading of the unconscious. During this prayer, avoid analyzing your experience, harboring expectations or aiming at some specific goal such as: Repeating the sacred word continuously; Having no thoughts; Making the mind a blank; Feeling peaceful or consoled; Achieving a spiritual experience. What Centering Prayer is not: It is not a technique; It is not a relaxation exercise; It is not a form of self-hypnosis; It is not a charismatic gift; It is not a para-psychological phenomenon; It is not limited to the "felt" presence of God; It is not discursive meditation or affective prayer.

When compiling this book, I preferred to use the Douay-Rheims version of the Bible. However, not all of the Biblical excerpts are from the Douay-Rheims version. Here is an example that shows the differences in text. From the New American Standard version, Matthew 11:28 is quoted as "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." From the Douay Rheims version, Matthew 11:28 is quoted as "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Refresh means to revive with or as if with rest, food, or drink; give new vigor or spirit to; to give new freshness or brightness to; restore; to make cool, clean, or moist; freshen up; to renew by stimulation: refresh one's memory; to fill up again; replenish: refresh a drink. In contrast, rest means cessation of work, exertion, or activity; peace, ease, or refreshment resulting from sleep or the cessation of an activity; sleep or quiet relaxation; the repose of death or eternal rest; relief or freedom from disquiet or disturbance; mental or emotional tranquility; termination or absence of motion. I hope you can appreciate why I prefer to use the Douay Rheims version!

## How to use this book

This publication is an annotation of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. To help explain aspects of prayer each chapter of *The Cloud of Unknowing* is accompanied by relevant excerpts from the Holy Bible and my commentary or explanatory notes. I hope that you find this format useful and beneficial for helping you remain faithful to daily contemplative prayer.

<u>Text from this publication</u>	<u>Font type and purpose</u>
<b><i>Possess the sanctuary of God</i></b>	<p>Arial font, 12 point size, italicized.</p> <p>This text indicates a section corresponding to a chapter or a subsection of a chapter from the Cloud. Read one section per day and ponder the meaning of the text throughout the day and before you pray contemplatively.</p>
<p>Chapter 40, part 4: If you possess God you will be free of sin and when you are free of sin you possess God.</p>	<p>Times New Roman Font, 12 point size.</p> <p>This text indicates an excerpt from a chapter or a subsection of the Cloud. Read the corresponding chapter in whole from Johnston's translation of <i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> (see the bibliography) after reading the excerpt.</p> <p>My written excerpts are formulated or based on the versions translated by William Johnston and/or by Underhill.</p>
<p><i>Psalms 82:13 Let us possess the sanctuary of God for an inheritance.</i></p> <p><i>Sanctuary: A sacred place, such as a church, temple, or mosque. The holiest part of a sacred place, as the part of a Christian church around the altar. A sacred place, such as a church, in which fugitives formerly were immune to arrest.</i></p> <p><i>Note: during contemplative prayer, you are in the sanctuary of God when you are free of all distractions.</i></p>	<p>Arial font, 10 point size, italicized.</p> <p>This text indicates a quotation or excerpt from the Bible that is relevant to the excerpt from the Cloud. The text beginning with 'Note:' represents my comment of the Biblical excerpt. Ponder the words used in the excerpts of the Cloud and the Bible. Sometimes a special word is defined such as "sanctuary" to improve understanding.</p>
<p>Pray. Ask Jesus to help you to possess the silent sanctuary of God during prayer.</p>	<p>Arial font, 11 point size.</p> <p>This text indicates a suggestion that may help you pray contemplatively.</p>

## **Perfect Prayer**

Chapter 1: Be alert and attentive in your prayer. Give thanks to God for this calling. With His grace you may cut off all subtle assaults of distractions that harass you during prayer so that you may reach life unending. Christian prayer evolves towards the perfect. God calls us to advance into a deeper relationship with Him in prayer. Your desire for God burns in your heart. Since He does not want you to be far from Him, He awakens desire within you and draws you closer to Himself in prayer. He calls you to be His special friend. By praying contemplatively, you are spending time with Him in friendship. Live in the deep solitary core of your being and learn to direct your love in perfect prayer.

*Perfect: Lacking nothing essential to the whole; complete of its nature or kind. Being without defect or blemish: a perfect specimen. Thoroughly skilled or talented in a certain field or area; proficient. Completely suited for a particular purpose or situation. Completely corresponding to a description, standard, or type. Accurately reproducing an original. Complete; thorough; utter. Pure; undiluted; unmixed. Excellent and delightful in all respects. Synonyms: perfect, consummate, faultless, flawless, impeccable.*

*Genesis 6:9 Noe was a just and perfect man in his generations, he walked with God.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer allows you to "walk with God".*

*Genesis 17:1 And after he began to be ninety and nine years old, the Lord appeared to him: and said unto him: I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be perfect.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer is the means for being "perfect before God".*

*Deuteronomy 18:13 Thou shalt be perfect, and without spot before the Lord thy God.*

*Note: Perfect and free from all distractions during prayer is being "without spot before the Lord".*

*Joshua 24:14 Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him with a perfect and most sincere heart: and put away the gods which your fathers served in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer is the means by which we can serve Him with a perfect and sincere heart.*

*2 Samuel 22:33 God who hath girded me with strength, and made my way perfect.*

*Note: Ask God to help you make your prayer perfect and free from distractions.*

*1 Kings 11:4 And when he was now old, his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.*

*Note: When you turn your heart away from God during prayer, your prayer is no longer perfect because you follow distractions which are like strange gods.*

*Job 11:7 Peradventure thou wilt comprehend the steps of God, and wilt find out the Almighty perfectly?*

*Note: Contemplative prayer provides the steps to God which you find Him perfectly (that is, without distraction)*

*Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer renews your heart and praying contemplatively is the will of God.*

*Colossians 4:12 Epaphras saluteth you, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, who is always solicitous for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect, and full in all the will of God.*

*Note: Full in all the will of God, I have no distractions within during prayer. Only God is present.*

*Ecclesiasticus 50:21 And the people in prayer besought the Lord the most High, until the worship of the Lord was perfected, and they had finished their office.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer is perfecting worship of God.*

*Matthew 5:48 Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer is praying perfectly.*

*Matthew 19:21 Jesus saith to him: If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me.*

*Note: To be perfect is to be free of all distractions. So sell your distractions, give them away and be poor of distractions during prayer, and you will be following Jesus to the Kingdom of God (the true treasure in heaven) in the here and now.*

*Matthew 21:16 And said to him: Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said to them: Yea, have you never read: Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise?*

*Note: During prayer, be like a suckling infant which is not distracted when feeding.*

*Luke 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people.*

*Note: Follow Jesus and become perfect during prayer, turn your heart from all distraction.*

*Luke 6:40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one shall be perfect, if he be as his master.*

*Note: Pray perfectly and become master over your distractions.*

*Luke 8:15 But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.*

*Note: Praying contemplatively is to bring forward fruit in patience.*

*John 4:34 Jesus saith to them: My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work.*

*Note: Praying contemplatively is to perfect His work.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you develop a deep desire for His presence during perfect prayer, which is also known as contemplative prayer.

### ***Learn not to meddle with your distractions during prayer***

Chapter 2: Pursue your contemplative prayer relentlessly. Never mind what you have gained so far. Reach out to what lies ahead. Keep growing in prayer by nourishing in your heart the lively longing for God. God is a jealous lover. He is at work in your spirit and will not tolerate meddlers (that is people who meddle with their distractions during prayer). Fix your attentive love on Him and leave Him alone to do His work in you while you remain in pure attention during prayer.

*Pursue: To follow in an effort to overtake or capture; chase: a fox that was pursued by hounds. To strive to gain or accomplish: pursue lofty political goals. To proceed along the course of; follow: a ship that pursued the southern course. To carry further; advance: Let's not pursue this argument. To be engaged in an activity. To follow in an effort to overtake or capture; chase. To carry on; continue.*

*Jealous: Wary of being supplanted; apprehensive of losing affection or position. Vigilant in guarding something: We are jealous of our good name. Intolerant of disloyalty or infidelity.*

*Meddle: To intrude into other people's affairs or business; interfere. See Synonyms: interfere. To handle something idly or ignorantly; tamper. To interfere or busy with things in which a person has no concern.*

*Do not fashion images or visualize a form in the time of prayer.*

*"Chapters on Prayer" by Evagrius Ponticus (346-399 AD).*

*For thoughts that come from your imagination during prayer, let them come and let them go.*

*"Interior Castle" by St. Teresa of Avila*

*Exodus 34:14 Adore not any strange god. The Lord his name is Jealous, he is a jealous God.*

*Note: During prayer, do not adore any distractions (that is, strange gods).*

*Deuteronomy 4:24 Because the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

*Note: Ask God to use His fire to burn and consume all distractions away during prayer.*

*Ezekiel 39:25 Therefore, thus saith the Lord God: Now will I bring back the captivity of Jacob, and will have mercy on all the house of Israel: and I will be jealous for my holy name.*

*Note: Call on the name of God during prayer.*

*Matthew 6:26 Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they?*

*Note: Be like the birds of the air during prayer. Follow their example of how not to be distracted.*

*Matthew 8:20 And Jesus saith to him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

*Note: During contemplative prayer, it can be like trying to find a place to rest in a safe place - that is rest from distractions. It appears there is no rest from the distractions that come your way during prayer - there is no place to lay your head and obtain rest.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remain vigilant in guarding your mind from becoming distracted during prayer. The 'spots' are distractions that you become entangled with during prayer. Remain 'spotless', pure and undistracted during prayer.

### ***It gives the God the greatest delight***

Chapter 3: Lift up your heart to God. Lovingly desire Him for Himself only and not for His gifts. Centre your attention and desire on Him. Do all in your power to forget everything else. Keep your thoughts free from everything else. This may seem irresponsible but pay no attention to your thoughts during prayer. This is the contemplative love of the spirit, and it gives the God the greatest delight.

*Center: A place where a particular activity or service is concentrated; A point of origin; A person or thing that is the chief object of attention, interest, activity, or emotion. To be placed in a center. To be collected to a point; to be concentrated; to rest on, or gather about, as a center.*

*Matthew 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

*Note: Pray contemplatively (in secret) by closing your door to all distractions. Where is your 'inner room'?*

*Matthew 24:26 If therefore they say to you, "Behold, he is in the desert", go not forth; "behold, [he is] in the inner chambers", do not believe [it].*

*Note: Jesus is not found in a literal desert, or literally in an 'inner' room of some sort. Jesus is found when you sense no distractions during prayer. An inner room is a room that is isolated from noises and distractions, much like a person walking in a desert is isolated from 'things'.*

*John 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'*

*Note: Contemplative prayer allows - from your innermost being - the flowing of rivers of living waters that refresh you. Within you is Something which is found during prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you pay no attention to distractions during prayer. Ask for help to become isolated from all distractions during prayer. Your 'isolated' prayer gives God the greatest delight.

## **Your spirit is purified**

Chapter 3: Your friends are marvelously enriched by this work of yours even if you may not fully understand how. Your spirit is purified and strengthened by this contemplative work more than by all other works put together. When God's grace arouses you to enthusiasm it becomes the lightest work. Without His grace, it is very difficult work and quite beyond you. Ask for His help.

*Wisdom of Solomon 4:14 For his soul pleased God: therefore he hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities: but the people see this, and understand not, nor lay up such things in their hearts.*

*Note: The 'midst of iniquities' are your distractions during prayer.*

*Daniel 12:10 Many shall be purified, and be made white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.*

*Note: Prayer is purifying.*

*Jeremiah 5:5 I will go unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they know the way of Jehovah, the judgment of their God; but these have altogether broken the yoke, have burst the bonds.*

*Note: 'Breaking the yoke' is not praying everyday.*

*Ezekiel 34:27 And the tree of the field shall yield its fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase; and they shall be in safety in their land, and shall know that I [am] Jehovah, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them out of the hand of those that kept them in servitude.*

*Note: Who's 'yoke'?*

*Matthew 11:29-30 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer is your yoke. My prayer is easy, my prayer is light.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you bear the yoke of daily contemplative prayer.

## **A deep experience of Himself**

Chapter 3: Diligently persevere until you feel the joy in this work. In the beginning, it is usual to feel nothing but a kind of darkness about your mind like a cloud of unknowing. You seem to know and feel nothing except for a loving intent toward God springing from the depths of your being. This dark cloud will remain between you and God. You will feel frustrated and your mind will be unable to grasp Him. Learn to be with Him in this darkness. Return to it as often as you can. To see and feel God as He is in this life must be done from within this dark cloud during prayer. However, if you strive to fix your love on Him and forget everything else, I am confident that God will bring you to a deep experience of Himself.

*I consent to your Divine presence and action in my life.*

*"A Taste of Silence" by Carl Arico*

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Note: God tells us to not 'eat' during prayer, that is: to not eat our distractions during prayer. Eating distractions during prayer does not lead to the innermost river of living water. Do not eat knowledge or anything during prayer.*

*Exodus 19:9 The Lord said to him: Lo, now will I come to thee in the darkness of a cloud, that the people may hear me speaking to thee, and may believe thee for ever.*

*Note: God comes to you during prayer in a dark cloud in which you cannot sense Him. Have faith because He is near to you when you pray contemplatively. You cannot not comprehend Him during prayer.*

*Exodus 20:21 And the people stood afar off. But Moses went to the dark cloud wherein God was.*

*Deuteronomy 4:11 And you came to the foot of the mount, which burned even unto heaven: and there was darkness, and a cloud and obscurity in it.*

*Note: What is 'burned'?*

*Deuteronomy 5:22 These words the Lord spoke to all the multitude of you in the mountain, out of the midst of the fire and the cloud, and the darkness, with a loud voice, adding nothing more.*

*Note: 'adding nothing more' because it is enough to have God present during prayer.*

*Psalms 17:12 And he made darkness his covert, his pavilion round about him: dark waters in the clouds of the air.*

*Ezekiel 32:7 And I will cover the heavens, when thou shalt be put out, and I will make the stars thereof dark: I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.*

*2 Peter 2:17 These are fountains without water, and clouds tossed with whirlwinds, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved.*

*Note: The midst of darkness is reserved for those that pray contemplatively, where there is isolation from all distractions.*

*Matthew 17:5 And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.*

*Note: God tells us to listen to the message of contemplative prayer being taught by Jesus.*

*Matthew 12:33 Either make the tree good and its fruit good: or make the tree evil, and its fruit evil. For by the fruit the tree is known.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer leads to the production of good fruit.*

*Matthew 24:32 And from the fig tree learn a parable: When the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer is like a tree making and shedding leaves. You will make or experience distractions during prayer, but you shed your distractions like a tree shedding its leaves.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you understand the parable of the fig tree and the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

## **Grow in divine intimacy**

Chapter 4: By the work of contemplative prayer, man will be healed. Failing in this prayer, he sinks further and further away from God. By persevering in this prayer, he gradually rises and grows in divine intimacy with God.

*Isolation: the act of isolating; the quality or condition of being isolated. See Synonyms at solitude; the act of isolating, or the state of being isolated; insulation; separation; loneliness; a state of separation between persons or groups; a feeling of being disliked and alone; preference for seclusion or isolation [syn: reclusiveness]; the act of isolating something [syn: closing off]; a country's withdrawal from internal politics; "he opposed a policy of American isolation" I like the last one: withdrawal from 'internal' politics.*

*Soon after beginning contemplative prayer, the doors of your subconscious mind fall ajar and all sorts of curious figures begin to come waltzing onto the scene. If you are wise, you will not pay attention to these things. Remain in simple attention to God and keep your will peacefully directed to Him in simple desire, while the intermittent shadows of this annoying movie go about in the remote background. They*

*will not hurt you - have no anxiety about these images. It is the divine work of God - do not meddle with His work during prayer.*

*Chapter 30: Distractions, 'New Seeds of Contemplation' by Thomas Merton*

*Jeremiah 16:13 So I will cast you forth out of this land, into a land which you know not, nor you fathers: and there you shall serve strange gods day and night, which shall not give you any rest.*

*Note: Distractions give you no rest.*

*Jeremiah 6:16 Thus saith the Lord: Stand ye on the ways, and see and ask for the old paths which are the good way, and walk ye in it: and you shall find refreshment for your souls.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer is the path.*

*Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*

*Note: contemplative prayer allows you to become refreshed and ready to serve.*

*Mark 4:39 And rising up, he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace; be still. And the wind ceased: and there was made a great calm.*

*Note: Ask Jesus to bring peace during prayer, to cease distractions and bring a great calm. Jesus also calmed the waters. It is interesting to not that the human body is made of 96% water.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to refresh and calm your inner self during contemplative prayer. Ask Jesus to help you withdraw from your 'internal' distractions during prayer.

## **Abandonment**

Chapter 5: During contemplative prayer, maintain a cloud of unknowing between you and God. Fashion a cloud of forgetting between you and every created thing, circumstance, or activity whether material or spiritual. Abandon all created things beneath the cloud of forgetting. Do not meddle, engage, or pay any attention with created things. Remain calmly detached from them during this prayer. To dwell on created things during contemplative prayer is useless because they become obstacles to union with God. You cannot nourish your contemplative prayer by considering the attributes of God, Mary, Jesus, angels, saints, or heaven as wonderful and these thoughts are and as laudable as they are to reflect upon. During this prayer, it is better to let your mind rest in the awareness of God as He is, while you gently refuse to meddle with created things.

*Genesis 41:51 God hath made me to forget all my labors, and my father's house.*

*Note: during prayer, forget your labors or distractions.*

*Deuteronomy 4:23 Beware lest thou ever forget the covenant of the Lord thy God, which he hath made with thee: and make to thyself a graven likeness of those things which the Lord hath forbid to be made.*

*Note: What does 'make to thyself a graven likeness' mean? Graven: requiring serious thought; to sculpt or carve; engrave; to stamp or impress deeply; fix permanently. It appears that during prayer, we are not to attach ourselves to any impressions (engraving images during prayer is not required). Remain isolated from all images during prayer (do not engrave any images in your mind during prayer).*

*1 Kings 5:4 But now the Lord my God hath given me rest round about: and there is no adversary nor evil occurrence.*

*Note: Ask for rest during prayer so that you are isolated from all distractions.*

*Isaiah 14:3 And it shall come to pass in that day, that when God shall give thee rest from thy labor, and from thy vexation, and from the hard bondage.*

*Note: Keep praying and asking for help from the vexation of distractions during prayer. Eventually, you will experience rest. Be patient.*

*Ezekiel 6:14 And I will stretch forth my hand upon them: and I will make the land desolate, and abandoned from the desert of Deblatha in all their dwelling places: and they shall know that I am the Lord.*

*Note: God makes the 'land' desolate. That 'land' is you who prays contemplatively. It is not literally the 'land' that you stand on.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you abandon your distractions during prayer.

## **Abandon everything that you know**

Chapter 6: A person may completely know created things. Thought cannot comprehend God. During this prayer, abandon everything you know and chose to love Him whom you cannot know. God may be embraced by love, and can never be embraced by thought. We do well to consider God's qualities for insight. During contemplative prayer, cover your thoughts in a cloud of forgetting. Let your love for God step beyond your thoughts and into the darkness - do not cease come what may.

*Contemplative prayer teaches you how to free yourself of created things and temporal concerns - in which you can only find confusion and sorrow - and enter into loving contact with God who provides the help you badly need.*

*Chapter 29 - Mental Prayer, "New Seeds of Contemplation" by Thomas Merton*

*Images & Illusions: In order not to fall into illusion while practicing inner prayer, do not permit yourself any concepts, images, or visions. For vivid imaginings, darting to and fro, and flights of fancy do not cease even when the mind stands in the heart and recites prayer: and no one is able to rule over them, except those who have attained perfection by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and who have acquired stability of mind through Jesus Christ. (St. Nil Sorski 1433-1508)*

*Page 99, The Art of Prayer, compiled by Igumen Chariton of Valamo, translated by E. Kadloubovsky and E.M. Palmer*

*Dispel all images from your mind: I find in the writings of the Holy Fathers, that when they you pray you must dispel all images from your mind. That is what I also try to do, forcing myself to realize that God is everywhere - and so (among other places) here, where my thoughts and feelings are. I cannot succeed in freeing myself entirely from images, but gradually they evaporate more and more. There comes a point when they disappear completely. (Thophan the Recluse).*

*Page 99, The Art of Prayer, compiled by Igumen Chariton of Valamo, translated by E. Kadloubovsky and E.M. Palmer*

*Wipe out all alien impressions. I forgot to remind you that any impression alien to the inner state to which you are committed should be immediately wiped out as soon as it comes. So not put the matter off till the evening, let alone for a long time. It is quite simple to do this: descend into your heart where the impression has remained, repel it by refusing to harbor it, and at the same time pray to the Lord to protect you against it. Do this until it leaves you. (Theophan the Recluse).*

*Page 299, The Art of Prayer, compiled by Igumen Chariton of Valamo, translated by E. Kadloubovsky and E.M. Palmer*

*Job 11:7 Peradventure thou wilt comprehend the steps of God, and wilt find out the Almighty perfectly?*

*John 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

*Note: During prayer, you are the darkness, God sheds His light on you. But you cannot use your sense to comprehend His light during prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you abandon all comprehension during prayer.

## ***Your thoughts are powerless to grasp Him***

Chapter 7: It is inevitable that ideas will arise in your mind and try to distract you in a thousand ways. They will question you by saying, "What are you looking for? What do you want?" To all of them you must reply "God alone I seek and desire only Him." If they ask "What is God?" tell them that God created you, redeemed you and brought you to this work. Tell your thoughts, "You are powerless to grasp Him; be silent and still."

*Job 2:9 And his wife said to him: Dost thou still continue in thy simplicity? Bless God and die.*

*Note: Not literally die in a physical sense. What is 'continue in thy simplicity'?*

*Psalms 45:11 Be still and see that I am God.*

*Ecclesiastes 7:18 It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them.*

*Note: When you pray, come forth with all your distractions, give them to God and remain in silence during prayer.*

*Jeremiah 24:7 And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: because they shall return to me with their whole heart.*

*Note: How do you return to God with your whole heart?*

*Jeremiah 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord: I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.*

*Note: Pray with a clean heart, that is clean of all distractions. There are no 'gods' (that is distractions) but God.*

*Matthew 22:37 Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.*

*Note: There can be no room for any distractions when you love God with all your heart and mind.*

*Mark 4:39 And rising up, he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace, be still. And the wind ceased: and there was made a great calm.*

*Note: When you pray, ask Jesus to rebuke the storm of distractions and to bring on the great calm.*

*Matthew 6:3 But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth.*

*Note: when you pray, do not pay attention to distractions which is like your right hand not knowing what your left hand is doing.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to not know what your right hand and your left hand are doing during prayer.

## ***Dispel your thoughts***

Chapter 7: Dispel your thoughts by turning to God with a loving desire. Don't be surprised if thoughts come to you that seem holy and valuable for prayer, such as about the wonderful qualities of Jesus. These distractions come to tempt you away from remaining in the desert solitude with God during prayer. If you continue to pay attention to these ideas, they will go on chattering until they direct you to even more thoughts that are not related to Jesus. Suddenly, before you know it, your mind is completely scattered! Holy thoughts are valuable as a start. Eventually, you will need to leave these thoughts beneath a cloud of forgetting if you hope to

pierce the cloud of unknowing that lies between you and God. During contemplative work, simply raise your heart to God with a gentle stirring of love. Think only of God. Allow no other ideas about God to enter your mind. A naked intent (image-less thought) toward God and a desire for Him is enough.

*Dispel: To rid one's mind of: managed to dispel my doubts. To drive away or off by or as if by scattering.*

*Mark 14:51-52 And a certain young man followed him, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and they laid hold on him. But he, casting off the linen cloth, fled from them naked.*

*Note: praying contemplatively is like casting off all distractions and you become naked and free of all distractions, much like Adam originally was naked in the Garden of Eden.*

*John 21:7 That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: It is the Lord. Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him, (for he was naked,) and cast himself into the sea.*

*Luke 1:51 He hath shewed might in his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.*

*Note: Jesus helps you scatter the proud distractions haunting your heart.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to dispel all distractions during prayer so that you become interiorly naked.

### **Subdue all distractions**

Chapter 7: Gather all your desire into a simple word that your mind can easily retain, such as 'God' or 'love'. Choose a word meaningful to you. Then, fix it in your mind so that it will remain there come what may. Keep using this word in your conflict against distractions, and during moments of peace. Use this word to subdue all distractions thereby consigning your thoughts into a cloud of forgetting. If you begin to intellectualize over the meaning and connotations of this word, remind yourself that its value lies in its simplicity. Do this and I assure you these thoughts will vanish because you have refused to develop them with arguing.

*Simplicity: The property, condition, or quality of being simple or uncombined. Absence of luxury or showiness; plainness. Absence of affectation or pretense. Lack of sophistication or subtlety; naiveté. Lack of good sense or intelligence; foolishness. Clarity of expression. Austerity in embellishment.*

*To find God, we must pass beyond what can be seen and heard and enter into darkness and silence. Anything our imagination tells us about God is ultimately misleading.*

*Chapter 19 From Faith to Wisdom, "New Seeds of Contemplation" by Thomas Merton*

*Isaiah 66:2 My hand made all these things, and all these things were made, saith the Lord. But to whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?*

*Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Note: Praying contemplatively is being poor in spirit in which when you are 'poor' (that is, devoid of all distractions), you will see (that is, experience) the Kingdom of God.*

*Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.*

*Note: Praying contemplatively cleans your heart of distractions during prayer. When you are 'clean of distractions', you will experience the Kingdom of God.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you pray with simplicity, in which you remain uncombined with distractions.

## **Why do we need a cloud of forgetting during prayer?**

Chapter 8: During contemplative prayer, you must abandon your thoughts beneath a cloud of forgetting even if your thoughts are of God. Your thoughts start off as ideas conceived in your mind as a reflection of the divine intelligence. But what you could do with these thoughts may in turn be either good or evil. Your thoughts remain good if they help you understand your sinfulness and deepen your devotion. Your thoughts could become evil and corrupt your mind if they inflate your pride and egoism, in which your humble mind is put aside and becomes expert in vanities. Natural intelligence turns into evil whenever it is filled with pride, unnecessary curiosity, vanities, or coveting dignity, riches, empty pleasure or flattery.

*Matthew 12:43-45 But when the unclean spirit has gone out of the man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and does not find [it]. Then he says, I will return to my house whence I came out; and having come, he finds [it] unoccupied, swept, and adorned. Then he goes and takes with himself seven other spirits worse than himself, and entering in, they dwell there; and the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first.*

*Note: keep praying contemplatively to keep all distractions from returning during prayer.*

Jesus explains why distractions come to assault us during prayer. The distractions find a place to dwell with you during prayer because you pay attention to them and you let your guard down; anywhere else is not profitable for the distractions.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help to banish all distractions during prayer.

## **Sit in peace**

Chapter 8: Active life begins and ends on earth, while contemplative life is continuous because it is Mary's part which shall never be taken away. Active life is troubled and busy about many things, while contemplative life sits in peace with the one thing necessary.

*Matthew 8:11 And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*

*Note: praying contemplatively is sitting down with*

*Matthew 9:9 And when Jesus passed on from hence, he saw a man sitting in the custom house, named Matthew; and he saith to him: Follow me. And he rose up and followed him.*

*Matthew 9:10 And it came to pass as he was sitting at meat in the house, behold many publicans and sinners came, and sat down with Jesus and his disciples.*

*Matthew 11:16 But whereunto shall I esteem this generation to be like? It is like to children sitting in the market place.*

*Luke 1:79 To enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death: to direct our feet into the way of peace.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to sit with you in darkness during prayer, undisturbed from the noise of the marketplace of distractions.

## **Rest in blind awareness**

Chapter 8: An active life is well spent in good deeds and works of mercy, and in pondering the Passion of Christ, and to give thanks and praise for God's kindness. In contemplative prayer, all is darkness. A cloud of unknowing is where you turn to God with a loving desire for Himself alone. Sit and wait with God in blind awareness of His being.

*Psalms 32:20 Our soul waiteth for the Lord: for he is our helper and protector.*

*Proverbs 8:34 Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors.*

*Daniel 12:12 Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh unto a thousand three hundred thirty-five days.*

*Luke 8:40 And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the multitude received him: for they were all waiting for him.*

*John 5:3 In these lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered; waiting for the moving of the water.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you wait patiently and undistractedly during prayer.

## **Cling not to any thoughts**

Chapter 8: Cover all of your thoughts with a cloud of forgetting. Even if your thoughts are initially holy, they can never carry you during your contemplative prayer. Your love may reach God, but your knowledge cannot transport you to God. While your soul remains in your body, any initial good thoughts about God will eventually end up being commingled with fantasy, like wheat and tares growing together in the same field. This commingling will provide constant distractions during your prayer. Therefore, avoid temptation of becoming distracted to commingling of good and bad thoughts. Cling not to any of your thoughts, and entirely abandon them all.

*Cockle: A plant or weed that grows among grain; the corn rose. To cause to contract into wrinkles or ridges, as some kinds of cloth after a wetting. Cockle occurs only in Job 31:40 (marg., "noisome weeds"), where it is the rendering of a Hebrew word (b'oshah) which means "offensive," "having a bad smell," referring to some weed perhaps which has an unpleasant odor. Or it may be regarded as simply any noisome weed, such as the "tares" or darnel of Matt. 13:30. In Isa. 5:2, 4 the plural form is rendered "wild grapes."*

*Matthew 13:25-30 But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the goodman of the house coming said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said: No, lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.*

*Note: Prayer is like this parable. Your distractions are like an enemy that has sowed 'distracting' cockle in your field. Pay no attention to them. Ask Jesus to come and deal with them. Ask Jesus to come and reap up your inner cockle and burn them up.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remain detached from your distractions. Ask Jesus to burn them for you like burning cockle.

### ***Continue in spite of this struggle ahead of you***

Chapter 9, part 1: Sometimes during your contemplative prayer, your thoughts eventually may become sharply stirred. You must continue in spite of this struggle ahead of you. At other times, while abiding in this darkness with God, quite suddenly you become aware of some thought that has somehow slithered and slipped in between you and God. Be watchful and pay attention. When any thoughts begin slipping in between, quickly become aware of dwelling with them and release them - whether they are good or bad - and watch them slither away. Watch only God during prayer.

*Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God made. And he said to the woman: Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?*

*Note: Distractions come during prayer. Do not 'eat the knowledge of things' during prayer. Remain in a state in which you are in a constant 'fast' from all things during prayer. Prayer is a time for fasting.*

*Matthew 10:34 Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword.*

*Note: The sword of Jesus separates distractions from your prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to give you his sword so that you can cut off the slithering, serpent-like distractions during prayer.

### ***In hidden secret***

Chapter 9, part 2: To please God, to help your friends, to improve the health of your soul, avoid distractions during prayer. Quickly return to offering your blind stirring of love to God for Himself from within the cloud of unknowing. It is better to keep pressing in hidden secret on the cloud of unknowing than to experience any spiritual bliss.

*Matthew 13:44 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field. Which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*

*Note: Understand that contemplative prayer is like the inner treasure that is buried within you. Look no further for God for you have found Him within you in contemplative prayer - free from all distractions.*

*Luke 19:42 If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes.*

*Note: God remains hidden from your senses during prayer.*

*Matthew 1:23 ... and they shall call his name 'Emmanuel', which means 'God is with us' ...*

*Luke 2:8-9, 2:12 ... the shepherds abiding in their fields, keeping watch ... and the angle of the Lord came upon them ... .. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger ...*

To swaddle is to wrap or bind in bandages. To swathe is to wrap (a baby) in swaddling clothes, or to restrain or restrict. Jesus is born to show us how to pray. Follow the way baby Jesus prays! During

your contemplative prayer, abide in stillness and poverty within your inner wooden manger; keep watch during the finest hour of every day. God is within you.

Pray. Ask Jesus to find the hidden treasure that is laid up within you, the Kingdom of God.

### **Awareness and watchfulness**

Chapter 9, part 3: The skill of being aware and quickly releasing from all distractions during contemplative prayer can only be given to you as a gift of grace from God. Pray and ask for this special gift. Man can never achieve this skill by his own effort alone. Only God can grant this gift of watchfulness during prayer. All you can do during this prayer is to offer your unconditional love to God and to wait for God to draw your love into the cloud of unknowing. Any progress you realize in ignoring all distractions during prayer is a result of God's grace.

*Matthew 24:42 Watch ye therefore, because ye know not what hour your Lord will come.*

*Note: During prayer remain watchful, that is do not become distracted during prayer.*

*Matthew 24:43 But know this ye, that if the goodman of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open.*

*Note: Be watchful during prayer, like a man watching over his home at night. The distractions will come, but keep watch and prevent them from entering your inner home.*

*Matthew 26:38 Then he saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here, and watch with me.*

*Note: Jesus is asking you to watch with Him. When you pray, ask Jesus to watch with you during prayer.*

*Matthew 26:40 And he cometh to his disciples, and findeth them asleep, and he saith to Peter: What? Could you not watch one hour with me?*

*Note: pray for one hour a day.*

*Matthew 26:41 Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak.*

*Note: not enter into temptation. That is, remain free from tempting distractions during prayer.*

*Matthew 27:36 And they sat and watched him.*

*Mark 13:35 Watch ye therefore, (for you know not when the lord of the house cometh: at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning,)*

*Note: Pray once in the morning and once in the evening.*

*Mark 13:37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch.*

*Note: Jesus asks us to watch. When you watch, your attention is focused and undistracted by anything. Jesus asks us to 'watch' during prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you become watchful during prayer.

### **Engaging and dwelling**

Chapter 9, part 4: Any thoughts that enter your mind places you further from God. This makes you unable to experience the fruit of His love. Don't you know that any willful effort to continue engaging and dwelling in your thoughts will hinder your progress in contemplative

prayer? Since remembering any saint or angel will also hinder your progress, don't you know that recalling any living persons or worldly thing will also hinder and interfere with your prayer?

*Matthew 8:26 He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.*

*Note: ask Jesus to rebuke the distractions that are like winds during a storm at sea so that you may experience calm (that is, no distractions) during prayer.*

*Mark 4:39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.*

*Luke 8:24 They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm.*

*Note: During prayer, when you become distracted, ask Jesus to help calm down the distractions.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to calm distractions during prayer.

### ***The right type of effort***

Chapter 9, part 5: I am not saying that thoughts of good and holy things are opposed to your will. Nor am I saying that continuing to remember holy thoughts are a bad compulsion brought on by an opinion that they would increase your devotion to prayer. No - do not take it that way. What I mean is that remembering holy and good thoughts (during prayer) are very worthy and noble activities, but they are not the right type of effort required for contemplative prayer. Why? People that seek God perfectly will not remain dwelling and engaging with the good things of heaven and earth for the duration of contemplative prayer.

*Psalms 38:13 But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; And I am like a mute man who does not open his mouth.*

*Note: that is the way to prayer.*

*Psalms 39:9 I have become mute, I do not open my mouth, because it is You who have done it.*

*Note: ask Jesus for help in remaining 'silent' during prayer.*

*Mark 1:10 And forthwith coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit as a dove descending, and remaining on him.*

*Note: Jesus knows how to pray. He knows how to commune with God. God shows an outward sign indicating His communication with Jesus.*

*Matthew 9:27 And as Jesus passed from thence, there followed him two blind men crying out and saying, Have mercy on us, O Son of David.*

*Note: Ask Jesus for help during prayer in which you are to be blind. Jesus will come and help you understand prayer - so that you can 'see' the truth about prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus for mercy during prayer, mercy and relief from all distractions.

### ***Worldly distractions***

Chapter 10, part 1: Thoughts of living or worldly concerns that press against your self will during prayer are not a sin caused by your own fault. The source of these worldly distractions are a result of original sin, even though you have been cleansed of original sin at baptism. You must

quickly release these worldly thoughts during prayer otherwise they may disturb your peace. This includes new or old, pleasurable or troublesome thoughts.

*The invention all admir'd, and each, how he  
To be the inventor miss'd; so easy it seemed  
Once found, which yet unfound most would  
have thought Impossible.*

*Paradise Lost, Book VI, lines 498-501, John Milton*

*Matthew 10:34 Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword.*

*Note: the sword is for cutting away all distractions during prayer.*

*Job 40:14 He is the beginning of the ways of God, who made him, he will apply his sword.*

*Psalms 149:6 The high praise of God shall be in their mouth: and two-edged swords in their hands.*

*Jeremiah 14:13 And I said: Ah, ah, ah, O Lord God, the prophets say to them: You shall not see the sword, and there shall be no famine among you, but he will give you true peace in this place.*

*Ezekiel 11:8 You have feared the sword, and I will bring the sword upon you, saith the Lord God.*

*Ezekiel 21:9 Son of man, prophesy, and say: Thus saith the Lord God: Say: The sword, the sword is sharpened, and furbished.*

*Luke 12:51 Think ye, that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, no; but separation.*

*Note: Separation from distractions during prayer.*

*John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.*

*Note: during prayer, keep your heart detached from all fear and troubles.*

*John 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: Peace be to you.*

*Note: During prayer, go within and there you will find Jesus who brings peace and rest from distractions.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to bring you peace from distractions during prayer. Ask Jesus to separate all distractions during prayer.

### **Turn away from your thoughts**

Chapter 10, part 2: It would be a very bad sin to continue dwelling on worldly thoughts during prayer. However, for people that have forsaken the world during this prayer, and are secretly or openly devoutly committed, initial recollection of worldly thoughts represent a very weak sin if these thoughts are quickly released - because these people are undertaking a process of grounding and rooting their self will in God as experienced during contemplative prayer. Turn away from your thoughts.

*Exodus 30:15 The rich man shall not add to half a sicle, and the poor man shall diminish nothing.*

*Note: Be poor when you pray - nothing is diminished when you pray contemplatively.*

*Job 27:19 The rich man when he shall sleep shall take away nothing with him: he shall open his eyes and find nothing.*

*Note: pray by taking nothing with you. During prayer, find nothing!*

*2 Samuel 12:2 The rich man had exceeding many sheep and oxen.*

*Note: to be rich - in biblical terms related to prayer - means to possess many creatures (that is, these are distractions).*

*Proverbs 3:13 Blessed is the man that findeth wisdom and is rich in prudence:*

*Note: praying contemplatively is wisdom. When you pray contemplatively, you are rich in prudence.*

*Proverbs 19:1 Better is the poor man that walketh in his simplicity than a rich man that is perverse in his lips and unwise.*

*Note: better to pray in simplicity, than pray with distractions.*

*Proverbs 28:6 Better is the poor man walking in his simplicity, than the rich in crooked ways.*

*Proverbs 28:11 The rich man seemeth to himself wise: but the poor man that is prudent shall search him out.*

*Note: ... to search who out? Be poor when you pray for this is the way to search for God.*

*Proverbs 28:20 A faithful man shall be much praised: but he that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent.*

*Note: pray as an innocent one, in simplicity and poverty.*

*Ecclesiastes 5:9 A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money: and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them: so this also is vanity.*

*Note: prayer and dwelling with distractions does not allow the reaping of fruit (that is, the net result is no gain).*

*Matthew 19:24 And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

*Mark 10:25 It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

*Luke 18:25 For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

*Note: you cannot enter the Kingdom if you dwell with distractions during prayer. Dwelling with distractions is like a rich man running his fingers through his money and the rich man becomes distracted from what is really important.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you cast out your distraction during prayer so that you may enter the Kingdom of God.

## **His sword**

Chapter 10, part 2: If you willingly and fully consent to continue dwelling on worldly thoughts for too long, you risk the possibility of having these thoughts become welded to your self will, in which case you commit a deadly sin. This happens when a person willfully continues to dwell on thoughts of living persons or worldly concerns and refrains from releasing them altogether. There are seven categories of thoughts that could create deadly sin if you willfully dwell continuously on them. The seven types of deadly thoughts that lead to seven serious types of sin are:

1. Thoughts that cause worry, hate, anger, or vengeance will led to the sin of wrath.
2. Thoughts that cause feelings of contempt or repulsion of others, generate spite or condemnation will create the sin of envy.
3. Thoughts that cause weariness and disinterest in good works will lead to the sin of sloth.

*Job 40:14 He is the beginning of the ways of God, who made him, he will apply his sword.*

*Note: Apply his sword for what purpose?*

*Ezekiel 6:3 And say: Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God: Thus Faith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills, and to the rocks, and the valleys: Behold, I will bring upon you the sword, and I will destroy your high places.*

*Note: the sword is used for the destruction of 'high places'. What is a 'high place'? Does that mean that the 'low place' is not to be destroyed? What is the 'low place'? A 'low place' is a humble place. When praying be like a low, humble place in which you do not dwell in high minded distractions.*

*High place: In early Semitic religions, a place of worship built usually on top of a hill. a mount on which sacrifices were offered. "Him that offereth in the high place." --Jer. xlviii. 35. An high look and a proud heart . . . is sin. --Prov. xxi. 4. high place an eminence, natural or artificial, where worship by sacrifice or offerings was made (1 Kings 13:32; 2 Kings 17:29). The first altar after the Flood was built on a mountain (Gen. 8:20). Abraham also built an altar on a mountain (12:7, 8). It was on a mountain in Gilead that Laban and Jacob offered sacrifices (31:54). After the Israelites entered the Promised Land they were strictly enjoined to overthrow the high places of the Canaanites (Ex. 34:13; Deut. 7:5; 12:2, 3), and they were forbidden to worship the Lord on high places (Deut. 12:11-14), and were enjoined to use but one altar for sacrifices (Lev. 17:3, 4; Deut. 12; 16:21). The injunction against high places was, however, very imperfectly obeyed, and we find again and again mention made of them (2 Kings 14:4; 15:4, 35:2 Chr. 15:17, etc.).*

*Ephesians 6:17 And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God).*

*Matthew 10:34 Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword.*

*Note: the sword is used for separating distractions from prayer.*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of the sword that cuts the welding that binds you with your thoughts. Pray and ask Jesus to show you how to use His sword.

## ***Dwell not on worldly thoughts***

Chapter 10, Part 3:

4. Thoughts that cause self-pleasure, self-delight, or self-worth will led to the sin of pride.
5. Thoughts of worldly and monetary richness will lead to the sin of covetousness.
6. Thoughts of food will lead to the sin of gluttony.
7. Thoughts of the flesh or flattery will lead to the sin of lechery.

Dwelling for too long with these types of deadly thoughts could lead to welding them to your self will by feeding tempting passions to your heart. This will permanently distract you from paying attention and loving God for the duration of your contemplative prayer. Dwell not on these worldly thoughts and concepts during your prayer. In fact, pray to God that you will be able to avoid them altogether.

*Matthew 16:23 Who turning, said to Peter: Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me: because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men.*

*Note: Distractions that come during prayer are thoughts that do not come from God. Savor the things that come from God during prayer.*

*Matthew 15:18 But the things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man.*

*Note: Distractions that come during prayer are thoughts that come from within you. Distractions defile you during prayer.*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer having no distractions. Pray to Jesus and ask Him to remove your distractions they cannot interfere with prayer.

## **A house of prayer**

Chapter 11, part 1: I do not mention these things because I believe that you are feeling guilty about being distracted by worldly thoughts. I want you to become carefully and consciously aware of each thought as they happen from moment to moment. Watch as your thoughts become cut off at their roots during contemplative prayer.

*2 Samuel 7:27 Because thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to the ear of thy servant, saying: I will build thee a house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer to thee.*

*1 Kings 8:29 That thy eyes may be open upon this house night and day: upon the house of which thou hast said: My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth in this place to thee.*

*2 Chronicles 7:12 And the Lord appeared to him by night, and said : I have heard thy prayer, and I have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice.*

*Isaiah 32:14 For the house is forsaken, the multitude of the city is left, darkness and obscurity are come upon its dens for ever.*

*Isaiah 56:7 I will bring them into my holy mount, and will make them joyful in my house of prayer: their holocausts, and their victims shall please me upon my altar: for my house shall be called the house of prayer, for all nations.*

*Note: Their 'holocausts' refers to those that pray and sacrifice or burn their distractions during prayer.*

*Jeremiah 7:11 Is this house then, in which my name hath been called upon, in your eyes become a den of robbers? I, I am he: I have seen it, saith the Lord.*

*Note: God watches your involvement with distractions during prayer.*

*Matthew 21:13 And he saith to them: It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.*

*Note: When you pray and you dwell with distractions, you become a like a thief and rob time away from prayer with God.*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer within your body which is like a temple. Pray and ask Jesus to come and remove your distractions that act like inner thieves during prayer.

## **Who then can be saved?**

Chapter 11, part 2: By becoming welded with deadly thoughts during prayer, you reach a point where it is beyond your ability to cut loose from their deadly distraction. It will be difficult to redirect your attention to God within the cloud of unknowing. By not being constantly aware and watchful, you could become sloppy about engaging with even the most simplest and innocent of thoughts.

*Proverbs 1:6 He shall understand a parable, and the interpretation, the words of the wise, and their mysterious sayings.*

*Daniel 4:9 Baltassar, prince of the diviners, because I know that thou hast in thee the spirit of the holy gods, and that no secret is impossible to thee: tell me the visions of my dreams that I have seen, and the interpretation of them.*

*Daniel 7:16 I went near to one of them that stood by, and asked the truth of him concerning all these things, and he told me the interpretation of the words, and instructed me.*

*Matthew 19:25 Who then can be saved? This is impossible for human beings, but for God everything is possible.*

Pray and ask Jesus to save you from distractions by providing you with His gift of faithful watchfulness and attention. Ask Jesus to show you the interpretation of scripture. It may not be possible for you to interpret scripture. Ask Jesus to show you the hidden meaning within scripture.

### ***Clean inside the cup***

Chapter 11, part 3: It is not humanly possible to completely avoid engaging with all thoughts and thereby prevent all distractions during contemplative prayer. However, recklessly continuing to engage with even innocent thoughts are avoided by contemplatives seeking perfect prayer.

*Genesis 8:20 And Noe built an altar unto the Lord: and taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar.*

*Note: The sacrifices offered during prayer happens when we sacrifice distractions.*

*Exodus 25:29 Thou shalt prepare also dishes, and bowls, censers, and cups, wherein the libations are to be offered of the purest gold.*

*Note: Libations: The pouring of a liquid offering as a religious ritual. A beverage, especially an intoxicating beverage.*

*Note: Make your prayer a libation of pure gold, that is, pure in the sense that there are no impurities as a result of distractions.*

*Psalms 15:5 The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: it is thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me.*

*Note: prayer restores your rightful 'inheritance'. See: the parable of the prodigal son.*

*Psalms 17:21 And the Lord will reward me according to my justice; and will repay me according to the cleanness of my hands:*

*Note: during prayer, keep your hands clean, that is keep yourself clean from distractions.*

*Psalms 18:13 Who can understand sins? from my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord:*

*Isaiah 52:11 Depart, depart, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing: go out of the midst of her, be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord.*

*Isaiah 66:20 And they shall bring all your brethren out of all nations for a gift to the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and in coaches, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as if the children of Israel should bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.*

*2 Timothy 2:21 If any man therefore shall cleanse himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and profitable to the Lord, prepared unto every good work.*

*Note: prayer prepares you for good works.*

*Matthew 23:25-26 Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean.*

*Note: pray cleans your inner self, in preparation for good works.*

*Mark 7:8 For leaving the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washing of pots and of cups: and many other things you do like to these.*

*Note: the commandment of God is to pray contemplatively. But most of us are tempted by distractions towards the traditions of men.*

*Luke 11:39 And the Lord said to him: Now you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but your inside is full of rapine and iniquity.*

*Note: Rapine: The act of plundering; the seizing and carrying away of things by force; spoliation; pillage; plunder. It is the act of taking distractions instead of letting them go during prayer.*

Pray and ask Jesus to clean and remove your distractions that act like inner dirt, from each moment to each moment during the duration of your prayer.

## **Clearly and perfectly**

Chapter 11, part 4: I am not surprised that carelessly engaging and dwelling with innocent thoughts can easily lead to engaging with deadly thoughts. Your mind and heart could become welded therewith and blinded from paying attention to God within the cloud of unknowing.

*Are you reading St. Nilos of Soza? Read him with care and try to apply his words to your own life. I read here that any idea coming to us in prayer time even a good one, should be rejected at once, because it distracts us from prayer.*

*In Search of True Wisdom, by S. Bolshakoff (Introduction by M. B. Pennington)*

*“Have mercy” is the English rendering of the word “eleison”. When you say the Kyrie Elesion, you are using the Greek words which mean “Lord, have mercy”. Why I want to insist on these words which we use in prayer is that all modern languages words have specialized and narrow meanings as contrasted with ancient languages. Very often we use words of prayer which are extremely rich but we do not notice the depth of what we say, because we take the words for what they mean in our ordinary speech, while they could have deep echoes in our hearts if we only connect them with other things we know. I would give you an example of this which may shock classical scholars because the philology implied is doubtful, but since it is based on a pun made centuries ago by the Greek Spiritual Fathers, who knew their language and were not shy of making a pun, I will take advantage of it too. Most of us use the words “Kyrie Elesion” or “Lord, have mercy” at some moments of our lives. On the whole, these words are an appeal to God for mercy. Now the point at which the classical student may find fault with me and with the Greek Fathers is that some of them derive “elesion” from the same root as the Greek words “olive tree”, “olive”, “olive oil”.*

*Beginning to Pray, by Anthony Bloom*

*Genesis 24:27 Saying: Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not taken away his mercy and truth from my master, and hath brought me the straight way into the house of my master's brother.*

*1 Kings 8:23 And said: Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in heaven above, or on earth beneath: who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that have walked before thee with all their heart.*

*Nehemiah 1:5 And I said: I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, strong, great, and terrible, who keepest covenant and mercy with those that love thee, and keep thy commandments :*

*Psalms 23:5 He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Savior.*

*Psalms 47:10 We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple.*

*Isaiah 30:18 Therefore the Lord waiteth that he may have mercy on you: and therefore shall he be exalted sparing you: because the Lord is the God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.*

*Ezekiel 39:25 Therefore, thus saith the Lord God: Now will I bring back the captivity of Jacob, and will have mercy on all the house of Israel: and I will be jealous for my holy name.*

*Daniel 9:9 But to thee, the Lord our God, mercy and forgiveness, for we have departed from thee:*

*Hosea 1:7 And I will have mercy on the house of Juda, and I will save them by the Lord their God: and I will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen.*

*Matthew 20:30-34 And behold two blind men sitting by the way side, heard that Jesus passed by, and they cried out, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us. And the multitude rebuked them that they should hold their peace. But they cried out the more, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us. And Jesus stood, and called them, and said: What will ye that I do to you? They say to him: Lord, that our eyes be opened. And Jesus having compassion on them, touched their eyes. And immediately they saw, and followed him.*

*Note: Ask Jesus to show you how to pray, and He will open your eyes so that you begin to understand how to pray.*

*Matthew 6:17 But thou, when thou fastest anoint thy head, and wash thy face.*

*Matthew 26:7-8 There came to him a woman having an alabaster box of precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he was at table. And the disciples seeing it, had indignation, saying: To what purpose is this waste?*

*Note: The 'ointment' has a purpose. The apostles did not have an understanding of the purpose of combining 'ointment' and 'head'.*

Contemplative prayer is like the olive oil that has been anointed on your head. The olive oil is a symbol. What could olive oil represent? On a literal basis, it means we are to place oil on our heads for no apparent reason or purpose. On an allegorical level, it could symbolize anything! On a purposive construction, this is a symbol of contemplative prayer. What are the attributes of olive oil? Olive oil is clear and pure - that is, it has no impurities - it is free from impurities. Oil anointed on a person's head is symbolic of how a person should be during prayer. They should experience pure prayer - that is, pray free from impurities - clear from distractions. This is the purpose for combining an 'ointment' with a 'head' - to indicate how we are to pray.

Pray and ask Jesus to remove all distractions that get in the way of clearly and perfectly following the will of God in the present moment.

## ***Focus your love for God***

Chapter 12, part 1: Therefore, remain steadfast in daily labor of love that is contemplative prayer. Persistently and repeatedly focus your love for God into a sharply defined point from within the cloud of unknowing that lies between you and God.

*1 Kings 5:5 Wherefore I purpose to build a temple to the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to David my father, saying: my son, whom I will set upon the throne in thy piece, he shall build a house to my name.*

*Isaiah 1:11 To what purpose do you offer me the multitude of your victims, saith the Lord? I am full, I desire not holocausts of rams, and fat of fatlings, and blood of calves, and lambs, and buck goats.*

*Note: God does not want sacrifices of creatures. He wants sacrifices of all distractions during prayer.*

*Acts 11:23 Who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, rejoiced: and he exhorted them all with purpose of heart to continue in the Lord.*

*Note: That is, to continue praying in your heart.*

*Matthew 6:26 Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they?*

*Note: The birds of the air are not distracted by anything. When you pray, be like the birds of the air that remain undistracted from all concerns and distractions. Be like the birds of the air when you pray.*

*Matthew 6:28 Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin.*

*Note: The lilies of the field are not distracted by anything. They grow and they 'be'. When you pray, be like the lilies of the field that remain undistracted from all concerns. Be like the lilies of the field when you pray.*

*Matthew 12:30 Anyone who does not help me gather is really scattering.*

*Note: During prayer, help Jesus by gathering your focus and avoiding all distractions. If you are not focused during prayer, you are scattered by distractions.*

*Matthew 13:31 A man takes a mustard seed and sows it in his field. It is the smallest of seeds, but when it grows up, it is the biggest of all plants. It becomes a tree. So that birds come and make their nests in its branches.*

*Note: When you pray contemplatively, you become like a mustard seed that grows over time and your faithfulness to contemplative prayer allows you to become useful to those who need your help.*

*Luke 3:5 Every valley shall be filled; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight; and the rough ways plain.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer fills 'every valley' of your inner mind and thereby prevents distractions from filling therein, every proud mountain is brought low (when you pray your pride is brought humble and low). When you pray, the crooked 'distractions' disappear and everything becomes straight. Eventually, the rough ways of distractions become plain and simple prayer when we ask for help.*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of gathering and focusing your love and attention on God, undistracted from all concerns of this world. Pray and ask Jesus to help you gather and focus your love into a point having a size of a mustard seed within your body, which is like a field, so that your love may grow for the benefit of others.

## **Your rightful condition**

Chapter 12, part 2: Shun away from everything that is not God. Do not give up your daily labor of contemplative prayer.

*1 Kings 5:4 But now the Lord my God hath given me rest round about: and there is no adversary nor evil occurrence.*

*Job 27:7 Let my enemy be as the ungodly, and my adversary as the wicked one.*

*Psalms 17:48 O God, who avengest me, and subduest the people under me, my deliverer from my enemies.*

*Psalms 73:10 How long, O God, shall the enemy reproach: is the adversary to provoke thy name for ever?*

*Zechariah 3:1 And the Lord shewed me Jesus the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord: and Satan stood on his right hand to be his adversary.*

*Adversary: one who is turned against another or others with a design to oppose. Someone who offers opposition.*

*Note: It appears the root of this word is 'turned toward'. In other words, an 'adversary' is something that distracts you so that you become 'turned toward' the distraction and therefore you become 'turned away' from contemplative prayer.*

*Luke 18:2-5 Saying: There was a judge in a certain city, who feared not God, nor regarded man. And there was a certain widow in that city, and she came to him, saying: Avenge me of my adversary. And*

he would not for a long time. But afterwards he said within himself: Although I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me, I will avenge her, lest continually coming she weary me.

*Note: Ask God to remove your 'adversaries', that is - your distractions, from your prayer. The Douay Rheims version of the Bible provides the word 'adversary'. Other versions of the Bible provide the word 'opponent'. The root of opponent does not suggest a 'turning away' in the same way as the root of 'adversary'. I think it is very important to have the best possible translation of the Bible (from the original Hebrew and Greek) when attempting to understand prayer (otherwise, you may not reach an understanding about contemplative prayer).*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of daily persistence. Pray and persistently ask Jesus to restore your rightful condition; that is turned away from all distractions during prayer.

## **Root of sin**

Chapter 12, part 3: Only contemplative prayer can destroy the ground and root of sin.

*Psalms 1:2 But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night.*

*Psalms 62:7 If I have remembered thee upon my bed, I will meditate on thee in the morning.*

*2 Kings 4:4 And go in, and shut thy door, when thou art within, and thy sons: and pour out thereof into all those vessels: and when they are full take them away.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is like emptying of vessels. However, if those vessels remain full, they are removed because they are not acceptable (that is, their prayer is not acceptable because it is not empty of all distractions).*

*Matthew 6:6 But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.*

*Note: Praying successfully is like shutting the door to all distractions. Shut them all out.*

*Psalms 78:1 A psalm for Asaph. O God, the heathens are come into thy inheritance, they have defiled thy holy temple: they have made Jerusalem as a place to keep fruit.*

*Note: Do not be like the heathens when you pray. When you pray, do not 'keep the fruit' (do not attach to distractions), rather you should 'turn away' from the 'fruit'. Read Genesis 2:17 and understand what is God's purpose. Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death. When you pray, do not eat your distractions, rather turn away from all distractions (a type of knowledge) and remain fasting during prayer.*

*Matthew 6:7 And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard.*

*Note: pray is silence. The words are only a distraction. In the fire, all things are burned, all distractions are burned. All words are burned.*

*Daniel 9:17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the supplication of thy servant, and his prayers: and shew thy face upon thy sanctuary which is desolate, for thy own sake.*

*Note: When you pray, become like the sanctuary which is desolate.*

*Matthew 14:23 And having dismissed the multitude, he went into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening, he was there alone.*

*Note: When you pray, pray alone and away (that is turned away) from all distractions.*

*Exodus 17:7 And he called the name of that place Temptation, because the chiding of the children of Israel, and for that they tempted the Lord, saying: Is the Lord amongst us or not?*

*Note: The followers of God did not understand prayer. They expected to sense God during prayer and are thus confused.*

*Matthew 26:41 Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak.*

*Note: Ask Jesus for strength during prayer. Have a strong and willing faith that the Lord is amongst*

us, even though we do not sense His presence. Do not become weak and being to doubt during prayer.

*Exodus 5:1 After these things Moses and Aaron went in, and said to Pharaoh: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Let my people go that they may sacrifice to me in the desert.*

*Note: Praying is like making sacrifices to God in the desert. Sacrifice all distractions during prayer.*

*Luke 5:16 And he retired into the desert, and prayed.*

*Note: The desert is a place deserted of all things, all distractions. Pray within your desert at home.*

*Job 6:24 Teach me, and I will hold my peace: and if I have been ignorant in any thing, instruct me.*

*Job 27:11 I will teach you by the hand of God, what the Almighty hath, and I will not conceal it.*

*Luke 11:1 And it came to pass, that as he was in a certain place praying, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him: Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.*

*Note: Ask Jesus to show you how to pray. Read his words and ask Him to help you find their purpose or meaning.*

*Psalms 17:30 For by thee I shall be delivered from temptation; and through my God I shall go over a wall.*

*1 Corinthians 10:13 Let no temptation take hold on you, but such as is human. And God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.*

*Luke 22:40 And when he was come to the place, he said to them: Pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

*Note: "Temptation" is distraction from prayer. Temptation is something that tempts or entices you to turn away from your prayer.*

*Luke 22:46 And he said to them: Why sleep you? arise, pray, lest you enter into temptation.*

*Note: 'Sleep' is a distraction during prayer. Have you ever fallen asleep during prayer? Been there, done that!*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of healing. Pray and ask Jesus to heal you of your distractions during your prayer.

## **A daily cross**

Chapter 12, part 4: Resist feeding your thoughts during your contemplative prayer. Rise early to pray and keep awake. Do not sleep too much or wear yourself out too much; keep a steady and balanced life.

*From the Douay-Rheims: Genesis 40:19 After which Pharaoh will take thy hand from thee, and hang thee on a cross, and the birds shall tear thy flesh.*

*Note: Here is another example of words found in the Douay-Rheims version that cannot be found in other versions. Look at the use of the word 'cross'. No other version of the Bible uses 'cross' in this passage (they use 'tree'). What do the birds do? What is their attribute? The birds remove flesh, so that nothing remains. This passage describes contemplative prayer - remove all things until nothing remains. Examine the following passages from other versions of the Bible and you'll see that the Douay-Rheims provides something extra to ponder.*

*From the New American Standard: Genesis 40:19 ... within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh off you.*

*From the American Standard: Genesis 40:19 ... within yet three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.*

*From the Basic English Bible: Genesis 40:19 After three days Pharaoh will take you out of prison, hanging you on a tree, so that your flesh will be food for birds.*

*From the Darby Version: Genesis 40:19 In yet three days will Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and hang thee on a tree; and the birds will eat thy flesh from off thee.*

*From the King James Version: Genesis 40:19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.*

*From the Webster's Bible: Genesis 40:19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.*

*From the World English Bible: Genesis 40:19 Within three more days, Pharaoh will lift up your head from off you, and will hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from off you.*

*The Douay-Rheims version brings helpful meaning for understanding prayer. The following passages are all from the Douay-Rheims:*

*Genesis 3:24 And he drove out Man; and he set the Cherubim, and the flame of the flashing sword, toward the east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

*Note: the tree of life is the cross.*

*Genesis 40:19 After which Pharaoh will take thy hand from thee, and hang thee on a cross, and the birds shall tear thy flesh.*

*Note: prayer is removing everything (all distractions) till nothing remains.*

*Jeremiah 3:13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against Jehovah thy God, and hast turned thy ways hither and thither to the strangers under every green tree; and ye have not hearkened to my voice, saith Jehovah.*

*Note: the 'green' trees indicates trees that have not detached themselves from their leaves. Prayer is like a tree detaching itself from all its leaves.*

*Jeremiah 8:13 I will utterly take them away, saith Jehovah: there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree; and the leaf is faded: and I will give them up to those that shall pass over them.*

*Note: prayer is like a naked vine, a naked fig tree. All of the 'leaves' (that is, distractions) have faded away during prayer.*

*Daniel 4:14 he cried aloud, and said thus: Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the birds from its branches.*

*Note: the tree is made naked to demonstrate prayer.*

*Joel 1:7 He hath made my vine a desolation, and barked my fig-tree; he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away: its branches are made white.*

*Note: prayer is like a desolate vine.*

*Joel 1:12 The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate-tree, the palm also and the apple-tree; all the trees of the field are withered, yea, joy is withered away from the children of men.*

*Note: prayer is like a withered tree.*

*Matthew 10:38 And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me.*

*Note: Follow the way of the cross - which is contemplative prayer.*

*Mark 8:34 And calling the multitude together with his disciples, he said to them: If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

*Note: Deny yourself is to deny all of your distractions during prayer.*

*Luke 9:23 And he said to all: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

*Note: Follow the way of the cross daily. Follow the way of the naked tree daily.*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of the daily cross. Pray and ask Jesus to help you take up your daily cross of contemplative prayer.

## **Our Father in heaven**

Chapter 12, part 5: To prevent distraction, you would think that by removing your eyes, tongue, ears, nose, arms, and legs, you would be prevented from being distracted. But this is not correct thinking because even if you did not have eyes, ears, etc., you still would be tested with temptation that arises from your distractions. To prepare the way for a better life here and now, do not engage with distractions during prayer.

*So come! With heads erect, let us advance, ignoring everything, and remaining always satisfied with God and with all that he makes us do and accomplishes within us. Let us take good care not to get foolishly involved in all those fears and doubts which, like paths leading nowhere, only tempt us to wander on and on until we are hopelessly lost. Let us leap over this maze of self-love instead of trying to explore its endless alleys.*

*Abandonment to Divine Providence, Jean-Pierre de Caussade*

*The following passages are from the Douay-Rheims version of the Bible:*

**Matthew 6:9-13** *Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our supersubstantial bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen.*

### **Matthew 6:9 Our Father who art in heaven.**

*Exodus 10:21 And the Lord said to Moses: Stretch out thy hand towards heaven: and may there be darkness upon the land of Egypt, so thick that it may be felt.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is like darkness stretching out upon the land, the darkness so thick it may be felt - its so dark that there are no distractions can be felt or sensed.*

*Exodus 24:10 And they saw the God of Israel: and under his feet as it were a work of sapphire stone, and as the heaven, when clear.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is like a clear sapphire, that is 'clear' and free of all distractions.*

*Nehemiah 1:4 And when I had heard these words, I sat down, and wept, and mourned for many days: and I fasted, and prayed before the face of the God of heaven.*

*Note: prayer is like fasting, that is - fasting from all distractions.*

### **Matthew 6:9 Hallowed be thy name.**

*Exodus 15:3 The Lord is as a man of war, Almighty is his name.*

*Note: A man at war with distractions during prayer.*

*Exodus 34:5 And when the Lord was come down in a cloud, Moses stood with him, calling upon the name of the Lord.*

*Note: When you pray contemplatively, call on the name of the Lord.*

*What is "hallow"? To make or set apart as holy. To respect or honor greatly; revere. To make holy; to set apart for holy or religious use; to consecrate; to treat or keep as sacred; to reverence. worthy of religious veneration; "the sacred name of Jesus".*

*Leviticus 21:6 They shall be holy to their God, and shall not profane his name: for they offer the burnt offering of the Lord, and the bread of their God, and therefore they shall be holy.*

*Note: what is being burnt? All distractions are burned during prayer.*

*1 Chronicles 16:29 Give to the Lord glory to his name, bring up sacrifice, and come ye in his sight: and adore the Lord in holy becomingness.*

*Note: prayer is bringing up sacrifice, that is - sacrifice of all distractions.*

**Matthew 6:10 Thy kingdom come.**

*Exodus 19:6 And you shall be to me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation.*

*Note: prayer is like a kingdom, that is - something (a domain) in which God is dominant and distractions are not dominant.*

*What is "Kingdom"? A political or territorial unit ruled by a sovereign. The eternal spiritual sovereignty of God or Christ. The realm of this sovereignty. the kingdom of the imagination. One of the three main divisions (animal, vegetable, and mineral) into which natural organisms and objects are classified. A realm or sphere in which one thing is dominant. A domain in which something is dominant.*

**Matthew 6:10 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

*Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth.*

*Note: During prayer, do not make any distractions a graven thing.*

*What is "graven"? Something that requires serious thought. To stamp or impress deeply; fix permanently. To impress deeply (on the mind); to fix indelibly. To carve out or give shape to, by cutting with a chisel; to sculpture; as, to grave an image. To carve or cut, as letters or figures, on some hard substance; to engrave. sculptured representations.*

**Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our supersubstantial bread.**

*Supersubstantial: More than substantial; spiritual. The heavenly supersubstantial bread.*

*Bread: A staple food made from flour or meal mixed with other dry and liquid ingredients, usually combined with a leavening agent, and kneaded, shaped into loaves, and baked. Food in general, regarded as necessary for sustaining life. Something that nourishes; sustenance. Means of support; livelihood: earn one's bread.*

*Exodus 3:1 Now Moses fed the sheep of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Madian: and he drove the flock to the inner parts of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, Horeb.*

*Note: go into the inner parts of the dried up desert during prayer. Pray is like a dried up desert - in which there are no distractions.*

*What is "Horeb"? It is a desert or mountain of the dried-up ground, a general name for the whole mountain range of which Sinai was one of the summits (Ex. 3:1; 17:6; 33:6; Ps. 106:19, etc.). The modern name of the whole range is Jebel Musa. It is a huge mountain block, about 2 miles long by about 1 in breadth.*

*Exodus 5:1 After these things Moses and Aaron went in, and said to Pharaoh: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Let my people go that they may sacrifice to me in the desert.*

*Note: prayer is making sacrifices in the desert; that is - sacrificing all distractions.*

*Exodus 16:4 And the Lord said to Moses: Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you: let the people go forth, and gather what is sufficient for every day: that I may prove them whether they will walk in my law, or not.*

*Note: prayer is the test in the desert - the moment of truth: do you pray in a distractionless state of mind or not?*

**Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.**

*Exodus 32:31 And returning to the Lord, he said: I beseech thee: this people hath sinned a heinous sin, and they have made to themselves gods of gold: either forgive them this trespass...*

*Note: Distractions are like the gods of gold.*

*Isaiah 58:3 Why have we fasted, and thou hast not regarded: have we humbled our souls, and thou hast not taken notice? Behold in the day of your fast your own will is found, and you exact of all your debtors.*

**Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation.**

*Exodus 17:7 And he called the name of that place Temptation, because the chiding of the children of Israel, and for that they tempted the Lord, saying: Is the Lord amongst us or not?*

*Note: During prayer, have faith that God is present.*

**Matthew 6:13 But deliver us from evil.**

*Exodus 18:4 For the God of my father, said he, is my helper, and hath delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.*

*Note: Distractions are like the sword of Pharaoh.*

*Proverbs 20:22 Say not: I will return evil: wait for the Lord and he will deliver thee.*

*Matthew 6:9 - 13 Thus therefore shall you pray:*

*Our Father who art in heaven,*

*hallowed be thy name.*

*Thy kingdom come.*

*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our supersubstantial bread.*

*And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation.*

*But deliver us from evil. Amen.*

I think it is peculiar that for my entire life that when I said the Lord's prayer, I always said "give us this day our daily bread", and never gave it any thought. I mindlessly recited these words and did not attempt to fully understand the purpose or meaning behind them. The Bible that I had always referred to stated "give us this day our daily bread". But, the Douay-Rheims version states "give us this day our supersubstantial bread". What a difference in meaning packed in so few words! The Douay-Rheims suggests that this is not literally bread that is to be received daily. This is a special bread. A spiritual bread that is found only in the desert of contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer is the prayer of the desert. What is the attribute of a desert? It is a place barren and dry (a place having nothing that exists). When you exist in a desert, there is nothing to distract you because it is a barren, dry place. This is contemplative prayer. Pray in the desert and receive your daily spiritual bread - the bread that gives you spiritual nourishment and sustenance to help you face your task of helping the less fortunate.

Pray and ask Jesus to help during the daily hard testing, that is - by helping you pay no attention to temptation from distractions during prayer. Say the prayer that Jesus taught us - the 'Our Father' - before starting your contemplative prayer.

**Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.**

... we use Your Holy Name during prayer as a sign of our love for You. Your Holy Name helps us deal with distractions during prayer;

**Thy kingdom come.**

... may we realize fidelity and perfection during prayer having no distractions;

**Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

... may we follow your will during prayer and as we walk on earth, that is to pray contemplatively and then help the less fortunate;

**Give us this day our supersubstantial bread.**

... so that we do not become distracted with the concerns of what we need for today during prayer; feed us during prayer so that we may in turn help the less fortunate (our neighbors);

**And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.**

... so that we do not become distracted by the wrongs done to us and the wrongs done by us to others during prayer;

**And lead us not into temptation.**

... do not bring us to hard testing; have mercy and help us in our resolve to avoid tempting distractions during prayer;

**But deliver us from evil. Amen.**

... prevent the evil one from feeding us distractions during prayer.

***Give and take***

Chapter 12, part 6: What benefit would you obtain by engaging in active spiritual activities, such as: weeping for your sins, pondering the Passion of Christ, or pondering of heavenly bliss? No doubt, active spiritual activities provide some measure of benefit for you. However, any benefit derived from active spiritual activities would be significantly improved by a large measure if contemplative prayer is practiced daily.

*Job 12:6 The tabernacles of robbers abound, and they provoke God boldly; whereas it is he that hath given all into their hands.*

*Job 30:15 I am brought to nothing: as a wind thou hast taken away my desire: and my prosperity hath passed away like a cloud.*

*Isaiah 42:6 I the Lord have called thee in justice, and taken thee by the hand, and preserved thee. And I have given thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles:*

*Matthew 25:30 For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The wisdom of Jesus is a light to show you the path to contemplative prayer. But, to hear the message, you must understand the parable. The person who has something is the person who prays, even the little he prays is something (its better than no prayer at all). The person who has nothing is the person who does not pray - he has no prayer life. The person who does not pray contemplatively is

judged to be useless. For persons who spend time at contemplative prayer, even more benefit will be given to them. For persons who spend no time for contemplative prayer - what little benefit they already have will be taken away because they are not prepared for the call to prayer, which is to resist the temptation from distractions. To prepare the contemplative way, ask for divine assistance before your prayer. Contemplative prayer appears to be prayer that requires 'less' (that is less or more preferably no attention to distraction), in which 'more' benefit is provided to those that pray contemplatively. God wants you to experience the interior darkness as prayer. If you do not experience the interior darkness, then you are cast out into the exterior darkness (that is, your life becomes bleak).

During prayer, be spiritually poor by turning from all distractions; and, do not be rich with distractions.

### ***The best part of Mary***

Chapter 12, part 7: Contemplative prayer by itself is the best part of Mary, even if you use few active spiritual activities which are Martha's part. The work of Martha provides few spiritual benefits. The work of Mary destroys the ground and root of sin that brings spiritual perfection, which is free from being commingled your self-willed thoughts or self-centered notions. From the root of sin sprout distracting thoughts and notions that can tempt you so that you do not see and follow the will of God. Without contemplative prayer, virtues eventually become commingled with crooked intent (that is, your self will), which leads to spiritual imperfection.

*Luke 10:41 Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her.*

*Matthew 4:1-2 Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. After spending 40 days and nights without food, Jesus was hungry.*

Contemplative prayer is the right thing, and Jesus shows us how to pray. Contemplative prayer brings you into an inner desert in which temptations come when you may become hungry for interactions with those distractions. Resist the distractions during prayer. Pray and ask Jesus to teach you how to pray rightly from your inner silent hunger within you. Ask Jesus to teach you how to remove sprouting distractions that tempt you to turn your focused attention away from God. Attention to God is the one thing needed during prayer.

### ***The commandment***

Chapter 12, part 8: Virtue is given to you from God so that you can respond properly to God for Himself. God is the creator of virtue. If a man allows this virtue to become stirred up with any type of distraction, that virtue becomes imperfect. Be meek and humble to God's will and be charitable to others. For those that have these two virtues need nothing more because they have everything perfectly.

*Deuteronomy 6:5 Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.*

*Deuteronomy 7:9 And thou shalt know that the Lord thy God, he is a strong and faithful God, keeping his covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments, unto a thousand generations.*

*Deuteronomy 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways, and love him, and serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.*

*Deuteronomy 30:6 The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed: that then mayst love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayst live.*

*Joshua 23:11 This only take care of with all diligence, that you love the Lord your God.*

*1 Chronicles 29:17 I know my God that thou provest hearts, and lovest simplicity, wherefore I also in the simplicity of my heart, have joyfully offered all these things: and I have seen with great joy thy people, which are here present, offer thee their offerings.*

*Leviticus 19:18 Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens. Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself. I am the Lord.*

*Zechariah 8:17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his friend: and love not a false oath: for all these are the things that I hate, saith the Lord.*

*Matthew 22:37 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Everything depends on these two commandments.*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of pure love. When you pray, experience love for God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength. When you do this, it is implied that there will be no room for experiencing distractions during prayer because everything is taken up in love. If you love your neighbor as you love yourself, there will be no possibility for becoming distracted during prayer; that is, distractions of envy, hatred, and the like for your neighbor will not appear during prayer.

Pray and ask Jesus to teach you how to achieve and abide in pure love - with a simple-minded and perfect attention - to God during daily contemplative prayer. Turn away from all strange distractions. Ask Jesus to teach you how to abide with the commandment give unconditional love to God and to all people.

## **Humility**

Chapter 13, part 1: Regarding the virtue of meekness (humility):

- (1) it is imperfect when your mind mingles with any distractions during prayer; and
- (2) it is perfect when your mind mingles with no thing during prayer, for which only God can be the cause of perfect humility.

*Isaiah 66:2 My hand made all these things, and all these things were made, saith the Lord. But to whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?*

*Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

*Psalms 36:11 But the meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace.*

*Psalms 149:4 For the Lord is well pleased with his people: and he will exalt the meek unto salvation.*

*Matthew 5:4 Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.*

*Psalms 50:12 Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels.*

*Proverbs 20:9 Who can say: My heart is clean, I am pure from sin?*

*Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of those that are poor, humble and pure. What does it mean to be poor? What does it mean to be little? A poor spirit as opposed to a rich spirit? Poor can be having little or no wealth and few or no possessions. Spirit can be the vital principle or animating force within living beings. If a rich spirit signifies a richly animated person (one possessed by many distractions), then a poor spirit is detached from these animated distractions. During prayer, be poor of spirit - that is, be detached from all distractions and avoid having an animated imagination during prayer.

What does it mean to be meek and to inherit? Meek: Showing patience and humility; gentle. Easily imposed on; submissive. Mild of temper; not easily provoked or irritated; patient under injuries; not vain, or haughty, or resentful; forbearing; submissive. Inherit: to receive (property or a title, for example) from an ancestor by legal succession or will; to receive by bequest or as a legacy. During prayer, do not become provoked by distractions, and you shall inherit your rightful place in the land.

What is a heart? What is clean? Heart: the vital center and source of one's being, emotions, and sensibilities; the central or innermost physical part of a place or region. Clean: free from dirt, stain, or impurities; unsoiled. During prayer, remain unsoiled by not dwelling with any distractions.

Pray and ask Jesus to teach you how to pray in poverty, humility, and purity so that no distractions mingle with you, so that your attention stays purely focused on God during the duration of your contemplative prayer.

## ***Who are you?***

Chapter 13, part 2: A person experiences humility when they become consciously aware of who they really are. Strive to become increasingly humble until you reach a point where you are humble enough to not pay any attention to distractions during prayer.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*1 Samuel 2:7 The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he humbleth and he exalteth.*

*2 Samuel 22:28 And the poor people thou wilt save: and with thy eyes thou wilt humble the haughty.*

*Job 22:29 For he that hath been humbled, shall be in glory: and he that shall bow down his eyes, he shall be saved.*

*Psalms 33:19 The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart: and he will save the humble of spirit.*

*Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the High and the Eminent that inhabiteth eternity: and his name is Holy, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

*Luke 14:11 Because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.*

Pray and ask Jesus to help you understand humility during prayer. Jesus will help you if you ask. Be humble by not becoming involved in distractions or to knowing anything during prayer. God will exalt you if you remain humble during prayer.

## **Understanding humility**

Chapter 13, part 3: To understand humility, view it like a coin that has two sides:

Side #1 is a type of humility that is an experience of your inability to turn from your distractions, in which you end up tempting yourself towards sin. This humbling experience of your inability will be present to you throughout your prayer here on earth; and (continued tomorrow).

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Proverbs 13:13 Whosoever speaketh ill of any thing, bindeth himself for the time to come: but he that feareth the commandment, shall dwell in peace. Deceitful souls go astray in sins: the just are merciful, and shew mercy.*

*Note: the binding refers to becoming attached to distractions (such as the stuff you speak ill about). But if you fear the commandment to remain detached from all knowledge of all things during prayer, you shall dwell in peace.*

*Matthew 5:28 But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

*Note: Jesus teaches us not to become distracted during prayer.*

*Matthew 6:7 And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard.*

*Note: your prayers should have no speech.*

*Matthew 9:4 And Jesus seeing their thoughts, said: Why do you think evil in your hearts?*

*Note: Jesus tells us not to think or evil (which is an attachment) during prayer.*

*Matthew 16:8 And Jesus knowing it, said: Why do you think within yourselves, O ye of little faith, for that you have no bread?*

*Note: Do not think or know anything within yourself during prayer.*

*Mark 2:6 And there were some of the scribes sitting there, and thinking in their hearts:*

*Note: when praying, do not think in your heart (it is a distraction).*

*Luke 12:40 Be you then also ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.*

*Note: when you think 'not' during prayer, Jesus will come. Think 'not' or 'do not think of anything because they are distractions'.*

*Luke 12:51 Think ye, that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, no; but separation.*

*Note: separation from distractions during prayer.*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of work that never finishes. Pray and ask Jesus to help you to continue your contemplative prayer faithfully each and every day. If you know who you really are, is it

possible to ever stop praying every day? How can a professional musician play sheet music? By measuring and using the silence, which is a "no thing" that is spaced between each musical note, in which the music can become expressible through an instrument. By not having regularly spaced moments of silence, no music can be interpreted and expressed in a meaningful way. Each sheet of music is distinctive when compared to what was ever written in the past and to what may be written in the future. No two sheets of music are the same, much in the same way that human DNA distinctively identifies every person. A blank page expresses nothing meaningful. Words on a page becomes an expression surrounded by empty space. The writing takes on a meaning because of the empty, surrounding space surrounding each note. No empty space means that there is no meaningful expression and is of no real value to others. Will you consent to sitting still regularly or daily so that you can experience your moments of silence so that the Master Musician can express His music in its fullness through the instrument (that is you) during daily activity? Would it be satisfactory or beneficial to listeners to allow music to be partially interpreted and performed?

Contemplative prayer comprises moments of silence disposed between moments of action so that your life comes to a fullness like music comprising silence disposed between notes so that the music can be read and played with full meaning and real expression. You could be like sheet music if you consent to letting God express the true you, like the way a musician expresses sheet music as it is written before it is played. Who are you? What are you like? Can music be partially expressed in a satisfying manner to those that are listening and experiencing the music? Would a life that is partially expressed be satisfactory or beneficial to others that are connected with that life? Would it be satisfactory or meaningful to partially read a book by reading only the letters and avoiding the spaces disposed between the letters? Would it be satisfactory or meaningful to anyone else to partially write a novel as a long string of letters having no spaces or pauses placed between the letters? Would it be a satisfying and full experience to partially walk through a forest by ignoring the moments of silence? Is it possible to dance without taking moments to pause between dance steps? Each of these activities of life requires moments of silence - a "no thing" - before the next movement can meaningfully and newly begin in which your true self becomes expressed in its fullest sense. Would you consent to becoming still for some moments so that you can follow the dance of life to the fullest and trust that your dance Partner lead the way?

Contemplative prayer is like dancing, in which you pay attention to your Partner's lead during pauses that occur between dance steps and accepting and trusting His cue about which direction the next step takes and following through to the next pause before beginning the next expression.

"I am" is God's expression or out-pressing of your true inner self - as you really are - in the present moment if you humbly consent to an experience of this real expression moment by moment. Otherwise, what you may be experiencing is you expressing your false self that is not a true

expression of you as God may have intended to be expressed. God allows us to freely choose to consent to His true expression of us for the benefit of others around us. "I Am" is God as He is in the past, present and future.

Does contemplative prayer ever finish? If you consent to experiencing your true expression moment by moment for the benefit us and of others around us, why would you finish experiencing a meaningful, full and true expression of the real you by avoiding experiencing moments of regular stillness or "no-thing" between moments of life's active movements?

### ***God's over abundant love for you***

Chapter 13, part 4: (continues from above) Side#2 is another type of humility is an experience of God's over abundant love. What would it be like to experience or become aware of His love? His love can quake nature, turn wise men into fools, and blind angles and saints.

*Nahum 1:5 The mountains tremble at him, and the hills are made desolate: and the earth hath quaked at his presence, and the world, and all that dwell therein.*

*Matthew 27:50-51 And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent.*

The cross is the ultimate symbol of contemplative prayer. God is silently present when you pray contemplatively. Contemplative prayer is consenting to letting God express your true inner self through silence. Pray and humbly consent to interleaved moments of silence (prayer) and activity.

### ***Happy are those who have no doubts***

Chapter 13, part 5: Since God's love can overshadow you, He shows mercy by limiting your experiential awareness of Himself by matching your level of ability with what He allows you to experience during prayer. Otherwise, I dare not think what might happen to you should this be otherwise!

*Psalms 90:4 He will overshadow thee with his shoulders: and under his wings thou shalt trust.*

*Wisdom of Solomon 19:7 For a cloud overshadowed their camp, and where water was before, dry land appeared, and in the Red Sea a way without hindrance, and out of the great deep a springing field:*

*Isaiah 60:19 Thou shalt no more have the sun for thy light by day, neither shall the brightness of the moon enlighten thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee for an everlasting light, and thy God for thy glory.*

*Matthew 17:5 And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.*

*Luke 9:34 And as he spoke these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them; and they were afraid, when they entered into the cloud.*

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting.*

*John 4:14 But the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting.*

Prayer is the way without hindrance from distractions, in which from within your inner great deepness there is a springing field of everlasting water. Pray and find this everlasting water within you. God is within you but it is beyond our ability to comprehend Him. God expresses our true selves in the present moment if we consent to experiencing daily stillness. During this silence, remain ignorant of what goes on and be still; be as ignorant as a child that is ignorant of worldly things. Do not assert your will to think. Have no distractions because during your prayer it is beyond your intellectual comprehension and matters are best left in the hands of God during prayer. Become like the 'wise men' that turn into 'fools' that are not capable of thinking during your prayer. Remember that: "I am a jealous God, and I shall have no other gods before Me." During your prayer, place 'no gods' or 'no distractions' before you. If you pay attention to distractions during prayer, it is like having other 'gods' before you. Consider the following riddle or parable: Those who understand it do not understand it, and those who do not understand it understand it. Those that have ears, let them truly hear this Holy Paradox!

1) Those who understand it (those who possibly think they understand correct prayer);

2) do not understand it (they have no real clue as to the reality of real prayer, and their life suffers and they express no real meaning or value to themselves and to others that they come in contact with);

3) and those who do not understand it (those that remain 'ignorant like a child' in which they become free from all distractions, concerns and thoughts during prayer);

4) understand it. (they really understand the real inner condition needed for silent prayer in which their life becomes expressed as meaningful and valuable to themselves and for the benefit of others).

Consider this: Matthew 19:30 And many that are first, shall be last: and the last shall be first.

1) many that are first (those who possibly think they understand prayer);

2) shall be last, (they have no clue as to the reality of real prayer and will suffer as a result);

3) and the last (those that remain 'ignorant like a child' during prayer and put themselves in a humble position during prayer);

4) shall be first (they really understand the real inner condition for prayer, and gain a meaningful life, basically it is like they inherit the world for being humble during prayer).

What is beyond our intellectual comprehension (adhering to distractions during contemplative silence) is best left in the hands of God. Release your distractions to God. In the final analysis, the simple way of praying works best! If you accept this, you are as humble in intelligence as a child during prayer.

What is required is not your thoughts, your demands, your self-centered ideas, your intelligence, your distractions during prayer. What is needed is for you to be still and wait for God to come and meet you in your stillness. Be still; your intelligence will become fully expressed in your actions after prayer.

Trust God to express this intelligence from within you. Therefore, when you face distractions during

prayer, try this prayer phrase: "No thing, no thought, no sound, no meaning, no sight, no feeling", which may help you to become still and wait patiently during your silent prayer.

## **Perfect humility**

Chapter 13, part 6: The second side of the coin of humility is called perfect humility because it lasts forever, after you consent to waiting for God to express or out-press your true self through His will along every moment of your life. The first side of the coin of humility is called imperfect humility in that you decide to continue living by expressing your false self or self-will.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Deuteronomy 31:18 But I will hide, and cover my face in that day, for all the evils which they have done, because they have followed strange gods.*

*Job 3:23 To a man whose way is hidden, and God hath surrounded him with darkness?*

*Isaiah 45:3 And I will give thee hidden treasures, and the concealed riches of secret places: that thou mayest know that I am the Lord who call thee by thy name, the God of Israel.*

*Isaiah 45:15 Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel the savior.*

*Daniel 2:47 And the king spoke to Daniel, and said: Verily your God is the God of gods, and Lord of kings, and a revealer of hidden things: seeing thou couldst discover this secret.*

*1 Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory*

*Matthew 11:25 - 26 At that time Jesus answered and said: I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones. Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight.*

*Hosea 10:1 Israel a vine full of branches, the fruit is agreeable to it: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath multiplied altars, according to the plenty of his land he hath abounded with idols.*

*Joel 1:7 He hath laid my vineyard waste, and hath peeled off the bark of my fig tree: he hath stripped it bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.*

*John 15:1-2 I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, so that it will be clean and bear fruit.*

*John 20:22 Then Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

Chapter 13 of the 'Cloud' is an essential chapter that must be completely understood. It contains the key to the gate that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven that exists within you. That is why I write so much about this chapter so that you may completely understand how to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This is your lucky chapter. Contemplative prayer is the prayer that allows your true self to become expressed, if you consent. Consent and ask God for patience to wait in a simple unknown silence that goes beyond your ability to understand so that He can fully express your true self during your activities for the benefit of your neighbors. Ask God show you what He has hidden from those who choose to remain attached to their distractions during prayer. He is very generous with people who consent to being His children who are simple and have 'no distractions, no thing' during their prayers.

Here is a parable for the children of God: Truly truly, I say unto you, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer that uses fire to raze his field, in which everything is burned to the ground, and this prepares the field for a new world to evolve. Verily verily, I say unto you, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a gardener that breaks off every branch in on a vine that does not bear fruit, so that the vine will be clean and bear fruit. Those that have ears, let them hear. Those that have eyes, let them see.

If your prayer is not clean of distractions (attached to old branches), then you cannot bear fruit. The Kingdom of God is within you and it is like a gate that remains locked up, in which passage through this gate is only permitted by using a key named 'humility'. To use this key, you must consent to becoming humble of mind so that you are not distracted by attachments. Who are you? Are you the word of God that waits in silence for Him to come and express your true self so that 'fruit' comes out of you for the benefit of others? Evidence of your silent prayer for God becomes factual by the quantity of fruit that becomes expressed from you during your active moments. This fruit is available for unconditional use and benefit by those who need it. Pray. Ask Jesus for the Holy Spirit, which is like a Holy Fire, to descend within the inner field of your mind like a fire that will burn and raze every distraction to the ground so that the expression of your true self come out in the form of a living fruit for the benefit of others. Pray contemplatively twice a day, morning and evening, for 20 to 30 minutes, every day. Use the key named 'humility' to open the locked gate to the Kingdom of Heaven within you.

## **A subtle sweetness**

Chapter 13, part 7: With much help and grace from God, He may eventually grant you a sudden and perfect experience of distractionless prayer. This will be like walking in a desert in which you are completely isolated from all tempting distractions, regardless of your natural ability to completely turn from your distractions during prayer. With help from God, it is possible to have this experience.

*Genesis 2:15 & Genesis 2:25 Then the Lord placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it. ... the man (Adam) and the woman (Eve) were both naked, but they were not embarrassed.*

*Note: cultivate and guard your prayer.*

*Genesis 3: 7-10 ... so they sewed fig leaves together and covered themselves. ... and they hid from Him among the trees ... "I was afraid and hid from you because I was naked."*

*Note: remain naked during prayer; that is do not cover yourself with layers and layers of distractions.*

*Genesis 3:23-24 So the Lord God sent them out of the Garden of Eden and made them cultivate the soil ... Then at the east side of the garden He put living creatures and a flaming sword which turned in all directions. This was to keep anyone from coming near the tree that gives life.*

*Note: use the flaming sword to keep away all distractions during prayer.*

*Exodus 3:2 There the angle of the Lord appeared to him (Moses) as a flame coming from the middle of a bush.*

*Note: use the flame to burn all distractions during prayer.*

*Exodus 19:9-10 & 19:18 The Lord said to Moses, "I will come to you in a thick cloud." ... "Go tell the people to purify themselves ..." ... All of Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord had*

*come down on it in a fire.*

*Note: purify yourself of all distractions during prayer.*

*Exodus 20:21 Moses went near the dark cloud where God was.*

*Note: in a dark cloud, you cannot sense anything, which is what is supposed to happen to you during prayer.*

*Psalms 1:3 They are like trees that grow beside a stream, that bear fruit at the right time.*

*Note: When you pray, you are the tree that grows beside a stream of everlasting water which comes from within you.*

*Psalms 23:3-4 He guides me in the right paths as He has promised. Even though I go through deepest darkness.*

*Note: To pray contemplatively is to go through the deepest darkness.*

*Jonah 3: 4-6 Jonah started through the city ... "In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed!" ... So they decided that everyone should fast ... and they had repented. ... and sat down in the ashes.*

*Note: to pray is to sit in ashes, the ashes are burned distractions which were burned by the flame.*

*Sirach 3:21 Don't try to understand things that are too hard for you or investigate matters beyond your power to know.*

*Note: do not use your head during prayer.*

*2 Maccabees 14:16 "Take this holy sword, a gift from God, with which you will strike down your 'adversaries'.*

*Note: use the sword to strike down all distractions during prayer.*

*Mark 8:24 Yes, I can see people, but they look like trees walking around.*

*Note: you are like a tree.*

*Mark 13:28 Let the fig tree teach you a lesson ...*

*Note: the fig tree produces fig leaves. Do not use them to cover yourself during prayer. Rather, the fig tree releases its leaves to expose its nakedness. This is how you pray, by exposing your nakedness to God. Do not cover yourself with leaves of distractions during prayer.*

*Luke 4:35 & 6:44 & 13:9 Be quiet and come out ... Every tree is known by the fruit it bears; you do not pick figs from thorn bushes or gather grapes from bramble bushes. ... Then if the tree bears fruit next year, so much the better; if not, then you can have it cut down.*

*Note: you are to pray and bear fruit.*

*John 4:10 & 14, 7:38 ... and he would give you life-giving water. ... The water I give them will become in them a spring which will provide them life-giving water and give them everlasting life. ... Streams of life-giving water will pour out from his side.*

*John 11:11 Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I will go and wake him up.*

Many more specific references may be cited from the Bible. These cited references are sufficient enough to back up what is about to be explicitly revealed for you. This description should be more free from ambiguity in that it more sufficiently defines contemplative prayer and why we should be praying this way. How to pray contemplatively will be more fully revealed for you. The following will describe something you already know deep down within you. You already know this material but for some paradoxical reason (which is beyond our understanding) a vast majority of Christians do not really 'know' this prayer and know why we are meant to pray this way. An ironic mystery.

Consider what happens to a tree called a 'maple leaf' tree, which is sometimes referred to as a 'sugar maple' tree, during the different seasons of the year. It is interesting to note that a maple leaf looks like a fig leaf in that they are both broad and wide leaves. In the summer season, a maple leaf tree is so choked with leaves that you cannot see through to the other side. It provides an excellent, cool shade

for anyone who would like to dwell underneath this tree during the summer season. During the autumn season, many interesting things happen to a maple leaf tree. Its green colored leaves turn into fiery red while they are attached to its branches. A blowing wind causes the fiery red maple leaves to rustle in which the tree appears to be engulfed in spectacular fire. It appears that the tree looks like Moses' burning bush. This tree appears to be standing on guard and watches while its leaves fall from its branches; and, it is interesting to note that the tree takes no action to hold onto its fiery leaves. The blowing wind seems to peel off the red leaves from the branches, until eventually no leaves remain clinging to the branches. The tree appears to willingly consent to allowing its leaves to detach or peel off and float and flutter to the ground and then they begin decaying into ash. It's an interesting way to spend time by watching the leaves floating and fluttering to the ground. In some mysterious way that I do not know or understand, ash from the leaves provides nutrient that feeds the tree. The wind appears to remove and strip all the leaves from the tree's branches. The tree becomes completely naked and it takes on an odd sort of beauty in relation to the surrounding environment. At first glance, the naked tree looks ugly, but it does indeed have an interesting beauty about its stark nakedness. The winter season comes like a thick cloud, like a thick cloud of snow. The branches of the maple leaf tree remain purely free from its leaves. It makes no attempts to pick up the fallen leaves and put them back on its branches. Its branches become covered in snow, which looks like smoke. It appears that there is nothing special to see, but you can get a feeling in your gut that something is mysteriously present with the tree during winter. I do not know what happens to the tree during winter. I do not try to understand what is going on because they are things that are too hard for me to investigate; they are matters beyond my power to know. But I watch and observe the nakedness around the tree. Sometimes, I get a little scared and think that the tree appears to be abandoned and doomed to be destroyed. During winter, which is like a deep darkness, other interesting things happen to a maple leaf tree. The tree remains without any attached leaves clinging to its branches. The maple leaf tree appears not to be afraid and hides not its branches while it stands on guard and firmly rooted over the ground. The tree appears to be quiet and nothing comes out of the tree during the solitude of winter. It appears that this tree gives no benefit in the winter and does nothing but sit. During this time, the leaves remain fallen and lay down to decay into ash on the ground. It appears that the maple leaf tree may appear to be dead, but I know that it is merely sleeping for now. You can see the naked maple leaf tree listing nakedly in the blowing wind. It appears that this tree stands still and listens to the blowing wind. It appears to be standing on guard over the soil during the darkness of winter while it waits for a new spring season. A maple leaf tree no longer hides behind its leaves during winter and it remains completely naked of leaves for the duration of winter. A maple leaf tree has no understanding of why it must shed its leaves and remains content to be naked during winter. A maple leaf tree appears to not be embarrassed by its nakedness as a result of being purely peeled and void of all its leaves during winter. A maple leaf tree appears to be fasting before the spring season. Branches of a maple tree remain bare and naked. Each branch or member of the tree forms into long, bare points.

The leaves remain peeled from each long branch. The tree remains firmly rooted to the ground and remains still and sitting on the ground with a straight back. The tree waits in an envelope of a deep and mysterious silence during the winter.

The spring season comes and something miraculous happens to the maple leaf tree. It miraculously bears its fruit at the right time! This tree provides life-giving sap in spring time. A farmer comes along side a maple tree and drives a tap into a side of the tree because he knows the tree provides sap that will flow out through his tap. Now, something beautifully sweet comes out of the tree. Could it be possible for a maple leaf tree to produce sap if it did not shed its leaves and experience a season of winter? A maple leaf tree produces a sap that is a clear liquid having a subtle sweetness detectable by taste buds. Sap flows freely within the interior veins of a maple leaf tree. This sap is processed by the farmer into pure maple syrup. The sweetness of this divine sap is like the subtle sweetness that comes from a rose in full bloom. It appears that the gift of turning the leaves into a red color and having them fall off to the ground is a gift from God.

Truly I say unto you, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a wind blowing on red fiery maples leaves of a humble maple leaf tree during the autumn season, in which the wind makes the tree look like it is on fire while the tree remains firmly rooted to the ground that it stands over, and the maple leaf tree humbly consents to releasing its leaves into the blowing wind whereby they fall and flutter to the ground so that the tree may prepare for providing ever lasting watery sap from within itself in the spring season. The maple tree sheds all of its leaves once per year. In a similar way, the children of God consent to periodically shedding their thoughts, which are like leaves, and then dwell in a deep, mysterious silence twice per day for 30 minutes for each period of dwelling.

Jesus is a carpenter, and more specifically, Jesus is a wood worker and you are the living wood that he works on, in, over, and through you. Jesus is the legal agent that acts on your behalf when you are humble enough to ask for help. Jesus knows and teaches all the 'ins' and 'outs' of the Father's 'legal' system. Would you sign a legal document without asking for legal assistance to understand the document? Truly I say unto you, pray and consent to the Holy Spirit to come like a Wind to blow and rustle your thoughts, which are like leaves. Let your thoughts flutter away from you so that you can become naked, like a bare tree on a long, silent winter season. Remain rooted firmly to the ground and with a straight back, like a sleeping tree, so that a new spring time appears and then everlasting water flows from within the inner tree of your mind.

To shed your thoughts during contemplative prayer, gently rub a rosary bead, which is like a little stone or 'petra' or 'cepha', so that you remind yourself to humbly shed your thoughts so that they may fall like leaves falling from a maple leaf tree in autumn - from the branches of your inner tree within your mind - so that everlasting waters may flow from within and out of you later in the day. This is God's gift to us.

May we humbly accept His free gift. Faithfully performing contemplative prayer twice every day is doing the will of God. Glory be to God our Father Who made us, Jesus our Brother and Helper Who shows us the right way to our Father, and the Holy Spirit our Wind Who peels off our thoughts when we consent to contemplative prayer, forever and ever. Amen.

Pray. Ask Jesus to come to you in a thick cloud and help you purify yourself from distractions during prayer. Ask Jesus to give you His holy sword, a gift from God, with which you will use to strike down your distractions during prayer.

## **Formless and desolate**

Chapter 13, part 8: Regarding the experience of perfect humility, which is like a 'no thing' that is experienced either often or seldom during prayer, it lasts only for a very short time. The build up to this perfect condition is spent on time required to 'burn' your thoughts until 'no thing' remains but their ashes.

*Genesis 1:1-2 In the beginning, ... the earth was formless and desolate ... engulfed in total darkness. ... Then God commanded, "Let there be light" - and light appeared.*

*Genesis 2:7 ... God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it.*

*Genesis 3:5 & 17 & 24 God said that because He knows that when you eat it, you will be like God and know ... to become wise (i.e. wise about things that they should not attempt to sense or know from sensing). ... they were given understanding (i.e. they preferred to dwell with attachments to their perceptions through their senses and generate abstract thoughts and constructs that do not relate to things that are real as they really are). ... the ground (i.e. your 'ground', which is like a field that represents your body or inner temple) will be under a curse. ... he put living creatures ... to keep anyone from coming near ....*

*Deuteronomy 11:26-28 & 13:8-9 Today I am giving you a blessing and a curse - a blessing if you obey but a curse if you disobey and turn to worship other gods. ... show them no mercy or pity and do not protect them. Kill them!*

*Job 42:6 ... repent in dust and ashes...*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 To everything there is a season: ... (this specific phrase taken from the New King James Version because the usual reference has replaced 'season' with another meaning)... ... a time for death ... ... a time for losing ... ... a time for throwing away ... ... a time to keep silent ...*

*Malachi 1:10 & 3: 10 I will not accept an offering from your hand. ... put me to the test to see if I will pour down for you an overflowing blessing ... your vine in the field shall not fail to bear fruit ... then all nations will call you blessed.*

*2 Esdras 4 (all of it) ... how do you weigh a pound of fire ... ... how do you measure a bushel of wind ... ... how many dwelling places are there beneath the sea ... ... how many rivers are there above the dome of the sky ...*

*Matthew 9:17 ... pour new wine into old wine skins and the (old) skins will burst, the new wine will pour out ...*

*Matthew 26:39 ... take this cup of suffering from me! Yet, not what I want but what You want (i.e. the will of God the Father).*

*Matthew 22:44 Sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet.*

*Matthew 27:46 & Mark 15:33 My God, my God, why did you abandon me?*

*Mark 14: 37-38 Were you not able to stay awake for one hour? Keep watch, and pray that you do not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.*

*Luke 2:49 Why did you have to look for me? Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business.*

*Note: What is Father's business? Daily prayer.*

*Luke 13:3 & 13:28 ... if you do not turn from your sins, you will die ... let the fig tree teach you a lesson ...*

*Luke 13:21 A woman takes some yeast and mixes it with a bushel of flour ...*

*Luke 4:8 & Luke 23:46 Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him. ... Father! Into your hands I place my spirit!*

*John 2:5 Do whatever he (Jesus) tells you. ... Fill these jars with water. .... They took the water, which now had turned into wine and he (the man in charge of the feast) tasted it.*

*Note: you are the jars that Jesus fills up with new wine, if you consent to experiencing contemplative prayer.*

*John 19:28 I am thirsty.*

*Revelations 22:1-4 ...the water of life ... the tree of life, which bears fruit ... its leaves are for the healing of the nations ...they will see His Face .....they will not need lamps because God will be their light ...and they will rule as kings ....*

*Note: you could become a tree of life, if you consent to experiencing contemplative prayer every day of your life, in which God is a 'dark' light which you do not understand but this light does shine in your inner darkness which does not know this inner light).*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of silence. Pray and ask Jesus to help you peel off your thoughts and place them onto the dust underneath your feet during your prayer.

For those that have ears, let them hear. For those that have eyes, let them see. For those that have a tongue, let them taste. For those that have fingers, let them touch. For those that have a nose, let them sniff. Knowing how to pray contemplatively is directly understood by listening with your ears, seeing with your eyes, tasting with your tongue, touching with your fingers, and sniffing with your nose to directly experience what a tree experiences during the seasons of the year. Let the fig tree teach you a lesson. That lesson is that we must experience - during prayer - detachment from all distractions so that you become naked, as naked as a fig tree during the winter months.

Consider the form and structure of a maple leaf. It comprises five lobes that radiate outwardly from a main source stem that is in turn attached to a branch of a maple leaf tree. Contained within each lobe is a single main artery that accepts nutrients from the main stem. The five lobe arteries could represent our five senses. I do not know what a fig leaf looks like because they do not grow in the cold climate that I live in. But I would venture to say that it has a similar form and structure to the maple leaf. We know from direct experience that a maple leaf tree annually sheds its leaves and goes through a quiet period and then produces a sweet sap in the spring season. We know this happens to all trees. The leaves represent your senses and mental constructs that hang from your senses and that these things need to be shed periodically, preferably on a daily basis.

Consider the cross. Pick up a cross and look at it. It is made from wood and it is bare or naked of all leaves. Run your fingers along the vertical portion of the cross from top to bottom and notice that the vertical portion is made from a trunk of a tree. Run your fingers along the horizontal portion from side

to side and notice that the horizontal portion is made from two side branches of the tree. Notice that a figure that represents our humble Jesus is attached firmly to the wooden cross by three nails. Look at how Jesus obediently agreed to dwell in humble union with the wooden, bare naked, leafless cross in blindness, silence and stillness. When the senses are not engaged and thoughts are ignored, desire and cravings become starved into a sort of fasting, and the heart becomes tamed and controlled, in a way matured and not child-like. The wooden cross represents the wooden gate to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a tree of life. Adam decided to suffer in a curse in the here and now of the present moment on earth by refusing to release his inner passions represented by his fig leaf. Jesus shows us how to enter into the Kingdom by experiencing, during contemplative prayer, a Holy Void: Nothing. Praying the cross is coming fact to face with our Silent Father. Jesus teaches us that we will feel like we are abandoned, alone, and forsaken during contemplative prayer. But have faith in understanding that God is silently present during contemplative prayer, in a way that our senses can not detect His Holy Presence. You always will abide or dwell blind, deaf, and dumb to the Presence of God. If you happen to detect something with your senses during this prayer is not from God because God prefers to dwell silently so that you will never sense or detect Him. Therefore, what ever 'creature' you sense must be 'killed' or forgotten (i.e., remain in the cloud of unknowing). That is the way God intended prayer to work from the very beginning of time. Why? He knows that if you could sense Him, you would be tempted to remain dwelling for too long with Him and then you would neglect the work or business you were called to perform on earth, which is helping and serving your needy earthly brothers and sisters who God knows need your help - and

God hears these cries for help and His intention is to send His help via the obedient contemplatives. Contemplatives are the delivery vehicle for God's help to our needy brothers and sisters. Consider the teaching put forth by an angel, in the form of a series of question, who tried to teach contemplative prayer in 2 Esdras:

How do you weigh out a pound of fire?

How do you measure a bushel of wind?

How many dwelling places are there beneath the sea?

How many rivers are there above the dome of the sky?

The contemplative answer is to these types of questions are:

I do not know because I cannot detect any of these things with my five senses.

Therefore, the answer remains unknown to me because I cannot form mental abstract constructs of things I do not sense.

Therefore, away with these stupid types of questions and do not interrupt me while I am drinking the Divine Tea that my Father gives freely to me.

Anyone who attempts to provide an answer to these sorts of questions is demonstrating their

preference for using 'brain' logic coupled with their senses. Therefore, this person does not know how to pray contemplatively and therefore would be the sort of person who would remain stuck and dwell with distractions for the complete duration of their contemplative prayer. It is like asking, "what was your original face before you were born?" And to which a true Christian contemplative will say "No face; my original face is a 'no face' because I cannot detect or sense my original face before it was born - it is beyond my senses to know; therefore I cannot make a proper construction of my original face, so I prefer not to dwell on this question, or for that matter on questions about abstract concerns and thoughts because they will only serve to distract me from my silent contemplative prayer, in which I am supposed to be busy drinking the Everlasting Water; kill and burn all of these abstract questions because they are a distraction to my prayer!" If the question posed by Shakespeare is: 'to be or not to be', then the Christian contemplative will answer with: 'not be then truly be. Now leave me alone in the still darkness while I pray in silence'. If the asserted statement is: "I think, therefore I am", then the contemplative asserts: "I do not think (during silent prayer), therefore I can truly become who I am supposed to be".

Therefore:

How do you weigh out a pound of fire? No weight because my senses are not able to weigh fire. Maybe you can and maybe you cannot, but it is not my business, and more specifically, it is not related to my Father's business that I am supposed to attend to.

How do you measure a bushel of wind? No measure because my senses are not able to measure wind; why waste time pondering things I cannot sense directly and immediately.

How many dwelling places are there beneath the sea? No dwelling places because my senses are not able to detect the dwelling places under the sea and thus the questions is generally inconvenient to bother with altogether.

How many rivers are there above the dome of the sky? No rivers because my senses are not able to detect the rivers above the dome of the sky.

Consider what Mother Teresa of Calcutta stated in her book "A Simple Path" on page 8, last paragraph: "Every morning the sisters wake up knowing what they have to go through again, which is sometimes very difficult for them (they worked with the really poor and very sick of Calcutta for those of you not familiar with Mother Teresa). Prayer gives them strength (i.e., inner Nutrients for the workers of God) - it sustains, helps, and gives us all the joy to carry out what we need to do (our Father's business). We begin the day with prayer and we end the day with an hour of Adoration before Jesus (i.e., contemplative prayer). To continuously do and to continuously give needs God's graces (i.e., the Divine Tea, the Holy Spirit refills our ability to serve the needy) - without them it would be impossible for us to live (i.e., and to give and serve the less fortunate of our siblings). It appears to me that Mother Teresa knows very well indeed how to conduct our Father's business. The pause that refreshes and energizes! In the end, Jesus is raised from his 'sleep' death and God renews Jesus with a new life in

which Jesus continues to serve God in an even 'higher' way. God created us to pray by the example provided by our brother Jesus. Jesus shows us how to die to our five senses and related mental constructs in order to achieve divine union with God. We are saved because we believe in Jesus, and more specifically, we daily follow Jesus and his teaching of the way of praying contemplatively. This is how our Father in Heaven always wanted us to pray from the very beginning of time. Adam preferred to remain attached to his five senses as symbolized by being covered with a fig leaf, in which he chose to suffer the remainder of his life in a terrible curse. Adam did not want to become naked of his senses in front of God. Through contemplative prayer, God gives us a new life if we pray contemplatively every day. God will refill us with His Essence, His Divine Tea, His Everlasting Waters every day if we consent to praying contemplatively. God fills us and out from our 'pours' will express or burst His Essence, which is like a sweet fruit and new wine to be 'consumed' by our earthly brothers and sisters who desperately need our help. Without God's daily infusion of His Helping Portion, we do not have enough inner strength to help our brothers and sisters who cry in need. Fasting has a deeper meaning in that it is a state of mind where the five senses do not operate and you come face to face with God. We are called to imitate Christ and His method of praying.

When you are involved with a 'business', you will inevitably have to learn to deal with 'contracts' or else you can get into trouble (sooner or later). Consider the concepts that support contract law in society. A contract, which is a covenant between two parties, typically includes a specification portion and a claims portion. The Bible is made of two portions: the claims portion is the book of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and all the other books are the specification portion that support the claims portion. Jesus proclaims the good news in 4 books. The specification portion is a description of the general terms of the contract and provides definitions for specific words and the meaning they are intended to be understood in a purposive way. The specification provides a purposive definition of various words or phrases that are to be used in the claims portion. The words have a meaning that are used for achieving a specific or intended purpose or objective. The claims portion defines the scope or outer limits, or boundaries of the contract (much like the boundaries that fence off a portion of real estate or parcel of land), wherein if you perform within the scope of the claims of a contract as purposively intended by the writer of the contract, then you are abiding within the writer's intended or purposive meaning and you may remain in peace because the writer of the contract is pleased that your actions are within the intended scope of the claims and therefore will not take you to court to stand before a judge so in a way you experience a type of peace of mind and you can sleep very well at night, which is like you are blessed or 'saved' from having to suffer in the present moment. However, if your behavior takes you outside of the scope of the claims of the contract, then you have taken upon yourself a condition for litigation by the writer of the contract because now your behavior is outside of the scope of the claims as purposively intended by the writer of the contract, and generally when you are outside of the scope of a contract it can be a real 'pain' to deal with, something like a curse, and the consequences in such a manner that you do not sleep well at night and life, in general, becomes

downright disagreeable with fewer things giving you pleasure because of this pending court case against you (you suffer in the present moment - like a curse). Have you ever been involved in legal matters? They can be very painful if the terms of a contract are not understood fully and if the terms are not abided with. Then, when the time comes to be placed in front of a judge, the judge performs, as first duty irrespective of why you are standing in front of him, to construe or construct the claims of the contract, which is a process of understanding the fullest possible plain and direct meaning of the language used in the claims (which finds full support from the descriptive material found in the specification portion of the contract) in order to clearly understand the intended or purposive scope or acceptable outer limits as intended in the description of the specification as written by the writer of the contract. Then, the judge will examine your behavior and decide whether you are acting within the intended scope or outside the intended scope of the written contract. The intention of the writer is assumed by the judge to have been fully disclosed in the written description portion of the contract. The judge does not ask the writer to submit to a verbal testimony about just what he really meant to say in his contract because it is not allowed in court. The court assumes that what the writer writes is what he meant or fully intended to cover with his claims - the courts do not rewrite the claims, they construe them (understand them). The responsibility of the judge is to give a reasonable and plain fair effect or meaning to the claims - that's how a judge works from within the framework of the law in society. In matters of the law, the judge never uses a 'literal' interpretation of the claims of the contract because that is not an acceptable way to interpret the inner meaning of a contract claim (more on this topic in the next paragraph). Rather, the judge uses an accepted technique called 'purposive' construction of the claims, in which the intent of the writer of the contract is given effect or meaning with regard to what the writer wrote in the specification that supports the claims of the contract. Then, the actions of the second party (i.e., you or me or generally anyone else for that matter) are examined with respect to the understood (i.e., constructed) meaning of the scope or outer limits of the claims. The claims are always given a fair and useful and plain meaning by the judge. Sometimes, expert witnesses are called upon to help provide further elaboration (i.e. like perhaps the Saints and angels) on the meaning of the terms within the claims of a contract because they are skilled in the art of the subject matter (prayer). The judge always makes the final decision with respect to defining a full, reasonable and fair meaning of the claims.

The Judge avoids abstract and twisted interpretations so that a reasonable meaning can be derived of a contract. He uses a technique called 'purposive' construction that gives effect or meaning to the claims of the contract. The Bible is a collection of words and phrases that form something that is like a legal document in that a lot of people talk about the covenant that God has with His chosen people and the contract specifies and 'pro'-claims the word of God, which is written on blank paper so that there can be no misunderstandings in the future. Now, consider the following question of law: "is contemplative prayer an optional prayer or a required prayer in my life?" In other words: "is my behavior of not praying contemplatively within the scope of the word of God or outside the scope of the

word of God?" Wait! Before you answer that question, let me recommend an excellent, sharp Jewish lawyer for you to consult with. His name is Jesus and it appears to me that He knows and completely understands the 'purposive' or intended scope and meaning of the outer boundaries or limits that define or encompass the word of God. I would recommend that you consult directly with Jesus on the question of using contemplative prayer on a daily basis. Glory be to God our Judge who decides whether we have lived according to His Word, to Jesus our Jewish Lawyer who advises us how to stay within intended scope of the Word of God as proclaimed, and the Holy Spirit for delivering us the proclaimed word of God from the pages contained within the Holy Bible, forever and ever. Ahem. Is contemplative prayer optional? Jesus will tell you in very plain language and by very plain example that there are blessings for you if you pray this way and there are curses for you if you do not pray contemplatively. Understand clearly your options and consequences before you decide your conduct. It would appear to me that a smart person would want full understanding of the 'disclosure' as written.

Now, let us consider the reasons why literal interpretations of legal documents are frowned upon in a court of law. I will try to demonstrate this plainly by example, and avoid abstract notions as much as possible. From time to time, a friend of mine shares with me stories about the antics of his two sons. He finds these stories quite amusing and so will you. The first story involves my friend who wanted to re-seed his back lawn because the two sons have trampled and destroyed the lawn. After re-seeding the backyard lawn, my friend tells his boys:

*"Do not to disturb the back yard lawn." Later on, he catches his two sons walking on the lawn.*

*"I thought I told you guys not to disturb the lawn."*

*"But daddy, we were only walking on the lawn. We were not disturbing the lawn by talking to it in the way we disturb you when you are reading!"*

*"OK. I do not want you to touch the lawn. Go and play."*

*"OK daddy. We love you daddy."*

*"I love you too. Be good, please." And within 5 minutes, my friend catches his sons riding their bikes over the lawn. "I thought I told you boys not to touch the lawn".*

*"Hi daddy! We are not touching the lawn. What ever gave you such a notion. Our bikes are touching the lawn. We are touching our bikes. Can't you see that for yourself. We do as you ask us to do. We love you daddy!"*

*"OK. I want you to not come near the lawn. Go and play nice, please." And about 5 minutes later, my friend catches his sons tossing balls and other assorted toys onto the lawn. "I thought I told you boys not to come near the lawn."*

*"Hi daddy! We did not come near the lawn. We are far away from the lawn. The balls and toys are touching the lawn but we are not near or touching the lawn. We obey your word daddy because we love you!"*

*"OK. I want you boys to leave the lawn alone, never come near it, do not ride over it, do not touch it, do not walk on it, do not toss stuff on it, do not ....*

And the list goes on forever in order to cover ever possible situation. The sons of the father did not understand the substance or the pith and marrow of the meaning their father was trying to convey through words and phrases. The sons felt completely justified in assuming a literal interpretation of

their father's words and phrases was sufficient to keep them from experiencing harmful consequences (which is like an immediate curse) that is experienced in the here and now of the present moment. I do not know about whether the pain will be felt many years later after not following their father's words because my senses do not detect what is coming in the future; my senses only operate and function in the here and now). It appears the sons of the father feel justified for taking the words of their daddy in a literal sense. What an ironic situation. And you know that every possible situation can never be covered because the human mind is very inventive by design. Now you see what Mosses had to put up with. The children of Mosses' time took everything literally. Mosses tried to define a set of laws or rules to try to cover every situation that literal-minded (i.e. small-minded) children can get involved with. They push the edge of the envelope into new territories because they continue to devote themselves to using literal interpretation of the rules. That's why the courts frown upon using literal interpretation of documents. It leads to a legal system which will only break down and everything is tossed into disarray and the world cannot function in such a system of 'literal' thoughts. That's why the courts, and more specifically judges, will use 'purposive' construction of documents (legal or otherwise). There are loads of documents that describe how to perform purposive construction of documents. Go to a court room and experience what a judge does with a contract when someone is seeking relief which he is entitled to because of the claims of a binding contract. Sometimes you can see television judges that are very sharp with handling written contracts.

It appears to me that we, in fact, are compelled to pray contemplatively for at least one hour every day. I suggest praying in two 30 minute sessions: one in the morning and one in the evening. Here is a noteworthy Irish proverb that may say why you should do it this way: "May you be in heaven for half and hour before the devil realizes you have arrived!" It appears to be easier to pray contemplatively for a 30 minute duration than to attempt a one hour duration (unless you are a professional at this - it appears to me that Jesus is the ultimate professional). He did it for 40 days straight before temptation showed up to distract Him). You need to eat three times a day, you need to pray contemplatively twice per day so that you can become productive and improve the community that you live in by bringing some of Heaven to earth.

Truly I say unto you, the Kingdom of Heaven is like an inner hidden source that provides clean pure water, which seeps from the dark underground of your inner field, that slowly infuses the roots of a rose bush. The water from the ground is everlasting water, which is like a divine tea that seeps from the dark, black ground and surrounds and infuses the roots of a humble rose bush. With proper care and attention from the farmer's assistant, nothing interferes with the growing rose bush that will eventually reveal and unfold its fiery red blossoms because the assistant has prevented any distractions from the surrounding environment to reach the rose bush. The rose bush consents to absorbing the water from the dark ground and cannot help but express blossoms. From the red blossoms, a pollen is expressed and it is sweetness to the nose. This sweetness attracts honey bees

that come to collect the pollen and make a sweet honey on earth, which is a free gift of God from heaven to earth. The honey is a nutrient, which is like a milk that is consumed by the bee hive. All the while, the rose bush remains still and quiet and blind to the water infusing into its roots and the pollen leaving from the blossoms. The blossoms unfold daily. The rose bush produces many blossoms over its life time. Sometimes, the wind blows and peels off the old blossoms and they fall to the ground, and new blossoms become expressed into creation. While the wind blows on the rose bush, the blossoms toss about and it appears that the rose bush is on fire. Some rose bushes produce no blossoms and the farmer tells his assistant to take action on these bushes and make sure that those rose bushes makes some blossoms because the bees are crying out for more pollen. His assistant asks for permission from the master farmer to try to save the bush by giving him some additional time and that then after a final attempt the assistant will toss the useless rose bushes into the composing bin for not producing some blossoms. And there these useless bushes will suffer. The assistant always asks the master farmer for an extension of time so that the assistant can give the errant bush some help, but the farmer will permit only so much time for a change to occur in the behavior of the bush. Glory and praise to God our Master Farmer Who created us, Jesus His Assistant Who helps us to pray properly, and the Holy Spirit Who is our Everlasting Water Who feeds us what we need. I suspect that the second coming of Jesus could be what is experienced during and after silent contemplative prayer. That's my take on that question.

### ***Do what God requires***

Chapter 13, part 9: But, experiencing and mingling with distractions is a condition of imperfect humility. But, even if the mingling distractions are good, then try the best you can to not dwell on them for too long by asking for divine deliverance into the promised land of complete silence within you. This inner land is truly free of all thoughts, concerns and distractions.

*Matthew 5:6 Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully!*

*Note: the prayer of the cross or contemplative prayer is what God wants us to partake in and for which He will reward us in ways we will never understand.*

*Matthew 7:13 - 14 Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!*

*Note: Jesus tells us that the gate to life, which is the prayer of the cross, leads to 'life' if you abide with the prayer of the cross and therefore you are within the limits of protection, and if you do not abide with the prayer of the cross you are outside the limits of the protection. The 'property line' defining the outer limits of the 'city' are clearly defined and identified by Jesus. The option of humbly staying within the limits or outside of the limits is for each of us to choose. We are free to choose.*

*Matthew 17:41 But only prayer and fasting can drive out this kind of demon; nothing else can.*

*Note: the prayer of the cross drives out the rot, the pain from within us; the decaying stuff that God removes from our inner-most parts of ourselves, if we consent, and to which we are made 'new' to provide 'something' back to others.*

*Matthew 22:32 He is the God of the living, not of the dead.*

*Note: The God of the present moment. In the present moment is where our five senses operate; concepts of the past and the future are mere speculation because the past and future are beyond what we can sense. We can only exist, sense, and function in the present moment.*

*Matthew 25:34 Come and possess the Kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world.*

*Note: this is how God always wanted us to pray to Him by being naked of everything like Jesus praying on the cross (on the cross, Jesus is naked). Pray not like Adam 'covered' in the 'leaves' of his distractions, thoughts and concerns.*

*Matthew 26:38 & 40 Stay and keep watch with me. ... Keep watch with me for one hour.*

*Note: pray like Jesus on the cross for one hour a day and be watchful and mindful that you release your thoughts and every concern during the prayer of the cross because you come face to face with God during this prayer and you should have nothing on your mind during this prayer. Ask Jesus or Mary for help on this condition.*

*Mark 8:34 And calling the multitude together with his disciples, he said to them: If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

*Note: while praying the prayer of the cross, detach from everything (that is, deny yourself) and forget everything so that you stand in a cloud of unknowing while God is present to the 'naked' you so that God may do what He needs to do to you during prayer. You are not required to understand what He does during this prayer.*

*Mark 10:38 Can you drink the cup of suffering I must drink? Can you be baptized in the way I must be baptized?*

*Note: it is not easy to pray the cross daily for one hour - this prayer is a daily baptism of fire in which everything is burned off and you remain naked to God, face to face.*

*Mark 11:14 No one shall ever eat figs from you again!*

*Note: Why would Jesus 'literally' curse a tree, unless He were trying to say something very deep. The 'tree' does not produce 'fruit' because it does not want to cooperate with the requirement to shed its leaves periodically. This tree prefers to behave like Adam and keep its leaves of thoughts.*

*Luke 14: 27 Those who do not carry their own cross and come after me cannot be my disciples. None of you can be my disciple unless you give up everything you have.*

*Note: ... give up everything - all distractions - you have during the prayer of the cross or contemplative prayer.*

*Luke 17:21 The Kingdom of God is within you.*

*Note: seek the Kingdom every day via the prayer of the cross and you need only to do so from wherever you stand, you do not need to seek outside of yourself - but please continue going to Church every week.*

*Luke 20:47 And then make a show of saying long prayers. Their punishment will be all the worse.*

*Note: showing and saying long prayers in front of God during the prayer of the cross, which is the opposite of being silent and still during the prayer of the cross. We must imitate the behavior of Jesus as prayed nakedly on His cross.*

*Luke 21:31 When you see the leaves beginning to appear, you know that summer is near. In the same way you can see these things happening, you will know that the Kingdom of God is about to come.*

*Note: when summer comes, the next season is the falling of the leaves, and the Kingdom of God comes when your thoughts and concerns fall away from you during the prayer of the cross and you unknowingly experience God. Jesus tells us - on the cross - it is like God is absent to our senses (my God my God, why have you forsaken me).*

*Luke 22:40 Pray that you do not fall into temptation.*

*Note: Jesus advises us to not remain dwelling in tempting but distracting thoughts and concerns during your prayer of the cross.*

*1 Corinthians 15:22 All people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ.*

*Note: the limits of the contract are expressed in a different way.*

*Revelations 22:14 Happy are those who wash their robes clean and so have the right to eat from the fruit from the tree of life ... But those outside the city are perverts ....*

*Note: the prayer of the cross is like 'cleaning' your robes and then you have the right to partake in*

*the 'fruit'. If you abide with the prayer of the cross, you are within the 'city' property limits, and if you do not abide with the prayer of the cross you are outside the limits of the 'city' property. The property line defining the outer limits of the 'city' are clearly defined and identified by Jesus and they form the claims of the contract which is expressed here as a 'property deed'. The option of staying within the 'city' limits or outside of the 'city' limits is for you to choose and the consequences flow from your decision to abide or not abide.*

*The Kingdom of Heaven is within each one of us. To pray, quite simply, is to enter this inner Kingdom of our heart, and there to stand before God, quite conscious of His Indwelling Presence: 'to pray ceaselessly,' is to do this constantly... The door is before us, and the key is in our hands."*

*Bishop Kallistos Ware*

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of doing what God requires daily. Pray and ask Jesus to bring you to the promised land within you, which is a condition of being still and quiet, which is similar to experiencing 'sleep' from your distractions for a period of time. Keep in mind that a discussion of 'purposive' construction or 'claims' construction involves contracts (such as a private contracts, patents, property deeds, legislation, etc.) that has claims that describe the outer boundary or limits for which people are supposed to either stay away from or stay within. Typically, contracts are written to inform others of the boundaries or limits to which you must remain within. Some contracts (patent and property deeds are an agreement between a person and the government) and has a slightly different orientation when compared with typical contracts (between people) and legislation (which is a contract between a government and the residents). But the principle of 'purposive' or 'claims' construction are applicable to any document for interpreting the purpose or meaning held within contracts and statutory legislation. Basically, any document that needs to be interpreted by a judge in court before the judge can make a determination if you are either within the intended scope or outside the intended scope of a contract. The judge is responsible for interpreting the purpose or meaning of the intention of the words and phrases as written and stated on paper. He will avoid using literal interpretation of the words since this leads to confusion. When studying 'claims' construction theory, keep in mind that the Bible represents a covenant or contract that has a 'claims' portion (i.e. the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and the remaining books (of the Bible) are part of the specification portion of the contract or covenant. An excerpt from the reference cited above (to illustrate the notion of what a 'picture word' is supposed to provide): "Before you decide whether or not [the defendant] has infringed the claims of [the plaintiff's] contract or whether or not [the plaintiff's] claims are valid, you will have to understand the scope of the contract "claims." The claims are numbered paragraphs at the end of the contract. The claims are "word pictures" intended to define, in words, the boundaries of the protection that supported, described and illustrated in the specification or description and the claims. A person can only 'infringe' the claims of the contract. "Infringed" is a technical word that means either you are behaving within the meaning of the claims or you are behaving outside the meaning and scope of protection of the claims. A judge is in a position to decide whether your behavior abides with the scope of the claims or your behavior does not abide with the claims. Sometimes, it is a very good idea to discuss with a lawyer who can provide his professional opinion as to how a judge would understand the scope of the claims so that you can make a rational decision as to whether you want to abide or

whether you would be willing to accept the risks of not abiding. It's like a dentist advising his patients to take some time every day to floss their teeth in order to avoid the condition of having their teeth and gums slowly rot away and thereby causing them a great deal of suffering later on in life. The written description portion of the contract cannot be infringed. Each of the claims must be considered individually, and not all claims have to be infringed for the contract to be infringed. To prove infringement, the plaintiff need only establish by a preponderance of the evidence that at least one claim was infringed as a result of your behavior. I am not saying that we should judge the words of the Bible. We should understand the meaning that is held within the words of the Bible in the same way that a judge or lawyer were to read it and draw the meanings out of the words from a contract in order to get an understanding of the scope of the coverage that is declared within the claims of the contract.

*"How do you distinguish the true sleeper from the one who is feigning sleep?" asked the monk.  
"There's no way. Only the sleeper knows when he is feigning," said the novice. The monk smiled.*

### **Ripe sweet fruit**

Chapter 14, part 1: Although I speak of imperfect humility it is not because I place little value on true self-knowledge. Should every one pray for my growth in humility, I am certain it would not bring me to perfect humility as quickly as a little self-knowledge. Indeed, it is altogether impossible to arrive at perfect humility without it.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Genesis 3:7 to 8 And the eyes of them both were opened: and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves aprons. And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in paradise at the afternoon air, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God, amidst the trees of paradise.*

*Matthew 3:10 For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.*

*Matthew 7:17 to 19 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.*

*Matthew 21:19 And seeing a certain fig tree by the way side, he came to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only, and he saith to it: May no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig tree withered away.*

*Matthew 24:32 And from the fig tree learn a parable: When the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh.*

God commanded Adam to "not eat from the tree of knowledge". If this is taken literally, God asked Adam to literally not eat any fruit from a tree which happened to be named 'knowledge'. And as a result of Adam eating from this fruit, he is cast as a sinner. Not just any old sinner, but he has the distinct label of being the first sinner ever. Why would God get upset about some whether Adam literally eat some fruit? My doctor tells me to literally eat fruit every day, along with vegetables in a balanced diet. Something does not fit within context here when we view this story in literal terms. Something does not make sense with a literal translation of the story of Adam.

If the story of Adam is taken metaphorically, God meant that Adam should be obedient to the will of God, no matter what God asks. And God's reference to 'eating fruit' is supposed to be a simple example of Adam's disobedience (and man in general). Metaphorically, the story of Adam is about man's general disposition to being disobedient to the will of God (what ever that means because for now we may or may not exactly know what the 'will of God' means). Why demonstrate the will of God as "not eating fruit from a tree called knowledge"? Why not use another example that would appear far more serious in sharp contrast to "eating fruit"? For example, God could have asked Adam not to do anything within the scope of the 10 commandments. Doing something within the scope of the 10 commandments would appear to be doing something substantially that is not within the will of God. Why was such a trivial example picked such as "eating fruit"? Again, when this story is viewed along metaphorical terms, something does not seem quite right. Such a harsh penalty is brought on Adam for such a small transgression. And I have been told that because Adam ate this fruit, I am plagued with Adam's sin. Is that fair? I had nothing to do with Adam's decision to eat some fruit - if I were there, I'd have held Adam back! Or maybe because I come from Adam, its just within my genes to be naturally disobedient towards God.

If we attempt to uncover the purpose for this story (God's intention), may be we can get a better handle on what God wanted (and still wants from us - because I think the living God would not change His mind about what He wants from us - right from the time of Adam up to today, and well into the future. Just because He is God, would He really change His mind about what He wants from us?). Well, let's ponder this. What happens when you eat something? Well, you would happen to engage your sense of taste. There are other senses such as seeing, hearing, smelling, touching that come along with tasting. Five senses we use to detect or to KNOW something. To know something is to sense something or other. If we do not sense something, we do not 'sensually' know that something. Perhaps God wants us to not engage in our senses (but when?). Naturally, you need to ask: would that be all day, all night, or during a specific period of time? In order for me to interact with this world, I need to use my senses. Maybe in order for me to become adjusted and to interact with God and His spiritual realm, I must refrain from using my senses. Hmmmm. I need to adjust to God. Interacting with God. Prayer is an interaction with God. When I was a child I was told to ask God for what I needed. Hmmmm. I was told to use my sense (speech) when interacting with God. In hindsight, perhaps this may not be a good way to always interact with God during prayer. Perhaps, that God intended that we should interact with Him during prayer, we must refrain from using our senses. We should not 'eat the fruit from tree of knowledge'. Now that makes good sense to me! During prayer, refrain from becoming distracted by eating 'knowledge' or things that can be sensed (distractions). Adam was not interested in consenting to shedding his 'leaves' so that more fruit could be made in the next 'season'. After all, a tree needs to shed its leaves in order to bring fruit forward (naturally). Read Genesis and see that Adam covered himself up and did not want to shed his fig leaf after eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you refrain from using your five senses to examine distractions during prayer.

### ***Be merciful to the poor***

Chapter 14, part 2: Do not shrink from the sweat and toil involved in gaining real self knowledge in order to come to an experiential knowledge of God Who is as He is. I Am Who I Am. Therefore, what this means to the person who prays: “do not become distracted with wanting to know more than this simple fact: be still”. God is not sensed by you knowingly while you remain on earth. This unknown and mysterious knowledge of God is a complete as you are ever to get while you are on earth. In heaven, it is a different story, but our senses do not extend or reach into that reality while we are on earth, so anything we construct or ponder about heaven is merely hypothetical. When you pray, be still.

*Daniel 4 - all -*

*Daniel 4:27 So then follow my advice and stop sinning, do what is right and be merciful to the poor. Then you will continue to be prosperous.*

The specification of a contract supports the claims of the contract. This fact holds very true for special contracts called patents. A patent is a special contract between a government and its people. The claims of a patent specify what the public must not perform, and the specification of the patent provides support for those claims.

In Daniel 4, God has blessed Daniel to understand how to extract the deep meanings from dreams of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel reveals and constructs the intent, purpose, and meaning of the dream in Daniel 4. It is interesting to note that the tree is stripped of leaves and that this is intended to represent Nebuchadnezzar (which also is intended to represent you and me). Daniel reveals in Daniel 4:27 the two main commandments of Jesus Who reveals these in the ‘claims’ of the covenant in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

- 1) Love God with all you heart and mind (silent contemplative prayer);
- 2) love your neighbors (to the least of these that you do, you do so to me).

But Nebuchadnezzar decides to ignore this advice and the story shows that he will suffer much in a metaphorical way so that we feel his pain and suffering. After 7 years, Nebuchadnezzar realizes his mistake and follows the advice of Daniel about prayer. His life changes for the better, as it was promised it would, not in the after life, but life is experienced in the here and now. The story applies to you and me both in the here and now. Salvation is to be experienced in the here and now of every day by adhering to the two commandments of Jesus. I do not know nor do I care to know about what happens after physical death (because that will lead to distraction anyway).

## **Know I am God**

Chapter 14, part 3: Your secret love for God needs to be expressed with purity of heart (that is, a pure heart during prayer, a heart so pure that there are no blemishing distractions attached to it). Purity of heart is when you love only God as He Is during prayer, and you pay attention to nothing at all (no distractions) but only to God during prayer. It will be like you are pressing on a cloud of unknowing within you, which is the place in which God abides. You are required to express no clear ideas or thoughts or cling to any distractions if you truly love God for Who He Is.

*Ezekiel 17:24 And all the trees of the country shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, and exalted the low tree: and have dried up the green tree, and have caused the dry tree to flourish. I the Lord have spoken and have done it.*

*Note: this is the action of contemplative prayer. Even though you feel a dryness within you during prayer, after this prayer you become green.*

*Ezekiel 18:16-17 That hath turned away his hand from injuring the poor, hath not taken usury and increase, but hath executed my judgments, and hath walked in my commandments: this man shall not die for the iniquity of his father, but living he shall live.*

*Note: after prayer, you are like a green tree that is used for the benefit of others.*

*Matthew 22:36 to 22:40 Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.*

The Bible is indeed the living word of the Living God. The Word of God is captured within the Bible for all to witness the Glory of God. He writes a contract in which He does promise something for you if you abide with the claims of His contract. Once again, the specification portion of the Bible (contract) supports the claims (statements made by Jesus) of the contract. The contract has a guarantee of performance but only if you abide within the claim limits set out by Jesus. Indeed, God offers salvation as claimed by Jesus in His two commandments. This salvation is contemplative prayer (passive action) intermixed with your direct intervention with our suffering brothers and sisters (the active action). By abiding in God's requirements, He will bring salvation to you in the present moments of every day of your life. Contemplative prayer is not intended to be used in isolation, but it used in the 'seasons' of inaction and action as defined by the two commandments of Jesus. Do you understand the intended meaning and purpose of the word of God?

There are many incredible meanings that can be extracted from the phrase "judge not otherwise you will be judged". But, there is only one contemplative meaning that may be understood from this 'cryptic' parable or phrase. This phrase is not to be taken literally, not to be taken metaphorically, but this phrase must be respected like a judge who would attempt to understand the purpose and intention of a contract. A judge would extract the inner most and deepest meaning and intent of the contract writer in order to respect the wishes of the contract writer so that the judge can execute the terms and conditions that bind contract between two parties. Unto you I will reveal the contemplative meaning of 'judge not' for you. 'Judge not' means when you pray contemplatively, for the duration of your prayer do not

'judge' or in other words, do not think or have any activity within your inner mind - do not become distracted. Be clear of all attachments to thoughts and emotions and concerns during prayer. This is the inactive part of prayer. Be like a void and the Divine Tea can flow from God into you and fills you so that you are made ready for the 'active' season in which you serve the hungry, naked, and poor (the second half of prayer). This will become an easy yoke for you to bear when facing the needy if you are full of the Divine Tea that you receive newly every day. 'Otherwise you could be judged' means if you do not abide in the void, you are being active and God cannot fill you up with His Divine Tea when you are in any 'active' mode. God judges that you are not ready to receive His Tea during silent prayer. The filling operation of His Grace within you occurs only when you are in an 'inactive' mode of operation otherwise called prayer of the cross (you imitate Jesus in prayer and activity). Without the Divine Tea, it will be very very hard for you to take on the 'yoke' and respond directly to the feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and serving the poor. Do you fully understand why God created you? Do you know who you are? Did He make you so that you could sit around all day and do nothing? To remain in a void all day? Or to be only active all day focused on your own concerns and 'problem' or issues? The dance with God is a two step dance which is like the 'active and inactive seasons' of the year. Do you understand His intent? There is an 'active' part and an 'inactive' part in combination or union. Today, the Law of the Living God is revealed unto you.

### ***Do not ruin the wheat by threshing it endlessly***

Chapter 14, part 4: Be diligent in striving for the virtue of perfect humility in which you experience inactivity (that is, not active with any distractions). This will look like you are in a sleep but not really sleeping. When people experience perfect humility in contemplative prayer, they do not sin.

*Isaiah 28:23-29 Farmers do not constantly sow their fields and keep planting. They never use a heavy club to beat out dill seeds; instead they use light sticks of proper size. They do not ruin the wheat by threshing it endlessly; they thresh it by driving a cart over it without bruising the grains. This wisdom comes from Lord Almighty. The plans God make are wise and always succeed.*

*Isaiah 28:23 to 28:29 (taken from the Douay Rheims version) Give ear, and hear my voice, hearken, and hear my speech. Shall the ploughman plough all the day to sow, shall he open and harrow his ground? Will he not, when he hath made plain the surface thereof, sow gith, and scatter cummin, and put wheat in order, and barley, and millet, and vetches in their bounds? For he will instruct him in judgment : his God will teach him. For gith shall not be thrashed with saws, neither shall the cart wheel turn about upon cummin: but gith shall be beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a staff. But bread corn shall be broken small: but the thrasher shall not thrash it for ever, neither shall the cart wheel hurt it, nor break it with its teeth. This also is come forth from the Lord God of hosts, to make his counsel wonderful, and magnify justice.*

*John 12:24 to 25 Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal.*

The excerpt from Isaiah is an interesting one. It appears to be a reference to natural events in the lives of people that live close to the earth. Could this passage provide something for us today? If we use a

'literal' interpretation or 'strict' construction, we would conclude that this passage refers to agricultural practices and advice to farmers about how to properly harvest food from the land. Other than that literal meaning, this passage can provide nothing more. Other than that meaning, we may easily and quickly conclude that this passage is meaningless to those that are not farmers, and we may simply pass over this passage with an uncaring glance and quickly forget this passage altogether. Why should we pay attention to instructions for farmers? On the other hand, if we use a 'metaphorical' interpretation or 'liberal' construction, this passage could mean many things to many people or many conditions of living. The meaning ascribed to this passage may depend on the circumstances of life that day or week. For example, if you are trying to manage a sour relationship with a not-so-nice person at work, this passage might be telling us to use a proper approach when dealing with that sour person and avoid the use of a heavy handed approach. That interpretation seems interesting and possibly useful and worth a try. Indeed, why not? Or this passage could be applied to many situations as guidance for helping you to cope with your life in general. Why not. I'm feeling very liberal minded! So, what other possible options might we have?

To extract the deepest and truest possible meaning of this passage, let us examine this passage in the way a judge may examine a written contract and then may extract the written purpose or intent of the words and phrases in view of the entire contract as a whole. It is common knowledge that judges 'construe' or understand passages or paragraphs from a specification part of a contract based on the claims of the contract as a starting point. Why is that? Because it is common fact that a contract is 'construed' as a whole document (a holistic approach is used). In other words, the contract is construed in view of the context to the entire document. Well, the contract or document we have here is the Bible. The Bible provides us a code of conduct, especially to contemplative prayer. The claims that Jesus make relate to 'silent' prayer with God and also relate to providing help to suffering persons. Let's assume for the moment that this passage relates to providing help to suffering persons. Would I take a stick and beat a suffering person? No, that's silly: that's not the right fit at all. In fact, it seems to be not a very nice thing to do to beat a person who is already suffering! This passage of Isaiah appears to imply that we beat or 'work' on a 'cucumber', and extract some 'dill seeds' from the inside of the 'cucumber', and you know the seeds are good for eating and that they provide nutrients for someone's benefit. Hmmmmmmmm. Could this passage possibly relate to 'prayer', and more specifically, contemplative prayer? Let's look a little deeper at this passage line by line and see what deep meaning pops out. Maybe this passage has many meanings, but only one contemplative meaning. It would be amazing if something startling did pop out at us. Something hidden suddenly 'pops' out at us and startles us into a sort of awakening to what is staring directly at our 'inner' faces. Farmers do not constantly plow their fields and keep planting; they rest and wait for the crops to come. Could this mean that people who pray are like farmers who plow their fields and wait patiently for the crops to come. But while they wait, a good farmer will pull all weeds from the fields. He will pull all distractions that may take nutrients and water from the crops. We know about the plow yoke that Jesus

mentions in the 'claims' of the contract. Praying is like farming. That seems reasonable so far. So, this line seems to relate to prayer. But in what way? Jesus tells us to limit our prayer to one hour. And Isaiah seems to suggest not to pray constantly. Is praying like plowing and planting? Sure. We pray and at the end of our prayer, we are filled up with something useful. What you sow, so shall you reap - that's another expression from the Bible. They never use a heavy club to beat out dill seeds;

Hmmmm. Our prayer must not be 'heavy' in some way to 'beat' out the 'seeds'. I suppose if we beat out the seeds, they'll get bruised and not taste so good, and maybe they will even lose their nutrients. Instead they use light sticks of proper size. Proper prayer should be light and easy. As Jesus said, my yoke is easy. They do not ruin the wheat by threshing it endlessly. If I pray too much, I'll ruin the 'end product'. Is that what this line is saying to me? I must limit the amount of time for prayer otherwise I'll ruin my prayer. It seems to tell me that I must not pray silently for hours and hours on end. If I pray endlessly, I'll ruin something within me. Something valuable is lost. They thresh it by driving a cart over it without bruising the grains. So I need to be careful of the method I use to avoid bruising my 'inner' grains. The 'inner grain' is the result or fruit of my silent prayer. This wisdom comes from the Lord. God is telling us something wise and meaningful. The plans God make are wise and always succeed. God's instructions lead to good results. So, it appears to me that we must limit our prayer time. And praying for days and days and days and months constantly on end is not useful and might even damage something inside of us, and make us not so useful for God's purposes.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you root out all distractions during prayer so that your fruit may come in its proper time.

## ***Perfection of virtue***

Chapter 15: Yet our Lord Jesus calls us in the Gospel to the perfection of virtue when He says we need to be perfect by grace as He is by nature.

*Genesis 17:1 And after he began to be ninety and nine years old, the Lord appeared to him: and said unto him: I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be perfect.*

*Deuteronomy 18:13 Thou shalt be perfect, and without spot before the Lord thy God.*

*Joshua 24:14 Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him with a perfect and most sincere heart: and put away the gods which your fathers served in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.*

*2 Samuel 22:33 God who hath girded me with strength, and made my way perfect.*

*1 Kings 8:61 Let our hearts also be perfect with the Lord our God, that we may walk in his statutes, and keep his commandments, as at this day.*

*Job 4:6 Where is thy fear, thy fortitude, thy patience, and the perfection of thy ways?*

*Job 37:16 Knowest thou the great paths of the clouds, and the perfect knowledge?*

*Psalms 100:6 My eyes were upon the faithful of the earth, to sit with me: the man that walked in the perfect way, he served me.*

*Matthew 5:48 Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.*

*Matthew 19:21 Jesus saith to him: If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me.*

Perfect: lacking nothing essential to the whole; complete of its nature or kind; being without defect or blemish; thoroughly skilled or talented in a certain field or area; proficient; completely suited for a particular purpose or situation; accurately reproducing an original; complete; thorough; pure; undiluted; unmixed; to carry to the end, to perform, finish, perfect; Brought to consummation or completeness; completed; not defective nor redundant; having all the properties or qualities requisite to its nature and kind; without flaw, fault, or blemish; without error; mature; whole; pure; sound; right; correct.

What do we need to make “perfect”? Are we being asked to make our prayer perfect? Perfect prayer is prayer that is free from blemish of distractions, or unmixed with distractions.

Let the dead bury their dead”. This phrase may have many meanings. Or does it have a special meaning? Before I address today’s excerpt, let me complete the previous posting. I wanted it to sink into your mind very deeply before I completed the proper construction of “let the dead bury their dead”.

Now, after constructing the passage from Isaiah 28:23-29, a reasonable judge would come to a conclusion about the Kingdom of Heaven. The judge would state to the court, “I have come to a conclusion, and I believe that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who waits patiently for the cucumber or fruit of his inner field to ripen at the right time, and then takes that cucumber and extracts the inner seeds in a manner as to not spoil the seeds and then provides the seeds to the hungry, sick, and less fortunate persons of the world in a manner of the regular seasons”. The judge has completed the extraction process to obtain the inner meaning of the intended purpose if the expression of the writer of the contract. The judge will then will pose a question that needs to be examined to see if you did abide or did not abide with the terms of the contract. Either you ‘did develop your inner seeds and provided them to the less fortunate on a regular basis, or you did not do so. There is no fence sitting on this issue. Its not possible to develop the inner ‘seeds’ or fruit of prayer and then withhold this fruit from the less fortunate. If you do develop these seeds, they be used. The problem comes in staying away from distractions so that those seeds may develop. Only you and God knows for sure whether you initiate Jesus in the active and inactive seasons of your life, in the here and now! The active season is feeding the hungry, poor, while the inactive season is prayer of the cross, just in case you were not following my written intent.

Now, to the mysterious excerpt about the dead burying the dead. The phrase “Let the dead bury their dead” has many meanings. Truly I say unto you, it has only one contemplative meaning. And naturally, I will reveal this meaning unto you instantly. Literally, this phrase means ‘a dead person should be burying the dead, and you are not responsible for doing anything else’. That make no logical sense what so ever (to me anyway). Metaphorically, it could mean a plurality of things. Maybe about how to handle folks who are not in tune with your way of thinking, ‘Oh, forget him, he is dead to my ideas, he does not understand, so let the ‘dead bury the dead.’ OK, if I am interested in justifying myself and coping with the cruel hard world, maybe that might be a good interpretation. But it does not really sink

in too deep for me. What about a purposive construction? The scope of the claims of the contract is about prayer and providing help to the suffering persons. Do I want the suffering to be dead? No, so that means this phrase does not apply to the suffering persons. Let's see if this excerpt applies to prayer. Do I want something 'dead' in my prayer. Well, sort of. I want my distractions to be dead to me while I pray. 'Let the dead'..... maybe my distractions are merely 'dead' thoughts that bring me to death, but a death of what? Oh, when I am distracted during prayer I am not filled up with the Essence of God, which is a sort of 'death'. I prevent my self from being filled with the Divine Tea or grace. So, 'Let the dead' refer to letting my distractions die during prayer. Now what about 'bury the dead'. Oh, I need to bury my distractions into the ground below my feet. The passage purposively means that during our contemplative prayer, we are required to bury and forget our distractions. We must become still and silent during prayer, like the way the figure of Jesus remains still and quiet on the cross. We must treat out distractions as dead things - so let them bury themselves. Pay no attention to your distractions during prayer. Your distractions will eventually bury themselves if you just ignore them entirely (maybe God will bury them for you if you ask). Then, if you remain in silence during prayer, you may have the ability to respond appropriately to those that suffering that God hears very clear and wants to send help directly to them through you and the grace you have received. Believe this. That is how God works through the Holy Contract as revealed in the Word of God.

So, the judge would interpret this parable in the following way: the Kingdom of Heaven is like ... a farmer who treats his inner distractions as dead things and buries them in his inner most mind which is like an inner field, so that a miracle may happen over the season of winter in which something grows out of the inner field to feed the suffering of the world.

This remains me of a funny joke. It is relevant for today. An upright man was praying - in the usual, conventional way - at the church when a flood came. Someone came and told the church goers to leave and evacuate the Church. But the upright man stayed behind because he new in God's house that he would be safe and secure. The flood got worse, and the upright man was forced to climb up into the bell tower. Another man in a row boat came by and asked the upright man if he would like to get in the boat. The upright man decided to remain praying for direct help from God. He asked God to come down and directly lift him to safety. Then the flood got worse, and the upright man was forced to climb the flag pole. A helicopter came by and the pilot asked the upright man if he would like to grab the rope and climb in to safety. The upright man said no thanks, and he continued to pray for direct help from God. The waters continued to raise up and the upright man was eventually killed. At the pearly gates of Heaven, the upright man asked God why He did not respond to his prayers. God said, "You idiot! I sent my best friends that I personally trained to directly help you. I trained them to respond to those who need help. Why did you ignore them! You are such a putz!" 'Putz' is a Jewish word for 'idiot'. So? Who are you? A servant of the suffering that is daily and personally trained by the living

God to imitate Jesus every day to serve the suffering? Do you think that governments set up all the protection safety nets for helping the suffering?

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you make your prayer pure and free from all distractions.

### ***The source of the living water***

Chapter 16: Mark this well. For in this you can see the power of contemplative love. It is more powerful than anything else. She (Mary) fastened her love and longing on to that cloud of unknowing. She learned to love Him without seeing Him in the clear light of reason or feeling His Presence in the sensible light of devotion.

*Genesis 26:19 And they dug in the torrent, and found living water.*

*Numbers 20:6 And Moses and Aaron leaving the multitude, went into the tabernacle of the covenant, and fell flat upon the ground, and cried to the Lord, and said: O Lord God, hear the cry of this people, and open to them thy treasure, a fountain of living water, that being satisfied, they may cease to murmur. And the glory of the Lord appeared over them.*

*Psalms 77:16 He brought forth water out of the rock: and made streams run down as rivers.*

*Jeremiah 2:13 For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*

*Isaiah 32:2 And a man shall be as when one is hid from the wind, and hideth himself from a storm, as rivers of waters in drought, and the shadow of a rock that standeth out in a desert land.*

*Jeremiah 17:13 O Lord the hope of Israel: all that forsake thee shall be confounded: they that depart from thee, shall be written in the earth: because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters.*

*John 7:37 - 39 And on the last, and great day of the festivity, Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink. He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Now this he said of the Spirit which they should receive, who believed in him: for as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

*In John 7:37-39, the Latin Vulgate has made us familiar with a reading that made the heart of the believer the source of the living water. "If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as Scripture says: out of his breast shall flow rivers of living waters." Hugo Rahner has shown this reading originated from Origen, and was taken over by many Greek and Latin Fathers, and it is known as the 'Alexandrian' reading. By careful research, Rahner was able to show that the older Fathers favored the 'other' reading, which is the 'Ephesian' reading, in which it is the breast of Christ that is the source of the living water.*

*Chapter 7, last paragraph of page 138 "Biblical Spirituality of the Heart" by Father J.G. Bovenmars, Missionary of the Scared Heart, Catholic priest and theologian*

*Upon honor and Cold Iron, God helping me, by these things I purpose to abide.*

*"Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer" by Rudyard Kipling, poet and author*

*It is a long time since I have attended a gathering of the scientific world - a world in which I am at home - one in which men deal with realities and where truth is, in fact, the goal. For the past ten years I have been in exile from this world and an explorer in another - a world where men substitute words for realities and then talk about the words. Truth in that world seems merely to be the avowed object. Now I undertook to reconcile the objects of these two worlds and for a time I believed that could be accomplished. Perhaps I still believe it - or perhaps it is all a dream.*

*Edwin Howard Armstrong, inventor of regeneration and FM radio, in an address to the annual convention of the Institute of Radio Engineers, Philadelphia, U.S.A., May 29, 1934*

*...we do not yet know all the basic laws: there is an expanding frontier of ignorance... Each piece, or part, of the whole of nature is always merely an approximation to the complete truth, or the complete truth so far as we know it. In fact, everything we know is only some kind of approximation, because we know that we do not know all the laws as yet. Therefore, things must be learned only to be unlearned*

*again or, more likely, to be corrected. The principle of science, the definition, almost, is the following: The test of all knowledge is experiment. Experiment is the sole judge of scientific "truth." But what is the source of knowledge? Where do the laws that are to be tested come from? Experiment, itself, helps to produce these laws, in the sense that it gives us hints. But also needed is imagination to create from these hints the great generalizations -- to guess at the wonderful, simple, but very strange patterns beneath them all, and then to experiment to check again whether we have made the right guess.*

*Dr. Richard Feynman, physicist*

When you pray contemplatively, you receive the living water from God.

Question: What does a Catholic theologian, a poet, an engineer, and a physicist all have in common?

Answer: The never ending search for the will of God. Mr. Kipling composed the poem of "Ritual calling of an Engineer" for a friend who was an engineer (engineers are considered to be applied scientists).

The poem was to serve as a 'daily' reminder that the duty of an engineer is to apply known 'scientific' laws and abide in them so that mankind can be best served. Look all round you. Your environment was shaped by engineers. All of it. The engineer works by transforming, not creating. The engineer transformed sand into electronic circuits that drive the computer you are using to read these words. Nature's 'engineer' is considered to be the beaver. The beaver is the only animal, other than man, who can shape the environment by transforming trees into devices that transform rivers into ponds. Then, the beaver transforms a living ecosystem so that animals can have a place to live. The Cold Iron that Kipling refers to is raw nature itself in its original form and the engineer transforms it into something useful. But the engineer must be mindful of the 'law' of the science that governs his activities so that the structures he assembles do not come falling down and hurt innocent people. He must check and recheck to make sure he has abided in his 'science' daily. Every day he must ask himself, "Did I abide with the laws of my science? I need to check because society depends on me to set up these structures and buildings properly. Otherwise everything falls apart and someone may get hurt."

Mr. Armstrong described "a world where men substitute words for reality and then talk about the words". We should first examine Armstrong's world of science and engineering, where people deal with realities and where truth is, in fact, the goal until it is understood what scientists and engineers are dealing with. Our words that describe their reality will not do the job adequately. Armstrong refers to the 'world' where men substitute words for reality as the 'legal' world of men, not nature. Armstrong was involved in a patent law suit and was trying to protect his invention of FM radio. Armstrong was complaining that the 'legal' world of men deal with fighting over 'words' and not with dealing with 'reality' or 'nature'. Does that remind you of anyone or group of people that you know?

Science is not nature; science is our description of nature. It is sometimes only an approximate description. Dr. Richard Feynman, a brilliant physicist and one of its best teachers conceded that as a fact. It is the recognition of patterns in nature that allow scientist to create the so-called "laws" of nature. These are in fact laws of humans, and are subject to being overthrown by the "more correct" laws of nature themselves through experimentation. So whether scientists use words or mathematical

formulae to describe natural "laws", these "laws" all are approximations and imperfect abstractions based on our imperfect observations and incomplete understanding. "Precision" defines the error, scatter or degree of uncertainty surrounding a fact. "Accuracy" is a measure of correctness or "truth". We deal with precision and accuracy in our everyday lives.

"Streams of life giving water will pour out from within anyone who believes in me". Bovenmars has identified a potential problem in scripture (actually he identified several). His research has shown that two different meanings were derived from that passage in John 7. It seems that the 'words' somehow point to two different 'realities'. The 'lawyers' could argue the point because that's what lawyers do. You need to put up some 'hard' evidence otherwise one argument is as good as the other and so both are right (for now). But, logically, both cannot point to the same reality. One does, and the other does not. That's what happens when lawyers get involved in sorting out meaning from documents. They somehow they can easily focus on the words and forget the underlying meaning behind the words, and then the inevitable results occur where there is a 'cloud' of confusion. Lawyers get paid to make confusion. Most often they cloud the issues with side issues and layer and layer it on until you cannot see the 'reality' as Armstrong was complaining about earlier.

Mr. Feynman was lucky. He could search for 'reality' of nature by seeking the 'true laws' that best describe the reality of nature. If the laws are wrong, they will be supplanted with new laws that better reflect the reality as it is. There is no dispute because the laws can be tested to see if they work as predicted. Reality does not change. It is our understanding of reality that changes. It is the understanding which is expressed as words that changes. Reality does not change. A lawyer could never argue about the 'law of nature' with Feynman because the 'laws' that Feynman uncovers can only be replaced with better 'laws' when someone is clever enough to identify them. The God of Genesis is the God of today. God does not change. He is constant. It is our understanding of God that changes, that is what changes. I seek the truth. I seek an accurate description of the 'laws' of God. I seek to be like the responsible 'engineer'. I must daily abide in those 'laws' of God so that the 'structure' of society can be improved and made better for the suffering and less fortunate of the world. I seek the truth. The only way to see if the two commandments of Jesus really work in our daily lives is to work on them and observe the results that occur. That's how physicists figure out if a 'law' of nature works or does not work: they check it out for themselves. If it works, they stick with that law, and engineers will abide in that law every day to improve and develop society by those 'laws'.

Pray. Ask Jesus for the living water during prayer.

### ***What are you looking for? Come and see***

Chapter 17: May God give you true peace, wise counsel, and His own interior joy in the fullness of grace.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Mark 12:41 to 44 And Jesus sitting over against the treasury, beheld how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And calling his disciples together, he saith to them: Amen I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living.*

*Luke 21:1 to 4 And looking on, he saw the rich men cast their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in two brass mites. And he said: Verily I say to you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast into the offerings of God: but she of her want, hath cast in all the living that she had.*

*Matthew 25:15 to 30 And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to every one according to his proper ability: and immediately he took his journey. And he that had received the five talents, went his way, and traded with the same, and gained other five. And in like manner he that had received the two, gained other two. But he that had received the one, going his way digged into the earth, and hid his lord's money. But after a long time the lord of those servants came, and reckoned with them. And he that had received the five talents coming, brought other five talents, saying: Lord, thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained other five over and above. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the two talents came and said: Lord, thou deliveredst two talents to me: behold I have gained other two. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. But he that had received the one talent, came and said: Lord, I know that thou art a hard man; thou reapest where thou hast not sown, and gatherest where thou hast not strewed. And being afraid I went and hid thy talent in the earth: behold here thou hast that which is thine. And his lord answering, said to him: Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not, and gather where I have not strewed: Thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Regarding the parable of the poor woman and her last two mites, let us attempt to understand what Jesus intended to impart to us. If we use a literal construction, we are supposed to give all our money to the Church. Give all of it and we are to remain absolutely dirt poor and penniless. Or may be if we use a metaphorical construction, when we go to Church, only take some of your money so that you can 'empty' your pockets of all your money that you have on hand at the time of donation. Or, when you are involved with the Church, give of yourself totally, time, money, energy for the good of the Church. Support the Church with all your might. Or, when it comes time to do something for the Church, do it wholeheartedly and completely, then go about your other business. Or 'the meanings that could be extracted could go on forever - all with very good and well meaning intentions'. But is it deep or meaningful enough?

Let's approach this parable with a purposive construction (in light of the two main commandments or 'laws' claimed by Jesus). The Kingdom of Heaven is like ... when you pray, release from your distractions like an old woman that releases all of her inner 'coins' so that she becomes completely empty on the 'inside' (that is not distracted by any coins), in which her coins represent her distractions and attachments to concerns of this world, so that you release these things from your inner temple

(mind and body) so that you can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven in the proper way (distractionless), so that later, you have been given His grace to abide in the second law, which is: feed the hungry, cloth the naked, comfort the suffering, etc. As you can see, there is only one purposive construction that brings out the deepest possible meaning from the parable of Jesus, in which we can wisely understand and follow and imitate the way of Jesus. This parable baffles many, but it does not baffle the contemplative.

Regarding the parable of the buried talents or coins, Jesus again desires to impart a deep meaning into us. If we use a literal construction: do not bury your money in the ground or under your mattress. At a minimum, place your money in a bank so that you can at least collect interest. Be wise about how you invest your money. Buy term insurance and invest the difference! If we use a metaphorical construction: do not bury your talents but use them. If you know mathematics, be an accountant and make lots of money. If you like teeth, be a dentist and make lots of money. If you like business, get an MBA degree and makes lots of money. It is a sin to keep you talents unused. And on it goes.

If we use a purposive construction: The Kingdom of Heaven is like ... a person who does not bury his distractions (that is keeps holding on to them) during prayer, like someone burying coins in a field, and during prayer release from your distractions and attachments so that all distractions are kept away like keeping the 'money' from being buried within your inner fields. Distractionless prayer will be worth many times more that any distractions so release from them so that you may take in His grace and you may serve the second law with the help of His grace. Again, there is only one purposive construction of this parable to imply one contemplative meaning which is a reflection of the two commandments or 'laws' that Jesus identified explicitly and distinctly and directly for us. Contemplation is more than just the 'inactive' portion or prayer of our lives. It is the daily integral combination of 'inactive' or silent prayer to God in combination with service to the suffering of the world. Contemplative prayer is not just Mary's part, but in fact it is the combination of Mary's part and Martha's part taken together. We are asked by Jesus to 'follow Him' and that means copy what Jesus does in a combined effort of both:

- A) silent prayer (like when he retreats up the quiet mountain in solitude); and
- B) 'healing' suffering people (even though we can not perform the miracles that Jesus performed, we can do something by being directly involved). The most you can hope to get from the suffering is a thank you and that's it.

When both laws are performed, something wonderful happens in your life. Our Father has much in store for those who become the apostles of Jesus in the here and now (from the parable of the buried talent: unto them, more will be given). There were 12 original apostles, but that is not the upper limit for the number of apostles. That was just the start.

Contemplative prayer is the combination. Silent prayer is not intended to be de-linked from service to the suffering. The combination of 'inactive' or silent prayer with service to the poor is the sum total of

'contemplative' prayer. Prayer de-linked from service to the suffering is not 'contemplative' prayer. De-linked silent prayer is self-centered prayer (and Thomas Merton describes this condition fully as being self-absorption).

Do the parables of Jesus mean something? Yes, and it depends on how you 'construct' them. If you have a purpose in mind, like "What do I do about that nasty person in the office" then the parables can provide some wisdom in that regard. However, the parables of Jesus provide us the deepest possible wisdom we could ever imagine if the two commandments are taken into account or taken into context when reading the parables.

"Come with me and I will teach you to catch people".

1) literal construction: I will teach you to catch people with your bare hands, in the way children play hide and seek. We will have lots of fun.

2) metaphorical construction: Become a 'registered' person of the 'cloth' and I will show you how to bring people to the church on Sundays and save them. Or, copy me and you will make lots of personal friends. Or ...

3) purposive construction: Become my apostle by abiding in God's requirement to pray silently to Him, and then you will have an ability to 'catch' the suffering people before they give up all hope. Now, its up to you.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you drink the living water during prayer in an undistracted manner.

## **Absence of self**

Chapter 15, part 1: There is such a thing as perfect humility. With God's grace, you can experience perfect humility in this life. Do not erroneously think that humility is thinking about your unhappy condition or your memory of your sinful past. Transcend everything.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat, for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Genesis 6:5 And God seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times.*

*Genesis 8:21 And the Lord smelled a sweet savour, and said: I will no more curse the earth for the sake of man: for the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth: therefore I will no more destroy every living soul as I have done.*

*Psalms 10:11 For he hath said in his heart: God hath forgotten, he hath turned away his face not to see to the end.*

*Psalms 23:3 Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in his holy place?*

*Psalms 39:9 that I should do thy will : O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart.*

*Psalms 50:12 Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels.*

*Proverbs 4:23 With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it.*

*Isaiah 14:13 And thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north.*

*Isaiah 14:14 I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the most High.*

*Isaiah 30:15 For thus saith the Lord God the Holy One of Israel: If you return and be quiet, you shall be saved: in silence and in hope shall your strength be.*

*Jeremiah 24:7 And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: because they shall return to me with their whole heart.*

*Habakkuk 2:20 But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.*

*Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.*

*Matthew 22:37 Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.*

*Silence is not the absence of sound, but the absence of self. The real purpose of prayer (in the fully personal sense as well as in the Christian assembly) is the deepening of personal realization in love, the awareness of God (even if sometimes this awareness may amount to a negative factor, a seeming absence.) Thomas Merton, "The Climate of Monastic Prayer"*

*Transcend: To pass beyond the limits; to exist above and independent of (material experience or the universe); to rise above; to pass over; to go beyond; to exceed.*

Awareness: Having knowledge or cognizance; vigilant; watchful; of elementary or undifferentiated consciousness.

Absence: state of being absent or withdrawn from a place or from companionship; inattention to things present; the state of being absent.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you keep a watchful silence during prayer.

## ***Bring yourself to the present moment***

Chapter 15, part 2: After the rust of sin is rubbed away in the Sacrament of Penance, remain humble by reminding yourself of your former sins. Jesus calls us in the Gospel to perfection when he says we are to be perfect like God is perfect, by grace which includes the virtue of humility.

*Exodus 5:9 Let the labor be heavier on the men, and let them work at it so that they will pay no attention to false words.*

*2 Chronicles 20:3 Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.*

*Psalms 44:11 Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house.*

*Isaiah 48:18 "If only you had paid attention to My commandments! Then your well-being would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.*

*Genesis 3:7 to 11 And the eyes of them both were opened: and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves aprons. And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in paradise at the afternoon air, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God, amidst the trees of paradise. And the Lord God called Adam, and said to him: Where art thou? And he said: I heard thy voice in paradise; and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. And he said to him: And who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?*

*Matthew 22:1 to 14 And Jesus answering, spoke again in parables to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son. And he sent his servants, to call them that were invited to the marriage; and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell*

*them that were invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come ye to the marriage. But they neglected, and went their own ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. And the rest laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard of it, he was angry, and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city. Then he saith to his servants: The marriage indeed is ready; but they that were invited were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways; and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage. And his servants going forth into the ways, gathered together all that they found, both bad and good: and the marriage was filled with guests. And the king went in to see the guests: and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the king said to the waiters: Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.*

*Attention is indispensable. Each time you are distracted, bring yourself to the present moment. In this manner, you practice perseverance and vigilance in prayer.*

*Tito Colliander, Collection of Eastern Orthodox Spiritual Writers*

*Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible Sun within us.*

*Thomas Browne*

Prayer is work in which you pay attention to no false words that come from distractions (Exodus 5:9).

Prayer is like a fast in which during that time your attention is turned to God and not turned to distractions (2 Chronicles 20:3).

Prayer is like forgetting all distractions, even those distractions that remind you of thy people and thy father's house (Psalms 44:11).

Prayer is paying attention to His commandments, to love God with all your mind and soul - so that your mind and soul are not distracted during that time, so that when you are undistracted, you become filled with His grace which is used to provide assistance to the needy (Isaiah 48:18).

Prayer is like being naked of all distractions in which these distractions serve by covering your body, mind and soul from interaction with God (Genesis 3:7 to 11, Matthew 22:1 to 14)

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you keep silent and undisturbed by all distractions during prayer.

## ***Come to my help, O God***

Chapter 16, part 1: A converted sinner comes to perfection most quickly through contemplation. Follow the example of the prodigal son, reach for God in the darkness of the cloud of unknowing with a humble desire for His love.

*2 Kings 8:5 And when he was telling the king how he had raised one dead to life, the woman appeared, whose son he had restored to life, crying to the king for her house, and her lands. And Giezi said: My lord O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Eliseus raised to life.*

*Isaiah 57:13 When thou shalt cry, let thy companies deliver thee, but the wind shall carry them all off, a breeze shall take them away, but he that putteth his trust in me, shall inherit the land, and shall possess my holy mount.*

*Isaiah 58:11 And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness, and deliver thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail.*

*Luke 15:11 to 32 And he said: A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country: and there wasted his substance, living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: Because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field, and when he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing: And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said to him: Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe. And he was angry, and would not go in. His father therefore coming out began to entreat him. And he answering, said to his father: Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment, and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. But he said to him: Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found.*

*. . . I am troubled by the pangs of rage, of greed, of gloom. I am drawn to scatter that gentleness which I had embraced as my own. And so if I am not to be carried off by turbulent rage into bitterness I must groan mightily and call out, 'Come to my help, O God; Lord, hurry to my rescue.'"*

*John Cassian, 5th Century*

Prayer is like leaving all worldly distractions aside while you make your way back to the Father. These distractions no longer interest you and they bring you no comforts.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you keep away from all distractions during prayer.

## ***Refuse to validate any sensation***

Chapter 16, part 2: Your contemplative prayer is a powerful love for God. Sincerely regret your sins and humble yourself during prayer.

*Numbers 23:21 There is no idol in Jacob, neither is there an image god to be seen in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the sound of the victory of the king in him.*

*Deuteronomy 4:10 to 18 From the day in which thou didst stand before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord spoke to me, saying: Call together the people unto me, that they may hear my words, and may learn to fear me all the time that they live on the earth, and may teach their children. And you came to the foot of the mount, which burned even unto heaven: and there was darkness, and a cloud and obscurity in it. And the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire. You heard the voice of his words, but you saw not any form at all. And he shewed you his covenant, which he commanded you to do, and the ten words that he wrote in two tables of stone. And he commanded me at that time that I should teach you the ceremonies and judgments which you shall do in the land, that you shall possess. Keep therefore your souls carefully. You saw not any similitude in the day that the Lord God spoke to you in Horeb from the midst of the fire: Lest perhaps being deceived you might make you a graven similitude, or image of male or female, the similitude of any beasts, that are upon the earth, or of birds, that fly under heaven, or of creeping things, that move on the earth, or of fishes, that abide in the waters under the earth:*

*Isaiah 40:18 To whom then have you likened God? or what image will you make for him? Hath the workman cast a graven statue? or hath the goldsmith formed it with gold, or the silversmith with plates of silver? He hath chosen strong wood, and that will not rot: the skilful workman seeketh how he may set up an idol that may not be moved. Do you not know? hath it not been heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have you not understood the foundations of the earth?*

*Ezekiel 7:20 And they have turned the ornament of their jewels into pride, and have made of it the images of their abominations, and idols: therefore I have made it an uncleanness to them.*

*Matthew 22:19 to 22 Shew me the coin of the tribute. And they offered him a penny. And Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him: Caesar's. Then he saith to them: Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's. And hearing this they wondered, and leaving him, went their ways.*

*In prayer, never allow an image or concept to interpose itself between you and God. Remain in God. Eject all images and concepts during prayer. He who sees nothing in prayer sees God who is invisible and incomprehensible.*

*C. Ware*

*During prayer, refuse to validate any sensation, any feelings except the sense of repentance and sorrow for your sins mixed with hope for God's mercy. The sacrifice which God finds acceptable is that of a broken spirit; a bruised and humble heart that God will never scorn.*

*I. Briantchaninov*

Contemplative prayer is the image-free prayer that God finds acceptable.

Prayer is like having no distracting idols within you (Numbers 23:21).

Prayer is like being in an obscure cloud (Deuteronomy 4:10 to 18).

Prayer is like an image-less form (Isaiah 40:18, Ezekiel 7:20).

Prayer is like letting go of a coin having a distracting image embossed thereon (Matthew 22:19 to 22).

Pray and ask Jesus to help you let go of all distractions during prayer.

### ***Peace lies in the heart of this darkness***

Chapter 16, part 3: Mary fastened her love and longing on to that cloud of unknowing and learned to love Him without seeing Him in the clear light of reason or without feeling His presence in the sensible light of devotion. She became oblivious of everything both material and spiritual during prayer.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Deuteronomy 9:16 And saw that you had sinned against the Lord your God, and had made to yourselves a molten calf, and had quickly forsaken his way, which he had shewn you:*

*Joshua 22:16 Thus saith all the people of the Lord: What meaneth this transgression? Why have you forsaken the Lord the God of Israel, building a sacrilegious altar, and revolting from the worship of him?*

*Judges 10:13 And yet you have forsaken me, and have worshipped strange gods: therefore I will deliver you no more:*

*1 Samuel 8:8 According to all their works, they have done from the day that I brought them out of Egypt until this day: as they have forsaken me, and served strange gods, so do they also unto thee.*

*2 Kings 22:17 Because they have forsaken me, and have sacrificed to strange gods, provoking me by all the works of their hands: therefore my indignation shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.*

*Ezra 9:9 For we are bondmen, and in our bondage our God hath not forsaken us, but hath extended mercy upon us before the king of the Persians, to give us life, and to set up the house of our God, and rebuild the desolations thereof, and to give us a fence in Juda and Jerusalem.*

*Jeremiah 1:16 And I will pronounce my judgements against them, touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have sacrificed to strange gods, and have adored the work of their own hands.*

*Jeremiah 2:17 Hath not this been done to thee, because thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God at that time, when he led thee by the way?*

*Jeremiah 5:19 And if you shall say: why hath the Lord our God done all these things to us? thou shalt say to them: As you have forsaken me, and served a strange god in your own land, so shall you serve strangers in a land that is not your own.*

*Jeremiah 22:9 And they shall answer: Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and have adored strange gods, and served them.*

*1 Maccabees 10:14 Only in Bethsura there remained some of them, that had forsaken the law, and the commandments of God: for this was a place of refuge for them.*

*Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

*Peace lies in the heart of this darkness. Something prompts them to keep still, to trust in God, to be quiet and listen for His voice; to be patient. A subtle and indefinable peace begins to seep into their souls and occupies them with a deep and inexplicable satisfaction that is tenuous and dark. It cannot be grasped or identified. What is it? It is hard to say: but one feels that it is "the will of God", or simply "God".*

*-- Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation, Chapter 32 The Night of the Senses*

*You should pay no attention to distractions during prayer. But when you become aware of any distraction recall very gently the presence of God and that you are in His presence and release from these distractions. Bearing the cross of distractions is often more meritorious than prayer itself for bearing and turning from all distractions unites our will with God's will.*

*-- J.P. de Caussade, Self-abandonment to Divine Providence, Letter 8*

Prayer is like abandoning all distractions such that prayer appears to our senses as an emptiness and silence (Matthew 27:46).

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you abandon and forsake all distractions during prayer so that you become dry and empty of distractions.

Pray and ask Jesus to help you imitate His prayer made on the cross which is the tree of unknowing.

### ***Hold me close to your heart***

Chapter 17, part 1: Mary turned to Jesus with all of the love of her heart. She was unmoved by what she saw or heard spoken and done about her. She sat there in perfect stillness in the cloud of unknowing.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Genesis 3:10 And he said: I heard thy voice in paradise; and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.*

*Genesis 3:11 And he said to him: And who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?*

*Genesis 22:1 After these things, God tempted Abraham, and said to him: Abraham, Abraham. And he answered: Here I am.*

*Genesis 27:1 Now Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, and he could not see: and he called Esau, his elder son, and said to him: My son? And he answered: Here I am.*

*Genesis 31:11 And the angel of God said to me in my sleep: Jacob? And I answered: Here I am.*

*Genesis 46:2 He heard him by a vision in the night calling him, and saying to him: Jacob, Jacob. And he answered him: Lo, here I am.*

*Exodus 3:4 And when the Lord saw that he went forward to see, he called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said: Moses, Moses. And he answered: Here I am.*

*Isaiah 52:6 Therefore my people shall know my name in that day: for I myself that spoke, behold I am here.*

*Isaiah 58:9 Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.*

*Matthew 16:15 Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am?*

*Matthew 27:43 He trusted in God; let him now deliver him if he will have him; for he said: I am the Son of God.*

*Mark 8:27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi. And in the way, he asked his disciples, saying to them: Whom do men say that I am?*

*Mark 14:62 And Jesus said to him: I am. And you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*

*John 8:12 Again therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying: I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

*John 6:41 The Jews therefore murmured at him, because he had said: I am the living bread which came down from heaven.*

*The eternal God asks a favor of the soul: "Hold me close to your heart."  
-- Henry Suso*

*... In this way God desires to bring utter death within you, supernatural and divine. The more your wretchedness grows, the more assured you are that God is effecting that poverty of spirit. What must you do? Nothing, other than allow God to do His work. Live like a block of wood and let God work during this silent night.*

*-- Self-abandonment to Divine Providence by J.P. Caussade, Letter 10 Mystical Death*

*Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Prayer begins by God calling for your presence, and you respond to His calling by being in the present moment with Him by saying to Him, "I am here", even though you may not literally sense His presence.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you avoid eating any distractions during prayer, in which distractions are like knowledge because you sense them.

## ***The process of subtraction***

Chapter 17, part 2: Contemplative prayer is the best and holiest part of life of a person. Do not relinquish it for anything on earth.

*Joshua 24:23 Now therefore, said he, put away strange gods from among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord the God of Israel.*

*1 Samuel 7:3 And Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying: If you turn to the Lord with all your heart, put away the strange gods from among you, Baalim and Astaroth: and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.*

*1 Kings 8:61 Let our hearts also be perfect with the Lord our God, that we may walk in his statutes, and keep his commandments, as at this day.*

*1 Kings 11:4 And when he was now old, his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.*

*1 Chronicles 22:19 Give therefore your hearts and your souls, to seek the Lord your God: and arise, and build a sanctuary to the Lord God, that the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the vessels consecrated to the Lord, may be brought into the house, which is built to the name of the Lord.*

*2 Chronicles 15:12 And he went in to confirm as usual the covenant, that they should seek the Lord the God of their fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul.*

*Matthew 3:9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father. For I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.*

*Mark 4:39 And rising up, he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace, be still. And the wind ceased: and there was made a great calm.*

*The very best and upmost attainment in this life is to remain still and let God act and speak through you. -- Meister Eckart*

*Mark 12:41 to 44 And Jesus sitting over against the treasury, beheld how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And calling his disciples together, he saith to them: Amen I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living.*

*God is not found in the soul by adding anything, but by a process of subtraction. -- Meister Eckhart*

*Matthew 3:2 And saying: Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

*I have a capacity in my soul for taking in God entirely. I am as sure as I live that nothing is so near to me as God. God is nearer to me than I am to myself; my existence depends on the nearness and the presence of God. --Meister Eckhart*

*Matthew 22:36 to 40 Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.*

*Christ has no body on earth but yours. No hands but yours. No feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless people now. -- St. Teresa of Avila*

*Matthew 22:37 Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.*

*Luke 17:21 Neither shall they say: Behold here, or behold there. For lo, the kingdom of God is within you.*

*John 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: Peace be to you.*

*Our real journey in life is interior; it is a matter of growth, deepening and of ever greater surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts. -- Thomas Merton, The Road to Joy*

*Luke 12:54 And he said also to the multitudes: When you see a cloud rising from the west, presently you say: A shower is coming: and so it happeneth:*

*Luke 21:13 And it shall happen unto you for a testimony.*

*Holiness is less a matter of what one does than of what one allows to happen. -- Anthony deMello, S.J.*

*Matthew 13:15 For the heart of this people is grown gross, and with their ears they have been dull of hearing, and their eyes they have shut: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*

*Mark 8:17 Which Jesus knowing, saith to them: Why do you reason, because you have no bread? do you not yet know nor understand? have you still your heart blinded?*

*Can one talk about the ocean to a frog sitting in a well -- or about the divine to people who are restricted by their concepts? -- Anthony deMello, S.J.*

*Matthew 15:8 This people honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me.*

*Mark 3:35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, he is my brother, and my sister, and mother.*

*John 1:13 Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

*John 7:17 If any man do the will of him; he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

*Well, there are miracles and then there are miracles. Most people think that a miracle occurs when God does someone's will. But a miracle is when someone does the will of God. – A. deMello, S.J.*

*Matthew 6:5 And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.*

*Matthew 6:16 And when you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.*

*The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it. -- John Ruskin*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you subtract all distractions until you become still during prayer.

### ***Resist much; obey little***

Chapter 17, part 3: Jesus and the incident with Mary and Martha was intended to be a lesson. Contemplation is good, and Mary chose the better part. Deeds of charity are necessary, and Martha served Christ and the Apostles. St. Thomas Aquinas says the active life is better than contemplative life because you pour out the love received during contemplative prayer. What we plant in the soil of contemplation (i.e., the silent reception of grace), we reap in the harvest of action (i.e., provide service for those in need), and the purpose of contemplation is achieved (i.e., we adhere to the will of God).

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Resist much; obey little.*

*-- Walt Whitman*

Contemplative prayer comprises:

a passive, silent portion for ingesting love and grace from God; and

an active, serving portion for pouring out the ingested love and grace to those that need help.

Resist much; obey little. What does that mean? Resist many distractions. Obey few distractions.

Whitman understands what we should be doing during contemplative prayer.

During your prayer of silence, ask Jesus to help you to resist your distractions, and to obey none of your temptations. Pray and ask Jesus to help you to 'eat' from the tree of 'unknowing', that is, eat no distractions during prayer. Eating knowledge is another way of saying that we have become distracted during prayer, our focus remains not on prayer, but of eating strange images and distractions that take us away from the here and now or God's presence. Contemplative pray is a sort of fasting from any eating. What meaning must we apply to the word 'eat'? Literal? Figurative? Purposive construction? What is the intended purpose or meaning of 'eat' as expressed in Genesis 2:17? Ponder this for today:

- to take into the body by the mouth for digestion or absorption;
- to taste or relish;
- to make one's way slowly (as in 'eating' through a complicated document).

When we are eating distractions, we are not praying.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you eat from the tree of unknowing - from the cloud of unknowing - during prayer.

### ***Eat not the fruit from the tree of the knowledge***

Chapter 18: People will unearth every kind of dire tale about others who have taken up contemplative prayer. They have nothing good to tell. Contemplatives need counsel of authentic spiritual guides.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God made. And he said to the woman: Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?*

*Genesis 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat; and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die.*

*Genesis 3:11 And he said to him: And who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?*

*Genesis 3:17 And to Adam he said: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life.*

*Judges 13:16 And the angel answered him: If thou press me, I will not eat of thy bread: but if thou wilt offer a holocaust, offer it to the Lord.*

*1 Kings 13:9 For so it was enjoined me by the word of the Lord commanding me: Thou shalt not eat bread nor drink water, nor return by the same way that thou camest.*

*Ezekiel 18:6 And hath not eaten upon the mountains, nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel:*

*Matthew 6:25 Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat: and the body more than the raiment?*

*Matthew 6:31 Be not solicitous therefore, saying, What shall we eat: or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?*

*Matthew 12:4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the loaves of proposition, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for them that were with him, but for the priests only?*

*Matthew 25:42 For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink.*

*Matthew 23:26 Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean.*

*Luke 11:39 And the Lord said to him: Now you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but your inside is full of rapine and iniquity.*

*Mark 8:2 I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.*

*Luke 22:16 For I say to you, that from this time I will not eat it, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

*John 4:32 But he said to them: I have meat to eat, which you know not.*

*John 6:59 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live for ever.*

*Acts 17:22 to 31 But Paul standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For passing by, and seeing your idols, I found an altar also, on which was written: To the unknown God. What therefore you worship, without knowing it, that I preach to you: God, who made the world, and all things therein; he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is he served with men's hands, as though he needed any thing; seeing it is he who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things: And hath made of one, all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times, and the limits of their habitation. That they should seek God, if happily they may feel after him or find him, although he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and are; as some also of your own poets said: For we are also his offspring. Being therefore the offspring of God, we must not suppose the divinity to be like unto gold, or silver, or stone, the graving of art, and device of man. And God indeed having winked at the times of this ignorance, now declareth unto men, that all should every where do penance. Because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in equity, by the man whom he hath appointed; giving faith to all, by raising him up from the dead.*

*If you really forsake your own knowledge and will, then surely and gladly God will enter with His knowledge. It is my place to remain in darkness? Yes! -- Meister Eckhart*

To eat means to ingest, to chew, to take into the body, to introduce by mouth to the body - it is the opposite of egest.

Ingerere (Latin): to bring in, especially for digestion, to breathe, to input.

Ingest: gest (Latin): gerere: the base of all words (very interesting meaning).

Ingestus (Latin) (in + gerere): to bear or to carry (oneself or something else), to take on oneself, to take charge of, to perform or accomplish, to give birth to.

Gestare (Latin), synonymous with gerere: to carry on, to wage war, to carry on a war (interesting connotation here - a 'spiritual' war - avoiding 'eating' the images floating around in your head during silent prayer).

Egest: to pass off, to expel, to discharge (something) from the body, to exhale, to output.

It is not recommended to eat dinner while watching TV. You got to pay attention to your food while you slowly chew it and taste it so that you can digest it properly. So in a similar way, when you eat from the tree of unknowing, do not watch the 'TV' images floating around in your head. When you eat, eat. When you are performing other acts, perform them with your full attention. A future posting will examine the Hebrew meanings that uphold 'eat', since the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. The first book of the Bible 'Genesis' appears to share the same root meaning as 'eat', or in

Latin 'ingerere' or merely 'gerere' as in 'gestate'. This is a very meaningful connection and deep, profound meaning.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you perform contemplative prayer comprising the cyclical steps of silently ingesting God's love, and actively egesting God's love for use by others.

Pray. Ask Jesus to bring you to an authentic spiritual guide. In the mean time, while you are waiting, read the works of the Saints, nuns, and monks.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remain in darkness where you sense and eat no distractions during prayer.

### ***Light shines in the darkness***

Chapter 19: Excuse the critics, on account of their ignorance, who find fault with contemplatives. The critics understand little of the contemplative life. Tolerate them and remain calm.

*Genesis 1:2-3 And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said: Be light made. And light was made.*

*Job 3:4 Let that day be turned into darkness, let not God regard it from above, and let not the light shine upon it.*

*Job 12:22 He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth up to light the shadow of death.*

*Job 15:22 He believeth not that he may return from darkness to light, looking round about for the sword on every side.*

*Psalms 138:12 But darkness shall not be dark to thee, and night shall be light as day: the darkness thereof, and the light thereof are alike to thee.*

*Daniel 2:22 He revealeth deep and hidden things, and knoweth what is in darkness: and light is with him.*

*Amos 5:20 Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light: and obscurity, and no brightness in it?*

*Matthew 4:16 The people that sat in darkness, hath seen great light: and to them that sat in the region of the shadow of death, light is sprung up.*

*John 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

*John 8:12 Again therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying: I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

*John 12:46 I am come a light into the world; that whosoever believeth in me, may not remain in darkness.*

*You cannot know God by your own wisdom. To know God, your own knowledge must become as pure ignorance, in which you forget yourself and every other creature. Is it your place to be in the darkness? Yes! You could do no better than to go where it is dark, that is, unconsciousness.*

*-- Meister Eckhart, Sermon 4: Eternal Birth*

Pray in darkness, that is within the kind of darkness experienced when your senses know nothing.

Swing your sword and cut off all distractions so that your senses remain in an un-understandable or

unknowing darkness (that is, you know no distractions) during prayer. God shines in your inner darkness but you will not comprehend Him in this darkness.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you pray in darkness while His light shines on you wherein His light is a light that you cannot comprehend - you will know Him not during prayer.

### ***Mercilessly cut off all distractions***

Chapter 20, part 1: Contemplatives should take little heed of what others think of them. When others complain about your contemplative prayer, do what Mary did when Martha complained; let Jesus intervene for you like He did for Mary.

*Luke 10:38 - 42 Now it came to pass as they went, that he entered into a certain town: and a certain woman named Martha, received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word. But Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering, said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things: But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

*And what of self-appreciation? Take up the sword of humility and meekness, hold it always in your hand, and mercilessly cut off the head of our chief foe.*

*E. Kadloubovsky and E. M. Palmer, The Art of Prayer, pp. 271 - 274*

Our chief foe during prayer are the distractions that come to us. Cut them all off; do not dwell with your distractions and in that way do not be troubled by many things. Only one thing is necessary: attention to no distractions. Be dead unto them; do not react with them.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you to eat from the tree of unknowing. Ask Jesus to cut off your distractions which are like foes that come to distract you during prayer.

### ***Rest in the Lord***

Chapter 20, part 2: Since Mary was occupied in spirit, Jesus replied, on Mary's behalf, to Martha, "You are busy and troubled by much - even though you do good things. But you do not perform the best type of work that you might. One thing is necessary".

*Exodus 36:5 Said to Moses: The people offereth more than is necessary.*

*Luke 10:42 But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

*Luke 14:27 to 33 And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down, and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it: Lest, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, about to go to make war against another king, doth not first sit down, and think whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that, with twenty thousand, cometh against him? Or else, whilst the other is yet afar off, sending an embassy, he desireth conditions of peace. So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple.*

Genesis (Greek): the coming into being of something, the origin. Latin, from the Greek: origin, creation, generation, from 'gignesthai': to come into being. The basic Greek verb is 'gignesthai': to be born, to beget. The 'gi' is a reduplication that was clipped off for derivatives.

Prayer is remaining in an distractionless state in which your focus is on God.

Prayer is like building a tower and knowing the cost for completing that tower is undivided effort at turning from all distractions so that the tower may be completed.

Prayer is paying attention to the condition of peace.

Prayer is like renouncing all distractions that may possess you.

Pray. Ask Jesus to show you how to taste no distractions during your prayer.

### ***What will happen when the wood is dry***

Chapter 20, part 3: And what is the “one thing necessary”? Reserve some time every day to love God above all things, above even the necessities of life. Mary had chosen the best part. And it should not be taken away from her.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*

*Genesis 18:4 But I will fetch a little water, and wash ye your feet, and rest ye under the tree.*

*Exodus 27:8 Thou shalt not make it solid, but empty and hollow in the inside, as it was shewn thee in the mount.*

*Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*

*Matthew 23:25 - 26 Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean.*

*Luke 23:31 For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*

*Revelations 22:31 "Listen!", said Jesus, "Happy are those that wash their robes clean and have a right to eat the fruit from the tree of life."*

Pray by eating from the tree of life - the tree of unknowing, which is the cross. Ask Jesus to help you pray by cleaning your 'inner' robes of all distractions and make your 'inner' wood dry during your contemplative prayer (prayer of the heart). Contemplative prayer is so powerful that it will awaken you from your walking 'death' in a manner that you will feel like you are reborn and refreshed into a new life. Praise be to God.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you become refreshed during prayer.

## ***In the depth of our being***

Chapter 21, part 1: What does did Jesus intend to mean that Mary has chosen the best part? What was His purpose? There are three parts to life: they are the good part, the better part, and the best part of life. The good part comprises works of mercy and acts of charity. This is the first degree of the active life. The better part comprises pondering or thinking of heaven, God, angles, prayers of petitions, etc. This is the first degree of contemplative life, and the second degree of active life.

*"True encounter with Christ in the word of God awakens something in the depth of our being, something we do not know was there. True encounter with Christ liberates something in us, a power we did not know we had, a hope, a capacity for life, a resilience, an ability to bounce back when we thought we were completely defeated, a capacity to grow and change, a power of creative transformation."*

*Thomas Merton, "He is Risen"*

*Prayer is learned in the hour when prayer becomes impossible and your heart turns to stone. If you never had any distractions you don't know how to pray. When your memory and imagination are persecuting you with a crowd (note: 'a legion') of useless or even evil thoughts and images, you are forced to pray better. That is why it is useless to get upset when you cannot shake off distractions. Distractions are inevitable. Kneeling and suffering under the tidal wave of wild images is the trial of contemplative life (note: like Christ suffering on the cross - imitate Christ). You profit much more by patiently resisting distractions (note: 'temptations') and learn about your own helplessness (note: 'and ask for mercy').*

*Thomas Merton, "New Seeds of Contemplation" Chapter 30: Distractions*

Pray. Ask Jesus to teach you how to pray when you reach the hour when your heart turns to stone and prayer becomes impossible.

## ***A manner that surpasses understanding***

Chapter 21, part 2: The best part is remaining in the cloud of unknowing. Jesus did not say that Mary had the best 'life', but that Mary had experienced the best 'part.'

*Exodus 20:21 And the people stood afar off. But Moses went to the dark cloud wherein God was.*

*Leave the senses and workings of the intellect, and all that the senses and intellect can perceive, and all that is not and that is; and through unknowing reach out, so far as this is possible, towards oneness with Him who is beyond all being and knowledge. In this way, through an uncompromising, absolute and pure detachment from yourself and from all things, transcending all things and released from all, you will be led towards that radiance of the divine darkness which is beyond all being. Entering the darkness that surpasses understanding, we shall find ourselves brought, not just to brevity of speech, but to perfect silence and unknowing. Emptied of all knowledge, man is joined in the highest part of himself, not with any created thing, nor with himself, nor with another, but with the One who is altogether unknowable; and, in knowing nothing, he knows in a manner that surpasses understanding.*

*St. Dionysius*

St. Dionysius uses the symbol of 'darkness' with the meaning expressed in Exodus 20:21 - The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God is. God is not called

'darkness', but He may appear to dwell in darkness because of our inability to grasp His essence or inner nature with our five senses. In other words, the darkness is our inherent limitation to sense God, and is not a darkness about God.

Pray. Ask Jesus to show you how to approach and remain in the thick darkness where God is. Be not afraid.

### ***Keep your attention on God***

Chapter 22, part 1: Sweet was the love between Jesus and Mary. She had much love for Him and He has much more love for her. Mary was not satisfied with concepts or images because they did not comfort her. Mary would not let any images hold her heart from being with Jesus.

*Leviticus 19:4 Turn ye not to idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods. I am the Lord your God.*

*Leviticus 26:1 I am the Lord your God: you shall not make to yourselves any idol or graven thing, neither shall you erect pillars, nor set up a remarkable stone in your land, to adore it: for I am the Lord your God.*

*Numbers 23:21 There is no idol in Jacob, neither is there an image god to be seen in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the sound of the victory of the king in him.*

*Jeremiah 2:6 And they have not said: Where is the Lord, that made us come up out of the land of Egypt? that led us through the desert, through a land uninhabited and unpassable, through a land of drought, and the image of death, through a land wherein no man walked, nor any man dwelt?*

*Ezekiel 14:6 Therefore say to the house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord God: Be converted, and depart from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.*

*Matthew 22:19 - 22 Shew me the coin of the tribute. And they offered him a penny. And Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him: Caesar's. Then he saith to them: Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's. And hearing this they wondered, and leaving him, went their ways.*

Idol: An image used as an object of worship. A false god. One that is adored, often blindly or excessively. Something visible but without substance. An image of a divinity; a representation or symbol of a deity or any other being or thing, made or used as an object of worship; a similitude of a false god. A material object that is worshipped as a god; "thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"; "money was his god" [syn: graven image, god]. Someone who is adored blindly and excessively [syn: matinee idol]. An ideal instance; a perfect embodiment of a concept [syn: paragon, perfection, beau ideal].

Pray. During prayer, do not let your 'inner' distractions divert your attention from the treasure that is buried within you; keep your attention on God who remains in what you perceive to be silent darkness.

### ***Not comforted by any images or distractions***

Chapter 22, part 2: Mary (of Mary & Martha) sought Jesus at the sepulcher. She would not be comforted by angels saying to her, "Weep not Mary. Jesus who you seek is risen. He is with his

disciples.” But Mary would not stop crying. Why? People that seek God are not comforted by any images or distractions - even if those images are of angels!

*Ecclesiasticus 35:20 He that adareth God with joy, shall be accepted, and his prayer shall approach even to the clouds.*

*Ecclesiasticus 35:21 The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds: and till it come nigh he will not be comforted: and he will not depart till the most High behold.*

*Matthew 5:5 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

*John 20:11 to 16 But Mary stood at the sepulcher without weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, and she saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her: Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them: Because they have taken away my Lord; and I know not where they have laid him. When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing; and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her: Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, thinking it was the gardener, saith to him: Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith to her: Mary. She turning, saith to him: Rabboni (which is to say, Master).*

Prayer is like Mary not knowing where they have placed Jesus.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you to not become comforted by any ‘inner’ distractions.

### ***The gate to life is narrow***

Chapter 22, part 3: Those who look for the truth in the gospel will find many examples of Mary’s perfect and special love that is shared with Jesus. The gospel provides many examples of accustomed sinners that truly turn and are called to contemplative prayer. Seek the gospel and you shall find these examples.

*Numbers 22:24 The angel stood in a narrow place between two walls, wherewith the vineyards were enclosed.*

*Numbers 22:26 And nevertheless the angel going on to a narrow place, where there was no way to turn aside either to the right hand or to the left, stood to meet him.*

*Matthew 7:12 to 14 All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets. Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!*

A gate is a structure that can be swung, drawn, or lowered to block an entrance or a passageway; an opening in a wall or fence for entrance or exit; the structure surrounding such an opening, such as the monumental or fortified entrance to a palace or walled city; a means of access: the gate to riches; a mountain pass.

Find the hidden examples of contemplative prayer in the gospel.

Pray. Ask Jesus to truly turn you to contemplative prayer that brings you to the gate of life - the gate to paradise - in which you become adapted to properly serve those that really need your help.

## **Return to the Almighty and humble yourself**

Chapter 22, part 4: Jesus will not tolerate anyone who speaks even a single word against contemplatives. He will directly intervene. Jesus blamed Symon Leprous when he spoke against Mary. This was great love.

*Job 22:21 to 30 Submit thyself then to him, and be at peace: and thereby thou shalt have the best fruits. Receive the law of his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart. If thou wilt return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, and shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle. He shall give for earth flint, and for flint torrents of gold. And the Almighty shall be against thy enemies, and silver shall be heaped together for thee. Then shalt thou abound in delights in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face to God. Thou shalt pray to him, and he will hear thee, and thou shalt pay vows. Thou shalt decree a thing, and it I shall come to thee, and light shall shine in thy ways. For he that hath been humbled, shall be in glory: and he that shall bow down his eyes, he shall be saved. The innocent shall be saved, and he shall be saved by the cleanness of his hands.*

*Job 23:8 - 17 But if I go to the east, he appeareth not; if to the west, I shall not understand him. If to the left hand, what shall I do? I shall not take hold on him: if I turn myself to the right hand, I shall not see him. But he knoweth my way, and has tried me as gold that passeth through the fire: My foot hath followed his steps, I have kept his way, and have not declined from it. I have not departed from the commandments of his lips, and the words of his mouth I have hid in my bosom. For he is alone, and no man can turn away his thought: and whatsoever is soul hath desired, that hath he done. And when he shall have fulfilled his will in me, many other like things are also at hand with him. And therefore I am troubled at his presence, and when I consider him I am made pensive with fear. God hath softened my heart, and the Almighty hath troubled me. For I have not perished because of the darkness that hangs over me, neither hath the mist covered my face.*

*Matthew 6:1 Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when thou dost an almsdeed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.*

*Matthew 6:5 - 8 And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not you therefore like to them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask him.*

Jesus and Job teach us about prayer - more specifically, about contemplative prayer - prayer of the heart. Job's words provide description that supports Jesus' claim to love God and love neighbor. The words from God are silent words. Prayer must be silent and mysterious. Asking God for explicit favors is not contemplative prayer. Do not be like 'them' - do not pray by uttering explicit requests to God. Pray. Ask Jesus to silence your 'inner' mouth. Remain hushed. During prayer, remain hemmed in by darkness and consent to the Thick Darkness covering your face. Be not afraid.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you not know your inner distractions.

## ***I made a cloud my garment***

Chapter 23, part 1: Conform your practice of prayer, as allowed by Grace and counsel, as revealed by the example of Mary. Have no doubt that Jesus will deal with those people who are against your daily devotion and practice. Give no more heed to those people in the same manner as Mary and Jesus will deal with them and within a few days they will feel ashamed of themselves.

*Exodus 40:33 Neither could Moses go into the tabernacle of the covenant, the cloud covering all things and the majesty of the Lord shining, for the cloud had covered all.*

*Job 38:9 I made a cloud the garment thereof, and wrapped it in a mist as in swaddling bands.*

*Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

*Luke 2:12 And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you wrap yourself up in a swaddling band of thick, dark Cloud during your prayer, in which that thick cloud prevents you from sensing any distraction.

## ***Wrapped in swaddling cloths***

Chapter 23, part 2: Jesus will also stir other people to help us maintain our daily prayer. If you turn from the world (distractions of the world) unto God, you can trust God to send you help without any help from you. Would you prefer to that God send you strength and patience to bear your 'cup of suffering' during prayer or send you abundance of bodily comforts. You can have one but not both! But which do you wish to have? Are you in doubt? Have you truly turned to God during prayer?

*Job 37:15 - 16 Dost thou know when God commanded the rains, to shew his light of his clouds? Knowest thou the great paths of the clouds, and the perfect knowledge?*

*Matthew 22:2 The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.*

*Matthew 22:11 But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless.*

*Luke 2:12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.*

Looks like the speechless man who was invited to the wedding feast did not know about the proper clothes that he should have been wearing to the wedding feast. Wear the proper garment for the occasion. During prayer, the proper garment to wear is no garment (that is, place no distractions between you and God; be naked unto God during prayer). By agreeing to pray the prayer of the heart,

you have been agreed to attend the wedding 'feast' which is your union with God. Do you now know the proper clothes to wear when you attend this special feast with God during prayer?

Pray. Ask Jesus to wrap and swaddle you in the inner silence of a cloud during your prayer.

### ***Drip upon man abundantly***

Chapter 23, part 3: Therefore, resolve your mind to copy Mary's example and choose to be humble while praying. Confine your prayer to perfection of humbleness during prayer. You need nothing else! Why? You have God in Whom all is plenty. Those who have God need nothing else in this life including your own images and thoughts!

*Exodus 16:4 And the Lord said to Moses: Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you: let the people go forth, and gather what is sufficient for every day: that I may prove them whether they will walk in my law, or not.*

*James 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth: patiently bearing till he receive the early and latter rain.*

*Job 36:28 When the clouds pour down, they drip upon man abundantly.*

*Matthew 5:48 Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Be perfect like your Father in heaven.*

*Matthew 5:45 He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

Pray. Ask the Cloud of Unknowing to send a refreshing rain on you while you pray (a rain that you cannot sense).

### ***The LORD will continually guide you***

Chapter 24: In charity, love God for Himself above every created thing (that is, the definition of 'silent' prayer of detachment to everything for a period of time), and love your fellow brothers and sisters because it is God's law.

*Isaiah 58: 5-11 Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed and for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD? Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; thou will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, and if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday. And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.*

Isaiah 58 is a foreshadowing of the two 'inter-linked' commandments of Christ. Christ's commandment to love your neighbor is intended to mean 'help the suffering'. It can seem very scary to extend help to

the suffering of the world. Imagine being footsteps behind the good Samaritan? You need to be brave to come face to face with the suffering. Most people would choose to ignore the needy and pass them by. But you can drink from the source of living water (pray contemplatively) that can give you the strength to providing help to the suffering. It is the essential law of God. Do you have faith and believe in the law of gravity? If you are wise, you pay attention to the law of gravity and you remain out of trouble. If you are unwise, you choose to ignore it and expose yourself to potential harm. Whether you believe in this law or not, the law of gravity exists. It is constant and acts everyday. If you blatantly choose to ignore the law of gravity, you could be setting yourself up for a hurtful situation. Do you have faith and believe in the 'law' of Jesus? That is: love God and love your neighbor? If you are wise, you pay attention and in fact reap many benefits (whether you know it or not). If you are unwise, you ignore this law and expose yourself to darkness and suffering. Whether you believe it or not, the law of Christ exists. It is constant and acts every day. Contemplative prayer is not meaningful when you withhold your assistance to the suffering. Isaiah's and Jesus' promise to you is not some airy fairy promise to be counted on in the afterlife or some sort of 'salvation' to be realized after you die. The salvation of Christ is something to be realize today and every day by paying attention to His commandments. Do you believe it? Do you have faith in the two commandments of Jesus? Do you have faith in the law of gravity? Jesus was not kidding around when he ends his parables with people who decide to ignore the two commandments and then are cast out bitterly into the darkness. They expose themselves to harm by ignoring the law. They will feel like they have been cast into darkness and bitterness. If you pay attention to the two commandments, then miracles happen! This story is repeated in Daniel and Isaiah and others. Do you believe? Can you pray without doing anything about providing compassion for the suffering? If you need to look further for how you can directly confront the suffering, check out your local yellow pages for 'volunteer services' and take your pick. You need not have to go to Calcutta. Can anyone stop their suffering by detachment? I don't know - maybe. What is the right way to respond to people who suffer. How about telling a homeless person "Stop your suffering and detach from your need for a roof and food for tonight." That would not be the Christian way to respond to that homeless person. Christ commands us to go and be like the good Samaritan. We must be brave and directly help the suffering. In Isaiah 58, sitting around in the ashes is not enough. We are called to serve the suffering. Many people say many things about contemplative prayer. What assumptions are they making? We are all free to choose what we want to place our faith in. But the two commandments of Jesus - like gravity - always work, whether you believe in it or not.

The parable of the olive tree and the fig tree for the children of the Kingdom of God. The olive tree ridiculed the fig tree because, while she was green all the year round, the fig tree changed its leaves with the seasons. A shower of snow fell upon them, and, finding the olive tree full of foliage, it settled upon its branches and broke them down with its weight, at once despoiling it of its beauty and killing the tree. But finding the fig tree denuded of leaves, the snow fell through to the ground, and did not

injure it at all. Those that have ears, let them hear. Contemplative prayer is like letting go of the leaves of your inner fig tree.

Receive this grace from your Lord, and listen to him when he says, "Whoever will come after me let him forsake himself." I ask you, how can a man better forsake himself and the world, and better despise them, than by refusing to think of any aspect of their being during contemplative prayer? Hate to think of anything but God himself, so that nothing occupies our mind or will but only God. Try to forget all created things that he ever made, and the purpose behind them, so that your thought and longing do not turn or reach out to them either in general or in particular. Let your thoughts go, and pay no attention to them. This is the work of the soul that pleases God.

The parable of the horse and the ass for the children of the Kingdom of God. There once was a man who owned a horse and an ass. Whenever he took trips, he tended to spare the horse and put all of the burden on the ass's back. Since the ass had been ailing for some time, he asked the horse one day to relieve him of part of his load while on a trip. "If you take a fair portion of the load," said the ass, "I'll soon get well again. But if you refuse to help me, this weight will kill me." The horse, however, told the ass to get on with it and to stop troubling him with his complaints. The ass jogged on in silence, but he was soon overcome by the weight of his burden and dropped dead in his tracks, just as he predicted. Consequently, the master came up, untied the load from the dead ass, out it on the horse's back, and made him carry the ass's carcass in addition. "That's what I get for my bad disposition!" The horse groaned. "By refusing to pull my own weight, I now have to carry all of it along with some dead weight in the bargain."

Self-centeredness is our false self. It is a false way to live in the world. By praying silently, we are training ourselves to not dwell on our self-centeredness. By responding properly to those who suffer, we are not being self-centered but we are being our true selves as God wants us to be. God gives us everything when we become our true selves. The hedge for your inner vineyard. Keep doing this work.

Endure patiently the suffering of distractions. Your sufferings will pass and God will begin to teach you His own methods by grace and through experience. Remnants of original sin will plague you to the grave despite your own efforts. In this life, you will never be without anguish. Daily strike down distractions with a two-edged sword of discernment. Never give up: do not become anxious about failing.

The parable of the hedge and the vineyard for the children of God. A son took possession of his father's estate and had all the hedges surrounding the vineyard torn down because the hedges did not bear any grapes. By tearing down the hedges, the son had laid his ground open to man and beast alike and all his vines were soon destroyed. The son realized too late that it was just as important to shield the vineyard as to possess it. For those that have ears to listen, let them listen. Contemplative

prayer is your hedge that protects your inner vineyard. Gather all your desire into a simple word that your mind can easily retain, such as 'God' or 'love'. Choose a word meaningful to you. Then, fix it in your mind so that it will remain there come what may. Keep using this word in your conflict against thoughts, and during moments of peace.

The parable of the treasure in the vineyard for the children of the Kingdom of God. A farmer, who was on the verge of death, wanted to make sure that his sons would overcome their personal quarrels and maintain the vineyard in a successful way. So he called them together and said, "My sons. I am about to depart from this life, and you will find all that I have to leave you in the vineyard." Sometime later, after the old man died, the sons set to work with their spades and plows thinking that their father had buried treasure in the ground. They turned the soil over and over again, but found no treasure. However, the vines, strengthened and improved by this thorough tillage, yielded a finer vintage that they had ever produced before.

Contemplative prayer is turning your inner field over and over again so that you can provide the finest contribution to those that need it. There is no 'literal' treasure hidden in your inner field. Faithfully pray contemplatively every day and see what becomes out pressed from you every day, like the miracle of fine grapes being out pressed from a vine!

### ***Put in all she had***

Chapter 24, part 1: Humbleness is being able to blindly remain in the cloud of unknowing during prayer while ignoring all other things that we can sense.

*Genesis 9:3 I give all to you.*

*Genesis 4:3-5 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.*

*Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4 A poor widow dropped two copper coins into the offering box. "I tell you that this poor widow put more in the offering box than the others. For the others put in what they had to spare; but she, poor as she is, put in all she had - she gave all she had to live on."*

Cain, Abel, and Jesus teach us how to pray. What does this parable of the poor widow really mean? This parable provides us with a very deep riddle wrapped in a mystery. What kind of construction (construing, understanding) shall we extract from this parable? To construe a written document would involve ascertaining the intent or purpose of the writer of that document. One must ask: what is the intention or purpose is expressed in the whole document from cover to cover? We are not to merely limit ourselves to any specific portion of the document. We need to seek a pattern that shows the intention of the writer as expressed throughout the entire document. This is purposive construction. Would it be fair to apply a literal construction to this parable? Is this parable really just about money and nothing else? Is Jesus really telling us to literally give all our money away by placing it all into the

offering box at church? What would we materially live on if we did just that? We would become materially homeless and destitute, and you might say we have then become a burden onto others. Would it be fair to apply a symbolic construction to this parable? Is the parable telling us to give something away, anything at all? Something spiritual or conceptual that we have should be given away, all of it - a type of sacrifice perhaps? But there could be many symbols of sacrifice we could swap for the 'two copper coins', such as 'love', 'patience', 'good will', and the list could go on forever! Which one would or should we choose? It just not clear, is it? There are too many items to choose from. Can you pick or guess the right type of sacrifice?

How about using a purposive construction on this parable? We have a good notion that the Bible, from cover to cover, is concerned with several major topics. More specifically the Bible is centered about a very major topic which is prayer. But is prayer a type of sacrifice? That depends on how you pray. If by prayer you mean asking God for this thing or that condition, where is the sacrifice that you make under that sort of definition of prayer? You are asking God to do all of the work, and you have to do nothing at all. Does sacrifice mean turning from all distractions from prayer - now that's work! This parable shows us how to pray the proper way. The rich man has many personal distractions which is depicted as money in the parable. When the rich man prays, he can manage to only give away or release (detach) some of his distractions (his coins), but he cannot manage to release from all of his distractions (all of his coins). In sharp contrast, the poor widow has few distractions which are depicted as two copper coins in the parable. And the few distractions that she has she can manage to release them so that she becomes poor in spirit, and she remains in a state is 'distraction-less-ness' or spiritual poverty. Jesus wants us to be poor spiritually, not poor in a literally materialistic way. But Jesus wants us to be literally spiritually poor. But He hides the meaning carefully so that you really have to think it through. Why did Jesus do this? Why would he not be clear from the get go about the nature of prayer. It's like He's making us work at understanding prayer. And maybe once we understand this parable, we'll have paid a deep price, and then maybe begin to respect this parable, and hopefully embrace this parable fully and every day. Would we have responded to the commandment to contemplative prayer of you had been told upfront (without the use of parables)? Maybe, and maybe not.

Let's examine the prayer life of Cain and Abel. Abel offered his 'creatures' which can represent distractions (often the saints write about 'creatures' that we must ignore during prayer). Abel's prayer pleased God, but Cain offered something during prayer which was not what God wanted! Jesus' parable about the two coins is about prayer of the heart. It is about giving all to God: about releasing and giving each and every one of your distractions so that God can take them away from you. God is prepared to give all to you, but are you prepared to give all (your distractions) to God during prayer?

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you sacrifice your precious inner 'coins' and give them all up. May your sacrifice of your inner 'creatures' be acceptable unto God.

## ***Nor shall you place a figured stone in your land***

Chapter 24, part 2: Charity is focusing love for God beyond all else, ignoring all else -- even your own thoughts!

*Leviticus 26:1 You shall not make for yourselves idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a sacred pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God.*

*Mark 13:1-2, Matthew 24:1-2, Luke 21:5-6 Look, Teacher! What wonderful stones and buildings. You see great buildings? Not a single stone will be left in place; every one of them will be thrown down.*

Leviticus and Jesus teach us how to pray. Is this parable literally about a lesson in civil engineering or architecture? Or is this parable metaphorically or symbolically about a philosophy of life? Or perhaps this parable is a prophecy of something to happen: about the impermanence of life itself? Or is this parable purposively about prayer? The interpretation or understanding of the intention of the writer must be extracted from the whole of the writing from cover to cover, and not in isolation from the remaining material between the covers. The buildings and stones depict distractions during prayer. Teacher, look at how wonderful these distractions are to us! The distractions are being depicted as beautiful stones assembled to form buildings and structures which we then may perceive and conceive of them as merely distractions to prayer. Jesus is teaching us to forget about or deconstruct all distractions during prayer. When you pray, remove each inner 'stone', one by one, until nothing is left behind -- and then you will find yourself within the realm of the Kingdom of God.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remove each 'inner' stone from your inner 'building' until nothing remains except the Kingdom of God.

## ***I gave my attention to the Lord***

Chapter 24, part 3: The substance of prayer is a naked intent directed unto God. Naked because there is nothing else that can satisfy you. Not even your own thoughts comfort you.

*Psalms 35:13 I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer kept returning to my bosom.*

*Daniel 9:3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.*

*Matthew 17:21 ... but this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting ...*

*Matthew 23:1-36, Luke 20:45-47, Mark 12:38-40 ... and they make a show of saying long prayers ...*

The psalmster (David), Daniel and Jesus teach us how to pray. Jesus teaches us that wordy prayers are not what we should be performing when in the presence of God. Jesus teaches us the opposite of using wordy prayers, in that our inner temples must be naked of all words, concepts, ideas, images or distractions of any type (anything which may become a distraction from prayer). You should be naked of distractions and be still when you are facing God during prayer so that God can do His Holy Work in you.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you strip all distractions (knowledge) away so that you may dwell naked in front of God like the way Adam was originally standing in front of God before Adam ate from the tree of knowledge. Come Holy Comforter for we await patiently and silently for You during prayer.

### ***Sit here at my right side***

Chapter 24, part 4: When you pray do not ask for release from pain, nor ask for increase in comforts. Ask for nothing except only to be in His silent presence.

*Psalms 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."*

*Proverbs 4:27 Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil.*

*Micah 7:19 He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

*Matthew 21:41-46, Luke 20:41-44, Mark 12:35-37 Sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your foot.*

Is this parable literally about asking God to hurt other people by stepping on them? If that is so, this parable is incongruent because we are expected to love each other, and that God is a loving God, not a hating God. Is this parable metaphorically about letting God do the job of punishing the people who treat us bad, and that it should not be our concern to judge others? If that is so, this parable is incongruent because God is a loving God, not a hating God.

Jesus' parable is 'purposively' teaching us something about prayer. In this parable, distractions are being depicted as your 'enemies'. Jesus is teaching us to pray the right way by letting or asking God to put our 'enemies', which are like distractions, under our feet, which is a place where we cannot sense or detect them during our contemplative prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to take your distractions, which are like 'enemies', and place them under your inner feet where they can no longer distract you because you cannot sense them during prayer.

### ***He will be quiet in His love***

Chapter 24, part 5: Pay no attention to your needs except to do His will. His will is for us to pray every day and to help others. Don't even pay attention to the holiest creature that God may send to you during prayer.

*Joshua 22:5 Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

*Nehemiah 1:5 I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him.*

*Zephaniah 3:17 The LORD your God is in your midst ... He will be quiet in His love.*

*Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34, Luke 10:25-28 The most important commandment is love God with all your mind and all your strength. The second most important commandment is to love others as you love yourself. Do this and you will live.*

Jesus, Joshua, Nehemiah, and Zephaniah teach us to how to pray! If you love God with all your mind and all your strength then that will mean that there remains no room in your mind for distractions during prayer. During prayer, there is 'no god' (that is, no distraction to your senses) but God. If you dwell with a distraction during prayer, have you loved God with all your heart? You will be distraction-less and your full attention dwells in and on God, which you will detect as a Thick Dark Cloud of Unknowing. Later, the love that you received from God during prayer will be spread around for others who need it because you have learned not to become distracted with your self centered-ness. You become centered on those around you.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you dwell your attention on God until there remains no room for any distractions during prayer.

*Psalm of Silence.*

*In the silence of my mind; quiet movements where I can find.*

*Lonely feeling deep inside; find a corner where I can hide.*

*Silent footsteps crowding me; here is where I learn to be.*

*Sudden darkness but I can see; nothing to satisfy me.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to come into your midst where He will be quiet in His love during prayer.

## ***My soul thirsts for God***

Chapter 24, part 6: With this prayer, charity for your neighbors becomes fulfilled. You have no special interest for anyone, kin, stranger, friend or foe. You will begin to treat everyone with equal generosity and concern, and show good will for all people.

*Exodus 3:2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.*

*Psalms 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*

*Hosea 1:10 It will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God."*

*Matthew 22:23-33, Mark 12:18-27, Luke 20:27-40 Have you not read in the book of Moses about the burning bush? The God of Abraham is the God of the living.*

Jesus, Moses, David and Hosea teach us how to pray. Is the message about landscape design and how to choose interesting shrubs for your yard, such as a burning bush? I have several burning bushes planted around my yard. They turn flaming red in the fall - very nice. Is this passage metaphorically about burning? What's burning up? Could be anything - just pick a passionate topic to get hot about! Is this passage purposively about prayer? If you were set a bush or tree on fire, what would burn up? The leaves would burn up thereby leaving a naked tree being stripped of its leaves. The leaves depict distractions that come during prayer. Leaves are like a cover between you and God

- does that remind you of Adam? The tree is depicted as people that pray. Jesus teaches us to burn off our inner 'leaves' of distraction so that we become inwardly naked when we pray in silence. During prayer, burn all of your distractions and become inwardly naked. Become like the burning bush of Moses. What is the 'God of the living'? Where does a living person exist? In the past or future? A living person lives in the present moment. When we pray, our attention is focused on the living God who exists in the present moment. Our attention is not being distracted by future or past events. Our attention is focused above and beyond (transcending) all distractions that take away from the present moment where the living God exists. Like St. John of the Cross says: "not this, not that; everything and nothing". Sometimes, words just cannot describe the experience of prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you burn off your inner distractions until you are naked of all distractions during prayer. Ask Mother Mary to bring you to perfect obedience during prayer.

### ***Sacrifice to the LORD our God***

Chapter 24, part 7: During prayer, God removes your distractions and pours His love into you. So, detach from distractions so that you do not interfere in God's way of doing His Holy Business. As a result of this Holy exchange, you end up pouring His love out for others. It is inevitable conclusion, but it is realized or manifested only through your faithful participation in daily contemplative prayer.

*Exodus 3:18 So now, please, let us go a three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.*

*Deuteronomy 23:21 When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you.*

*Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow!*

*Matthew 22:15-22, Luke 20:20-26, Mark 12:13-17 Well then, pay to the emperor (Caesar) what belongs to the emperor, and pay to God what belongs to God.*

Jesus and Moses teach us how to pray. Is this parable urging us to literally pay 'coin' or 'money' to both the government and to God. Is this literally about some sort of tax shelter scheme with beneficial implications for material or wealth creation? Is this parable metaphorically about allotting your time between working for the government and church? Is this parable purposively about prayer? Well, let us ponder this for a moment. A holy riddle for you: give to God what belongs to God; give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. What is 'what belongs'? Give exactly 'what'? Is it the same thing that God and Caesar want? Does God want what Caesar wants? The payment of money or coins represents giving or releasing our distractions. Caesar is depicted as the way of the world. The world loves its distractions. Distractions are the a thing or creature of the world, and they are not a thing for holding onto in the spiritual world. God wants payment (sacrifice) from us. He wants to take away our distractions but we must be willing to release or sacrifice these distractions (inner coins) and remain

detached from the distractions so that God can take them away from us in exchange for His love. The world acts in the opposite manner. The world (Caesar) wants to dwell in distractions (coins - Caesar wants payment of your taxes in the form of coins, and he wants to dwell with these coins). God works in the opposite way that the world works. God wants the opposite of what the world wants. God does not want us to dwell in inner coins or distractions during prayer. Let God take your distractions during prayer. Do not hold onto distractions in the way Caesar demands tax payments in the form of coins. Question: what are you supposed to give, during prayer, to God that belongs to God; and what are you supposed to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar? Answer: Give to God your distractions during contemplative prayer. Do not be like Caesar who shows us how to hold onto coins or distractions.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you release and detach from your inner 'coins', which are like distractions, so that God can fill you with His love during prayer. Prayer is the time for a Holy exchange - life does not get any better than that!

### ***Give Him His share of the harvest***

Chapter 25, part 1: If this prayer is performed perfectly so that all things are fully forgotten, then you will have deeper relations with any persons whether they are friend, foe, kin or stranger.

*Genesis 3:24 So He drove the man (Adam) out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.*

*Leviticus 19:10 Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.*

*Numbers 22:24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side.*

*Matthew 21:33-46 He will rent the vineyard out to others who will give Him his share of the harvest at the right time.*

Jesus and several angels teach us how to pray. The angel of Genesis shows us that during prayer we are to remain stationary (i.e., stationed), and we are required to swing our 'flaming sword' in every direction to cut off distractions that come during prayer because that leads to life (which is depicted as the 'tree of life'). The angel of Numbers shows us that during prayer we are to stand at attention (that is, stood in the narrow way which is the path of contemplative prayer) so that our minds do not turn away to 'this side and that side' (that is, distractions). Jesus teaches us that by praying contemplatively, we are fulfilling our obligation and eventually we provide a 'yield' of harvest (i.e., some benefit) at the right time for the benefit of the those in need.

Pray. During prayer, give Him His share of the harvest (your distractions). Ask Jesus to help you to fulfill your yield to the needy after prayer.

## ***I shall come into Your house with burnt offerings***

Chapter 25, part 2: You will be made virtuous and charitable by this prayer so that your will is directed to perform works of charity - especially when directed to help your friend, foe, kin or stranger, but especially more to foe than friend.

*Psalms 66:13 I shall come into Your house with burnt offerings; I shall pay You my vows.*

*Isaiah 56:7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.*

*Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48, John 2:13-32 My temple will be called a house of prayer. But you are making it a hideout for thieves. ... and he would not let anyone carry anything through the temple courtyards. ... and he drove the animals out of the Temple and scattered their coins. My devotion to you house burns like a fire.*

'Thieves' and 'carrying anything' are being depicted as the distractions that we dwell with during prayer. 'Driving the animals' and 'scattering the coins' are being depicted as assistance from Jesus for helping us to detach from our distractions which tempt us to dwell with them during prayer. During prayer, we detach from our distractions and offer them as our sacrifices or 'burnt offerings' which are acceptable unto God. Our distractions become burnt by our inner 'flaming swords' which we use to detach from all distractions during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to kindle a desire, which is like a burning fire, within you for the practice of daily contemplative prayer. During prayer offer your distractions as a burnt sacrifice which is acceptable unto God. Dwell in silence, not in distractions, during prayer.

## ***Be attentive to the prayer***

Chapter 25, part 3: You will not know who is friend, foe, kin or stranger. By prayer, charitable work is caused by God through you in an unbiased manner so that you bring God's love to all people on behalf of God.

*Nehemiah 1:11 O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name ... now I was the cup bearer to the king.*

*Matthew 20:20-28, Mark 10:35-45 Can you drink the cup of suffering that I must drink? Can you be baptized in the way I must be baptized? ... You must be the servant of the rest.*

Suffering represents the suffering you feel just before you detach from your precious distractions during prayer. It is very difficult to release from your distractions. Can you suffer in the way Jesus suffered on the cross? Can you be baptized in the way of prayer which Jesus demonstrated for us on the cross? If you are brave to perform this prayer, you become the servant of the rest.

Pray. During prayer call on the name of Jesus and revere His name. Ask Jesus to help you to bear to drink from your inner 'cup of suffering' in the way Jesus drank while He was nailed to the cross. To be

baptized in the way of contemplative prayer, drink distraction-less-ness, and you will become transformed into the servant of the rest.

### ***You will find rest for your souls***

Chapter 25, part 4: Follow the way Adam prayed and you will become lost (Adam covered himself in the presence of God, with distracting fig leaves); eat not from the tree of knowledge. All who pray like Jesus are saved (Jesus remained naked on the cross); eat from the tree of unknowing. A soul who prays like Jesus lives in unity with God in spirit and you become servant to the members of the community.

*Isaiah 42:16 I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, in paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them and rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, and I will not leave them undone.*

*Jeremiah 6:16 Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls."*

*Jeremiah 18:15 'For My people have forgotten Me, they burn incense to worthless gods and they have stumbled from their ways, from the ancient paths, to walk in bypaths, not on a highway.*

*Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 18:35-43 Son of David! Have mercy on me! We want you to give us our sight. The crowd scolded them and told them to be quiet. Jesus touched them and they were able to see Jesus and they followed Jesus on the road.*

Pray. Before beginning your daily devotion of contemplative prayer, ask Jesus to walk with you along the ancient silent (distraction-less) path to God.

### ***I do not know how to go out or come in***

Chapter 25, part 5: Those who are perfect disciples of Jesus pray by remaining silent in the dark cloud of unknowing. Another way to express this concept is by remaining still on the tree of unknowing for the purpose of becoming capable and ready to help their brothers and sisters without bias or preference for one person over another. For all that leave sin (distraction during prayer) and ask for mercy (help to release all distractions) is saved through contemplative prayer by pressing within the cloud of unknowing.

*1 Kings 3:7 Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.*

*Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17 Who ever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.*

The Kingdom of God is entered with childlike simplicity. You must not know or pay attention to (that is, "I am a child, and I do not know how to go out or come in") the comings or goings of all distractions during prayer. Simply detach from your distractions and do not dwell with them during prayer. Release from all distractions and offer them as an acceptable sacrifice unto God. Do not interfere with the offering of your distractions to God by dwelling with them.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you keep the simple practice of gently releasing your distractions during prayer.

## **Here I am**

*Genesis 22:1-18 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take now your son, your only son, (i.e., "your first born") whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided." Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."*

*2 Samuel 23:6 "But the worthless, every one of them will be thrust away like thorns, because they cannot be taken in hand.*

*Isaiah 5:6 "I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it."*

*Matthew 27:29 ... and after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head.*

Jesus, an angel, and Abraham teach us how to pray. A short review of key passages of Genesis 22:1-18:

1) *"Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." God said, "Take now your son, your only son, (i.e., "your first born") whom you love and ... offer him (Abraham's first born) there as a burnt offering ...*

2) *... and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar... Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.*

3) *... then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son....*

Ponder God's intended meaning as expressed in these key passages for a moment before reading any further.

... and God paid a visit to Abraham and asks Abraham to sacrifice his 'first born'. So, Abraham literally interprets the word of God to mean that he should literally kill his first born son. Abraham appears to not have taken some time to carefully ponder the meaning of God's word. Abraham appears to have assumed that God literally meant that he should kill his own son. Was that a mistake? Did God really intend for Abraham to literally kill his son? Would the living merciful God ask Abraham to commit murder of his own 'first born' as a sacrifice? Did God intend a symbolic or metaphorical meaning in His request for a sacrifice? But what could He have meant on a symbolic level? Could be anything! Maybe God have a specific purpose in Mind when He asked Abraham to 'kill your first born'? When Abraham was ready to literally kill his son, an angel appeared and told Abraham, "Wait a minute! Do not literally kill your son. Put that knife down." Why? Because that is not what God had intended.

Then Abraham saw "a ram caught in the thicket by his horns". That was not a serendipitous happening or occurrence. The angel set that scene up with the ram so that Abraham could learn about prayer. The angel tells Abraham not to literally kill your first born (that's not what was intended). That is not the acceptable sacrifice that God wants. God has something else in Mind. So, God asked Abraham to 'kill your first born'. What is God's intention here? When you pray in silence, distractions are the first things we notice and these distractions in a sense become "our first 'inner' born thoughts". God wants us to 'kill' our first inner born 'distractions' during contemplative prayer. Abraham's knife (sword) was directed to the wrong goal or target and an angel corrected him. Our 'swords' are to be 'swung' at our distractions during prayer.

Then, an angel helps Abraham 'see' (as in 'see' the spiritual understanding of the God's intentions for prayer) a 'ram caught in a thicket' which was burned as an offering. What an amazing picture to behold! When we pray, we are to notice our distractions which are like a 'ram' (i.e., a creature), catch ourselves noticing this 'ram' (i.e., a distraction that become caught in a thicket or our awareness or attention), and offer this noticed distraction as an acceptable 'burnt' offering unto God. Release and detach from the 'ram'; let the 'ram' burn up to nothingness, because what remains after the offering is burnt up is the Kingdom of God.

What is the meaning of "worthless" from 2 Samuel 23:6? The "worthless are your distractions that come to you during prayer. And you are to thrust "every one of them" like "thorns" because "they cannot be taken in hand" (i.e. do not dwell with your distractions). What is "lay it to waste" in Isaiah 5:6 Ask Jesus to help lay your distractions to "waste". Do not dwell (i.e., it will not be pruned or hoed). This prayer is difficult and sometimes this prayer will feel like "briars and thorns" that "come up". Ask Jesus to "charge the clouds to rain no rain on it" in which 'it' is your inner mind while you pray, and the 'rain' is the bombardment of distractions.

The head of Jesus is wrapped up in thorns, which means that His distractions are being caught for sacrifice. This prayer is difficult, and the intention is to direct your attention to handling distractions

during prayer which occur in your mind during prayer. Praise be to the Everlasting God who asks us to sacrifice our inner 'first born' during prayer. Jesus have mercy on us all when we ask for Your assistance to release our distractions during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you notice your inner distractions during prayer and offer them up to God as an acceptable burnt sacrifice.

### ***You do not know the activity of God during prayer***

Chapter 26, part 1: Labor within the cloud of unknowing and rest afterwards like a mother resting after having given birth. A new birth is the result of this prayer which may take awhile.

*Ecclesiastes 11:5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.*

*Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31, Luke 18:18-30 If you want to be perfect, sell everything you have ... and you will have riches in heaven; then, follow me. It is much harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. ... many who are first will be last and many who are now last will be first.*

*Matthew 27:29 ... and after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head.*

Do we need to literally sell all of our worldly possessions? Do we need to metaphorically give up our old ways and take on new ways? What ways? Do we understand the hidden message about prayer? Selling everything is a depiction of selling or releasing all of your distractions during prayer so that you become poor in the possession of distractions. In fact, become so poor that no distractions remain. A rich man is a depiction of a person who prefers to hold onto his inner riches (which are distractions) during prayer rather than releasing from all distractions and handing them over to God.

"Many who are first will be last and many who are now last will be first" What can this riddle possibly mean to a person who seeks the everlasting waters? Is this some sort of accounting scheme (FILO meaning first in last out) that we should use in our religious life? Why would I turn to the Bible to learn about accounting schemes? I turn to the Bible to learn about prayer. Those "who are first" are those people that dwell with distractions firstly in preference to releasing from all distractions (and they are treated as the 'last' in the Kingdom). While those "who are last" are those people that dwell with their distractions lastly after prayer (and they will be treated as the 'first' in the Kingdom).

But why is the message of contemplative prayer hidden in the Bible? What purpose does it serve to hide the way of prayer? It is like playing a game of hide and seek with God. If you seek God through doctrine created by man, you might just miss a glimpse of God. Does God want seekers who desire Him above all else, even above the opinions of religious experts? Maybe. God wants you via daily prayer. And if you want God, seek Him via daily prayer. You need to become sufficiently disciplined to follow His voice during and after prayer (like a sheep that follows the voice of the master shepherd). Contemplative prayer is the prayer of experience. Someone can describe it to you but that's not how to pray. That would be living vicariously through someone else. You have experience this prayer for

yourself. It's not enough to have someone tell you all about prayer or religion for that matter. You just have to experience prayer for yourself. Its experience by participation. Prayer is something you discover for yourself with help from the Bible. You do not have to rely on anyone to tell you like it is. You discover what 'it' is for yourself. Is it a satisfying experience to have someone tell you about the meal they ate last night? No really; it would be far more meaningful if you were to experience it yourself.

"and after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head". Why would this happen? In a literal sense, this is a very cruel punishment. In a metaphorical sense, this could mean anything. But in a purposive sense, the mounting of thorns on the head of Jesus tells us something about prayer and how we should pray.

Pray. Ask Jesus to mount a crown of thorns on your head so that the thorns impale all distractions during prayer, and what remains after the distractions have been all impaled is the Kingdom of God.

### ***Let my cry for help come to You***

Chapter 26, part 2: What is this new birth of love? It is love that is not brought about by your effort but it is brought about by the hand of God who is willing to work in each soul that prays contemplatively.

*Psalms 88:13 But I, O LORD, have cried out to You for help, and in the morning my prayer comes before You.*

*Psalms 102:1 Hear my prayer, O LORD ! And let my cry for help come to You.*

*Matthew 17:14-21, Mark 9:14-29, Luke 9:37-43 I do have faith but not enough. Help me more.*

*Mark 9:2-12, Matthew 17:1-13, Luke 9:28-36 A cloud appeared and covered them in a shadow and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my son - listen to him."*

Listen to the purposive meaning of the words of Jesus, and pray. Jesus shows us the way of prayer. When you are having difficulty praying in silence because the distractions are overwhelming you, ask Jesus to help you calm your distractions so that you may remain faithful to daily contemplative prayer.

### ***I am about to kindle a fire in you***

Chapter 26, part 3: What is the labor of new birth? The labor consists of placing everything under a cloud of forgetting, and letting God perform his work in you during prayer. You do your work and He does His work.

*Ezekiel 20:47-49 'Hear the word of the LORD: thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am about to kindle a fire in you, and it will consume every green tree in you, as well as every dry tree; the blazing flame will not be quenched and the whole surface from south to north will be burned by it. All flesh will see that I, the LORD, have kindled it; it shall not be quenched." Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! They are saying of me, 'Is he not just speaking parables?' "*

*Mark 8:22-25 Can you see anything? Yes. I can see people but they look like trees walking around.*

The purpose of Biblical parables is to teach us how to pray. Trees depict people and leaves depict distractions that cover you during prayer (that is, the distractions become a block or implement between you and God). God cannot deal with you when you remain attached to distractions during prayer. This is in much the same way that God could not see Adam when Adam covered himself by using a fig leaf. God did not allow Adam to remain in Paradise when Adam preferred to remain covered by leaves (distractions during prayer). When we pray, we remain naked during prayer (naked as in nothing stands or remains between you and God during prayer).

Pray. Ask Jesus for mercy and to light a Holy Fire within you during prayer so that your distracting leaves become completely consumed, burned and stripped from your inner tree so that you may remain naked and free from all distractions while you abide with God.

### ***He who reveals the profound and hidden things***

Chapter 26, part 4: Bear this labor and God will abide with you. Labor awhile and soon you will find this work less difficult. Praying in the cloud is very hard in the beginning when you have little devotion. But when you have picked up the habit of daily devotion, this work becomes easy and restful. You will feel little labor, but God continues His labor within you. Be happy and remain in the cloud and let God perform his work in you.

*Psalms 78:1-3 Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known ...*

*Ezekiel 17:1-2 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, propound a riddle and speak a parable to the house of Israel ..."*

*Hosea 12:6-10 Therefore, return to your God, observe kindness and justice, and wait for your God continually. ... I have also spoken to the prophets, and I gave numerous visions, and through the prophets I gave parables.*

*Daniel 2:22 "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things. He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.*

*Matthew 13:12-14, 34-35 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world."*

*Mark 4:11,13 ... and He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables... ... and He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?"*

*Luke 8:10 ... and He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.*

The intention of God with respect to prayer is hidden in parables. God's intention is hidden from man from the very beginning and God intention is revealed to us from the very beginning in Genesis. Do not eat from the tree of knowledge which also means that we are to eat from the tree of unknowing. Is this Biblical passage literally about a diet for weight reduction by shunning the consumption of a type of

fruit? If you still think so, this book may not literally be your cup of tea. Is this passage metaphorically be about not eating anything having do with knowledge? Perhaps this passage is purposively about not eating or consuming distractions (distractions can be like some sort of knowledge) during prayer (when you do not eat distractions during prayer, you are not dwelling with knowledge).

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you uncover and reveal the meaning of prayer that is hidden in Biblical parables that have been set from the very beginning of time, and have never changed since.

### ***Sacrifice to your God within the land***

Chapter 26, part 5: If God chooses, He may consider letting His Light shine through and pierce the cloud of unknowing. But if you bear witness to this event, you will not be able to speak of it to anyone. You will become inflamed with the fire of His love. But that remains God choice, not yours.

*Exodus 8:25 Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.*

*Job 10:13 Yet these things You have concealed in Your heart; I know that this is within You.*

*Job 3:21 ... and dig for it more than for hidden treasures ...*

*Ezekiel 37:14 I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD.*

*Ezekiel 36:26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

*Isaiah 45:3 I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.*

*Matthew 13:44 The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

*Luke 17:20-21 And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come? he answered them, and said: The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say: "Behold here, or behold there". For lo, the kingdom of God is within you.*

*John 21:3 - 6 Simon Peter saith to them: I go a fishing. They say to him: We also come with thee. And they went forth, and entered into the ship: and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them: Children, have you any meat? They answered him: No. He saith to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find. They cast therefore; and now they were not able to draw it, for the multitude of fishes.*

During prayer, we labor and catching nothing (that is, catch no distractions) and all may appears to be for naught because this is very difficult work; however, me must trust Jesus to show us the way to prayer.

Within each of us there is a very deep well and in it dwells God. By means of contemplative prayer, we can be in the present moment with God. Do you not understand the meaning of the present time? Sometimes stone and grit block the access to the well, and God remains buried and hidden beneath much like a treasure that remains hidden in a field or parcel of land. It may appear to be like this during prayer. By means of contemplative prayer, we may dig to reach Him by removing this inner grit. The

foolish maidens pray by turning their eyes heavenward and seeking God outside themselves. However, the wise maidens are those who bow and bury their heads in their hands to seek God within themselves.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remove or detach from your inner stones and dirt during prayer, in which the stones and dirt act like distractions which block and prevent your access to God Who dwells within you. What remains after all of the inner 'dirt' is detached and removed is the Kingdom of God.

### ***Open your mouth wide***

Chapter 26, part 6: It is less perilous for you to remain in the cloud of unknowing during prayer; do not wish to see God's Glory shine through this cloud. Remain in darkness during prayer.

*Psalms 81:10 I, the LORD, am your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.*

*Mark 7:31-37 Open up.*

*Matthew 15: 10-20, Mark 7:14-23 It is what comes out of you that make you unclean.*

*John 4:32 But he said to them: I have meat to eat, which you know not.*

Have you ever seen a child opening up his mouth wide open just before he receives food from his parent? Carefully notice how that child places all of his attention and anticipation in waiting for that food. Now try to distract that child. You'll see that if that child is hungry enough, nothing will distract his attention during the moment when he is about to receive his meal! This is how God wants us to pray: with focused, child-like attention and anticipation in an opened-up manner ready to receive His grace (that is, meat to eat which you know not). During prayer, distractions may come in an attempt to prevent you from ingesting His grace: the question to ask is whether you hungry enough.

Open up what? Fill my mouth with what? Opening up a bottle or a container is to let out or release or detach the inner contents from the container. The inner contents may become detached from the bottle (that is, once someone turns the container over). The bottle depicts you during prayer. The contents depict distractions during prayer. During prayer, release from your distractions and empty yourself of all distractions. But you are not really empty because God fills up this emptiness with His love which you then deliver to those in need. During prayer, what comes out of you is not good for you (these are distractions), and what goes in is good for you (that is, God's love).

A parable for the children of God: the Kingdom of God is like emptying a bottle of its inner contents and refilling the bottle with everlasting eternal waters. Is this parable literally about bottled water? Is it metaphorically about emptying anything? Or is this parable purposively about how to pray?

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you to empty your inner self of distractions so that God's grace and love can fill you up, which you then take to others that need help.

## ***Do not abandon My instruction***

Chapter 27: I will tell you who should work at prayer: all those that have forsaken the world in the active life and walk the path of contemplative life. It does not matter whether they are accustomed sinners or not.

*Leviticus 6:25 This is the law of the sin offering: in the place where the burnt offering is slain the sin offering shall be slain before the LORD; it is most holy.*

*Numbers 6:8 All the days of his separation he is holy to the LORD.*

*Proverbs 4:2 For I give you sound teaching; do not abandon My instruction.*

*Proverbs 13:14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, to turn aside from the snares of death.*

*Jeremiah 32:33 They have turned their back to Me and not their face; though I taught them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction.*

*Daniel 9:10 ... nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets.*

*Matthew 15:1-9, Mark 7:1-13 These people, says God, honor me with their words. But their heart is really far away from me, because they teach human rules as though they were my laws. You put aside God's command and obey human teachings.*

In Leviticus, we are taught to slay the 'burnt offering' before the LORD because it is most holy.

Purposively, this teaches us that during prayer, we are to burn our distractions and offer them up as burnt offerings. It is most holy to 'slay' these distractions before God during prayer.

In Numbers, we are taught to remain in separation to be holy to the LORD. Purposively, during prayer we are to remain separated from all distractions. Otherwise, how are we to understand the concept of separation? Is this literally about divorce? Or is this passage purposively about prayer: about separating from our distractions during prayer. In Job, we are taught that God's teaching is pure, and that when we pray the way God wants us to pray, we are 'innocent in Your eyes.' In Proverbs, we are taught that contemplative prayer is 'a sound teaching' and we are asked to not 'abandon My instruction' \*that is, God's instruction). Contemplative prayer is 'the teaching of the wise' which 'is a fountain of life', which means we are required, during prayer, 'to turn aside from the snares of death' in which 'death' is a depiction of dwelling with distractions during prayer.

Jeremiah teaches us that God wants us to 'turn' our faces to Him during prayer, and we are not to dwell in distractions because when we do dwell in distractions during prayer it is like we are turning our 'backs' on God during prayer. When we 'turn' out backs to God during prayer, we prevent God from filling us with His love which we are to take to those in need, and in effect we are interfering with His plans when we dwell in distractions during prayer.

Daniel teaches us that we have not 'obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets'. We walk in man made teachings, but ignore God's teaching of contemplative prayer.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus tells us to follow God's command to pray contemplatively.

Remember: when you see a man at the top of a mountain, he didn't just fall there. It is work to pray contemplatively.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you to follow God's law to pray contemplatively every day.

## ***A sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD***

Chapter 28, part 1: When may you pray contemplatively? Pray after you have cleared your conscience of past sin.

*Leviticus 22:21 When a man offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.*

*Matthew 16:21-28, Mark 8:31-28, Luke 9:22-27 Get away from me Satan. Your thoughts do not come from God. If any of you want to come with me you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me. For if you want to save your own life you will lose it; but if you lose your life, you will save it.*

Leviticus teaches us that when we pray, we must sacrifice offerings to the LORD the herd of the flock (that is, sacrifice all creatures which are a depiction of distractions during prayer). Prayer must be perfect to be accepted. There shall be no defect in prayer (that is, perfect meaning that you do not dwell in distractions during prayer). Jesus teaches us to lose our life to save it. How paradoxical can one get? This means we are to lose our life with distractions during prayer in order to gain the life that God intended for us to live after prayer. Literally, it cannot mean that we are to throw away our life.

What is the Kingdom of God is like? A beautiful woman dwelt in a certain city and she had a multitude of lovers. A great and noble man came to her and said, "Promise that you will be mine and I will wed you." She gladly promised and being his wife went to dwell with him in his palace. Afterwards, her former lovers came seeking her and found her not. When they heard that she had become the nobleman's wife, they said to one another, "If we go up to the door of the palace, it will be plain that we are seeking her, then, without doubt, we shall be punished. Let us go to the back of the palace and whistle to her, as we used to do when she was free. When she hears our whistling, she will certainly come down to us." They did as they planned, and the woman heard their whistling. Hating greatly to even hear them, she went into the inner parts of the palace and shut the door upon herself. Those that have ears to hear, let them hear the parables of the Kingdom of God.

For those that wish to understand the meaning of this parable, the woman is a depiction of the soul. The nobleman is Jesus. The palace is the body which houses the soul. The whistlers are distractions that come to disturb the soul's dwelling with Jesus in silence during prayer. Using merely words to communicate is very inefficient. Admittedly, it is more effective than no communications. But on the other hand, words can never properly express 95% of the nonverbal communication, such as: physical gestures (hand waving, eye rolling, eyebrow inflections, forehead furrows, scratching chins, disheveled

hair, and the like), or verbal inflections to accentuate the humorous or the serious side of a sentence. The text provides the content, but there is no context or framework from which to understand the content. Therefore, merely text alone is a very crude way to communicate and is a poor or an unsuitable substitute for personal face to face communications. So, we are left with the problem of understanding the words of Jesus (the content), and we must construct the context or backdrop in order to place effect on the content. The interpretation that may be placed on a textual message will depend on the context in which to frame the content.

Jesus provides us with words that define the boundaries of the law of God. But we must be careful when construing or understanding the words of Jesus, which define the boundaries of the Kingdom of God. The construction of the words of Jesus is important in order to provide a measure against which we can discern whether we are abiding or we are not abiding within the boundaries of the Kingdom of God. The difficulty in arriving at a proper balance when interpreting the meaning of the words of Jesus is that too much elasticity in the interpretation of the scope of the words of Jesus creates uncertainty (we may not clearly know where we stand). We must have enough certainty so that we know when we dwell in the promised land so that even if we are forced to wander around for 40 years in the dry desert, we would still be able to tell - with certainty - every day whether or not we abide or dwell in the Kingdom of God (the promised land) or not. One must take a purposive approach in order to identify the key elements of the boundaries of the Kingdom. The words of Jesus must be interpreted within the context of the Bible as a whole and not merely upon a mechanical or literal analysis of the words of Jesus. We must:

A) identify the key words or phrases in the words of Jesus which identifies as essential elements of the Kingdom of God; and

B) the essential elements are to be determined upon a knowledgeable reading of the whole Bible rather than on the basis of a literal interpretation of words of Jesus.

A purely literal understanding of the words of Jesus would allow people to make variations in the boundaries -- as defined by Jesus -- and thereby provide a different 'system' that remains outside of the boundaries of the Kingdom of God as intended to be identified by Jesus. A purposive construction provides the way to give proper effect to the words of Jesus.

Pray. Ask Jesus for the gift of understanding the meaning His words.

### ***Until you have paid the very last cent***

Chapter 28, part 2: During contemplative prayer, what dries up is the root and ground of sin which continues to live in the soul after confession. Cleanse your conscience before prayer.

*Genesis 42:18 And the third day he brought them out of prison, and said: Do as I have said, and you shall live: for I fear God.*

*Exodus 6:7 And I will take you to myself for my people, I will be your God: and you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brought you out from the work prison of the Egyptians.*

*Ezra 7:26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king diligently, judgment shall be executed upon him, either unto death, or unto banishment, or to the confiscation of goods, or at least to prison.*

*Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners.*

*Luke 12:58-59 For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent.*

Jesus teaches us a parable about prayer by paying very last cent before we can get out of prison. Literally, Jesus is giving us legal advice about getting out of prison. Purposively, Jesus tells us about prayer. Money is a depiction of distractions which are experienced during prayer. During prayer, Jesus tells us to 'pay every last cent' which means to release 'every last' distraction before we can exit 'prison' (if we exit prison, that means we are free from all distractions), and thereby once free of all distractions during prayer, we enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of God is like an archer who turns his eyes away from everything except his mark. A man will despise all things present as being transitory when he securely fixes the gaze of his mind on those things which are immovable and eternal. It is as when one desires to strike some mighty prize which is far off on high, and seems but a small mark to shoot at with a bow and arrow. The archer stains his eyesight while he aims at it, for he knows how great is the glory and reward which await his hitting the mark. He turns his eyes away from everything, and will look only to the mark. He knows he will lose the prize if his strained sight were turned away from the mark even a very little. Distractions during prayer act to turn your attention away from being silently present with God, and if you pay attention to the distractions, you will miss the mark!

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you pay every last distraction during prayer so that you can then enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

### ***Until it is leavened***

Chapter 28, part 3: Prayer is a lifelong labor. Eventually you will arrive and remain in the Cloud of Unknowing. But at others times of prayer, distractions continue to press in between you and God in attempts to interrupt your communion with God.

*Hosea 7:4 ... like an oven heated by the baker Who ceases to stir up the fire from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.*

*Amos 4:5 "Offer a thank offering also from that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings, make them known. For so you love to do, you sons of Israel," declares the Lord GOD.*

*Matthew 16:5-12, Mark 8:14-21 ... and be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod. Don't you understand yet? Are your minds so dull? You have eyes but you cannot see.*

*You have ears but you cannot hear. How it is that you do not understand? I was not talking to you about bread.*

*The Gospel According to Thomas: Logion 82 Jesus said, The one who is near me is near to the fire, and the one who is far from me is far from the kingdom.*

Jesus tells us that he was not literally talking about bread. In fact, we are told not to understand Him on a literal basis (presumably because that would lead to an erroneous interpretation or understanding). Well then, what was Jesus talking about? What was Jesus' purpose: his intended message? We shall apply a purposive interpretation, that is, to understand the intended purpose of Jesus from his words and find the message that is consistent and clear. The message is consistent with God's plans, and God's plans never change (from Genesis to now and tomorrow). What changes is man's perceived understanding of God, but God does not change. During prayer, do not accept any distractions which rise like yeast-laden dough as the Pharisees accepts this yeast; instead, accept the yeast of God during prayer, that is accept no yeast or eat the bread that has no yeast: beware the yeast of the Pharisees. Have you ever literally eaten the bread made with no yeast? It's dry: very dry; the way prayer should be.

A parable for the children of God: the Kingdom of God is like a baker that kneads yeast into a lump of dough and then the dough sits in silence and stillness and eventually the dough becomes transformed and rises into prepared dough which can be cooked for the hungry. In this parable of the Kingdom of God, the baker is a depiction of God, the lump of dough is a depiction of the person who prays contemplatively, the yeast is a depiction of God's love, the baker working in the yeast is a depiction of the process of contemplative prayer (the dough knows not what the baker or the yeast is doing during prayer), the prepared dough is a depiction of you who becomes transformed by God's love received during contemplative prayer so that you are made ready to bring 'nutrition' or assistance to those in need. Like Jesus says: "bring us this day our daily bread". We pray contemplatively every day so that we become prepared to deliver our assistance, our 'prepared bread', to those in need every day. If you work into you the yeast of the Pharisees, the concepts that do not come from God, you will remain a simple lump of dough which is not useful to anyone. Beware the yeast of the Pharisees. The Pharisees are a depiction of teachings that originate not from God.

The one who is near me is near to the fire, that is: near the fire that burns all distractions during prayer. And the one who is far from me is far from the kingdom, that is: sufficiently far enough so that the fire does not burn any distractions during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to knead His yeast into your inner 'lump of dough' during prayer so that you become prepared bread for those in need.

***He shall become a sanctuary***

Chapter 28, part 4: The wisdom of God is such that in the beginning, while man had control over the creatures, God permitted man to willingly turn his back on God. But now when man returns to God during prayer, he is tested with distractions. Thus each person during prayer must willingly decide to detach from all distractions or to dwell with these distractions.

*Exodus 17:6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.*

*Isaiah 50:6 I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.*

*Matthew 5:39 But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*

The Kingdom of God is like a rock being stricken unmercifully, but the rock knows nothing of what was striking itself. The rock is a depiction of a person who prays contemplatively, and the striking is a depiction of distractions that relentlessly strike the one who prays. However, to pray perfectly, you must know nothing of the striking (that is, pay no attention to the distractions).

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you imitate the rock that knows nothing about the onslaught of striking blows that come during prayer.

### ***He who loves purity of heart***

Chapter 29, part 1: Regardless of whether you have been a sinner or an innocent during your life, patiently struggle during contemplative prayer and endure the labor of prayer to gain purity of heart that was lost through sin. However, sinners will feel this suffering more than the innocents.

*Exodus 3:7 The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings."*

*Deuteronomy 21:9 "So you shall remove the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the eyes of the LORD.*

*Psalms 50:12 Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels.*

*Proverbs 22:11 He who loves purity of heart and whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend.*

*Ezekiel 16:30 Wherein shall I cleanse thy heart, saith the Lord God*

*Matthew 5:8, 10 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.*

*Mark 5:9 And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many."*

*Luke 8:30 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.*

To be pure of heart is a process of detaching from all distractions during prayer. Contemplative prayer is pure undistracted prayer. To be persecuted is to suffer and endure the legion of distractions that come to assault you while you patiently keep your attention on God during prayer. Place nothing between you and God during prayer; be naked in front of God, the way Adam was naked standing

before God before Adam ate from the 'tree of knowledge'. Place nothing between you and God and do not follow Adam's example by placing something, such as a fig leaf (a distraction), between yourself and God during prayer. When you pray, 'eat from the tree of no knowledge', which means knowledge is an activity full of distractions that should be avoided between you and God during prayer. Be still of body, mind and soul during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to make your heart pure and free from the legion of inner distractions that come during prayer.

### ***For God alone my soul waits in silence***

Chapter 29, part 2: However, some hardened or habitual sinners have arrived at perfect contemplative prayer (that is, placing nothing between you and God during prayer) sooner than those that have never sinned grievously. God lavishes His grace on those He chooses, and the world stands in bewilderment.

*Psalm 25:4-6 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation; for thee I wait all the day long.*

*Psalm 62:4-6 For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.*

*Psalm 69:2-4 I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.*

*Isaiah 25:8-10 Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*

*Isaiah 30:17-19 Therefore, the LORD waits to be gracious to you; therefore, he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.*

*Isaiah 64:3-5 From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides thee, who works for those who wait for him.*

*Hosea 12:5-7 "So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.*

*Micah 7:6-8 But as for me, I will look to the LORD, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.*

*Luke 12:37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself {to serve}, and have them recline {at the table}, and will come up and wait on them.*

Grid: To prepare for action; to summon up one's inner resources in preparation for action; to surround; to encircle, or encompass; to prepare; to make ready; to equip; as, to gird one's self for a contest.

The Kingdom of God is like a master that finds his servant waiting in patient alertness for the presence of the master; and the master rewards the servant with a feast.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you wait patiently in full alertness on the presence of God during prayer.

### ***Worship the Lord and serve Him only***

Chapter 29, part 3: Some who are despised and held in contempt shall reign in splendor with His saints. And perhaps some who have never grievously sinned and who outwardly appear as pious shall find themselves in misery among the damned.

*Isaiah 46:5-7 Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship!*

*Jeremiah 13:9-11 These evil people, who refuse to hear my words, who stubbornly follow their own heart and have gone after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be like this waist cloth, which is good for nothing.*

*Matthew 4:10 Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.*

*Matthew 15:9 And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men.*

*John 4:20 Our fathers adored on this mountain, and you say, that at Jerusalem is the place where men must adore.*

Jesus teaches us to pray. When tempted by distractions during prayer, remember to not adore those distractions, but rather to continue adoring God in silence so that with His grace that He has given you during prayer, you may then properly serve others.

Pray. Ask Jesus to bring you to proper worship of the living God in silence in which there is nothing interposing between you and God.

### ***Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing***

Chapter 29, part 4: In this life, no man is capable of judging another as good or evil simply on the evidence of their deeds. The deeds are another matter which may be judged as good or evil, but the person should not be judged.

*Psalms 109:31 For He stands at the right hand of the needy, to save him from those who judge his soul.*

*Isaiah 11:3 And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears.*

*Jeremiah 34:15 Although recently you had turned and done what is right in My sight, each man proclaiming release to his neighbor, and you had made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name.*

*Matthew 6:3 But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*

*Matthew 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

*Luke 6:37 And judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released:*

*John 8:33,36 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free?'" ... So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*

What is my right and left hand doing without the knowledge of either? Is this some sort of riddle or advice intended for circus jugglers and the like? Or perhaps this is advice intended for contemplatives!

How can we understand or interpret the meaning of these words? Literally? Metaphorically? Symbolically? Purposively? The Kingdom of God is like turning your back on paying attention to the distractions (or judging and condemning others because ultimately, that's a distraction too) by releasing these distractions in favor of inner poverty during prayer. When we dwell with distractions during prayer we are not suitably prepared for intimacy with our Father.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you to not judge or condemn others and to release all distractions so that you can be free to be intimate with God during prayer. What remains when you are free of distractions is the Kingdom of God.

### ***The Lord has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud***

Chapter 30, part 1: There are people who can judge another person's life. Those who have responsibility for the spiritual good of others can rightfully censure the deeds of man. A man may officially receive this power through the church, or where possible through the Holy Spirit, may inspire an individual well established in prayer and love to assume this office.

*Exodus 19:9 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever."*

*Exodus 24:16 The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.*

*Exodus 24:18 Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.*

*Exodus 34:5 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD.*

*Job 21:14 They say to God, 'Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Your ways.'*

*Job 36:4 For truly my words are not false; one who is perfect in knowledge is with You.*

*02 Samuel 22:12 "And He made darkness canopies around Him, a mass of waters, thick clouds of the sky.*

*1 Kings 8:12 Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud."*

*Psalms 18:12 From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds.*

*Isaiah 18:4 For thus the LORD has told me, "I will look from My dwelling place quietly, like dazzling heat in the sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."*

*Jeremiah 4:13 "Behold, he goes up like clouds, and his chariots like the whirlwind.*

*Ezekiel 10:3 Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple when the man entered, and the cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD.*

*Matthew 17:5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"*

*Mark 9:7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"*

*Luke 9:34 While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!"*

What is the symbol for Christian enlightenment? The rose. Why? The outer peddles of the rose peel off to expose the inner peddles, which in turn become peeled off until eventually what is left behind after all peddles have been peeled away is nothing but God. Peddles are a depiction of our concepts or knowledge. The means for knowing God is by means of self-abandonment (that is, by not personally knowing) of imaginative or conceptual knowledge of anything during prayer: we abandon all knowledge during prayer. This is sometimes referred to as a 'dark knowledge' of God. God is unknowable and a mystery. The Kingdom of God is like rose peddles peeling away from a rose bud and what is left behind after all peddles have all been peeled away is God. Let nothing stand between God and you during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you peel off your distractions during prayer so that you remain with God.

### ***Lay down his life for his friends***

Chapter 30, part 2: However, every man must be careful to avoid monitoring the faults of others, for he may be liable to error. It is another matter in contemplation when a man is really inspired to speak out.

*Matthew 5:39 But I say unto you, not to resist evil; but whoever shall strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other.*

*Luke 12:33 Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.*

*John 15:13 Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

*A certain brother once asked the abbot Poeman saying, "What is this word which the Lord says in the gospel, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend?' How may one do such a thing?" Poeman answered, "Perhaps a man may hear from his friend some word which insults and angers him. Perhaps it is in his power to speak back to his friend in like manner. If then he chooses to endure in silence - if he does violence to himself, being fully determined to speak no angry word, not any word to hurt or vex the other --- then, verily, this man lays down, in sacrifice, his life for his friend."*

*The Wisdom of the Desert, J.O. Hannay (1906)*

But I say unto you, not to resist distractions; but whatever distractions shall strike thee on thy right cheek during prayer, turn to those distractions also the other cheek. Ignore all distractions and resist any interaction with them entirely during prayer.

Sell all your distractions and give them freely away; make yourselves something that does not wear out: an unfailing presence during prayer, which is like a treasure where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

Greater love than this no man hath, that a man forgets his distractions surrounding his friends, especially during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you to avoid being disturbed by careless people and to avoid judging the carelessness of other people during prayer and during the day so that your prayer can be perfect and

free from disturbances and distractions so that your attention remains, during prayer, on the Everlasting Treasure that has been laid up within you by God.

### ***Serve Him with a perfect and most sincere heart***

Chapter 30, part 3: And so I warn you, think twice about passing judgment on the lives of others. In the privacy of your own conscience judge yourself as you see fit before God or your spiritual director, but do not meddle in the lives of others.

*Genesis 17:1 And after he began to be ninety and nine years old, the Lord appeared to him: and said unto him: I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be perfect.*

*Deuteronomy 18:13 Thou shalt be perfect, and without spot before the Lord thy God.*

*Deuteronomy 33:8 Thy perfection, and thy doctrine be to thy holy man, whom thou hast proved in the temptation.*

*Joshua 24:14 Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him with a perfect and most sincere heart: and put away the gods which your fathers served in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.*

*1 Kings 11:4 And when he was now old, his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.*

*Job 4:6 Where is thy fear, thy fortitude, thy patience, and the perfection of thy ways?*

*Job 37:16 Knowest thou the great paths of the clouds, and the perfect knowledge?*

*Psalms 100:6 My eyes were upon the faithful of the earth, to sit with me: the man that walked in the perfect way, he served me.*

*Luke 8:14 But that that fell where the thorns were, these are they who having heard go away and are choked under cares and riches and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.*

Be perfect during prayer, that is be without distraction before the Lord thy God. Prove your perfection by resisting all tempting distractions. During prayer be perfect and have a most sincere heart by putting away all distractions and this way you serve the Lord. Become like a cloud during prayer in which you perceive nothing.

Those that fall because of distractions, these are they who having heard go away and are choked under distractions of life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the manner of perfect prayer, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.

What is the means for bringing forth fruit? How does a tree bring forth fruit? In just one day, does the tree just pop out the fruit from its branches? The fruit matures slowly over time. Contemplative prayer is the means for maturing and bringing forward your fruit of perfection. The Kingdom of God is like a tree having its fruit bearing from its branches, the fruit slowly matures and what remains after the fruit reaches its perfection is the Kingdom of God.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remain as still as a tree while your inner fruit matures and become ready for perfection.

### ***Naked and barefoot***

Chapter 31, part 1: When you feel you have done your best to amend your life according to the Laws of the Church, give yourself earnestly to contemplative prayer. And if the memory of your past sins or the temptation to new sins should plague your mind, forming an obstacle or distraction between you and God, crush them beneath your feet and bravely step beyond them.

*Genesis 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.*

*Genesis 3:10-11 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"*

*Isaiah 20:2-3 ... at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips and take your shoes off your feet." And he did so, going naked and barefoot. And the LORD said, Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token against Egypt.*

*Mark 14:49-52 "Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures." And they all left Him and fled. A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.*

Distractions are like perception with your eyes and you see and know these distractions. Be naked of all distractions. Covering yourself with distractions during prayer is not how to pray. Do not eat any knowledge during prayer. Become like a young man that wears nothing and escape naked from all distractions during prayer.

Jesus teaches us to pull free from our inner 'sheet of linen' that shields us from God so that we can escape from all distractions and be 'naked' unto God during prayer. It's what God wanted from us since the beginning with Adam. Are we so dull that we do not understand what God wants from us?

Pray. During contemplative prayer, ask Jesus to pull away your inner 'sheets' which are like a distraction which keep you shielded from God, so that when all of the sheets of distractions have been pulled away it is like you have escaped from them so that nothing but nakedness exists between you and the Kingdom of God.

### ***Do not know the activity of God***

Chapter 31, part 2: Bury the thoughts of past sins beneath the thick cloud of forgetting as though you never had done those sins. If they persist in returning, your must persist in rejecting them. As often as they rise up you must put them down.

*Exodus 10:26 "Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the LORD our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know*

*with what we shall serve the LORD."*

*Note: when you pray, remain in a condition of not knowing with what to serve God. Merely be present to God and remain in a state of unknowing during prayer and let God take care of the rest.*

*1 Kings 3:7 "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.*

*Note: when you pray, become like a child that does not know anything and let the Master directly teach you how to pray contemplatively Matthew 18:3 "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven.*

*Psalms 82:5 They do not know nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.*

*Note: when you pray contemplatively, the foundations are shaken.*

*Ecclesiastes 9:5 For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten.*

*Note: remain in a condition of 'do not know' during contemplative prayer, much like the 'dead' that know nothing and memory is forgotten; 'let the dead bury the dead'.*

*Ecclesiastes 11:5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.*

*Note: remain in a condition of 'do not know' during contemplative prayer.*

*Ecclesiastes 11:6 Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.*

*Note: pray contemplatively morning and night.*

*Isaiah 42:16 "I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, in paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them and rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, and I will not leave them undone."*

*Note: a very poetic way to describe what happens to you during contemplative prayer.*

*Isaiah 44:18 They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.*

*Note: a very poetic way to describe what happens to you during contemplative prayer.*

*Jeremiah 1:6 Then I said, "Alas, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth."*

*Note: when we pray contemplatively, we are to not speak internally or externally.*

*Jeremiah 5:4 Then I said, "They are only the poor, they are foolish; for they do not know the way of the LORD Or the ordinance of their God.*

*Jeremiah 8:7 "Even the stork in the sky knows her seasons; and the turtledove and the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration; but My people do not know the ordinance of the LORD.*

*Note: what ordinance? The ordinance is contemplative prayer performed daily.*

*Jeremiah 9:3 "They bend their tongue like their bow; lies and not truth prevail in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know Me," declares the LORD.*

*Note: to know God is through the path of unknowing which leads to the Kingdom of God.*

*Jeremiah 33:3 'Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'*

*Note: what mighty things? During prayer, what God says and does is not made known to us explicitly and therefore we remain in a condition of 'do not know' during contemplative prayer.*

*Hosea 5:4 Their deeds will not allow them to return to their God. For a spirit of harlotry is within them, and they do not know the LORD.*

*Note: 'What deeds'? Not praying contemplatively is the deed that does not allow you to return to God - rather stated in a positive sense, praying contemplatively allows you to return to God, like the Prodigal son returning to his father.*

*Micah 4:12 "But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD, and they do not understand His purpose; for He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.*

*Note: Gathered 'what' to the threshing floor? Naturally, God gathers 'distractions' from you during prayer ... distractions are like sheaves which God gathers onto the threshing floor so as to remove them from you - if you consent during prayer. Do not understand His purpose during prayer, but merely consent to this condition during prayer.*

*John 3:5-8 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

*Note: during prayer, remain unknowing, like you would not know from where the wind comes from and where it is going.*

The key phrase used throughout these biblical excerpts is 'do not know'. Now you know.

Pray. Ask Jesus to teach you to enter the state of unknowing during prayer, that is a state of not knowing any distractions. For when all of the distractions have been removed, what remains is the Kingdom of God.

### **Apply the sword**

Chapter 31, part 3: If you become tired you could be tempted to investigate methods of the occult crafts to help you control your distractions and interfering thoughts. Believe me, techniques for controlling your thoughts are best learned from God through experience than from any man in this life.

*Genesis 3:24 And he cast out Adam; and placed before the paradise of pleasure Cherubims, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

*Job 40:14 He is the beginning of the ways of God, who made him, he will apply his sword.*

*Psalms 34:3 Bring out the sword, and shut up the way against them that persecute me : say to my soul : I am thy salvation.*

*Jeremiah 17:8 For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit.*

*Note: this is an example of contemplative prayer, like being a tree planted by the water.*

*Jeremiah 44:27 Behold I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Juda that are in the land of Egypt, shall be consumed, by the sword, and by famine, till there be an end of them.*

*Ezekiel 5:17 And I will send in upon you famine, and evil beasts unto utter destruction: and pestilence, and blood shall pass through thee, and I will bring in the sword upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it.*

*Matthew 3:10 For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.*

*Matthew 10:34 Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword.*

*Luke 2:35 And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.*

God shows us how to pray by applying the sword to remove all distractions during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to lay His sword at your distractions during prayer, and keep axing all these distractions until nothing remains except the Kingdom of God.

### **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven**

Chapter 32, part 1: Distractions will press on you to interrupt your prayer. Try to look over their shoulders and seek God Who is enclosed in a cloud of unknowing. If you do this I think that within a short time you will find this prayer easier. I think that this method is a longing desire for God. Such a desire is charity.

*Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.*

*Matthew 5:1-11 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,*

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

*Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.*

*He who does not have attention (sobriety, silence of heart) in himself does not guard the mind, cannot become pure in heart and so cannot see God.*

*He who does not have attention in himself*

*cannot be poor in spirit,*

*cannot weep and be contrite,*

*nor be gentle,*

*nor hunger and thirst for righteousness,*

*nor be merciful,*

*nor a peacemaker,*

*nor suffer for righteousness' sake.*

*St. Simeon the New Theologian, Writings From the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart, Translated by E. Kadloubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer*

Verily, I say unto you, it is impossible to acquire any virtue in any way except through the of prayer of attention, the prayer of the heart. The Holy Bible is like a diamond of the highest purity and clarity, the diamond having a plurality of individually polished facets providing excerpts and sayings, and from each polished facet passes a single message of light from a single Light Source, and the message is about contemplative prayer in which you may become transformed into a suitable vehicle for assisting the unfortunate, the lonely, the sick, and the dying.

### ***Slay them in my presence***

Chapter 32, part 2: When distracting thoughts come to dwell with you during prayer, try to pretend that you do not notice their presence or when they come to strike turn your cheek away from them so that they do not come between you and God.

*Exodus 25:30 You shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.*

*Note: 'set the bread of the Presence on the table' is prayer of the present.*

*Exodus 33:14 And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."*

*Note: pray for rest and silence from all distractions during prayer.*

*Leviticus 10:2 And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.*

*Note: what dies during prayer? Your distractions die.*

*Judges 5:5 The mountains quaked at the presence of the LORD, this Sinai, at the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel.*

*Job 17:12 They make night into day, saying, 'The light is near,' in the presence of darkness.*

*Note: 'in the presence of darkness' means dwelling with God in silence during prayer.*

*Psalms 41:12 As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and You set me in Your presence forever.*

*Note: 'you set me in your presence' means being in the present moment with God during prayer.*

*Jeremiah 4:1,3 "If you will return, O Israel," declares the LORD, "Then you should return to Me. And if you will put away your detested things from My presence, and will not waver. For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, "Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns.*

*Note: 'do not sow among the thorns' means do not dwell in distractions during prayer.*

*Luke 19:27 "But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence."*

*Note: what is 'slay'? Your distractions during prayer are slayed.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to slay all distractions during prayer.

### ***Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand***

Chapter 32, part 3: Look beyond the distractions as if you were looking for something else. Beyond them, God remains hidden in a dark cloud of unknowing. Do this and you will not worry about the distractions. This is called the yearning for God, which is a longing to be with God. A desire like this is love and it brings peace.

*Job 6:8 Oh that my request might come to pass, and that God would grant my longing!*

*Note: ask God to develop your longing for Him.*

*Amos 5:18 Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, for what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light;*

*Note: 'the day of the Lord' is contemplative prayer because it will be darkness to you -- like a dark cloud -- and you will perceive nothing but darkness and it will appear that this prayer does not serve you - but it does in ways you'll never know.*

*Isaiah 6:9 He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.'*

*Note: during prayer, we are to perceive nothing, understand nothing, dwell in what we perceive to be nothing, but in reality it is God hidden in a cloud.*

*Matthew 27:55 Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him.*

*Note: the women look from a distance like viewing a cloud from a distance, over and beyond their distractions.*

*Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."*

*Note: 'putting your hand on the plow' is committing to contemplative prayer and plowing your 'inner field'. When you 'look back', you are looking at distractions, and, therefore, are not focused on God within the cloud or rather more specifically within your inner 'field'.*

*Indeed, for loving God alone and hating oneself more than anything, and desiring to be despised by others we do not require external work or physical strength, but rather physical solitude, the labor of the heart, and peace of mind so that, as it were, by labor of the heart and the disposition of the inmost mind, one may rise up, casting off from oneself lower and physical things, and so soar up, ascending to things heavenly and divine.*

*Chapter 15, ON CLEAVING TO GOD, St. Albert the Great*

Pray. Ask Jesus to develop a sincere desire and longing for contemplative prayer.

### ***Let your enemies be scattered***

Chapter 32, part 4: When you feel utterly exhausted from struggling with your distractions during prayer, say to God, "It is futile to fight against them any longer; I commend myself to God in the midst of my enemies, and I admit my impotence at dealing with my distractions." And in doing this you make yourself available for God. Be authentic and it will show that you know who you are: a miserable and defiled creature that is less than nothing without God. This is demonstrable humility.

*Numbers 10:35 Then it came about when the ark set out that Moses said, "Rise up, O LORD ! And let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You."*

*Deuteronomy 20:4 ... for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.*

*Deuteronomy 23:14 Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.*

*Joshua 21:44 And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them;*

*Judges 5:31 "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD; but let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might." And the land was undisturbed for forty years.*

*Psalms 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for your feet.*

*2 Samuel 7:1 Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest on every side from all his enemies,*

*Matthew 22:44 The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool?*

*Mark 12:36 For David himself saith by the Holy Ghost: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool.*

*Luke 20:42-43 And David himself saith in the book of Psalms: The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool.*

*The wicked one, on the watch, carried me off as booty as I lazily slept. He led my mind into error; he plundered my spirit and snatched away the wealth of Thy grace, this arch robber. So raise me up, as I am fallen, and summon me, Savior, Thou who dost will that all men be saved.*

*Kontakia of St. Romanos, A Prayer.*

*I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, "What can get through from such snares?" Then I heard a voice saying to me, "Humility."*

*St. Anthony the Great*

*You cannot destroy the passions on your own, but ask God, and He will destroy them, if this is profitable for you.*

*St. Anatoly of Optina*

*An old man was asked, 'How can I find God?' He said, 'In fasting, in watching, in labors, in devotion, and, above all, in discernment. I tell you, many have injured their bodies without discernment and have gone away from us having achieved nothing. Our mouths smell bad through fasting, we know the Scriptures by heart, we recite all the Psalms of David, but we have not that which God seeks: charity and humility.*

*Apophthegmata Patrum*

*Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honour your patience.*

*St. John of the Ladder*

Pray. Ask Jesus to scatter your enemies which are distractions during prayer.

### ***But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit***

Chapter 32, part 5: When you remain in humility of knowing who you really are, God will hasten to you and revenge Himself on His enemies.

*Leviticus 16:31 It is to be a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls; it is a permanent statute.*

*Leviticus 23:27 On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the LORD.*

*Numbers 29:7 Then on the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall humble yourselves; you shall not do any work.*

*Deuteronomy 8:2 You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*

*Deuteronomy 8:3 He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.*

*Deuteronomy 8:16 In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.*

*2 Chronicles 7:14 ... and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

*2 Chronicles 12:7 When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, "They have humbled themselves so I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some measure of deliverance" ...*

*Proverbs 16:19 It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.*

*Isaiah 66:2 For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word."*

*Matthew 11:29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.*

*Matthew 18:4 Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.*

*Matthew 23:12 Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.*

*Luke 14:11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

*Luke 18:14 I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

*Humility is the only thing we need; one can still fall having virtues other than humility -- but with humility one does not fall.*

*Elder Herman of Mt. Athos*

*When you are praying alone, and your spirit is dejected, and you are wearied and oppressed by your loneliness, remember then, as always, that God the Trinity looks upon you with eyes brighter than the sun; also all the angels, your own Guardian Angel, and all the Saints of God. Truly they do; for they are*

*all one in God, and where God is, there are they also. Where the sun is, thither also are directed all its rays. Try to understand what this means.*

*St. John of Kronstadt*

*Our holy fathers have renounced all other spiritual work and concentrated wholly on this one doing, that is, on guarding the heart, convinced that, through this practice, they would easily attain every other virtue, whereas without it not a single virtue can be firmly established.*

*St. Symeon the New Theologian*

*Let it be plainly understood that we cannot return to God unless we enter first into ourselves. God is everywhere, but not everywhere to us. There is but one point in the universe where God communicates with us, and that is in the center of our own soul.*

*Archbishop Ullathorne: "Humility and Patience," 19th C.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to become humble enough during prayer to stop paying attention to your distractions.

### ***For I am aware of their sufferings***

Chapter 33, part 1: I encourage you to keep on praying like this. If you cannot master these techniques immediately, patiently endure the suffering of distractions during prayer. But your suffering will pass and God will teach you His own methods by grace and through experience. The remnants of original sin will plague you despite your efforts at prayer.

*Exodus 3:7 The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings."*

*Note: God sees your 'suffering' through prayer, He sees your 'inner' taskmasters, which are your distractions during prayer.*

*Isaiah 13:8 They will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them; they will writhe like a woman in labor, they will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame.*

*Note: during prayer, the anguish of dealing with distractions can be terrible, but in prayer, you are in labor, and eventually your face becomes aflame once you can deal with the distractions.*

*Matthew 4:24 The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.*

*Note: Jesus can heal the suffering of distractions experienced in prayer.*

*John 16:21 Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world.*

*Note: once you can deal with the distractions, you will forget how hard it was when you labored over them.*

*If you are praised, be silent. If you are scolded, be silent. If you incur losses, be silent. If you receive profit, be silent. If you are satiated, be silent. If you are hungry, also be silent. And do not be afraid that there will be no fruit when all dies down; there will be! Not everything will die down. Energy will appear; and what energy!*

*St. Feofil, the Fool for Christ*

*Even if an angel should indeed appear to you, do not receive him but humiliate yourself, saying, 'I am not worthy to see an angel, for I am a sinner.'*

*Apophthegmata Patrum*

*Love sails me around the house. I walk two steps on the ground and four steps in the air. It is love. It is consolation. I don't care if it is consolation. I love God. Love carries me all around. I don't want to do anything but love. And when the bell rings it is like pulling teeth to make myself shift because of that love, secret love, hidden love, obscure love, down inside me and outside me where I don't care to talk about it.*

*Thomas Merton*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you through the suffering of distractions during prayer.

## ***Be devoured by the sword***

Chapter 33, part 2: On account of original sin, you will be tempted every day and you must respond with cutting them down with the two edged sword of discernment. Experience in this life will teach you that there is no lasting peace with distractions.

*Isaiah 1:20 "But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

*Note: if 'distractions' rebel against you during prayer, use the sword and cut them off.*

*Isaiah 14:19 "But you have been cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch, clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword, who go down to the stones of the pit like a trampled corpse.*

*Note: the 'slain' are distractions slain and pierced with a sword during prayer, and once they are slain, they are cast like stones into a pit.*

*Isaiah 21:15 For they have fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow and from the press of battle.*

*Note: they are 'distractions' which flee from the sword during prayer.*

*Isaiah 27:1 In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, with His fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea.*

*Note: He (God) will 'kill the dragon' which are like distractions which live in the 'sea' or rather which live deep inside you (like a dragon living deep inside the sea) during prayer.*

*Isaiah 37:7 "Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land."*

*Note: God calls us to contemplative prayer within our inner land or body. God will make the 'distractions' to fall by His sword during prayer.*

*Isaiah 49:2 He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; And He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver.*

*Note: God remains hidden in a shadow holding a sword, in the quiver of an arrow, both of which are used to kill distractions during prayer.*

*Jeremiah 12:12 "On all the bare heights in the wilderness destroyers have come, for a sword of the LORD is devouring from one end of the land even to the other; there is no peace for anyone.*

*Note: the sword devours 'distractions' during prayer there is no peace when it comes to killing distractions with God's sword: note what stands at the entrance of the Garden of Eden a flaming sword because that is the way back into the Garden, rather the Kingdom of God.*

*Jeremiah 14:13 But, "Ah, Lord GOD !" I said, "Look, the prophets are telling them, 'You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place.' "*

*Note: the sword of God is not a literal sword, rather a spiritual sword by which peace is reached by killing distractions during prayer.*

*Matthew 10:34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*

*Note: Jesus brings the sword of God to cut off distractions during prayer.*

*Luke 18:1 And he spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint.*

*We should zealously cultivate watchfulness, my brethren; and when, our mind purified in Christ Jesus, we are exalted by the vision it confers, we should review our sins and our former life, so that shattered and humbled at the thought of them we may never lose the help of Jesus Christ our God in the invisible battle.*

*St. Hesychius the Presbyter*

*When the blessed Eulogius saw an angel distributing gifts to the monks who toiled at all-night vigils, to one he gave a gold piece with the image of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to another a silver piece with a cross, to another a copper piece, to another a bronze piece, and to another nothing. The others who had remained in the church, left the church empty-handed. It was revealed to him that the ones who*

*had obtained the gifts are those who toil at vigils and are diligent in prayers, supplications, psalms, chants, and readings. Those who received nothing or who left the church empty-handed are those who are heedless of their salvation, are enslaved to vainglory and the clamors of life, and stand feebly and lazily at vigils and whisper and jest.*

*St. Joseph of Volokalamsk*

What does it mean to 'pray always'? Does this literally mean that we must pray around the clock? It means that when we pray we are to avoid submitting ourselves to any distraction by just praying. By praying always, there is no room for any distraction. No matter how often we are faced with distractions during prayer, we begin again and continue until we arrive at the total silence of all distractions.

Pray. Ask Jesus to bring God's sword to your so that you can cut off all distractions during prayer.

### ***I cannot perceive Him***

Chapter 33, part 3: But never give up and never become overly anxious about failing. By grace and the techniques I have taught you, you will overcome any temptations, and they will hinder your growth very little.

*Job 9:11 Were He to pass by me, I would not see Him; were He to move past me, I would not perceive Him.*

*Job 23:8 Behold, I go forward but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him.*

*Note: during prayer, Job teaches us to perceive nothing.*

*Psalms 73:17 Until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end.*

*Note: David teaches us 'I perceived the end' of what? Naturally, the end of 'inner distractions' is perceived in prayer.*

*Isaiah 6:9 He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.'*

*Note: Isaiah teaches us to perceive nothing during prayer.*

*Isaiah 64:4 For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.*

*Note: Isaiah teaches us to wait for God by not perceiving or knowing anything during prayer.*

*Matthew 13:14 And the prophecy of Isaias is fulfilled in them, who saith: By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand: and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive.*

*Mark 4:12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand: lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.*

*John 12:40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*

*A man may seem to be silent, but if his heart is condemning others, he is babbling ceaselessly. But there may be another who talks from morning till night and yet he is truly silent, that is, he says nothing that is not profitable.*

*Abba Pimen*

*Those who have truly decided to serve the Lord God should practice the remembrance of God and uninterrupted prayer to Jesus Christ, mentally saying: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*

*St. Seraphim of Sarov*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you not perceive any distractions during prayer. Remain non-receptive to any distractions during prayer.

### ***Your eyes will behold your Teacher***

Chapter 34, part 1: If you asked me exactly how to go about praying contemplatively, I would be at a loss for words. All I can say is that I may God teach you Himself. For in all honesty, I can say is: I do not know. And no wonder because for God does as He pleases and paradoxically no one can pray without His help. God chooses to work in those who have been habitual sinners rather than those who, by comparison, have never grieved Him at all. God is free to work as, where and when He pleases. We can only ask Him to show us the path of prayer, and the rest is up to Him.

*Deuteronomy 4:1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgements which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.*

*Note: 'possession of your land' is possession of your mind free from distractions.*

*Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

*Isaiah 2:3 And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

*Isaiah 30:20 Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher.*

*Isaiah 48:17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, Who leads you in the way you should go."*

*Note: God prepares you during prayer so that He leads you the way you should go.*

*Luke 11:1 It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."*

*Note: Pray. Ask Jesus to teach you to pray in the silence of your inner mind free from distractions.*

*Luke 7:41-42 A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?*

*What we need is a little labor! Let us endure this labor that we may obtain mercy.*

*St. Dorotheus of Gaza*

*Self-accusation before God is something that is very necessary for us; and humility of heart is extremely advantageous in our lives, above all at the time of prayer. For prayer requires great attention and needs a proper awareness, otherwise it will turn out to be unacceptable and rejected, and 'it will be turned back empty' to our bosom.*

*Martyrius of Edessa*

What does the moneylender parable mean? On a literal interpretation, this parable is about advice for moneylenders and the like; and if you are not a moneylender, this parable is not important to you. On a metaphorical basis or interpretation, this parable is about God loving sinners more than people who are basically good and do little or next to no sin. But why would God do that? Why is money used to depict the amount of sin we have, and that we are unable to repay to cover for those sins? I wonder in amazement that anyone would believe that God loves sinners more than basically nice people.

Somehow, that just goes against intuition. I will pick an example to illustrate the absurdity of this metaphorical interpretation. Let's pick Jesus, who is without sin, and also pick the people who had a hand in physically murdering Jesus. If we follow the metaphorical interpretation of this parable, God loves those murderers more than Jesus. This would contradict the Bible in which God tells us that He 'is well pleased with His son (that is, Jesus)' and tells us to 'Listen to my son (Jesus)'. God never says "I am well pleased with the murderers of my son, Jesus". No, I think this metaphorical interpretation is not just right.

On a purposive interpretation, this parable is consistent with the message provided by the whole Bible, that the Bible provides the message of contemplative prayer from "Eat not from the tree of knowledge" (that is, from Genesis) to "become like trees and drink from the living streams of water" (that is, to Revelations). We have discussed before that money depicts "distractions" which we will experience during prayer.

A moneylender (that is, God) had two debtors (that is, people who pray): one owed five hundred denarii (that is, one person will experience 500 distractions during prayer and should give them all up, that is: he sort of owes them, to God during prayer), and the other fifty (that is, the other person will experience 50 distractions during prayer which he will attempt to give them all up – in a sense he owes them - to God). When they were unable to repay (that is, they could no longer pray any longer: they reached their limit, and perhaps there were more distractions that each still owed, etc), he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more? (He loved them both for giving up their distractions, but He favors the one that gave up the most).

This parable is telling us that if and when we release from our distractions during prayer, God loves us. The more distractions we release, the better. God is pleased with people who release the most or better yet all of their distractions during prayer. If you can manage to release some distractions and commend them into the hands of God, so much the better and God loves you for this and forgives your sin of dwelling with distractions before you release them unto God. Jesus has reached perfection in prayer and God proclaims to the world, "With Jesus I am well pleased". Jesus is the most perfect and obedient servant and we must follow His example in prayer.

However, if you do not like the meaning I have ascribed to Luke 7:41-42, then choose a meaning for this parable that best brings you to God.

Pray. Ask Jesus to bring you strength to persist in daily contemplative prayer, like the kind of persistent strength depicted in the parable of the widow who daily asked the judge to hear her case: do not give up your daily efforts. May we learn from what Jesus was trying to convey to us via His parables.

***The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness***

Chapter 34, part 2: A person who lacks the aptitude and capacity to receive His grace could never gain it through his own efforts. For this gift is free; it is not given for innocence nor is it withheld (not withdrawn) for sin.

*Jeremiah 31:2 Thus says the LORD, "The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness-- Israel, when it went to find its rest."*

*Note: use the sword to cut off distractions during, and ask for God's grace in your inner 'wilderness' which is free from all distractions.*

*John 1:17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.*

*Note: Jesus teaches us how to pray in which we may receive God's grace to deal with distractions during prayer.*

*This is the mark of Christianity--however much a man toils, and however many righteousneses he performs, to feel that he has done nothing, and in fasting to say, "This is not fasting," and in praying, "This is not prayer," and in perseverance at prayer, "I have shown no perseverance; I am only just beginning to practice and to take pains"; and even if he is righteous before God, he should say, "I am not righteous, not I; I do not take pains, but only make a beginning every day."*

*St. Macarius the Great*

*O, all you who thirst, learn that you have not far to go to find the fountain of living waters; it flows quite close to you in the present moment; therefore hasten to find it. Why, with the fountain so near, do you tire yourselves with running about after every little rill? These only increase your thirst by giving only a few drops, whereas the source is inexhaustible.*

*ABANDONMENT TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE, Chapter 2, Section 9; Jean Pierre de Caussade, S.J.*

Use the sword to cut off all distractions during prayer. Ask for God's grace in your inner 'wilderness' which is to remain free from all distractions during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to show you how to use the sword to remove all distractions during prayer.

### ***You were faithful with a few things***

Chapter 34, part 3: Beware of pride. If you were really humble you would understand what I am trying to say. Contemplative prayer is God's gift and wholly gratuitous. No one can earn it. Those that receive this gift receive the aptitude for prayer. Without God's grace, a person would not desire for this prayer for very long. Only God can provide the desire for this prayer. But persist and become faithful to this prayer until it becomes your whole life.

*1 Samuel 2:35 'But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always.*

*Note: how will the faithful priest be raised up? Via contemplative prayer.*

*Proverbs 25:13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his masters.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is like ... the cold of snow after which the spring time comes to refresh the soul.*

*Isaiah 26:2 Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter, the one that remains faithful.*

*Note: the gate to the Kingdom is open to those who are faithful in contemplative prayer.*

*Ezekiel 18:9 If he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully -- he is righteous and will surely live," declares the Lord GOD.*

*Note: 'to deal faithfully' is faithfully praying contemplatively.*

*Hosea 2:20 And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD.*

*Note: 'betroth in faithfulness' is performed during contemplative prayer, in which we come to know*

God during prayer by unknowing or detaching, releasing or forfeiting every single distraction that comes to us during prayer, and what remains after all distractions are gone is the Kingdom of God.

Jonah 2:8 *Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness.*

*Note: contemplative prayer pays no regard to vain 'idols' which are inner distraction during prayer.*

Matthew 25:21,23 *His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'*

*How strict and detached were the lives the holy hermits led in the desert! What long and grave temptations they suffered! How often were they beset by the enemy! What frequent and ardent prayers they offered to God! What rigorous fasts they observed! How great their zeal and their love for spiritual perfection! How brave the fight they waged to master their evil habits! What pure and straightforward purpose they showed toward God! By day they labored and by night they spent themselves in long prayers. Even at work they did not cease from mental prayer. They used all their time profitably; every hour seemed too short for serving God, and in the great sweetness of contemplation, they forgot even their bodily needs.*

*Chapter 18; THE IMITATION OF CHRIST by Thomas a Kempis*

*Question: When is a person sure of having arrived at purity? Answer: When s/he considers all human beings are good, and no created thing appears impure or defiled. Then s/he is truly pure in heart.*

*Isaac of Nineveh, Ascetic Treatises*

Since you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Faithful with 'few things' means that you'll be faithful to few distractions (ideally no distractions) during daily contemplative prayer, which is the prayer of spiritual poverty or the prayer of 'few things'.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you become faithful with a few 'things' or rather faithful in attention to no distractions during prayer.

### ***The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light***

Chapter 35, part 1: All who aspire to contemplation should read, think and pray for understanding. Those who do not make an effort to ponder God's word should not be surprised that they are unable to pray.

*Acts 4:36-37 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

*Acts 5:1-5 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.*

*Matthew 4:16 The people that sat in darkness, hath seen great light: and to them that sat in the region of the shadow of death, light is sprung up.*

*Matthew 13:44 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field. Which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*

*Matthew 19:21 Jesus saith to him: If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me.*

*Having withdrawn from the palace to the solitary life, abba Arsenius prayed and heard a voice saying to him, "Arsenius, flee, be silent, pray always, for these are the source of sinlessness." A brother in scetis went to ask for a word from abba Moses and the old man said to him, "Go and sit in your cell*

*and your cell will teach you everything." Abba Nilus said, "The arrows of the enemy cannot touch one who loves quietness; but he who moves about in a crowd will often be wounded."*

*If you desire to think, to write, and to speak like the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Saints, you must give yourself up, as they did, to the inspirations of God. O unknown Love! it seems as if Your wonders were finished and nothing remained but to copy Your ancient works, and to quote Your past discourses! And no one sees that Your inexhaustible activity is a source of new thoughts, of fresh sufferings and further actions: of new Patriarchs, Apostles, Prophets, and Saints who have no need to copy the lives and writings of the others, but only to live in perpetual abandonment to Your secret operations. We hear of nothing on all sides but "the first centuries," "the time of the Saints." What a strange way of talking!*

*Chapter 2, Section 9: ABANDONMENT TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE, Jean Pierre de Caussade, S.J.*

Who sits in the land and shadow of death? Those who pray contemplatively sit in darkness, in which death is becoming dead involvement with distractions. What happens to those who 'sit in darkness'? Ah! A great light shines upon them! The Light of God which comes from His Kingdom, perhaps once you have shown you can be faithful during prayer.

Referring to Acts 5:1-5, what does this parable mean? On a literal interpretation, it means we must literally give all of our possessions and wealth to the Church, and hold nothing back; well then, I'm doomed if that is the case! On a metaphorical interpretation, we must not hold back from contributing to the Church; but 'hold back' exactly what? That could be anything from holding back your 'religious attitude' to 'money' to just about anything. Someone could just very well pick any meaning to be ascribed to this parable. But, this parable should have one clear and distinct meaning, not just any meaning that someone can ascribe to it, but only the meaning that God may ascribed to it. On a purposive construction or interpretation, this parable is about prayer. This parable teaches us to hold back 'nothing' when we pray, or rather to hold on to no distractions - to eat from the tree of unknowing as it were. We are told to release (be free) from all of our distractions and remain completely detached from them during prayer: to watch the distractions but do not be tempted to interact with them. This goes with the parable of selling everything, that is sell all distractions so that you no longer hold any in your possession during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you rest and sit in darkness so that a great light may shine upon you.

### ***Our inner man is being renewed day by day***

Chapter 35, part 2: A mirror can reflect your appearance. When a person discovers dirt on his appearance, he goes to wash it off. When a person sees himself reflected in scripture, then he goes to wash off his sins via confession. When a person sees a tendency to sin reflected in scripture, then the well he must seek is God and the water he must apply is contemplative prayer.

*Joshua 1:13 "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God gives you rest and will give you this land.'*

*1 Kings 5:4 "But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune.*

*Isaiah 30:15 For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength."*

*2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is like water you use to wash and renew yourself every day. Its a question of spiritual hygiene.*

*Mark 4:12-13 so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN." And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?*

*So consider yourself as already dead since there is no doubt that you have got to die. And as a final thought let this be the test for you of whether any thought, word or action of yours is of God, whether you are made more humble because of it, more inward and more recollected and established in God. If you find it is otherwise in yourself, you should be suspicious about it, whether it be not according to God, unacceptable to you and not to your benefit.*

*ON CLEAVING TO GOD, St. Albert the Great*

*The Master was exceedingly gracious to university dons who visited him, but he would never reply to their questions or be drawn into their theological speculations. To his disciples, who marveled at this, he said, "Can one talk about the ocean to a frog in a well -- or about the divine to people who are restricted by their concepts?"*

*Anthony de Mello, SJ*

*"I have no idea of what tomorrow will bring, so I wish to prepare for it." "You fear tomorrow -- not realizing that yesterday is just as dangerous."*

*Anthony de Mello, SJ*

Pray. Ask Jesus to lead you to desolation of spirit during prayer, an inner desolate desert in which you perceive nothing because God cannot be perceived, and rest with God.

## ***The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension***

Chapter 35, part 3: Read the word of God, ponder it, give serious time to reflect on His words, and you will be in a better position to practice genuine contemplative prayer. Man does not live on bread alone, but by the very words that proceeds forth from the mouth of God.

*Ephesians 4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.*

*Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Note: The peace of God is experientially realized during contemplative prayer, and by no other means. It 'surpasses all comprehension' in a cloud.*

*Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.*

*Note: 'keeping alert' is paying attention to nothing during prayer, rather being alert and watchful but unattached to all things during prayer.*

*Luke 4:33-35 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm.*

*Abba Ammonas was asked, "What is the "narrow and hard way?" (Mt. 7.14) He replied, "The "narrow and hard way" is this, to control your thoughts, and to strip yourself of your own will, for the sake of God. This is also the meaning of the sentence, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you." (Mt. 19.27)*

Ephesians 4:14 tells us that we are not to be tossed and carried about by the wind of doctrine created by man. Rather, we are to be 'carried' by the doctrine of God - that is, the doctrine of 'eat not from the tree of knowledge - or rather 'eat from the tree of unknowing' which we have come to understand as contemplative prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you resist temptation of distractions which act like demons to take your attention away from God during prayer.

### ***A well of water springing up to eternal life***

Chapter 36, part 1: Those who faithfully practice contemplative prayer experience sudden intuition or obscure certainty. For example, they will suddenly be aware of their sins but without having made any effort to realize this through reading or other means. Insight like this is more divine than human in origin.

*1 Timothy 4:16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.*

*Note: 'pay close attention to yourself' is paying attention not to distractions during prayer.*

*2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*

*Note: 'sound doctrine' is 'not eating from the tree of knowledge'. 'Turning aside to their own desires' is turning to distractions during prayer.*

*John 4:14 ... but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.*

*The fly that touches honey cannot use its wings; so the soul that clings to spiritual sweetness ruins its freedom and hinders contemplation.*

*St. John of the Cross*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you find the inner well of water springing up eternal life from within you during prayer.

### ***Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest***

Chapter 36, part 2: At this point, you might be inclined to stop pondering your fallen nature or God's goodness and that you are drawn by grace to contemplative prayer. For then it is sufficient to focus your attention and watchfulness on a simple word, and without the intervention of any other thoughts or distractions allow yourself to experience directly Reality. DO not use logic or examine or explain this word nor ponder the anything (you might think that this may possibly increase your love). Reasoning never helps in contemplative work. This is why I advise you to leave or detach from your words altogether.

*Hebrews 4:11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.*

*Note: what 'rest'? 'Rest' is contemplative prayer. What is 'not one will fall'? Fall from where? When you dwell in distractions during prayer, you 'fall' down. What 'same example of disobedience'? Adam*

provides the example of 'disobedience'. Adam 'falls'. Adam dwells in 'knowledge' during prayer. God tells Adam to 'not eat from the tree of knowledge'. Adam was disobedient.

James 4:6 *But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."*

*Note: The proud are people who are too proud with their own thoughts and prefer to remain dwelling with their own thoughts and distractions during prayer. Those who 'humble' themselves during prayer and avoid dwelling with distractions and thus remain detached from even their own thoughts are given 'grace'.*

Matthew 11:28-29 *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS."*

*Note: 'weary and heavy-laden' with distractions during prayer.*

Matthew 12:43 *"Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it."*

*Note: 'unclean spirits' are those that cannot find 'rest' and rather cause distractions.*

Mark 6:31 *And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while."*

*If you wish to find out whether you are addicted to the passion of gluttony (or any other, for that matter), you can find it out in the following manner. If food (or anything else) captures your thought so that you cannot resist it, you are a glutton. If you are not possessed by it and partake freely of all kinds of food to the extent your body requires it, you are not a glutton. . . . passionate attachment to anything should always be avoided, for it does harm to the soul.*

*St. Barsanuphius*

Pray. Ask Jesus to bring you rest during contemplative prayer.

## ***Draw near to God and He will draw near to you***

Chapter 36, part 3: When people look at you praying, they should not see any change in your expression and you remain calm and composed. Appear relaxed and peaceful even though distractions come and go; let the distractions come and go and refrain from dwelling with them.

*James 4:7-10 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

*Note: Resist the devil' is to refrain from dwelling with distractions during prayer. 'Purify your hearts' is to remain in a state of detachment while praying. 'Humble yourself' is to be humble enough to forget the temptations to dwell with distractions during prayer - they are not important so pay no attention to them, and let them pass by.*

*1 Peter 4:12 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.*

*Note: to pray contemplatively is to suffer in the flesh, because this work can be difficult. But when you toil in this prayer, you are in a state of no sin because you have learned to resist the lusts provided by distractions during prayer.*

*Proverbs 22:11 He who loves purity of heart and whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend.*

*Note: "purity of heart' is remaining in purity by not dwelling with distractions during prayer. Who is the 'king'? What is 'to love purity of heart'? God is a friend to a person who loves contemplative prayer. And what if a person does not love to pray contemplatively? Although I'm sure that God never stops loving or caring for anyone, contemplatives are God's 'close & best' friends.*

*Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

*Note: how is God seen? In various instances, God is detected as a cloud and remains hidden and unknown to observers. God is not seen in the literal sense. Behold, God is 'seen' in contemplative prayer, when you are 'pure' (pure as in untouched by distractions during prayer).*

*Matthew 17:5 & Mark 9:7 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"*

*Luke 9:34-35 While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!"*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you purify your heart so that you remain untouched and not tempted to dwell with distractions during prayer.

### ***Hush, be still, and the wind died down and it became perfectly calm***

Chapter 37, part 1: The skilled contemplative does not use intellect and reasoning. Beginners in contemplative prayer use their intellect for understanding what is contemplative prayer. The experienced contemplative experiences insights of truth without the help of any intellectual process. The experience contemplative are wholly spontaneous and not dependant on specific methods of preparation. The contemplative does not neglect liturgical worship of the Church because he (she) has the highest regard for the liturgy.

*Job 4:16 It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance; a form was before my eyes; there was silence, then I heard a voice.*

*Psalms 4:4 Tremble, and do not sin; meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.*

*Psalms 139:18 If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.*

*Jeremiah 47:6 "Ah, sword of the LORD, how long will you not be quiet? Withdraw into your sheath; be at rest and stay still.*

*Mark 4:39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to bring you into an inner stillness, untouched and unaffected by all distractions during prayer.

### ***His voice was like the sound of many waters***

Chapter 37, part 2: Contemplatives rarely pray with words and when they do, they use few words. The fewer the better. And a single, short word is more suitable for this work than longer words. During prayer, the contemplative holds himself in continued, focused alertness on a single point in complete detachment from dwelling with distractions. He notices the distractions coming and going and remains detached from them in spirit.

*Deuteronomy 5:24-26 You said, 'Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die. For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?'*

*Note: What is 'heard His voice from midst of the fire'? What fire? Oh, that's the fire that burns from within you when you pray contemplatively. Its the fire that 'burns' all distractions. Its also the 'sword' that cuts off all distractions. And when that inner 'fire' burns from within, His voice is 'heard' - what ever that means (as we shall see later...). Do we die when we hear the voice of God? Is it a literal death or*

*a metaphorical death, or a purposive death? When we pray contemplatively, we listen to His voice and in the process our old self dies and something 'new' is born - you become 'born' again through contemplative prayer.*

*Deuteronomy 13:4 "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.*

*Note: How do we listen to the voice of God? Is this a voice we can understand. Or is it the voice that is understood via the way of unknowing? God's intention is clearly stated in Genesis "do not eat from the tree of knowledge" which can be taken to mean 'eat from the tree of unknowing'. We can hear 'His Voice'. How do we cling to God? During contemplative prayer, we cling in silence to Him. What is 'His Voice'? Maybe it is a 'No Voice' (a Voice which is not understood in a direct, intellectual sense). Maybe, if you hear or detect a voice when praying, it is not really from God, but rather it is merely a distraction that has come to dwell with you. It is safer to remain detached from all 'voices' that come to you during prayer, and let God do what He does - you'll not know what He does during your time of prayer, but we know we are to remain 'still' and detached from distractions. Let's see what else the Bible has to say about the 'Voice'.*

*Isaiah 40:3 A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Note: 'make smooth in a desert' is a phrase for 'contemplative prayer'. All distractions are ignored and a 'smooth' path is cleared in your inner 'desert', a path detached from distractions and intellectualizations.*

*Isaiah 50:10 Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*

*Note: 'walks in darkness and has no light' is the condition of contemplative prayer. During prayer, rely on a short prayer, the name of God. To obey His Voice is to remain silent and detached. This is His Mysterious Will that we do during prayer. We can make conjectures, but in the final analysis, we are to remain in a state of 'unknowing'. Even Jesus said many 'false prophets' will come. These 'false prophets' are distractions which get in the way of prayer.*

*Jeremiah 42:6 "Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we will listen to the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, so that it may go well with us when we listen to the voice of the LORD our God."*

*Note: 'whether it is unpleasant or pleasant' is telling us that contemplative prayer can be at times pleasant and at other times unpleasant. Being still for 30 minutes may or may not be a pleasant activity because we are learning to remain detached from distractions. It is sometimes not an easy thing to master, and so we ask for assistance during prayer.*

*Ezekiel 10:5 Moreover, the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when He speaks.*

*Ezekiel 43:2 ... and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.*

*Note: 'like the sound of many waters' or 'the sound of the wings of the cherubim' means that God's voice is not understood by us in a knowing way (a way in which we can know what it means directly via the intellect), but rather the voice of God is understood in an unknowing way, which is via contemplative prayer. The Voice of God is incomprehensible as 'the sound of wings or the sound of many waters'. Understand?*

*Mark 5:7 & Luke 8:28 ... and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!"*

*Note: When Jesus is present, distractions or the cause of the distractions cannot bear to hear His voice and they flee and bother you no longer during prayer.*

*Pray. Ask Jesus to use His Incomprehensible Voice to scare off your inner distractions during prayer.*

## ***I set a fire in Egypt***

Chapter 37, part 3: For example, when a person is terrified, he focuses his energy into one cry for help. He is not given to many words and instead focuses his strength into one cry: 'Help!' And with focused effort, he effectively arouses attention and assistance.

*2 Samuel 22:7 In my distress I called upon the LORD, yes, I cried to my God; and from His temple He heard my voice, and my cry for help came into His ears.*

*Psalms 22:19 But You, O LORD, be not far off; O You my help, hasten to my assistance.*

*Psalms 102:1 Hear my prayer, O LORD ! And let my cry for help come to You.*

*Note: Why are you crying for help or assistance during prayer? Because you want to be able to remain detached from distractions during prayer.*

*Isaiah 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD !*

*Note: What is 'rely on horses and chariots from Egypt because there are many and strong'? These are the distractions that come during prayer, and they can be strong and numerous enough to distract you from inner silence during prayer.*

*Ezekiel 30:8 And they will know that I am the LORD, when I set a fire in Egypt and all her helpers are broken.*

*Note: What is 'set fire to Egypt'? What 'helpers are broken'? Contemplative prayer is setting the Holy Fire within you, a fire which burns all distractions during prayer, so that what remains after everything is burned is the Kingdom of God. The 'helpers' are the causes of the distractions during prayer.*

*Jonah 2:2 ... and he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice.*

*Note: what is 'distress'? It is caused by not remaining detached from distractions.*

*Matthew 15:25 But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remain unaffected and undisturbed from distractions during prayer.

## ***My prayer is pure***

Chapter 37, part 4: Use one little interior word to express your whole being. This simple prayer from the depths of your spirit reaches God more certainly than some long psalm mumbled without mindfulness. This is the meaning of the saying in Scripture: "A short prayer pierces the heavens".

*Job 16:17 Although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure.*

*Note: Pure? When something is 'pure' that means it is not contaminated with 'something' else, and therefore it is pure. What is that 'something' else? It is distractions that come and you dwell with them during prayer. When you dwell with them, then your prayer is not pure. Resist dwelling with distractions during prayer.*

*Psalms 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer kept returning to my bosom.*

*Note: 'fasting'? When you are 'fasting' you are not eating 'anything'. What is 'anything' which is not eaten during prayer? Distractions are not to be 'eaten' during prayer. Read Genesis 2;16-17 and understand this meaning of the intention of the writer. It is not literally 'eating'.*

*Psalms 109:7 When he is judged, let him come forth guilty, and let his prayer become sin.*

*Note: what is sin during prayer? How can prayer become sin? - when you dwell in distractions during prayer.*

*Isaiah 1:15 So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.*

*Note: God does not like 'words' during prayer. The fewer the better. And when no words are used, that is the best.*

*Luke 6:12 It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.*

*Note: 'whole night'? When night comes, you sleep and nothing is known unto you. To spend time the 'whole night' is to not know anything. The whole night in prayer is time during which nothing is known or understood by your intellect during prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to bring the 'whole night' upon you during prayer.

## **For I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat**

Chapter 38, part 1: Why do you suppose that this one single word of prayer is enough to pierce the heavens? A person who prays like this prays from the depths of his spirit.

*Isaiah 9:20 They slice off what is on the right hand but still are hungry, and they eat what is on the left hand but they are not satisfied.*

*Note: What 'hunger'; 'eat' what? Matthew 6:3 ... but when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. When you pray in spiritual poverty (give to the poor), do not 'examine' your right and left hand for distractions. Do not 'know' what may be at 'hand', rather remain detached from the distractions that you are tempted to grasp with your right and left 'hands'.*

*Isaiah 29:8 It will be as when a hungry man dreams-- and behold, he is eating; but when he awakens, his hunger is not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams-- and behold, he is drinking, but when he awakens, behold, he is faint and his thirst is not quenched.*

*Note: When you pray, do not dream of 'eating' or 'drinking' or for that matter, do not 'dream' or imagine anything. Keep your prayer 'pure', in that it is free from all contaminating distractions.*

*Isaiah 55:2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance.*

*Note: 'Eat what is good'? Delight yourself in abundance of what? Eat not from the tree of knowledge (Genesis 2:16-17). Delight yourself in abundance of purity of prayer, or poverty of prayer, a pray free from all distracting influences.*

*Ezekiel 18:6 ... and does not eat at the mountain shrines or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel ...*

*Note: Do not literally eat? No. 'Eating' is being made equivalent here to 'casting your eyes on idols' Not eating, not looking at idols is equivalent language to 'not eating from the tree of knowledge' of Genesis 2:16-17.*

*Ezekiel 24:17 Groan silently; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban and put your shoes on your feet, and do not cover your moustache and do not eat the bread of men.*

*Note: do not eat the 'bread of man'? What is 'bread of man'? The bread of man represents distractions that men would rather 'eat' during prayer than refraining from 'eating' these distractions.*

*Matthew 25:42 ... for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink.*

*Note: Previous excerpts provide an interesting backdrop for this passage in Matthew. In the past, I always presumed this passage to mean that Jesus is telling us to be compassionate towards others less fortunate. And this is rightly so. How about another interpretation. Sometimes, phrases can have multiple interpretations, depending on the backdrop or context that the message is being sent! How about this: when Jesus prays to God, He is 'hungry' (that is hungry for distractions), but God gives nothing to satisfy Jesus' sense of 'hunger' during prayer. When Jesus prays to God, He is thirsty (that is thirsty for distractions), but God gives nothing to satisfy Jesus' sense of 'thirst'. Contemplative prayer is the pray of 'fasting' or 'purity, of poverty.*

*John 6:50 & 6:58 This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.*

*Note: the 'bread' of heaven is not something that can be physically sensed. The 'bread' of heaven is 'silence and detachment' from distractions during prayer. Eat the bread of heaven and you will live.*

Discipline is remembering what I want. And when I pray and notice that I am beginning to become entangled with distractions, I 'remember what I want', (which is a simple way of saying 'I have recollection' or 'I am remaining in the present moment'). What I want is pure prayer, pure in the sense that my prayer is free from being contaminated by distracting thoughts or concerns during prayer.

Pray. Ask Jesus to bring to you the bread of heaven during prayer to help you refrain from dwelling with distractions.

## ***Draw near to the obscurity and rest with God***

Chapter 38, part 2: It is by contemplative prayer that a person comes to understand God in obscurity. God hears this prayer.

*Exodus 20:21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near to the obscurity where God was.*

*Note: God is found in the prayer of obscurity; we cannot use our senses to know Him; we know Him by not knowing.*

*Obscurity: Deficiency or absence of light; darkness. The quality or condition of being unknown. One that is unknown. The quality or condition of being imperfectly known or difficult to understand. An instance of being imperfectly known or difficult to understand.*

*Deuteronomy 4:11 ... and ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and obscurity.*

*Note: How can a mountain 'burn' with darkness and clouds? When something 'burns' it can be 'engulfed' with flames. Then, when we pray, we become 'engulfed' within a cloud of darkness and obscurity, in which within the cloud exists God.*

*Deuteronomy 5:22 These words Jehovah spoke to all your congregation on the mountain from the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the obscurity, with a great voice ...*

*Note: How can you have 'obscurity' and 'great voice' in the same sentence? What a counter diction in terms. Have you listened to the 'darkness' during prayer? Or are you 'listening' to distractions during prayer? Can the silence of darkness turn into a 'great voice'? Pay attention to the darkness during prayer and the sound it makes can be loud and great enough to be 'deafening'.*

*Isaiah 29:18 ... and in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and, out of obscurity and out of darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see.*

*Note: Out of obscurity and darkness, the 'deaf hear the words' and 'eyes of the blind' shall see? What a counter diction of terms. Praying contemplatively is 'obscurity and darkness'. So to 'come out' of something means that 'a result of some sort is achieved'. 'The deaf hear words' and 'the eyes of the blind shall see' is a biblical way of saying a fancy concept or notion also known as 'enlightenment'. When you do not understand spiritual truth, you are deaf and blind. The result of praying contemplatively is that you come out of a spiritual 'ignorance', or said another way, you become 'enlightened' or perhaps it could be said that you become 'born again'.*

*Isaiah 58:10 ... and thou proffer thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in the darkness, and thine obscurity be as midday.*

*Note: 'Proffer' your soul to 'hunger' means to not feed anything (such as distractions) to your soul during prayer. And when you do not feed any distractions to your soul during prayer, you shall experience a 'light', your 'obscurity is midday', which means that by experiencing contemplative prayer (not to be dwelling in distractions) is spiritual 'enlightenment'. That's what 'its' all about.*

*Jeremiah 29:12-13 And ye shall call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you; and ye shall seek Me and find Me, for ye shall search for Me with all your heart.*

*Note: When you pray contemplatively, call upon the name of Jesus or God. To seek Him and find Him only occurs in contemplative prayer.*

*Matthew 8:22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.*

*Note: Allow 'the dead to bury the dead'. Mysterious isn't it?*

Jesus teaches us that when we do not pay attention to distractions during prayer, the 'distractions' will eventually 'bury' themselves in which they become forgotten and no longer distracting you. Distractions are 'dead' in that they cannot hurt you - so fear them not, just let the 'dead bury their own dead'. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see the Kingdom of God.

## ***Dig for it more than for hidden treasures***

Chapter 38, part 3: During prayer, we can hope in God because he is merciful.

*Job 3:21 .. who long for death, and it [cometh] not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures;*

*Note: '... who long for death' is Job's way of saying 'those who pray and long for the death of distractions'. What is Job digging for? 'Dig for it?': what is 'it'? What is worth digging for more than any hidden treasure? Must be something very valuable. Job digs for the Kingdom of God, and his shovel is contemplative prayer. Once all the distracting 'dirt' is removed, the inner hidden 'treasure' (the Kingdom) is located and realized within the 'obscurity' of Job's inner field.*

*Psalms 62:5 My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him.*

*Note: 'Wait in silence'? Silence meaning void of 'noise'? Or more specifically, void of 'distractions'? Distractions are a kind of 'noise'.*

*Isaiah 57:10 You were tired out by the length of your road, yet you did not say, 'It is hopeless.' You found renewed strength, therefore you did not faint.*

*Note: Praying contemplatively is like walking along a very very long (and very narrow) road. And yet you did not say 'it is hopeless'. What is 'hopeless'? Getting to the 'final destination', the end of the road.*

*Lamentations 3:21 This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.*

*Note: 'Recall' what to your mind? Is this a biblical term for 'staying in the present moment'? 'Hope' for what? Hope for continued travel along the road of contemplative prayer.*

*Ezekiel 37:12-14 Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD.'*

*Note: 'Open your graves'? 'cause you to come out of your grave'? 'I will put My Spirit in you and you will come to life'? Well, one meaning could be literal, as in 'literally, God will open your literal grave and literally take your dead body and make it come to life again.' Well, another meaning could be metaphorical, as in 'metaphorically, God will open some aspects of you that are dead and He will bring that dead aspect of you back to life'. What is the aspect that is to be brought back to life? Could be anything. Or how about a purposive interpretation? 'Purposively, 'coming out of your grave' is a figure of speech. Riddle me this: when are you most like a 'dead' person, absolutely 'dead' to the world and all distractions? Answer: that would - ideally - be a condition that occurs during contemplative prayer. During prayer, we are supposed to be 'dead' to the world, all distractions of this world, in fact all distractions (period). Dead as dead can be to all temptations caused by distractions. During prayer, when God sees you are really 'dead' to distractions, He will come and place His Spirit in you and you will 'be placed on your own land', which I presume to be the land of milk and honey!*

*Matthew 11:5 ... the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.*

*Note: are the literal dead raised up? Or is there a purposive sense to 'raising the dead'. Maybe both senses or meanings are correct.*

*Luke 15:24 ... for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.*

*Note: the son was not literally dead, but dead in another sense.*

*John 5:21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.*

*John 5:25 Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*

*Note: can the literally 'dead' hear anything?*

*John 11:43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."*

Pray. Wait for Jesus to call your name while you remain 'dead' to the world during prayer.

### **Let Your Face shine on Your desolate sanctuary**

Chapter 39, part 1: When we pray, pray with few words. In fact try using only one word. If we can determine the nature of prayer, perhaps we can choose an appropriate word. Prayer is openness to God, a desire to grow in goodness and overcome evil. Evil is summed up in a word 'sin'. So when we pray for the destruction of sin, let us pray this one word 'sin'. When we pray for goodness, let us use one word 'God'. Contemplation is not the fruit of study, but a gift of grace obtained, as God sees fit, during prayer.

*Ecclesiastes 5:2 Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.*

*Note: use few words during prayer.*

*Daniel 9:17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your Face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.*

*Note: you are the 'desolate sanctuary' during prayer, desolate and free from all distractions.*

*Luke 2:37 ... and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.*

*Note: pray always.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to make your inner 'sanctuary' desolate and empty of all distractions during prayer.

### **Be unceasing in prayer**

Chapter 39, part 2: Pray the single word in simplicity in an unceasing manner until it is answered. For a person in distress will keep crying for help until his pleas are answered.

*Exodus 29:38 Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two one year old lambs each day, continuously.*

*Note: 'Offer on the alter' is an old term for contemplative prayer. What is offered? Your inner creatures or 'distractions' are offered as a sacrifice during prayer. How are they offered? Continuously.*

*Unceasing: Not stopping; continuous (constant; perpetual; eternal; endless).*

*Numbers 9:16 So it was continuously; the cloud would cover it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.*

*Note: The cloud covered 'it' continuously. What is 'it'? The fire covered 'it' continuously. What is 'it'? The 'it' is you praying contemplatively.*

*Deuteronomy 33:27 The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He drove out the enemy from before you, and said, 'Destroy!'*

*Note: God is a 'dwelling place'? God drives out the 'enemy'? 'Destroy' what? God's 'arms' drives out the distractions during prayer, if you ask for His help, His grace.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:17 Be unceasing in prayer.*

*Note: What else can anyone add to this? The meaning is plain on its reading. Pay attention to every thing and let no distractions take you away from paying attention and remaining in the present moment. God is found in the present moment within you.*

*Matthew 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

*Note: Pray to God who is in 'secret'? 'Close' your door?*

*Secret: Kept hidden from knowledge or view; concealed; Something kept hidden from others. Dependably discreet. Operating in a hidden or confidential manner: a secret agent. Not expressed; inward: their secret thoughts. Not frequented; secluded: wandered about the secret byways of Paris. Beyond ordinary understanding; mysterious; Something that remains beyond understanding or explanation; a mystery.*

*Close: To move (a door, for example) so that an opening or passage is covered or obstructed; shut. To bar access to: closed the road for repairs. To stop the operations of permanently or temporarily: closed down the factory. Therefore, 'to close the door' implies shutting off everything and being inwardly alone and hidden (in a secluded and confidential manner) with God in your inner 'room', and even be brave enough to leave your reasoning behind too!*

*Matthew 6:7 "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.*

*Note: Use few words when praying.*

*Matthew 23:14 & Luke 20:47 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.*

*Note: Use few words when praying.*

*Matthew 26:41 Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

*Note: Use few words when praying. Resist temptation to use any words. Resist all temptations from distractions. Release them and ask God to take them away.*

*Luke 22:40 When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."*

*John 5:17 His reply to their accusation was, "My Father works unceasingly, and so do I."*

*Note: Jesus' work is prayer. Jesus prays unceasingly.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you pray without ceasing so that you remain in the present moment undistracted.

## **He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple**

Chapter 40, part 1: Anything that separates you from God is evil and will rob you of inner peace.

*Ezekiel 5:11 'So as I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare.*

*Note: During prayer, you are His 'sanctuary'. And He wants to be alone with you during prayer. God dwells in you. He is a jealous God and wants no other 'gods' before Him while He dwells in you.*

*Sanctuary: A sacred place, such as a church, temple, or mosque. The holiest part of a sacred place, as the part of a Christian church around the altar. A sacred place, such as a church, in which fugitives formerly were immune to arrest. Immunity to arrest afforded by a sanctuary. A place of refuge or asylum. A reserved area in which birds and other animals, especially wild animals, are protected from hunting or molestation.*

*Ezekiel 44:9 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the sons of Israel, shall enter My sanctuary.*

*Note: What is 'Uncircumcised in heart'.*

*Circumcise: to cut around, to circumcise; to cut; concise, to shed. To cut off the prepuce of foreskin of, in the case of males. To purify spiritually.*

*Heart: The vital center and source of one's being, emotions, and sensibilities. The repository of*

one's deepest and sincerest feelings and beliefs. The seat of the intellect or imagination. The central or innermost physical part of a place or region. What is being 'cut' off during prayer from your inner self? Distractions.

*Matthew 21:12-14* And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER'; but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN." And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

*Note:* Ask Jesus to help you drive out your distractions during prayer from your inner sanctuary.

*Matthew 23:21* "And whoever swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it.

*Note:* Him who dwells within ... the temple that is you.

*Mark 11:16* ... and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple.

*Note:* During prayer, do not carry 'merchandise', which purposively construed is 'distractions'.

*John 2:21* But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

*Note:* Purposively construed, the meaning of the 'temple' is that this word refers to your body.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you circumcise your inner heart during prayer.

### **Be very desolate**

Chapter 40, part 2: It is best when the word is wholly interior without sound or thought.

*Jeremiah 2:12* "Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate," declares the LORD.

*Jeremiah 51:26* "They will not take from you even a stone for a corner nor a stone for foundations, but you will be desolate forever," declares the LORD.

*Matthew 23:38* Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you make your inner 'house' desolate (of distractions) during prayer.

### **For it had been founded on the rock**

Chapter 40, part 3: Without ideas of God, immerse yourself in this prayer. Desire for nothing but God. Let nothing except God hold in your mind and heart.

*Psalms 78:18* And in their heart they put God to the test by asking food according to their desire.

*Immerse:* To cover completely in a liquid; submerge. To baptize by submerging in water. To engage wholly or deeply; absorb: scholars who immerse themselves in their subjects.

*Matthew 4:7* Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.' "

*1 Samuel 2:35* And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, [who] shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed continually.

*Matthew 7:24-25* Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.

*1 Chronicles 28:9* And thou, Solomon my son, know the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for Jehovah searches all hearts, and discerns all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cut thee off for ever.

*Matthew 6:33 But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

*Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God."*

*Acts 17:24-27 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.*

*Matthew 13:45 Again, the Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls...*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you become immersed in silence of mind, body and soul during prayer.

## **Possess the sanctuary of God**

Chapter 40, part 4: If you possess God you will be free of sin and when you are free of sin you possess God.

*Psalms 82:13 Let us possess the sanctuary of God for an inheritance.*

*Sanctuary: A sacred place, such as a church, temple, or mosque. The holiest part of a sacred place, as the part of a Christian church around the altar. A sacred place, such as a church, in which fugitives formerly were immune to arrest. Immunity to arrest afforded by a sanctuary. A place of refuge or asylum. A reserved area in which birds and other animals, especially wild animals, are protected from hunting or molestation.*

*Note: during contemplative prayer, you are in the sanctuary of God when you are free of all distractions.*

*Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He doth not hear.*

*Note: your 'sins' during contemplative prayer is to become distracted. But you are quickly forgive when you release your distractions.*

*Ezekiel 37:23 And they shall not defile themselves any more with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; and I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*

*Idol: An image used as an object of worship. A false god. One that is adored, often blindly or excessively. Something visible but without substance.*

*Note: during contemplative prayer, distractions are the 'idols'. To dwell with distractions during prayer is a transgression. You are the 'dwelling-place' during contemplative prayer, and paying attention to distractions in your 'dwelling-place' is sin. Ask Jesus to help your to release or detach from them so that you become 'cleansed. Contemplatives shall be the people of God.*

*Luke 15:10 Thus, I say unto you, there is joy before the angels of God for one repenting sinner.*

*Note: The is joy in heaven when you turn away from distractions during contemplative prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you to possess the silent sanctuary of God during prayer.

## **Hate robbery in a holocaust**

Chapter 41: Observe no moderation for remaining faithful to daily contemplative prayer. With all aspects of life keep a middle path. However, never cease from this work of love that is called contemplative prayer.

*Joshua 22:5 Yet so that you observe attentively, and in work fulfill the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you: that you love the Lord your God, and walk in all his ways, and keep all his commandments, and cleave to him, and serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is the means wherein you ... 'cleave to Him, and serve Him with all your heart, and with all your soul.'*

*Isaiah 40:31 But they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is the means wherein contemplatives ... "renew their strength".*

*Isaiah 61:8 For I am the Lord that love judgment, and hate robbery in a holocaust: and I will make their work in truth, and I will make a perpetual covenant with them.*

*Holocaust: Great destruction resulting in the extensive loss of life, especially by fire. A massive slaughter. A sacrificial offering that is consumed entirely by flames.*

*Robbery: the act or an instance of unlawfully taking the property of another by the use of violence or intimidation.*

*Note: 'robbery in a holocaust' is robbery of the sacrificial offering. When you pray contemplatively, you are to detach and release from your distractions which are an offering to God, and the distractions are to be burnt up and forgotten. When you remain attached to your distractions during prayer, you are committing the crime of robbery (preventing the 'destruction' of distractions during prayer). God wants for you to not 'rob' the distractions by remaining detached from the distractions so that they may be sacrificed during prayer.*

*Matthew 10:34 Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*

*Note: Ask Jesus to bring the Fire and Sword that will burn and cut down your distractions in a holocaust during prayer.*

*2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is the means by which you are ... 'renewed day by day'.*

*Luke 18:1 ... and he spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint...*

*Faint: Lacking strength or vigor; feeble. Lacking conviction, boldness, or courage; timid. Lacking brightness: a faint light in the gloom. Lacking clarity or distinctness: a faint recollection. Likely to fall into a faint; dizzy and weak: felt faint for a moment.*

*Note: 'to pray and not faint' means to pray and remain with 'clarity' or 'purity'; clarity of mind is a mind free of distractions.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you keep your inner mind clear of attachments while the Fire consumes your distractions in a holocaust during prayer.

## **Do not anxiously look about you**

Chapter 42: Lift up your heart with a blind stirring of love and desire for God and detest for sin. I pray that God comes to your aid for now you need Him very much.

*2 Samuel 22:7 In my distress I called upon the LORD, yes, I cried to my God; and from His temple He heard my voice, and my cry for help came into His ears.*

*Psalms 70:1 O God, hasten to deliver me; O LORD, hasten to my help!*

*Isaiah 41:10 Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*

*Note: do not look about yourself during prayer. Remain still and ask for help.*

*Matthew 15:8-9 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.' "*

Pray. Ask Jesus to deliver you from your distractions, and to make haste to help you detach from your distractions during prayer.

## ***Journey into the wilderness***

Chapter 43, part 1: Be careful to empty your mind and heart of everything except God during the time of this work. Reject the knowledge and experience of everything less than God, and tread all this knowledge beneath the cloud of forgetting.

*Exodus 3:18 The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.*

*Exodus 5:3 The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.*

*Note: 'Sacrifice in the wilderness' is detaching from interior distractions during prayer.*

*Exodus 8:27 We must go a three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He commands us.*

*Note: The wilderness is interior wilderness experienced during contemplative prayer.*

*Joshua 9:13 These wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are torn; and these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey.*

*Note: If the wineskins are torn then that means they are empty. The long journey to God is an 'empty' journey, that is empty from distractions during prayer.*

*Matthew 10:10 Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.*

*Mark 6:8-9 ... and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff -- no bread, no bag, no money in their belt -- but to wear sandals; and He added, "Do not put on two tunics."*

*Luke 9:3 And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece."*

*Note: Take nothing for the journey to God.*

*Journey: The act of traveling from one place to another; a trip. A distance to be traveled or the time required for a trip. A process or course likened to traveling; a passage: the journey of life.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you on your journey to God along the narrow path called contemplative prayer; ask Jesus to help you take nothing along during this journey - no staff, bag, bread, nor money, no clothes because this journey to God is interior and within you.

## ***And do you not remember***

Chapter 43, part 2: During prayer, you must learn to forget not only every creature and its deeds but yourself as well, and whatever you may have accomplished in God's service.

*Deuteronomy 6:12 ... then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

*Deuteronomy 8:19 It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.*

*Note: During prayer, do not go after 'other gods', that is 'distractions'.*

*Judges 10:13 Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer deliver you.*

*Nehemiah 9:19 You, in Your great compassion, did not forsake them in the wilderness; the pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, to guide them on their way, nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go.*

*Job 8:13 So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the godless will perish,*

*Lamentations 5:20 Why do You forget us forever? Why do You forsake us so long?*

*Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI ?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME ?"*

*Mark 8:18 HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE ? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR ? And do you not remember...*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remember to pray contemplatively every day.

### ***I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert***

Chapter 43, part 3: For a true lover (of contemplative prayer) not only cherishes his beloved more than himself but in certain sense he becomes oblivious of himself on account of the One he loves.

*Isaiah 43:19 Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.*

*Oblivious: Lacking all memory; forgetful. Lacking conscious awareness; unmindful.*

*Roadway: especially that part of a road over which vehicles travel*

*Wilderness: A tract of land, or a region, uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings, whether a forest or a wide, barren plain; a wild; a waste; a desert; a pathless waste of any kind. A disorderly or neglected place. Quality or state of being wild; wildness.*

*(Note: You can make a 'roadway in the wilderness' by praying contemplatively, you treat a narrow path inside yourself, which is like an interior wilderness.)*

*Mark 2:8 Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?"*

*Luke 5:22 But Jesus, aware of their reasoning, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?"*

*Note: During prayer, do not reason. Eat not the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Eat from the tree of unknowing.*

*Mark 2:8 Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?"*

Pray. Ask Jesus to show you the holy roadway to the Kingdom of God which lies within you.

*Wilderness: Hebrew: midhbar, denoting not a barren desert but a district or region suitable for pasturing sheep and cattle (Ps. 65:12; Isa. 42:11; Jer. 23:10; Joel 1:19; 2:22); an uncultivated place.*

*3. Jeshimon, a desert waste (Deut. 32:10; Ps. 68:7). 'Arabah, the name given to the valley from the Dead Sea to the eastern branch of the Red Sea. In Deut. 1:1; 2:8, it is rendered "plain" (R.V., "Arabah"). Tziyyah, a "dry place" (Ps. 78:17; 105:41). Tohu, a "desolate" place, a place "waste" or "unoccupied" (Deut. 32:10; Job 12:24; comp. Gen. 1:2, "without form").*

The wilderness region in the Sinaitic peninsula through which for forty years the Hebrews wandered is generally styled "the wilderness of the wanderings." This entire region is in the form of a triangle, having its base toward the north and its apex toward the south. Its extent from north to south is about 250 miles, and at its widest point it is about 150 miles broad. Throughout this vast region of some 1,500 square miles there is not a single river. The northern part of this triangular peninsula is properly the "wilderness of the wanderings" (et-Tih). The western portion of it is called the "wilderness of Shur" (Ex. 15:22), and the eastern the "wilderness of Paran." The "wilderness of Judea" (Matt. 3:1) is a wild, barren region, lying between the Dead Sea and the Hebron Mountains.

## ***Remove every obstacle out of the way of My people***

Chapter 43, part 4: You must come to loathe and regret everything that occupies your mind except God. Everything is an obstacle between you and Him.

*Job 15:4 Indeed, you do away with reverence and hinder meditation before God.*

*Note: Job is explaining about hindering or obstructing "meditation before God."*

*Reverence: A feeling of profound awe and respect and often love; veneration. An act showing respect. The state of being revered. To consider or treat with profound awe and respect; venerate.*

*Obstacle: One that opposes, stands in the way of, or holds up progress. That which stands in the way, or opposes; anything that hinders progress; a hindrance; an obstruction, physical or moral. Something immaterial that stands in the way and must be circumvented or surmounted (skirted, hedged, bypassed).*

*Job 3:23 Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?*

*Note: contemplative prayer is the 'hidden' way in which you are 'hedged in' during prayer.*

*Isaiah 5:5 So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.*

*Note: During prayer, you are to become like the vineyard which has no hedge so that your inner 'grapes' (that is 'distractions') can become consumed.*

*Isaiah 34:11 But pelican and hedgehog will possess it, and owl and raven will dwell in it; and He will stretch over it the line of desolation and the plumb line of emptiness.*

*Note: What does "plumb line of emptiness" mean? Contemplative prayer is the means for going directly to your heart (center) in which is located the Kingdom of God.*

*Plumb line: A line from which a weight is suspended to determine verticality or depth. A line regarded as directed exactly toward the earth's center of gravity.*

*Emptiness: The state of being empty; absence of contents; void space; vacuum; as, the emptiness of a vessel; emptiness of the stomach. Want of solidity or substance; unsatisfactory; inability to satisfy desire; vacuity; hollowness; the emptiness of earthly glory. Want of knowledge; lack of sense; vacuity of mind. Holding or containing nothing. Having no occupants or inhabitants; vacant: an empty chair; empty desert.*

*Devoid; destitute: empty of pity.*

*Synonyms of emptiness: empty, vacant, blank, void, vacuous, bare, barren: These adjectives mean without contents that could or should be present. Empty applies to what is wholly lacking contents or substance: an empty room; empty promises. Vacant refers to what is without an occupant or incumbent, or to what is without intelligence or thought: a vacant auditorium; a vacant stare. Blank stresses the absence of something, especially on a surface, that would convey meaning or content: blank pages. Void applies to what is free from or completely destitute of discernible content: gibberish void of all meaning. Vacuous describes what is as devoid of substance as a vacuum is: led a vacuous life. Something that is bare lacks surface covering (a bare head) or detail (the bare facts); the word also denotes the condition of being stripped of contents or furnishings: a bare closet. Barren literally and figuratively stresses lack of productivity: barren land; writing barren of insight.*

*Isaiah 57:14 And it will be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstacle out of the way of My people."*

*Note: 'remove every obstacle out of the way' is Isaiah's way of saying, 'remove distractions from your prayers'.*

*Matthew 19:14 But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

*Note: Jesus tells the 'distractions' not to hinder the 'children' from coming to Him during prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to tell your distractions to not hinder you from journeying to the Kingdom of God during prayer.

## **Scatter them like drifting straw to the desert wind**

Chapter 43, part 5: You should hate to think of yourself in view of your deep realization of sin. The wretched lump called sin is none other than yourself. Sin is something that keeps you separated from God.

*Jeremiah 13:24 Therefore I will scatter them like drifting straw to the desert wind.*

*Note: Just what exactly is Jeremiah scattering into the desert wind?*

*Separate: To set or keep apart; disunite. To scatter: small farms that were separated one from another by miles of open land. To differentiate or discriminate between; distinguish: To remove from a mixture or combination; isolate. To part (a couple), often by decree: She was separated from her husband last year. To terminate a contractual relationship, as military service, with; discharge.*

*Withdraw: The state threatened to separate from the Union. To part company; disperse. To stop living together as spouses. To become divided into components or parts: Oil and water tend to separate.*

*Scatter: To cause to separate and go in different directions. To distribute loosely by or as if by sprinkling; strew: scattering confetti from the upper windows. To deflect (radiation or particles). To separate and go in different directions; disperse.*

*Hosea 5:6 They will go with their flocks and herds to seek the LORD, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them.*

*Note: Ever notice how distractions that come during prayer behave like 'flocks & herds' - never resting, never quiet, never still, and constant noise.*

*Matthew 12:30 He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.*

*Gather: To cause to come together; convene. To accumulate (something) gradually; amass. To harvest or pick: gather flowers; gather wild foods. To gain by a process of gradual increase: gather speed. To collect into one place; assemble. To pick up and enfold.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you gather yourself into a still point during prayer.

## **Hidden wealth of secret places**

Chapter 43, part 6: So, reject the thought and experience of all created things. Most importantly forget yourself. Long after you have forgotten every creature and its works, you will find that a naked knowing and feeling of your own being still remains between you and God. You will not be perfect in love until this is also destroyed.

*Judges 3:19 But he himself turned back from the idols which were at Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." And he said, "Keep silence."*

*Note: 'turn back from idols' is another way to say 'turn from distractions'*

*Isaiah 45:3 I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.*

*Note: 'treasures of darkness' is finding the Kingdom of God during prayer. 'Hidden wealth of secret places' is finding the Kingdom of God during prayer.*

*Matthew 6:3-4 But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

*Note: 'giving will be in secret' is 'giving or detaching' from distractions during prayer.*

*Matthew 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

*Note: 'pray in secret' is praying contemplatively (no one knows that you do this prayer - so your prayer remains in secret).*

*Matthew 6:17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

*Note: 'Fasting will not be noticed by men' is a 'fast' from distractions during prayer which is something that cannot be noticed by anyone.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you fast during prayer.

## **He pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked**

Chapter 44, part 1: How shall you destroy this naked knowledge of your own being? If you destroy this, every other obstacle is destroyed. Without God's special grace (freely given), you can never hope to destroy the naked knowing of your being. Unless you experience strong, deep interior sorrow.

*Luke 22:45-46 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and he said to them: Why sleep you? Arise, pray, lest you enter into temptation.*

*Note: 'Sleeping from sorrow' means removing yourself from feeling sorrow, such as when you are 'sleeping' so that you do not feel any sorrow.*

*Mark 14:51 A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.*

*Note: You are the 'young man' that follows Jesus. 'They' are the distractions that 'seize' you during prayer. During prayer, pull free from your distractions, and escape naked from them.*

*Sorrow: Mental suffering or pain caused by injury, loss, or despair. To feel pain of mind in consequence of evil experienced, feared, or done; The uneasiness or pain of mind which is produced by the loss of any good, real or supposed, or by disappointment in the expectation of good; grief at having suffered or occasioned evil. An emotion of great sadness associated with loss or bereavement. Something that causes great unhappiness.*

*Naked: Having no clothing on the body; nude. Having no covering, especially the usual one: a naked sword. Devoid of vegetation, trees, or foliage: the naked ground; naked tree limbs. Devoid of a specified quality, characteristic, or element. Having no clothes on; uncovered; nude; bare; Having no means of defense or protection; open; unarmed; defenseless. Unprovided with needful or desirable accessories, means of sustenance. Without addition, exaggeration, or excuses; not concealed or disguised; open to view; manifest; plain. Mere; simple; plain.*

*Naked (biblical contexts): absolute nakedness (Gen. 2:25; Job 1:21; Eccl. 5:15; Micah 1:8; Amos 2:16); being poorly clad (Isa. 58:7; James 2:15). The state of one who has laid aside his loose outer garment (Lat. nudus), and appears clothed only in a long tunic or under robe worn next the skin (1 Sam. 19:24; Isa. 47:3; comp. Mark 14:52; John 21:7). It is used figuratively, meaning "being discovered" or "made manifest" (Job 26:6; Heb. 4:13).*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you be naked of distractions during prayer.

## ***If these become silent, the stones will cry out***

Chapter 44, part 2: However, you must moderate this sorrow. Be careful never to strain your body or spirit irreverently. Sit still relaxed and quiet but plunged and immersed in sorrow.

*Exodus 14:14 The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.*

*Note: When you pray contemplatively in silence, ask the Lord to fight for you, that is to fight with the distractions while you remain silent.*

*Leviticus 10:3 Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.' " So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.*

*Note: Pray silently and God will treat you as holy.*

*Job 13:5 O that you would be completely silent, and that it would become your wisdom!*

*Job 33:33 If not, listen to me; keep silent, and I will teach you wisdom.*

*1 Samuel 2:9 He keeps the feet of His godly ones, but the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; for not by might shall a man prevail.*

*Note: What are the 'wicked ones' that are silenced in 'darkness'? They are your distractions.*

*Psalms 62:1 My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation.*

*Psalms 94:17 If the LORD had not been my help, my soul would soon have dwelt in the abode of silence.*

*Habakkuk 2:20 But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.*

*Luke 19:40 But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"*

*Note: 'the stones will cry out' On the day you manage to become silent (as silent as stones) during prayer, the stones will be so surprised that they will cry out.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you become silent as a stone during prayer.

## ***I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant***

Chapter 44, part 3: The sorrow I speak of is genuine and perfect. Blessed is the person who can experience this. He who feels authentic sorrow realizes not only what he is but that he is. This sorrow purifies a person of sin and prepares his heart to receive that joy through which he will finally transcend the knowing and feeling of his being.

*Genesis 9:13-14 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud...*

*Bow: Anything bent, or in the form of a curve, as the rainbow. The front section of a ship or boat. To yield in defeat or out of courtesy; submit. The U-shaped piece which embraces the neck of an ox and fastens it to the yoke.*

*Note: God demonstrates to Noah what He wants by means of an illustration of a 'yoke' or 'bow' set in front of a cloud. God is asking all of His children to put on His yoke and if you do so, you will be 'covered' or protected by His covenant. What is the purpose of an earthly yoke? An ox wears the yoke to plow a field so that the field can be made ready to receive seed from the farmer. The yoke and ox is the means for renewing the field and making it ready for new growth. So, what is the purpose of the spiritual yoke? What is another name for the spiritual yoke? Ah, the spiritual yoke is contemplative prayer, and you are the ox. When you pray contemplatively, prayer is the yoke and you are renewing your inner 'field' or self and thereby make yourself ready or renewed to accept seed from God (today and every day).*

*Psalms 5:7 But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house, at Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.*

*Note: does 'bow' mean to literally bend yourself (in the context of Psalms 5:7)? To bow in reverence means to pray.*

*Matthew 11:29-30 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

*Yoke: A crossbar with two U-shaped pieces that encircle the necks of a pair of oxen or other draft animals working together. A frame designed to be carried across a person's shoulders with equal loads suspended from each end. Something that connects or joins together; a bond or tie. That which connects or binds; a chain; a link; a bond connection (the yoke of marriage). A mark of servitude; hence, servitude; slavery; bondage; service. A portion of the working day; as, to work two yokes, that is, to work both portions of the day, or morning and afternoon.*

*Note: So, a yoke also means a portion of a work day, or to serve.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you pray with a yoke spanning two portions of the day, that is, to pray during both portions of the day (morning and afternoon), so that your inner field becomes renewed for service.

## **Do not turn to idols**

Chapter 44, part 4: When this sorrow is authentic it is full of reverent longing for God's salvation.

*Leviticus 19:4 Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods; I am the LORD your God.*

*Salvation: Preservation or deliverance from destruction, difficulty, or evil. Source, means, or cause of such preservation or deliverance. Deliverance from the power or penalty of sin; redemption. The agent or means that brings about such deliverance.*

*Leviticus 26:1 You shall not make for yourselves idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a sacred pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God.*

*Isaiah 12:3 Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation.*

*Isaiah 17:10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants and set them with vine slips of a strange god.*

*Mark 5:9-13 And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that idols are not literal idols that are made of wood or stone. Rather idols are interior idols that distract us and cause us 'difficulty' during prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to save you from your interior difficulty with distractions during prayer.

## **Man shall not live on bread alone**

Chapter 45: Beware of deceptions. Do not interpret concepts in literal or material terms thereby missing the spiritual meaning. Do not weary yourself. Keep yourself on even terms. Do not work yourself into a frenzy. I will describe the snares that you are liable to encounter as your toil in prayer, so that you can avoid them.

*Luke 4:1-13 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell*

*this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.' "*

*Note: Jesus teaches us that we are to eat more than just the earthly bread every day. We are to eat the bread of heaven every day. What is the bread of heaven? See: Exodus 16:4: Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. What is God testing? Whether you gather the 'bread of heaven' every day, that is whether you pray contemplatively everyday.*

*Luke 4:1-13 (continued)..... And he led Him up and showed Him all the Kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. "Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.' "*

*Note: Jesus tells us that we are to worship only God. How do we worship? By praying contemplatively. See: Exodus 7:16: 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. Where is the 'wilderness'? This region is located in your interior, that is your 'heart'. What are you 'cultivating' with the yoke of contemplative prayer?*

*Heart: The chambered muscular organ in vertebrates that pumps blood received from the veins into the arteries, thereby maintaining the flow of blood through the entire circulatory system. The area that is the approximate location of the heart in the body; the breast. The vital center and source of one's being, emotions, and sensibilities. The repository of one's deepest and sincerest feelings and beliefs. The seat of the intellect or imagination: the worst atrocities the human heart could devise. Emotional constitution, basic disposition, or character. One's prevailing mood or current inclination. The central or innermost physical part of a place or region: the heart of the financial district.*

*Wilderness: An unsettled, uncultivated region left in its natural condition, especially: A large wild tract of land covered with dense vegetation or forests. An extensive area, such as a desert or ocean, that is barren or empty; a waste. A piece of land set aside to grow wild. A tract of land, or a region, uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings, whether a forest or a wide, barren plain; a wild; a waste; a desert; a pathless waste of any kind. A disorderly or neglected place. Quality or state of being wild; wildness.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer helps cultivate your inner self. Why? To remove the neglected, disorderly inner heart.*

*Luke 4:1-13 (continued) And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,' and, 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.' " And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.' "*

*Note: Jesus tells us to remain silent in spirit during prayer, and to believe in good faith that God is present. Do not test or request to see proof of His Presence during silent prayer. See: Exodus 17:7: He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"*

Pray. Ask Jesus to teach you about contemplative prayer.

## **Remove every obstacle out of the way of My people**

Chapter 46: Rely on joyful enthusiasm. Do not strain yourself at prayer. Remain humble. Do not morbidly drive yourself at prayer. Avoid unnatural compulsions. Love with joy. Be sweet and gentle. Wait humbly for God. Do not snatch at love during prayer like a hungry dog. Come to God with a child's heart.

*Genesis 17:17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"*

*Note: perhaps Abraham attempted to understand the literal meaning of God's words. Contemplative prayer is like preparing for ... a child to be born in you.*

*Luke 1:17 "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

*Luke 1:76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS.*

*Note: how are the people made prepared for the Lord? See: Isaiah 57:14: And it will be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstacle out of the way of My people." During contemplative prayer, we are 'removing every obstacle' that is 'distractions' that come to us during prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you become prepared for prayer.

### ***And blessed is he to whom I shall not be a stumbling block***

Chapter 47: Experience God in the purity and depth of your spirit. Unite with God in spiritual communion that transcends anything earthly. Desires rooted in emotions are remote from God.

Remain composed in pure, deep spirit. Be less dominated by the flesh. Be pure of spirit.

*Isaiah 57:14 And it will be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstacle out of the way of My people."*

*Obstacle: Something that opposes, stands in the way of, or holds up progress. Something that prevents action or slows progress, something that stands in the way. Something that makes passage or progress difficult. Something that which stands in the way, or opposes; anything that hinders progress; a hindrance.*

*Isaiah 62:10 Go through, go through the doors; make ready the way of the people; let the highway be lifted up; let the stones be taken away; let a flag be lifted up over the peoples.*

*Note: the door is the gate is narrow that leads to the Kingdom.*

*Psalms 140:9 (Douay-Rheims Bible) Keep me from the snare, which they have laid for me, and from the stumbling-blocks of them that work iniquity.*

*Note: the snare is set for you during prayer.*

*Psalms 119:165 Abundant peace have those loving Thy law, and they have no stumbling-block.*

*Note: love God's law means to love contemplative prayer.*

*Matthew 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindset not the things of God, but the things of men.*

*Note: stumbling blocks are the things that distract you from paying attention to God during prayer.*

*Matthew 18:7 'Wo to the world from the stumbling-blocks! for there is a necessity for the stumbling-blocks to come, but wo to that man through whom the stumbling-block doth come!*

*Note: the distractions will come; it is a necessity during prayer.*

*Luke 17:1 And he said unto the disciples, 'It is impossible for the stumbling blocks not to come, but wo [to him] through whom they come.*

*Note: the distractions will come during contemplative prayer. When the distractions come, they will be difficult.*

*Luke 7:22-23 Then Jesus answering, said to them, Go, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; that the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, to whom I shall not be a stumbling block.*

*Note: call on Jesus for help during prayer; Jesus will not be like a stumbling block; rather, Jesus will act in the opposite manner of the stumbling block! You are blessed when you pray contemplatively and call on the name of Jesus for help.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remove your inner stumbling blocks that come your way during contemplative prayer.

### ***They did not comprehend the things that were said***

Chapter 48: Authentic consolation is love that abides in a pure heart. Be occupied in the blind joy to steady your heart. Give credence to nothing until the Holy Spirit approves or by approval of wise counsel.

*Job 37:5 God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things which we cannot comprehend.*

*Note: God's thundering voice is the silence wrapped around us during prayer. We will never understand this silence. We are invited to experience this silence.*

*Isaiah 44:18 They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.*

*Note: this is what happens to you during prayer.*

*Luke 18:34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.*

*Note: prayer is taught in a hidden way because prayer itself is hidden.*

*John 1:5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

*Note: you remain in that darkness during prayer. God shines in the darkness of prayer, but you do not comprehend God during prayer.*

Love is photogenic. it needs darkness to develop.

Pray. Ask Jesus to wrap you in silence during prayer.

### ***Be very desolate***

Chapter 49: Contemplative prayer is the essence of a good life. Without it, no good work is possible. Love is the radical commitment to God. Avoid the experience of earthly delights (such biting into an apple - sound familiar?) or any consolations during prayer.

*Joel 1:12 The vine dries up and the fig tree fails; the pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree, all the trees of the field dry up. Indeed, rejoicing dries up from the sons of men.*

*Note: during prayer, become dry - so dry that you produce no fruit (that is anything that can distract you during prayer, like biting in to the apple called distraction).*

*Jeremiah 2:12 "Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate," declares the LORD.*

*Matthew 23:38 Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!*

*Desolate: Devoid of inhabitants; deserted. Barren; lifeless: the rocky, desolate surface of the moon. Rendered unfit for habitation or use.*

*Note: during prayer, be desolate; avoid habitation with distractions. Your house is your interior heart.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you keep you desolate during prayer.

### ***God hath commanded us that we should not eat***

Chapter 50: Concentrate your attention on the gentle stirring of love. Be careless of consolations and delights of sense or spirit. When they come, do not rest in them Be perfect in love.

*Matthew 6:7 And in your prayer do not make use of the same words again and again, as the Gentiles do: for they have the idea that God will give attention to them because of the number of their words.*

*Matthew 6:7 And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.*

*Matthew 6:7 (Douay-Rheims Bible) And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard.*

*Repetition: The act or process or an instance of repeating or being repeated. A recitation or recital, especially of prepared or memorized material. The act of repeating; a doing or saying again; iteration. Recital from memory; rehearsal. The act of repeating, singing, or playing, the same piece or part a second time; reiteration of a note. Reiteration, or repeating the same word, or the same sense in different words, for the purpose of making a deeper impression on the audience.*

*Psalms 113:13 (Douay-Rheims) They have mouths and speak not: they have eyes and see not.*

*Psalms 134:16 (Douay-Rheims) They have a mouth, but they speak not: they have eyes, but they see not.*

*Note: those that pray contemplatively, 'they have a mouth but speak not, ...' during prayer, 'they have eyes but see not' during prayer.*

*Ecclesiastes 5:1 (Douay-Rheims) Speak not any thing rashly, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.*

*Luke 12:29 (Douay-Rheims) And seek not you what you shall eat, or what you shall drink: and be not lifted up on high.*

*Note: during prayer, seek not what you shall 'eat' (that is digest with your mind), or what you shall 'drink' (that is ingest with your mind). Be not lifted up on high (that is remain in silence and avoid thinking 'high minded thoughts' or 'anything' minded for that matter).*

*Genesis 3:3 (Douay-Rheims) But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat.*

*Note: "in the midst of paradise" is the inner center from which you pray. And when you pray at your inner center, do not 'eat' anything.*

*Luke 22:15-16 (Douay-Rheims) And he said to them: With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer. For I say to you, that from this time I will not eat it, till it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to teach and help you suffer and not succumb to the temptation of digesting anything during prayer.

## **You are the salt of the earth**

Chapter 51: Be careful not to interpret literally what is meant spiritually. Literal interpretation leads to misunderstanding. Do not foolishly think that you can possess (understand) God with your intellect. The intellect thinks best in literal terms. The heart thinks best in spiritual terms. To hide something 'purposely' is to cast it deep into your spirit. But there can be other meanings for 'hide something' which are not relevant to prayer.

*Exodus 30:34-36 ... and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred.*

*Leviticus 2:12-14 Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.*

*Numbers 18:18-20 Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings the Israelites present to the LORD I give to you and your sons and daughters as your regular share. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the LORD for both you and your offspring.*

*2 Chronicles 13:4-6 Don't you know that the LORD, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt?*

*Matthew 5:12-14 You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.*

*Mark 9:49-51 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."*

*Note: Have salt in yourself? Why? Be like the salt that draws water.*

There are many ways to understand, such as literally, allegorically, or purposively. You are the 'salt' of the world. In literal terms, I'm not sure what that might mean. Could be that I am called to 'salt' the world, that is spread salt over world (the salt of God - what ever that might mean). I could see people getting angry at me for literally 'salting the world' (salt back them was very expensive - so to toss it around would be wasteful). What might be the allegorical meaning of 'become the salt of the world'. In allegorical terms, I should become something like salt: 'white' like salt, 'granular' like salt, or maybe 'bitter and sour' like salt. Could be anything. If I become 'bitter' like salt, that appears to be in opposition to love (love God and your neighbor). Love and bitterness cannot coexist at the same time, can they? The literal meaning of "you become the salt of the world" makes no sense at all when this phrase is pondered by your intellect. To understand the spiritual meaning of this phrase requires understanding with your heart, not with your intellect. Let's examine a purposive construction. What is the intention or purpose for being the salt of the world? Why would I want to be like salt? What does salt do? I have a friend who is an orthodox Jew. He tells me that it is customary to salt their meat. The meat is caked in salt. So much so that the men die of heart attacks before the age of 60 because of the high salt content of their meals. I asked him why is the meat caked in salt. I was told that the salt draws out the blood from the meat. Apparently, it is customary to draw out the blood before the meat is eaten. Its Jewish dietary law. So I would suppose that if I were to act like salt, I would be drawing blood or some sort of fluid. Perhaps, this is Jesus' way of saying that praying contemplatively is remaining silence so that like the salt, you may draw the everlasting water into you during prayer. Now, if salt were to lose its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? I suppose if water soaked salt were to remain in the sunshine of day, the water would eventually evaporate and thus leave behind the salt, and the salt would regain its saltiness. That's part of prayer. You draw on the everlasting water (like salt drawing on water) during silent prayer, and then during the day the water that was previously drawn on is slowly released so that when you come to pray again, you are in a 'salty' condition (and therefore, ready to soak up some more everlasting water). And so the daily cycle continues. Drawing in everlasting waters, and releasing everlasting waters. Drawing in the grace of God and releasing His grace in a cyclic manner. Those who do not understand will think that the salt having no saltiness is no good anymore except to be thrown out and trampled over by men. But the salt can be rejuvenated.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you daily become like salt so that you draw the eternal waters from the spring that exists within you during prayer, so that during the day the eternal waters (love) can be spread around.

### ***Sweep the house and search***

Chapter 52: Understand what it means to work interiorly. Do not seek interior images, noises and the like. Do not seeking for Something that can never be sensed with your mind. Turn away from all distractions and temptations that come to your mind during prayer.

*Deuteronomy 32:12 The Lord alone was his leader: and there was no strange god with him.*

*Deuteronomy 32:39 See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me.*

*Note: when you pray, you are alone with God. If there are other 'things' that you sense during prayer, those sensed 'things' are strange gods, and they are not the true God.*

*Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

*Solitary: Existing, living, or going without others; alone: a solitary traveler. Happening, done, or made alone: a solitary evening; Remote from civilization; secluded: a solitary retreat. Having no companions; lonesome or lonely.*

*Note: When you pray, pray in the 'dark', in which you cannot become distracted by any obstacles to pure prayer. Pray in solitary (that is, without anything to distract you).*

*Isaiah 28:17 I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level; then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters will overflow the secret place.*

*Note: "sweep away the lies" is description for removing all distractions during prayer so that when all sensed distractions are removed, the 'waters flow' (that is Love flows) in a secret place which is inside you.*

*Luke 15:8 Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ... There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over a sinner who repents.*

*Note: While the woman searches for the lost coin, she is not distracted by the furniture or other obstacles that exist in her 'house'. In the same way, when you pray, do not be distracted by interior or exterior obstacles. Remain focused on the One.*

*The whole monastic life tends towards this summit of liberty, and it is in the light of this freedom of spirit that we must see and understand all the discipline of the monk, his austerities, his obedience, and his vows. The monk leaves the world with its false freedoms, and by renouncing the weakness of will that drives him to obey very impulse and satisfy all his passions, he disciplines himself in obedience to the will of God... Which brings him to a pure knowledge of God ... Until his soul rests in that tranquil peace which is the sign that there are no longer any significant obstacles to frustrate his desire for truth.*

*Pages 25-26, The Silent Life, Thomas Merton.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to free you from obstacles and distractions so that you can remain focused on God during prayer.

### ***From the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ***

Chapter 53: God's friends always bear themselves with simplicity. Avoid drawing attention to yourself. Be moderate. Be simple. Avoid having a restless imagination.

*2 Corinthians 8:2 (Douay-Rhims Bible) That in much experience of tribulation, they have had abundance of joy; and their very deep poverty hath abounded unto the riches of their simplicity.*

*2 Corinthians 9:13 (Douay-Rhims Bible) By the proof of this ministry, glorifying God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ, and for the simplicity of your communicating unto them, and unto all.*

*2 Corinthians 11:3 But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*

*Note: what is 'simplicity and devotion' to Christ. This is contemplative prayer.*

*Acts 2:46 And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart.*

*Abba John said, "I am like a man sitting under a great tree, who sees wild beasts and snakes coming against him in great numbers. When he cannot withstand them any longer, he runs to climb the tree and is saved. It is just the same with me; I sit in my cell and I am aware of evil thoughts coming against me, and when I have no more strength against them, I take refuge in God by prayer and I am saved from the enemy."*

*Sr. Benedicta Ward, "The Sayings of the Desert Fathers," (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1975), pp. 85-89*

*Abba Poemen said of Abba John the Dwarf that he had prayed God to take his passions away from him so that he might become free from care. He went and told an old man this: "I find myself in peace, without an enemy," he said. The old man said to him, "Go, beseech God to stir up warfare so that you may regain the affliction and humility that you used to have, for it is by warfare that the soul makes progress." So he besought God and when warfare came, he no longer prayed that it might be taken away, but said, "Lord, give me strength for the fight."*

*Sr. Benedicta Ward, "The Sayings of the Desert Fathers," (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1975)*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help strengthen your attention and simplicity during contemplative prayer.

## **No one sews a patch of new cloth on an old garment**

Chapter 54: As a you continue in the work of love, love will govern your demeanor inside and out. Contemplative prayer physically transfigures a person. They radiate a sense of God. They are rich with spiritual wisdom and the fruit of love. Pray contemplatively and you become holy before God.

*Matthew 17:2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.*

*Mark 9:2 Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them.*

*Transfigure: Across, over + to form, shape. To change the outward form or appearance of; to metamorphose; to transform. Especially, to change to something exalted and glorious; to give an ideal form to. Change completely the nature of something.*

*Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*Note: how is the renewing of your mind to come about?*

*Genesis 35:2 And Jacob said to his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and cleanse yourselves, and change your garments;*

*Note: what garments are changed?*

*Mark 2:21 No one sews a patch of new cloth on an old garment: otherwise its new filling-up takes from the old [stuff], and there is a worse rent.*

*Note: You cannot merely put a new patch on your old garment. You cannot pray half way. You need to go the whole distance. Every thing must be new.*

*Matthew 22:11-14 And the king, having gone in to see the guests, beheld there a man not clothed with a wedding garment. And he says to him, [My] friend, how camest thou in here not having on a wedding garment? But he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him feet and hands, and take him away, and cast him out into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. For many are called ones, but few chosen ones.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you release and detach your old garments and help you put on a new 'wedding' garment during prayer.

## **He who has ears to hear, let him hear**

Chapter 55: During prayer, do not become attached to making judgements about anything. Detach from all judgements during prayer and listen.

*Deuteronomy 4:30 When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.*

*Deuteronomy 8:20 Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.*

*Deuteronomy 11:13 It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul.*

*Note: how do we serve God? In which manner is this done with heart and soul?*

*Jeremiah 35:13 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Go and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words?" declares the LORD.*

*Note: when do you receive His instructions? By listening to His words when?*

*Jeremiah 35:15 Also I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending them again and again, saying: 'Turn now every man from his evil way and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to worship them. Then you will dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your forefathers; but you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me.*

*Note: God asks us to listen. To listen requires concentration and focus, free from all distractions. When do we listen?*

*Matthew 17:5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!*

*Matthew 11:15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*

*Note: Listen not in the literal sense. Release from your judgements and listen during prayer. You are not literally listening for something audible.*

*Luke 19:11 While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.*

*Note: they supposed that the Kingdom of God was "literally" going to appear before them. You enter into the Kingdom during contemplative prayer, in silence you listen.*

Two men were walking along a crowded sidewalk in a downtown business area. Suddenly one exclaimed: "Listen to the lovely sound of that cricket". But the other man could not hear. He asked his companion how he could detect the sound of a cricket amid the din of people and traffic. The first man, who was a zoologist, had trained himself to listen to the voice of nature. But he did not explain. He simply took a coin out of his pocket and dropped it to the sidewalk, whereupon a dozen people began to look about them. "We hear," he said, "what we listen for".

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you release from your constantly judging things and listen to the voice of God during prayer.

### **Guide them to springs of the water of life**

Chapter 56: Avoid falling victim to pride, intellectual curiosity, and scholarly knowledge. Rely on the guidance of the Church and of the Saints.

*Deuteronomy 32:12 The LORD alone guided him, and there was no foreign god with him.*

*Note: 'no foreign god' means experience of no distractions during prayer.*

*Matthew 21:43 Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.*

*Note: by praying contemplatively, we produce fruit.*

*Revelation 7:17 ... for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."*

Pray. Ask Jesus to guide you during contemplative prayer to the Kingdom of God where you will find the springs of water of life so that you can properly serve others.

### **From the mouth of the LORD**

Chapter 57: There is a spiritual understanding of key words. Do not use a literal interpretation of words. Beware your imagination which can play tricks on you during prayer. Prayer is interior and pursued in the spirit.

*Jeremiah 23:16 Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD.*

*Literal: Being in accordance with, conforming to, or upholding the exact or primary meaning of a word or words. Word for word; verbatim: a literal translation. Avoiding exaggeration, metaphor, or embellishment; factual; prosaic: a literal description; a literal mind. Consisting of, using, or expressed by letters: literal notation. Conforming or limited to the simplest, non-figurative, or most obvious meaning of a word or words.*

*Note: from the mouth of the Lord there is silence and stillness during prayer.*

*Malachi 3:1-3 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap."*

*"He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness."*

*Note: During prayer, God comes to burn off your distractions. Eventually, you become purified and free from all distractions. When all distractions are gone, you have reached the Kingdom of God.*

*John 11:13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.*

*Note: avoid literal meanings.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you burn away all distracting imaginations during contemplative prayer.

### **The elements shall melt with the burning heat**

Chapter 58: Go beyond the course rind which is literal understanding of the words in the Bible. Let us find and feed on the sweet fruit (that is, the real meaning purposively intended by God). God does not expect us to understand or comprehend Him (or anything for that matter) during prayer. Stand fast in your faith during prayer and bear the assault of distractions. Spiritual truth contained in the words of the Bible is concealed from the superficial observer.

*1 Corinthians 7:35 But I say this for your own profit; not that I may set a snare before you, but for what [is] seemly, and waiting on the Lord without distraction.*

*Distraction: The act of distracting; a drawing apart; separation. That which diverts attention; a diversion. A diversity of direction; detachment. State in which the attention is called in different ways; confusion; perplexity. Confusion of affairs; tumult; disorder; as, political distractions. Agitation from violent emotions; perturbation of mind; despair.*

*Note: avoid all snares and pray by "waiting on the Lord" (That is, contemplative prayer).*

*1 Corinthians 7:35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.*

*Note: "undistracted devotion" is another way of saying contemplative prayer.*

*Jude 1:21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto life everlasting.*

*2 Peter 3:12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord, by which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the burning heat.*

*Note: What remains after everything has dissolved and everything had burned away (during prayer) is the Kingdom of God.*

*Luke 23:51 ... (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the Kingdom of God;*

*Mark 15:43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the Kingdom of God;*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you dissolve your distractions during prayer so that what remains after everything has been dissolved is the Kingdom of God.

### ***The meaning of this statement was hidden***

Chapter 59: Those who work spiritually must be careful about interpretation of the words in the Bible. Expressions are not meant to be taken literally.

*Psalms 63 O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land where no water is.*

*Interpreting: To explain the meaning of: See Synonyms at explain. To conceive the significance of; construe: To present or conceptualize the meaning of by means of art or criticism. To translate orally.*

*Note: Contemplative prayer is like a dry and weary land where there is no water to quench a thirsty imaginations and distractions.*

*Ecclesiasticus 39:3 He will search out the hidden meanings of proverbs, and will be conversant in the secrets of parables.*

*Luke 18:34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.*

*1 Corinthians 14:10-11 There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you become conversant in the secrets of parables.

### **Nazareth, notserah: one guarding or watching**

*A Christmas selection from the Bible:*

*Genesis 24:7 "The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.*

*Genesis 49:26 The blessings of thy father are strengthened with the blessings of his fathers: until the desire of the everlasting hills should come; may they be upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the Nazarite among his brethren.*

*Numbers 6:2 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the LORD,*

*Numbers 6:21 This is the law of the Nazirite, when he hath vowed his oblation to the Lord in the time of his consecration, besides those things which his hand shall find, according to that which he had vowed in his mind, so shall he do for the fulfilling of his sanctification.*

*Deuteronomy 33:16 And of the fruits of the earth, and of the fullness thereof. The blessing of him that appeared in the bush, come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the Nazarite among his brethren.*

*Judges 13:5 "For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines."*

*Judges 13:7 "But he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.' "*

*Amos 2:11 "Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets and some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not so, O sons of Israel?" declares the LORD.*

*Matthew 2:23 ... and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."*

*Matthew 26:71 And as he went out of the gate, another maid saw him, and she saith to them that were there: This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth.*

*Mark 1:9 And it came to pass, in those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.*

*Mark 10:47 When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

*Luke 1:26 And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth,*

*Luke 2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David,*

*Luke 2:39 And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city Nazareth.*

*Luke 2:51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart.*

*Luke 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he was brought up: and he went into the synagogue, according to his custom, on the sabbath day; and he rose up to read.*

*Luke 4:34 Saying: Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God.*

*Luke 24:19 And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,*

*John 1:45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith to him: We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth.*

*John 18:7 Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene."*

*John 19:19 And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

Nazareth (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition): A town of northern Israel southeast of Haifa. Settled in prehistoric times, it is first mentioned in the New Testament as the boyhood home of Jesus. The modern town is a trade center and pilgrimage site.

Nazareth (Hitchcock's Bible Names Dictionary): separated; crowned; sanctified.

Nazareth (Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary): Nazareth separated, generally supposed to be the Greek form of the Hebrew "netser", a "shoot" or "sprout." Some, however, think that the name of the city must be connected with the name of the hill behind it, from which one of the finest prospects in Palestine is obtained, and accordingly they derive it from the Hebrew "notserah", i.e., one guarding or watching, thus designating the hill which overlooks and thus guards an extensive region. The name Nazareth perhaps means 'a watch tower' (now en-Nasrah), but is connected in the New Testament with Netzer, 'a branch' (Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Matt. 2:23), Nazarene being quite a different word from Nazarite.

Guard: to supervise entry or exit through; keep watch at: guarded the door. Watch: to look or observe attentively or carefully. Pray. Ask Jesus to teach and help you to guard and watch during contemplative prayer. Are you a notserah?

### ***The LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel***

Chapter 60: Avoid misconstruing the words used in the Bible. Avoid the literal sense of words. The path to heaven is measured through desire. We dwell in Heaven through the love of contemplative prayer.

*Exodus 11:7 'But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.'*

*Note: Egypt, that troubles or oppresses; anguish (Hitchcock's Bible Names Dictionary)*

*Israel, who prevails with God (Hitchcock's Bible Names Dictionary)*

*Note: during contemplative prayer, distractions come to trouble you and even oppress you, and you may even feel anguish. But what ever distractions come during prayer, prevail with God.*

*1 Chronicles 22:12 "Only the LORD give you discretion and understanding, and give you charge over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the LORD your God.*

*1 Chronicles 28:9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.*

*Psalms 14:2 The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.*

*Isaiah 43:10 "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me.*

*Daniel 5:23 but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.*

*Daniel 10:12 Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.*

*Matthew 13:15 For this people's mind is stupefied, their hearing has become dull, and their eyes they have closed; to prevent their ever seeing with their eyes, or hearing with their ears, or understanding with their minds, and turning back, so that I might heal them.*

*Note: the healing comes via help from Jesus during contemplative prayer.*

*Matthew 22:29 But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.*

*Mark 6:52 For they had not learned the lesson taught by the loaves, but their minds were dull.*

*Mark 8:17 He perceived what they were saying, and He said to them, "What is this discussion of yours about having no bread? Do you not yet see and understand? Are your minds so dull of comprehension?"*

*Note: avoid being dull by limiting your understanding to the literal sense of words.*

*Luke 8:10 And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.*

*Luke 24:25 "O dull-witted men," He replied, "with minds so slow to believe all that the Prophets have spoken!*

*Note: the prophets have spoken about contemplative prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you deal with distractions and to prevail with God during contemplative prayer.

### ***Breath of the Almighty gives them understanding***

Chapter 61: Can a non-material spirit be detected like a physical thing? By no means. We have to rely on words to communicate. The words have a literal meaning. But they do not have to be understood in this sense. Grasp the spiritual significance of the words used in the Bible.

*Exodus 31:3 "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship,*

*Job 20:3 "I listened to the reproof which insults me, and the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.*

*Job 32:8 "But it is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.*

*Luke 2:50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.*

*Luke 9:45 But they understood not this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.*

*Luke 18:34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.*

Pray. Ask Jesus for understanding about contemplative prayer.

### ***The Kingdom of God has come upon you***

Chapter 62: When the word 'you' is used in print, do not limit yourself to the literal meaning that it is 'your' physical sense: bones and flesh. You are related to everything. You are the sum total of your experiences and relationships. You are not just limited to physical flesh and bones. You are more than the sum of your physical parts.

*Hebrews 7:16 ... who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.*

*Matthew 12:28 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.*

*Note: what remains after all of the distracting 'demons' have been removed is the Kingdom of God.*

*John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*

*Note: do not rely on or use literal translations. Rely on the spirit of the word.*

*John 4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remove all of the distracting 'demons' so that you may reach the Kingdom of God.

### ***The Searcher of hearts knows what the Spirit's meaning is***

Chapter 63: Your mind is capable of comprehending physical things and non-physical things. When reading the words of the Bible, pay attention to the non-physical meaning associated with the words. The non-physical meaning was intended to be imparted to you.

*Daniel 4:18 (Douay-Rheims) I king Nabuchodonosor saw this dream: thou, therefore, O Baltassar, tell me quickly the interpretation: for all the wise men of my Kingdom are not able to declare the meaning of it to me: but thou art able, because the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.*

*Romans 8:27 (Weymouth) ... and the Searcher of hearts knows what the Spirit's meaning is, because His intercessions for God's people are in harmony with God's will.*

*Mark 4:13 "Do you all miss the meaning of this parable?" He added; "how then will you understand the rest of my parables?"*

*Note: understand the intended meaning of the parables, and there is only one consistent intended meaning that all parables point to, and that is contemplative prayer.*

*Luke 22:16 for I tell you that I certainly shall not eat one again till its full meaning has been brought out in the Kingdom of God."*

*Note: Once the "eating" has stopped during prayer, you have entered the Kingdom of God. See: Genesis 2 & 3*

*Genesis 2:17 ... but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."*

*Genesis 3:11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"*

*Genesis 3:17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you;*

*John 4:37 For it is in this that you see the real meaning of the saying, 'The sower is one person, and the reaper is another.'*

*Note: Contemplative prayer is like a sower who sows distractions into your inner field and a reaper who cuts down these distractions.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you reap your inner distractions resist 'eating' during contemplative prayer.

Ask Jesus to help you resist 'eating' your distractions during contemplative prayer.

## **A man took and sowed in his field**

Chapter 64: Do not become distracted (or blinded by) with physical meaning of words. Avoid being attracted to anything during prayer. Seek the non-physical (spiritual) meaning of words. Seek the intention of God. His intention has always been consistent, but our understanding during the ages has not been consistent.

*Genesis 22:18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*

*Note: how is His word obeyed? We obey by praying contemplatively.*

*Job 38:27 To satisfy the waste and desolate land and to make the seeds of grass to sprout.*

*Ecclesiastes 11:6 Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.*

*Note: sow your seed is prayer.*

*Jeremiah 2:21 Yet I planted you a choice vine, a completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?*

*Note: paying attention to distractions during prayer is like turning yourself into degenerate shoots of foreign vine.*

*Joel 1:17 The seeds shrivel under their clods; the storehouses are desolate, the barns are torn down, for the grain is dried up.*

*Note: this is what contemplative prayer feels like.*

*Haggai 2:19 'Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit. Yet from this day on I will bless you.'*

*Note: contemplative prayer is like 'not generating fruit'. When you stop 'making or eating fruit' during prayer is the day you become blessed.*

*Amos 9:13 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; when the mountains will drip sweet wine and all the hills will be dissolved."*

*Note: after learning to pray contemplatively, you become like a plowman who overtakes the reaper and the sower (the plowman removes everything from the field leaving the field bare). The day you pray contemplatively will be like a day when the hills become dissolved leaving nothing behind except for the Kingdom of God.*

*2 Esdras 8:6 (King James Version) O Lord, if thou suffer not thy servant, that we may pray before thee, and thou give us seed unto our heart, and culture to our understanding, that there may come fruit of it; how shall each man live that is corrupt, who beareth the place of a man?*

*Note: a prayer asking for understanding of how to pray.*

*Matthew 13:10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"*

*Note: Jesus is ready to tell why He uses parables.*

*Matthew 13:11 Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that He will grant the understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God to those people who ask for it and avoid using the literal sense of words. Those who prefer to remain examining the literal sense of words will not be granted any understanding of His words.*

*Matthew 13:12 For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that for those that understand the intended meaning of His words, more understanding will be given to us. And for those that limit themselves to the literal sense of His words, then whatever understanding they have will be taken away (that is, they will understand even less).*

*Matthew 13:13 Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*

*Note: Jesus advises us to avoid the literal sense of words. Otherwise, if we use the literal sense of the words, we will miss the intended (or purposive) meaning behind the words He uses to convey His message about the Kingdom of God.*

*Matthew 13:14 In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;*

*Note: Jesus quotes an interesting riddle from Isaiah. Riddle me this, under what condition can you hear something but not understand it? Under what condition do you see but not perceive? Answer: when you stick to the literal sense of words, you will not understand and perceive. When you stick to the intended meaning of the words, you will understand and perceive.*

*Matthew 13:15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'*

*Note: Jesus tells us that when we decide to understand the intended meaning of His words (understand with your heart), He will heal us when we return. How do we return? We return daily to Him through contemplative prayer (like the prodigal son returns to his father).*

*Matthew 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that we are blessed because we can see and hear the intended meaning of His words. And the intention is to talk about contemplative prayer. Always.*

*Matthew 13:17 "For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that there are many people desire to understand the Truth (that is the intended meaning of the words used by Jesus), but they cannot see it and cannot hear it.*

*Matthew 13:18 Hear then the parable of the sower.*

*Note: Jesus has a riddle for us. If we seek the intended meaning we will understand Him and understand what God wants from us.*

*Matthew 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.*

*Note: The seed is the message provided through the Bible. The message is continually being placed into our hearts every time we read the words in the Bible. If you do not understand the message (that is your understand the literal words but not the intended meaning of the words), it is like the evil one has come and snatched the message from your heart (you have not understanding). The message is about contemplative prayer. The message is like the rain that falls down on everyone good or bad alike. All of the rain drops are the same. Some are large and some are small. But rain is rain, and the words of the Bible provide the same message.*

*Matthew 13:20 The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;*

*Note: Jesus tells us that some of us will understand the meaning of the message being conveyed to us through the words of the Bible.*

*Matthew 13:21 ... yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that while some understand the intended meaning, they will not preserve in daily contemplative prayer because they suffer from affliction or persecution that arises because of the word (that is the message of contemplative prayer) and they immediately turn away from contemplative prayer.*

*Matthew 13:22 And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that some will understand the message of the words conveyed in the Bible, but they are too busy being worried by the daily grind of life and/or by the distractions of making material wealth, and in this manner, these people do not produce fruit through contemplative prayer.*

*Matthew 13:23 And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."*

*Note: Jesus tells us that some people will understand the meaning of the message conveyed in the words of the Bible about contemplative prayer. They pray every day and thus produce the fruit.*

*Matthew 13:24 Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.*

*Note: Jesus tells us another riddle about seeds.*

*Matthew 13:25-26 But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that during prayer, good and bad distractions present themselves to the one who prays contemplatively.*

*Matthew 13:27 The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'*

*Note: Jesus tells us that some people do not understand why there are good and bad distractions that present themselves during prayer.*

*Matthew 13:28-29 And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that during prayer, we are to remain detached from all distractions whether they be good or bad distractions.*

*Matthew 13:30 Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."*

*Note: Jesus tells us to ask for help during prayer. Jesus tells us that he will come to help us with our distractions if we ask for His help. Pray. Ask Jesus to deal with the distractions His way during contemplative prayer.*

*Matthew 13:31 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;*

*Note: Jesus prepares to tell us another riddle involving a seed.*

*Matthew 13:32 ... and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES.*

*Note: Jesus tells us that contemplative prayer is like planting a seed and letting it grow. In order for a seed to grow, we must not disturb it and just let it be, but we must pray every day. Eventually, our lives change in way that we become useful for helping others (that is the birds depicted in the parable).*

Pray. Ask Jesus to deal with the distractions His way during contemplative prayer.

## **Do not go after them**

Chapter 65: You imagination can lead you to astray to counterfeits of reality. Avoid delightful thoughts, images and daydreams. Your imagination can be unruly. Through the interior life, you are healed and thereby ascend your imagination to the truth.

*1 Chronicles 5:25 But they forsook the God of their fathers, and went astray after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them.*

*Note: during contemplative prayer, do not go astray after other gods (that is distractions).*

*Baruch 1:19 From the day that he brought our fathers out of the land of Egypt, even to this day, we were disobedient to the Lord our God: and going astray we turned away from hearing his voice.*

*Note: during prayer, do not go astray from placing attention on the Kingdom of God.*

*Baruch 4:28 For as it was your mind to go astray from God; so when you return again you shall seek him ten times as much.*

*Note: when you catch yourself going astray from God during prayer, return your attention on God.*

*Wisdom of Solomon 12:24 For they went astray for a long time in the ways of error, holding those things for gods which are the most worthless among beasts, living after the manner of children without understanding.*

*Note: during prayer, do not go astray from God. Understand contemplative prayer as taught in the Bible.*

*Ezekiel 44:27 "On the day that he goes into the sanctuary, into the inner court to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering," declares the Lord GOD.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is prayer where we offer our distractions in our inner sanctuary.*

*Matthew 18:12-13 "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? "If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.*

*Note: Jesus will come to your assistance when you astray during contemplative prayer.*

*Luke 21:8 And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.*

*Note: Call on Jesus for help with contemplative prayer. Do not go after distractions during prayer*

Pray. Ask Jesus for assistance with contemplative prayer.

## ***The Kingdom of God is within you***

Chapter 66: It is painful to your mind to withdraw from pleasures which you blindly crave. It abhors discipline. Nevertheless, ask for help and grace for praying contemplatively.

*Job 10:13 Yet these things You have concealed in Your heart; I know that this is within You:*

*Note: Job knows that the message of contemplative prayer is concealed in God's heart.*

*Psalms 74:11 Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand? From within Your bosom, destroy them!*

*Note: What is being asked for destruction? Distractions! Ask for help to pray contemplatively.*

*Proverbs 2:1 My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you.*

*Note: God asks us to pray contemplatively.*

*Ezekiel 36:26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is a transformative prayer.*

*Luke 17:21 Neither shall they say: Behold here, or behold there. For lo, the Kingdom of God is within you.*

*Note: avoid the literal meaning of the Kingdom of God. It is not a physical thing. You can enter the 'Kingdom' via contemplative prayer.*

*Matthew 13:30 Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."*

*Note: Jesus tells us to ask for His help during contemplative prayer. Jesus tells us that He will come to help us with our distractions if we ask for His help.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to deal with the distractions His way during contemplative prayer.

## ***I will utter dark sayings of old***

Chapter 67: Do not be deceived in understanding the spiritual meaning of certain expressions. There will come a time when your mind is free from involvement with material or spiritual concerns and be totally taken up with God himself. This is true contemplative work. Transcend everything during prayer and seek union with God in spirit. Do not misunderstand words by referring to their literal sense. Do not interpret literally what is intended purposefully understood in a spiritual context.

*Psalms 77:2 I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter propositions from the beginning.*

*Transcend: To pass beyond the limits of: emotions that transcend understanding. To be greater than, as in intensity or power; surpass: love that transcends infatuation. To exist above and independent of (material experience or the universe).*

*Parable: a simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson.*

*Psalms 78:2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old...*

*Matthew 13:10 And his disciples came and said to him: Why speakest thou to them in parables?*

*Matthew 13:13 Therefore do I speak to them in parables: because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you reach beyond the literal meaning of His parables to His intended message about contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer is what God wanted from us from the very beginning.

### ***Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden***

Chapter 68: Your senses and faculties will be frustrated for lack of something to dwell on they chide you for doing nothing. Be faithful and go on with nothing and remain moved by love for God. Persevere in this nothingness. Wrestle with this nothingness. You can only experience this nothingness. It will feel very dark, but this is spiritual light. Who derides it as emptiness? Our superficial self. Our true self appreciates this darkness. In this darkness, we experience an intuitive understanding of everything material and spiritual.

*Job 3:23 Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?*

*Note: Job wonders why those that pray contemplatively are given the 'light' (which the intended meaning of light is 'understanding').*

*Isaiah 45:3 I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.*

*Note: the treasure of darkness is contemplative prayer.*

*Ezekiel 32:8 "All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you and will set darkness on your land," declares the Lord GOD.*

*Note: during contemplative prayer, you are darkened over (a darkness sets on you). But this darkness is really 'light' from heaven.*

*1 Corinthians 2:7 ... but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory.*

*Note: contemplative prayer is a dark, hidden mystery which is what God wanted since the creation of earth.*

*Mark 4:11 And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables".*

*Note: Jesus will provide understanding of contemplative prayer. For people who do not ask Jesus for understanding of His words, they will not understand His message buried in His parables.*

Pray. Ask Jesus for help in understanding His parables.

### ***When I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light***

Chapter 69: You are transformed by the interior experience of nothingness. In time, all distractions become removed. He who patiently abides in darkness will be comforted and his distractions become removed. Endure this suffering. In this nothingness is heavenly paradise. Eventually, you will experience peace in the darkness, and it will be God Himself present. But this peace remains a cloud of unknowing between God and the contemplative.

*Micah 7:8 Rejoice not, thou, my enemy, over me, because I am fallen: I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light.*

*Note: the enemy is distractions. "Sit in the darkness" is contemplative prayer.*

*Tobit 5:12 And Tobias said: What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven?*

*Note: Tobias wonders the benefit of 'sitting in the darkness' (that is, contemplative prayer).*

*Matthew 4:16 "THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED."*

*Note: Jesus tells us to sit in the darkness, and a great light will come upon those who pray contemplatively. This light cannot be perceived by you. You will perceive darkness. But to God, this is a great light that shines on you during prayer.*

*Luke 1:79 (Darby) ... to shine upon them who were sitting in darkness and in [the] shadow of death, to guide our feet into [the] way of peace.*

*Note: when you pray contemplatively, you sit in darkness, and this prayer guides you to peace.*

*John 6:27 Work not [for] the food which perishes, but [for] the food which abides unto life eternal, which the Son of man shall give to you; for him has the Father sealed, [even] God.*

*Note: Praying contemplatively is like receiving food during prayer.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to feed you during contemplative prayer with a dark light.

### ***By words without knowledge***

Chapter 70: Keep working in this nothingness. Do not involve your senses. Do not grasp at the non-physical during prayer. Your intellect cannot know God. When knowledge is exhausted, you have reached the Kingdom. The most divine knowledge of God is that which is known by not knowing.

*Job 38:2 Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*

*Note: Job is being distracted by wondering about the person that counsels him during contemplative prayer.*

*Isaiah 22:22 Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, when he opens no one will shut, when he shuts no one will open.*

*Note: Isaiah tells us, in a riddle, about contemplative prayer, which appears to shut out distractions.*

*Luke 11:52 Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering.*

*Note: Jesus does not approve of lawyers because they tend to examine the literal meaning of contracts and words, and as a result they impose their literal interpretation on others. The literal interpretation hinders the progress of others.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you avoid literal interpretations of His words.

### ***The cloud filled the inner court***

Chapter 71: There are some who believe contemplation is terrible and difficult. God determines your course of contemplative experience. Some reach it through arduous work. Others experience it quickly and without much difficulty. Within the cloud is the temple of God.

*Ezekiel 10:3 Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple when the man entered, and the cloud filled the inner court.*

*Ezekiel 10:4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD.*

*Revelation 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe."*

*Luke 24:53 ... and were continually in the temple, blessing God.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you pass by the cherubim so that you pray continually in your inner temple.

### ***Went to the dark cloud wherein God was***

Chapter 72: Your experience of the contemplative life is unique and will not be experienced by another. Do not waste your time making comparisons with the contemplative experience of others.

*Exodus 20:21 (Douay-Rhiems) And the people stood afar off. But Moses went to the dark cloud wherein God was.*

*Note: When you enter the dark cloud where God is, you are very near to God.*

*Job 3:23 (Douay-Rhiems) To a man whose way is hidden, and God hath surrounded him with darkness.*

*Note: God surrounds those that pray contemplatively with darkness.*

*1 Samuel 2:9 He keeps the feet of His godly ones, but the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; for not by might shall a man prevail.*

*Note: God silences the 'wicked ones' (that is, distractions) during prayer.*

*Psalms 18:28 For You light my lamp; the LORD my God illumines my darkness.*

*Note: God illumines your darkness during contemplative prayer. But you will only perceive a great darkness.*

*Isaiah 50:10 Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*

*Note: Use the name of God during contemplative prayer.*

*Jeremiah 13:16 Give glory to the LORD your God, before He brings darkness and before your feet stumble on the dusky mountains, and while you are hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness, and turns it into gloom.*

*Note: Hoping for light (literal light that is), God makes it a deep darkness (which is what you perceive) during prayer.*

*Ezekiel 32:8 "All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you and will set darkness on your land," declares the Lord GOD.*

*Note: During prayer, God will set a darkness over you.*

*1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

*Note: Jesus teaches us that the darkness is not a literal darkness, but to God this is a great light we are given during prayer.*

*Matthew 4:16 The people that sat in darkness, hath seen great light: and to them that sat in the region of the shadow of death, light is sprung up.*

*Matthew 8:12 But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

*Note: The children of the Kingdom are to experience darkness during prayer.*

*Luke 1:79 To enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death: to direct our feet into the way of peace.*

*Note: Sitting in darkness is spiritual enlightenment.*

*John 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

*Note: during contemplative prayer, God's light shines, but you will not understand this type of light so it remains dark to you.*

*John 8:12 Again therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying: I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

*Note: Jesus tells that that to pray contemplatively is not 'walking in darkness', but in fact those that pray contemplatively will have light of life.*

*John 12:46 I am come a light into the world; that whosoever believeth in me, may not remain in darkness.*

*Note: during contemplative prayer, believe that Jesus will help you and you will not merely remain in a literal darkness.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you pray contemplatively every day.

### ***It is to be given daily without fail***

Chapter 73: Continually give yourself to contemplative prayer. We are called to this work.

*Psalms 41:4 My tears have been any bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?*

*Ezra 6:9 Whatever is needed, both young bulls, rams, and lambs for a burnt offering to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and anointing oil, as the priests in Jerusalem request, it is to be given to them daily without fail.*

*Isaiah 58:2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that doeth righteousness, and hath not forsaken the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of righteousness, they take delight in approaching to God:*

*Matthew 26:55 I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple.*

*Luke 9:23 If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

*Luke 11:3 Give us this day our daily bread.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you daily with contemplative prayer.

### ***Continue in prayer night and day***

Chapter 74: If contemplative prayer is unsuited to you, then leave it aside and find another way to pray and excuse the way of contemplative prayer. Read this book several times to let the meaning sink into your mind and soul. This book is not suited for people not interested in contemplative prayer.

*Psalms 72:15 And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; [and] daily shall he be praised.*

*1 Timothy 5:5 Now she who [is] a widow indeed, and is left alone, has put [her] hope in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.*

*Matthew 14:23 And after he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain apart to pray: and when even was come, he was there alone.*

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you pray in the morning and evening.

### ***The beginning of the pride of man, is to fall off from God***

Chapter 75: Pride causes the withdrawal of grace. God withdraws grace to test your pride and prevent it from taking root in you. What matters is your desire for this daily work regardless of the lack or multitude of distractions that come.

*Deuteronomy 18:20 But the prophet, who being corrupted with pride, shall speak in my name things that I did not command him to say, or in the name of strange gods, shall be slain.*

*Hosea 7:10 Though the pride of Israel testifies against him, yet they have not returned to the LORD their God, nor have they sought Him, for all this.*

*Ecclesiasticus 10:14 The beginning of the pride of man, is to fall off from God.*

*Note: avoid falling off from God by praying contemplatively every day.*

*Mark 7:23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man.*

*Note: pray contemplatively to help you remove the root of evil things that spring from your inner field.*

*Acts 1:9-11 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."*

Acts 1:11 "This Jesus will come back in the same way that you saw Him go to heaven". How did Jesus go to heaven? Acts 1:9 "He was taken up to heaven as they watched Him and a cloud hid Him from their sight."

Therefore, how will Jesus come to you? Is it too difficult to figure out? Carefully ponder Acts 1:9-11. Read it over and over in your mind. Let the meaning sink in and become firmly anchored to your inner heart.

Does it make sense to you that Jesus will return from heaven to you (and me) and anyone who calls on Him during contemplative prayer which is described in Acts 1:9-11 as watching Jesus (the Nazarene Who is the ultimate Watcher) in a cloud hidden from your senses (our 'sight', and other senses). Do you believe? Do you have faith in this prayer?

What a holy revelation. Ask and wait for Jesus to come to you during prayer. Jesus becomes present to you during contemplative prayer but you cannot sense His Presence. During prayer ask Jesus to silence your distractions because you sincerely and humbly desire nothing but to be wholly present to Him as He wholly watches you.

Pray. Ask Jesus to help you remain faithful to twice daily contemplative prayer. Pray always. May God be merciful to you and be with you at all times.

I asked God to grant me patience. God said, No.

Patience is a by-product of tribulations; it isn't granted, it is earned.

I asked God to give me happiness. God said, No.

I give you blessings. Happiness is up to you.

I asked God to spare me pain. God said, No.

Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me.

I asked God to make my spirit grow. God said, No.

You must grow on your own, but I will prune you to make you fruitful.

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. God said No.

I will give you life so that you may enjoy all things.

I ask God to help me LOVE others, as much as God loves me. God said...

Ahhhh, finally you have the idea.

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