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THE "KNOW THYSELF" SERIES

Seven

LESSON NUMBER FOUR

THE FOUR LINES OF DEVELOPMENT

Ways

The Master Formula

To

Wisdom

Stature

Favor with God

Favor with Men

Selfhood

REVELATION NUMBER 131

"Observe thyself as thy greatest enemy would do.
So shalt thou be thy greatest friend."

-- Boyle.

Beloved Centurion:

As a Mayan Companion, one of your greatest interests is self-development. This lesson which we are now about to study is concerned mainly with your development. I want to stress again the importance of making a study of these Truths; - Dear student, please do not feel that just reading the material for your enlightenment is enough. Go deeper for hidden meanings. Read slowly and carefully and you should obtain results which can completely change your life. A thorough understanding of one's self has the power to make this possible.

The first step to improvement, whether it is material, moral, or religious, is knowledge of one's self. We must learn our weaknesses and our errors and our deficiencies and our sins, in order that we will overcome them. As I have told you before, if we do not recognize our weaknesses, we shall never overcome them, - thereby going backward instead of forward.

"Know Thyself" was counted as one of the oracles of the Greeks. It was inscribed as one of their three great precepts in letters of gold on the Temple at Delphos, and was regarded as divine.

Down through the ages, the importance of knowing one's self has been stressed. In order to have complete understanding of another, whether it is one of your family or your friends, or the public with whom you come in contact in the business world, you must have a complete knowledge of yourself.

There isn't a great deal more to be said about the importance of this particular series, "Seven Ways to Selfhood", which is the formal name, but which I call "Self-Analysis"; - I have already tried, in deepest sincerity and seriousness to point out to you the importance of this subject in your life - in your attempt to go ever onward and upward.

However, I would like to say just this: every night we should ask ourselves these questions - "What weakness have I mastered today?", "What temptations have I overcome?", "What good have I accomplished?", "In what way have I improved my life?". If we do this, our lives will be better for having done so. We will find ourselves trying harder to evaluate our actions day by day. There is much to be learned in the words which are to follow, so, in order that we may get started on the lesson proper, we shall not take time for more discussion here as we go into this study.

Although there is so much more I would like to say, may I make this one observation for you?: It is very wise to talk with our own hearts - ask ourselves how we stand toward God and Heaven - where we have failed - and how we can avoid failure in the future. And remember always the importance of knowing yourself. ALL WISDOM CENTERS THERE. Remember also that it one of the most difficult things in life to really, truly, know yourself. You may think that you do, but so often

we are guilty of seeing only those qualities in ourselves which are worthy, and we close our eyes to our weaknesses. Helping you to know yourself is the purpose of this series of lessons in this stage of your development. And now, with our hearts open to receive, let us proceed with The Four Lines of Development:

THE MASTER FORMULA

We have now considered the trinity of being, the three phases of selfhood that fuse themselves into the unified personality that any one of us is. It so happens, though, that this unified selfhood develops and manifests itself along four general lines. These we are now to consider.

What they are and why we arrange them as we do goes back to an old story recorded in the Second Chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke. A devout Jewish couple named Joseph and Mary, living in the poor little town of Nazareth, had in the family a remarkable boy named Jesus. They went each year to keep the great feast of the Passover in Jerusalem, and the year the boy was twelve, they took him along. Being a remarkable lad, he took a deep interest in the religious observance, and a still deeper interest in what might be its true meaning. Working in Joseph's carpenter shop, living in the home, and going about the town and countryside, he had been accustomed to doing a great deal of thinking about life, its origin, its meaning, its destiny. Not having much else to distract his mind, he had gone very deeply into these questions, and despite his youth had already reached some significant conclusions of his own.

So, while most other boys of his age may have had wandering minds or have been interested only in the pomp and pageantry side of the great feast, his mind was digging away at the secret of what had led and kept his people in their long struggle from slavery to the nationality they had now lost but always hoped to get back. His mind followed many paths, having many starting points, and running through many fields of thought and experience. But whatever road it took in its contemplations, soon or late it always found itself confronted with one name - God, whom Jesus even then preferred to call "My Father". He realized that the Supreme Being was the perimeter of human possibility, the alpha and the omega of experience and hope, the beginning and end of all roads. That is the basic premise of all good thinking.

The observance and control of the great feast seemed to center in the temple and there the boy of Nazareth went to see what was going on and to think it over. He was always thinking things over. That was his way. He figured that everything had a meaning, and he meant to find that meaning.

In the temple he found plenty to interest him. There were some remarkable men there - bright-eyed, scholarly old men they called the priests and the rabbis. He asked some of them questions, and the questions were so good that they did not brush him aside or order him away. Instead they fell into a discussion. Others noticed it and gathered around. Soon a great parley was on, with the amazing boy entering into it with strangely mature knowledge and judgment.

Meanwhile, Joseph and Mary had started home. Supposing the boy was in the party, looking after himself as usual, they got under way without paying any

attention. After going some distance they noticed that he was not with them and returned to Jerusalem to search for him. They were surprised to find him in the temple holding his own in discussion with the leaders of thought among his people. Not realizing that what had happened would be long remembered as one of the world's great events, they scolded him for being where he was when he was supposed to be in their party on the way home, as indeed he soon was. After chiding him, however, Mary found that she could not forget some of the things she had heard him say.

Some eighteen years later this boy broke upon the world's attention as a great teacher. In the three short years following he made himself a person much of the world worships as the Son of God, and nearly all the rest of it honors and admires for his wisdom and goodness. What was going on during those eighteen years, often called the silent years at Nazareth? Supposedly he was still working and thinking. Only one little statement has been thrown over that wall of silence by a man who inquired very deeply into that great life and reported things very carefully. That man, a physician named Luke, says that he was advancing or growing. In other words, he was building selfhood, a self that was to challenge the world and impress the centuries. He was advancing, Luke says, in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and men. In other words, he was developing along four lines - understanding, physical strength, religious life, and social relationships. What better can we do than to take these as the four lines along which all development toward the maximum selfhood should move?

WISDOM

First, then, we build selfhood by advancing in wisdom, but let us consider first what wisdom is. It is not knowledge, but knowing what to do with knowledge. It is knowledge plus. Knowing that fire radiates heat is not wisdom, but knowing how to use that knowledge to keep a house warm, prepare food, and avoid injury from burning is wisdom. The principle can be carried into any phase of life. Knowledge we acquire by learning facts. Wisdom we possess, build from experience, or get from creative sources beyond ourselves. It puts facts together till they accumulate into the greater pattern of truth. Some very learned people are not wise. They know many things, but they do not know how to relate them. Learning KNOWS. Wisdom REFLECTS, CONSIDERS, REASONS, AND DEDUCES. Think on this - it is a very important Truth.

We have no information about it, but the boy of Nazareth probably had some kind of schooling of whatever nature and amount was available in his town. In after years he showed himself quite familiar with the favorite subjects then current. But in any case he did more than to learn facts. He observed things, thought about them, and considered how they fitted into the universal plan of life. He did not do this as a slavish assignment, but as an enjoyable and enthusiastic personal interest. He liked to feel his mental outlook grow, to be consciously advancing in wisdom. So must any of us seeking to develop as persons. There is no reason why a boy of twelve should not be doing that. Neither is there any reason why a man or woman of ninety should not.

Pause now and consider your personal world. How large is it? What are its boundaries? That world is not bounded by geographical lines, but by the limits of your knowledge and understanding. That of which you are conscious is your world,

and nothing else is. That of which you are not conscious does not exist for you, and never will until and unless you become conscious of it. That flower you do not look at, that sunset you do not notice, that person you take no interest in, that possibility you do not explore - they are not in your world at all, no matter how near they are.

There is one thing about this about which we need to be on our guard to keep from deceiving ourselves. We know how much we are conscious of, but we do not know how much we are not conscious of. This fact can easily allow us to get a mistaken idea of the spaciousness of our own lives. One can easily get the idea that his little world contains all there is, like the small boy who came home from his first day at school and expressed great surprise that he was expected to go again next day. Such attitudes betray our lack of understanding, too. Only a boy in the first grade would think a thing like that. Those who have passed on to the upper grades prove that they have learned something by the fact that they have begun to realize how much there is yet to learn. Never be boastful of your wisdom. You will only betray your lack of it, for wisdom does not boast; it does not need to.

How much shall you try to understand? Well, it is better not to think of it that way. A child cannot say how many feet and inches he is going to grow, or how many pounds he is going to weigh. He can only take his normal nourishment day by day, and let the final extent of the results turn out as it will. Keep trying to extend the boundaries of your understanding. That is all you can do.

Begin with what is at hand, and proceed with the contemplation and mastery of truth deliberately, patiently, and calmly. Learn what you can, and try to understand as much as you can of it as you go along. Do not gorge your mind. That is as bad a practice as to gorge the stomach. Just keep growing, and do not stop. Consider the material things around you, from a grassblade to a star. Consider the work you see going on by the power of both man and nature. Consider life with its developments, struggles, and achievements. Consider people with their dreams, their hopes, and their labors. Consider the spiritual facts, principles, and values, lying beyond the horizons of sense. If all this could be added up on some cosmic calculating machine, the sum total would be the universe. You cannot master all that in one lifetime, of course - but you can build yourself quite a world.

Tennyson says that if one would take one flower from a cranny in the wall and learn all about it, he would know what God and man is. Does that singular form of the pure verb look like a grammatical error? Yes, but it isn't. It is exactly what the poet meant to say, for when he thought of God and man, he recognized their essential oneness. Life is not plural. It is a universal unity.

John Erskine has said that a good way to extend one's mental world is to take just one thing, anything whatever, and learn as much as possible about it. Then do the same with all the other things that have been suggested by the study of that one thing, and so on and on. The program would soon get out of hand, but it would give you plenty to do.

Louis Agassiz, at the summer school he conducted on Penikese Island, used to have fish served for breakfast the first morning. He would invite the students to learn all they could about the fish on their plates. They would discover that it was enough to keep them busy a good many days, and that by then plenty more would

have been suggested by it for further investigation. Start with a fish, a pebble, or whatever you will. Keep on, go to the bottom of things, and one day you will know much more about what God and man is. You will also have a much better idea how much further one might go.

STATURE

The second line of development lies along the course of physical growth and well-being. The body is a machine, and you are its user. Good operators want first class machines to work with. The stronger, and more capable, and more responsive your body is, the better job of living in the world you can do with it.

Naturally all the while that mental development is getting its start the body is growing too. Most young bodies are very well cared for these days, so physical development is not as much of a problem as seeing that the rest of personality keeps pace with it is. Still, it is something one must keep in mind.

It is likely that you are a mature person, and that the growth of your body is already completed. But there is always the question of maintenance and upkeep. You have probably been taught facts and skills, and you may have learned some actual wisdom. But now you are undertaking a more serious, intensive, conscientious program of personality development. You cannot develop your body over again, but you can take it as it is and start from here.

You can correct any wrong health habits you have acquired. You can have any real health needs, if any, attended to. You can begin following correct habits of diet, work, rest, and mental attitudes. Let us dwell on that word "attitudes" a little. Here you have a great but often unrecognized duty and opportunity. It is to avail yourself of the physical benefits of a cheerful spirit, a calm disposition, an optimistic, confident, constructive thought life. If you do not believe the mind has anything to do with the condition and functioning of the body, make a little study of the matter with yourself as the laboratory subject.

Have you not had thoughts that made you break out suddenly in sweat, or that made you flushed and feverish, or that caused a flow of saliva, or that nauseated you, or that calmed and soothed you when you were upset? They were only thoughts, but the body acted promptly on their suggestions. It takes very seriously everything that passes through the mind, and it responds to these things in some ways you know about and others you do not. The meaning of this is obvious in caring for the body and getting the best service from it. Very often in personal conversation with our visiting members who are in trouble, they say they feel so much better after we have talked their problems over.

Do you realize that your mind even has a distinct and immediate effect on the heart action? Some of the effects already mentioned show that it does, but try this experiment on some cooperative friend. Take his pulse count while he is reading some very absorbing material or working on a problem requiring concentration. Then take it when his mind is centered on what you are doing and wondering what the count will be. You will find that his mental concentration on the organ will have stepped up the rate quite a bit. So the attitude of the mind has a great

deal to do with the condition of the body and the functioning of its organs. Use this principle in getting and keeping physical health.

One thing to remember is that the body was made to be used and not to stand idle. If it is in normal condition it is much better off in action than not. Notice any piece of machinery that is kept in good condition and regularly used, and compare it with one that stands idle. The latter will actually disintegrate the faster. Our elders were fond of saying that it is better to wear out than to rust out. That is perfectly true, but they could have added the statement that it also takes longer to wear out than to rust out, and that there is more satisfaction in it. The body should not be overworked, run down, and ruthlessly exhausted, of course; but normal activity is good for it, even necessary to its continued fitness and well-being.

The normal use of the body has a very essential bearing on self-improvement too. It builds up the body's strength and skill. The used talent, like the used muscle, is the one that accumulates strength and ability. There are many potentially fine musicians, for instance, who cannot play at all because they did not practice to the point where they could coordinate the movements of their hands and fingers. Every other field of activity interest too is poorer by the loss of people who could have distinguished themselves in one way and another if they had only developed the abilities they possessed. Some of them took refuge in the excuse that they had no way to do so, when everyone has a good way - practice, use. The loss is all the greater and sadder because of the fact that the cultivation of a useful skill or art also opens new ways for the growth of the spiritual self.

A person of any age or situation can still do a great deal in the care of the body and the development of its physical skills. Here again you must start from where you are, of course. Do it a day at a time, and let the future take care of itself. You do not need to be a giant or an athlete. Just try to be a healthy person with disciplined nerves and muscles. You will find that nature will work with you all the way along.

FAVOR WITH GOD

The third line along which the ideal life develops is that of religious consciousness and action. Favor with God is no accident, nor is it automatically obtained like a premium for coffee labels. It is the result of taking the naturally religious nature with which we are born, conserving it with care, cultivating it with use, and extending it by exploration and experience. This, presumably, was being done by the one most of the world recognizes as the ideal man, and it is what must be done by any of us seeking excellence of the spiritual life.

Religion is the foundation and background of all good thinking and right living. It begins where life begins, and it reaches as far as life reaches. It is the completing element in all progressive experience. It places God at the beginning of every path and carries the recognition of Him all the way along.

Some insist that religion is something arbitrarily added to life, or something painted on. If so, it would be dispensable but it is not dispensable. If it were, so would we find the history of every race a story of earnest contemplation

of the Divine and of magnificent striving after it? The various scriptures of the world sparkle with beauty and truth for those who read them sympathetically and understandingly, and who see in them what is so surely there - the evidence of the universal quest of the human heart for the Supreme Personality. Religion is not an added ingredient to life. It is a part of man, and nothing but his own neglect can ever separate him from the urge for it. As St. Augustine said, God has made us for himself, and we find no rest till we find it in Him.

It is a matter of fellowship, of course. We have friends because we have become acquainted with them, associated with them, and talked with them, till we have come to understand, and know, and like them. They are a part of our lives because we have made them so. It is the same with fellowship with the Eternal. The religious person is a friend of God, and one who has found a Friend in God.

You have your own religious viewpoint and life. How advanced it is depends on what you have done with it. What effort you have put forth to make the most of it only you can know. But such as it is, it is yours. Do not worry about it or compare it with those of other people or groups. Pay no attention to people who tell you that you will surely be lost if you do not carry out this or that technicality. Religion is not like that, and neither is God. No one who honestly tries to know, and walk with, and do the will of the Divine is going to suffer. If you falter and make mistakes, that is only what everyone else too has done. If you fall down, get up again and go on. God is not going to require of you anything but your honest best. That is anyone's mark of perfection. The angels can do no better.

So take the religious viewpoint and life you have, whatever they are, and go forward from there. Have a creed if you want to, but if you make the progress you should, you will outgrow it. Seek the Divine for yourself. When you have established harmony, or oneness, with it, you will begin to build your own creed. You will then stop arguing with people about your opinions. You will have begun to have experience, and experience does not think; it knows. Those who know a thing do not care to debate about it. They live it, and let it speak for itself. If others insist on discussion, they simply state it and let it stand.

Religion, like strength of mind or muscle, must be a growing and advancing element of life. One does not get the maximum religious faith all in one grand rush and then spend the rest of his days rejoicing in its completeness. He achieves it along the road of effort, questing, and experience, a little at a time. It is like solving an infinitesimal, or as seeking the place where the sun sets. There is always more, and that is the glory of it. It is also why people should never be self-satisfied about their religious lives - there is always further to go than they have yet gone. Following it through in that spirit will keep you humble, sincere - and advancing.

Whatever the book of scriptures of your religion, search its words and ponder them. Better read some of the others too, all of them if you can, to see how much they have in common with your own. Remember that the City of God doesn't have just one gate on one side open only to you and your group. It has three gates on every side, plenty of gates for those who come from all directions, one for every soul that loves God, no matter who he is or whence he came. Bear this in mind. It will keep you out of narrow channels of thinking and make you a sharer in the universal

faith that even now is beginning to dawn.

- MAKE PRAYER A CONSTANT HABIT. You are not going to have much favor with God unless you keep on speaking terms. Above all, live what you know and do what you learn. Keep your religion also firm and strong with exercise.

FAVOR WITH MEN

The fourth line of development indicated is the social one. We are given only this hint about how the boy of Nazareth was developing through those silent years, but the hint tells us a great deal. No secretive, unsocial, self-contained person advances in favor with men, so we know he got acquainted with his neighbors, made friends, and shared in the common life. That is what the well-rounded personality, the adequate self must and will do.

We have already explained the nature of this social or collective viewpoint in a former lesson, so we need not stress that further. Rather, let us consider here something of how it functions, how we relate ourselves to it, and how we develop our lives in respect to it.

The life of the world is lived and the work of the world is done by all its people. The individual and his individual effort are important because they are parts of the total related strength of all, but it is that total strength that is invincible. The combined power and wisdom of the people is the sum of the power and wisdom of the individuals in it - plus the added force of organization - and that added item is very great. The hermit soul, the unsocial person, contributes little or nothing to it. He weakens his total life if he falls short in human relations.

Not only is he failing to do his duty to the world life, but he is also failing in his duty to himself. This social cooperation is like any other form of exercise - the person who does it grows by it. Normal human contacts and participation in worthwhile collective endeavors makes one always a more adequate person.

A word of caution, however. This does not mean taking one's cue from the crowd and going along with it, right or wrong. Throw your efforts to good purposes and try to defeat wrong ones, but in either case do not lose the common touch. Don't be a trailer, but don't insist on being the trolley either. Share in the work of your time, all the while keeping your rightful independence of conviction. Don't expect always to be approved, but try always to be worthy of it.

Try not to make enemies needlessly. Most people get enough of them without trying. But do try to make friends, and when you get a real one regard that friendship as a choice treasure. You never know when you will need a friend, but you can depend on it that it will be pretty often. Try to have enough that the needed one will always be available.

In the heyday of life when associations are many and friends are easily found you may not crave human companionship, for you will have enough, perhaps