

Handbook for the Spirit



Inspiring Spiritual Growth and Abundant Living

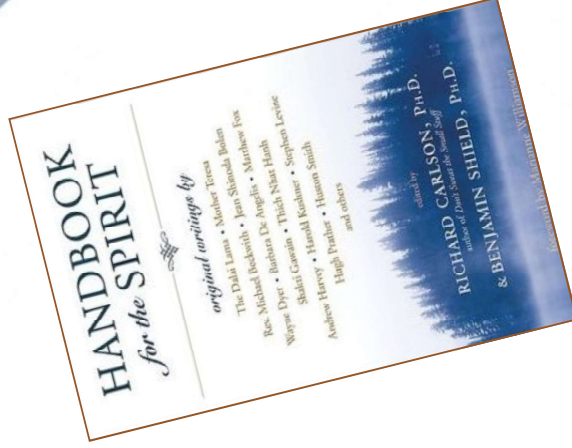


Adventures In Spirituality

Notes & Insights

Study Guide

Oct. 6 – Nov. 10, 2013



HANDBOOK for the SPIRIT

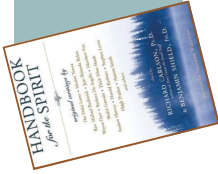
original writings by

The Dale Lams • Matthew Torres
The Dale Lams • Jerry Shonks Bolen
Rev. Michael Beckwith • Jerry Shonks Bolen
Worpe Dyer • Barbara De Jongle • Matthew Fox
Shakti Gargain • Thich Nhat Hanh
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Hugh Prather • Henson Smith
and others

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Handbook for the Spirit

Welcome to your Adventure in Spirituality

force flowing through her body in movement. What types of physical movement help you feel more connected to Spirit?

3. Thich Nhat Hanh poses the question, “Do we have the capacity of enjoying peace . . . or will we find it boring?” How do we sabotage peace in our lives?
4. What does practicing mindfulness mean to you?
5. What does “time in the silence” bring forth in your experience?
6. When did you consciously become aware of yourself as having an innate desire or need to have a relationship with God?
7. Huston Smith used the idea of Four Yogas to describe different spiritual temperaments people have and how our spiritual temperament might affect how we relate to God and how we live our spirituality. The four yogas are the approach to God through knowledge, love, service or meditation. To which one do you most closely relate?

Acknowledgements



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Jeanmarie Ecks, L.U.T.*

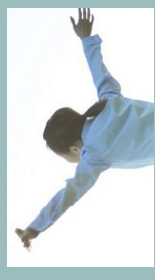
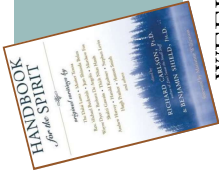
Meditation

Breathe into your heart space, allowing yourself to feel immersed in a field of infinite consciousness.

This Week's Practice

Spend at least 15 minutes each day in contemplation of GOD IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE.

Closing Prayer



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WEEK FIVE: Chapter 5

God in Everyday Life

Opening Prayer

Gathering in gratitude, we celebrate this moment. Freed from conditioning, we experience the purity and wholeness of the world around and within us. The veil of separation lifts as illumination continues to have its way within our minds and our collective consciousness. Filled with peace and laughter, we give life the light touch and savor the sweet moments.

Check-In Round

Share whatever is most alive in your heart & mind giving insights from material, blessings, and reflections from Sunday.

Housekeeping

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

Affirmation

We are immersed in a field of infinite consciousness. Together we celebrate our innate divinity. I am awake to the evolutionary pull of my soul. Peace expands within me as I live from the center of my being. Claiming my birthright, I live freely, love abundantly and expand mindfully. I express as a fuller, more expansive version of me.

Discussion

God in Everyday Life

1. Shakti Gawain sees her personal relationship to God as “surrendering to a deeper, wiser, more powerful force within myself.” Is this true for you? If so, how do you surrender or align yourself to a higher power?
2. One of the important ways that Shakti Gawain says that she connects with Spirit is through her physical body—of feeling the life

Enrichment Circle Meeting Agenda

Opening Prayer
Review of Ground Rules
Check-in Round
Weekly Affirmation
Discussion Questions
Meditation
Suggested Practice
Closing Round
Prayer for Protection

Chart of Our Course

WEEK ONE: THE AWAKENING SPIRIT

Chapter One

WEEK TWO: THE GOD WITHIN

Chapter Two

WEEK THREE: DISCOVERING GOD

Chapter Three

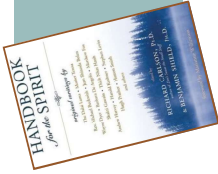
WEEK FOUR: EMBRACING GOD, EMBRACING LIFE

Chapter Four

WEEK FIVE: GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Chapter Five

WEEK SIX: CREATING APPRECIATION BASKETS



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The Commitment

Commitment transforms promise into reality. It is fueled by words that speak boldly of our intentions, and the actions which speak louder than words. It is making time, where there is none. It is following through. It is the power that transforms our lives and our world. It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism.

- I commit myself to this process of spiritual exploration, of fulfilling my soul's longing to understand and express the divine to the best of my ability, with my thoughts, words and actions.
- I go to my heart, and invite other circle members to do the same, because I believe in the connecting power of God that dwells in the one heart of which we are all a part.
- I celebrate the greatness in myself and in you. Our lives are filled with infinite possibilities woven together in Oneness.
- I love and accept you just the way you are, and I respect your right to be different and to think differently than I do.
- I am open to sharing my thoughts, feelings and beliefs authentically in our exploration of Truth. I love you and myself enough to share my personal experiences openly and to listen lovingly and intently to the truth you choose to share.
- I choose words of kindness, encouragement, appreciation and gratitude to build a strong foundation of mutual support as together we claim the perfect expression of our individual spiritual natures.

proportion to the effort they take." Recall a time when you received or showed a small act of kindness and it turned out to be a huge or meaningful gift that could not have been imagined?

3. In the essay titled *The Community of God*, (p. 125) Rabbi Harold Kushner, PhD posits that what has held Judaism together for centuries, and also holds other religions together even now, is a sense of community and relationship. (131) Do you think this is true for us? In what ways do people help hold the community together?
4. Anne Wilson Schaefer wrote *The Process of God*. (132) What do those words and her writings convey to you? Does this process involve faith? If so, how so?
5. In the essay *Alive With God* what did Father William McNamara mean when he wrote, "aliveness is the first effect of living a disciplined life?" (139) When are you most alive with God? What does Father McNamara mean with the phrase "disciplined wild people?" Do we want that?
6. If we were constantly aware of God, would we see any changes in our everyday lives? What might they be?
7. "To be alive is to love. Those who live the most dangerously, creatively, and wonderfully are the great lovers in the world." (p. 139) Do you think that is true? Are you a great lover in the world today? Who are some other good examples?

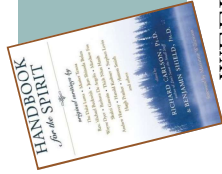
Meditation

Breathe into your heart space, allowing yourself to feel immersed in a field of infinite consciousness.

This Week's Practice

Spend at least 15 minutes each day contemplating and EMBRACING THE POWER OF SMALL THINGS.

Closing Prayer



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WEEK FOUR: Chapter 4

Embracing God, Embracing Life

Opening Prayer

Centered in gratitude, we acknowledge this divine appointment. We are a unique, unrepeatable expression of the Divine gathered together by the spirit of Wisdom. We loose attachments and bask in the flow of life. Present to the all embracing impulse that guides and inspires, we are a living blessing to the all.

Check-In Round

Share whatever is most alive in your heart & mind giving insights from material, blessings, and reflections from Sunday.

Housekeeping

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

Affirmation

We are immersed in a field of infinite consciousness. Together we celebrate our innate divinity. I am awake to the evolutionary pull of my soul. Peace expands within me as I live from the center of my being. Claiming my birthright, I live freely, love abundantly and expand mindfully. I express as a fuller, more expansive version of me.

DISCUSSION

Embracing God, Embracing Life

1. Sue Bender is intrigued by the question of how we can bring our own spirituality into full expression by living it, to “not just talk about it or preach it, but really live it.” Her questions for readers are: “How do you bring your spirit into your own real life? How do you face your own little and big struggles?”
2. Ms. Bender quotes Mother Theresa’s familiar statement, “We do not do great things, we do only small things with great love.” The way she put it is that small acts of kindness can have “echoes out of

The Ground Rules

Ground rules help create a safe and healthy environment for the group. It is important that the group reviews these ground rules and reaches consensus prior to discussions.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Everything shared by group members is confidential. What is shared here, stays here.

COMPASSION

Group members relate to each other with unconditional, compassionate acceptance. Judgmental comments, even unspoken judgmental thoughts threaten the group process.

TRUTH & INTEGRITY

Group members are encouraged and supported by one another honestly and authentically to be who they are. Speaking the truth involves risk and can only occur safely in a compassionate environment.

RESPECT

Group members show respect for each other and the group by not interrupting others, arriving on time, and allowing everyone to participate.

CONFLICT

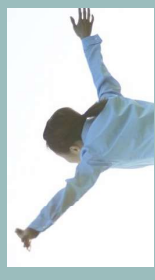
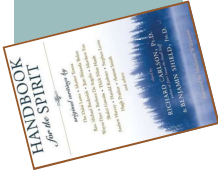
Whenever people come together and speak truthfully, the potential for hurt feelings, misunderstanding and conflict exists. If such a situation arises, group members agree to address it within the group process, or one-on-one with the facilitator. Unresolved conflict is toxic to the whole group and not just to the parties directly involved.

GROUP PROCESS

This process is for our own personal and spiritual growth, not group therapy. When sharing, group members are asked to use “I” statements and avoid trying to fix or solve.

PARTICIPATION

Group members agree to be prepared by reading the required chapters and to participate in discussion and group activities; however, each person has the right to ask to sit out or modify his or her participation.



Handbook for the Spirit

WEEK ONE: Chapter 1

The Awakening Spirit

Opening Prayer

Holy Spirit, bless this gathering as we share our thoughts, insights and a-ha's. We now open our hearts and minds that we might deepen our understanding of God, ourselves and one another, and remember that the same divinity in each of us is in everyone, everywhere.

Check-In Round

Share whatever is most alive in your heart & mind giving insights from material, blessings, and reflections from Sunday.

Housekeeping

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

Affirmation

We are immersed in a field of infinite consciousness. Together we celebrate our innate divinity. I am awake to the evolutionary pull of my soul. Peace expands within me as I live from the center of my being. Claiming my birthright, I live freely, love abundantly and expand mindfully. I express as a fuller, more expansive version of me.

DISCUSSION

The Awakening Spirit

1. The Dalai Lama states: "The common goal of all moral precepts laid down by the great teachers of humanity is unselfishness." Do you agree with this statement? How has this idea been articulated by some of the great teachers?
2. Matthew Fox writes: "When I'm operating at my best, my work is my prayer. It comes out of the same place that prayer comes out of — the center, the heart." Is this true for you in your everyday life? Why or why not?

ticed from your meditation practice especially the times when you have been the most consistent?

3. Stephen Levine says he hasn't the foggiest idea of what the term God means. "You cannot know God; you can only be God." What do you think about this idea? Have you ever felt 'homesick' for God?
4. Two interesting inquiries were posed in this chapter. Can the world survive without gratefulness? What is your favorite synonym for God?
5. Study the concept of the hologram theory on pgs 101-102. Discuss this concept and how you understand or disagree.
6. Fill in the blanks with your own words (reference pg. 105) Armageddon is what would happen if... A "planetary Pentecost" is a time when...
7. Describe your first contact with religion or meditation.

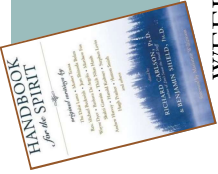
Meditation

Breathe into your heart space, allowing yourself to feel immersed in a field of infinite consciousness.

This Week's Practice

Spend at least 15 minutes each day DISCOVERING GOD!

Closing Prayer



Handbook for the Spirit

WEEK THREE: Chapter 3

Discovering God

Opening Prayer

Divine power blesses this gathering. We join together in our unity of purpose unfolding all that is ours to see, feel, bear and know. Fully present in this moment, we say “yes” to the divine invitation to expand our conscious awareness and practice of simplicity, power, and devotion.

Check-In Round

Share whatever is most alive in your heart & mind giving insights from material, blessings, and reflections from Sunday.

Housekeeping

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

Affirmation

We are immersed in a field of infinite consciousness. Together we celebrate our innate divinity. I am awake to the evolutionary pull of my soul. Peace expands within me as I live from the center of my being. Claiming my birthright, I live freely, love abundantly and expand mindfully. I express as a fuller, more expansive version of me.

DISCUSSION

Discovering God

1. On p. 73, Andrew Harvey states, “Anyone born into this dimension is born with a hidden, direct connection with the total divine.” Does this resonate as true to you? Why would this connection be hidden? Is it really direct? Do you think the direct connection is with the **total** divine or just aspects and experiences of the divine?
2. Re-read the paragraph on p. 75 about the advantage of practicing simple meditation. What benefits have you no-

3. Matthew Fox likens gratitude to a sense of awe and says that gratitude is at the heart of his spirituality. What part does gratitude play in your spirituality?

4. In Riane Eisler’s article she says, “I feel very strongly that our society’s denial of the feminine aspect of the deity, the Mother aspect, is one of the great obstacles to having that personal relationship, that direct connection with the divine.” How do you relate to the divine — Father, Mother or Father/Mother? Why?

5. Riane Eisler used the term dominator model which has told us that we need an intermediary, i.e. the church or a guru to connect with the divine. She says, “This religious hierarchy stays in power by disempowering us.” Has this ever been part of your spiritual experience?

6. Do you agree with Wayne Dyer that “everything that happens outside us has its counterpart within us, and visa versa? How does this relate to your life? How does this statement effect how you deal with challenges in your life?

7. Wayne Dyer states that “the only way the world will be transformed is for the world’s inhabitants to make changes in individual levels of consciousness.” What qualities would need to become part of an individual’s consciousness to bring about this transformation?

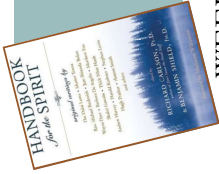
Meditation

Breathe into your heart space, allowing yourself to feel immersed in a field of infinite consciousness.

This Week’s Practice

Spend at least 15 minutes each day in contemplation of the SPIRIT AWAKENING WITHIN YOU.

Closing Prayer



Handbook for the Spirit

WEEK TWO: Chapter 2

The God Within

Opening Prayer

The infinite Spirit of Life, Love and Wisdom are everywhere present. As we tune into this truth, our gathering is alive with inspiration, awake with spiritual insights and grounded in principle. Present to this now moment, we acknowledge the spiritual teachers on our path and the sacred teachings that have led us to this moment.

Check-In Round

Share whatever is most alive in your heart & mind giving insights from material, blessings, and reflections from Sunday.

Housekeeping

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

Affirmation

We are immersed in a field of infinite consciousness. Together we celebrate our innate divinity. I am awake to the evolutionary pull of my soul. Peace expands within me as I live from the center of my being. Claiming my birthright, I live freely, love abundantly and expand mindfully. I express as a fuller, more expansive version of me.

DISCUSSION

The God Within

1. In chapter Two, the writings of several authors have been woven together in a way that shows us different ways to recognize, or open more fully, to the God within. The chapter concludes with a discussion on our relationship with God and an intentional invitation for God in our lives. Which of the chapters did you most resonate with?

2. In his book Teach Us to Pray, Charles Fillmore said “...seeking conscious union with God is the highest form of prayer we know.” How does that relate to what Michael Beckwith says is the most essential thing to remember about prayer? (p. 52)

3. Have you experienced your personal prayer quickening into conscious union with God – or the realization of Oneness? What was it within yourself that either fell away, or was added to your practice that cleared the way for the experience?

4. What does the author Almas mean by the line “reality is self-revealing.” (p. 58) Is that self-revealing action easily apparent? Is it possible for us to experience the essence of God in every moment?

5. In An Invitation to God, it’s not a surprise that Barbara De Angelis speaks to us through the lens of relationships. She even refers to relationship in her own invitation to God in the formal, conscious prayer on page 67 (read aloud) She clearly describes her intentions and willingness behind the request. Take a couple of minutes to write your own invitation to God. Formal or informal, what are your personal intentions for your relationship to your God within?

6. The overarching title for this collection of essays is The God Within. The author’s path in this final segment is a formal invitation through prayer. In previous segments authors speak of truth unfolding, knowing who we are and authentic expression of our spiritual identity, having a spiritual teacher that can help point the way and gratitude as a means to remembering and discovering. All are ways to realize the God Within. Is your way mentioned in these essays? What is your own way?

Meditation

Breathe into your heart space, allowing yourself to feel immersed in a field of infinite consciousness.

This Week’s Practice

Spend at least 15 minutes each day EXPERIENCING GOD WITHIN.

Closing Prayer