

A New Earth Study Guide

Week 1

The consciousness that says 'I am' is not the consciousness that thinks. –Jean-Paul Sartre

Affirmation:

"Through the guidance and wisdom of Spirit, I am being transformed by the renewing of my mind. All obstacles and emotions are stepping stones to the realization and appreciation of my sacred humanness."

Study Questions – *A New Earth* (Review chapters 1 & 2, pp 1-58)

Chapter 1: The Flowering of Human Consciousness

Reflect:

Eckhart Tolle uses the image of the first flower to begin his discussion of the transformation of consciousness. In your transformation, is this symbolism important to you? Describe.

The two core insights of early religion are: 1) the normal state of human consciousness is dysfunctional (the Hindu call it *maya* – the veil of delusion) and 2) the opportunity for transformation is also in human consciousness (the Hindu call this *enlightenment*) (p. 8-9). What in your recent experience points to each of these insights?

“To recognize one’s own insanity is, of course, the arising of sanity, the beginning of healing and transcendence” (p. 14). To what extent and in what circumstances (that you’re willing to discuss) does this statement apply to you?

Religion is derived from the Latin word *religare*, meaning “to bind.” What, in your religious experience, have you been bound to? Stretching your imagination a bit, what could the word have pointed to in its original context?

Spirit is derived from the Latin word *spiritus*, breath, and *spirare*, to blow. Aside from the allusion to hot air, how does this word pertain to your transformation? Do you consider yourself to be “spiritual” or “religious”? What examples of practices or beliefs can you give to illustrate?

How does this passage from Revelation 21:1-4 relate to your transformation? Tease out as much of the symbolism as you can.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

Get Active

Spend some time in the presence of something you consider beautiful—a flower, a gem, a piece of artwork, etc. As you look at the object, try to see it without naming it mentally. When we appreciate beauty in this manner, a window opens into the formless, and into a state of gratitude. See if you can experience that.

Choose one or two activities you do routinely and bring your attention to them. Here are three examples.

- Every time you walk up and down the stairs in your house or place of work, pay close attention to every step, every movement...even your breathing. Be totally present.
- When you wash your hands, pay attention to all the sensory perceptions associated with the activity: the sound and feel of the water, the movement of your hands, the scent of the soap and so on.
- When you get into your car, after you close the door, pause for a few seconds and observe the flow of your breath. Become aware of a silent but powerful sense of presence.

Chapter 2: Ego: The Current State of Humanity

Reflect

In his discussion of the ego, Tolle refers to the use of words and labels as a means of disguising the miracles with which we are continually blessed (p. 26). What experiences have you had that illustrate this idea?

Tolle asserts that the ego’s conditioning is completely in the past and is composed of content and structure (p. 34). Why is this distinction relevant?

The egoic mind arises in its identification with form. Thought is considered essential to the ego’s continuance. If we are to let go of the ego, is it essential to let go of thought as well? Is there anything to take the place of thought?

Toole declares, “Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness” (p. 41). Are you inclined to agree with that statement? Can you illustrate with a personal example where that seemed to be the case? Where it did not seem to be the case?

Several tools of the ego ensures its continuance:

- making yourself right and others wrong
- stimulating your appetite for “more”
- identifying with the body

What behaviors/activities can you practice/perform to reduce or eliminate the effect of the ego’s use of these tools?

“Descartes’ error” refers to his oft-quoted dictum, “I think, therefore I am.” Why is this an error? How does the acceptance or belief of this statement keep us in the state of *maya*? How does tragic loss lead us to the realization of “the peace that passes all understanding” (p. 56)?

Get Active

A few times a day, listen quietly for the voice in your head, the stream of continuous self-talk. Then ponder the following questions. Just be with the questions. Don't necessarily try to answer them.

- Am I the thoughts that are going through my head? or
- Am I the one who is aware that these thoughts are going through my head?

Pay attention to the gap between your thoughts—when one thought subsides and before another arises. In this way, you draw consciousness away from mind activity and create a gap of no-mind in which you are highly alert and aware but not thinking. When these gaps occur, you disidentify from your mind and feel a certain stillness and peace inside you. This is the essence of meditation and the single most vital step on your journey toward enlightenment.

Next Week: Read chapters 3 & 4.

A New Earth Study Guide

Week 2

The Truth is inseparable from who you are. –Eckhart Tolle

Affirmation:

"I AM as God created me."

Study Questions – *A New Earth* (Review chapters 3 & 4, pp 59-128)

Chapter 3: The Core of the Ego

Reflect

“Egos only differ on the surface. Deep down they are all the same.... They live on identification and separation.” (p. 60) What examples do you have of *your* ego living on identification and separation? How has that proved “useful” to the development of your relationships?

“To forgive is to overlook, or rather to look through.” (p. 63) Compare and contrast this concept of forgiveness to that which is taught at Living Water Unity: “Forgiveness is the process of giving love to the moment, without constraint, without limitation, without condition. Forgiveness is not an action after the fact but an attitude with which we enter each moment.”

Tolle identifies tools of the ego to include: complaints and resentment (p. 61), reactivity and grievances (p. 64), and being right and making wrong (p. 66). Aside from the obvious effect of these “ego tools” reinforcing the perception of separation from others, describe how you have used (abused?) these to make yourself feel “special”. What is the bodily *feeling* that arises when you use these tools?

Y. Haveli is quoted as having suggested the opportunity of “accommodating a competitive narrative” (p. 72). What does that mean to you and why do you think it is important in the transformation from egocentric to God-centric consciousness?

“Fighting unconsciousness will draw you into unconsciousness yourself. Unconsciousness, dysfunctional egoic behavior, can never be defeated by attacking it.” (p. 75) When have you tried to do this and what was the result? Identify several instances.

“The underlying emotion that governs all activity of the ego is fear.” (p. 80) Tolle states that this is so because the ego arises by identifying with form – and it knows no form is permanent. This and other references in *A New Earth* ascribe a motivation to this entity known as the ego as if it were separate from you. If all is one, then the ego cannot, in truth, be separate. How do you resolve this seeming paradox?

Get Active

Are you so busy getting to the future that the present is reduced to a means of getting there? There are simple things you can do to bring your attention to the here and now. You can measure your success in this practice by the degree of peace that you feel within.

Try This

Be patient. It is not easy at first to *be* there as the witnessing Presence, especially when the ego is in survival mode, but once you have had a taste of it, you will grow in Presence power, and the ego will lose its grip on you. The ultimate purpose of human existence, which is to say, your purpose, is to bring that power into the world.

Become aware of your breathing. Feel the air flowing in and out of your body. Feel your inner energy field. All that you ever have to deal with, cope with, in real life—as opposed to imaginary mind projections—is this moment. Ask yourself what "problem" you have right now, not next year, tomorrow, or five minutes from now. What is wrong with this moment?

Give up waiting as a state of mind. When you catch yourself slipping into waiting...snap out of it. Come into the present moment. Just be, and enjoy being. If you are present, there is never any need for you to wait for anything. So, next time somebody says, "Sorry to have kept you waiting." You can reply: "That's all right, I wasn't waiting. I was just standing here enjoying myself."

Chapter 4: Role Playing: The many faces of ego

Reflect

"Behind every positive self-concept is the hidden fear of not being good enough. Behind every negative self-concept is the hidden desire of being the greatest or better than others." (p. 86) Can you remember holding both a positive self-concept and the fear of not being good enough – or the converse, holding a negative self-concept and a desire to be better than others? How has that affected your relationships?

Think back to the last time you "fell in love." Tolle says, "'falling in love' is in most cases an intensification of egoic wanting and needing." (p. 88) Without judging the "rightness" of that act, consider your experience and how it may have been a reflection of the ego's "wanting and needing."

If one were to analyze our personal interactions, we might conclude that we use roles as a means of quickly stating to a new acquaintance our interests, talents and perceived position in society. We might also infer, based upon the self-proclaimed role of another, a panoply of personal characteristics, attributes and beliefs without ever exploring these with the other

person (does the problem with “assume” come to mind?). How do roles limit interpersonal communication? How do roles limit our exploration of our (and others’) true nature?

“If there is unhappiness in you, first you need to acknowledge that it is there.” (p. 95)
Does this conflict with Unity’s teaching of the importance of using affirmations to shift consciousness? If so, how do you resolve these two approaches?

“If you think you are so enlightened, go and spend a week with your parents.” (p. 100) Ram Das illuminates how egoic behaviors are embedded in our relationships. If we are going to transform, our relationships must also transform. From this reading, what means do we have to reform our relationships? Who is responsible for the transforming?

On page 102, Tolle states that suffering is caused by identification with form (also the cause of the arising of the ego). A universal balm for suffering is forgiveness. Using Living Water Unity’s teaching on forgiveness (stated above), explain how it heals the suffering. “Anybody one with what he or she does is building the new earth.” (p. 122) How does this, or how does this not, resonate with you?

Get Active

Recurring negative emotions do sometimes contain a message. Any changes that you make, whether they have to do with your work, your relationships or your surroundings, are ultimately only cosmetic unless they arise out of a change in your level of consciousness. When you reach a certain degree of presence, you won't need negativity anymore to tell you what is needed in your life situation. But as long as negativity is there, use it. Use it as a kind of signal that reminds you to be more present.

Try This

Whenever you feel negativity arising within you, whether caused by an external factor, a thought or even nothing in particular that you are aware of, look on it as a voice saying, "Attention. Here and now. Wake up. Get out of your mind. Be present."

Feel yourself becoming transparent, without the solidity of a material body. Now allow whatever you are reacting negatively to—the noise of the car alarm, the dog barking, the traffic jam—to pass right through you. It is no longer hitting a solid "wall" inside you.

Become like a deep lake. The outer situation of your life, whatever happens there is like the surface of the lake—sometimes calm, sometimes windy and rough. Deep down, however, the lake is always undisturbed. You are the whole lake, not just the surface. Practice being in touch with your own depth, which remains absolutely still.

Next Week: Read chapters 5 & 6.

A New Earth Study Guide

Week 3

The Truth is inseparable from who you are.

—Eckhart Tolle

Affirmation:

"My joy replaces any pain I might experience."

Study Questions – *A New Earth* (Review chapters 5 & 6, pp 129-184)

Chapter 5: The Pain Body

Reflect

“This is not to say that all thinking and all emotion are of the ego. They turn into ego only when you identify with them and ... they become ‘I.’” (p. 131-132) What examples of thoughts and emotions have you had with which you have identified? ... with which you have NOT identified?

“Although the body is very intelligent, it cannot tell the difference between an actual situation and a thought.” (p. 134) Speculate as to why this is so. What personal examples illustrate this concept? How is this principle used by the ego to ensure its perpetuation?

“We can learn not to keep situations or events alive in our minds, but to return our attention continuously to the pristine, timeless present moment rather than be caught up in mental movie-making.” (p. 141) In what “movie-making” have you recently engaged? How can the practice of forgiveness as taught here (“giving love to the moment”) help you avoid “movie-making”?

What distinguishes a “happy, positive thought” from an “unhappy, negative thought”? Is the effect of each more than just on your emotional well-being? Consider the ramifications of holding each type of thought on your present consciousness, on the development of your consciousness and on the development of your relationships.

Tolle seems to ascribe a motivation to the pain-body as an “entity” of consciousness separate from but similar to the ego. Consider the pain-body as a “tool” of the ego rather than as a separate “entity”. In this context, how can the pain-body be used by the ego to ensure its perpetuation? How can it be used to escape the grip of the ego?

Tolle refers to the “collective pain-body” as one would refer to the “collective consciousness” or “shared consciousness”. Does this idea resonate with you or do you understand the “collective pain-body” to be something other than “shared”? Discuss.

Get Active

The pain-body doesn't want you to observe it directly. The moment you observe the pain-body, feel its energy field within you and take your attention into it, the identification is broken. A higher dimension of consciousness comes in. It is called Presence. You are now the witness or the watcher of the pain-body.

Here are three ways to observe and dissolve the pain-body:

- Watch out for any sign of unhappiness in yourself in whatever form—it may be the awakening pain-body. This can take the form of irritation, impatience, a somber mood, a desire to hurt, anger, rage, depression, a need to have some drama in your relationship and so on. Catch the pain-body the moment it awakens from its dormant stage.
- Observe the resistance within yourself. Observe the attachment to your pain. Be very alert. Observe the peculiar pleasure you derive from being unhappy. Observe the compulsion to talk or think about it. The resistance will cease if you make it conscious.
- Focus attention on the negative feeling inside you. Know that it is the pain-body. Accept that it is there. Don't think about it—don't let the feeling turn into thinking. Don't judge yourself out of it. Stay present, and continue to be the observer of what is happening inside you.

Chapter 6: Breaking Free

Reflect

Chapter 6 begins with the first two steps required to free yourself from your pain-body: 1) realize you have a pain-body, and 2) notice the pain-body is the source of negative emotion. What benefits can you see of being free of your pain-body? Do you anticipate that this is a “permanent” freedom?

“The energy that was trapped in the pain-body then changes its vibrational frequency and is transmuted into Presence.” (p. 162) How would you describe this process of transmutation? Describe a situation where you have experienced this. What effect did you experience?

Tolle's definition of the ego is the identification with thought or form. When we identify with the pain-body, we are reinforcing the ego. Illustrate with personal examples when this has happened, how this ego-perpetuation occurs and what effects it has.

According to Tolle, each of us has a pain-body. It often shows up in adults as the source of spontaneous, “negative” responses to otherwise benign stimuli – such as one weeping in response to someone’s criticism of some task just completed. Can you identify an early “addition” to your pain-body (something that occurred early in your life)? How has that affected you in your life?

“It requires a high degree of Presence to avoid reacting when confronted by someone with such an active pain-body. If you are able to stay present, it sometimes happens that your Presence enables the other person to dis-identify from his/her own pain-body and thus experience the miracle of a sudden awakening.” (p. 174-175) Describe a situation where you have experienced this (either as the one maintaining Presence or the one awakened). Speculate as to how this might happen.

Chapter six ends with the third step to freeing yourself from the pain-body: accepting the “isness” of the experience by allowing yourself to feel whatever it is you are feeling at the moment. (p. 184) Speculate as to why this “allowing” is important to your dis-identification with the emotion of the pain-body.

Get Active

Don't *try* to become free. Don't look for peace. Don't look for any other state than the one you are in now; otherwise, you will set up inner conflict and unconscious resistance. Instead, try these three exercises the next time you feel the arising pain-body:

- The moment you completely accept your nonpeace, your nonpeace becomes transmuted into peace. Anything you accept fully will get you there, will take you into peace. This is the miracle of surrender.
- When you accept what is, every moment is the best moment. That is enlightenment.
- You don't need to deceive yourself and say that there is nothing wrong with a particular unpleasant or undesirable life situation. It may be time for you to get out of it. If so, you can recognize fully that you want to get out of it. Then, narrow your attention down to the present moment without mentally labeling it in any way. No judgment, no resistance, no emotional negativity. Just the "isness" of this moment. Then you take action and do all that you can to get out of the situation.

Next Week: Read chapters 7 & 8.

A New Earth Study Guide

Week 4

The Truth is inseparable from who you are. –Eckhart Tolle

Affirmation:

"I am."

Study Questions – A New Earth (Review chapters 7 & 8, pp 185-256)

Chapter 7: Finding Who You Truly Are

Reflect

“Your sense of who you are determines what you perceive as your needs and what matters to you in life – and whatever matters to you will have the power to upset and disturb you.” (p. 186) When we attempt to better understand ourselves, we are often blinded by our assumptions and beliefs. Today we have the opportunity to make use of the collective insight of the group. Identify those two or three things that have the most power to disturb you. What does this tell you about whom you think you are? Based upon those two or three things, what insight do others have about who you think you are? Take turns within the group discussing each other’s “things” (ok, let’s all chuckle together and get it over with).

“*Who you are* requires no belief. In fact, every belief is an obstacle.” (p. 189) What insights arise in considering this statement?

“Whatever people are withholding from you – praise, appreciation, assistance, loving care, and so on – give it to them.... You cannot receive what you don’t give.” (p. 191) Thoughts?

“Nothing you can find out about yourself is you. Nothing you can know *about* you is you.” (p. 192) Comments?

What obstacles arise when we label people, things, circumstances or situations as “good” or “bad”? (pp. 195-198) What effects do these obstacles have on the realization of *who we are*?

“The most important, the primordial relationship in your life is your relationship with the Now,...(with) what is or what happens.” Why do you think that is so?

“There are three ways the ego will treat the present moment: as a means to an end, as an obstacle, or as an enemy.” How has this idea shown up for you? What experiences have you had when the present moment has been 1) as a means to an end (“I gotta’ do this before I can do that”), 2) as an obstacle (“I’ll grit my teeth through this”), or 3) as an enemy (“why me?”)?

“The elimination of time from your consciousness is the elimination of the ego. I is the only true spiritual practice.” (p. 207) Elaborate upon why you agree or disagree with this statement.

“A powerful spiritual practice is consciously to allow the diminishment of ego when it happens without attempting to restore it.” (p. 215) How has this felt when you have tried to do this? How did it affect the circumstances in which you experienced the diminishment of the ego? Would you willingly do it again?

Get Active

The elimination of time from your consciousness is the elimination of ego. It is the only true spiritual practice. Here are three exercises to help you eliminate time.

- Step out of the time dimension as much as possible in everyday life. Become friendly toward the present moment. Make it your practice to withdraw attention from past and future whenever they are not needed.
- Be present as the watcher of your mind—of your thoughts and emotions as well as your reactions in various situations. Be at least as interested in your reactions as in the situation or person that causes you to react.
- Use your senses fully. Be where you are. Look around. Just look, don't interpret. Be aware of the silent presence of each thing. Be aware of the space that allows everything to be. Listen to the sounds; don't judge them. Listen to the silence beneath the sounds. Touch something—anything—and feel and acknowledge its Being. Allow the "isness" of all things. Move deeply into the Now.

Chapter 8: The Discovery of Inner Space

Reflect

“This, too, will pass.” (p. 224) What does this mean to you? How have you applied this idea in your life? What has been the tangible effect of its use? If you were seeking, as the king in the parable sought, an inner peace that could not be disturbed – and this was offered to you as a solution by a reknowned wise person – would you honor the gift by always applying the idea? Then why do you have episodes of lack of inner peace?

“Can you feel your own Presence?” (p. 228) How would you describe your experience of your own Presence? Was its experience intentional or unintentional? How would you regain that experience?

“Consciousness, the traditional word for which is *spirit*, cannot be known in the normal sense of the word, and seeking it is futile.” How does Tolle explain this statement? What do *you* understand this statement to mean? If consciousness cannot be known, then what’s the point of our spiritual practice?

“In the first moment of seeing something or hearing a sound – and more so if it is unfamiliar – before the mind names or interprets what you see or hear, there is usually a gap of alert attention in which perception occurs. That is inner space.” (p. 253) Have you had that experience of inner space? How would you describe that gap that occurs before the “naming” or “interpreting”? How is the awareness of that gap relevant to your knowing who you are?

Get Active

Because breath has no form as such, it has since ancient times been equated with spirit—the formless one Life. It is an excellent meditation object precisely because it is not an object, has no shape or form. Whenever you are conscious of the breath, you are absolutely present. Use these breath exercises to become aware of inner space.

- Be aware of your breathing. Notice the sensation of the breath. Feel the air moving in and out of your body. Notice how the chest and abdomen expand and contract slightly with the in- and out-breath. One conscious breath is enough to make some space where before there was the uninterrupted succession of one thought after another.
- Breathing isn't really something that you do but something that you witness as it happens. Breathing happens by itself. The intelligence within the body is doing it. All you have to do is watch it happening. There is no strain or effort involved.
- Take two or three conscious breaths. Now see if you can detect a subtle sense of aliveness that pervades your entire inner body. Can you feel your body from within, so to speak? Sense briefly specific parts of your body. Feel your hands, then your arms, feet and legs. Can you feel your abdomen, chest, neck and head? What about your lips? Is there life in them? Then become aware again of the inner body as a whole

Next Week: Read chapters 9 & 10.

A New Earth Study Guide

Week 5

The Truth is inseparable from who you are.—Eckhart Tolle

Affirmation:

"God Is."

Study Questions – *A New Earth* (Review chapters 9 & 10, pp 257-309)

Chapter 9: Your Inner Purpose

Reflect

“Your inner purpose is to awaken. It is as simple as that. You share that purpose with every other person on the planet – because it is the purpose of humanity” (p. 258) At this stage of the study of Tolle’s work, what does that mean to you? Speculate as to why we were “designed” that way.

“Only the first awakening, the first glimpse of consciousness without thought, happens by grace, without any doing on your part.” (p. 260) If you have had this experience, describe the circumstances in which it happened. If you have not yet had this experience, are you willing to accept Tolle’s assertion that there’s nothing you can do to precipitate the experience? If not, why not?

“The separation of thinking and awareness, which lies at the core of your primary purpose, happens through the negation of time.” (p. 265) What does Tolle mean by “the negation of time”? He goes on to state in the next paragraph, “When you look upon what you do or where you are as the main purpose in your life, you negate time.” Do these statements seem inconsistent to you? If so, how would you rewrite the second statement to be more clear and consistent with the first?

“When doing becomes infused with the timeless quality of Being, *that* is success.” (p. 271-272) Describe an experience that you have had in which this statement is illustrated.

Get Active

To help you stay connected to your inner purpose, you can use these simple practices.

- Ask yourself: "Is there joy, ease and lightness in what I am doing?" If there isn't, then time is covering up the present moment, and life is perceived as a burden or a struggle.
- If there is no joy, ease or lightness in what you are doing, it does not necessarily mean you need to change what you are doing. It may be sufficient to change the how. "How" is always more important than "what." See if you can give much more attention to the doing than to the result you want to achieve through it.
- Give your fullest attention to whatever the moment presents. This implies that you also completely accept what is because you cannot give your full attention to something and resist it at the same time.

Chapter 10: A New Earth

Reflect

Elaborate upon Tolle's assertion that the ego, when identifying with the return movement, develops a hardened shell. (p 287)

"Awakened doing is the alignment of your outer purpose – what you do – with your inner purpose – awakening and staying awake." (p. 294). "The modalities of awakened doing are acceptance, enjoyment and enthusiasm." (p. 295) Describe when you have engaged in one or more of these modalities. What distinguished these experiences? I.e., how was that experience different than other "focused doing" (i.e. being so focused in what you're doing that you lose a sense of time)?

"The fourteenth-century Persian poet and Sufi master Hafiz expresses this truth beautifully: 'I am a hole in the flute that the Christ's breath moves through. Listen to this music.'" (p. 301) Describe an experience that you have had in which you felt like a hole in the flute of Christ.

Get Active

The new earth arises as more and more people discover that their main purpose is to bring the light of consciousness into this world and so use whatever they do as a vehicle for consciousness. Here are three ways of practicing "awakened doing."

- Knowing that what *is* cannot be undone—because it already is—you say yes to what is or accept what isn't. Then, you do what you have to do, whatever the situation requires.
- Stay alert, stay present—present with your whole Being, with every cell of your body. As you do so, you are bringing a light into the darkness. This is the flame of your consciousness.
- Abide in this state of acceptance for longer and longer periods each day. In this state, you create no more negativity, no more suffering, no more unhappiness. You then live in a state of nonresistance, a state of grace and lightness, free of struggle. When your doing arises from this state, your Being is a gift to the world.