

Concentration - the Key to Success

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The subject this morning, interesting to all us, is "Concentration," – but not only concentration, "the Key to Success." That's what we're interested in.

But I think perhaps we make a mistake sometimes in weighing just what success is. What is success? Taken from worldly consciousness, you know what success is. But we also know that worldly consciousness passes away – is changeable, is not permanent – and so, all success in that consciousness must pass away. So real success, of course, must be success by merging in the One Father, the One Common Father. If we know Him, whether we have anything or not, does not matter. As Jesus said, he had no place to lay his head, but he had oneness with God, which is the greatest success. So bear that in mind as we discuss this problem this morning, "Concentration – the Key to Success."

Now, success in any line of endeavor – whether it be labor, professions, or business, arts and sciences – depends upon one thing, it depends upon control of the Life Force in the body. If you have control of the Life Force in the body, then, then you can have concentration. If you do not have control of the Life Force, you cannot concentrate to the fullest extent. And, remember, to know God, the Science of all Sciences, requires the deepest concentration. So it is very important that we know the control the Life Force in the body, because that is the key to concentration.

Now when you have control of that Life Force, then you know what relaxation is. Relaxation means the withdrawing of the Life Force in the body from the senses, from the muscles, from the internal organs. So that has to come first. Remember that. Having that, having relaxation, control of the Life Force in the body, then you can concentrate. Then you can use your concentration, as I will try to point out. So, just remember that the first thing is relaxation.

Let me give you an illustration. You are in a room, and there's lots of noise going on. You're trying to concentrate on some one thing, and you say, "My, I wish they would stop that racket. How can I concentrate?" You can't. Why – because you have not controlled the Life Force in the body. If you had control of the Life Force in the body, you could immediately withdraw it from the ears, from the sense of hearing, and from the eyes, and you'd be perfectly oblivious to the sound, and the sight of all the

commotion. Why? Because you had learned how to withdraw the Life Force, and when you withdraw the Life Force, that sensation cannot persist.

Just like if I cut my finger here – I inject Novocain here, and I will not feel the effect of that injury. Likewise, if I can, through the power of control of Life Force, withdraw the Life Force from the finger, still I will not feel any sensation. So remember, in your concentration, the first, and important law, is to learn relaxation – control of Life Force in the body. That's very, very, very important. If you do not have the control of Life Force in the body, what is the result? You are laid open to fear, and anger, hatred, and those things. And what is the result of that? Nervousness, on one hand – uncontrolled thought processes, uncontrolled nervous system with all its results – which I will not go into – and finally, great fatigue.

Why do we have fatigue? Because the Life Force stays partly in the senses – in the muscles and organs, and you know, those of you who practice the recharging exercises, if you recharge to a high tension, and let go, the Life Force, the stagnant Life Force, is taken out of the nerves – the senses, the muscles – and fatigue will leave. So you cannot concentrate, if you're fatigued. But, if you take out that stagnant Life Force, then, then, you can concentrate.

Those are just little points in passing. So remember, the first thing, is that you learn how to relax – control the Life Force in the body – then you can concentrate to the highest degree.

Now, what is the definition of concentration? The definition of concentration, according to the Master is, "It denotes the art of withdrawing the attention from the objects of distraction," – that's one part of it – "and then applying that freed attention on one thing at a time."

So remember two parts of it – two parts of it. First, withdrawing the attention from the objects of distraction – and we'll come to those objects in a moment. We had an illustration, as I spoke about the room; the distractions were from the sense of hearing, and sight, and other senses. Those were distracting your attention so that you couldn't withdraw it. So you have to learn to withdraw the attention from the objects of distractions, and then apply that freed attention on one thing at a time. Now, until you can do that, you cannot really and truly concentrate, or at least your concentration is not at the highest degree. You must be able to do those two things.

Now one other thing that comes to my mind, in passing, is this. When you withdraw the attention from the objects of senses, then, then it must not remain quiescent, or dormant. You can get that in sleep. When you go to sleep you withdraw the attention from the senses, and from the muscles – partly – and the internal organs. Things quiet down. But what good is it to you?

But in concentration, you keep that withdrawn attention alerted – alerted – ready to use. If you want to withdraw the attention, as I have said, you can sleep, or you can let somebody hit you a good thump on the head. Your attention will be taken from the objects of distraction. But where is it? You must have that attention. It must be in your hand, so to speak, ready to be applied to the problem at hand.

So those two things are the first two things to remember in concentration. Get hold of that attention; withdraw it from the objects of distraction; and then apply it, keep it alert, ready to be applied. Now many people in their meditations, they withdraw the attention – but then what happens to it? Then it begins to float all off in imagination, all around, and they see all sorts of things. That's not the way. Withdraw your attention from the senses, from the body, from the mind, still the waves of the thought, and from the emotions, and then keep it alert. Where? At the Christ Center. That's the key.

You will not be traveling all around in foreign countries until you're ready to. Who wants to travel around in imagination? Who wants to be fooled? I don't want to be fooled. I want to know where I'm going – so do you. So let us realize we must take that attention, keep it alerted at the Christ Center, and no force in the universe can disturb you, or harm you, if you keep your attention alerted here [Doctor points to the place between the eyebrows – the Christ Center]. But if you just withdraw the attention, and let it slide all around, all over the place – where are you? You can't tell me. You say, "Oh, I see this, I see that." Listen, the mind has all sorts of ways to keep us trapped in delusion, and that's one of them.

So remember, if you keep your withdrawn attention alerted at the Christ Center, no force in the universe can hurt you, or disturb you. Let's do that. That's one of the greatest things in concentration, is to keep that attention right ready for us to apply it right where we want to. If we want to make a success in business, we apply it there. If we want to make a success in the arts and sciences, we apply it there. If we want to make a success in knowing God, we apply it on God in us.

So remember that's an important part. Keep the attention alerted – alerted at the Christ Center.

Now, another point I have written down to tell you about is this. That the art of concentration of Self-Realization Fellowship is the highest art. Why? Most systems of concentration use the mind, and the powers of the mind to concentrate. But the art of concentration of Self-Realization Fellowship goes beyond that to the cause. And what is the cause? I have just told you, uncontrolled Life Force in the body. And so, the art of concentration of Self-Realization Fellowship goes beyond mind to the force which made the mind, and causes the mind to function. Is that clear? That's why you all should know this high art of concentration of Self-Realization Fellowship, because it goes to the basic cause. And what is it? Uncontrolled Life Force.

If in that room I spoke about a few minutes ago, you were able to control the Life Force, you could immediately concentrate, in spite of all the bedlam that was going along and around you. Why – because you had control of Life Force. That's very important. So the basis, the key point in the art of concentration of Self-Realization Fellowship is that it goes to the basic cause – uncontrolled Life Force, or uncontrolled Presence of God in us. The Life Force, remember, I have told you, is the Cosmic Energy within us, the Presence of God Himself. But we have no control over it. We must know Him, make friendship with Him, and then whatever we apply that force to, we will succeed, if other things are equal.

So, going on now, just a bit about concentration itself – concerning concentration itself. I have told you the two first phases of concentration: recalling the attention and keeping it alert, and apply it where we want to.

Now there are three enemies of our concentration – three enemies. What are they? You've heard it over, and over again. How many can control them? So it's well to hear it over, and over, and then do something about it.

First is the senses, and the thoughts produced by sensation, and memory thoughts. These things are always interfering with our concentration. And when you sit to meditate, that's the easiest way to understand what's interfering with your concentration. When you sit to meditate you're going to concentrate on God, or meditate. That's all meditation is – concentration upon God. And so you sit down, you say, "I'm gonna meditate," and poof, some sensation bothers you. So there's an illustration of a sensation. "Ah, the chair just doesn't, doesn't feel good." All right, you get seated.

Then pretty soon you begin to think from sensations which come in of sound, and hearing. "Wonder what's going on out in the yard? I hear this racket." All right, those are thoughts produced by sensations.

Then you get all fixed, you don't hear anything outside, and the body's fine, and suddenly in come the thoughts – a deluge of them – memory thoughts. Then the battle begins. And when we can overcome that, then you begin to get somewheres near concentration.

So those are the three enemies. Remember those. Sensations; thoughts produced by sensations; and finally, memory thoughts. There's not enough to make us stop the sensations, and the thoughts from those sensations, but then, the internal thoughts begin to get busy from all emotions, and a million things. But that's the battle. That's the razor's edge to keep, to keep the mind concentrated on God within you, and put away all thoughts, and outward distractions.

So then, going on to concentration, we come to the four factors – the four factors, and, I cannot take this up at length, because it would take too much time – but I will just quickly say, the four factors are first: your consciousness.

Your consciousness is the Presence of God in you. And that's the only real thing you have, is your consciousness, and the experiences, which you have had in consciousness. So, remember, that's an important thing in concentration, and that is the Presence of God in you. But the point is this – and this is the important point to remember about concentration – I'm trying to pick out the important points only this morning – that Consciousness, or God in you, is attached to the body. And that's the whole trouble.

That consciousness, of the Presence of God in you, is attached to the vehicle, and as long as it's attached, you cannot apply that consciousness on any one thing which you want to do. So consciousness is the first factor. But it's attached to the body. Now we have to break that attachment. How is it attached to the body? By the second fact of concentration, or breath.

Breath keeps us attached to the body. Now you say, "Well how about that?" You have tried to concentrate at this point, and you'll get along nicely. Perhaps, you'll see a little bit of the Light, and you'll hear the Cosmic Sound, and then you have to take a breath. There goes your concentration. Why? Because the breath ties the soul to the body through the Ida and Pingala current of the sympathetic nervous system. What do we have to do? We have to withdraw the Life Force from those two nerves, and then the breath will quiet down, and you can concentrate, because you can break the attachment to the body.

Now that brings in the third factor: the heartbeat, the work of the heart. The heart pumps 18 tons of blood a day. Imagine it. Eighteen tons of blood a day. Lot of Life Force taken up there. Why can't we slow the heart down? Relieve...release a lot of that Life Force to be used in our concentration. That's just what this high art of concentration of Self-Realization Fellowship does. It helps you to take the load off of the heart. Slow it down, and then reciprocally, the breath slows down.

St. Paul said, "I die daily." All he did was pass from the outward state of consciousness, where he breathed, and jumped around, into that quiet state of breathlessness. Then you can concentrate. You cannot concentrate while the breath is attached to the body. So the heart plays an important part by reciprocally slowing down the breath, releasing a tremendous amount of Life Force for you to use later, as I will shortly point out.

One other thing; the heart shuts off the sensation. So when you are in that room I spoke of in the beginning and that bedlam was going on, you just slow the heart down, and the sensations cease. That's the high art of concentration. Self-Realization technique will show you how, how, to slow the heart down, and then the sensations are shut off.

That brings me to the final phase of concentration, the final factor, rather, which is Life Force itself – Life Force itself – which is the Cosmic Energy in the body. It's the Presence of God's Cosmic Energy in the body. And when you control that, as I have said, withdraw that Life Force from the senses – from the muscles, from the internal organs of breath, and heart, and even the involuntary nerves – what happens? That Life Force retires to the Seat of the Soul within you – the spine and the brain – and there it is, alerted, ready for you to use for success, by the applying of the highest concentration. You understand? Life Force is the key.

If you can withdraw that Life Force from the senses, muscles, nerves, internal organs, it retires naturally to the spine. That's why you feel the Bliss of God. This Bliss of God does not just happen in you. There's a reason, and the reason is that the Life Force goes to the spine, and those churches I spoke of. Now realize, the Force of God in those Centers of the spine is felt. Then you'll feel a Calm God. Don't you think you can concentrate then? I think you can. So Life Force

is an important thing. It retires to the spine and brain ready for you to use in concentration for success.

So there you have in a few words about concentration. It is very important to know how to apply it, as I will shortly point out. Now we come to the part of the application of concentration for success.

Now these three things are very important. Most people think, “Well, if I can concentrate good and solidly, I can succeed.” No. That is not enough. There are three factors necessary for success through concentration.

First is what? First we must apply right effort. Now that’s very important. You may have all the powers of concentration – greatest power – but, if you do not follow the right advice in the application of that concentration, how can you succeed?

I remember back in Boston an illustration, which points that out very vividly. There was this young man. He was full of pep. He had lots of concentration, and he had a strong will. He said to the Master, “Now, I want to buy houses.” The Master said, “I wouldn’t do it.” Why? Because the Master knew the market was falling in real estate, and, if the boy had applied his full concentration, still he would not have succeeded, because his effort was not right. The time was not right. You understand?

So the first important thing in success through concentration is to apply right effort – right effort. That’s very important. Now, how are we gonna know right effort? Act from Soul Guidance, not from the guidance of the intellect, mind, and reason, and so forth. Act from the Presence of God in you as the Soul. Then you’ll be guided right, will you not? Therefore, the first thing to do in concentration is to get God contact. Know God within you. Know His Presence within you.

And you can do that. Don’t you think you’ll be guided right? I think you will. So the first important thing in success through concentration is to have right effort – effort which comes to you by your contact with God – Soul advice. Not advice from the mind, and the intellect, and the senses, which deceive us all the time. Let’s be through with that. Let’s say, “Father, I am willing to work, but guide Thou my activity to do the right thing.” Then apply your concentration.

And that brings us to the second important phase of success through concentration, which is concentration itself. All great businessmen, big businessmen, have tremendous power of concentration – no question about it. All great artists, all great men of God, have tremendous power of concentration.

You take the Master. You would start him off on something, and he’d say, “Yes, yes,” – you’d get enthused, then it would die down, and you’d think, “Well, I guess that’s over with.” No. He never let go. He never let go. He kept at it until finally it was consummated. So, concentration we will find in all great souls – in business, in the arts and sciences, and especially in religion – because to know God, as I have stated, is the Science of all Sciences.

I'll give you an illustration of concentration. It'll only take just minute, I think it's worthwhile. There was a young man came to our house, the Master brought him. He just came from India. He said, "I want you to meet this young man. He has some things to show you, tell you about." And so, he brought this young Hindu fellow, and he came in, and he said, "Howdy do," and I said "How are you?" He said, "When was your...what's the date of your birth?" I said "March 26, 1893." He said, "You were born on Sunday." I said, "Yes, that's right. And I began to wonder how he knew I was born on Sunday? "But," he said, "that's nothing. Don't think anything of that." I said, "All right."

"Now," he says, "you take your...get some paper and pencil" – there were two or three of us there - and he said, "Now you write down six figures." So I wrote, "one, six, seven, eight, two, three, four." "Now," he says, "put six figures under that." So we wrote down, – we had the same figures – we wrote down six under that, and drew a line. "Now," he says, "make all the racket you want – make all the noise you want, and figure it out, and I will tell you what your sum is."

So we started, just get started, and he says, "1,602,403." So we figured it out, and it was right. Then he said, "Ask me any time, within one year, and I will name you that sum." So I said, "Well, that's fine." He said, "That's nothing." He says, "I multiplied 60 digits times 60, at Columbia University and in England." Sixty digits – imagine 60 figures, oh Lord, times 60, mentally. So they get out their adding machines, and they get going, they said, "Oh, you, you've made a mistake." He said, "No. You have made the mistake." And when they got all through, they found that he was right, and they had made their mistake in manipulating those adding machines. Imagine it – sixty times 60.

I said, "How do you do it?" I said, "Do you...does it seem like a blackboard?" He says, "That's it. I have a big blackboard, and I just put the figures down, and I multiply them there. And I can do it faster than you can do with a pencil, and with paper." So there's concentration, isn't it? Well, perhaps we all cannot multiply 60 times 60. He said, "I can teach you to do it." I said, "I don't think you can. That's too much. That's beyond me." But at least I was...it was interesting to see the Powers of God, which are sometimes developed in His children.

So remember the second point, is concentration itself – very important. First is what? Right, right effort – to do the right thing. "Father, I am willing to work, but guide me, guide me to do the right thing." Then when He tells you what to do, get busy, and do it, through your concentration.

That leads us to the third, and final point, which is that we must apply steady will, steady will. That's very important. Some people have an explosive will. They say, "Let's go." Ah well, suddenly, they peter out. You gotta carry it through. Carry it through to the end. You've seen the people in SRF [Self-Realization Fellowship], there are lots of them. "Boy, this is it." Next time they're way down. Why? Because they haven't applied steady will. Steady will, also, full will, and this is the important point. Full will, must be applied for success – full will, steady will, steady, full will.

Now, that, that point is this, Hindu psychologists say...say, "that the will must be used completely, or the whole will must be used in concentration." You understand? Now in ordinary human activity, where there are different phases – conflicting ideas, and so forth – the will used is what? The will used is that of ego consciousness. You understand? In ordinary activities, we're using the ego. We're using the ego, or the will incited by ego consciousness. Now that is not the full will, is it?

Yet on the other hand, Professor James says this, most wonderfully, he says, "By methodical, aesthetic, discipline, the full will can be used completely." "Completely used; completely integrated," as the Hindu psychologists say. The will must completely be integrated – used as a whole. That's what I'm trying to point out.

Now, in ego consciousness, you do not use it as a whole, because ego is not the whole. But in methodical, aesthetic discipline, the whole will can be used. That's an important point for us. Why? What is methodic, aesthetic discipline? What is it? You're going to be surprised when I tell you what it is. It's living SRF yoga. That's what it is. And, if you live SRF yoga, you will apply that methodical, aesthetic discipline.

Now what's the result? The use of the will in full. Now what is full will? Your will, coupled to God's Will. Now, there's your answer to complete concentration: full concentration, right effort, concentration itself, plus full will, which comes not by ego, but by coupling your will with God in you. Then the will is used completely. Do you see now why success comes by real concentration, full concentration?

And in conclusion, I just want to say this – that, if we will realize the first thing to do with our concentration is what? Is to apply it on contacting God – that's the important thing. Use your concentration, first, in making friends with God within. Be one with Him – feeling His Presence as the Holy Vibration within you. You have the techniques in Self-Realization to do it. You have the Om technique, which will give you contact with God in you as the Holy Vibration, with the Light of the Holy Vibration, the Cosmic Sound, and the Love of God in your heart. Isn't that the first thing to apply your

concentration for? If you're going to succeed, know God. Then you will have His Unfailing Guidance. He cannot fail you. He will not fail you.

Finally, when you have His Supreme Will coupled with your will, you must succeed. And that's why Jesus said, he said – he might have said in words – “apply your concentration first in knowing God,” but he said, “Seek first the kingdom of God, then all other things shall be added unto you.” Seek first, God communion, companionship with God, and all other things, including every success, will be yours.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Friend, Beloved God. May Thy love shine forever, on the sanctuary, of my devotion, and may I be able, to awaken Thy love, in all hearts. Make my soul Thy temple, make my heart Thy altar, make my love Thy home. Be Thou the only King, reigning on the throne, of all my desires. I bow to Thee oh Father, I bow to Jesus, I bow to the Great Ones, Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswarji, with all my love and devotion, on the altar of my heart, I bow to the Beloved Master. Om, Om, Peace, Bliss, Amen.

God bless you.

Doctor plays “America the Beautiful,” and two chants “Engrossed is the Bee of My Mind,” and “Door of My Heart” at the closing.