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WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL?

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Over and over again in the readings of Edgar Cayce appears this question, addressed to the person having the reading: "What is your Ideal?" The third chapter in Book I of 'A Search For God' is devoted to an analysis of what the ideal is, and briefly summarises an ideal as "a standard of perfection." An ideal is also a mental concept that must partake of the spiritual. This differentiates it from an idea, which may or may not be an ideal.

To analyse your ideal, the readings suggest that you break it down under the headings of your Physical Ideal, your Mental Ideal, and your Spiritual Ideal.

Most people have not the faintest idea of what a physical, mental or spiritual ideal entails. When the subject is first discussed in class work, the students are either silent when questioned regarding their ideal, or they generalise, saying: "My ideal is to be one with God!" But what does it mean to "be one with God"? What would it mean to the average man or woman in the street? Almost nothing.

Much self-study is necessary before you can emerge with a clear realisation of what your ideals are. You begin by a careful analysis of your daily activities, and the motives behind these activities. Such a search brings understanding and a rededication of the body, mind and soul to greater and

nobler service. Let us first realise, however, that your ideals change as you yourself become either more spiritual minded or more material minded - for "mind is the builder." And what appears, or is expressed, must first be conceived in mind.

"Hence the great injunction to find self in the ideals - spiritual, mental and material - and not just hearsay! Put them down in black and white. Put them down in three columns, and you'll rub them out daily if you study it - and replace them. Then you'll find that they all will be in one column. For the Lord thy God is *one*. But put them down. Put names to them. In names, we make limitations, we set metes and bounds. Then as you grow, these limitations must be expanded."

The Physical Ideal

Let us begin, then, with an analysis of the physical ideal. Perhaps you would say, "I want a perfect physical body," or "I want a beautiful body" - or you might say, "I want a beautiful home - a car - money to travel - nice clothes - a beautiful voice - perfect sight, etc. etc."

Is the request for any of these things wrong? It might be! According to the readings, nothing in itself is wrong. It is the *purpose* for which a thing is desired that makes it right or wrong, It is the Father's wish that all things be ours - but only if they are used rightly. What would a perfect physical body do

to you, your reel self, your soul? As one reading asked, "What do you want to get well for?" If it's to continue in your selfish way, then it is better to remain as you are. For it would be wrong to save the body and not save the soul.

Therefore, even to ask for physical perfection without a dedication of the body to the service of God and man could be selfishness - and selfishness is sin. He who sins shall surely die, says the Bible.

In one physical reading, the person asked, "How may I attain and retain physical perfection?" The answer was, "Not until you have entered at least thirty times."

Physical perfection is an outward expression of an interior state. From another reading we have this: "And if thy life is disturbed, if thy body is racked with pain, it is thy bungling of the laws which are as universal as Life itself. Life is of God; it is through Him that you may know, then, its purposes. And your experiences are as given of old: "Those He loves, He chastises, He purges that they may bring forth fruit worthy of your Lord, your Master." #281-23

Very often it is through illness that we are made aware of the true purposes of life, and thus we are brought closer to our Source. This brings a rededication, and often a better physical body.

Perhaps you are one who wants a beautiful body. Is that wrong? Again, what is the motive? It it's to be a better expression of God on earth — because your body is the temple of the living God - then that is a true ideal.

If the desire for a beautiful body, however, is based on vanity - the wish to show it off, to lure the opposite sex, to feel superior, to make you proud; is the desire, then, an ideal? No, because it is based on selfishness.

A beautiful home, a car, fine clothes, money to travel - all these desires are normal and may be ideals. But again you must ask yourself the question: "Why do I want these things? How would a beautiful home and all these other luxuries make me of greater service to God and man?" Remember, these blessings can be ours if we use them as steppingstones in our service to Him.

So often, as St. Therese, "The Little Flower," said: "Fame, Fortune are two of the greatest poisons that can be offered to man, for few there are who can resist their temptations."

You may ask, "Temptations to what?" To egotism, pride, vanity, the love of luxuries, the worship of money, and other temptations of the flesh. Nevertheless, if these luxuries are an aid in doing the Lord's work, they can be yours.

The writer knows a person who has all these luxuries, and there have come times in the life of this person when he has been tempted, because of these luxuries at home, to refuse a call "to duty." Always the inner voice has warned that if these luxuries become a stumbling- block to service, then in the next life there will not be such luxuries or opportunities.

Perhaps you would hold perfect sight or a lovely voice as ideals. Again, why do you want these perfections? What will you do with perfect sight? What kind of books will you read - the Bible or other constructive writings? What kind of TV or movies will you want to see? What do you *look for* in your neighbour, and in the person you pass on the street? Are you now seeing the good?

Eyes were made to see good. Ears were made to hear only good. The voice was made to speak only that which is

good.

The ideal is something to strive for. Do you want perfect sight in order to help others see more perfectly the good in the world - to study more so that you may teach others? Are your eyes feeding, your soul, or helping to destroy it? When you see that which is seemingly not good, do you now pass it on to others? If so, it is a misuse of the eyes and the tongue, and the voice. Do you use your eyes to flirt with? To lie with? To bring hope, or to bring despair into the lives of others? A look can create - or destroy. The eyes are the windows of the soul and with them you speak to others: you command, impress, hurt, love or hate another. With them you can even hypnotise another. Hence examine well your aims and purposes regarding the ideal of perfect sight. Do, you help all those you see in need of help, or do you turn away? Many of us are truly blind long before actual sight is taken away from us. Remember the saying, "There are none so blind as those who will not see."

Perfect hearing, also, can be an ideal; but is your desire perfect? Do you love to listen to gossip, to off-colour stories, to flattery, to murder stories and other things that are not constructive? Or perhaps you do none of these; then ask yourself: "Do I close my ears to criticism, or turn a deaf ear to the needs of others?" Do you listen to the problems of others and try to help them? Do you visit the sick and let them talk to their heart's content about their operations? In short, are you a good listener? Remember, through the ears, too, you are feeding your soul. But what are you feeding it?

"How," you may ask, "does one feed one's soul by listening to the woes of others?" One feeds the most important ingredient of all to the soul -

patience. And "patience is the chief cornerstone of soul development."

A lovely voice is indeed an asset, but it too must be used for lovely purposes: "to magnify the virtues, to minimise the faults"; to speak that which is good; to speak softly and gently and humbly, at all times.

An ideal use of the voice would be to speak kindly, even though for correction, when that is necessary and right; to rebuke only, as St. Therese said, "After you have asked God about it"; to pray often and to give all praise to God for all that you have and are, through His mercy. As His true spokesman on earth, the beautiful voice may be earnestly desired as an ideal.

And so with the ideal of beautiful, strong hands. These could be used in serving Him better, by holding the hands of those in sorrow, cooling the brow of the sick and feverish, encouraging the faltering by a gentle caress. The hands are doing His work, too, when they wave a friendly hello or goodbye; when they lovingly prepare food for friends and loved ones; when they serve, serve, serve. His blessing may come through the hands when there is healing of another by the laying-on of hands. And your physical ideal of beautiful hands would include, most of all, the folding of those hands oft in prayer, for others.

Still another facet of the physical ideal lies in the diet. What is the ideal diet? One that merely tastes good, and looks good; or is it perhaps one that we know will strengthen the body and help purify the soul for greater service to Him? How often do you ask yourself the question, "Why am I eating this? Does my body rule me or do my mind and will rule?" You will be amazed how often the body wins! Then study to find an ideal diet and, with the help of the will, stick

to it! Your digestion will be better and so will your disposition. Best of all, you will be master!

Many other matters might be discussed under physical ideals: the ideal work, the ideal recreation, the ideal number of hours for rest and play, the ideal colours to wear, the ideal place to live, the ideal exercise, the ideal clothes to wear, and so on. All of these can be answered for self by keeping in mind the purpose and the motive, which are the determining factors as to whether the choice made is right or wrong for you.

"Do not just consider these mentally. Do it materially, by setting it down in three distinct columns. The physical: what are the attributes of the physical body? Eyes, ears, nose, mouth - these are the means and ways by which the *awareness of the physical body* may become known to others...*these are consciousnesses*. Then there are the emotions of the body. These come under the mental heading, yes; but there are also some phases in which the mental and emotional are born of the physical, or under the control of the physical. . . "

#3590-3

The Mental Ideal

Briefly, we could say that a mental ideal is one in which every thought is a blessing. The admonition from the Bible is, "Let that mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." We know from His words and deeds that He was motivated by a mind that would serve His God and His fellow man.

In order to analyse the mind, let us consider the divisions of the mind : the conscious, the subconscious and the superconscious. We are all aware of mind; the subconscious is also recognised; but the superconscious is still to be discovered - consciously sought and used by the greater number of people. .

Meditation is the means whereby the conscious mind may be made to conform with one's ideal of good. It is also the means whereby the subconscious and the superconscious can be brought into greater activity. Hence, bringing into activity every facet of the mind's ability may also be an ideal.

Merely to say, "I want a good mind", just to want a brilliant mind - these are not enough. One must answer the question again: "Why do I want a brilliant mind?" You might want to be smarter than others - to be famous - to be well thought of - or to be known as an intellectual.

These are motives, but not ideal ones. Suppose we conceive an ideal of a brilliant mind in order to leave this world with greater understanding and greater wisdom. Suppose, too, that we have the longing, the ideal, to create beauty by writing inspirational music - music that stirs the soul to attune itself to lofty ideas and ideals. In these we see unselfish and beautiful ideals. If the mind - which is the builder - cleaves to the desire to express beauty and logic with such clarity that they stimulate others to express the same beauty in their own lives; then we have lifted the horizon of our mental ideal into the realm of the spiritual. And we know, of course, that there is no separation of the physical, mental and spiritual.

In addition to the conscious mind, the subconscious and the superconscious minds, there is another facet of the mind which can also lift our mental sights: that is, the consciousness which lies at the heart of every cell of our body! Hence a part of our mental ideal should be to develop each cell of the body to greater sensitivity. Then another channel of service will be opened to the soul - a greater awareness,

a greater perception. The five senses actually become ten senses! For we may see, feel, hear, smell and taste with the spiritual senses. The soul seeking to serve His Creator through an ideal may experience the additional talents of clairvoyance, clairaudience, psychometry, intuition, and an extension of the olfactory sense.

Man was created for good. The mind of man contains about 46 million nerve centers - more than all the telephone trunks in the world. Only a small fraction of the brain is in use; but the most important point to remember is that the human brain was created for good, as was the mind of the soul, and its ultimate end must be good. Every negative thought tends to destroy the perfection of mind's activity. Good increases its ability and scope. As mind is the builder, let us especially use will power to develop right thinking; and use meditation as the means by which to increase the will and direct the mind to ever higher goals of service.

"How may I gain greater understanding?", #5321 asked in a life reading. The answer was: "There are ideals. What manner of friend is an ideal to you? What is the ideal relationship of man to his Maker? What is the ideal relationship of a husband, a father, a son, a brother? These would be ideals, not merely ideas. Set them down. Then make yourself to be an ideal friend, an ideal father, an ideal husband, an ideal brother, ideal neighbour. You will find that there will come harmony, peace and growth within.

The Spiritual Ideal

The spiritual ideal was best expressed by Jesus who became the Christ. He did not deal with personalities, but always with principles. He was all things to all people. He was human yet He expressed in thought,

word and deed the fact that He was the son of the Living God. Through His activities and words, He proclaimed the fact that He walked and talked with His Creator. And through the love He so abundantly gave to all. He expressed the Father. He was the closest approach of God to man. He had control over Himself, and thus controlled all the elements in the world. The flesh was subservient to His will; thus all of materiality was subject to His will, for He was one with God. Because of this, all power in heaven and on earth was given to him.

A spiritual ideal, then, is to desire His Will to be our will; His ways our ways; and His Spirit our spirit.

"Ideals are set from spiritual purposes, spiritual aspirations and desires; and there is a pattern in Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Light. When your pattern is set according to such judgements, we would find there is no condemnation of others who do not agree with us. Condemn them not, for such is measured to you again. These we find, are the greatest problems we have with others. Then first analyse yourself and your ideals." #5255

"For the activities of a man or a woman in the earth may not excel the individual's ideal." #3407-1

By holding these mental, physical and spiritual ideals, one day there will come the fulfilment of the Biblical promise: "I and my Father will abide with you forever." Then the ideal expression will be brought into the life of the one having this awareness of the Presence of God. Then faith, an attribute of the soul from the beginning, will be an active ingredient; moulding the soul into the form and purpose for which it was created—to be a companion to God.

THE IDEAL DAY

Let us now be very practical and

summarise what might make or constitute an ideal day. Here are notes which may be used as points of guidance for your own day.

1. *To awaken with thanksgiving* for a night of rest and for another day of activity dedicated to His service.
2. *To pray for guidance* and for strength, to recognise and to fulfil the opportunities presented that day.
3. *To hold a period of meditation*, of silence, before one's God.
4. *To take a moments thought* for the plans of the day: duties to be discharged; acts of "hidden virtue" to be exercised; kind deeds to one's neighbour; a phone call to someone convalescing; a note of encouragement to someone with a problem. All or some of these every day.
5. *To reflect upon the clothes*, the colours most appropriate for the day. Red for energy; blue for tranquillity; pink for love; yellow for mental activity; green for healing; purple for spiritual seeking. Use these colours as an aid for the day's activities and the needs of the soul. The clothes should suit the occasion - be neither over-dressing nor over-exposing. Simplicity in all expressions of the soul's activity is the keynote of elegance - whether in speech, dress, hat, home, or the combination of colours.
6. *To plan the day's meals* so that they comprise what is good for the body, mind and soul, not merely what tastes good to the body. If one has established an ideal, the body will soon crave those foods which will aid the body-mind-soul in fulfilling its ideals. If the body is material minded, seeking primarily fulfilment of its desires (desire, meaning away from the Father), then the desire for foods that stimulate the sensuous side of man's nature will be built into the body more and more. Therefore it is very important to use will, in the selection of foods served the body.
7. *To say Grace before eating* is to enlarge the body's ability to assimilate food better. The prayer, "Lord, bless this food that it may strengthen my body and purify my spirit for greater service to Thee," will then aid the soul in the fulfilment of its ideal.
8. *To take proper rest* during the day, by changing the activities for a few minutes, brings a better balance.
9. *To set aside a time for prayer* and meditation for others is a must, if we would have God aid us each day.
10. *To take a few minutes for reading* the Bible, or something equally uplifting. To read the newspapers to keep abreast of the times.
11. *To have a hobby* - the hobby of helping others. And to play, whenever possible, with children.
12. *To keep the house an home*, where contentment, beauty and love are the vibrations that greet everyone who enters. When working at home, or reading, leave the radio tuned to a station which specialises in classical music. Keep fresh flowers or plants growing in the home. Cleanliness and orderliness, too, are externalisations of one's interior being - and no house is a home without these.

The end of the day should bring a feeling of a day well spent in His service, with good will toward all men. This brings the greatest blessing of all - a

night of rest, interrupted only by sweet dreams and the feeling that "all is well."

IDEALS

He that gives life—Him in whom we live and move and have our being—has set His moral codes and they that err from them do so to their own undoing. Having chosen then whom you shall serve, whether yourself and the gratification of self's desires or those obligations that have been assumed by yourself and those that have been given into thy keeping, let each be guided accordingly. For the answer is within yourself; and it is not for any moralist to decide or any wagging tongue that may seek to find fault or that may spread any unkind word. Know within yourself what is chosen. cooperating one with another, giving and taking, and conducting yourself in that way which is chosen.

Do this not only as a duty, but also as a privilege, for the better expression and manifestation of yourself. Do it not as an idealist, but to bring that which is the desire of thine inner heart toward the ideal that is chosen. . . .

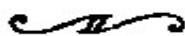
Dare to do that which is right and in accord with the ideal chosen as the

standard for the home. It is not what others will say, but what is thine ideal? What would you have said of yourself? What would you say in the same circumstances? What is your ideal?

Act and conduct yourself according to your ideal, irrespective of what others may say or others may do. Be rather as he of old, "Others may do as they may, but as for me and my house we will serve the living God!" #903-17

Ever keep this in the inmost recesses of the heart, that in love the world was moved and made, in hate and indifference the world may be destroyed.

Let that mind be in each to acknowledge error, for each becomes the bigger by acknowledging and not committing the same error twice. And in love keep those joys that come in showing peace and joy and in keeping first and foremost those precepts which were given. In honour serve your God; for your God is a zealous, not a jealous God, willing that all men should be one with Him in bringing the knowledge of Him to the sons of men. . . . #903-13



NOTE: This has is a REPRINT of a former monthly publication of the Association for Research and Enlightenment, Inc.