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Six Stages in the Search for Truth

By Elise L. Moore

The yearning for something higher and Holier resonates in the human heart. And so a search for spirituality begins. Yet the search is often for a type of "Northwest Passage," a shortcut that will make life easier. People read books. Listen to talks. Test the methods. Does it work? Do we feel more inspired, uplifted, confident, satisfied? Are we more successful, healthier, happier? If so, we stick with the system that works for us. If not, we keep looking.

Mary Baker Eddy, who founded the *Sentinel* in 1898, discovered that the path to spirituality began when she challenged materialism—the "theory that physical matter is the only reality and that everything in the universe, including thought, feeling, mind, and will, can be explained in terms of physical laws" (*American Heritage Dictionary*). We might not believe that everything is matter, but we tend to believe almost exclusively what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. These indications of materialism have to be challenged in order to make room for us to see spiritual concepts.

Just admitting that the five physical senses aren't always accurate is helpful. Like when puddles of "water" appear on dry, hot pavement in the summer. Or when the sun appears to slide under the horizon when actually the earth is turning. Or when a child announces he or she will never learn the multiplication tables and wants to stop using flash cards every evening. There are lots of times when we don't readily believe our eyes and ears.

It's a lot like this when spiritual ideas contradict the material senses. Take the idea that God is Love, for example. Many people say God is Love. But relying strictly on what you read in the paper or see on *TV*, the world looks less than loving. So where is the evidence that God is Love? This is not discerned through the physical senses but through spiritual sense. To realize that God is Love, one first learns to see and feel the spiritual dimension of life. Spirituality relates to our life, but it's beyond the physical and distinct from it. It's more than seeing a glass as half full instead of half empty. Spiritual sense enables a person to perceive God as Love, and this results in

an improved life. Having an awareness of divine Love transforms a person's individual views and experiences. It also can help other people to discern the presence of divine Love in their lives. Spiritual sense reveals the divine.

"Spiritual sense, contradicting the material senses, involves intuition, hope, faith, understanding, fruition, reality" (Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 298). Let's look at these stages of spiritual sense.

First, it often begins as intuition, a feeling, a perceptive insight. In this context, intuition is feeling without going through the process of intellectual reasoning. It is not us thinking about something. It is us receiving an intuition from God. It is an immediate perception of God's presence or power or goodness or action. Spiritual intuition is God-directed feeling.

This intuition develops into hope, the feeling that good will happen. It is confident expectation.

From hope we continue to faith. The Greek word for *faith* means "conviction, reliance on God." Here's where hope becomes firm. An expectation of good becomes a conviction and certainty of good. Faith is freedom from doubt. *Science and Health* says of faith, "It is a chrysalis state of human thought, in which spiritual evidence, contradicting the testimony of material sense, begins to appear, and Truth, the ever-present, is becoming understood" (p. 297). What began as an intuition continues as confident expectation, until we see the validity of the hope. The spiritual facts begin to appear valid to us, even if they contradict what we see with our eyes.

These initial stages of spiritual sense—intuition, hope, and faith—are all feelings. If we have any spiritual intuition, hope, or faith, we *are* feeling spirituality right now.

The remaining stages—"understanding, fruition, reality"—involve the tangible effects of spirituality. With understanding, which means grasping fully, spiritual evidence is seen clearly in our lives, and materiality has faded out of conscious thought. This understanding isn't an intellectual exercise of the human mind. It's an expression of the divine Mind. It's feeling that one's thoughts are coming from beyond oneself. It's feeling a direct connection with God and acknowledging that God's ideas are tangible and real.

Understanding includes agreeing with the spiritual idea. In conversation, we talk about "reaching an understanding," implying that we have reached an agreement. Likewise understanding a spiritual concept is more than simply having the idea. It is agreeing with it. This is such an important stage in spiritualizing thought and in spiritual healing. If I'm praying about a given situation, I need to start agreeing with the intuitions and spiritual evidence coming to me from divine Mind. If I mentally argue with these spiritual views, my spiritual sense will tend to stall at the stage of faith. But the more I agree with spiritual concepts and dismiss contradictory testimony the more understanding becomes fruition and fruition becomes reality.

Fruition is transformation and healing. It is spirituality manifest in human life. This takes whatever form is needed—mental transformation, healing of the body, emotional stabilization. Fruition means that spiritual sense is real, genuine and permanent to us. Once we understand a spiritual fact, we are aware of its reality forever.

Cultivating spiritual sense through intuition, hope, faith, understanding, fruition, reality, enables us to discern the presence of good, right where some see only materialism. Spiritual sense enables a person to practice spiritual healing.

Let me illustrate. While on vacation, I got a severe case of sun poisoning on my back. A member of our group kindly offered a medicated cream to ease the pain. I declined the medication because I felt God was more powerful to help me. And maybe the pain wasn't so bad, I thought. Later that evening the pain became unbearable. My thought was entirely focused on it.

I turned to God desperately in prayer, and intuitions came. The first was that thinking that a cream could relieve pain was considering myself as entirely material, instead of as being made by God, as being an idea of God—mental and spiritual. I recognized this intuition as God's answer to my prayer. Immediately I accepted the intuition and asked God what I should do.

A second intuition came—to forget physical pain and have total conviction that God, Spirit, would heal me. This was the second stage of spiritual sense—hope, an expectation of good (even though there was no physical

evidence supporting the idea). I accepted this intuition without reservation.

My next thought was to sit quietly and think over certain statements of spiritual truth from the Bible and *Science and Health*, both of which I had with me. So I sat on the bed and began to read. Each idea I took in, I treated like an intuition or spiritual inspiration directly from God to me. I consciously went through the stages of spiritual sense with each sentence, having hope or confidence that each statement was true, acknowledging that spiritual evidence was present to support the truth of the statement, and accepting it as true about me at that very moment. After about an hour, I was more consciously aware of God, of divine Spirit, than of matter and my physical body. I decided to stay with that spiritual consciousness and trust that understanding or agreeing wholly with absolute, spiritual truths would result in fruition (physical healing). So I turned off the light and went to sleep.

In the morning, I felt no pain whatsoever, even though there were still quite a few visual symptoms of sun poisoning. The pain had been permanently healed. And within a day or so there were no signs on my back that there had ever been a problem.

Even if someone's desire for spirituality doesn't extend to physical healing, cultivating spiritual sense will open one's life to a spiritual dimension that is thrilling.