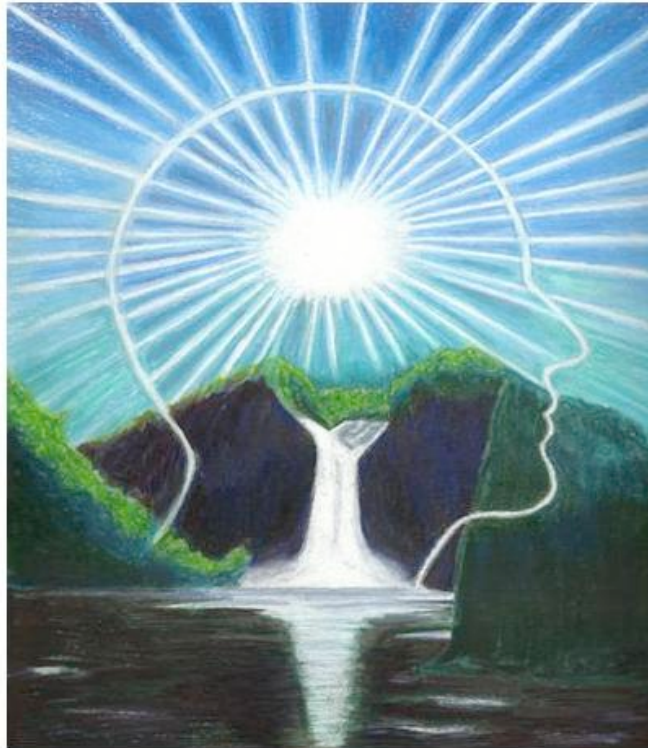


ASCENSION MEDITATION

An Introduction

by
Chad Millemon



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chad Millemon was born in Hobbs, New Mexico in 1975. He has practiced meditation for over 15 years and has taught Ascension Meditation worldwide since 1998. In addition to instructing beginners courses, he has also guided extended retreats to advanced students ranging from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and walks of life.

After discovering that meditation and spirituality were not at all complicated, but amazingly simple, Chad has chosen to share his insights with others who seek clarity within their own practice. His intention is to provide an educational service that inspires others along their paths of personal and spiritual endeavor.



'May you always walk in beauty'

Native American Prayer

PROLOGUE

“The longer I live the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think, or say or do.

It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day.

We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one thing we have, and that is our attitude.

I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes.”

~Charles Swindell~

Ascension Meditation has the power to help bring about extremely powerful and profound positive changes in the way we relate to ourselves, others and the world. When applied as an aid to personal development and spiritual endeavor it can help clarify deeper meaning and purpose in addition to a direct awareness of inner Peace. Initially, the most notable aspect of this practice is the incredible ease and simplicity with which it can be integrated into life.

The main reason the Techniques of Ascension (a.k.a Ascension Attitudes or Ascension Techniques), are so simple is that they don't give us anything that we don't already have. Praise, gratitude, love and compassion form the foundation of this practice. These wholly positive 'emotions' already exist in everyone. With Ascension Meditation we simply aim to enliven these uplifting qualities to the point where they become dominant within us. As these gradually override and cancel out the dominance of doubts, fears and judgments the result is a far more enriching experience of life and of Self.

Ascension Meditation is not instructed in this or any book. Careful instruction is needed in a live format so that students are as clear and confident as possible about their practice. Even though Ascension is simple, the mind is incredibly subtle and can be quite complex. Proper instruction replaces doubts with confidence.

This text is divided into two sections - The Beginner section is an introduction to Ascension and the Advanced section serves as a condensed handbook of the basic mechanics of practice for those who have already learned to Ascend. Overall, the intention of the text is to provide inspiration and clarity into this little known meditation practice.

INTRODUCTION

Techniques and teachings for spiritual and personal development are about as old as humankind itself. These days the smorgasbord of options available to the student of spiritual endeavor is arguably greater than ever before. This can often lead to confusion within many who seek a trustworthy practice. A clear outline of Ascension Meditation is of due importance given the fact that there has been a considerable lack of viable material available to current or potential students with respect to this teaching.

While people learn Ascension Meditation for a myriad of reasons, the vast majority of participants learn in order to discover peace, contentment, joy, happiness, love and to develop greater connection with a Higher Power. Really, any reason would be a good reason to learn to Ascend. The techniques of Ascension Meditation (Ascension Attitudes) are at times referred to as 'mechanical techniques' as they yield positive results for anyone who uses them regardless of one's beliefs about them.

Among other things, regular practice of Ascension can result in: a more positive relationship with ourselves, others and the world, dissolution of accumulated stress and self-destructive behavior patterns; enhanced spiritual and religious practice. The most notable result of this practice is that it provides the potential to experience the presence of the Divine within. This is experienced as a deep abiding inner peace and stillness that transcends all thought, feeling and emotion. It is a stillness that prevails even in the midst of external noise and activity.

The benefits of Ascension are made possible due to the fact that peace and positivity are available to all at all times and because the techniques are based on praise, gratitude, love and compassion – emotions that are without a doubt the most powerful in the universe and which have always lead to the most fulfilling experiences that any of us have ever had.

The Techniques can be practiced by people of any faith or walk of life within any situation. Praise, gratitude, love and compassion form the crux of any of the worlds great religions and spiritual pathways. Therefore, many have felt that Ascension compliments their commitment to their preferred religious or spiritual endeavor. Many have noted its tremendous effectiveness as an aid with 12-step recovery programs.

Even though Ascension is simple and powerful, it is common for practitioners to unnecessarily complicate the practice out of doubt or misunderstanding. Therefore the purpose of this text is to provide enough basic instruction to help bring about the simplicity that will result in the amazing benefits of this great form of meditation.

Regular practice of Ascension will result in positive changes for anyone that applies it correctly. With perseverance, consciousness will naturally expand beyond its current boundaries and evolve into greater and more rewarding states of being. Each step of growth equals a grander experience of life filled with ever more profound depths of contentment and positivity.

The great stumbling block to the discovery of the silence of Divinity for even the most sincere is deeply imbedded mental programming. You may just as well refer to this programming as 'mind' or 'ego'. Ego/mind is the source of all complexity and conflict and is subtle in the extreme. For this reason experienced teachers of spiritual and meditative pathways have mentioned that it is wise to seek guidance of those with greater understanding when possible. Guidance can quickly clear up doubts and misunderstandings that could otherwise remain in place for an entire lifetime.

This book is dedicated to the brilliant presence of Life that already exists within us all.

SECTION I

BEGINNERS

This section presents an overview of the basics of Ascension Meditation. None of the following information provides the actual techniques or instruction on *how* to meditate. We have found live instruction to be far and away the most effective at providing clarity when it comes to teaching meditation.

Much like those who practice meditation are termed 'meditators', those who practice Ascension are often referred to as 'Ascenders'. And like those who engage in meditation would be '*meditating*', an Ascender would be '*Ascending*'. Therefore 'Ascend' or '*Ascending*' when used in this context doesn't refer to any sort of levitating, or out-of-body experience, but refers simply to the act of applying the Techniques of Ascension. At times the techniques of Ascension will be referred to as 'Ascension Attitudes' and at other times as 'Techniques'. These terms are all interchangeable and refer to the same thing.

Throughout this short text there is also reference to the ultimate goal of meditative practice. For this there are several words may be used which all point to the Source of all that is - Silence, Peace, the Infinite, the true Self, Inner Peace, Consciousness - these all are interchangeable and refer to the exact same presence. The sun has probably had hundreds of names throughout aeons of time. While the names have changed the actual *experience* of the sun has been the same for anyone who has ever experienced it throughout all of time. The same can be said of the direct experience of permanent inner peace, which is the exact same within us all.

What is Ascension Meditation?

Ascension is a unique meditation practice that consists of a series of concise mechanical techniques known as Ascension Attitudes. These Techniques are based on the wholly positive emotions of Praise, Gratitude, Love and Compassion – widely known to be the most powerful of all emotions. We use the word ‘mechanical’ because this means that they work whether we believe they will or not.

The Ascension Attitudes have the potential effect of facilitating positive empowerment and transformation for anyone who uses them. This is so because the techniques are structured in such a way to help dissolve the internal core or root of conflict itself. These roots are more common than commonly thought. Ascension means “to rise beyond”. It is a means by which we can rise beyond all the limiting and unrewarding mental programs that we have been enslaved by for most of our lives.

Ascension is not a belief system, religion, new age fad or philosophy. It is a teaching based entirely on personal experience. The Techniques are simple because they don’t give anyone anything they don’t already have, but only help to uncover the already existing presence of peace within.

For most, the vast majority of the day is spent absorbed in the chaotic chatter of the mind. As we think and believe, so we act. The thoughts that we identify with and give our attention to have the power to affect our lives - for either better or worse. All too often the content of the mind is filled with negativity and limitation. This is a result of past experience and the conditioning of society.

Regardless of how such patterns were formed to begin with, it is important to be aware of the fact that there are consequences to indulging in a steady diet of negative thinking. Typically this amounts to a life that is unnecessarily plagued with inner turmoil where conflict prevails over peace. This, in turn, takes its toll on the body. What is held in mind has a direct effect on our physical well-being.

The good news is that we can utilize the power of our conscious attention by planting the seeds of powerful positive thoughts. Thoughts which allow the fruits of a more full and complete life to blossom. Whereas before it may have been difficult to know exactly *how* one could live differently or change the way we look at ourselves and the world, Ascension helps make this clear and simple.

How is it different from other meditation practices?

The notion of meditation commonly evokes images of rigid uncomfortable postures and strenuous inward focus. It is commonly assumed that we need to forcibly stop or exert some sort of control over the stream of thoughts in order to achieve a state of inner peace. But if meditation is meant to bring about peace and relaxation then it must be simple, not an exercise in strain and complexity.

If there is a belief that your mind must be different than what it is in any given moment, then the chances are ripe that you will fall into the ineffective trap of applying force to control it. A key difference between traditional forms of meditation and Ascension meditation is that the practice of Ascension does not involve mind control. *It isn't the mind that changes so much with regular practice as it is your relationship with the mind.* So thoughts don't actually need to change regardless of their quantity or quality.

Another key distinction between Ascension and traditional forms of meditation is that Ascension can be practiced with eyes-open or closed. In addition, there are no specific diets, postures, music, chants or belief systems required. There is no need to alter your current beliefs to practice Ascension. It isn't even necessary to believe that the practice will work in order to benefit from it.

Is this a religion, new-age practice or belief system?

No. Ascension is a teaching of direct, personal experience. There are no specific beliefs required, nor any images to worship. There are no gurus to bow before and nothing you need to join. All that is presented in any course on Ascension is for the sake of helping participants to be clear in their own practice.

Ascension is a teaching of conscious awareness. As we become ever more aware of ourselves at deeper levels, we may very well see that there may be some behavioral patterns which are productive and enjoyable but also habits that consistently bind us into a life that is less than rewarding. All too often we feel helplessly controlled by these programs even if we don't want anything to do with them. Fortunately we can choose differently in any moment so long as we know exactly *how*.

Ascension is a tool that exists to help us overcome those habits that cripple our potential to live a more complete and integrated life. It is also a means to strengthen spiritual devotion regardless of what your current belief or cultural upbringing. Underneath all of our thoughts and beliefs there is an infinite wellspring of peace that transcends all of our countless conflicting thought streams and supposed differences. This presence is available to all. It is only necessary to know how to approach it effectively.

There is no need even to believe that this is true in order to reap the benefits of this practice. Our only recommendation for any newcomer to this teaching is to be innocent and consistent with the techniques to see how they work for you.

Do I have to give up my current religious affiliation or spiritual practice to learn?

No. The only thing required is the willingness to apply this practice as instructed with an attitude of innocence and openness. This is a teaching that conforms to your lifestyle and preferences rather than you needing to conform to it. If you are a Buddhist it will help you be a better Buddhist. If you are a Christian it will help you be a better Christian. Even if you have no spiritual or religious affiliation to speak of, it will still enhance your quality of life regardless.

I have tried to stop my mind, but nothing seems to work. Will this help me get rid of my thoughts?

This is arguably the most widespread misunderstanding with respect to meditation practices. As a beginning meditator, I too tried in vain to silence my mind.

The attempt to control the mind seems to make perfect sense – “My thoughts are creating endless anxiety, so if I could only get rid of them I would finally have peace”. The error is in trying to silence the mind, which often only amounts to a huge amount of wasted time and energy. Frustration is more the result than peace.

The practice of Ascension offers another perspective. Perhaps the same thoughts can arise, but you don't give them any attention. Instead you gently redirect your attention to a different sort of thought, one that moves in quite the opposite direction of doubt, fear and judgment. With the help of even a single Ascension Technique it is easy to discover the fine art to being able to consciously shift your focus from worry to peace at the snap of a finger.

In the movie ‘A Beautiful Mind’ the main character played by Russell Crowe lives much of his adulthood as a paranoid schizophrenic. During his life there were certain familiar acquaintances that he maintained close contact with from childhood all the way into adulthood. As real as they appeared to be, they only existed in his imagination. By the time he finally realized this, his promising life and career were nearly ruined.

His recovery is intriguing, because the imaginary acquaintances never actually went away. With the help of trained professionals, he was able to see them for what they were. While the imagined acquaintances may not have gone away, his *relationship* with them changed. As a result, they no longer had an adverse effect on his life. We all have a similar ability to shift our relationship with the voices in our own head.

What are the benefits of Ascending? How does life change?

This varies somewhat from one person to the next. Everyone will have their own unique experience of this practice. Some of the most common benefits are as follows:

- Improved sleep and rest.

Even if sleep is hard to come by, Ascension helps bring one to a state of waking restfulness that can leave one feeling rejuvenated. One of the most common testimonials I have seen, even within the first few days of Ascension practice, is that it worked brilliantly to help people overcome sleeping problems.

- Decreased work and family related stress.

Stress doesn't come from any external circumstances but in how we *relate* to them. The real spiritual retreat is not away in the tranquil, forested mountains, but right here and now in the midst of the 'daily grind' of life. Armed with a powerful technique, prayerful meditation can be a way of life and offers an evolved means to respond to every situation, no matter how mundane or thrilling.

- Increased calm and relaxation begins to replace anxiety throughout the day.

Anxiety comes from our programming. With regular practice many find that stress levels decrease naturally and automatically. It takes patience and persistence. We all progress differently. But *all programming that results in distress can be overcome!* It is quite common for those who have been Ascending for awhile to find notable decrease in stress levels while driving in heavy traffic or in the workplace environment.

I once experienced a constant, deep emotional heaviness, for lack of a better way of describing it. It was like a burden I had carried my whole life. As much as I wanted to be free of it I couldn't recall what it was like to live without it. I can actually remember the moment it disappeared. It was sudden, complete and without any prelude. Poof! Gone. That was over a decade ago and I have found no trace of it since.

- Enhanced spiritual practice

When I began feeling especially drawn to spiritual teachings I was full of ambition, but riddled with doubts regarding how best to channel my passion most effectively. The teachings of the great saints, sages and Christian Mystics were of greatest interest. In spite of all that ambition I felt like I was lost at sea without a compass and map. Just learning to Ascend wiped away a multitude of uncertainty right away. This was due to the utter simplicity and directness of the Techniques of Ascension. Additional subtle doubts unravelled with further practice.

If meditation, contemplation or prayer is to be practiced effectively then it must be practiced with certainty. Meditation + confidence and regularity in the practice = inevitable progress. Therefore it is vital that proper tools for transformation must be taught by a competent guide to ensure that such confidence prevails in the student.

- Notable increase in inner peace, self-acceptance, stillness and contentment

We all have thoughts whether we like it or not. Just as well peace and stillness is present within us all and in all moments. This goes unrecognized so long as we are entangled in our continuous thought streams. Ascending facilitates natural growth and attraction toward the field of stillness beneath the flow of thoughts.

We have to ask ourselves, what is it that we choose to prioritize? Is it the flow of thinkingness - the voices in our head? Or is it *the field of silence in which thought occurs*? Obviously this silent field isn't so clear to us. That is precisely why a technique like this exists in the first place. The practice of Ascension is like an anchor that pulls us toward peace. When the stream of thinkingness is relinquished, silence is what remains. Silence is the supreme form of meditation and prayer.

- An optimistic worldview begins to replace the 'cup half-empty' worldview

Optimism is just as much of a choice as pessimism. So why do most seem to choose the latter? Optimism leads to growth, pessimism is like putting the brakes on.

- Many who are involved in 12-step recovery groups find that this practice is a huge boost toward helping heal addiction.

It was actually a profound spiritual practice that enabled the very first addicts to recover and give rise to the current Alcoholics Anonymous. Bill W. was initially an atheist but eventually embraced this profound practice and found that it was his saving grace. That practice is - surrender to the Higher Power by whatever name one would call it. By following the rays of the sun, one eventually ends up at their source. By following the fragrance of a cherry blossom tree eventually find the tree can be appreciated.

Ascension is based on praise, gratitude, love and compassion - the very 'fragrance' of the Divine. By aligning with these emotions we follow them back to their source within the heart - *'The Kingdom of Heaven is within us'*.

How this practice help me if I am already happy in my life?

Just because you are happy doesn't make the practice of Ascension useless. Regardless of how full and complete life is, the wonderful thing about the growth into ever more expanded states of awareness is that there are always greater depths of internal fulfillment. In other words, happiness has no bottom or ceiling.

It is important to know that during the practice of Ascension one may experience a range of emotions. The silent presence beyond the emotional highs and lows is constant, changeless and the source of *permanent* joy. It is the foundation or source from which these emotional highs and lows arise and subside. Much like turbulent waves may fluctuate atop the boundless sea.

A common trap in meditation practices is to try and force the recurrence of a particular past experience. Invariably, if you practice Ascension for long enough you can expect to experience close to the entire range of emotions at some point. The temptation is to want to recreate the peaks, or emotional highs, and eliminate the valleys or emotional lows. Many assume that the fleeting highs or expansive feelings are the goal of Ascending and a sign that we are progressing. This leads to a subtle judgement against those times when the emotional 'lows' prevail where we feel that either we, or the experience we are having is somehow wrong or less-than.

A rule of thumb is not to pass judgment onto whatever experience you may be having or to try and force a certain feeling when you Ascend. Always allow whatever happens naturally to happen each time you use an Ascension Attitude.

Is Ascension difficult?

This is not a difficult practice. Only our doubts about it or resistances to what we experience during the practice could ever make it appear so. Take a moment and remember a moment in your life where you felt the greatest amount of praise, gratitude or love in your life. Those moments that stand out in our lives as being the most significant and the most transformational are the ones that are filled with the purest expression of these emotions. Everyone who recalls their moments of greatest happiness can also be aware that there was absolutely no effort at all involved with these experiences.

Let's say your perfect moment was when you were sitting on the beach with someone special, watching the sunset over the horizon on a calm summer evening. You may remember that in those moments in life when you felt the most at peace within yourself and the world no thought was required. It was all absolutely effortless.

The experience of being filled with supreme contentment doesn't need to end the moment the sun drops past the horizon. The setting sun and loved one didn't cause your expansion. If anything, they helped you open up to a pre-existing state of being that was just forgotten. Such a state of expansion may have been triggered by the sunset and good company, but of itself, the source of the overwhelming feeling of connection in that moment was entirely internal. With Ascension we can actively open up to such moments more frequently by consciously connecting with the very source of contentment within.

Each moment is its very own unique work of art. Drama, judgment, resentments, guilt, worries, fears, all take us away from the perception of life's good grace, replacing it instead with conflict and stress. The Ascension Attitudes are an invitation to return to simplicity. They are like keys that unlock the joy that you may have tasted in moments so that it can be lived permanently.

Can this practice help heal physical ailments naturally?

Maybe yes. Maybe no. There is no guarantee that it will, as a rule, heal a given physical problem or ailment. It is more likely to help one discover a state of peace and contentment that prevails regardless of what state or condition the body is in.

Ascension does help bring one to a deep rest and deep rest has forever been known to facilitate the most effective healing. When the mind is excessively active it is difficult to sleep well at night or relax during the day. As a result one may experience a feeling of continuous exhaustion where physical energy is lacking. Many symptoms of illness are actually the result of mind-created stress. Hypertension, high-blood pressure, chronic fatigue, these are a few glaring examples that may very well be remedied with a regular and effective meditation practice. Some research has even shown that meditation can result in the release of endorphins.

Much of the physical tension I used to feel was the result of mind-created anxiety. I lived in constant worry and fear. Along with that there were constant thoughts of self-judgment. All of this led to sleeping problems at night. It seemed that just as I was about to drift off to sleep my alarm would go off. During the day I often felt tired and physically tense. So the physical does reflect what is held in mind. As I learned to Ascend and

began to use the Ascension Attitudes regularly I happened to notice the tension gradually diminished of its own.

Within the deep rest that results from eyes-closed Ascending, the body has the opportunity to heal itself at deep levels. As the nervous system unwinds, physical tension releases itself. In the deep peace that results from Ascending it actually becomes ever more difficult to hold onto the mental programming that gives rise to stress - mental and physical.

Can this help me increase abundance in my life?

What do you mean by 'abundance'? Is it defined by lots of money? Good health? Popularity? Knowledge? Our notion of abundance simply reflects that which is important to us. We all seek greater happiness in some way, shape or form. It isn't wrong to seek material gain and success. But if our happiness depends *entirely* on relative conditions, then it would seem that all the eggs have been put in one basket. Relative conditions naturally change. Therefore if happiness is entirely dependent upon fluctuating conditions, then your level of contentment will ebb and flow accordingly. If we are only happy on a sunny day it isn't the cloudy day that causes unhappiness, it is our mind and its belief that we can only be happy if external conditions arrange themselves according to our preferences and expectations. The famous sage Ramana Maharshi once mentioned that the attempt to change the world without first changing oneself was as absurd as putting carpet all over the world to protect our feet. It is much easier to wear shoes.

A life that is heavy in materialism and devoid of spiritual enrichment tends to be marked by only fleeting moments of contentment followed by an inevitable sense that something is missing. Just as well a life that is heavily committed to spiritual practice but is detached from the day to day material life is limited in its own right. Aversions aren't necessarily more noble than attractions. Buddha spoke of the 'middle path' as the high road that the wise would take to discover enlightenment. Balance and moderation are among the hallmarks of the middle path where day to day life isn't avoided but neither is one swept up in it at the expense of the soul's nourishment.

Many spiritual/religious paths look unfavorably upon material gain. Often the interpretation is that wealth is less Holy than scarcity. The desire for material gain is not wrong or evil, but it is often a source of imbalance and suffering. This is best summed up by the following - "*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Mark 8:36 American King James Version) It is possible to be fully in the

world with all its material abundance and yet not be swept up in it to the point where we lose ourselves along the way.

Ascension is a priceless boon to help us keep in line with these great teachings. The Ascension Attitudes help to keep us grounded in spiritual endeavor no matter what life presents us. When doubts, fears and uncertainties creep in and begin to cripple our effectiveness, it provides a way to withdraw focus from them so that we don't give them undue attention. There is great power in simply being positive no matter what life throws at us. Then you can see that material wealth and true abundance are not the same thing. At the end of the day all that is needed to be abundant is a positive attitude. The world always seems to be full of souls who couldn't be happy even though they had everything money could buy.

I once watched an episode of *Undercover Boss* where CEOs of big companies would go undercover and work with some of their hourly employees. Much of the work involved physical labor in rather unpleasant conditions. The particular episode I watched followed the CEO of a waste management company as he left the comfort of his office to work among his employees in the field where he helped clean garbage bins and overflowing portable toilets at huge public events.

What was striking to the CEO was how positive the employees were, even though they performed such undesirable tasks for a small salary. In fact, he was so moved by their positive attitude that when he finally revealed who he really was he rewarded them with higher pay and positions within the company. These employees had no significant education or noteworthy past job experience to speak of, nevertheless, the man who cleaned toilets full-time was given a significantly higher paying job within the company as a motivational speaker.

These employees impacted others based on who and what they were and how they chose to respond to what life presented each day. The power of positivity is its very own reward and the wisest investment anyone can make.

When I Ascend will it help a difficult family situation?

It can and it very often does, but this must begin with you. As much as we would love to see a loved one or family situation be a certain way, we still must not be invested in the outcome when we practice Ascension as this may very well serve as a limitation. We may have the best of intentions, but the wisest advice of all and in all situations is to 'let go and let God'.

Some may notice a feeling selfishness when they practice eyes-closed meditation as if they are taking too much time for themselves. In reality, by taking the time to seek greater peace, love and clarity within ourselves we become much more effective with all of our interpersonal relationships. So this can be considered a positive and even necessary form of selfishness. As we actively approach a greater standard of being within ourselves, everyone around us will be directly influenced for the better in ways we aren't always aware of.

What greater way to transform the world than to live a whole and complete life yourself. As Gandhi said, "We must be the change we wish to see in the world". Ascension is a fantastic way to be the change for peace, love, acceptance and positivity that the world so desperately needs.

How does it help heal the chaos in the world?

By transcending the chaos within yourself a wave of immense positive influence radiates out onto the world. Each choice - positive or negative - you make sends a ripple out into the universe. Quantum mechanics has backed up the claim that many saints and sages have made for aeons - that our every thought, feeling and action affect everything else. We are either contributing to the collective chaos of the world with the thoughts we hold in mind, or we are contributing to a more consciously evolved world.

It would be more important to acknowledge that the real chaos is not in the world, it is in your mind. Each step beyond the identification with the mind is a step closer to the presence of Silence where chaos simply does not exist.

How long does it take to reach the Silence?

It really depends on how devoted you are to discovering it. There is actually no distance to traverse. Silence is not acquired, but is already present in all moments. To experience it is actually the easiest thing there is, but we must break free of a lifetime of addiction to the thoughts which pull our attention away from it. For the Stillness to be experienced in all its fullness it must become more important to us than our thoughts. It is important to know that the silence of sitting still and the Silence that is present whether the body or mind moves or not are two completely different things.

To the degree we can foster confidence and simplicity with a valid practice of meditation our journey beyond the mind's confines is hastened. In terms of my own practice of Ascension Meditation there was a time where I was so caught up in getting something

in the future or arriving at some presumed state of higher understanding that I would never allow myself to enjoy my life as was is in the in the moment. I became quite rigid with my practice, even meditating with my eyes-closed straight through dinner on many nights while attending an extended retreat. Even though I was instructed time and time again to keep things simple and easy, my programming was such that I was prepared to run through a brick wall with all my effort. While I thought this was noble at the time, I was wasting a lot of time and energy.

One day I remembered vacationing every summer with my family as a kid. I always looked forward to it so much that I even packed my bags a week early on a few occasions. As excited as I was about arriving at my grandparents house and seeing all my aunts, uncles and cousins at the end of a 1000 mile trip, I remembered always being just as excited about the journey itself.

While on the road I enjoyed every part of the trip – the scenery, the unfamiliar faces, the changing weather, the restaurants...I loved it all. Many years later I came across a teaching from Buddha that says, “It is better to travel well, than to arrive.” The sooner we learn to fully enjoy and embrace each moment as it arises, the happier we become. I applied this to my practice and what a difference it made. We can only work with what we are and what we are faced with right now. To do this with joy is made possible when we stop resisting what is.

This isn't to say that arriving at some future goal is necessarily a bad thing. It is commendable to have any form of self-improvement as a goal. But there is no better time than now to learn to practice looking at yourself and thoughts with compassion. If you aren't sure how to do that, then Ascension will make quite clear. As we learn to embrace all those parts of ourselves that we might have judged as unworthy and unlovable, our self-imposed burdens are lifted. What is left when the burdens fall away is a state of pure contentment. This is really not a far off or unattainable goal at all. We just need the right approach and it will unfold quite naturally.

Will Ascension help me sleep better?

Of all the comments we receive immediately following instruction on the very first Ascension Attitude, improved sleep and rest are among the most common testimonials. Ascension helps us relax into tranquil states where deep rest comes effortlessly. Even if one cannot sleep at night, Ascending eyes-closed can leave one feeling refreshed by the time we rise to start our day. Many have found that the practice of Ascension can serve as a drug-free alternative to sleeping pills and is simple to learn. Even little kids have learned to Ascend using the exact same techniques that adults do.

Why can't I learn from a book?

Attempting to properly learn any meditation technique from a book can be very tricky. I know this one from personal experience as I tried for a couple of years to practice meditation using books as my only instruction. While I can say that I honestly found a lot of inspiration from some of these books, each time I would attempt to meditate I was riddled with doubt as to whether or not I was doing it correctly. I constantly wondered which method was the best or most effective.

Occasionally I tried to mix and match a few methods and practices from some of the different practices and spiritual teachings I read about. This only resulted in a great deal of confusion rather than peace. When learned to Ascend I was relieved to find a technique with which I was confident with. The live teaching helped clarify and simplify things in a way where I felt like *I could put all my energy into the practice instead of constantly second guessing everything.*

With book learning I had turned much of what I read about into subtle belief systems which did not necessarily result in direct experience. One belief I picked up was where I thought I needed to sit in a certain uncomfortable position. Most of the pictures I saw of people meditating always seemed to show them in the traditional cross-legged position. Personally I still can't sit for any length of time in such a position and neither can most people whom I have worked with over the years.

Many of the books mentioned either to stop the flow of thoughts or hold an object or phrase in mind without wavering. And for some reason I assumed that once I was locked into my position that I wasn't allowed to move at all. All of this rigidity was terribly uncomfortable and I had absolutely zero success in stopping my mind.

As it turned out all my attention was directed into my bodily discomfort and into fighting with the thoughts and feelings that would flow through the mind. I found little peace with this approach. After a couple years, I realized that I had been practicing in a way that was completely ineffective! I But I am thankful to have spent only a couple years doing this. I have worked with many people who had previously spent *decades* practicing a technique or practice that rarely, if ever, resulted in lasting depths of peace and stillness.

The experience of learning in a group of other beginners was an unexpected gift as well. Many of the questions and experiences other people had were similar to mine. It was nice to see that there are common solutions to common doubts. All the additional time I would have to spend trying to figure it out on my own was cut drastically short by the time I spent in live interaction with those who had experience in effective methods of meditation.

Can I combine Ascension with other practices?

The recommendation is for beginners to only use the Ascension Attitudes for a period of 6 to 8 weeks. This is only so you can have the best opportunity to experience this teaching for yourself before deciding if you wish to continue it or not. This does not mean that you can't practice yoga or go to church on Sundays. But if you mix several different meditation practices, mantras, affirmations and the like, then chances are you may wind up complicating things. Regardless which practice you choose, Stillness is simple and so must be the approach that directs us to it.

Some healers, Reiki masters and massage therapists have learned Ascension and apply it while working with patients. Many have noted that it greatly enhanced their therapeutic practice and its effectiveness on patients. One common statement is that it helped them 'get out of the way' so that they could become a clearer channel for the healing energy to flow.

Do I need to be in a certain mood to Ascend?

Ascension will work regardless of our feeling or mood. It is actually counterproductive to try and evoke a certain feeling to go with this practice. I used to think that I needed to conjure up feelings of love when using the Love Ascension Attitude. I figured it would add fuel to the fire, so to speak. But, at the end of the day, I saw that I was trying to control the experience and force it to be a certain way rather than allowing it to be as it was.

Peace is not a feeling so much as it is the ever-present context/field *in* which feelings and thoughts arise. By analogy thoughts would be like a flock of birds and the context/field would be the sky. This motionless, indescribable field is forever unaffected by the ebb and flow of moods. This does not mean that by discovering this we become like emotionless blocks of wood. Nor does this mean that we must try and be void of emotion in order to Ascend.

The rule of thumb to follow when Ascending is to apply the Techniques and allow whatever happens naturally to happen. Sometimes rather strong feelings and moods surface. Other times there may be no feeling associated with the use of an Ascension Attitude at all whatsoever - In either case, the technique will accomplish its own aim when we use it. Whatever the experience is, let it be what it is without commentary.

When possible it is beneficial to minimize distractions when spending time eyes-closed Ascending. Over time you may very well notice the external things that were once distractions will disturb you less and less. But when the practice is new to you the fewer

distractions the better. Not only is this practice incredibly restful and relaxing, but those periods of eyes closed Ascending are typically the easiest in which to experience the inner peace clearly.

How do I integrate spiritual life with ordinary life?

'Ordinary' is a label. With the right perspective, all of life can be embraced as extraordinary spiritual opportunity. A valid and time tested practice such as Ascension will only help one to embrace it as such. It is a good idea to let go of projecting imaginary lines onto our lives where a situation becomes a 'this' or a 'that' - which is to say, 'spiritual' and 'non-spiritual'. As soon as the labels of what is and what isn't spiritual are gone, then we can embrace each moment more fully as a perfect opportunity for conscious growth. Opportunities for growth don't end the moment we enter a work environment. The presence of Divinity is not absent in rush hour traffic or while filing taxes. The line in a grocery store can be as enlivening as a walk in the park.

I feel that I am too old and have too much accumulated stress and programming for this to work for me.

The power of techniques based on praise, gratitude, love and compassion isn't reserved for select age groups. These emotions are the essence of the miraculous and can positively impact the life of anyone who makes them important.

If discovering permanent inner peace or living a life of greater happiness and contentment is your goal, then why allow your mind to make excuses for why you cannot have it? This is actually a widespread habit. We may want something in particular in our lives - a rewarding relationship, love, connection, spiritual fulfillment, etc. - but then we make excuses for why we feel we cannot do it. I have met many who long for a relationship, but shoot themselves in the foot by convincing themselves why they are unloveable. It is a rather bizarre habit, don't you think?

What is the importance of combining eyes-closed with eye-open Ascending?

Eyes-closed Ascending is ideal for experiencing not only deep relaxation, but also the deepest and clearest experiences of Stillness. As you set aside some time to Ascend

eyes-closed, do your best to minimize external distractions. This will help to bring more attention inward to the practice.

The by-products of this method are both cumulative and immediate. Stresses that have accumulated within our nervous systems from throughout our lives begins to dissolve automatically when we present the ideal conditions. At the same time we gradually drift into a calmer and clearer state of being - one that is ever more free from the fetters of the past. Many report great levels of peace even the very first time they close their eyes to Ascend.

Eyes-open Ascending can be easily forgotten out of habit, laziness or out of not really appreciating the power that is inherent in eyes-open practice. But it is easy to turn this into a habit that will only ever yield positive results. Unfortunately this opportunity is missed if we quit Ascending, or we don't find some way to prioritize the emotions of praise, gratitude and love at least in form in our lives.

By using the Attitudes eyes-opened, the amount of stress and conditioning that would otherwise filter into our consciousness is minimized a great deal. To Ascend is to align with a powerful field that is much more significant than the petty worries, pointless mental chatter and dramas that otherwise cloud our awareness.

How are these techniques different from affirmations or mantras?

Some affirmations that I have seen involve repeating a particular set of words that make a claim (I am wealthy... I am connected with God, etc.), and are introduced mentally or chanted verbally. The more common mantras often presented in a language such as Sanskrit or Tibetan where we may or may not know much about what we are repeating to ourselves. The value of many affirmations and mantras is they, at the very least, offer a positive direction in which to begin directing attention. Using a devotional mantra is by far better than taking no action at all as far as actively moving toward a greater experience of life.

I noticed certain limitations to some of the affirmations that I once used. To take an example - You may introduce a phrase either verbally or mentally that says, "I am healthy" and while this sounds great on the surface of the mind, a deeper part of the mind might say, "Yeah right! Who are you fooling anyway?"

The likelihood of this deeper voice to rise up and counteract our claims is virtually guaranteed if we tell ourselves something that isn't necessarily our direct experience. The more extraordinary the claim, the more strongly it seems the deeper voice of doubt rises in opposition. On the surface we may feel good about it. Nevertheless it seems there are no shortage of deeply entrenched programs that all-too-often undermine our

practice. So it isn't that the affirmation is useless - It is just that its effectiveness may only reach a certain depth. If this is the case it may do little toward dissolving the root of conflict and ineffectiveness.

Sanskrit and Tibetan chants are often beautiful, devotional and powerful. My main struggle with these when I practiced them as a beginning meditator was that the phrases meant nothing to the surface level of the mind. In other words, I didn't really know much about what I was repeating to myself. In addition, verbal chanting wasn't so practical when I was working, going to school or on jury duty. A valid technique will work whether we believe it or not. But its effectiveness also may very well depend on *how* it is used.

I used to repeat mantras in fast sequence over and over again while trying to block out other thoughts. As I attempted to subdue the torrents of mind-chatter it became clear that I was applying way too much effort. I certainly never was able to relax much below the surface level of the mind. This yielded few peaceful results in my experience. My biggest issue was that I had no idea if the mantras were working or if I was using them correctly or not.

The Ascension Attitudes are statements that acknowledge the perfection of what is. They make no claims. There are no "I am this or that" phrases. Use of the techniques never involves trying to block thoughts. Instead the instruction is to allow thoughts to be without fighting with them - for this an attitude of active indifference toward the mind's thoughts is suggested. Ascension doesn't involve verbal chants or exhausting mental exercises. When I began to use them the deeper programs that negated the affirmations I used fell silent. The way the Ascension Attitudes are structured leave nothing for those deeper voices to argue with.

The first four Ascension Attitudes are specifically designed to dissolve 'root stresses'. A root stress is the core program from which all other negative, limiting or self destructive programs manifest. The power of the Attitude begins to dissolve these tendencies by dissolving the root.

Will Ascension help me deal with intense emotions?

It will enable you to be more accepting of it when it arises. This may be easier said than done at first, particularly if the emotions are intense. Over time with the help of Ascension the energy behind the emotions affects us less. Gradually we become less reactive to them. In the Tao Te Ching it asks, "Do you have the patience to wait while the mud settles and the water is clear?" This is a good way of relating to emotion.

Personally I like to describe the experience of witnessing thoughts and feelings during the practice of Ascension as ‘attention without tension’.

As emotion arises the best practice is to simply observe it. Note the emotion and your reaction to it. You will begin to notice not only the thoughts, but also the charge behind the thoughts. Using the Ascension Attitudes while witnessing the thoughts and feelings allows us to more easily remain as the witness of thoughts for longer periods. It is important to note that *we never use the Attitudes to make the feelings change or go away, but to shift our relationship with them.*

Keep in mind that there is a lifetime of momentum behind the mind’s deep programming. Patience is required to begin to break free of the addiction to these habits. If a freight train is suddenly switched off while traveling at 65 miles per hour it will not come to an instantaneous stop, but will continue until its momentum is exhausted. It is the same with the addiction to thoughts and emotions. One helpful tip that will aid in exhausting this momentum is to be intently aware of your thought processes while in the midst of particularly intense thought streams or emotions. You will notice that there will be a tendency to label the experience you are having.

As you notice this tendency you can begin to let go of identifying with these labels of ‘wrong’, ‘bad’, ‘good’, ‘intense’, ‘not as intense’, ‘good experience’, ‘bad experience’, etc. This is a very significant way to shift the relationship with intense emotion. Of course, anyone can do this with or without the aid of Ascension. But with the help of Ascension it is a great deal easier. Instead of clinging to a label, think an Ascension Attitude instead.

Do I have to use all the Techniques I have? Can I skip some?

To benefit the most from the practice we recommend using all the Ascension Attitudes that you have at least once a day eyes-closed. As all of them are powerful and do their part to help heal programming within different aspects of our lives, it is a wise to use them. Sometimes people find that they are drawn certain Attitudes and devote more time to them. With eyes-open practice there is no particular prescribed order. Feel free to use whatever Techniques come naturally from one moment to the next.

Can I use them in any order?

With eyes-closed Ascending the suggestion is to use them all in order. One practical reason for this is for the sake of simplicity. Without spending time pondering over which Ascension Techniqu to think next there is a perfect order already mapped out for you in

advance. Also, by thinking the Attitudes in order, there is more of a likelihood that you will spend quality time using them all. This is especially important for those who choose to learn additional Attitudes over time.

When I first began to Ascend I preferred to skip over the Gratitude Attitude, but it was recommended that I use it anyway. I continued my practice regardless of how I may have felt about it at times. Eventually I realized that particular Attitude was actually serving to dissolve a deep judgment about myself I didn't know I had. The discomfort I felt with it stemmed from a particular judgment that was being confronted. This program eventually faded away until it no longer had a negative influence over me. After years of teaching I have found this to be a very common experience with others. This is precisely why it is important to use all of the Techniques you have regardless of how you may feel about them. They work on levels that we aren't always aware of.

With eyes open Ascending feel free to mix it up as you see fit. Even with eyes-closed Ascending, after spending a certain period of time using all the techniques, if you wish to spend time on a specific technique then feel free to do so. Ultimately there is no wrong way to do it as long as you keep it simple.

How can I fit in the time to Ascend when my life is so busy?

If life is busy the best one can do is have the intention then seize the opportunities when they arise, even if they are brief. The refreshing thing about Ascension is rather than trying to fit your lifestyle into this practice, this practice fits into your lifestyle. Since it is so enjoyable and gives such deep rest, naturally you may *want* to find the time to set aside to Ascend eyes-closed.

This is also where the unique eyes-open aspect of this practice is ideal. Even if eyes-closed practice is hard to come by you can always Ascend with eyes open. It is a great idea to Ascend each night until you fall asleep and great to use if you awake in the middle of the night and are unable to sleep.

Why is 20 minutes, 2 to 3 times a day of eyes-closed Ascending recommended and not more?

Twenty minutes is a basic recommendation. Longer periods are fine if you can do it comfortably. Also, twenty minutes is an easy amount of time that most anyone can fit into their daily schedule and is sufficient time to allow for quality eyes-closed

experience. It is beneficial to get into some sort of regular routine where regular time is spent with eyes-closed to go with consistent eyes-open practice.

Can I just use the Techniques eyes-open?

This is certainly better than not using them at all. Ideally eyes-closed practice should be a part of regular practice. Eyes-open it is great to use the Attitudes as much as you can remember.

The benefit of eyes-closed practice is that it allows for deeper experiences of peace. There is great benefit in being able to close your eyes and direct all attention inward. As awareness is gently pulled inward with the aid of the Ascension Attitudes the experience of peace becomes ever-clearer and a deep and healing rest follow naturally.

When you open your eyes to go about your day you may notice that this peace can remain with you for a certain period of time. By alternating eyes-closed practice with eye-open practice, over time you will notice that it will deepen and remain for progressively longer periods. There comes a point where a very solid, clear and rock-solid presence of peace remains in all moments - eyes-closed and open, in activity or rest. With this rare and refined level of awareness, the presence of Silence itself becomes the meditation. The awareness of Silence is the purest form of meditation.

There is a wonderful analogy that illustrates how the awareness of Stillness in eyes-closed Ascending eventually permeates the eyes-open practice - Imagine you have a dry, white cloth and a bucket of dark red dye. Your job is to color the cloth the same deep-red color of the dye. First the cloth is dunked and saturated in the dye (*This is like experiencing Stillness with eyes-closed*). When the cloth is removed it is the same dark shade of red as that of the dye (*Experience of Stillness can be particularly strong immediately after Ascending, even if only temporarily*).

As the cloth is hung to dry in the sun it gradually fades to a light pink (*In the early stages, the busyness of life can distract us and the experience of Stillness fades*). After a fresh dunk it once again assumes as deep a red as the dye as it hung to dry in the sun (*Once more we close our eyes to sink into the purest experience of Stillness*). But this time when the cloth dries to a slightly darker shade (*Each time a little more Peace carries over into waking life from our eyes-closed practice*). A progressively deeper shade results with each repetition of this process. Eventually the cloth maintains the same deep red color as the bucket of dye, whether it is dry or wet. Those intermittent experiences of Stillness are laying the groundwork for a stable and ongoing inner

awareness of it. Eventually the awareness of Silence is strikingly evident whether eyes are closed or not.

Is there ongoing support after I learn Ascension Meditation?

Absolutely. Even though the practice is simple, there is tremendous value in ongoing guidance and in gathering with like-minded people. For this reason there are a multitude of formats beyond the initial course that help to enhance and accelerate growth. From a simple phone call or advanced evening meeting to an advanced course that lasts anywhere from a day to several months - there are a multitude of possibilities. None of these are required as a rule, but they are available for those who are drawn to them.

To clarify, the word 'advanced' is used in this sense to refer to someone who has already learned to Ascend. Even if that is with only the first Technique.

How can I overcome pain and suffering?

First we must note the important distinction between pain and suffering - pain is a sensation and suffering is a story. A broken bone will be painful for anyone and yet physical pain can be experienced without wallowing in the commentary that tends to follow - "I can't believe i'm so clumsy. That was so stupid of me. This sort of thing always happens to me. When will I ever learn? Nobody loves me. Why would they love me?" If we cling to this running dialogue it will lead to a low emotional state which we may call 'suffering'.

Because there is great power to what we hold in mind, we plant our own seeds and reap the harvest thereof. Negative and self-degrading thought streams drain life of its luster. Just as well, the right perspective can help us lift the curtain of despair and allow the light of higher self-awareness to replace the more burdensome views of self and the world.

The stories that arise in response to physical pain stem from an already existing belief structure imbedded deep within the mind. The painful knee isn't the cause of suffering, but only a trigger for the outburst of latent programs which operate in the subconscious mind. The origin of all personal suffering is within us. Yet we have a rather strong habit of attributing the cause of our suffering to an external source. This in turn leads to a state of powerlessness and victimhood. It is always easy at this point to point the finger of blame elsewhere, but it takes real courage to begin to assume some semblance of accountability for our own state of well-being and effectiveness in life.

So long as we attribute the cause of suffering to external agents this ensures the continuance of further suffering. Ascension is a direct path that leads us back inward to the actual source of permanent, uncaused joy. Simultaneously, the Techniques help to sever the ties with the very roots of suffering. At their very core, these festering roots are nothing more than subtle thoughts. They are the unconscious programs that color perception of each moment of our lives.

Of interesting note, there are some who maintain dearly held beliefs on the nobility of suffering. After all, Jesus and the Saints suffered for God. Some of the great Mystics even described the intense anguish that came with their devout practice of contemplative prayer (such as 'The Dark Night of the Soul' by Saint John of the Cross and the story of St. Francis of Assisi). Some images and stories of eastern sages practicing intense meditation and prayer depict scenes of harsh austerity.

The innocent and naive student sees these images and assumes that this is how a dedicated approach must look. While it is in some way impressive that one would go to such great lengths to be devoted to God, the strain and effort may very well come from a belief that it is noble or even necessary to suffer to be worthy spiritual progress. While suffering can certainly be a great motivator for one to find deeper meaning in life, an intentionally masochistic practice ultimately only serves the ego, not God.

What Ascension Attitudes are available after the very first one? What purpose do they serve?

There are 20 Ascension Attitudes which are seen to be the most beneficial. These are divided into groups of four with each group referred to as a 'Sphere'. Within each of the Five Spheres of Ascension Attitudes there are a Praise, Gratitude and Love Technique followed by a fourth technique known as a Cognition Technique.

This series of Ascension Attitudes exists for a couple reasons - Having more than one Ascension Attitude keeps the mind from being easily bored or distracted. Additional Attitudes serve to charm the mind and to help keep the practice fresh and alive. The other reason is that the other Ascension Attitudes operate at increasingly subtle levels. They serve to enhance and accelerate the dissolution of limiting habits and unconscious programming. You could say that the very first of all the Ascension Attitudes - The Praise Attitude - represents the foundation for all the Techniques of Ascension. With respect to addressing the very root of discord, it really does cover everything.

How many Ascension Attitudes do I need to learn to be able to practice effectively?

Most learn the first four Ascension Attitudes in rapid succession. Usually all in an introductory weekend course. Even so, the very first Ascension Attitude is all that is required to practice effectively. Beyond this the many additional Attitudes are available for those who wish to experience the effects of some of the advanced techniques. All of these serve to further enhance and enliven the practice, although none are required.

Many report that their practice of Ascension is greatly enhanced by picking up additional Techniques beyond the first four. But everyone will have their own experience with this practice. So whether or not you feel you will need more Ascension Attitudes or not would ultimately be up to you.

SECTION II

ADVANCED

Those who have already learned to Ascend are referred to here as 'Advanced Ascenders'. Beyond that 'advanced' doesn't refer to any sort of special accomplishment or experience. For as many questions as prospective or beginning Ascenders tend to have about this practice, regular application of this meditation typically leads to additional experiences and questions. Normally the best way to address such questions is through live dialogue with a competent instructor, but such contact is not always readily available.

The following represent a few common questions that arise, not just for those who Ascend, but for meditators in general. All the following questions and answers are presented within the context of Ascension Meditation due to the fact that it is the practice that the author has himself practiced and taught worldwide.

It is helpful to know that nearly everyone encounters similar doubts and concerns as they ease into the practice. New Ascenders tend to be relieved to find that there are common answers to the questions they face. Of equal importance is the recognition that there are a lot of similarities between your mind and everyone else's. This fact alone takes away a lot of the tendencies to believe that our problems, doubts or habits are somehow special and unique only to us.

Even though one may be considered 'advanced' it is best to always remain innocent each time you Ascend. A willingness to be open with each and every experience will always be important, without it, stagnancy results. While openness is key, one must be properly educated on what works and what doesn't. In this way you can most effectively hasten the expansion of your own consciousness beyond its current boundaries.

For the sake of being concise, we have listed only a few of the common questions that tend to arise for those who have been Ascending only a short period of time. It is my hope that a future book will delve more deeply into some of these topics.

How do I concentrate enough to stay in the now? My mind wanders so easily.

Don't worry about concentrating or 'staying in the now'. Just think one of your Ascension Attitudes when you remember, let it go and allow whatever happens happen. Keep it simple and stay alert to what happens next. If you forget to Ascend for a period of time or drift off, it is of no value to spend time being frustrated for having forgotten. Nothing can be done for moments that have passed. Even a split second ago is history. Simply re-introduce the technique the instant you remember. Each moment you scold yourself or try to force your practice is a moment wasted.

The only thing that is not present 'in the now' is the mind. We are not the mind or its thoughts. By letting it go with the help of Ascension, what is left will automatically be present moment awareness. Don't fight to stay present, just gently redirect attention to an Ascension Attitude when you remember.

If I am not my thoughts, what am I?

If thought can be observed then it must be an object. By witnessing the flow of thoughts you will also notice that there is an ever-present 'watcher' that does not come and go as thoughts and feelings do. A thought appears in the mind like a cloud appears in the sky. The sky is the field in which change occurs - clouds, birds, airplanes and diverse weather conditions all appear and disappear. The sky is infinitely bigger than what moves through it. Objects that move through the sky have boundaries and are subject to change. But the sky is formless, unchanging and unaffected by this fleeting content.

The sky neither resists nor clings to any of the objects that moves through it. Also, no matter how chaotic the various objects may be, the sky is forever present and silent. Movement and change represent only the smallest part of the sky. The sky has no judgment or preference toward either white fluffy clouds or dark stormy clouds. It is silent and unmoving before, during and after the fireworks display.

Like clouds, thought arises within a field that is already silent and without change. In its highest sense, meditation is a means to shift attention from the thoughts to the field in which they occur. As one realizes that they are the 'sky' of pure silence this doesn't necessarily mean that thoughts cease to arise. It simply means that one identifies more with the silent field in which they pass through more than the thoughts. The real 'you' is discovered in the silence.

I still have a lot of thoughts, even after a few years of Ascending.

The quantity and quality of thoughts is not be an issue. What changes with regular Ascension is not the thoughts themselves so much as it is how we *relate* to them. With this practice there are times where thoughts will appear to be more intense and numerous than at other times. This is par for the course.

You may notice as you think an Ascension Attitude that you can either do so with an agenda that the experience should be a certain way, or you can Ascend and allow whatever happens to happen. An expectation that the content of the mind should be a certain way will lead to excessive effort. This is counter-productive. The best approach is to always allow the experience to be what it is without attempting to control it at all. This is the royal road to supreme peace and contentment.

Are thoughts always going to be ok when I Ascend?

Thoughts are always ok while we Ascend. This practice should never involve strain or effort no matter what. It is never of benefit to try and force the mind to try and be a certain way. When all labels are removed from our thought streams, they are neither 'ok' or 'not ok', they simply are. This is a key teaching. What part of us is disturbed by the quality or quantity of thoughts? It is only the ego and its limited perspective that is ever affected.

As consciousness evolves through continued practice it is possible to reach a point where your mind may think the same thoughts it always has. The difference is you are less and less affected by them. Thoughts no longer have the power they once seemed to have. Greater depths of stillness and acceptance begin to replace the addiction to thinking. Before I learned to Ascend I experienced depression. After a few years the depressing thoughts continued, but I was no longer depressed. I just no longer payed any attention to those thoughts. Peace prevailed in spite of the depressing thoughts.

Thought is typically believed to be real and 'who I am'. So long as this is the case then we will remain subject to the quality and quantity of thoughts. So long as we remain caught in this misidentification, thoughts will appear to have power over us and we will continue to be at the mercy of our programming.

In a more refined and rarely experienced state of consciousness peace is lived in all moments. Thoughts may be many or they may be few, but it is absolutely unimportant at that point. Less and less do they disturb the awareness of infinite silence. Just as the sky isn't the least bit bothered by a flock of birds fluttering through it, neither are we affected by the thoughts that may float through our consciousness.

If a life of inner contentment and joy is our birthright, why do so few experience this?

Because inner peace and spiritual growth is not a priority for most people. Few know that it is even possible to experience permanent, uncaused joy at all let alone on a consistent basis. It seems that most are content to make virtually anything and everything else more important than discovering the presence of the Divine within.

For those that are on a spiritual path, there are a multitude of techniques, teachings, books and practices from which to choose. To the beginning spiritual aspirant the wide array of options can be overwhelming if you aren't sure what to look for. Without proper tools and guidance one can waste a lot of time on practices that don't lead to contentment. The addiction to the mind is quite strong and not easily overcome without proper tools and competent guidance, which are rare.

Why can't I change the Techniques?

From the surface of our own minds it is difficult, if not impossible, to know with certainty if the changes we make will actually enhance the Techniques or weaken them. Just because a specific wording may sound or even feel better than the original does not mean that it will be more effective. The Ascension Attitudes work wonderfully exactly as they are. It is always best to leave the Attitudes alone as a rule of thumb. Sometimes there is the temptation to change the attitudes because we are looking for a certain feeling or mood to go with them. But this noble attempt at trying to control the experience is a hindrance.

Am I helping my family and friends by Ascending?

Anytime you do anything to better yourself spiritually you cannot help but affect those around you automatically and for the better. Each progression of your own consciousness into greater states of being is a gift to all, even if nobody else ever recognizes that fact.

Having said that, it is wise to forego projecting expectations of change onto others. We are much better off without our ego's subtle expectations interfering. Ascending isn't designed to change the outside to fit our preconceived notions of how things should be.

It is a simple means to change the way we relate to all of life and the situations we encounter.

If your aunt Molly is a drama queen when you start to Ascend, she may or may not continue to be a drama queen after a certain amount of time Ascending. Perhaps there was a time that you engaged her drama in order to feel connected with her. After Ascending for a certain period of time you may find she is still complaining about the neighbors curtains but you are no longer interested in chiming in with judgments of your own. You may find that you no longer have the energy for such trivial things. This certainly doesn't mean you have become snobby or love Aunt Molly less, it just means that you prioritize a higher state of being over the drama.

Any state of being or attitude is enhanced by collective participation. What you focus on grows. If a group of people are all criticizing and complaining, then everyone feeds off of each other and strengthens that focus. But each person that chooses not to engage in such drama weakens that focus within the group and invites the possibility for a more mature and enlivening presence to prevail. If you no longer engage aunt Molly's drama, then chances are she may find someone else to talk to or she may very well drop it all-together. Regardless you must protect your peace of mind irrespective of what others think or do.

We all influence our surroundings one way or another by being what we are in every moment. The more each of us evolves, the more significant and beneficial our impact is to all around us and the whole world in unseen ways.

It is ok to fall asleep while Ascending?

Whatever happens naturally is ok while Ascending. Because Ascension is so easy and relaxing, sleep is a common result. In fact, many find that Ascension is the perfect cure for sleeping disorders. It certainly was for me. Even if I have a night where I can't sleep I just Ascend eyes-closed and I always wake up feeling great.

Always do your best to remain gently alert when you Ascend. If sleep comes naturally, it is best not to fight it. The rest and sleep brought about by Ascending can oftentimes be incredibly deep and restful. Within that level of rest a great deal of healing, both physical and emotional, can occur. Stresses that have accumulated within the nervous system have the best opportunity to dissolve at this point.

I have worked with people who, after a long period of time, still believe it is a problem to sleep when they Ascend. Have your best intention to remain alert and use all of your

techniques, but if sleep comes, then welcome it with open arms. Ascension will always give you what you need. Sometime in order for deep healing to occur we need sleep.

How can I be certain I am Ascending correctly?

Here are a few rules of thumb:

- Be innocent when using the Ascension Attitude. Allow whatever happens to happen. Don't try to control the experience you are having or try and force it to be something other than what it is. Peace is the result of accepting the mind as it is, not in trying to control it.
- Remain ever so gently alert - 'Attention without tension'.
- Be consistent with the practice.
- Get feedback a competent instructor or from those with experience when possible.
- Keep it simple!

Why is innocence so important?

Innocence is just another way of saying openness. This is best put into practice by 'allowing'. Controlling the experience does not lead to more expanded states of consciousness. We attempt to control the experience when we have a preconceived notion of what we would like to happen when we Ascend. But this is where we get in the way.

You may notice times when you Ascend that there will be moments where you would prefer to have a different experience than the one you are faced with. This is particularly the case when intense emotions or painful memories surface. This would be the perfect moment to consider the high teaching of - "Not my will, but Thy will be done". Nobody has ever fought and controlled their way into greater states of peace and fullness. If you remember some of your most expansive moments in life - those moments where you felt the most love, joy and expansion - you will see that these came about without the slightest bit of effort They radiated forth effortlessly from within.

How do I let go of my negative thoughts and programming?

The practice of Ascension helps us relate differently to negative programming by giving a new, positive direction for the mind to move. All negative programming is of the past. By dragging the past into the present our perception of the world is colored. In this way *'the world as it is'* is often different than *'the world as I see it'*. The addiction to the past fades of its own as we Ascend. The energy behind the Ascension Attitudes allows us to resonate with a higher consciousness where it is difficult to hold onto negativity.

When I first began to Ascend, my mind seemed to be filled constant negative and depressing thought streams. Doubt, fear and judgment certainly prevailed over praise, gratitude and love. As a result there was zero experience of peace. As I began to meditate with this practice I noticed one day that the world wasn't the cause of my conflict as I once believed it to be. I was feeling down and stressed only because I was continuously focused on depressing thoughts. There never was an external cause. While I was happy to realize this, it was only the first step. The addiction to these habits was strong.

By sticking with the practice of Ascension what I noticed was that, over time, the energy behind these negative thought streams gradually dissolved. This continued until there was a point where the exact same thoughts would flow through the mind, but it was as if they no longer had any charge or life to them at all. It was as if they were hollow shells of what they once were.

Trying to calm the chaotic surface of the mind is like trying to still the waves on the surface of the ocean while treading water. Any effort to calm the waves only results in a more ripples, not less. We may not be able to still the surface of the ocean, but we can relax into the silence that already exists underneath it. Beyond the choppy surface is an endless depth of tranquility.

How do I Ascend with intense pain? Sometimes it seems impossible.

It is never impossible even if it may seem difficult at times. The struggle often experienced with intense physical pain is due to the fact that all attention goes outward toward the pain and toward thoughts about pain. In these moments we are accustomed to doing anything other than bringing attention back to thinking techniques based on praise, gratitude, love and compassion. Even so, the Ascension Techniques will work whenever they are used, even if we don't believe or even feel it.

It is highly individual whether or not Ascending will reduce the level of physical pain, but it will help us change the way we relate to it. Sometimes when discomfort is particularly intense, lots of intense thoughts can arise pertaining directly to the source of discomfort. This intensity can disrupt any semblance of peace if we get swept up in it. Ascending helps us remain centered, like the calm in the storm. At more refined levels of awareness it is possible to have pain and yet remain simultaneously immersed in the Stillness.

I have read about the importance of surrender along a committed spiritual path but what does this mean? How does one practice surrender?

Some unfortunate misinterpretations have turned the notion of surrender into a pious form of suffering for God. The purest practice of surrender leads to *instant* Joy. It is anything but an exercise in self-inflicted strain and anguish.

What has always stood out to me within the teachings of Jesus was where he repeatedly made mention of “Not my will be done, but Thy will be done”. ‘Thy’ of course referring to God the Father. I always wondered what that meant. Did he hear God’s voice? Was he privy to getting special downloaded information from the Divine that is kept from the rest of us who are less worthy? Or is that depth of surrender a practice we can all readily put into practice in each moment of our own lives should we choose to?

Alcoholics anonymous is renowned for having helped millions of addicts recover. The same 12-steps are used by a myriad of addiction recovery groups all over the world with great success. The 11th step of Alcoholics Anonymous states - ‘Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood ‘him’ praying only for knowledge of ‘his’ will for us and the power to carry that out.” This step is the key element for true healing and recovery of addiction. It is profoundly spiritual.

This can be used within Ascension to recover from the addiction to our negative, limited programming. There are essentially two ways to approach the practice - In any moment you can see when you use an Ascension Technique you do so with either an attitude of either “Thy will be done” or “My will be done”. Either we can allow the experience to be what it is without trying to control it, or we can apply ‘my will’ and attempt to force what ‘I’ want to happen.

In this sense, “my will” only results in conflict and ‘Thy will be done’ ultimately results in peace. Therefore surrender is more a shift in attitude than anything. It is most certainly **not** a passive, tedious practice devoid of joy.

Doesn't meditation get boring after awhile?

Boredom is a label. When you think, "I am bored" you can either identify with this thought or you can let it go. Before I started to meditate I wondered the same thing. I couldn't imagine how some could meditate at a retreat for days, months or even years on end. I once heard an analogy that said that meditation was like opening all the windows in the house and letting the breeze blow through. We allow all thoughts and experiences come and go, to flow through unobstructed. Amazingly I find zero boredom in meditation and this has been the experience for well over ten years. A fullness prevails where no such thing can possibly exist. Hours can pass in perfect, timeless contentment. There is no such thing as boredom until the mind creates it.

These days many of us are so hooked on constant stimulation. It is as if it is needed at every turn. While traveling around the on an international flight we cannot wait to turn on our i-pod, i-pad, e-reader, movie screen or computer. There is always someone who needs to be told multiple times to turn off these things so the plane can depart. Is it so painful to set aside those things even for a few moments? At some places I have worked there was always a radio that would play in the background. The same songs over and over again, day after day. Nobody would pay much attention to it unless it was switched off. But it would never be off for more than a few minutes. It seems there is always someone who is uncomfortable with the silence.

The experience of inner peace seems removed from day to day life.

The experience inner Stillness is initially experienced as being quite distinct from life on the outside. It is the absolute calm in the storm of our daily life. As it becomes clearer we can maintain awareness of it whether we are healthy or sick, exercising or watching TV, whether young or old, at work or on vacation. It is silent, still, permanent and unmoving and is forever unaffected by what happens outside of us. In a stadium where 80,000 are erupting in joyful celebration after a game winning touchdown pass you can join in the celebration without your experience of Peace being displaced.

What is the ego/mind?

Mind and ego are the same thing. 'Ego' refers more to our sense of identity - who or what we have come to identify with as 'me'. Our ego identities aren't always evident to us in everyday life, or they are taken for granted. We may identify with our profession,

our past, our social status or our accolades - but are these things really the core and essence of what I am? Or are they merely adornments?

The notion of 'mind' feels somewhat less personal as we can easily point out the ramblings in our head and say things like, "The mind is crazy today'. So it is easy to observe these thoughts as we would observe any other object such as a bird or a car passing by. Ego refers to those identities with the mind that are hidden deep within the recesses of our consciousness. The core of ego identity isn't so evident to most of us as its roots run deep. To take an example, 'mind' could be like the icons on the computer screen and the ego is the programs that operate behind the scenes and run the computer.

As we become aware of our own 'software programs' we begin to see for ourselves some of the programs we have adhered to. A good approach with a practice such as this is innocent curiosity. With growing awareness mind/ego can be seen with greater clarity and understanding.

While it is typically taken for granted that our mind and ego represent the sum total of 'what I am' in spiritual practice we begin to see that there is a bigger 'me' that can be experienced. The temptation at this point is to vilify the mind and make it the 'other'. So long as we look at the mind/ego/personality with judgment then we have only done so with yet another limited ego position. The way to avoid chasing your tail is to see that the mind is not evil, but only limited. A coffee mug is not 'bad' for not being capable of containing the entire ocean, it is simply a limited container.

How was it created?

The mind/ego is an echo of the past. It is a result of societies conditioning and past experience leaving their impressions within an innocent mind. So long as we take for granted that it is the sum total of who we are, then these conditioned programs will continue undaunted and effect every aspect of life in one way or another. The mind/ego represents the content within the silent field of our consciousness. By analogy, an iceberg represents the *content* within the vast ocean. We are the silent ocean of consciousness, not the transient objects which float through it. So long as we identify solely with the mind/ego and remain unaware of the vast expanse of silence in which it exists, then there will quite naturally be a sense that something is missing within us.

Why aren't I experiencing peace and silence now if it is my true nature?

The addiction to the mind clouds the direct perception of peace just as clouds block the sun. So long as attention is transfixed within the outward movements of the mind the silence beyond it remains unrecognized. As already mentioned, these addictive habits run deep and can be subtle in the extreme. However most of us aren't always aware of just *where* we are holding onto programs that lead away from peace.

With Ascension we may become ever more cognizant of the habits that once operated behind the scenes. In this way we can know ourselves more deeply. The discovery of inner Silence is the pinnacle of endeavor with this practice and it is not at all difficult to become aware of it. To take an analogy, anyone can become aware of the silence in the room they may be sitting in. Take a few moments yourself and simply allow yourself to notice it. The stillness in the room has always been there. People and furnishings come and go, but that silence remains forever the same. You can only be aware of the silence in that very room in this moment, there is no use in regretting not having done it yesterday. To think about doing it later is to miss the point.

Is it not fascinating how you can become aware of the silence around so easily? We cannot see, touch, taste, feel or hear it - our five senses are of no help here. But we can become consciously *aware* of it. It is the simplest thing in the world to simply notice it. We can only notice the silence around us in this moment because the very nature of that which is doing the noticing, our consciousness, is itself already silent and still. It is that simple. In meditation practice consider the mind to be just like this room where thoughts and passing experiences are simply people and furnishings.

Sometimes I experience rather strong physical sensations and I find it challenging to Ascend.

Physical sensations and experiences will forever vary in intensity and frequency. Some may notice little physical discomfort others may find periods of intense pain. It is safe to say that you can expect any part of the spectrum at some point. Like it or not, sensations are simply part of life and can naturally be expected from time to time when you Ascend.

Rather than a means to eliminate sensations, Ascension is a means to choose how we react and respond to sensations as they arise. Even if you find it challenging in some moments to Ascend, it is still important, even if the discomfort is rather intense. In fact,

these are the moments it can be the most important. The mind can be the most dramatic in moments of sickness or pain or when the stock market crashes.

Ascending is never any more difficult than thinking any other thought. The mind may be active when the body is in pain, yet for some reason we still feel like we cannot Ascend. If we can think, then we can Ascend.

Do I have to feel the emotions of the Techniques? Sometimes I don't feel anything when I Ascend.

This is perfectly fine. Whether you feel the emotions of praise, gratitude or love or not is really unimportant. The Ascension Attitudes are equally powerful each time they are used. You may very well experience moments Ascending where you feel overwhelming feelings such as love and joy. There can also be surges of unpleasant feelings that come up such as anger or sadness. Then there can be times where you will feel nothing at all in particular. The entire range is to be expected as this is just part of the human experience. Always remember that one experience is not better or worse than another. Ascension will work regardless of what your experience is.

What do you recommend for fastest growth?

Commitment to the goal. If permanent peace, uncaused joy and enhanced Self awareness are important to you, then you must make them a priority each day.

The Ascension Attitudes do not have an expiration date. They will never run out of juice after a certain amount of usage, nor are they more 'charged' in some moments than others. Regardless what the surface experience may be, they have a positive effect deep within consciousness regardless of how we feel each time we use them. Each time they are used, the effect is quite significant.

Growth and progress always follow commitment to the goal, whatever that goal may happen to be. Invariably there will be moments where we aren't happy with our own state of progress. Sometimes our programmed human nature is to want to race ahead into the future as fast as we can in order to become something better or different than we are now. This noble enthusiasm comes from a subtle judgement against who and what we are now. Rather than trying to constantly get somewhere else or become something different, Ascension will help dissolve the tenacious self-judgments that most of us have deep within us. What happens if you were to stop listening to the judgments that say you are inadequate right now?

How does Karma affect our growth?

Perhaps a more practical word to use instead of Karma would be ‘accountability’. It is naïve to assume that anyone could ever act without consequences. Even if most feel as though they are victims to circumstance.

Victim mentality in this world seems to be the rule rather than the exception. The belief in victimhood is so deeply ingrained that it is rarely questioned. At some point we have all felt as if life pushes us around like a leaf in the wind. Deep down, victims essentially believe the world is unjust, God-deprived and imperfect. It is a hopelessly bleak outlook without substance or merit.

Victimhood, while essentially limiting, is also predictable, safe and comfortable to the programming of the ego. As long as anyone believes they are victim, they can always blame someone or something else for any undesirable results that turn up in life. The payoffs that are derived from victimhood are almost without end – lawsuits, sympathetic attention, justifications for laziness, unemployment, etc. All these ‘rewards’ are weak substitutes for the true power of personal accountability.

Ultimately all are responsible for their own level of happiness. This is never someone else’s responsibility at all. These do not come from the outside in. Victim consciousness is seated in a feeble state of powerlessness and illusion. All attract to them what they hold in mind. This is what was meant by, “You sow what you reap”.

Upon hearing this, it is tempting to look back into the past and wonder why you could have attracted certain situations throughout your life. It is common to hear people bring up endless examples of the suffering and cruelty of the human race. If there is a God, then why does He allow these things to happen? The truth is we can never know the bigger picture or purpose of a certain event. Often great good arises out of seeming disaster. As the saying goes - “Good news? Bad news? Who knows?”

I once heard of a particularly negative young woman who made regular visits to her doctor for help with her emotional state. But the best the doctor could do was provide medication for depression. This did little to change the woman’s angry, pessimistic view toward the world. One day during a routine breast exam, the doctor discovered several cancerous lumps. As it turned out a double mastectomy was required. A couple of months later one would never believe the incredible emotional transformation in that same patient. She realized, when faced with the potential of an unexpected shortened

life a serious medical condition how precious life was. She transformed into a bright, joyful person who would greet you with a smile. All cancer was removed with the procedure.

A practical way of looking at the nature of karma and how to step out of its ebbing and flowing tides is to know that it is not different from the mind. Step beyond the mind and you step beyond karma. Each time you engage the mind, you step back into the cycle of karmic change. It is said that the discovery of our true infinite Self is like roasting all the seeds of karma. Once a seed is roasted it will no longer sprout.

My practice of Ascension isn't as deep or expansive as it used to be.

In this case you are only comparing the present experience with a past one. The first mistake here are the labels 'deep' and 'expansive'. Attached to these labels is a memory of a past experience, which is really only a story. When we grasp at a label we open the door to the past and proceed to project a past experience onto a current one. But what happens when you refrain from label in the current experience at all while Ascending?

Feelings are not a very reliable indicator as to the effectiveness of Ascension. The best rule of thumb is - no matter what the experience is, remember to redirect your attention to an Ascension Attitude, let it go and then allow the experience that follows to be as it is.

Rather than allowing whatever happens to happen you may very well find moments where you introduce the Ascension Attitude, but don't particularly like what happens. You find that, in some moments, your mind is more chaotic, not less. Should this occur, the best advice is to gently direct your attention back to an Ascension Attitude. Think it, let it go and allow. When we don't allow, we control. We control because we judge. We judge because we have our own limited agenda that we feel should be met in a certain way. With judgment there is no surrender to *Thy Will*. Instead '*my will*' becomes more important.

By watching and allowing the mind, instead of trying to control it we can allow ourselves to sink into a state of compassion. Compassion comes from accepting what is as opposed to resisting or judging it. The best way to be utterly compassionate toward ourselves is to simply allow whatever happens to happen. Anyone can develop this quality of watchfulness. If this practice sounds effortful, then maybe you can replace witnessing with the word 'noticing'. Gentleness is key.

In all activity - eyes open or closed - anyone can notice the content of the mind and the feelings that may follow them. When learned properly, this practice can be profoundly

transformational and even deeply spiritual. Ascension helps to facilitate a state of continuous meditation.

It is a most fascinating exploration. The precious gift of each moment of life can be appreciated regardless of the quantity and quality of your thoughts in any given moment.

CONCLUSION

Ascension, like any pure spiritual practice, is not an escape from life. Nor is it a 'quick fix' for our destructive and limiting habits. To break the gravity of a lifetime of unrewarding programming can take a significant amount of resolve regardless of which path is chosen - Ascension or otherwise. If you are looking for the 'instant awakening pill' it is helpful to know that, while it is possible to awaken to a very high state of consciousness (Enlightenment) in an instant, your chances of winning the lottery or getting struck by lightning are likely far greater.

To be realistic, if you are sincere about reaching the rare state of consciousness, one where fullness, silence and peace prevail in all moments, then it must be your priority each day. After working with hundreds of students of this particular practice from around the world I have seen many stick with this just as I have seen many people quit or move on to something else. Personally I have yet to see how techniques based on praise, gratitude, love and compassion directed toward Divinity will suddenly become ineffective. The words of the techniques are one thing, but it's the powerful transformational energy behind the words that we bring into our lives with devotion to the practice. The energy behind these techniques is immense. So while consistency is required, there are tangible leaps in awareness. Each time even a single Ascension Attitude is applied is very significant.

Ascension is merely a means, one of many potential means that are available in the world today. There may be many paths to the top of a mountain. And yet, one of the main hindrances I have seen for the spiritually inclined is to constantly jump from one practice to another, never really committing to any one path for any length of time. The paths may vary, but the goal of the direct experience of Divinity is the same for all just as it has been throughout mankind's history. There is no absolute rule that says a technique is even required at all to discover it within ourselves. Given the tenacity of the addiction to the mind and its proclivity to distort perception- a technique is of tremendous assistance.

With all the various paths to the top of the mountain, all must take the same final step to ascend to the summit. The final step common to all serious spiritual endeavor is unreserved surrender to God. The very good news is that that step can only be taken in this moment. The ultimate value of Ascension is that it gives a way to do just that. Surrender to the Higher Power by whatever name one chooses to use has been recognized as the pivotal element in addiction recovery groups. In fact, that is precisely how the pioneers of alcoholics anonymous were able to stand as a testimony of

recovery and, in turn, provide hope and recovery to *millions* of alcoholics over the last several decades.

While it may initially appear as though surrender to God is a means to an end, this is only a view from the perspective of a mind that is conditioned 'to get' or to 'arrive'. There is certainly nothing inherently wrong with wanting to move from an incomplete state to a futuristic complete state. This is naturally how we all view it at first. But a higher understanding comes with growing spiritual evolution - one where surrender to God, through whatever means - becomes its very own reward. Unreserved surrender along a dedicated spiritual path leads to the joy of Divine awareness and non-surrender leads away from it. Rather than chasing a future state of fullness from a present feeling of lack or incompleteness, in a state of higher consciousness, fullness is enjoyed in each moment as an inevitable consequence of surrender to God.

There is no way to adequately describe the peace that has been mentioned so many times in this book. A change that I found highly notable in my experience was progressively going from a state of constant depression and into a continuous state of stillness and joy where no traces of internal turmoil can be found. Previously I when I was happy I believed there was something outside myself that caused it - It was Friday, I got paid, I was on vacation, I bought something that I had wanted for years, I had a decent buzz, the weather was good.

There is no cause for the state of Peace and Joy discovered through this practice. Spiritual practice doesn't cause such a condition to come about, but merely reveals it. I began to experience an indescribable contentment that didn't depend on any external conditions. This exquisite state has no reason that the mind can possibly understand because it has nothing at all to do with the mind. It doesn't grow with the acquisition of material things or fade away with their loss. It has nothing to do with whether the body is healthy or sick or if it is sunny and warm outside or snowy and cold. The state of divine peace is unconditional. It radiates joy and love because that is its very essence. The Silence is indicative of the presence of Divinity.

Buddha once mentioned that there are three things that cannot be hidden for long - the sun, the moon and the Truth. And he also mentioned that there are really only two mistakes that one can make on the path to Enlightenment - not starting and not finishing. If you have read this far then you can check the first of those two off the list.