

# Facilitator's Guide For Small Group Discussion

*Jesus and the Awakening to  
God-Consciousness*

with

Deepak Chopra and  
Rev. Wendy Craig-Purcell

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Laura Gaddy and The Unity Center in San Diego, California*

*All page references indicated in this text refer to  
The Third Jesus: The Christ We Cannot Ignore (Harmony Books) by Deepak Chopra.*

*For more information, visit [www.unity.fm](http://www.unity.fm).*

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# Week 1

## *Who Is Jesus and Why Does It Matter?*

**Suggested Length of Session: 2 hours**

### **Intention:**

- To meet circle members and begin the process of building interpersonal connections.
- Explore preexisting ideas about Jesus and explore the implications of the “third Jesus.”

### **Create Sacred Space:**

- Set up enough chairs for all participants.
- Eliminate as many outside distractions as possible. Remind participants to turn off cell phones.
- Soft, meditative music may be played.

### **Materials:**

- Access to Unity.FM Webcast or DVD of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness* and DVD player
- Chart paper and marker for recording Group Agreements
- Sign-in sheets
- Name tags

**Note to Facilitators**—All wording for facilitators is merely suggested. It is *not* recommended that it be read verbatim. The personality and personal style of the facilitator should be reflected in circle meetings. Times indicated throughout the lessons are also suggested and do not have to be strictly adhered to.

# The Gathering (30 minutes)

## Welcome:

- Greet participants and invite them to take a name tag and to sign the attendance sheet.
- Call the group together precisely at starting time even if everyone has not yet arrived. This sets the expectation for beginning and ending on time.
- **The Gathering** is usually 15-20 minutes in length. The first Gathering time will take longer in order to allow for overview of structure, content, and introduction of each participant.

## Centering Prayer:

- Trust your instincts and set the tone for the meeting. Help participants visualize themselves making connections, learning helpful information, and being fully present during the meeting. You may want to prepare something in advance or practice a few times to be sure you will feel comfortable when the moment arises.

## Introductions:

- An excellent first activity that allows participants to connect on a personal level is to go around your circle and have each person introduce themselves by answering a brief question such as "What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear the name *Jesus*?" or "What do you hope to gain for yourself through this series of gatherings?"

## Overview

### Say:

- This is our first circle meeting, and I want to give you a brief overview of what we will cover during the six weeks we will spend together.
- Sacred Circles are different from taking a class. A class generally covers specific materials and skills. In a Sacred Circle, most of our learning comes out of our own life experiences as well as the experiences we have as a group.
- Every meeting is structured in the same way. We will begin with a gathering time, prayer, and check-in. Then we will move into deeper exploration of the theme primarily through discussion. We will conclude our time together by taking prayer requests and offering each other prayer support as a spiritual community.

## Group Agreement

Say:

We will create a Group Agreement that includes beginning and ending on time. What other agreements do you think are important? (Guide the group in composing a list of agreements that the group will commit to. It may be necessary to offer suggestions or steer the group away from a list that is too lengthy. Record the Agreements on chart paper and display at all meetings.)

# The Viewing (30 minutes)

## Introduction of Topic

### Say:

- During our time together we will watch and discuss *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness* with Deepak Chopra and Rev. Wendy-Craig Purcell. Our primary text will be Deepak Chopra's book *The Third Jesus*. With these excellent sources to draw from and our own ideas and discussion of the topic, our circle meetings should be rich and rewarding. It is important to note that we will not discuss the book in sequential order but will follow the content as it is presented each week during the video series. This week we want to look at the topic "Who was Jesus and why does it matter?" Specifically, we will consider who Dr. Chopra describes as the first, second, and third Jesus as well as the five points he makes for the "real" Jesus.

### The Viewing:

View Part I of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness: "Who Is Jesus and Why Does It Matter?"*

# Discovery and Exploration (50 minutes)

## Discussion Questions:

**Note to Facilitators**—A number of questions are provided to guide the group discussions. You may or may not wish to use all of them. It is up to you to determine the length of time that should be spent on any one question. It is also expected that discussion will be generated from how you, and the individuals in your group, related both to the text and the videos. Feel free to develop questions of your own. It is recommended that if you do create your own questions that you try to keep them open-ended and on a deep enough level that they encourage reflection and allow individuals to relate their own personal experiences.

## Say:

- Each person's reading of any text will be unique to them. "We all view the world through our own glasses," as the expression goes. During our discussions, I will provide some questions that are designed to guide us more deeply into the material. We will also allow space for our discussions to flow in the direction of your interpretation of and reaction to the material. As you are reading, when a question comes to mind or a point really stands out for you, jot it down and bring it to the Circle meeting. The hope is that this six-week period will be a meaningful growth experience for all of us.

## Say:

- Let's start out by looking at how Chopra characterizes the first, second, and third Jesus. Jesus is described this way:

"The first Jesus was a rabbi who wandered the shores of northern Galilee many centuries ago. This Jesus still feels close enough to touch. He appears in our mind's eye dressed in homespun but haloed in glory. He was kind, serene, peaceful, loving, and yet he was the keeper of deep mysteries ... Jesus was a man of baffling contradictions." [Page 8]

"Millions of people worship another Jesus, however, who never existed, who doesn't even lay claim to the fleeting substance of the first Jesus. This is the Jesus built up over thousands of years by theologians and scholars. He is the Holy Ghost, the Three-in-One Christ, the source of sacraments and prayers that were unknown to the rabbi Jesus that walked the earth. He is also the Prince of Peace over whom bloody wars have been fought. This second Jesus cannot be embraced without embracing theology first ... The second Jesus leads us into the wilderness without a clear path out.

He became the foundation of a religion that has proliferated into some twenty thousand sects. They argue endlessly over every thread in the garments of a ghost." [Page 9]

"I want to offer the possibility that Jesus was truly, as he proclaimed, a savior. Not *the* savior, not the one and only Son of God. Rather, Jesus embodied the highest level of enlightenment. He spent his brief adult life describing it, teaching it, and passing it on to future generations. *Jesus intended to save the world by showing others the path to God-consciousness.* Such a reading of the New Testament doesn't diminish the first two Jesuses. Rather, they are brought into sharper focus. In place of lost history and complex theology, the third Jesus offers a direct relationship that is personal and present. Our task is to delve into scripture and prove that a map to enlightenment exists there." [Pages 9-10]

Say:

- Do you have any questions about the three Jesuses that Chopra describes; do you need clarification on any of these ideas?
- Does anyone have comments about the three Jesuses described here?
- What do you find most striking about Chopra's descriptions of Jesus?

Say:

- Chopra discusses the notion that the historical and theological Jesuses have stolen something.

"These two versions of Jesus—the sketchy historical figure and the abstract theological creation—hold a tragic aspect for me, because I blame them for stealing something precious: the Jesus who taught his followers how to reach God-consciousness ...The idea of the Second Coming has been especially destructive to Jesus' intentions, because it postpones what needs to happen now. The Third Coming—finding God-consciousness through your own efforts—happens in the present. I'm using the term as a metaphor for a shift in consciousness that makes Jesus' teaching totally real and vital." [Pages 9-10]

- He goes on to say:

"Jesus didn't want to keep the mystery of God-consciousness to himself. He constantly held out his vision to others, and he had a sense of urgency that was unmistakable. Life was going to be completely overturned, not in the distant future but very soon. [Page 15] ... Jesus was the very model of his teachings. Buddha said, 'Whoever sees me sees the teaching,' and the same is true of Jesus. He lived in Christ-consciousness, and his teaching grew directly out of his own state of

awareness. [Page 18] ....Consciousness is universal, and if there is such a thing as God-consciousness, no one can be excluded from it. By the same token, no one can lay exclusive claim, either. If Jesus rose to the highest level of enlightenment, why should he be unique in that regard? Buddha may be his equal (hundreds of millions of followers believe so), along with Vedic rishis like Vasishtha and Vyassa, who didn't happen to have religions named after them." [Page 20]

- **Share your thoughts on this idea that Jesus was an enlightened master such as Buddha or the Vedic sages.**
- **If Jesus was an enlightened master, what might this mean for Christianity?**

Say:

- During the video, Wendy shares a comment by Bishop John Shelby Spong stating that he believes that Jesus had an awakening experience and was enlightened and attempted to describe that to others and that they in turn interpreted it in their own way. To this Dr. Chopra responds that those hearing the message can only interpret it from their own level of consciousness. He goes on to say that some scripture is more or less ignored because it does not fit the ideology that has been put in place. He gives the example—"You think in the scripture you will find life. Spirit gives life, the letter kills."
- **Respond to the notion that a person's level of consciousness impacts their interpretation of the message.**
- **What are your thoughts about whether or not scripture is ignored in order to fit into the ideology of an institution?**

Say:

- Let's take a look at the chapter entitled "Who Is the 'Real' Jesus?" beginning on page 129. In this chapter, Chopra describes five arguments about who the real Jesus is. He states:

"Our skepticism demands proof that a wandering rabbi actually preached in northern Galilee two thousand years ago. In the absence of such proof, we need to confront the myth of the real Jesus head-on, not for the purpose of busting a cherished fantasy, but to ensure that the Jesus we choose is closest to the Jesus that can fulfill his teachings. A Jesus who teaches us how to reach God-consciousness lays claim to being more authentic than any other, for even the most basic facts to support the existence of Jesus as he was traditionally worshipped are nonexistent.

"Facing this truth is difficult, for the search for the real Jesus has turned into an industry dedicated to feeding the hopes of the faithful. Obviously, this is a thorny issue. Opinions about it run the gamut.

1. *The literal argument:* The real Jesus is in the gospels. There is no need to look any further.
2. *The rationalist argument:* The facts about Jesus have vanished over time. The four gospels are unreliable as evidence about the actual person.
3. *The mystical argument:* The real Jesus was never physical—he is the Holy Spirit.
4. *The skeptical argument:* There was no real Jesus to begin with—he is a figment of theological imagination.
5. *The consciousness argument:* Jesus exists in our own awareness at the level of God-consciousness."

Say:

- Chopra tells us that all of these arguments are based on interpretation. [Page 139]
- In this chapter he explores the arguments in more detail discussing the pros and cons of each.
- Did you find any of this surprising or did you find that you had strong feelings one way or the other about any of these arguments? Why do you think that is?
- Discuss your impressions of the five arguments.

Say:

- Chopra believes in the consciousness argument. He tells us:

"A devout Christian would object, certainly, to lumping the Messiah in with enlightened teachers like Buddha and the Vedic sages of India. (Catholicism stoutly resists a Buddha-like Christ, for example, as being inconsistent with Church doctrine. Enlightenment does not trump a belief that all faiths outside Christianity are pagan.)

"The uniqueness of Christ has been part of orthodox Christianity for centuries. However, granting Jesus a high level of enlightenment doesn't necessarily demote him; it only makes him more accessible." [Page 138]

- Many of us grew up in the Christian faith. How has your background impacted your beliefs today?
- Does it make reading a book like this a breath of fresh air or does it bring up less positive feelings? Do you experience inner conflict?
- Respond to the following statement by Chopra:

“Trying to find ‘the real Jesus’ is basically a fundamentalist effort. As such, it plays into the agenda of people who want Christianity to be rigid and exclusionary. The tragic irony is that Jesus preached against the priests in the temple for taking just that position.”

[Page 139]

Say:

- What stood out for you in this chapter of the book or in Wendy's interview?
- *You may want to ask this question earlier in the meeting.*

# Caring and Closing (10 minutes)

## Personal Reflection:

### Say:

- Each week there is something for you to reflect on during the week. You may want to write out your ideas as you would in a journal. If you feel moved to share your thoughts, you are welcomed to do that during our check-in time at the beginning of each circle meeting.
- This week during your time of personal reflection spend some time in quiet contemplation, perhaps by writing in a journal. Ask yourself, Who is the “real” Jesus to me? How do his teachings impact my life?

## Closing Prayer:

- Again, trust your instincts.

### Say:

- This is the time in our circle when we share our prayer requests with one another and support each other in prayer. We would like everyone to stand, form a circle, and hold hands. If you do not wish to offer a prayer request, then simply squeeze the hand of the next person.
- Remind the group of the agreement to hold each other in prayer during the week.
- You can begin the prayer by having the group read an affirmation aloud.
- Go around the circle and allow those who wish to make a prayer request do so.

# Week 2

## *Opening to the Path*

**Suggested Length of Session: 2 hours**

### **Intention:**

- To facilitate the process of building interpersonal connections.
- Explore the idea of the Christ presence within.

### **Create Sacred Space:**

- Set up enough chairs for all participants.
- Eliminate as many outside distractions as possible. Remind participants to turn off cell phones.
- Soft, meditative music may be played.

### **Materials:**

- Access to Unity.FM Webcast or DVD of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness* and DVD player
- Group Agreements from Week 1
- Participant handouts
- Sign-in sheets
- Name tags

**Note to Facilitators**—All wording for facilitators is merely suggested. It is *not* recommended that it be read verbatim. The personality and personal style of the facilitator should be reflected in circle meetings. Times indicated throughout the lessons are also suggested and do not have to be strictly adhered to.

# The Gathering (15 minutes)

## Welcome:

- Greet participants and invite them to take a name tag and to sign the attendance sheet.
- Call the group together precisely at starting time even if everyone has not yet arrived. This sets the expectation for beginning and ending on time.

## Centering Prayer:

- Trust your instincts and set the tone for the meeting. Help participants visualize themselves making connections, learning helpful information, and being fully present during the meeting. You may want to prepare something in advance or practice a few times to be sure you will feel comfortable when the moment arises.

## Check-in:

- *Before getting started with the new material, allow time for check-in. Open the floor to sharing any thoughts from the previous week. Specifically, allow participants to share some of their experiences or insights from their personal reflections during the week.*

# The Viewing (30 minutes)

## Introduction of Topic

### Say:

- This week we will be looking at some of the steps to God-consciousness. In the second half of the book, Dr. Chopra describes 15 steps to God-consciousness. Today we will look at three of them: Step 1: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you"; Step 10: "You must be born from above"; and Step 2: "Be in the world but not of it."

## The Viewing:

- View Part II of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness: "Opening to the Path"*

# Discovery and Exploration (65 minutes)

## Discussion Questions:

**Note to Facilitators**—A number of questions are provided to guide the group discussions. You may or may not wish to use all of them. It is up to you to determine the length of time that should be spent on any one question. It is also expected that discussion will be generated from how you and the individuals in your group relate to the text. Feel free to develop questions of your own. It is recommended that if you do create your own questions that you try to keep them open-ended and on a deep enough level that they encourage reflection and allow individuals to relate their own personal experiences.

## Say:

- The first of the 15 steps is “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.” Applying the teaching—the source of reality is inside you. It is your essence.
- Chopra says:

“Here Jesus points the way to hidden dimensions, not simply the conventional notion of Heaven. When you go inside, you are aware of activity such as thoughts and feelings. Your instinct is to pursue the activity that brings pleasure and avoid that which brings pain. But Jesus speaks of a completely different inner reality. The consciousness hidden behind your thoughts is the consciousness that upholds all intelligence in the universe. It is personal and collective at the same time. The personal is made up of your relationships; the collective is made up of the myths and archetypes common to all cultures. Both dimensions are you, and you can begin to connect the two as a bridge to the sacred.” [Page 144]

## Say:

- During the video, Chopra explains that Jesus described this level of awareness or enlightenment using the language of his spiritual tradition. Now we can interpret this teaching in terms of what we know about consciousness. The individual can access the infinite possibilities of the Universe. He tells us that conditioning inhibits our ability to do this.
- **Discuss what this teaching—“The Kingdom of Heaven is within you”— means to you personally.**
- **How is it reflected in your life?**
- **How might you bring this teaching into your life in a more intentional and consistent way?**

## Say:

- The next step that is discussed in the video is Step 10: “You must be born from above.” Applying the teaching—to renew yourself, die to the old every day. [Page 160]
- Dr. Chopra explains this idea in the following way:

“Jesus spoke about death as a prelude to resurrection, and he also spoke about the need to be born again. The connection between the two was summed up by Paul as ‘dying unto death.’ Christian doctrine has focused almost entirely on trusting in the resurrection of Jesus as a sign that every soul will be resurrected one day. But when he said, ‘You must be born from above,’ Jesus put the emphasis on transformation in this lifetime, not some faraway future.

“Being born from above means a rebirth in spirit. For me, the best way to imagine such an event isn’t by accepting Jesus as personal lord and savior, although fundamentalists constantly demand that. Spiritual rebirth usually isn’t a single event, a blinding epiphany that causes one’s life to change from that moment forward. Some individuals may be able to organize their spiritual life around one dramatic breakthrough, but for most, spiritual rebirth is a process akin to the long process that causes people to mature psychologically. The spiritual process brings transformation steadily, one step at a time, yet the overall result is dramatic. One’s attachment to the ego and its belief in separation, including the ultimate separation of death, is being jettisoned.” [Pages 160-161]

Say:

- In the video, Chopra elaborates on this idea by saying Jesus paved the way to a deeper understanding of death and resurrection. He states that in order to renew yourself you must die to the old every day. This is done by not allowing the past to be recreated over and over again. He recommends asking yourself each day—What needs to die today? Let something die today.

- Do you have any questions about how this teaching is explained?
- Share any thoughts you have on this interpretation of being born from above and/or the notion of rebirth in spirit.

Say:

- We are going to explore the exercise that Chopra describes in the book on page 161.

Exercise:

- *Go over the directions as described in the book on page 161.*

“If being born again is a process, you can contribute to it every day. In fact, this is the only viable way to creatively shape the spiritual path so that it belongs to you personally. Right now, you accept

a fixed set of labels that define you. These include your name, age, family, occupation, and social status. From Jesus' perspective, however, none of these labels is the true you; they distract from the reality that you are spirit embodied in flesh. If you wanted to, you could redefine yourself every day. As the fixed self gives way to a dynamic, fluid self that is open to the unknown, freedom dawns. In that freedom, you go beyond death by discovering that you encompass life and death in a state of pure Being.

"Now let's translate this into practical applications. Write down the most basic labels that apply to you: name, age, gender, education level, and occupation. Taking one at a time, consider how each label defines you. For example: your name specifies the identity of a person with a certain family background, it locates you in time and image. You are attached, to varying degrees, to all these threads of identity. Now consider whether these connections must apply. Do you feel a need to conform to family traditions and expectations? Is it important to you that your name earns recognition? As you ask such basic questions, you can begin to free yourself from the threads of attachment that keep you from being 'born from above.'"

- *Have each person write down the labels that apply to them and how that label defines them on the handout that is provided.*
- *After allowing a few minutes for the individual writing, have the participants meet with a partner for discussion. Encourage group members to pair up with someone they don't know well.*
- *After allowing time for brief discussions, call the group back together.*
- *Ask if any one would like to share something they learned or any insight they may have had during the writing and discussions.*

Say:

- The last step to God-consciousness that was discussed this week is Step 2: "Be in the world but not of it." Applying the teaching—through detachment, you master both inner and outer reality.
- Chopra offers the following interpretation:

"Jesus is asking for detachment, which isn't the same thing as indifference or passivity. This is an important distinction. You are more than the flesh-and-blood person you see in the mirror, a person created by the world around you. Your actual being has its source in spirit. Through detachment you shift your allegiance away from the physical toward the spiritual. Since you are spirit first and an individual person second, the world is actually in you as images, thought, sensations, memories, and projections. You are more real than the material world and closer to the creative source." [Page 145-146]

Say:

- As a point of clarification, Chopra describes detachment as passionate, active involvement without ego attachment to outcomes.
- During the video, Dr. Chopra goes on to say that the Kingdom of Heaven is beyond time and space. It is possible to shift your identification with the individual person you are *in* the world by observing yourself. He cautions against judging yourself as you observe yourself in the world. He advises getting out of the reaction mode and looking at the deeper context of a given situation and begin to notice the trivial nature of the things that bother us.
- Discuss your experiences with being in the world but not of it.
- What makes this most difficult for you?
- Share any experiences that you may have had where it came with greater ease.
- Have you learned anything specific about this teaching from your own experience that may be helpful for others?

Say:

- What stood out for you in the material we covered from the book or in the video?
- *You may want to ask this question earlier in the meeting.*

# Caring and Closing (10 minutes)

## Personal Reflection:

### Say:

- During the week, work with the meditative exercise described on pages 144-145 relating to Step 1: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you."
- Ask yourself each day: What needs to die in me/in my life today? Write about the answers that come to you.

## Closing Prayer:

- Again, trust your instincts.

### Say:

- This is the time in our circle when we share our prayer requests with one another and support each other in prayer. We would like everyone to stand, form a circle, and hold hands. If you do not wish to offer a prayer request, then simply squeeze the hand of the next person.
- Remind the group of the agreement to hold each other in prayer during the week.
- You can begin the prayer by having the group read an affirmation aloud.
- Go around the circle and allow those who wish to make a prayer request do so.

# Week 3

## *A New Way of Being*

**Suggested Length of Session: 2 hours**

### **Intention:**

- To facilitate the process of building interpersonal connections.
- To examine the initial benefits on the path to God-consciousness.

### **Create Sacred Space:**

- Set up enough chairs for all participants.
- Eliminate as many outside distractions as possible. Remind participants to turn off cell phones.
- Soft, meditative music may be played.

### **Materials:**

- Access to Unity.FM Webcast or DVD of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness* and DVD player
- Group Agreements from Week 1
- Participant handouts
- Sign-in sheets
- Name tags

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# The Gathering (15 minutes)

## Welcome:

- Greet participants and invite them to take a nametag and to sign the attendance sheet.
- Call the group together precisely at starting time even if everyone has not yet arrived. This sets the expectation for beginning and ending on time.

## Centering Prayer:

- Trust your instincts and set the tone for the meeting. Help participants visualize themselves making connections, learning helpful information and being fully present during the meeting. You may want to prepare something in advance or practice a few times to be sure you will feel comfortable when the moment arises.

## Check-in:

- *Before getting started with the new material you may want to allow time for check-in. Open the floor to sharing any thoughts from the previous week. Specifically, allow participants to share some of their experiences or insights from their personal reflections during the week.*

# The Viewing (30 minutes)

## Introduction of Topic

### Say:

- This week we will be looking at some of the steps to God-consciousness. Specifically, we will focus on Step 3: "For my yoke is easy and my burden light"; Step 12: "So don't worry about tomorrow"; Step 4: "Ask and you will receive"; and Step 15: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he loses his soul?"

### The Viewing:

- [View Part III of Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness: A New Way of Being](#)

# Discovery and Exploration (65 minutes)

## Discussion Questions:

**Note to Facilitators**—A number of questions are provided to guide the group discussions. You may or may not wish to use all of them. It is up to you to determine the length of time that should be spent on any one question. It is also expected that discussion will be generated from how you and the individuals in your group relate to the text. Feel free to develop questions of your own. It is recommended that if you do create your own questions that you try to keep them open-ended and deep enough that they encourage reflection and allow individuals to relate their own personal experiences.

## Say:

- We will start out with Step 3: “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Applying the teaching—life becomes more effortless as you move closer to God-consciousness.
- Chopra interprets this teaching in this way:

“Jesus speaks on two levels here, one higher and one lower. The lower level, the physical, is full of burdens, but Jesus assures his followers that God will open the way and remove obstacles, sometimes through miraculous means. This is the same as saying that life on the spiritual path is much easier than the struggle of everyday life.

On a higher level, Jesus is using the voice of pure spirit. The soul is saying, ‘Be at one with me. If you do, your struggles will end.’ In the East this is the promise of yoga, or union with God. The Sanskrit word *yoga* is also the root for the English word *yoke*. It’s not a stretch to hear Jesus saying, ‘Union with me is easy, my burden is light.’ This is an inspiring reminder whenever you are tempted to think of Jesus as a tragic figure fated to shoulder the burdens of a sinful world.” [Page 146-147]

- In the exercise on Page 147, Chopra says:

“In whatever way you can today, go with the flow. Do not resist or oppose. Do not control. Proceed through your day without expectations. The world seems to be a huge entity and you a very small one. But in truth the world is flowing from you. You are its source. To realize that truth, you must start to live as if it is true.

“You can think of this as an input-output exercise. When you operate out of a belief that the real world ‘out there’ is pushing against you, your mental input manifests as obstacles, resistance and

struggle. But if you operate from the belief that you are the source and the world is secondary, then events will move smoothly, with time and room to spare. Solutions to problems will begin to come effortlessly.

“In practical terms, the best advice is to hang loose. When you meet a familiar situation that angers or frustrates you, don’t fall back on your old reactions. You won’t benefit by doing more of what didn’t work in the first place. Allow God, spirit, the soul, to take over, even in a small degree. Wait and see what the universe has in mind. You will be surprised at how powerful this exercise can be once you dedicate yourself to it.

“The universe cooperates with you once you know that your desire and God’s desire are the same.”

Say:

- Share an example from your own life when you were able to truly experience the ease and grace to which this step is referring.
- What do you see as the greatest obstacles to “going with the flow”? What are some of the things that trigger an automatic, conditioned response?
- What are some specific steps that could be taken to approach life from a more open way?

Say:

- The next step that we will consider is Step 12: “So do not worry about tomorrow.” Applying the teaching—trust in the organizing power of the universe. Chopra interprets this teaching in this way:

“Jesus explicitly told his followers not to earn a living, save money, plan ahead, or worry about the future...If he was offering one of his most radical injunctions, it became the least followed. Like everyone else, Christians worry, plan, earn a living, and amass money and possessions.

“This teaching isn’t viable in ordinary consciousness, yet if you apply it on the spiritual path, asking for change beyond the ordinary, something new begins to emerge. A random, mindless universe is transformed into a safe haven, a home for every person, filled with life’s necessities. Jesus called this safe haven Providence because its purpose is to provide. Learning to trust Providence is a process. The old ways to which you are clinging gradually change. Even though Jesus tells his disciples to divest themselves of their money and possessions, I think we must assume a special relationship there. They had an enlightened teacher to guide them into far more radical change than any of us would be prepared for. Yet we need to be true to the underlying meaning of this teaching: God can be trusted. Your ego does not need to take over the function of Providence; there are other ways to attain life’s abundance...If we take Jesus literally, the most direct way not to worry about tomorrow is to live in the present. Only the present is real. It contains the fullness of

the world and the fullness of spirit at the same time. But the present is elusive. We all lead our lives by remembering the past and anticipating the future. Therefore, the real and unreal are inexorably blended. They are so entangled, in fact, that the present must be retrieved piecemeal; you cannot leap into it all at once." [Pages 164-165]

- Chopra goes on to provide two lists that contrast what we can experience in the present moment.

"Right now, the present moment is full for you, but in an unreal way. It is full of memories, expectations, projected beliefs, and past conditioning. The present moment could be full in a different, far more real way, through the qualities listed ...

*Alertness*—being awake.

*Openness*—or being free from expectations.

*Freshness*—not being overshadowed by the past.

*Innocence*—not judging from old experience.

*Spontaneity*—allowing new impulses to come in without criticism or censorship.

*Fearlessness*—the absence of traumas from the past.

*Replenishing*—the capacity to renew oneself from within." [Page 165]

- In general, what fills your present moment?
- What specific things have you learned about being in the present moment more fully that would be helpful to others?

Say:

- The next step we will explore is Step 4: "Ask, and you will receive." Applying the teaching—all fulfillment comes from within. In the book he tells us:

"This may seem to be one of Jesus' most extravagant promises. We have all asked and not received. To find out what Jesus actually meant, then, we have to answer a few questions: Who is asking? Where is the request going? Whom does it reach? For most people, the asking comes from the ego, with its unending stream of desires. The request is going out into empty space or to vaguely remembered God from childhood. The receiver of the request is unknown.

"What this means is that asking and receiving are disconnected. Indeed, they must be, because in everyday awareness the world is separate from us and fragmented into millions of isolated events. However, at a deeper level, everything is unified and whole. When you ask for anything, the One is asking the One, God is asking God. And there is always a response.

“Learn to ask in a new way, by expecting every wish to bring a response. Take the attitude expressed by the Persian poet Rumi: ‘Ask all of yourself.’ The mechanics of giving and receiving are inside you. Therefore, the next time you pray for something, or you simply desire it, go through the following steps:

Express the desired outcome to yourself clearly.

Detach yourself from your request after you make it.

Take an undemanding attitude to the outcome.

Be open to whatever response the universe gives back.

Know that there is always a response.

“In this case, ‘response’ doesn’t mean a yes or no from God. There is no judge deciding whether you are worthy or not. Those perceptions were born of separation...In the state of separation that his followers experienced, many thoughts seemed to get no response. To restore it required a new sense of self. Jesus repeatedly teaches that ‘you are in God, and God is in you.’ Gradually, we can begin to experience this truth, and one of the best ways is by observing how our prayers are answered. The ways are often subtle, and they change...

“By being open and alert to these responses, some of which are inner and other outer, you escape the dichotomy of ‘God healed me’ and God didn’t heal me.’” [Pages 147-149]

- During the video Dr. Chopra also recommends that when asking for something in prayer that we ask for what it is we really want such as peace, love, harmony, and happiness rather than things. He further suggests that we ask for spiritual goals as all other goals are encompassed in them.
- Share a time when a prayer was answered in a surprising or unexpected way.
- Share a time when you didn’t feel that a prayer was answered. In retrospect, how was it answered that you weren’t able to see at the time?
- What might you do now that will help you more readily see an answer to a prayer that you may not have recognized in the past?

Say:

- The last step that we will consider today is Step 15: “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he loses his soul?” Applying the teaching—keep your spiritual vision constantly in mind. [Page 172]
- Chopra’s interpretation of this teaching is as follows:

“The scheme of the world has not changed since the time of Jesus. On one side are the claims of material existence: money, status, family, career, and so on. On the other side are the claims of spiritual life. Jesus made a sharp division between the two. He decried money and possessions; he even discounted work and family as incompatible with being on the spiritual path...

“I doubt that Jesus meant to be so exclusionary. He said explicitly that he had come for the fallen, the wayward, the lost sheep, the prodigal sons. All were included in his vision of a redeemed humanity. From this we can see that what matters is adhering to the vision, not whether you have a little or a lot in material terms...

“The situation remains the same today, and none of us is exempt. Our attachment to material goals overrides our ability to enter a new world. The solution comes down to having a vision and keeping it before your eyes. The world exerts constant pressure to conform to its values. Spirit exerts no pressure. This isn’t a flaw. By its very nature growth is gradual, unseen, and effortless. But unlike a child, who doesn’t have to remind himself to grow, a person on the spiritual path needs to keep reinforcing these new beliefs and values. The process is one of falling off the path and getting back on over and over, although I am reluctant to use a phrase like ‘falling off’ when what occurs is more like being distracted or becoming forgetful. Your vision is a remedy for forgetfulness.” [Pages 172-173]

Say:

- Respond to this notion that our spiritual growth does not happen automatically, like a child’s growth does, and that it is important to keep your spiritual vision in front of you.
- What do you currently do to reinforce your spiritual growth?

Exercise:

- We are going to take some time now to consider our spiritual goals. Page 173 describes an exercise designed to create specific spiritual goals. Today we will take an initial look at doing that.
- Chopra tells us to:  
“Sit and reflect upon your vision as it applies at this very moment. Consider what you want to achieve spiritually in the coming months or year. Now write down the most important things ... Don’t overload your list. It’s best to pick a few things that are currently in the forefront of your inner life. If you are working on anger, for example, that’s more important than something more removed and abstract, such as seeing God in everyone. At the same time don’t turn this into a list of spiritual chores.”
- We are going to spend a few minutes in meditation asking that the spiritual goals that should be our focus for the next few months come forth.

- *Lead the participants into the following guided meditation. You may also want to play soft music in the background. Note: You should pause and allow enough reflection time for the participants when you see this mark: .....*

### **Guided Meditation**

I invite you to close your eyes. Take a deep breath and allow yourself to release any thoughts or feelings from the day ... Take a second deep breath and go within ... Take another deep breath and expand into the Universe ... Imagine yourself in a quiet and beautiful space, whatever that is to you ... Ask Spirit to allow you to discover the spiritual goals that you might set at this particular time in your life ... Open your heart to receive the information ... Sit in silence, open to whatever comes forward ... *(allow a longer period of silence here)* Bring your attention back to your breath ... Come back to the present moment ... into this room ... back to our circle.

Say:

- We will now take just a few minutes to allow you to jot down the ideas that came to you during the meditation. If nothing specific came to you while in meditation, go ahead and list a few goals that you know you are interested in working toward.
- *Allow the participants a few minutes to write down their goals on the handout that is provided.*
- *Call the circle back together.*
- *Allow time for participants to share anything about their experience during the meditation or the goals that they decided to work on.*

Say:

- **What stood out for you in the material we covered from the book or in the video?**
- *You may want to ask this question earlier in the meeting.*

# Caring and Closing (10 minutes)

## Personal Reflection:

### Say:

- During the week go back to the exercise on spiritual goals on pages 173-174 and continue the process that Chopra describes.
- If time permits, you may also want to go back and look at the exercises that he describes for Steps 3, 12, and 4.

## Closing Prayer:

- Again, trust your instincts.

### Say:

- This is the time in our circle when we share our prayer requests with one another and support each other in prayer. We would like everyone to stand, form a circle, and hold hands. If you do not wish to offer a prayer request then simply squeeze the hand of the next person.
- Remind the group of the agreement to hold each other in prayer during the week.
- You can begin the prayer by having the group read an affirmation aloud.
- Go around the circle and allow those who wish to make a prayer request do so.

# Week 4

## *When the Rubber Hits the Road*

Suggested Length of Session: 2 hours

### Intention:

- To facilitate the process of building interpersonal connections.
- To explore the “dark side” of the journey to God-consciousness.

### Create Sacred Space:

- Set up enough chairs for all participants.
- Eliminate as many outside distractions as possible. Remind participants to turn off cell phones.
- Soft, meditative music may be played.

### Materials:

- Access to Unity.FM Webcast or DVD of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness* and DVD player
- Group Agreements from Week 1
- Participant handouts
- Sign-in sheets
- Name tags

**Note to Facilitators**—All wording for facilitators is merely suggested. It is *not* recommended that it be read verbatim. The personality and personal style of the facilitator should be reflected in circle meetings. Times indicated throughout the lessons are also suggested and do not have to be strictly adhered to.

# The Gathering (15 minutes)

## Welcome:

- Greet participants and invite them to take a name tag and to sign the attendance sheet.
- Call the group together precisely at starting time even if everyone has not yet arrived. This sets the expectation for beginning and ending on time.

## Centering Prayer:

- Trust your instincts and set the tone for the meeting. Help participants visualize themselves making connections, learning helpful information, and being fully present during the meeting. You may want to prepare something in advance or practice a few times to be sure you will feel comfortable when the moment arises.

## Check-in:

*Before getting started with the new material you may want to allow time for check-in. Open the floor to sharing any thoughts from the previous week. Specifically, allow participants to share some of their experiences or insights from their personal reflections during the week.*

# The Viewing (30 minutes)

## Introduction of Topic

### Say:

- This week we will be looking at some of the steps to God-consciousness. Specifically, we will focus on Step 7: "As you sow, so shall you reap"; Step 5: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us"; and Step 8: "Resist not evil."

### The Viewing:

- View Part IV of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness*: "When the Rubber Hits the Road"

# Discovery and Exploration (65 minutes)

## Discussion Questions:

**Note to Facilitators**—A number of questions are provided to guide the group discussions. You may or may not wish to use all of them. It is up to you to determine the length of time that should be spent on any one question. It is also expected that discussion will be generated from how you and the individuals in your group related to the text. Feel free to develop questions of your own. It is recommended that if you do create your own questions that you keep in mind those questions should be open-ended and that they are on a deep enough level that they encourage reflection and allow individuals to relate their own personal experiences.

## Say:

- The first step that we will examine today is Step 7: “As you sow, so shall you reap.” Applying the teaching—the world is a mirror of the self.
- Dr. Chopra interprets this teaching this way:

“These words have already come up in the context of Karma—Jesus is teaching his listeners that their actions have moral consequences. Good actions lead to good results, bad actions to bad results. That is the most common understanding of Karma. But in a broader sense Jesus is making a point about life on the spiritual path. The world is a mirror of the self. The reason that good actions lead to good results isn’t that God listens in, makes a judgment, and then rewards you with a good result. Instead, action and result occur simultaneously.

“There is a constant, instantaneous calculus taking place with your every thought, word, and action. Most people don’t notice good or bad results unless these are dramatic, but the world functions as a mirror down to the minutest detail. The mechanics of consciousness are set up so that inner and outer dimensions match perfectly. Why does it take Jesus or another enlightened master to point this out? Because the mind is so complex and human nature so multilayered that we are easily conditioned to overlook the links between inner and outer. Separation is based on our own willingness to ignore certain images, some of them upsetting and disturbing, that the world reflects back at us. On the spiritual path, you become more willing to see what is right before your eyes—if not the eyes of the body, then the eyes of the soul.” [Pages 153-154]

- During the video Dr. Chopra elaborates on Karma by saying that it is both a simple and complex concept. He states that it is truly inexplicable in that we don't know the impact something will have. Every thought and choice spins off a series of space/time events and you can't know how it will impact the whole universe—the universe reaps what you sow.

**Exercise:**

- We will spend a little time with the mirror exercise that Chopra describes on Page 154.
- He describes the process this way:

“You are going to see yourself in two people, someone you greatly admire and someone you intensely dislike. Begin with the person you admire. Make a list of his or her most admirable traits Try to be as personal as possible. There are many strong, courageous role models, for example, so why did you choose Nehru in particular, or Mother Teresa, or Martin Luther King Jr.? The answer is that your own aspirations match your hero's achievement. Some quality in you seeks to emerge....Now reverse the exercise and pick someone you intensely dislike. Write down that person's worst qualities and then consider how you also embody those qualities without being able to see them in yourself. We project onto others what we cannot face in ourselves. It is better to choose someone closer to your own life.”

- It should be noted that it is important to “look in the mirror” with detachment and without judging yourself. It is enough to be aware of what you see. During the video Chopra says that both our positive and negative traits make us complete not flawed.
- *Allow individuals a few minutes to complete this exercise on the provided handout.*
- *Have the group members divide into triads to share their individual experiences.*
- *Call the circle back together.*
- *Allow time for participants to share anything about their experience during the exercise or small group discussion.*
- **Is there anything from Step 7 that you would like to discuss or have questions about?**

**Say:**

- The teaching in Step 5 is: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Applying the teaching—suffering is rooted in unreality. You can go beyond suffering by seeking what is real.
- Chopra interprets this teaching in this way:

“The teaching here is really about how to end suffering. Sin is the cause of suffering in the Christian model. You cannot be forgiven your sins, and thus released from suffering, unless you are aware that you have been forgiven. The message of forgiveness has to reach you, and that requires the removal of whatever blocks it: guilt, anger, resentment, lack of self-worth, and isolation. If these obstacles can be removed, you will experience divine forgiveness as Jesus promised it ... Forgiveness is actually release. It isn’t an act of moral courage or superhuman tolerance. The best metaphor is purification. Like letting cloudy water settle into clarity, your aim is to remove the haziness that keeps you from seeing who you really are, a soul free from guilt ... if you confront the shadows and ghosts of past suffering, present suffering will lift, and a space will be created for lasting forgiveness.” [Pages 150 and 152]

- During the video Dr. Chopra elaborates on these ideas. He says that forgiveness follows understanding of the law of Karma or the world as a mirror. When you see the world as a mirror you are ready to forgive. He quotes *A Course in Miracles* which says, “Every decision I make is a choice between a grievance and a miracle. Today I shall judge nothing that happens.” If you judge nothing then forgiveness is unnecessary.
- He also says that when you are feeling resentment you should ask if the resentment is hurting the other person or yourself. It is hurting you. Ask yourself how it is hurting you and what you are holding on to. Studies have shown that forgiveness positively impacts your body chemistry.
- He goes on to say that forgiveness is the only way to truly disarm your enemy.
- Chopra says that forgiveness isn’t an act of moral courage or superhuman tolerance, yet it can feel like a difficult thing to do. Have there been times in your life when you found forgiveness of yourself or another difficult? How were you able to eventually reach a place of forgiveness?
- If there are things that still need forgiveness how can you apply this teaching to that situation?  
Say:
- The last step that we will consider today is Step 8: “Resist not evil.” Applying the teaching—evil is the collective and personal shadow.
- In the book Chopra states:

“Learning how to overcome evil without resisting it involves a process. Jesus isn’t calling for instant conversion to pacifism, nor is he asking us to be blind to the terrible effects of evil when it goes unchecked.

“What he is teaching changes as you pass through the stages of your spiritual path. Reality is different in different states of your own spiritual path. Reality is different in different states of consciousness, and that includes evil. You cannot pretend to love your enemy, yet when you come closer to God-consciousness, such compassion comes naturally. It’s helpful to remind yourself that evil isn’t a monolith or a constant. It has many shades and degrees, and once they are fully examined, evil turns out to be your own shadow self expressing outwardly what you haven’t resolved inwardly.” [Pages 155-156]

- During the video, Dr. Chopra:
- Reminds us that when Jesus talked about resisting evil, he was in a different state of consciousness.
- He calls Satan the myth of the shadow self.
- If you have no shadow, you are standing in darkness. It is important to forgive your own shadow and help others with their own shadow.
- He says that some people hide behind a mask of goodness; they are hiding in hypocrisy. The more self-righteous a person is, the more they are hiding within their shadow.
- He also says that fighting evil is like fighting darkness with darkness; you must turn on the light of consciousness.

#### Discussion Questions

- The interpretation that Chopra provides of this teaching calls for a true shift in perspective. How might a shift to this way of thinking about evil be helpful to you personally?
- During the video, Chopra clarifies what he calls a mistake of the intellect that has confused differentiation with separation. What does that mean to you?
- When discussing turning the other cheek Chopra tells us to avoid spiritual one-upsmanship and agreeing with someone in a passive-aggressive way. How do you interpret turning the other cheek? How can you or do you apply this in your life?

Say:

- What stood out for you in the material we covered from the book or in the video?
- *You may want to ask this question earlier in the meeting.*

# Caring and Closing (10 minutes)

## Personal Reflection:

### Say:

- During the week do the exercise for Step 8 on pages 156-157. Particularly spend some time reflecting on the questions listed on page 157.
- If time permits, you may also want to go back and look at the exercises that he describes for Steps 7 and 5.

## Closing Prayer:

- Again, trust your instincts.

### Say:

- This is the time in our circle when we share our prayer requests with one another and support each other in prayer. We would like everyone to stand, form a circle, and hold hands. If you do not wish to offer a prayer request then simply squeeze the hand of the next person.
- Remind the group of the agreement to hold each other in prayer during the week.
- You can begin the prayer by having the group read an affirmation aloud.
- Go around the circle and allow those who wish to make a prayer request do so.

# Week 5

## *What to Expect When You're Expecting Enlightenment*

**Suggested Length of Session: 2 hours**

### **Intention:**

- To facilitate the process of building interpersonal connections.
- To examine the full process of the journey to God-consciousness indicating benchmarks along the way.

### **Create Sacred Space:**

- Set up enough chairs for all participants.
- Eliminate as many outside distractions as possible. Remind participants to turn off cell phones.
- Soft, meditative music may be played.

### **Materials:**

- Access to Unity.FM Webcast or DVD of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness* and DVD player
- Group Agreements from Week 1
- Sign-in sheets
- Name tags

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# The Gathering (15 minutes)

## Welcome:

- Greet participants and invite them to take a name tag and to sign the attendance sheet.
- Call the group together precisely at starting time even if everyone has not yet arrived. This sets the expectation for beginning and ending on time.

## Centering Prayer:

- Trust your instincts and set the tone for the meeting. Help participants visualize themselves making connections, learning helpful information, and being fully present during the meeting. You may want to prepare something in advance or practice a few times to be sure you will feel comfortable when the moment arises.

## Check-in:

*Before getting started with the new material you may want to allow time for check-in. Open the floor to sharing any thoughts from the previous week. Specifically, allow participants to share some of their experiences or insights from their personal reflections during the week.*

# The Viewing (30 minutes)

## Introduction of Topic

### Say:

- This week we will be focusing on Part 3 of the book, "Taking Jesus as Your Teacher: A Guide for Seekers." We want to look at how the path opens, the middle of the journey, and what it means to us as individuals and to the world to walk the spiritual path.

## The Viewing:

- View Part V of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness*: "What to Expect When You're Expecting Enlightenment"

# Discovery and Exploration (65 minutes)

## Discussion Questions:

**Note to Facilitators**—A number of questions are provided to guide the group discussions. You may or may not wish to use all of them. It is up to you to determine the length of time that should be spent on any one question. It is also expected that discussion will be generated from how you and the individuals in your group relate to the text. Feel free to develop questions of your own. It is recommended that if you do create your own questions that try to keep them open-ended and deep enough that they encourage reflection and allow individuals to relate their own personal experiences.

## Say:

- At the beginning of the chapter “How the Path Opens,” Chopra states:

“If we want to map the spiritual journey to God-consciousness, its contours would be different for each person. Nothing is more intimate and personal than your own awareness; we each relate to God on our own terms. But we can describe the general outlines of such a map.” [Page 175]

- Today we want to explore some of the common terrain of this “map.” We will start out by looking at what Chopra describes as the turning point for a soul who begins the journey of the spiritual path. He tells us:

“The Turning Point into the state of the soul trapped in duality some light begins to shine. At the turning point a critical event shakes the soul. Everyday life is interrupted, either by a crisis or by a sudden epiphany, or by both, in what is described as ‘the dark night of the soul.’” [Page 178]

- How did you come to walk the spiritual path that you are now on?
- Describe your own turning point.

## Say:

- In the book on pages 176-178 Chopra describes in some detail what life after a turning point can look like. In the video, he tells us that if you are on the path two things should happen: 1) you should

be experiencing diminished anxiety and more lightheartedness, and 2) you are experiencing a state of grace or a sense of being supported by the universe.

- **Share some of your experiences in this regard. What are some of your specific experiences of diminished anxiety and/or having the sense that you are being supported by the universe?**

**Say:**

- Chopra also describes what happens in the aftermath of the turning point. Most of us are all too familiar with this and what he goes on to describe as the middle of the journey. Of the aftermath he says:

“The astonishment of experiencing the turning point inevitably fades away. Descending back into mundane existence is very much like falling out of love. Your heightened perceptions return to their former state, which seems to dull now...When the divine presence is gone, only emptiness remains. The person can grieve this loss and remain bereft. That remains a strong temptation, as does the urge to lose oneself in nostalgic memories. The alternative is to look for some way to re-create the departed blessing. The most powerful thing that anyone can do, however, is to fill the void directly: going inward to find peace and silence; following the trail of spiritual clues; paying attention to the guidance of your soul; seeking your own essence; finding the presence of God; removing obstacles and inner resistance; changing your allegiance to the soul.” [Pages 178-180]

- After he describes each of these suggestions, he goes on to say:

“The experience that words can’t touch is of boundaries expanding and a limited sense of self dropping away. The ego can’t accomplish these changes, and as long as your deepest allegiance is given to your ego, they won’t occur; you will be tantalized by the prospect of freedom but find yourself unable to walk out of prison.” [Page 186]

- **What are some of your experiences with “the honeymoon is over” in walking your spiritual path?**
- **How do you motivate yourself to continue the journey?**
- **Have you used some of the methods Chopra suggests? Which have been most helpful?**
- **What have you learned that might be helpful to someone else?**

**Say:**

- We are also looking at what Chopra describes as “the middle of the journey.” He describes it this way:

“In the middle of the journey one begins to reap the fruits of spiritual life. As turmoil lessens and the soul comes closer, profound shifts occur. Epiphanies are no longer sudden bursts of ecstasy. Relating to yourself as a spiritual being becomes more constant and subtle ... Yet it’s not possible to feel that you’re growing every minute. There are times when no growth seems to be happening, when you’ve lost your focus. You experience discouraging setbacks, and long stretches where you’ve reached a plateau and can’t seem to move beyond it. The middle journey is a period of rewards and frustration. There is no one way to describe the middle of the journey. The important thing is not to be misled by its ups and downs.” [Pages 193-194] “What feels like backsliding in the middle of the journey is actually a return to parts of yourself that need spiritual attention. The soul is constant; only your perception changes. You see yourself leaping forward or falling back. You find inner peace only to lose it again. You struggle to overcome discouragement and the temptation to reclaim the normal life you had before this whole seduction of spirit lured you in. It’s helpful to prepare yourself for these spiritual mood swings and to learn how to react to them.” [Page 201]

- Here he makes the statement: *“What feels like backsliding in the middle of the journey is actually a return to parts of yourself that need spiritual attention.”* Share an experience when you seemed to be backsliding but discovered you had actually come to the point of removing another layer or saw that there was something more that needed to be healed.
- In this section of the book, Chopra provides some specific information about why we resist spirit [Pages 195-196] and what we can do when obstacles arise. [Pages 196- 199] Were there aspects of this information that you could particularly relate to? If so, share this with us.  
Say:
- Regardless of the pitfalls and challenges of the middle of the journey, Chopra does an excellent job of stressing the importance of continuing on the spiritual path:

“The path isn’t about feeling better. It’s not about knowing who you are, or ending your suffering, or finding peace, or healing your deepest wounds. It’s about a transformation so profound that illusion is traded for reality. Jesus survives to this day as a force in the world because he embodied that truth completely. As we are heading for God-consciousness, our own transformation cannot stop halfway; we can’t settle for a better life or even the best life, for a glimpse of God, or even for God as a daily companion. The state of God-consciousness represents a leap in human development that

you and I must be prepared to make personally. The middle of the path brings us to the leaping-off point. The end of the journey will look nothing like the world we took our leap from." [Page 208]

- How do you relate to these statements?
- Discuss your thoughts and/or feelings about your own spiritual journey having an impact on *everything*.

Say:

- In the video, Chopra states that God-consciousness is not the end of the journey but that it is Unity-consciousness which is transcendence. As individuals move into higher states of consciousness, we are actually "birthing" a new human.
- During the video, Dr. Chopra says that the media are our collective narrative. We are reinforcing what is. It is important to change that.
- The question for all of us then becomes, How do we lift the level of conversation in the world?

Say:

- What stood out for you in these sections of the book or in the video?
- *You may want to ask this question earlier in the meeting.*

# Caring and Closing (10 minutes)

## Personal Reflection:

### Say:

- During the week reflect on these questions—How can I personally do something different to help raise the level of conversation in the world? How can I bring my level of consciousness to bear in the world?

## Closing Prayer:

- Again, trust your instincts.

### Say:

- This is the time in our circle when we share our prayer requests with one another and support each other in prayer. We would like everyone to stand, form a circle, and hold hands. If you do not wish to offer a prayer request then simply squeeze the hand of the next person.
- Remind the group of the agreement to hold each other in prayer during the week.
- You can begin the prayer by having the group read an affirmation aloud.
- Go around the circle and allow those who wish to make a prayer request do so.

# Week 6

## *Jesus Without Dogma*

Suggested Length of Session: 2 hours

### Intention:

- To facilitate the process of building interpersonal connections.
- Explore a spiritual model for social change.

### Create Sacred Space:

- Set up enough chairs for all participants.
- Eliminate as many outside distractions as possible. Remind participants to turn off cell phones.
- Soft, meditative music may be played.

### Materials:

- Access to Unity.FM Webcast or DVD of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness* and DVD player
- Group Agreements from Week 1
- Participant handouts
- Sign-in sheets
- Name tags

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# The Gathering (15 minutes)

## Welcome:

- Greet participants and invite them to take a name tag and to sign the attendance sheet.
- Call the group together precisely at starting time even if everyone has not yet arrived. This sets the expectation for beginning and ending on time.

## Centering Prayer:

- Trust your instincts and set the tone for the meeting. Help participants visualize themselves making connections, learning helpful information, and being fully present during the meeting. You may want to prepare something in advance or practice a few times to be sure you will feel comfortable when the moment arises.

## Check-in:

*Before getting started with the new material you may want to allow time for check-in. Open the floor to sharing any thoughts from the previous week. Specifically, allow participants to share some of their experiences or insights from their personal reflections during the week.*

# The Viewing (30 minutes)

## Introduction of Topic

### Say:

- This week we will be focusing on the final section of the book entitled "What Would Jesus Do?" In this section Dr. Chopra provides a model for social change.

### The Viewing:

- View Part VI of *Jesus and the Awakening to God-Consciousness: "Jesus Without Dogma"*

# Discovery and Exploration (65 minutes)

## Discussion Questions:

**Note to Facilitators**—A number of questions are provided to guide the group discussions. You may or may not wish to use all of them. It is up to you to determine the length of time that should be spent on any one question. It is also expected that discussion will be generated from how you and the individuals in your group relate to the text. Feel free to develop questions of your own. It is recommended that if you do create your own questions that you try to keep them open-ended and deep enough that they encourage reflection and allow individuals to relate their own personal experiences.

## Say:

- In this section of the book, Chopra explores the “social crisis” that Christianity is facing. He states:

“I could not conclude a book about Jesus without delving into the social crisis that Christianity currently faces. Not just in America but around the world, the faith has been hijacked by movements that violate Jesus’s teaching even as they proclaim they are defending it. A religion of love has moved alarmingly in the direction of hatred, although outright hatred may not be preached from the pulpit. What is preached is self-righteous intolerance.” [Page 220]

- Chopra goes on to discuss current issues such as abortion, gay rights, women’s rights, and war and the stand that fundamentalist Christians take on these issues that demonstrate how far they are from the teachings of Jesus. He says:

“What would Jesus do? I have no doubt that he wouldn’t refer moral issues to a fixed code or to Church authority; he wouldn’t bow to social pressure; he wouldn’t be quick to raise himself above those who are labeled sinners. People who do any of those things aren’t spiritually motivated. They are falling back upon the lowest aspect of human nature, the tendency to condemn and punish anyone who is different. You and I can’t change the behavior of the religious right, but the passive reaction of many moderate and liberal Christians, which causes them to suffer in silence or walk away is self-defeating. Personal growth is achieved by acting according to your own spiritual vision. If Jesus is your model of spiritual greatness, his tenets lead to action.” [Page 230]

- During the video, Chopra suggests that each of us must ask, What do I do with this teaching, and is it making me a better person? He also says that this is a time of planetary transformation; so what do we do with these teachings?
- In the book Chopra, describes the actions a person can take that are in accordance with the teachings of Jesus. These are: courage, truth-telling, sympathy and tolerance, love and forgiveness.

**Exercise:**

- We are going to break into small groups to discuss each of these actions. Each group will be given one area to discuss. After reading the excerpt from the book about the topic, guide your discussion around the questions:
- **Where do I see evidence of this in the world?**
- **In what circumstance or situation could bringing more of this to bear bring a higher level of healing to the situation?**
- **What can I do as an individual to bring more of this into the world? Be specific about what you can do and in what area or situation you would like to focus your actions.**
- After the small group discussions, each group should be prepared to share some of what your group discussed.
- *Give each small group the handout that includes the excerpt from the book and questions for discussion.*
- *Allow enough time for the groups to meet and hold their discussions.*
- *Call the circle back together at the end of the small group discussion period.*

**Say:**

- Let's take time now to have each group share some of their discussion.
- *Allow each group to share, and where appropriate, encourage discussion from the whole circle around that topic.*

**Say:**

- Chopra concludes the book by reminding us that what we see in the outer world is a reflection of our inner state:  
 "In a world where winning and losing are two sides of the same illusion, there is a third way. Use today's crisis for tomorrow's growth. It's Christian to engage with love. When you don't engage, you cannot experience your authenticity. You cannot prove your degree of love, tolerance, and forgiveness against your hidden prejudice, intolerance, and judgment. External conflicts serve that purpose—and that purpose alone—on the spiritual path. They reflect the internal state of conflict

that needs to be healed, and in this way you discover how much distance separates you from your soul. Now you can view the schism in Christianity not as another wearisome political battle, or a contest between right and wrong. Rather this drama being projected from the inner world to the outer. You and I are drawn into the drama because it's our drama. We were meant to engage with it as part of our spiritual contract ... Your goal and mine isn't to imitate Jesus. It is to become part of him—or, as he said, to abide in him. We can do that at the level of consciousness by becoming part of the unending process that turns separation into unity. Our lives belong to that process as surely as the life of the Messiah did." [Pages 233-234]

- Respond to this excerpt. What does it mean to you, and how might you reflect its meaning in your own life?

Say:

- What stood out for you in these sections of the book or in the video?
- *You may want to ask this question earlier in the meeting.*

# Caring and Closing (10 minutes)

## Concluding remarks:

Allow time to thank the members of your circle for their participation and sharing. You may also want to allow group members to share their closing thoughts on the six-week experience.

## Closing Prayer:

- Again, trust your instincts.

## Say:

- This is the time in our circle when we share our prayer requests with one another and support each other in prayer. We would like everyone to stand, form a circle, and hold hands. If you do not wish to offer a prayer request then simply squeeze the hand of the next person.
- Remind the group of the agreement to hold each other in prayer during the week.
- You can begin the prayer by having the group read an affirmation aloud.
- Go around the circle and allow those who wish to make a prayer request do so.

# Material Covered Weekly From *The Third Jesus*

It is highly recommended that individuals read the entire book prior to the beginning of the series as the material will not be covered in sequential order.

## Week 1

Introduction [Pages 1-4]

Redeeming the Redeemer [Pages 7-20]

Who Is the "Real" Jesus?

## Week 2

Part Three

Taking Jesus as Your Teacher: A Guide for Seekers

The Search for Higher Reality [Beginning Page 143]

Step 1: The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. [Pages 144-145]

Step 10: You must be born from above. [Pages 160-162]

Step 2: Be in the world but not of it. [Pages 145-146]

Scripture References:

"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20-21 (KJV)

"Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." John 3:3 (NRSV)

"And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." John 8:23 (King James Version) "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." John 17:15-17 (KJV)

## Week 3

Step 3: For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. [Pages 146-147]

Step 12: So do not worry about tomorrow. [Pages 164-166]

Step 4: Ask and you will receive. [Pages 147-150]

Step 15: What does it profit a man to gain the world if he loses his soul? [Pages 172-174]

Scripture References:

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30 (NRSV)

"Therefore, do not worry, saying 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." Matthew 6:31-34 (NRSV)

"So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." Luke 11:9-10 (NRSV)

"And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? " Mark 8:34-36 (KJV)

#### Week 4

Step 7: As you sow, so shall you reap. [Pages 153-155]

Step 5: Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. [Pages 150-152]

Step 8: Resist not evil. [Pages 155-157]

#### Scripture References:

"Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit." Galatians 6:7-8 (NRSV)

"Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Matthew 6:11-12 (NRSV)

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile." Matthew 5:38-41 (NRSV)

#### Week 5

How the Path Opens [Pages 175-192]

The Middle of the Journey [Pages 193-208]

Where the Soul Never Dies [Pages 209-219]

#### Week 6

What Would Jesus Do? [Pages 220-234]

# *Participant Handouts*

# Week 2 Exercise

## *The Labels That Define Me*

Write down the most basic labels that apply to you: name, age, gender, education level, and occupation. Taking one at a time, consider how each label defines you.

For example: Your name specifies the identity of a person with a certain family background, it locates you in time and image. You are attached, to varying degrees, to all these threads of identity.

Now consider whether these connections must apply. Do you feel a need to conform to family traditions and expectations? Is it important to you that your name earns recognition? As you ask such basic questions, you can begin to free yourself from the threads of attachment that keep you from being 'born from above.'

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Education Level:



# Week 4 Exercise

## *Looking in the Mirror*

The person I most admire: \_\_\_\_\_

His/Her most admirable traits:

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Similar qualities in me or traits that are seeking to emerge:

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The person I least admire: \_\_\_\_\_

His/Her worst qualities:

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How do I embody these qualities?

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# Week 6 Exercise

*Small group discussions of Actions in Accordance with the Teachings of Jesus*

## Courage

"The enemy of courage is fear, which wears many masks. You can fear being different, or failure, or humiliation, or ostracism. Yet these are only reflections of a single condition: living behind boundaries. Bigots may seem brave, yet because their fight is always to build the walls and shut others out, intolerant people are acting from fear. When you realize that, the spiritual path opens up. You find that a single goal—overcoming fear—is the primary purpose of any quest. Courage renews the self by breaking boundaries." [Page 230]

- Where do I see evidence of courage in the world?
  - In what circumstance or situation could bringing more courage to a situation based in fear bring a higher level of healing to the situation?
  - What can I do as an individual to be more courageous? Be specific about what you can do and in what area or situation you would like to focus your actions.
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## Truth-telling

"Because the truth sets people free, Jesus used the truth as an agent of change. When you tell the truth, you speak to the truth in others. They may hide from their own truth, but you are seeking to free them, and in the process you make your truth stronger. The crucial words here are 'your truth,' which is personal, relative, and never the same as God's absolute truth. But to call the truth relative isn't the same as calling it weak. Relative refers to the fact that we each have a personal perspective and cannot see through anyone else's eyes."

[Pages 230-231]

- Where do I see evidence of truth and honesty in the world?
- In what circumstance or situation could bringing more truth to a situation based in fear bring a higher level of healing to the situation?

- **What can I do as an individual to be more truthful? Be specific about what you can do and in what area or situation you would like to focus your actions.**

#### **Sympathy and tolerance**

“In a divided society there are many reasons not to offer sympathy to others...Imagine the people whose values are dead set against yours, and know that they and their kind feel just as right as you do. It’s difficult to let this truth sink in, but nothing is more important. Two contending sides are equal at the level where ‘I am right and you are wrong’ exists. This ego-driven voice is an enemy to spiritual growth. The ego refuses to give up its certainty, isolation, competition, and antagonism. Jesus saw the problem clearly, and his answer—one of the most consistent answers he ever gave—was to see the world from the viewpoint of the humblest, weakest, and poorest. Jesus taught humility not just as an antidote to pride but as another way to become free. The ego, with all its wishes, fears, ambitions, likes, and dislikes, dominates everyone’s existence, and therefore almost no one sees the truth, which is that the ego is an enormous burden.”

[Page 231]

- **Where do I see evidence of sympathy and tolerance in the world?**
- **In what circumstance or situation could bringing more sympathy and tolerance to a situation based in fear bring a higher level of healing to the situation?**
- **What can I do as an individual to be more sympathetic and tolerant? Be specific about what you can do and in what area or situation you would like to focus your actions.**

#### **Love and Forgiveness**

“Love is many things, but two stand out in particular: It’s the truth, and it’s an experience. Jesus said that by experiencing the truth of love, you grow beyond nonlove and nontruth. In the early part of the twenty-first century, there is more than enough nonlove and nontruth for everyone to claim a portion. You and I know whom we don’t really forgive and whom we pretend to tolerate. We know what it’s like to wear a mask for social reasons that have little to do with our deepest feelings. Moving out of that predicament is what spirituality is about. The soul loves and forgives automatically; it sees beyond all divisions, however deep; it wears no masks. And the soul isn’t a distant goal but a hidden aspect of the self.” [Page 233]

- **Where do I see evidence of love and forgiveness in the world?**

- In what circumstance or situation could bringing more love and forgiveness to a situation based in fear bring a higher level of healing to the situation?
- What can I do as an individual to be more loving and forgiving? Be specific about what you can do and in what area or situation you would like to focus your actions.