

## ***Spiritual Liberation Study Guide*** **Thriving in Unity 2.0 Benchmark 7**

*Spiritual Liberation* by Michael Beckwith is a book packed with deep insight in every chapter and on every page. Rather than attempting to handle the entire book in seven weeks, this study guide offers an introduction to the book. We have selected seven chapters to highlight. If congregants wish to go deeper upon completion of the course you can invite them to form a Spiritual Liberation Embodiment Group to meet regularly and discuss the book and its practices in their entirety (perhaps a chapter a week for 18 weeks).

This guide breaks the material into seven sessions. Each session follows the same format for the two hour class:

Opening prayer (5 minutes)	Offer a brief centering prayer
Check in (about 40 minutes)	For the first meeting the check-in should be a brief introduction of each group member. For subsequent meetings, the check-in time will be used to share how the weekly practices went. Length of check in will depend on number in the group.
Questions and dialog (about 1 hour)	Choose from the questions provided, or write your own. Invite dialog and discussion of one or more questions. Encourage all participants to contribute.
Practice (about 5 minutes)	Share the practice (homework) for the week with the participants and answer any questions.
Embodiment (about 10 minutes)	Dim the lights and put on some meditation music. Read the embodiment aloud to the class. You may wish to practice ahead of time to ensure a smooth delivery with appropriate pauses and pacing.
Closing Affirmation	Each week make copies of the affirmation cards (found after the session notes). Hand out the cards and have the group say the affirmation together as a closing. Invite the participants to work with the affirmation each day of the coming week.

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### **SESSION 1: Chapter 2 - Evolved People**

#### **Summary:**

Patterns of thought and action develop over the course of a lifetime. Some of these patterns support us while others undermine us. Once we become conscious of the patterns we have formed, we can revisit them and make new choices. We have been given the power to create patterns of thought and action, and we have the power to change them. It comes down to understanding that we have been given dominion over our lives. Reality has dominion over illusion. You have been created to have dominion over your illusory, impermanent thought forms. To the degree that you exercise that dominion, you will experience what Jesus the Christ meant when he encouraged us to “consider the lilies of the field...”

By cultivating these seven practices of evolved people an entirely new self will be revealed to us, a self that has been present all along.

- 1) Giving thanks for what most people take for granted
- 2) Giving without an agenda
- 3) Seeing who can forgive first
- 4) Experiencing life as a celebration rather than a problem to be solved
- 5) Talking to ourselves and not to the world
- 6) Choosing happiness over drama
- 7) Understanding the value of downtime

#### **Questions:**

- What does it mean to you to have dominion over your life?
- What does it mean to “give without an agenda?” Have you experienced giving without an agenda and have you received a gift that you felt was given freely with no agenda?
- Imagine how your world would change if you were always racing to see who could forgive first. What resistance do you find comes up as you contemplate this, if any?
- *Authentic rest is power.* What keeps you from taking necessary downtime?

#### **Practice:**

Choose one of the seven practices of evolved people to work with for the coming week. Take time each day to contemplate the practice and to creatively apply it in your life. Make notes so that you can share your results during the check in portion of the next session.

#### **Affirmation:**

***I fully recognize and activate my power to set clear and potent intentions. My attention is inwardly directed, and I receive intuitive guidance in language my heart can understand and respond to. In gratitude, I surrender and trust where the Spirit is leading me in my intention to transform.***

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### **SESSION 2: Chapter 6 - Inner Ecology: Your Personal Laws of Life**

#### **Summary:**

Our self-growth is fueled by the contents of our inner ecology. Everything you need to fulfill your highest purpose on the planet is already within you. As we mature around our concept of the Godhead, we take responsibility for our lives. We walk the razor's edge between our mortality and immortality. *“Don't blow this incarnation: and “you are an eternal being.”* Be at Peace with your evolving Consciousness. When your personal laws of life include walking in balance between the mortal and the immortal, you become confident, and confidence leads you to acknowledge your worthiness and to deliver your talents and gifts on the planet. That which transforms your life is what you *practice*. And what you practice constitutes your personal laws of life—not what you merely believe in, but what you *practice*.

- 1) Sit and meditate on a daily basis, preferably first thing in the morning
- 2) Consciously circulate life-energy in the world (express kindness, encouragement, compassion and sharing of your financial resources.)
- 3) Celebrate the flow of Goodness into your life; celebrate the good that flows into the lives of others as though it were your own.

You are predisposed to vibrant health, affluence, love, compassion, creativity, generosity, equanimity, kindness—high octane qualities that will reconfigure your life in such a way that you will have tangible evidence that you are on the planet for a purpose.

#### **Questions:**

- In what ways have you noticed you are practicing “immature” wanting versus “mature” wanting?
- Have you lived through an experience that felt like lack, while staying in the consciousness of abundance? If so, what did this experience teach you? If you were unable to hold the consciousness of abundance, what got in the way?
- Where are you with the process of making peace with the temporariness of your life while embracing the fact that you are also an eternal being?
- Do you believe that you are on the planet for a purpose? If so, have you identified that purpose and are you living “on purpose”?

#### **Practice:**

Put the 3-step process described in this chapter into practice this week and note the results.

#### **Affirmation:**

***Today, as I enter my meditation practice, I am open and receptive to my inner spirit revealing to me the personal laws of life by which I live. I courageously look at myself in all honesty and with full confidence in my ability to co-create with the Spirit the life I am here to live.***

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### **SESSION 3: Chapter 8 - Creatively Maladjusted**

#### **Summary:**

Living “creatively maladjusted” is beautiful because it creates space for you to be transformed by the moment-by-moment renewing of your mind, heart, and spirit. Think of personality vs. character: It’s easy to tell if you are living from character or personality: If things aren’t going your way, personality pouts while character remains unruffled and learns from the experience. When you are not in psychologically or emotionally safe territory, personality panics. Character, on the other hand, rides the vicissitudes of life with even-mindedness. Personality endeavors to extract happiness from its experiences, whereas character realizes that happiness is an inherent quality of being that infuses experiences with happiness. Challenges are your spiritual liberators. Think of thermometers vs. thermostats (one reads what’s going on, the other sets the temperature.)

#### **Questions:**

- In what ways can you see that your personality is different from your character? How has your personality been influenced by societal norms?
- Think back to a challenge in your life that was particularly difficult. Are you able to put it to use in your journey to spiritual liberation? What blind spots or personality traits can you see it revealing to you?
- Consider the metaphor of thermometer vs. thermostat. What ways can you begin shifting your perspective to show up more as a thermostat than a thermometer?
- What does your true character yearn to express?

#### **Practice: “What’s running me?” (page 107)**

Pause throughout the week, especially when you are experiencing an challenge with someone else or with yourself (engaged in negative self-talk) and ask yourself, “What’s running me?” Notice when your old personality programs and motivations are preventing you from entering the realm of intimacy and love, excellence, and vitality character. Jot some notes in a journal throughout the week and share during check-in at the next session.

#### **Affirmation:**

***Today, I confidently step out of my comfort zone. I let go of self-consciousness and egoic concerns as I express myself freely, fully. I dedicate myself to genuine self-expression and know the joy of being my true self.***

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### **SESSION 4: Chapter 9 - Architects of the Beloved Community**

#### **Summary:**

As the realization that we are members of a world family finds its home in more and more hearts, people across the globe are dissolving manmade boundaries and acknowledging our interconnectedness. Love: the ultimate conqueror. We are all members of a world family. **Love is not an emotion, a romantic notion; it is a living, organically powerful energy that holds together the fabric of the created world. Love is what we are.** The world is looking for love masters.

*We are not here to “save” the world, but to serve an emerging paradigm of love, connectedness, and generosity of heart.* Ordinary people can respond in an extraordinary way. Your life is as significant as the greatest harbingers of peace. You are as cherished by the Spirit as any master or saint who ever walked the planet. When you think and act from a spiritualized consciousness, you have joined the revolution of values and serve as a beneficial presence on the planet. With awareness, free yourself from the common worldview and discover your own viewpoints independent of popular opinion. Become an emissary of love, peace, kindness and generosity.

#### **Questions:**

- What does it mean to you to be a member of a Beloved Community?
- How do you show up as loving service in YOUR life?
- What beliefs about yourself would you have to give up in order to fully believe that you are as powerful as Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr.?
- Have you noticed moments where awakening to your inherent love-nature has been messy or uncomfortable? If so, how did you deal with it?

**Practice:** Architects of the Beloved Community release a vibration of love wherever they go—in line at the market, on the freeway, at the gym, in the workplace, in the presence of so-called enemies (p. 125). As you go about your week, make a conscious effort to release the vibration of love wherever you are.

#### **Affirmation:**

***I know that my true essence is love, divine love. Such a potency of love am I that, were I to realize its fullness, I would be on my knees before my own inner self. Today, I embrace all of my brothers and sisters in this love. I wrap myself and every man, woman, and child in this love. I have no enemies, imagined or real. I practice world citizenry and radiate out a blessing of love upon the planet.***

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### **SESSION 5: Chapter 14 - Spiritually Liberating Livelihood**

#### **Summary:**

The purpose of business is threefold: the fulfillment of society's living needs and the creation of an environment in which happiness and self-development may flourish and art and beauty are encouraged. All else is an invasion of the ego into business endeavors. From a progressive point of view, once career success has been achieved, it's time to support the web of life by applying the principles that helped you become personally successful to creating global success. The growing recognition of the interconnectedness of body, mind, and spirit is excellent news for our society because it acknowledges that success in any endeavor begins with an integral approach. Here are seven keys that allow each individual to experience a flourishing personal and professional life.

- 1) Adequate hydration
- 2) Good nutrition
- 3) Exercise
- 4) Detoxification
- 5) Benevolent universe
- 6) Light (dosage of sunlight every day)
- 7) Adequate Rest everyday

#### **Questions:**

- How important do you think it is that your work life (or vocation) and your spiritual life be integrated?
- Give an example of a work/vocation experience that honored and encouraged spiritual expression.
- How might you be able to impact your career and/or work environment through applying spiritual practices?
- What, if anything, is in the way of your commitment to more deeply practicing the seven keys?

#### **Practice:**

During group time, give each participant a copy of the attached circle graph. Ask each participant to chart where each of the keys lands for them (from poor to excellent). If each key is "excellent" then the "wheel" is balanced. Notice which of the keys could be improved and work with it for the coming week. Take notes of your experience to share during check-in at the next session.

#### **Affirmation:**

***I acknowledge my desire to realize personal and professional success. I fully express my gifts, talents, and skills. I know that through my spirit of generosity, by holding back nothing, the universe fully supports me and sources my good in like measure. I give thanks for this co-creative, reciprocal relationship and enter into it with trust, integrity, and commitment.***

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### **SESSION 6: Chapter 15 - Minding Your Spiritual Manners on Planet Earth**

Your name is on the A-list for a cosmic happening: an invitation to realize total aliveness, a state of being that Matthew Fox called “radical amazement.” Of all the species on the planet, the human being alone has an inherent taste for enlightenment and the ability to realize it. It is the innate capacity to wake up that caused Buddhist to describe a human incarnation as very precious. Spirits’...joy comes from a freewill offering of our love, gratitude, and the full-out use of our gifts, talents and skills.

Explore the spiritual practices of:

- gratitude
- enthusiasm
- integrity
- respect
- generosity
- creativity

#### **Questions:**

- What does the idea of minding your spiritual manners mean to you?
- How does knowing that your energy impacts others change your ideas about what is proper etiquette?
- Which of the six practices defined in this chapter speak to you the most and why?
- What gets in your way of minding your manners?

#### **Practice:**

Choose a different practice each day in the coming week to contemplate for 5 to 10 minutes of quiet time (gratitude, enthusiasm, integrity, respect, generosity, creativity). Bring the word and concept deep into your heart. Using the power of love, open your heart and surrender deeply to expressing that quality throughout your day. Call forth the power to remove any barriers, blocks, or hesitation to fully embodying the trait for the day. Take notes on your daily experiences to share during check-in at the next session.

#### **Affirmation:**

***It is easy for me to mind my spiritual manners because I know who and what I am as an emissary of the spirit on earth. I surrender to life in full awareness and gratitude for all the gifts that have been freely by Existence. So with utmost respect for my individual life and that of all beings, creatures, and nature, I simply say thank you Infinite Spirit.***

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### **SESSION 7: Chapter 17 - Soulware for Authentic Happiness.**

As human beings, we have a sense of entitlement where happiness is concerned and with good reason: happiness is our true nature. Each individual must give his or her consent to being happy. Choosing happiness as a way of life ultimately leads to the understanding that joy is our natural state of being. Genuine happiness begins when we become conscious that we are co-creators of our destiny with life's source. Our Soulware for happiness is downloaded through meditation, affirmative prayer, spiritual study, visioning, contemplation, and sacred service.

These practices re-groove our habitual thought patterns and enable us to make wisdom-guided, happiness-producing choices.

The 4 C's (causes) of Happiness (p226):

Conversation: Vibrational heaven or hell?

Company: Keeping it Holy

Challenges: Maps to your inner growth

Commitment: the hallmark of freedom

And one extra -

Consciousness: the ability to be aware that you are aware

### **Questions:**

- Are there times in your life when you have been into "pseudo pleasure" versus a natural state of joy? What have you learned from these experiences?
- What does it mean to you that "Happiness is a choice?"
- Have tried applying spiritual law to the desires of the "entitled ego," and if so to what effect? Where are you with regard to your relationship between happiness and material things?
- Which of the 4 (5) C's of Happiness touch you the deepest and why?

### **Practice:**

Choose one of the 4 (5) C's of Happiness to focus on for the week (or choose a different one each day). Bring the concept into your prayer/quiet time. Notice how well you do in demonstrating that concept. Notice what resistance comes up. Notice any shifts in your perception as you focus on the concept. Continue experimenting with each concept as often as you like.

### **Affirmation:**

***The cosmic laughter of Spirit bathes my soul in joy. I see with clear seeing, and all that I do is from the pure joy of being. I love life and I love living. I love being me as I am me.***

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### Additional Material:

#### **Chapter 18: How to Make It through the Night: A Luminous View of the Dark Night of the Soul**

The material in this chapter is ideally suited for individuals experiencing deeply challenging circumstances. For those in your study group that fall into this category, you may wish to suggest that they read chapter 18 sooner rather than later. This concluding chapter will clarify how spiritually beneficial the dark night is to those who are deeply committed to their self-realization. To individual accustomed to living in conscious communion with the Ineffable, this dark night is an excruciating dry spell without a trace of divine succor. While it seems more natural than unnatural to reject the dark night experience, one does so at the expense of a profound purification in consciousness. To the Spirit, light and dark and equal; there is no separation, no difference. Expanding beyond the narrow confines of resistance to the dark night causes something within to break through the habitual mental pattern that's holding you hostage. A shift takes place. You will see yourself anew.

#### **Spiritual Liberation the movie:**

Produced by the pioneers at Elevate Films, *Spiritual Liberation* is an intimate look into the life of one of the most respected evolutionary teachers of our time. As you walk with Michael Bernard Beckwith (Founder and Spiritual Director of the Agape International Spiritual Center and featured in *The Secret*) through an actual day in his life, you will see why his teachings have empowered thousands of spiritual seekers for more than two decades. Inspired by his book, *Spiritual Liberation-Fulfilling Your Soul's Potential*, Michael shares in this film genuine solutions to the challenges of our times, while awakening us to our life's purpose.

#### **SPECIAL FEATURES:**

- Première Performance of "You Can Dream" by APL.DE.AP of the Black Eyed Peas
- 8 Musical performances of Rickie Byars Beckwith and The Agape International Choir
- Supplemental interviews about: Love, Forgiveness, Living on Purpose and Meditation
- The Genesis of Spiritual Liberation: A talk with Michael Bernard Beckwith and Director, Mikki Wills
- The secret recipe of "The Green Shake"

Additional bonus features include interviews with USC football coach Pete Carroll, bestselling author Iyanla Vanzant, actor and filmmaker Mario Van Peebles, Mark Harris, Producer of the Oscar Winning Film, *Crash*, and motivational speaker Lisa Nichols.