

The Art of Living: Spiritual Meditations on *Theo of Golden*

Session 1

October 6, 2026

- Allen Levi – 70/71 – 1955/6 Bay Minette, AL
 - Univ. of Georgia – English / Law School
 - MA – Scottish Fiction, University of Edinburgh
 - attorney 13 years
 - judge
 - singer / songwriter 15 years
 - author
- Harris County, GA LaGrange / Columbus
 - Golden / Columbus
- long-form fiction – discipline? -- prove to himself...
 - COVID
 - did not seek publication
 - self-published – 100,000+ copies sold – 3.5 million
 - “Credits”
 - Aron Ritchie (niece) – technology / marketing
 - Simon and Schuster (Atria) – translated into 33 languages
 - Jen Hatmaker “I don’t know anyone who’s not reading it.”
 - *New York Times* A word of mouth smash hit
 - “non-writer” – ‘broke all the rules of publishing
- long-form fiction – NOVEL
 - “life as it might be” – “life-changing”
 - a great novel becomes a part of you
 - Oprah Winfrey “This book stays with you...”
 - “classic”
 - Italo Colvino – a classic is never finished saying what it has to say
 - Harper Lee, Foreword – *To Kill A Mockingbird* (1993) – “*Mockingbird* still says what it has to say; it has managed to survive the years without preamble.”
- SPIRITUALITY
 - COVID – “foul mood” – “foul humor” – an injection of kindness – grace
 - “We like some of the venal...”
- CHRISTIAN
 - ‘Christian Fiction’
 - publication – “Lord, this is something I made for you.”
 - “Everything I’ve ever done has been an expression of my faith.”
- THEMES
 - aging – Theo (86)
 - seeing / being seen – characters from everyday life
 - wonder – nature/humanity made in the image of God

- the value of time
 - family
 - vocation / purpose / passion / self-image
 - Southern history
 - memory – an old man can have young memories
 - grief
 - conversation – “bestowals”
- backcover – “A story of giving and receiving, of seeing and being seen, *Theo of Golden* is a beautifully crafted novel about the power of creative generosity, the importance of wonder to a purposeful life, and the invisible threads of kindness that bind us to one another.”
 - p. 1 | “Only a year. Not so long. But long enough to create a current of his own and to catch others in it.”
 - *The Last Sweet Mile* (2014) – brother / Gary
 - p. 5 | “On this day, and for the foreseeable future, Theo had no deadlines, no meetings, and no obligations.”
 - p. 5 | “He did not know a soul in the town. Well...perhaps one.”
 - p. 6 | The Chalice – Fountain City Coffee – portraits (4)
 - p. 11 | Asher Glissen “My mother, who was an artist, used to tell me that every face is a story.”
 - p. 13 | “He lingered at the portrait of a young woman with delicate features, unsmiling, and with eyes that looked directly into his. They had a haunting familiarity about them. *Could it be?*” – Minnette Prentiss
 - p. 18 | letter to Minnette Prentiss – “If, as has been said, it is more blessed to give than to receive, my happiness in putting the picture in your hands...”
 - p. 23 | Derrick Prentiss “...but I think there really might be an old man who really does just want to give you a gift, though I can’t imagine why.”
 - p. 23 | Minnette “Just think, we might actually meet a sincerely kind human being. There don’t seem to be many of those around these days.”
 - p. 25 | Asher Glissen “His wardrobe, unlike many of theirs, suggested a life free of supervision or a need to impress.”
 - p. 26 | Asher “With those simple tools, that arsenal, he waged daily war against mediocrity and was rewarded with masterpiece after masterpiece.”
 - p. 26 | “His hand twisted, turned, tapped, danced, hovered, and stroked the page in a choreography that had taken years to perfect.”
 - p. 26 | “A man’s face began to emerge from the lines, a man with big, untamed hair, a scruffy beard, a boyish grin, and a class-clown playfulness in his eyes. It was a different energy to reproduce on a two-dimensional surface, but Asher wrestled it convincingly to the mat.”