

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

Lessons 93-110: The "hump" of the Workbook

Get ready! You are about to embark on the hardest part of the Workbook, in terms of the practice that is asked of us. Yet the content of the lessons is some of the most uplifting in the book.

These eighteen lessons are the most demanding series of lessons in the Workbook. The total time that they ask for each day (Five minutes per hour, if done every hour for 16 hours, totals 1 hour and 20 minutes a day.) is actually less than what you might be doing in the second half of the Workbook. But still these are more demanding because they ask for significant blocks of time in the middle of our busy daily schedules. Thus, I think of this bank of lessons as the "hump" of the Workbook. If you can get over this hump, you can take anything the Workbook can dish out.

Almost all of the focus is put on the hourly practice: the first five minutes of every waking hour.

In these eighteen lessons, the practice temporarily metamorphoses and places most of its emphasis on these hourly exercises, to be done the first five minutes of every waking hour.

Longer periods are the hourly periods; there are no special morning and evening practices.

Frequent reminders are there but they are not as emphasized as in the 60's and 70's. There are few special instructions for these and no specifics given for their frequency (beyond such remarks as "as frequently as possible" or "as often as you can"). Lesson 98 even frames these frequent reminders as preparation for the next hourly five minute periods.

Enticements and encouragement to practice

Because of the demanding nature of this bank of lessons, the Workbook gives us more encouragement to practice here (especially early in the series) than anywhere else. It is amazing how much encouragement we get. Here is a summary:

- 93: Your practice today can bring closer the salvation of the world, your part in that salvation and your conviction that light and peace and joy abide in you.
- 94: Each five minutes "will be a giant stride toward your release, and a milestone in learning the thought system which this course sets forth" (5:9). And since the goal of the Workbook is to teach you to think along the lines the text sets forth, each five minutes will be a milestone towards achieving the Workbook's goal.

- 95: Because your mind is so undisciplined you need a structure which includes short, frequent and regular practice. This is why it is so great that the Workbook is providing you with a structure in which you practice the first five minutes of every waking hour.
- 96: Every time you practice, whether you feel anything or not, your Self will save the joy It experiences for you until you can experience it. Every time you practice you will add another treasure to your growing store. And everyone can draw from this store.
- 97: The Holy Spirit will take each five minutes you give, carry them around this aching world and give them wherever they are welcomed. Thus, your minutes will be multiplied tens of millions of times, with the result that you can save a thousand years each time you practice (a multiplication of 100 million times).
- 98: Surely it is worth five minutes to accept God's happiness, recognize your special function, find full release from pain, joy the world does not contain, peace of mind, certainty of purpose and promise of success. And, since time is an illusion, you are gaining everything for nothing. Further, those who have accepted their part in God's plan will support you. And those who haven't yet--even the unborn--will benefit from your practice.
- 106: Each five minutes you practice a thousand minds will be opened to hear the truth that you hear.
- 107: Each five minutes you give will correct your errors as well as increase the gifts you give the world.
- 108: Each practice period will be a quick advance in your learning. You will make faster progress from now on.
- 109: Each five minutes you practice you will bring healing to an injured bird, a dry stream, a tired mind. You will call to all your brothers to enter the temple doors and rest with you. And they will hear you.

How to deal with the fact that you cannot or will not do all of them

The author knows that you will not do all of the hourly exercises. He knows you will not be able, nor even willing. He has two plans for how to deal this, both of which reveal his primary concern: He wants to keep you from giving up at all costs.

1. Give whatever time you can; at least do the alternate. You can see this part as composed of three steps:

- "You may not be willing or even able to use the first five minutes of each hour for these exercises" (93.10:1).
- "...do not think that less is worthless when you cannot give Him more" (105.9:1). In other words, give whatever time you can.
- If you cannot (or will not) do the five minutes, at least do the alternate: Repeat the idea for the day as the hour strikes and spend whatever time you can with it. This alternate is only mentioned in three of the eighteen lessons, but since it is mentioned in the first two, you should understand that it holds for all eighteen.

2. Overlook your lapses and get back to practicing; don't parlay lapses into prolonged lapses. **Lesson 95 contains some of the most important advice in the Workbook.** It comes early in this series of eighteen lessons because it is geared to the needs of this demanding practice regimen. This advice is given in paragraphs 7-10. It deserves careful and repeated reading. My summary of the advice: The real danger to your practice is not lapsing from your schedule. This is merely a mistake and the Holy Spirit is not delayed by it. The real danger is using this lapse as an excuse to lapse more; turning it into prolonged lapses, even into giving up for the day. Here is how to deal with that temptation:

- Recognize this as a defense against the truth.
- Be willing to forgive yourself for your mistakes; this deprives them of power.
- Get right back to practicing.

The practice for these eighteen lessons: Meditation on your Self and Its happiness

- What are you doing for your five minutes each hour (about 300, if you do them all)? Almost all of these lessons are meditations, in which you:
- sink through and away from the clouds of your illusions: your self-images, list of good and bad attributes you have ascribed to yourself (remember lesson 35?), little thoughts, foolish goals, cares, burdens, anxieties.
- and then sink into, or wait in silent expectancy to experience, your Self and its happiness. Notably, lessons 100-105 focus specifically on experiencing the happiness God has laid inside of you. What could be more enjoyable?

The exceptions to this meditative practice are the following lessons:

- 98: You give the Holy Spirit the words and He will give them back to you shining with the conviction, sincerity, certainty and understanding that you lack.
- 99: A fascinating internal housecleaning practice in which you open up your secret dark places to the Holy Spirit and let Him lighten them up. Reminiscent of Chapter 14 in the Text.
- 106: You ask the truth what it means to give and receive, and then listen for an answer.
- 108: You consciously send out blessing in different forms to the world (perhaps via a particular person).

LESSON 93 - April 3

Light and joy and peace abide in me.

I love this lesson! The idea it presents is, I believe, universally applicable and, if we can be completely honest with ourselves, always both very welcome and very difficult to accept. But at first, it may seem the opposite. Some people don't quite get it when the lesson starts out by saying things like, "You think you are the home of evil, darkness and sin" (1:1). Their reaction is something like, "I don't see myself that way! I may not be perfect, but I certainly don't find myself repellent or repulsive. I do not think of myself as 'evil'." Such people may even say they find it easy to believe that light, joy, and peace abide in them.

If that's true, why do we cringe at the idea that none of our thoughts are private? What are we hiding? Our belief in the evil within is the reason behind our reluctance to entirely let go of the notion of guilt. We're convinced that, without guilt, we'd run wild. We don't really believe that we can be trusted to live without any restraints. Perhaps you may think, "I don't think I need the restraint of guilt, but I'm sure a lot of people do." Guess what? That's projection! You believe other people cannot be trusted because, secretly, you believe it about yourself.

So we really need the message of this lesson. "You are as pure and holy as you were created" (4:1). "Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God" (repeated seven times in the lesson). You have not sinned because you cannot sin. "To sin would be to violate reality, and to succeed" (T-19.II.2:2), and that is flat-out impossible. If it is impossible, you cannot possibly have done it.

Once again, the lesson urges us to connect with that deep, inner Reality of our Self, which is pure, innocent love. It asks us to float in it, let ourselves be surrounded by it, and then (in 9:7) to realize, this is you! This is what you are: this vastness, this infinite compassion! Think of your most profound experience of God, and tell yourself, "That which I experienced in that moment, That is Me. That is what I am."

LESSON 94--April 4

I am as God created me.

This lesson continues with the thought introduced yesterday as the key to salvation: "You are as God created you, not what you made of yourself" (W-pI.93.7:1). The Course places a significant emphasis on this single idea. It is the only idea used as the main theme of more than one lesson; it is the lead thought of this lesson, Lesson 110, and Lesson 162. It was introduced in the Text (31.VIII.5:2). It is a sub-theme in Lessons 132 and 139, and Review VI has us repeating a version of it every day for twenty days! You sort of get the feeling that Jesus wants us to get this idea and get it good.

Read the opening paragraph several times. Read it aloud, and try to get some feeling for just how important the author believes this idea to be. Believe it completely, and you are saved; your sanity is restored. The world disappears. The ego's thought system is entirely erased!

Think about its meaning. It isn't all that deep, but it's worth ruminating on it. God created you. Whatever you were, whoever you were, however you were when God created you, you are still that. That's the import of the simple words, "I am." You are now, you are still, you will forever be exactly the same as the moment God created you. What God creates does not change; it is eternal. It lasts forever. You last forever.

This one idea really sums up the message of the entire Course. Really get it, and you've got most of the Course.

LESSON 95--April 5

I am one Self, united with my Creator.

This lesson has two important, major aspects. The first, in paragraphs 1 to 3 and 11 to 15, is the actual thought for the day. The second emphasis, in paragraphs 4 to 10, is on countering our resistance to the hourly practice, and helping us to rebound from our lapses in practicing. The teaching and instructions for practice of the lesson would work perfectly well if you just skipped from paragraph 3 to paragraph 11; the intervening seven paragraphs really stand by themselves as a major pep talk to get us to really try to do the five-minutes-per-hour practice. They are worth bookmarking and reading over any time you start to feel discouraged about your practicing.

The idea that “I am one Self” is a powerful one. Somehow, this lofty view of what I am is not incompatible with my stumbling attempts to follow the course. My mistakes do not negate the truth of Who I am. I need the structured practice this lesson espouses just because I do not believe the truth about myself. Part of the purpose of this, surely, is to experience failure and then forgive ourselves. But that isn’t all! The purpose is to fail, forgive, and then DO IT.

Often, as we read the Course, we get the idea that somehow we are two selves: ego and spirit, two parts that are always at war. The Course talks about a “split mind.” It advises us to choose between two voices. So it does seem as if we are at least two selves, or maybe three--the ego, the Holy Spirit, and the “chooser.” The Course is clear, however: “You are not two selves in conflict” (T-16.III.6:1). “I am one Self.” Yes, we appear to be torn between spirit and ego, but that’s only an appearance. The Course tells us that the ego itself is only an illusion (W-pI.66.8:4). We are torn between our Self and an illusion of our self. “Now must you choose between yourself and an illusion of yourself. Not both, but one.” (T-22.II.6:6-7) To me this is liberating! It used to seem an endless, impossible task to win the battle against my baser impulses. As the Apostle Paul put it in the Bible:

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin. (Romans 7:25, NRSV)

For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. (Galatians 5:17, NRSV)

That’s the result of the belief in two selves. It prevents you from doing what you want. It stops you cold. Realizing that the opposing voice is an illusion, an illusion without power, sets us free to be what we truly are.

The distractions of the ego may seem to interfere with your learning, but the ego has no power to distract you unless you give it the power to do so. The ego's voice is an hallucination. (T-8.I.2:1-2)

Paragraphs 12 and 13 in this lesson really reward reading out loud and substituting “I” and “me” for “you”. For instance, “I am one Self, complete and healed and whole, with power to lift the veil of darkness from the world, and let the light in me come through to teach the world the truth about myself.” When Jesus, in the Gospel of John, said this:

I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. (John 12:46)

...Was he not saying about himself exactly what the Course is saying about each of us? He was letting the light in himself come through to teach us the truth about himself, and that is what we are being called to do as well.

LESSON 96--April 6

Salvation comes from my one Self.

Another lesson about the one Self. Do you begin to see a pattern here? "I am as God created me," "I am one Self," and "Salvation comes from my one Self."

This lesson speaks directly to the issue of the way we experience ourselves as two selves, both good and evil. I love the way it starkly points out that reconciling the two selves isn't possible; they "will never be compatible" (1:4). There is only one solution to the dilemma. Give up the ego! Just let it go. Don't love it, coddle it, or try to accommodate it. Let it go. "The self you made can never be your Self, nor can your Self be split in two, and still be what It is and must forever be" (3:3). To the Course's way of thinking, this also entails recognizing that the body is an illusion as well, and affirming the mind as our true identity.

LESSON 97--April 7

I am spirit.

Created by God and unchanged, I am one Self in which is my salvation, and that Self is spirit.

The one Self the Course speaks of is spirit. To affirm the title thought of today's lesson is to let go of all illusions of an identity divided between a good and bad self, and of all attempts we might make to somehow reconcile the ego self that is bound to a body with the spiritual self that is unlimited by a body.

As always in this series of lessons we are strongly encouraged to remind ourselves of this truth every hour, spending five minutes to get to touch with the one Self. I find the image in this lesson particularly striking, that each minute we give to the Holy Spirit in this practice will circumnavigate the globe, touching every open mind with our healing gift, and in His hands will come back to us magnified beyond belief in its power to heal us and light our way out of darkness. The only image he can use is to compare the light of a firefly to the light of the sun! Wow! What a return on investment! Who can resist a bargain like that?

LESSON 98--April 8

I will accept my part in God's plan for salvation.

[The commentaries on 98 and 99 are taken from my book, A Workbook Companion.]

Perhaps as I read all those lines about certainty in the first two paragraphs, I find myself doubting that very certainty. "Am I certain?" The thought surely arises. Perhaps I feel as if I don't belong with this lesson. My ego reminds me slyly that I am not beyond vacillation. How can I say I have no doubts?

Yet even in the words of the lesson is the recognition of my condition: "All our doubts we lay aside today" (2:2). Yes, doubts are there. Of course they are. Jesus knows that. He is only suggesting that in these five minutes we spend with him, we suspend our doubting. Just put them down and be without them for a few minutes. See what it is like. You can doubt later if you want; for now, see how happy it is to be certain.

Within me there is a place that is always certain. It has never doubted. It cannot doubt because it knows. This is my true Self. The doubts are thoughts that question the reality of that Self, the reality of the part of me that is certain, which is the only real part. I am brought by this lesson to question my questioning. I am brought to listen to the certainty, the eternal silence of spirit which knows.

When I am willing, even for a moment, to suspend my doubting, to still the nattering mind, the yama yama of my idle thoughts, I encounter a still sureness. It is not a certainty of ideas and words; it is an assurance of being, a majestic calm. The stillness is beyond space and time. It has nothing to do with the drama played on this planet.

It is of this we speak today. It is of those who know to touch this eternal calm which is described in such glowing terms in 3:3-4. It is of those who "rest in quiet certainty" (3:3).

I take my stand with those who, before me, have come to this place. It is the same place for all of us. It is the same Self we come to know. And I know, in that holy instant, that if one has been here before me, all will come to find it. If one has been here--and I know that many have been here--all will be here, for one could not come unless it were the reality for all. The nature of this place, this quiet certainty, is a shared nature. It could not be here for me if it were not here for you as well. It could not have been there for Jesus if it were not also here for me. As paragraph 4 makes clear, when I enter this place, literally everyone who ever was, is, or will be enters with me.

In the center of the storm of doubts and uncertainty there is an eye of calm. The storm rages on. We still can perceive it. Yet here, here, we are calm. We are quiet. We rest.

Of course you have doubts and uncertainty. That is what you are supposed to notice as you do this lesson! Just for the moment, be willing to have them disappear. There is One within you who is always certain, and He is you; you have forgotten that. Let yourself, however briefly, identify with His certainty, and let go of your identification with the doubts. Make

that choice; this is all that is asked. The One within you who never doubts will bring His certainty to your uncertain practicing, and His perfect faith will shine away your doubts. (7:2-4).

"Give Him the words, and He will do the rest" (9:1). A wonderful statement! He is simply asking you to say your faltering "Yes." You are not being asked to turn your doubt into faith. He will do that. "My part in God's plan" is very simple: acceptance. My part is not an active role, but passive. It is to be willing to receive, and that is all. My part is to say, "Okay. Yes. I will accept." That is all. He will joyously affirm my choice, in loving recognition that this <is> what I really want (9:4).

Over and over through the day, over and over throughout life, just say to Him: "I will accept my part. Yes."

This is surrender. This is all we do. There is nothing else to do. So simple. So difficult to be so simple. So difficult to stop trying to make it on our own. Let go, and let God. "Yes, God. Yes, Holy Spirit. I accept."

Perhaps I'm not sure I want it. But He will make sure I want it (11:2). Come to Him just as you are, with all your doubts, all your fears. Just come. Just say, "Yes. I accept."

[Just a note of interest: There is a poetic meter called <iambic pentameter>, which consists of lines of ten syllables, with alternating soft and hard emphasis: da-DAH da-DAH da-DAH da-DAH da-DAH. You should be able to detect that, after the title and first line, most (but not quite all) of today's lesson is written in that meter.

Tomorrow's lesson begins the first full lesson in iambic pentameter, and the entire rest of the Workbook, with only minor exceptions, follows suit.]

LESSON 99--April 9

Salvation is my only function here.

Today we will just comment on a few ideas from this lesson. The main idea we will discuss is expressed in 5:4-5, which I encourage you to read now.

We see suffering and loss in a myriad of forms. We think these things are real. What is worse, we believe them to be God's Will. If we attribute this world and its creation to God, these things must be, by implication, God's Will. He created them. If we believe He created the world we must believe that, even if the belief is not conscious. At the very least we believe He willingly created the potential for all this suffering and loss, and somehow planned for us to go through it all.

Much Christian teaching has been very explicit about this. A loved one dies prematurely. We are overcome with an agony of grief and loss, and some well-intentioned friend tries to comfort us with the thought, "It was God's Will." What comfort is that? What does it do but place the blame for our agony on God? What does it do but make God into a monster, an object of fear or even hatred?

"God is still Love, and this is not His Will" (5:5). None of the forms of suffering and loss we see and experience are God's Will. They never have been. Such a belief stems from a covert belief that God has it in for us, that He is punishing us for our sins. To hold such a belief we must also hold a belief that we deserve this awful experience. This is the instant of our belief in separation from God being played out on the stage of the world.

You and I have thought that this was God's intention. He wanted us to be in this world of pain. Sometimes we have agreed with what we thought of Him, agreed that we deserved to suffer. Sometimes we have angrily denied we deserved it, and accused Him of being unfair. Often we have simply been bewildered, pitifully wondering what we did to deserve all this; sure we must have done something, but at a loss as to what it might be.

Somehow we have never considered this thought:

"All the world of pain is not His Will. Forgive yourself the thought He wanted this for you" (7:4-5).

The essence of our anguish, the element that lends it exquisite sharpness, is the underlying thought that God actually intends pain to happen. What cuts deepest is the hidden belief that God is the source of this pain. He Whom my heart loves, and loves uncontrollably, has willed this for me. It is my Father Who inflicts this pain.

We huddle in our suffering and grief, hopeless and lost because we think it is God's Will.

"This is not so," Jesus tells us. "Forgive yourself the thought He wanted this for you."

How could we think this of God? How could we believe He is so vengeful? We do not yet realize, yet will discover it so if we grant ourselves this forgiveness, that it is only this thought about God that grants to pain all its power over us. When grief tears at us, fear grips us, or a deep sense of loss seems to shred our very soul, if we will allow ourselves to turn to the Holy Spirit and hear Him say, "God does not want this for you," we will find it possible to forgive ourselves for thinking it was so. The moment we do, the vitality of pain is removed. "God does not want this for me. This is not from Him." The pain becomes--something else.

God's Will is not the source of our pain. It is ourselves. We believe God punishes because we believe we deserve punishment. We experience life as pain because we are unconsciously punishing ourselves.

We are not talking here of the event we think has caused our pain or fear: the death of the loved one, the apparent loss of love, the physical suffering. We are talking primarily of the mental-emotional context in which we are holding it. This is an internal thing. This anguish, this pain of grief, this terror--this is not His Will for you. We suffer so incredibly because, all unconscious, we accept most of life as a punishment. A chastisement. A penalty for being the awful thing we think we are.

Because we believe the bite of pain is His Will, we cannot take it to Him for comfort. He is its Source, we think, so we flee from Him. We deny ourselves the relief of His loving Presence. In that Presence we can find our Self. We can look on our own essence and "look upon no obstacle to what He wills for you" (8:3). We can ask the Holy Spirit to help us look beyond our fear and pain, and see our loving Self, the Self which is our only reality (9:8).

"Forgive yourself the thought He wanted this for you." Bring your pain to Jesus. It was never God's intention for you to experience pain. The experience you are going through can become a doorway to infinite release if you let down your defenses against God. His Presence can transform your experience of pain into one of joy. It can be a path to knowing your Self as Love. Such seems impossible to us, but then, miracles always seem impossible.

Let down the defenses. God is not angry. He does not want this pain for you. Uncoil from your tight fear of Him. Shrink not from His touch. Let Him show you your Self as He sees it, and open to His healing Love.