

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

LESSON 149

May 29

“My mind holds only what I think with God.”

“When I am healed I am not healed alone.”

“Heaven is the decision I must make.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Review IV

Purpose: To prepare for part II of the Workbook, by concentrating on readiness for it and by reviewing the last 20 lessons in a way that will facilitate that readiness.

Longer: 2—beginning and ending of the day for 5 minutes or more.

- Open your mind, clear it of all distracting thoughts. For five minutes let this thought alone occupy it, displacing all others: “My mind holds only what I think with God.”
- Read the day’s two ideas. Close eyes and repeat ideas slowly, without hurry, for this is what time was made for. Let each word shine with the meaning God gave it. Receive from each idea the gift God placed in it.

Remarks: Phase 1 will be enough to set your day along the lines God planned, making it a special time of blessing for you and for the world. It will be enough to place Him in charge of all your thoughts. Your thoughts will come from more than you. They will also come from Him and tell you of His Love. Thus will you, His completion, join with Him. And He, your completion, will join with you. He thanks you for your practicing. And as your day ends, His gratitude will surround you.

Shorter: hourly, for a quiet moment

- Say: “My mind holds only what I think with God.” Spend a quiet moment with it.
- Then repeat the day’s two ideas, slowly enough to see their gifts and receive their gifts.

COMMENTARY

More and more, as we progress through the Workbook, what we are being asked to do is really to commune with God. Or, to put it in more mundane terms, to get back into communication with Him.

“You taught yourself the most unnatural habit of not communicating with your Creator. Yet you remain in close communication with Him, and with everything that is within Him, as it is within yourself. Unlearn isolation through His loving guidance, and learn of all the happy communication that you have thrown away but could not lose.” (T-14.III.18:1–3)

As we clear our minds of lesser thoughts and tune in on the thoughts we share with God, thoughts will come to our minds, and they won’t be from ourselves alone. “And so each one will bring the message of His Love to you, returning messages of yours to Him. So will communion with the Lord of Hosts be yours, as He Himself has willed it be.” (W-pI.rIV.6:2,3) Connecting in my mind with God connects me, as well, with my brothers and sisters, because all of us are connected to the Source. I am not healed alone.

I could use a “message of His Love” today; how about you? And I wouldn’t mind returning my message of love to Him, as well. There are moments in a loving relationship where the love just seems to be ping-ponging back and forth so fast you can’t follow it, you can’t even be sure whose love is whose. It outstrips ping-ponging, in fact; it transcends the back-and-forth motion implied by that analogy and becomes a constant, cyclical current of love, going both ways simultaneously. You don’t even feel as though you are *doing* anything; you are just caught in the current, possessed by love. Sort of the way you might feel when you look into your beloved’s eyes and feel you are falling in, when the love coming back at you is almost too much to bear, and the love you are feeling threatens to blow your circuits. I’d like a moment like that today with my Beloved. Well, I’d like a moment like that *this year*. I’ve had such moments, but they are rare.

Why are they rare? Having those moments of communion, which is a foretaste of Heaven, is up to me. It’s a decision I must make; no, *the* decision I must make.

“The instant in which magnitude dawns upon you is but as far away as your desire for it. As long as you desire it not and cherish littleness instead, by so much is it far from you. By so much as you want it will you bring it nearer” (T-15.IV.2:2–4). It is nearer than my own heart, so close. This ecstasy of love, this communion with God, is actually going on right now. My right mind has never ceased to be in perfect communication with Him (T-13.XI.8). “The part of your mind in which truth abides is in constant communication with God, whether you are aware of it or not.” (W-pI.49.1:2)

So all that is necessary is to decide that I want it, and it is there. I just plug in to it. What is it that prevents me from choosing it? What keeps me from letting myself fall in love with God? What holds me back? Am I willing to be in love with everyone, or am I afraid of appearing too “mooshy?” Am I afraid of being out of control? Am I afraid of being too vulnerable? What holds me back? Let me look at myself today and ask myself, “Why am I not experiencing being in Heaven right now?”

When you realize that you could just “switch over” at any instant—and that you don’t!—it is a sobering moment. All of a sudden you can’t blame anyone or anything for experiencing anything

less than Heaven. You recognize that you are choosing it; “I am doing this to myself” (see T-27.VIII.10:1). There is literally nothing to prevent me from experiencing the holy instant right now. Nothing but my refusal to accept it; nothing but my fear. “So we begin today considering the choice that time was made to help us make.” (W-pI.138.7:1) There is no rush; we have all of time to make this choice. But why wait? Why not now?

LESSON 150

May 30

“My mind holds only what I think with God.”

“I will accept Atonement for myself.”

“Only salvation can be said to cure.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Review IV

Purpose: To prepare for part II of the Workbook, by concentrating on readiness for it and by reviewing the last 20 lessons in a way that will facilitate that readiness.

Longer: 2—beginning and ending of the day for 5 minutes or more.

- Open your mind, clear it of all distracting thoughts. For five minutes let this thought alone occupy it, displacing all others: “My mind holds only what I think with God.”
- Read the day’s two ideas. Close eyes and repeat ideas slowly, without hurry, for this is what time was made for. Let each word shine with the meaning God gave it. Receive from each idea the gift God placed in it.

Remarks: Phase 1 will be enough to set your day along the lines God planned, making it a special time of blessing for you and for the world. It will be enough to place Him in charge of all your thoughts. Your thoughts will come from more than you. They will also come from Him and tell you of His Love. Thus will you, His completion, join with Him. And He, your completion, will join with you. He thanks you for your practicing. And as your day ends, His gratitude will surround you.

Shorter: hourly, for a quiet moment

- Say: “My mind holds only what I think with God.” Spend a quiet moment with it.
- Then repeat the day’s two ideas, slowly enough to see their gifts and receive their gifts.

COMMENTARY

Accepting Atonement for myself means, to me, allowing God to release me from all kinds of guilt. Letting go of all my judgments against myself, all my diminishing self-evaluations. It means accepting that I am not my thoughts and, above all, I am not my ego. I am not what I have thought I am. I am not what I am afraid I am. Accepting the Atonement for myself means that I can look upon my own ego without condemnation, recognizing it as no more than a foolish mistake about myself that can be corrected.

When I accept Atonement for myself, I stop measuring myself against arbitrary standards and accept myself just as I am. I am able to look upon myself with love, to view myself with merciful acceptance. In the holy instant, I accept the Atonement, and to enter such a moment it is not necessary that I have no thoughts that are not pure, only that I have no thoughts that I want to keep (T-15.IV.9:1,2). I recognize that I have made mistakes, but I am willing for every mistake to be corrected, and I accept no guilt concerning those mistakes. I do not allow my mistakes to keep me from the holy instant, because the holy instant is the place those mistakes can be corrected,

and their consequences undone.

This is salvation. This is the undoing of errors, the correction of mistakes.

“Salvation is undoing in the sense that it does nothing, failing to support the world of dreams and malice. Thus it lets illusions go. By not supporting them, it merely lets them quietly go down to dust” (W-pII.2.3:1–3).

This is the only thing that can be said to truly cure. Anything less than this is mere alleviation of symptoms, mere shifting of form without any change in content. The root cause of guilt must be undone. “The Holy Spirit knows that all salvation is escape from guilt” (T-14.III.13:4).

To know that my mind holds only what I think with God is to escape from guilt. To know that my mind holds only what I think with God is salvation, and truly cures my ills. Atonement is God’s answer to everything within my mind that appears to be other than God. It erases every thought opposed to truth and leaves me with the clean, crisp truth of my own innocence. I can bring every impure thought, every unworthy thought, every guilty thought, every thought of isolation and separateness, every thought of pain and vengeance and despair to this miraculous place of Atonement, lay it there on the altar, and watch it disappear.

“This is the shift that true perception brings: What was projected out is seen within, and there forgiveness lets it disappear. For there the altar to the Son is set, and there his Father is remembered. Here are all illusions brought to truth and laid upon the altar. What is seen outside must lie beyond forgiveness, for it seems to be forever sinful. Where is hope while sin is seen as outside? What remedy can guilt expect? But seen within your mind, guilt and forgiveness for an instant lie together, side by side, upon one altar. There at last are sickness and its single remedy joined in one healing brightness. God has come to claim His Own. Forgiveness is complete.” (C-4.6:1–10)

LESSON 151

May 31

“All things are echoes of the Voice for God.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Morning/Evening: 15 minutes

- Repeat idea once, slowly.
- Then watch your thoughts. Give to the Holy Spirit each thought that comes to mind. He will evaluate it, retain the elements of truth and remove the elements of illusion. Then He will give it back as a miracle which does not contradict God’s Will and proclaims your wholeness. Each thought will thus take on healing power that offers its perfection to everyone.

Remarks: Purifying your thoughts will begin your ministry. For everyone will share in the thoughts He has purified. Through your transformation the world is released from guilt and learns of its sanctity.

Hourly: Remember the Holy Spirit Who restored you to sanity. Lift your resurrected mind to Him in gratitude.

COMMENTARY

The world as we see it seems to bear unrelenting witness to separation, sin, death, hatred, and the transient nature of everything. The world seen with the vision of Christ, as the Holy Spirit sees it, bears witness to the truth, to unity, holiness, life, love and the eternal nature of everything.

Everything is echoing the Voice for God, all the time, but we do not hear it. We hear the ego’s voice with relentless consistency. The two views could not be more stark in their contrast. Why do we display such a prejudice for the ego’s view?

The early part of this lesson points out that the reason the world so often seems so solidly real to us is because of our underlying doubt of its reality. It asks us to look at the fact that the ego goes too far in its stubborn insistence that what our eyes and ears show us is solidly reliable. It says that, although we know very well from our experience that our senses often deceive us, and our judgments are often wide of the mark, we irrationally continue to believe them down to the last detail. We show surprise whenever we discover that what we thought was true is not, in fact, true, even though we have had this experience hundreds or thousands of times. And it asks: “Why would you trust them [your senses] so implicitly? Why but because of underlying doubt, which you would hide with show of certainty” (2:5–6).

It is like the line in Shakespeare: “Methinks the lady doth protest too much.” (Not sure if that’s an exact quote.) It is the behavior of someone who is trying to shout down their doubts with protestations of absolute certainty. So, to the Holy Spirit, our very “certainty” of the world’s reality is a proof of underlying doubt! We are certain even when it is unreasonable to be certain, and that is a certain evidence of hidden uncertainty.

We who study the Course are used to the idea that we project our guilt and anger onto others. Here, however, the Course introduces the idea that there is a way in which our egos project themselves onto us. The ego doubts. The ego condemns itself. The ego alone feels guilt. Only the ego is in despair. (5:1–6) But it projects all of these things onto us, and tries to convince us “its

evil is your own” (6:2). It plays this trick on us by showing us the world through its eyes, and introducing the things of the world as witnesses to our evil, our guilt, our doubt and despair. The ego is desperate for us to see the world as it wants us to because the ego’s world is what proves to us that we are identical with the ego. For instance, it leads us to evaluate our own spiritual progress and to find ourselves wanting; it induces us to despair. Why? Because *it* [the ego] is feeling despair. It knows (without admitting it) that it is going to lose. This is why spiritual despair so often strikes after a major spiritual advance. The ego feels despair, and projects that despair onto our minds, trying to convince us the despair is *ours* rather than *its*. This is why the ego is so insistent on convincing us of the world’s reality. It needs the world to build its case.

The lesson asks us to raise all our evaluations, which we have learned from the ego, to question, and to doubt the evidence of our senses. It asks us to let the Holy Spirit be the Judge of what we are, and of everything that seems to happen to us (6:2, 6:6). If we try to judge things by ourselves, we will be deceived by our own egos, and the way in which we see ourselves and the world will become a witness to the ego’s reality. If, however, we let go of our judgments and accept the judgment of the Holy Spirit, He will bear witness to our beautiful creation as God’s Son. Everything we see, if we look with Him, will show us God.

Read the 11th paragraph; it describes perfectly just how the Holy Spirit accomplishes this retranslation of everything. When we give Him our thoughts, He gives them back as miracles (14:1).

Let me, then, give my thoughts to Him today. Let me not hide my thoughts from Him, nor try to alter them myself before I expose them to His sight. Let me ask Him to work His alchemy on them, to transmute the lead into gold before my eyes. That is His job. Every thought has elements of truth in it, to which we have added falsehood and illusion. The Holy Spirit strips away the false, and leaves the golden kernel of truth. He does not attack our thoughts; He purifies them. He shows “the love beyond the hate, the constancy in change, the pure in sin” (11:3). He does this with our very thoughts, and so reveals to us the gentle face of Christ as our very Self.

LESSON 152

June 1

“The power of decision is my own.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Morning/Evening: 5 minutes

- Encourage your frightened mind with this: “The power of decision is my own. This day I will accept myself as what my Father’s Will created me to be.”
- Then wait in silence. In true humility give up all your arrogant self-concepts, which say that you are a guilty, fearful sinner. Give up all your self-deceptions, which comprise the ephemeral physical world you made. Give up all your frantic thoughts.
- Humbly ask your Self to reveal Himself to you, in all His mightiness, changelessness and wholeness. Lift your heart in true humility to Him Who created you like Himself in purity, power and love. His Voice will then substitute your true Self for your self-concepts and self-deceptions.

Hourly: Invite your Self with these words: “The power of decision is my own. This day I will accept myself as what my Father’s Will created me to be.”

COMMENTARY

The central appeal of this lesson is to get me to “accept [my] rightful place as co-creator of the universe” (8:3). It attempts, through its logical arguments, to persuade me to accept the fact that I made the world I see (6:1). “Nothing occurs but represents your wish, and nothing is omitted that you choose” (1:5).

If that is true, and I accept it, then the main thought of the lesson makes sense: “The power of decision is my own.” My choice makes the world. What grants our illusion of pain, sin and death such apparent solidity is that we believe it exists outside of our power; that we are *not* responsible for it. If, however, I can accept that I made it what it is, then I can recognize the possibility of exercising the same power of choice to make it disappear. If I deny that I made it I cannot unmake it.

If, however, I recognize that I have made the world I see, I am accepting at the same time that God did *not* make it. The absurdity of the idea that God created this world is clearly stated here. “To think that God made chaos, contradicts His will, invented opposites to truth, and suffers death to triumph over life; all this is arrogance. Humility would see at once these things are not of him” (7:1–2). If they are not of Him, they must be of me—my fabrications, the results of my power of decision, and therefore undo-able.

Applied to myself, these ideas mean that I must be still whole, unchanged by mistakes. “As God created you, you must remain unchangeable, with transitory states by definition false. And that includes all shifts in feeling, alterations in conditions of the body and the mind; in all awareness and in all response” (5:1–2). I love those words, “transitory states by definition false.” If it changes, it is not real. Wow! What does that do to any concerns I might have about mood swings? About aging? About sickness? About the level of my income (“transitory” seems so a propos in regard to income!)? How about alterations in awareness? Transitory, therefore false.

Alterations in my response to the Course? Transitory, therefore false. Truth is true, and only truth is true; any and all alterations are “contradictions introduced by [me]” (4:4).

I have begun to learn that when I feel bummed out, for any reason, I can remind myself that this feeling is transitory and therefore false; nothing to be concerned about. This doesn't always immediately dispel my feeling bummed out, but it *does* prevent me from feeling guilty about feeling bummed out, or feeling anxious that something is seriously wrong with me. As a result, the negative feeling does not last as long as it used to, because I am no longer adding additional layers of self-condemnation on top of the original feeling.

Such an attitude somehow distances me from the transitory feelings or shifts in my awareness.

Instead of relating *from* the feeling I begin to relate *to* it, with gentleness and merciful forgiveness. Some have expressed the difference in words by saying things like, “My body is sick,” instead of, “I am sick,” or, “I am experiencing a depression,” instead of saying, “I am depressed.” Instead of the passing thought or feeling being mistaken for “me,” I am aware of “me” over here, consistent and unchanging, but experiencing this transitory state of mind. “I” am distinct from, and not identified with, the passing show of my mind. And in that situation, I can recognize: “The power of decision is my own.”

LESSON 153

June 2

“In my defenselessness my safety lies.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Morning/Evening Quiet Time: 5 minutes—at least; 10—better; 15 even better; 30 or more—best

Let your weakness disappear as you remember that Christ’s strength abides in you. Leave dreams and fearful thoughts behind as you recognize you need no defense, for you were created unassailable. You will stand secure, certain of your safety, salvation and your holy purpose of blessing the world.

Hourly Remembrance: as the hour strikes more than 1 minute (reduce if circumstances do not permit)

Sit quietly and wait on God. Thank Him for His gifts in the previous hour. And let His Voice tell you what He wants you to do in the coming hour.

Remarks: At times the business of the world will allow you only a minute or less, or no time at all. At other times you will forget. Yet whenever you can, do your hourly remembrance.

Frequent Reminder: Through the day, remind yourself God remains beside you, supporting your weakness with His strength.

Remarks: In time you will never cease to think of God, not even for a moment, not even while busy giving salvation to the world.

Response To Temptation: Whenever you feel tempted to defend yourself, call upon God’s strength, pause a moment, and hear Him say: “I am here.”

Overall Remarks: Your practice will begin to be infused with the earnestness of love, keeping your mind from wandering. Do not be afraid, you will reach your goal. God’s Love and strength will make sure of it, for you are His minister.

COMMENTARY

In regard to our practice, notice that this lesson presents instructions that are to be followed “for quite a while” (15:1). Specifically, the form of practice given today continues for every lesson through Lesson 170. They are given this once and not referred to again except in brief mentions; we are supposed to remember the instructions from this lesson. Notice, too, that the instructions about what we are to do in this five to thirty-minute period each day are rather vague. Mostly they are summed up as “giving our attention to the daily thought as long as possible” (15:2). We are told that our “practicing will now begin to take the earnestness of love” (20:1). The longer practice periods have become “a time to spend with God” (15:5); we enjoy His loving Presence so much that half an hour seems too short! To some degree, by this time, our practicing has switched from sessions with a drill sergeant to a rendezvous with our Lover. If that hasn’t happened for us yet, it will; “There can be no doubt that you will reach your final goal” (20:3). The lesson opens by pointing out that this world is <not> a safe place; “It is rooted in attack” (1:2–3). Peace of mind in <this> world is impossible (1:5). On every side are things that provoke us to defensiveness (2:1–2). But defenses affect not only what is outside of us; they

affect ourselves. They reinforce our sense of weakness (2:4), and since they ultimately do not work (2:4), they betray us. We are betrayed by the world outside and by our own defenses within (2:5–6).

“It is as if a circle held it [the mind] fast, wherein another circle bound it and another one in that, until escape no longer can be hoped for nor obtained” (3:1). We are trapped in concentric vicious circles of attack and defense; we find ourselves unable to break out of the attack-defense cycle (3:2–3).

We do not realize how profoundly our minds are threatened by the world around us. If we try as hard as we can to conceive of someone caught deep in a frenzy of intense fear, “The sense of threat the world encourages is so much deeper, and so far beyond the frenzy and intensity of which you can conceive, that you have no idea of all the devastation it has wrought” (4:2). All of us, the Course is saying, are living in blind panic masked by a superficial act of being calm. Panic is always there, just below the surface. Think of the things that threaten us constantly, and the attention that is paid to them in our personal lives and in the media. Nuclear holocaust. Street gangs. Drunk drivers. *All* drivers. Corrupt politicians. The greedy power structure. Threatening economic collapse. Food additives, depletion of the ozone layer, vitamin-depleted foods, growth hormones in our milk, nitrates in the bacon, cholesterol, saturated fat, sugar, polluted water supplies, draught, heat waves, blizzards, floods, hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, alien invasion, lying news media, insects in our homes, aging bodies, untrustworthy love partners or business partners, AIDS, cancer, heart disease—the list could go on and on. And we have not begun to speak of the threat of foreign invasion or economic takeover, racial animosities, or religious intolerance.

We are slaves of the world’s threat (5:1). “You do not know what you do, in fear of it. You do not understand how much you have been made to sacrifice, who feel its iron grip upon your heart” (5:2–3). Try to imagine, for a moment, what it would be like to be completely <without> any and all fear concerning the things we have mentioned. If you are like me, you can’t even <imagine> it. We have become so accustomed to the subliminal hum of fear! Nor do we realize how much we have sabotaged our own peace by our stance of constant defensiveness (5:4). The choice this lesson presents to us (6:3) is between two things: the “silly game” (6:4) of defensiveness, played by tired children too sleepy to remember what they want (a bit like how I feel right now!), and the “game that happy children play” (12:1), a joyous game that teaches us that the game of fear is gone. The happy game is “salvation,” or functioning as a minister of God in the world, offering the light to all our brothers. In brief, we can spend our time trying to defend ourselves, or we can drop our defenses and reach out in love to the world. Those are the only options.

The game of defensiveness is a deadly one. In defenses “lies madness in a form so grim that hope of sanity seems but to be an idle dream, beyond the possible” (4:2). Defenses bind us into an attack-defense cycle that never ends.

Defenselessness is based on the reality of what we are. “We need no defense because we are created unassailable” (9:1). It witnesses to our strength. As God’s ministers we are protected. We need no defense <because> we are “the ones who are among the chosen ones of God, by His election and [our] own as well” (10:6).

To choose defenselessness is to choose the strength of Christ, instead of our own weakness. To

reach out to heal, instead of contracting inward in self-defense, puts us in an unassailable position. Our true safety lies, not in protecting what we have, but in giving it away, because this firmly identifies us with the Christ.

Robert Perry's Comments on Lesson 153's Practice Instructions

Lesson 153: Laying the foundation for full-blown practice

This is one of most important shifts in the Workbook. Up until now we have been given various pieces.

- We have been instructed in longer practice periods that have slowly gravitated to morning and evening time slots. And we have learned several kinds of practice for these longer periods, meditation being perhaps the most frequent and notable.
- We have been instructed in hourly remembrances, beginning with Lesson 93. These have been anywhere from the demanding five minutes per hour of 93–110 to the brief moments spent with the idea in 121–152.
- We have been instructed in frequent reminders, beginning with that landmark Lesson 20 and its descendants, Lessons 27, 40 and 48, and then going into the intense frequency of the 60's and 70's.
- We have also been instructed in response to temptation, which has evolved enormously from its first appearance in Lesson 4. We started getting specific instructions for it in the 30's. We were trained in the crucial skill of letting related thoughts come in the 40's and 60's, a skill which we applied to response to temptation in the 80's. We got special lines to say in the 60's and 70's and were given particular temptations to respond to in the 130's.

Putting into place the bottom tiers of the pyramid. We can look at these four types of practice as a series of tiers constituting a pyramid. The pyramid rests on the foundation of the morning and evening quiet times and extends up to the apex of response to temptation. Lesson 153 is a major step toward assembling the entire pyramid. It gives us 48 lessons in which to focus on putting the first two tiers solidly in place. This is a major step toward assembling the entire pyramid, which we will take with us into Part II of the Workbook.

The instructions for the next 48 lessons. The instructions for this lesson begin by saying, “Today we will practice in a form we will maintain for quite a while.” It does not mention that “quite a while” means nearly fifty lessons. Here are some comments on those instructions:

- **Morning and evening quiet time.** We are asked to give as much time as we can—at least five minutes and at best more than a half hour. This focus on duration drops away later, but for now it is important. We are still given some instruction in what to do in this time, but much of it is left up to us. We have enough experience in meditation, in listening for the Holy Spirit's Voice, in bringing our darkness to His light, and in waiting for an experience of vision from Him, that are being increasingly left on our own.

• **Hourly remembrance.** The hourly remembrance has reached its final form. Two things are notable about this final form:

- Ideally we spend a couple of minutes or more, but given the nature of our days we spend however much we can. It is understood that we will often not be able to or will forget.
- The hourly remembrance, both here and in its modified form in Lesson 193, focuses on putting to bed the previous hour and preparing us for the coming hour. The current instructions have us thanking God for the previous hour and asking for guidance for the coming one.

• **Response to temptation.** Though this practice is not mentioned as part of the instructions, it has become an assumed part of the practice of the Workbook. Hopefully, we know by now something of how to do this practice, how to watch our thoughts and use the idea to respond to egoic thoughts. Yet we will still occasionally get instructions for particular applications of certain lessons.

It either goes up from here or down from here. The instructions for practice have been relatively relaxed lately, resting us up from that intense five minutes per hour of 93–110 and getting us ready for the leap forward of Lesson 153. If we are not ready to leap forward, chances are that we will start sliding down from here, for two reasons. First, the Workbook is asking for a lot of practice. Second, just as the Workbook is asking for more, it is also leaving us more and more on our own, giving us fewer and fewer instructions. We are thus being asked to practice more and do so under *our own motivation*. If we are not up to it, then just as the Workbook is trying to move us into the fullness of practice, we will be drifting away into less and less practice.

LESSON 154

June 3

“I am among the ministers of God.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To give what you have received, and so recognize that it is yours. To give the Holy Spirit your voice, hands and feet.

Morning/Evening Quiet Time: 5 minutes—at least; 10—better; 15 even better; 30 or more—best

- Say: “I am among the ministers of God, and I am grateful that I have the means by which to recognize that I am free.”
- Let the world recede from your mind, as your mind lights up with the realization that these holy words are true. Thus will the gifts of God spring to your awareness, so you can give them.

Hourly Remembrance: as the hour strikes, more than 1 minute (reduce if circumstances do not permit)

Sit quietly and wait on God. Thank Him for His gifts in the previous hour. And let His Voice tell you what He wants you to do in the coming hour.

Remarks: At times the business of the world will allow you only a minute or less, or no time at all. At other times you will forget. Yet whenever you can, do your hourly remembrance.

Frequent Reminder: Say: “I am among the ministers of God, and I am grateful that I have the means by which to recognize that I am free.”

Remarks: In time you will never cease to think of God, not even for a moment, not even while busy giving salvation to the world.

Response To Temptation: Use the day’s thought.

Overall Remarks: Your practice will begin to be infused with the earnestness of love, keeping your mind from wandering. Do not be afraid, you will reach your goal. God’s Love and strength will make sure of it, for you are His minister.

COMMENTARY

As I see it, this lesson has two main things to say to me:

- 1) My function on earth is to be a minister (or messenger) of God, and the specific form that function takes is determined, not by me, but by the Holy Spirit.
- 2) As a messenger, my function is to receive God’s messages for myself, and then to give them away, as directed by the Holy Spirit. By giving away the messages I will recognize and understand the messages I have received.

The Holy Spirit knows me to the core. He knows my individual strengths and weaknesses; He knows the “larger plan” I cannot possibly know (1:5); He knows how best to use my particular strengths, “where they can best be applied, for what, to whom, and when” (2:2). Therefore, it is unwise to try to evaluate myself or to direct my own functioning in this world, and far wiser to place myself in His hands. Because of this, I will “choose no roles that are not given [me] by His

authority” (7:3). He chooses my function for me, tells me what it is, gives me strength to do it and to succeed in everything related to it (3:2).

A major part of the training program in the Workbook is learning to hear His Voice and to submit to Its authority. Learning to hear His Voice isn’t something that comes without any effort. Indeed, it takes effort and great willingness (T-5.II.3:9, 10). I may feel at first that I don’t know how to hear His Voice, but that is <exactly> why I need this practice. I don’t know, as I begin, how to tell the Voice of the Holy Spirit apart from my own ego’s voice; I need training in that discernment, and some of it will be trial and error. But if I will follow the instructions in this book, I will learn.

The second point is really an encouragement to take up the function given me by God, which in a generic sense is to be His messenger. “He needs our voice that He may speak through us. He needs our hands to hold His messages, and carry them to those whom He appoints. He needs our feet to bring us where He wills, that those who wait in misery may be at last delivered. And He needs our will united with His Own, that we may be the true receivers of the gifts He gives” (11:2–5). Clearly, He directs me very specifically, choosing where I go physically, whom I speak to, and what I say. Yet the main thing is that I accept this overall function of “messenger” for my life; if I accept that, the specifics will follow.

There is a three step process clearly delineated in this lesson:

* Receive — Give — Recognize

First, I receive the message for myself, accept it and apply it to my own life. I accept the Atonement for myself, seeing that the appearance of guilt within me is an illusion, and recognizing the innocence it hides. I accept my acceptance with God. I let go of my false and guilty self-concept.

Second, I give this message to those to whom the Holy Spirit sends me. This can be with words, with actions, or simply with the attitude of mercy and acceptance I show to those I meet. I give the message I have received. I show them the mercy God has shown to me. I see in them what I have begun to see in myself.

Third, as a result of giving, I recognize the reality of what I have received. “No one can receive and understand he has received until he gives” (8:6). Giving away the message cements it and validates it in my own mind. “We will not recognize what we receive until we give it” (12:1).

The second step is an essential part of the whole process. Without giving away the message, the cycle cannot be completed; my own recognition of salvation cannot become complete. It is not enough simply to receive the messages of God. “Yet another part of your appointed task is yet to be accomplished” (9:4). The messages must be given away, shared, in order to be fully received. I must take up my function as the messenger of God if I am to understand what I have been given.

Notice that the practice instructions are adapted from Lesson 153, where we were told “we practice in a form we will maintain for quite a while” (W-pI.153.15:1). These instructions will be followed until new ones are given in Lesson 171 (Review V).

LESSON 155

June 4

“I will step back and let Him lead the way.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Morning/Evening Quiet Time: 5 minutes—at least; 10—better; 15 even better; 30 or more—best

Practice gladly with this thought: “I will step back and let Him lead the way, for I would walk along the road to Him.” Think of Him a while and let Him tell you of His limitless Love and trust in you.

Hourly Remembrance: as the hour strikes, for more than 1 minute (reduce if circumstances do not permit)

Practice gladly with this thought: “I will step back and let Him lead the way, for I would walk along the road to Him.” Think of Him a while and let Him tell you of His limitless Love and trust in you.

Frequent Reminder: Repeat: “I will step back and let Him lead the way, for I would walk along the road to Him.”

Response To Temptation: Whenever you feel tempted, say: “I will step back and let Him lead the way, for I would walk along the road to Him.”

COMMENTARY

“There is a way of living in this world that is not here, although it seems to be” (1:1). And to this way of living we all aspire. The remarkable thing about the Course is that it offers what might be called a middle way between renouncing the world and diving into it. Many, perhaps the majority of, spiritual seekers make the mistake of thinking that a spiritual life must somehow look different. Some dress differently; some abjure the modern conveniences; some find spirituality in vegetables; some fill their homes with incense; some live in poverty, or apart from normal worldly concourse.

This lesson is one of the clearest statements in the Course that a good Course student does not change appearance—except that perhaps he smiles more frequently. There are spiritual paths that demand a changed appearance—a shaved head, difference in dress—and this is not to put down these other paths. But they are not the way of the Course. One of the more difficult lessons for students of the Course, in my observation, seems to be learning to be normal. A true student of the Course is like anyone else, so much so that “those who have not yet perceived the way will... believe that you are like them, as you were before” (1:5).

Yet we are different. The difference is inward; we have stepped back, taken our hands off the controls of our lives, and we are letting our Inner Guide lead the way to God. Everyone, including ourselves, came to this world by choice, “seeking for a place where they can be illusions, and avoid their own reality” (2:2). But we have discovered that we cannot escape our reality, and we have chosen to place diminishing importance on the illusions, and to follow the truth. We have taken up our function, and we recognize that we are here now, not for ourselves alone, but to serve those around us as we serve ourselves (5:4). We walk to God, and we lead the

world to God with us (12:1; 13:1). We step back, and let Him lead the way.