

# Workbook Lesson Support Notes

## by Allen Watson

### **LESSON 18**

#### **I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing.**

How you see things has effects, and those effects are not limited to you.

The lesson “emphasizes the idea that minds are joined” (1:2). This is a key concept of A Course in Miracles. We think our thoughts are limited to ourselves, but the Course insists that they are not. In fact, as we shall soon see, your thoughts affect everyone. This is why no thought is unimportant.

When you do this lesson, during the day, let yourself become aware that, “What I am thinking right now is having an effect on everyone in the world.”

Once again, this should provide powerful motivation to do as the Apostle Paul wrote in the book of Romans:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2).

A change in your thinking can change the world:

A miracle is never lost. It may touch many people you have not even met, and produce undreamed of changes in situations of which you are not even aware. (T-1.I.45:1-2)

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### **LESSON 19**

#### **I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts.**

Minds are joined. How do you react to that idea? Take a moment and let yourself feel what comes up if you focus on the thought: all minds are joined. Do you welcome the idea with open arms, or is there a bit of resistance to it?

Does the thought that your mind is open in some way to everyone in the world feel like an invasion of your privacy?

Do you feel weighted down by the thought that what you think might have adverse effects on people all over the world?

How does it feel to think that “there are no private thoughts” (2:3)?

The lesson says this is a fact, and that it “must be true if salvation is possible at all” (2:4, my italics). What does the writer mean by that? He says “you will yet understand,” implying that we probably do not completely understand it now. If I think about it, it implies that if my mind is not joined with all other minds, I cannot be “saved.” If I am not joined, I must be separate--and being separate is hell. If my mind, and your mind, and all minds, are immutably joined with the One Mind of God, then, and only then, can we be truly safe. If I am a separate, independent blip of mind, adrift in an ocean of consciousness, then I am truly lost.

As you practice these lessons, try to get used to the routine of carefully searching your mind for whatever thoughts it might contain at the moment. It’s important not to try to blank your mind or block out any thoughts. Instead, let them in, let them arise, and notice what they are. And as you notice a thought, apply the lesson: I am not alone in experiencing the effects of this thought about ----.

Notice, also, how the author alerts you to the fact that he is going to discontinue constant reminders about being indiscriminate in applying the lesson. In the days to come, he expects us to remember this on our own. Random selection of thoughts for all practice periods “remains essential throughout” the entire Workbook.

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## **LESSON 20**

### **I am determined to see.**

I can’t quite tell you why, but this is one of my favorite lessons. There is something wonderful about saying out loud (to myself, of course): I am determined to see. The words have a powerful effect on me. I like repeating them a dozen times or so, varying the emphasis:

I am determined to **see**.

**I** am determined to see.

I **am** determined to see.

I am **determined** to see.

**I** am determined to **see**.

This lesson is a turning point. If the Workbook has seemed easy up until this point, that was intentional. It cannot stay that easy, however, and reach its goal of the total transformation of your thinking. So beginning now it will give you more of a structure within which to practice. This will include more frequent practice, set times in which to practice, and longer

practice. The idea for the day is quite appropriate to this change to a higher gear, this increase in difficulty. You will need determination to stick with it.

On the face of it, today's lesson does not really ask a lot. It just wants us to repeat the words, "I am determined to see," once every half hour. How much time does that take out of an hour? Maybe four or five seconds, that's all! No big deal, right? But it's amazing how difficult it will seem to you to actually do it. Most people feel threatened to some degree. They don't like being squeezed into a structure; they resist it. The word "discipline" has a negative charge for most of us. Why is that? Don't we want to change? Of course we do, at the deepest level, but at the ego level, we resist change. So the lesson in paragraph 2 reminds us that this is not some external will being imposed on us, but rather an expression of our own deep desire.

All we are really doing today is reminding ourselves of that deep, ancient inward craving to see, to know the truth and be set free.

Pay attention to this instruction, too: "...attempting [to repeat today's idea] every half hour. Do not be distressed if you forget to do so, but make a real effort to remember" (5:1-2). Make a real effort! Let's do that.

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## **LESSON 21**

### **I am determined to see things differently.**

With the addition of just two words, yesterday's lesson is converted into a call for the transformation of our minds..."to see things differently."

Once again we return to the five minute-long practice periods. If you have not already figured it out, you will find that it helps immensely to set times for practice in advance. One first thing in the morning is easy, but unless you set times for yourself during the day you are almost certain to forget until bed time--if you remember then! The intermediate times can be at something like 10 a.m., lunchtime, and 3 p.m. Or lunch, 3 p.m., and supper time. Picking the times in advance really helps you to remember. You may want to set other reminders for yourself, such as writing the lesson on a 3 x 5 card and placing it where you will see it when you go to eat lunch. All that is asked is a minute of practice.

Just as there is no order of difficulty in miracles (the first sentence of the Text), there are no levels of anger in the Course. Mild irritation or rage, a slight twinge of annoyance or intense fury, they are all the same. In fact, the "slight twinge" is "nothing but a veil" that hides your intense fury! In other words, all anger is always intense fury. So in practicing, even if what crops up seems like a "little" thought of anger, make sure not to pass over it. As the lesson points out, if you think some forms of anger are more obvious, what you really are thinking is that some instances of anger are more justified. The Course teaches, "Anger is never justified" (T-30.VI.1:1).

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## **LESSON 22--January 22**

### **What I see is a form of vengeance.**

This is a lesson that I simply did not understand the first few times I went through the Workbook. It makes a certain sense to me now, however, so let me share that understanding with you. Notice one thing, however, as you read through the lesson. What you are asked to actually practice with is *not* simply the thought that heads the lesson, but quite a bit more, ending with the question, "Is this the world I really want to see?" So understanding the lead thought isn't the entire purpose of this lesson; rather, the purpose is to help us realize that we do not really want what we are seeing.

We are seeing it, however, because in some part of our mind, a part we have hidden from consciousness, we do want it. That is how perceptions works. We see what we want to see. In other words, we are seeing what we are seeing because we want to see it. If that is so, then if this lesson can help us learn we don't *really* want it--that we really want something else--it will help us change what we see. Change what we desire, and our perception changes with it.

If we hold attack thoughts in our mind we must see the world as a vicious place, a dangerous place, a world of pain. That pain, says the Course, is punishment that we are dreaming into our experience as payment for our "sins." As I said yesterday, we are angry at ourselves over what we think we have done, and as a result we are having "a dream of fierce retaliation" (W-pl.190.2:4) for our crimes. As egos we are also angry at reality for not being what we want it to be, for not supporting our wish for separation and specialness. We cannot face our own anger at ourselves, and we cannot support the guilt of our insane rage at reality, so we project it. Once we project it, we see it in the world staring back at us. We see an angry, vengeful world.

The anger and attack we see in the world is only the reflection of the intensity of our inner rage, the rage we cannot see in ourselves *precisely because* we have denied it and projected it outward. The world I see thus shows me what I am thinking. Vengeance is what fills my own mind, although I am unaware of it. That I see vengeance in the world is the proof it is in my mind, because that is the law of perception.

Paragraph 2 calls our picture of the world--a picture of nothing but attack, defense, and counterattack--our own "savage fantasy" (2:1). What evocative words! If the world looks like this--and surely it does, quite often at least--what must be the state of our minds that spawn it?

We *do* want to get free of this savage fantasy. That is the goal of today's lesson, to help us become willing to change how we see. None of what we are seeing exists, and if we are willing to change how we see, we will no longer see it.

The Course's definition of "real" is "eternal, everlasting, changeless." What does not last is not real, by definition. Therefore none of this is real, by this definition. If it is not real, what is it? "A form of vengeance." Ken Wapnick said once that the world is simply crystallized guilt. This lesson is saying that the world is crystallized attack thoughts, vengeance solidified into a world of attack and counterattack.

Think about that final question we are supposed to ask ourselves: "Is this the world I really want to see?" (3:8). This lesson is working at the level of motivation. It is not telling us *how* we can see something differently. It knows that if it can get us to the point of *wanting* something different the battle is over, because what we want, we will see. So if this lesson leaves you thinking, "God! No, I don't want to see the world like this anymore, but what can I do about it?" then the lesson has been successful. The question will be answered as the lessons progress.

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### ***LESSON 23--January 23***

#### **I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts.**

This is one example of a statement that sums up the message of ACIM for us. We do not escape this conflict-ridden world by controlling it, manipulating it, fixing it, or trying to make it better. We escape by an act of mind, by relinquishing our own hostile thoughts. This lesson is emphatic in saying that there is no other way. It cannot work by trying to rearrange externals. The world is the symptom level; the mind is the level of causation.

It is very hard for most people to accept this dictum of the Course: "There is no point in trying to change the world" (2:3). As often as I have read this I keep running my head up against it. I find myself trying to change some outward factor, something in the world around me, thinking that such a change will somehow make things better. All this accomplishes is to alleviate some symptoms, like taking a cough drop when I have a cold. It cures nothing. Or, as Marianne Williamson has said, it is like trying to solve the problems on the Titanic by rearranging the deck chairs. The only change that works is an inward change.

Every day we look on the world, not realizing that the images we see have been fashioned by us, by our attack thoughts. We don't recognize the power of our mind; we use the very images made by the mind to mask the mind's power. We resist being tagged as the image maker. We want it to be someone else's fault, even God's.

Every single thing we made out of our hate, our attack, and our rage can be transformed if we join with the Holy Spirit to let His light shine on them. Every special relationship, whether it seems hateful or loving, can become a source of blessing to the world. Every act of vengeance can be turned into salvation. This is what a miracle does.

In paragraph 5 we find a wonderfully brief summary of the process of changing our minds, which Ken Wapnick has labeled the three steps of forgiveness. It is found in a single sentence (see 5:2). This sentence gives us the following three steps:

1) *Identifying the cause.* We must recognize that mind is the cause. We must become aware that we are constantly "making" the ego every moment within our own minds, by our thoughts. We must become aware that what we see is not foisted upon us from without, but projected from within.

2) *Letting go of the cause.* Having recognized the mind as cause, that is where we focus our efforts at change. We must realize that the thoughts we have been thinking are not the thoughts we want because, as the lesson said yesterday, we realize the world they have produced is not what we want. It does not say anything here about coming up with new thoughts; it merely says we let go of the old ones. All that is needed is a willingness for change, a recognition that, "I no longer want this."

3) *The cause is replaced.* The third step is the replacement of attack thoughts with holy thoughts, thoughts of love and peace. Please take note: *This replacement is not our job!* We cooperate in uncovering the ego within our minds (Step 1), and we cooperate in letting go of those ego thoughts (Step 2), but the replacement with God's thoughts is not our job. That just happens.

When something happens to upset me, this is all I need to remember. 1) The cause is not outside but my own thoughts. 2) I do not want these thoughts. If I just remember that, Step 3 takes care of itself, for the "true" thoughts spoken of earlier are already in my mind, but they are masked by the false ones. Remove the false, and the true is seen to be already there.

Within the practice instructions there is one other idea worth singling out. We are supposed to include "both your thoughts of attacking and being attacked...because they are exactly the same" (7:1-2). An "attack thought" is not just a thought of anger or resentment I have toward another; it is also a thought of *being* attacked by another. What seems to be attack coming at me from outside is really my own thought of attack bouncing back at me.

Fears of all kinds are therefore attack thoughts. Uneasiness when a highway patrol car cruises by is an attack thought. Worry about competition at work, or in a relationship, is an attack thought. Cheering when the Death Star blows up is an attack thought. Watch your mind on Super Bowl Sunday!

We have a lot of giving up to do. The result is worth it.

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## **LESSON 24--January 24**

### **I do not perceive my own best interests.**

Our actions in any given situation are the direct result of how we perceive the situation. And as we have been seeing for the last 23 lessons, our perceptions are, to put it mildly, unreliable. The lesson says it more bluntly. It says they are just plain "wrong." While those perceptions stay in place, then, we are doomed to spend all of our time seeking outcomes that are not in our best interests.

Paragraph 6 describes the mess produced by the goals we carry in relation to any situation. Rather than pursuing a single, unified goal, we are simultaneously pursuing a jumble of different goals, many of which are mutually exclusive. Thus, even if we achieve some of the goals we desire, a number of other goals will be frustrated by that very achievement. Moreover, some of the goals we have attached to this situation bear no real relation to it. In other words, there is no way *this* situation can meet *those* goals. Like an overburdened camel, we have piled onto this single situation a bundle of hopes and dreams too huge for it to ever possibly carry.

We have all experienced what this paragraph is talking about, particularly in making major decisions. Suppose I receive a fabulous job offer that pays me more money than I ever dreamed of and involves doing something I like. Sounds good at first. Then I realize I will have to relocate to a part of the country I don't like; I'll have to be willing to travel extensively; and I will frequently be required to work long hours and weekends. My mind suddenly becomes filled with all the conflicting goals. I may find I am expecting the job to make me happy, somehow. Perhaps I am thinking the job should provide me with spiritual companions. I'll have to leave my friends behind. And so on and on.

The more I have worked with the Course the more I realize that this is not just a beginning lesson; it is something that applies to nearly every situation I get into. I am constantly reminding myself that I don't know what my own best interests are in one situation after another. I find it most important to do so when things seem to be relatively clear, when I think I *do* know what I want and need. For that is the very thought that keeps my mind closed. That is what keeps me from being taught by the Holy Spirit what it is that truly serves my happiness. The best mental state I can maintain, then, is, "I don't know."

I can acknowledge my preferences, I can admit that I think I would like certain things to happen, but I need to learn to add, "I'm not certain this is the best." If I pray for something, I can add, "Let X happen, or something better." I remain open-minded, ready to accept that what I think about the situation may not cover all the bases, and probably does not. That is the intent behind today's idea: to open our minds to the possibility that we may not know, and may need assistance.