

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

LESSON 184

July 3

“The Name of God is my inheritance.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To go past the inheritance you gave yourself and so experience the Name that God gave as your true inheritance. This experience will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment. You cannot fail today.

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

- Repeat idea.
- Let your mind accept the Name God gave you. This is the answer to the pitiful inheritance you made for yourself. Use only this one Name in your practicing. If other names enter your mind, respond with this Name.

Remarks: You need this interval in which you leave the dark prison house of the world and go into the sunlight. Here you understand the name which God gave you, the one Identity that all things share. And then step back into darkness, to proclaim its unreality using names that have meaning in the world of darkness.

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

(Suggestion) Do a short version of morning/evening exercise.

Frequent Reminder: (Suggestion) Realize that the different names you have given things obscure their oneness. Practice applying the one Name to everything, and see all foolish separations disappear.

Response To Temptation: (Suggestion) When tempted to think someone’s name defines them as a separate identity, silently apply God’s Name to them.

COMMENTARY

There is a lot we could think about in this lesson. The way names, which are symbols, are based on separation and distancing of things. The way that perception is built up by these names and distinctions. How all of this is forced to view wholeness as an enemy. The way that the learning of the world consists primarily in learning all these names and ways of classifying things.

All of this is in contrast to the reality that is represented by the Name of God. The Name of God stands for wholeness, oneness, “the one Identity Which all things share” (10:2). Our perception has taught us an illusion, based on thousands of names for discreet parts we see as separate things; reality, however, is Wholeness, undifferentiated, unseparated. The picture of parts we have manufactured hides the reality of the Wholeness from us.

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So, then, are we to attempt to completely set aside our perception of parts with separate names, and to live, somehow, seeing only the Oneness? Is it somehow “wrong” for us to use the names and symbols of the world, to act as though Marilyn is different from Bob? Are we to treat a bluebird like our own baby? No. The lesson affirms the absolute truth, but it does not insist we attempt to make this world fit into that picture.

First, it says quite clearly that learning all the little names and symbols of separation “is a phase of learning everyone who comes must go through” (7:2). As some teachers of transpersonal psychology (the branch of psychology that teaches that ultimate wholeness transcends individual ego development) have said, you cannot transcend the ego until you have developed a healthy ego. Ego development seems to be a necessary step in our overall growth. Children have to become healthy, adult egos before they can successfully go beyond the ego. If an adult is still wrestling with problems of personality development that, in “normal” growth, should have been handled in childhood or adolescence, those problems probably need to be addressed, on their own level, before the person seeks to transcend their ego entirely.

I am extrapolating on the lesson a good deal here, and expressing what have to be classed as opinions, not necessarily something taught by the Course. But I do think this section comes pretty close to implying this; *everyone* has to pass through the “teaching of the world” stage before they can begin to question its premises. We do not want to “stop short” at the teaching of the world (7:4), but it does seem we have to pass through it. “In its proper place, it serves but as a starting point from which another kind of learning can begin” (7:5).

Not only do we all need to pass through the world’s kind of learning as a starting point, but after we have begun to “go beyond all symbols of the world,” there is still reason for us to continue to use them: we have a teaching function (9:1). We still continue, for instance, to call people by name, to treat them as individuals with individual needs, but we are “not deceived” (9:3) by these apparent differences. The names and symbols of the world are necessary for purposes of communication, but, “They become but means by which you can communicate in ways the world can understand, but which you recognize is not the unity where true communication can be found” (9:5). We are using the symbols of the world to communicate the fact of Wholeness; we are using symbols to undo the symbols.

This is a tricky game. It is easy, remaining in the world and playing by the rules of separation, so to speak, to forget the reality these symbols of separation are hiding. That is exactly why the practice of holy instants is so important!

“Thus what you need are intervals each day in which the learning of the world becomes a transitory phase; a prison house from which you go into the sunlight and forget the darkness. Here you understand the Word, the Name which God has given you; the one Identity which all things share; the one acknowledgment of what is true. And then step back to darkness, not because you think it real, but only to proclaim its unreality in terms which still have meaning in the world that darkness rules” (W-pI.184.10).

Practicing with the Name of God enables us to let go of “all foolish separations...which kept us blind” (14:3). In our quiet times we remember the Wholeness and forget the differences. We may still see differences, but what we see has not changed the truth (13:3). All things still have One Name. In our practicing we renew this awareness, and then we “step back to darkness;” we return to the world of symbols and dreams in order to proclaim to it the reality we have

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experienced in the holy instant.

“Father, our Name is Yours. In It we are united with all living things, and You Who are their one Creator” (15:1,2).

LESSON 185

July 4

“I want the peace of God.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To go past the dreams you still cherish and recognize that you really want the peace of God. Experiencing His peace will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment. You cannot fail today.

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

- Search your mind carefully to find the dreams you still cherish. Forget the words; what does your heart really ask for? What do you think will comfort you and make you happy? Do not hide some dreams; bring them all to light.
- Ask of every dream you thus uncover: “Is this what I would have, in place of Heaven and the peace of God?”
- After this, practice recognizing that you really mean the words of today’s idea.

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

(Suggestion) Do a short version of morning/evening exercise.

Frequent Reminder: Repeat idea, recognizing that you really mean it.

Response To Temptation: (Suggestion) When tempted to want something besides the peace of God, say: “Is this what I would have, in place of Heaven and the peace of God?” Then try to recognize that what you really want is the peace of God.

Overall Remarks: You have often been weak, uncertain of your purpose and desire, unsure where to turn for help. Today have one intent. Make the request for God’s peace, realizing that in so doing you join your mind with the call of every mind. Through this joining, you cannot fail to find the Help you need.

COMMENTARY

Kind of interesting that a lesson about the peace of God falls on the day that celebrates a revolution (Independence Day in the USA). Our local Unity minister suggested that instead of “Independence Day” we should celebrate “Inner-dependence Day,” which I thought was a nice play on words and quite appropriate.

This lesson teaches two seemingly opposing things. First, it teaches us that we do not yet really mean it when we say, “I want the peace of God.” For if we meant it, we would have it. “No one can mean these words and not be healed” (2:1). “Many have said these words. But few indeed have meant them. You have but to look upon the world you see around you to be sure how very few they are” (2:6–8). Indeed, all you need to do is watch the evening news. Or spend one day at your job.

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Second, it teaches us that, in spite of our obvious dedication to things other than peace, at heart we *really do* want the peace of God. All of us do. “We want the peace of God. This is no idle wish” (7:2–3). “You want the peace of God. And so do all who seem to seek for dreams” (10:1–2).

The task the Course sets before us is uncovering and fully accepting *both* of these facts. To accept them fully, they must be accepted as true of everyone, not just of ourselves. Underneath all the seeking for illusions, everyone wants peace. This is something that is universally true, a fact that can be totally depended upon. It is true, as the line I quoted in the last paragraph asserts, even of those who seem to be seeking for something else. They may not be *aware* that the peace of God is what they really want, but it is true, nevertheless (10:4). Our job in interacting with others is to remember this universal longing of every heart, and to join ourselves with it in the other person, even when they are totally unaware of it themselves.

Yet before we can firmly believe that we, and everyone, wants the peace of God above all else, we have to face the fact that we have foolishly believed we wanted something else more than peace. For if we wanted only peace, we would have only peace; that is how the power of our minds works. So there must be something, or some things, that we have valued more than peace. Our first job, then, is uncovering these competing desires, assessing them honestly, recognizing that they are only idle wishes, and letting them go in favor of peace.

We want the most amazingly trivial things instead of peace. I watch a young child burst into tears and throw a tantrum because he cannot have his favorite breakfast, and I think, “The only difference between him and me is that I have developed sophisticated ways of camouflaging my tantrums.” I share a house with Robert Perry and his family and another single man, and we often have guests. I have found myself losing my peace over empty ice cube trays and vanishing rolls of toilet paper. I have given away my peace in concern about who last emptied the garbage. Perhaps, today, we can all stop ourselves when these “little” moments of separation occur and ask ourselves, “Is this what I would have, in place of Heaven and the peace of God?” (8:8) Do I really value a roll of toilet paper more than God’s peace?

Let me point out one more interesting observation of this lesson; you cannot have peace alone. “The mind which means that all it wants is peace must join with other minds, for that is how peace is obtained” (6:1). To have peace we have to be willing to let the other person into our hearts. We have to recognize their desire for peace equally with our own.

The temptation is always to think, “I want peace; the problem is with the other person.” Always remember, though; if you want peace, you will have it. No one else can take it from you. If you cannot be at peace when the other person seems to want something besides peace, what you are teaching that person is that your peace depends on their changing. This just reinforces the same belief in the other person, and they continue to believe that their peace depends on them changing you.

Our job is to see past the competing desires in that other person to the universal reality that lies underneath. However we respond to them, if we are to teach peace, our actions must affirm to that person that peace already lies within them, ready for them as soon as they are willing to receive it. We join our own intent with what they seek above all things (10:4). By our faith in that intent, however hidden it may appear, we draw it out of them; we give them the opportunity to recognize it within themselves and align their mind with it.

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“It is this one intent we seek today, uniting our desires with the need of every heart, the call of every mind, the hope that lies beyond despair, the love attack would hide, the brotherhood that hate has sought to sever, but which still remains as God created it” (14:1)

LESSON 186

July 5

“Salvation of the world depends on me.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To go past your self-made roles and hear the Voice for God tell you of your part in the salvation of the world. To go beyond words and images to experience. This will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment.

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

Relinquish the roles and functions you gave yourself and listen to the Voice for God telling you your part in His plan. Do not doubt your adequacy to His plan, do not think what He says is impossible. Such false humility is arrogance. Trust that He knows you better than you do; your strengths, your wisdom and holiness. Do not cling to words and self-made images, but be willing to go beyond them to experience. Experience the Holy Spirit telling you that salvation needs your part and that you have the strength to fulfill it, that you are not weak, ignorant, helpless or sinful, but are God’s Own Son.

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

(Suggestion) Do a short version of morning/evening exercise.

Frequent Reminder: (Suggestion) Repeat idea, remembering that the Holy Spirit knows your function and that your function is to forgive.

Response To Temptation: (Suggestion) When something tempts you to see yourself as weak or unworthy, repeat the idea, and hear God’s Voice urging you to remember Him.

COMMENTARY

Our individual salvation and our happiness depends on our accepting what this lesson teaches: that the salvation of the world depends on us. That our function is to save the world, to bring the light and joy and peace of God to every mind within our reach—which is a far greater number than we imagine.

The lesson is not simply saying that it would be a good idea for us to accept this thought. It is saying that acceptance is imperative to our own personal freedom. “There is one way, and only one, to be released from the imprisonment your plan to prove the false is true has brought to you. Accept the plan you did not make instead” (5:1,2). The Course is often so uncompromising: “one way, and only one.” If we want to experience our own wholeness, if we want to find our Self, we *must* accept that salvation of the world depends on us. Why? Because the nature of Who we are demands it. If I am an extension of God, and if Love, which created me, is what I am, then how can I possibly accept that fact and *not* accept that my function is to give myself to the world? Giving is what Love does!

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To take our place among the saviors of the world is not arrogance, if we are as God created us. It is merely accepting what has been given to us by our Creator: “We did not establish [our function]. It is not our idea” (2:2–3). In fact it is arrogant *not* to acknowledge this as our function. The self-image we make in arrogance pictures us as weak, ignorant and helpless (6:3–4). It seems humble, but it is mountainous arrogance masquerading as humility. This self-image thumbs its nose at the Creator and says, “I am what I make of myself, and not what You created me to be.”

The last week or so I have frequently been finding myself feeling at loose ends. I seem to drift from one task to another, and to have a great deal of difficulty concentrating on anything. The description in 10:4 seems to describe me exactly: “The functions which the world esteems are so uncertain that they change ten times an hour at their most secure.” And as I read this lesson I recognize that I have been trying to define my function for myself, instead of simply accepting the one God gave me. I have been fighting my function. Yet when it is accepted, it is so unambiguous that life simply straightens out, and all the confusion is gone: “In lovely contrast, certain as the sun’s return each morning to dispel the night, your truly given function stands out clear and wholly unambiguous” (11:1).

So then, let me today stop resisting my function. Let me stop listening to my self-made image, which trembles as God speaks to me of my true function, sensing that the basis of its existence is being cut away (7:1–2). Let me simply let go of my plans for myself and surrender to the plan I did not make, trusting that everything I need to fulfill it has been given me; trusting that I am worthy to be counted among the saviors of the world; trusting that all my needs are answered by God, even though He does not see them, in whatever form is most useful at the moment (13:4–5).

“Salvation of the world depends on you who can forgive. Such is your function here” (14:5–6).

LESSON 187

July 6

“I bless the world because I bless myself.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To go past your belief in sacrifice and so experience the abundance that lies at the altar within. This will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment.

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

Be willing to look on the altar within, the altar to the one God. There you will see the lilies your brother offers you and those you offer him, in all their lovely holiness. There you are joined with all your brothers and with God. There you stand in blessedness and give as you receive. As you look within, repeat the Name of God.

Remarks: By receiving this blessing, you can bless the world. Offer this blessing to everything you see today.

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

(Suggestion) Do a short version of morning/evening exercise.

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Frequent Reminder: (Suggestion) Behold everything you see shining with the grace of God.

Response To Temptation: When tempted to entertain the thought of sacrifice—as pain, loss, sickness, grief, poverty, starvation, death, etc.—give blessing to yourself, and you will have it to give the world.

COMMENTARY

We find it easy to understand that in order to give a thing, you first must have it. That's obvious. We find it more difficult to believe that giving actually increases what you have.

The key to understanding this, says the lesson, lies in the fact that “things but represent the thoughts that make them” (2:3). To understand how giving away what we have increases it, we have to begin to recognize that “things” are not real; what is real is the thoughts behind them.

This is not necessarily saying that if I give \$100 to a brother in need I will immediately receive \$200 in return from some other source. However, it is saying that when I give \$100 away knowing that money is just an idea I will be increasing the thought that brought money to me in the first place. Therefore, that will eventually result in more money, or more “wealth and abundance” in some form. The form may be identical or it may not.

“Perhaps the form in which the thought seems to appear is changed in giving. Yet it must return to him who gives. Nor can the form it takes be less acceptable. It must be more” (2:5–8).

In other words, what is returned is always greater than what is given.

I have begun to learn this by giving away ideas directly, in my study group and in my writing. I have indeed found it true that as I give away these ideas, they increase in me. I get more benefit than anyone who is “receiving” from me. I am quite aware that I am blessing the world because I am blessing myself; I am doing this for my own benefit.

It is harder when it comes to material things. It is not so easy to make the connection that money is just an idea, or a tape is just an idea, a book is just an idea, a car is just an idea. I learn in little ways. I give away newsletters that cost me money, believing that it will return to me eventually. I give hours of my time to the study group, believing that the return will come. I still *feel* that as basically giving it away. The return has only just begun.

I think when I learn this lesson fully it will be no big deal to give up the idea of ownership entirely and to share everything I possess with anyone who needs it. But I am a long way from that as yet.

The next paragraph is very important:

“Ideas must first belong to you, before you give them. If you are to save the world, you first accept salvation for yourself. But you will not believe that this is done until you see the miracles it brings to everyone you look upon. Herein is the idea of giving clarified and given meaning.

Now you can perceive that by your giving is your store increased” (3:1–5).

To give salvation I must first accept it for myself. But to know I have it, I have to give it away.

That must mean that I have to start giving before I know I have it! The gift that giving brings is knowing that I have the gift I give.

The lesson advises us to protect what we have by giving it away. It warns, “Yet value not its form.” In other words, you may not get it back in the exact form you give it. If I give \$100 cash, I may receive a gift in a different form: a tape player, computer software, a vacation, or whatever. If I give away a particular book, I may not ever receive that particular form again, and I have to

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learn not to value the form, but the thought behind the form. It is foolish to value forms. “No form endures” (4:5). Remember, “What [the giver] seems to lose is always something he will value less than what will surely be returned to him” (5:8).

Every gift I give is always a gift to myself. I never lose! I gain, and so does the recipient of my gift, especially if he or she learns from me to give again. “Who understands what giving means must laugh at the idea of sacrifice” (6:2). Laugh, because there is no such thing as sacrifice. What I give is given to myself; I never lose; I always gain. How can that be called sacrifice!

The lesson clearly applies this to all forms of “giving” and all forms of “sacrifice,” including pain and loss, sickness, grief, poverty, starvation and death. When I “give up” a relationship in the form I thought I wanted, according to this lesson I receive something I will value far more.

Perhaps I may learn to accept the gift of self-sufficiency, for instance.

I’m sure the same will be true as I make other “sacrifices.” Mistakenly I fear the “loss” I will feel with these things absent from my life. There will be no loss, no sacrifice. What I gain will far exceed the apparent loss. And in reality I lose nothing except a false identification.

For instance, I think I get a certain satisfaction and comfort from eating a nice steak. The pleasure of the taste; the pleasure of being full. I falsely identify these feelings with the object, steak. But pleasure, satisfaction and comfort are just the ideas behind the steak. If I were to dissociate steak from those ideas, perhaps giving up steak, I would not be giving up those ideas; I would be affirming them. I retain them, and they grow. There will be pleasure, satisfaction and comfort in other forms, more lasting and more generalized. I have gained the general form by giving up the specific identification of those ideas with “steak.”

In general, we will go through many iterations of apparent giving up, apparent sacrifice, until we learn that the thing is not the idea, that no particular form can be identified with the idea behind it. We will learn, eventually, to hold on to no form, but to always value, not the form, but the thought behind it.

Ultimately we go beyond the idea of many different thoughts to see only one Thought—the innocent Son of God, the Christ. We see that Thought within ourselves, and “what we have looked upon we would extend, for we would see it everywhere” (11:2). “To ensure this holy sight is ours, we offer it to everything we see” (11:5).

LESSON 188

July 7

“The peace of God is shining in me now.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To go past thoughts of the outer world and so experience the peace of God shining in you now. This will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment.

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

Sit quietly, close your eyes. You have let your thoughts wander, stray. You have thrown them outside of you where they have become tainted by the world. Now gently bring them back.

Exclude the outer world and let your thoughts fly to the peace within. Let the light in your mind draw them home. There, washed clean of insane wishes and desires, honest and untainted, they

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become God's holy messengers. There, they fall in line with your real thoughts, the ones you share with God. There, they become your real thoughts, having been restored to their holy inheritance. These thoughts recognize their home and point the way there. They lead you back to peace. They urge you to listen to God's Voice when you do not; to accept His Word instead of fantasies and shadows.

Remarks: As you let your thoughts go to the peace within, the peace of God in you extends from your heart around the world, blessing each living thing, restoring them to the memory of God.

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

(Suggestion) Do a short version of morning/evening exercise.

Frequent Reminder: Lay your saving blessing on the world by saying: "The peace of God is shining in me now. Let all things shine upon me in that peace. And let me bless them with the light in me."

Response To Temptation: When tempted to have unforgiving thoughts, forgive the world for what you thought it did to you. Say: "The peace of God is shining in me now. Let all things shine upon me in that peace. And let me bless them with the light in me."

COMMENTARY

I always seem to hear the emphasis in this sentence on the last word, "now." It speaks to me of the holy instant. It tells me that, whatever storms seem to be raging in my mind, whatever chaotic circumstances I find myself in, that there is within me a constant beacon of peace, forever shining, uninterrupted and uninteruptable. It calls me to stop for a moment, withdraw my attention from all the turmoil that makes up my "life" in this world, and re-connect to that peace. Somewhere within me, there is a place that is always at perfect peace, like the eye of a hurricane. And I can find that place any time I choose to do so, truly desiring to find it.

The Course is consistent in its vision. Nothing separates us from the love of God. Complete salvation, perfect peace, pure joy, and full forgiveness are always available right now.

"Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all" (1:4). What we call enlightenment is simply recognizing the presence of the light, which has never left us. It is realizing that the only reason we cannot see the light is that we have our hands over our eyes. That is why we "need do nothing." We don't have to *do*, we simply *undo*. We stop blocking the light, which is always there.

The particular block being addressed in this lesson (You'll recall that this series of lessons was billed as directly addressing certain specific blocks, W-pI.Int(181-200).2:1) is simply the tendency to see enlightenment as something future. The opening words sound the keynote: "Why wait for Heaven?" "Why wait to find it in the future, or believe it has been lost already, or was never there?" (2:2) All that we need do to discover its reality is to look for it within ourselves, where it has always been.

But the peace of God is not only *within* me, it is *shining in* me. "The peace of God is shining in you now, and from your heart extends around the world" (3:1). I may feel as bottled up as Custer at the Last Stand; I may feel as fertile as the Sahara. But from within my being, nevertheless, the peace of God is being broadcast like a universal beacon to the entire world. My right mind is

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extending itself in global beneficence to all creation, pausing “to caress each living thing” (3:2) (What a beautiful image that brings to my mind!), and leaving an everlasting blessing with whatever it touches. That is part of what I am bringing to my awareness; that is part of the picture of my Self that I am learning to recognize each time I stop, become quiet, and look within. When the Course tells me that I am among the saviors of the world, it isn’t telling me about something I have to *achieve*, it is telling me what I already am.

Within me there is, even now, and even in my darkest moments, a living flow of thoughts of light. There is a heavenly current constantly surging through me to extend love and blessing to the world, and to myself. That flow of thoughts is something I can, in the holy instant, become aware of and tune in to.

“Accept His Word for what you are” (8:2); that is what this lesson is calling on us to do. We read of the Christ, we read of the Buddha and his heart of compassion. The Buddha is you. And that is Jesus’s message to us, that we are as he is. “1 Jo 2:6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” We are the Christ; that is what we are; that is what we need to accept. It seems too high, too far beyond our concept of ourselves. But in the holy instant, in the quiet, when we withdraw from the world and “let your thoughts fly to the peace within” (6:4), we can know ourselves in this way. We can sense the depth of love that wants to express itself through us.

Oh, we may not do such a great job, just yet, at letting that love out. We may get in the way more often than not. But the love that would embrace the world, heal its wounds and dry its tears, is in us, and IS us. We all know that is so, if we are willing to look at it. We can look upon the whole world today and everyone within it, and we can say:

“We will forgive them all, absolving all the world from what we thought it did to us... Now we choose that it be innocent, devoid of sin and open to salvation. And we lay our saving blessing on it, as we say:

“The peace of God is shining in me now. Let all things shine upon me in that peace, And let me bless them with the light in me.” (10:2,4–7).

LESSON 189

July 8

“I feel the Love of God within me now.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To go past all your thoughts of self, world and God and so experience the Love of God within you now. This will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment.

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

Be still and empty your mind of all images of yourself, all concepts of the world, all beliefs in what God is, everything you think is true, false, good, bad, your “worthy” thoughts and “shameful” thoughts, all thoughts you learned from the past. Forget even this course. And come with empty hands, quiet heart and open mind unto your God.

Remarks: Do not point out the road by which God must come to you. Merely let Him be. Open a door to Him and His Love will blaze a pathway to you, shining outward from its home within.

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

(Suggestion) Do a short version of morning/evening exercise.

Frequent Reminder: (Suggestion) Look out from the Love of God within you to see a world shining in innocence and alive with hope.

COMMENTARY

By this point in the Workbook, any time we see the word “now” we should be seeing it as a probable reference to the holy instant. The word “feel” also has significance, directing our attention to the realm of experience, as opposed to conceptual understanding. Given these two points we can realize that this lesson is about entering a holy instant in which we have an experience of God’s Love within us.

“There is a light in you the world can not perceive” (1:1). The lesson begins by referring, as did yesterday’s lesson, to the light that is within us, inherent in our creation. It is not something visible to the body’s sense organs (1:2), but quite visible to a different kind of sight. To see this light and to feel the Love of God are synonymous (1:7). We are being directed to experience this other kind of seeing.

We can see “through darkened eyes of malice and of fear” (3:2) or with a mind permeated with the experience of Love’s Presence within the mind. What we see within determines how we see the world. Based on our state of mind, we see either a world poised to attack us, or a world that reaches out to bless us. Either picture of the world makes the other picture inconceivable to us (3:5, 4:1).

If I am seeing “a world of hatred rising from attack” (3:5), the description of the world given in paragraph 2 seems to be no more than wishful thinking. People encountering the teaching of the Course for the first time often raise this objection. For instance, I once heard a man who had listened to a lecture on forgiveness say, “You people must be crazy! All you have to do is walk down the street in New York and you can’t possibly maintain that love is all there is.” He was seeing a world of hatred rising from attack; there was no room left in his mind to see anything else.

If I am seeing the world of hatred, how can I possibly see a world of love? No logical argument will ever change my mind. What is required is something that will change what my mind is seeing within itself, because the world I see is nothing more than a reflection of that, the outside picture of an inward condition (T-21.Int.1:5). If I am seeing a world of attack it is because within myself I am seeing an attacking mind. “What they have felt in them they look upon, and see its sure reflection everywhere” (4:3). The holy instant can, and does, change that self-perception. “I feel the Love of God within me now.” That experience will literally transform the way I see the world. “If you feel the Love of God within you, you will look out on a world of mercy and of love” (5:5).

This is why we are asked to “lay aside all thoughts of what you are” (7:1), to be still, and to allow something else to enter our minds. We are being asked to set aside every conclusion we have ever made about anything, to allow—for a moment at least—that all of it may be misinformed and misguided, and to “come with wholly empty hands unto your God” (7:5). In asking us to forget even “this course” the lesson is not saying that intellectual comprehension of

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the course is not useful, but it is saying that only something that transcends the intellect can truly turn the tide of our wrong perception. Even our understanding of the Course is bound to be distorted when it is based on a mind firmly rooted in fear and in the concept of self we have built up. We may mistakenly use that imperfect understanding to dictate to God the way He should come to us. So we are asked to set even this aside, and to allow God to come to us in whatever way He wants to come.

To forget the Course is not a permanent principle, but a temporary expedient designed to allow a new kind of experience. It is merely part of removing the barriers to the experience of ourselves as Love, for even our ego-based “understanding” of the Course can interfere with the experience of its true meaning. So we are being told, when seeking the holy instant, to lay aside any assumption that we understand anything at all. Let everything be open to change. If we are willing to do this, “His Love will blaze its pathway of itself” (9:4).

We cannot force ourselves to see the world differently. But if we can, just for an instant, see *ourselves* differently, and feel the Love of God within ourselves, the way we see the world will change of itself, because the way we see the world *is* the way we see ourselves.

LESSON 190

July 9

“I choose the joy of God instead of pain.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To realize that pain is deceptive illusion, and that joy is reality and truth. To go past pain and experience the joy that lies beyond it. This will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment.

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

Lay down all thoughts of attack, judgment, danger and fear and come into the quiet place of Heaven’s peace. Here you will understand that instead of pain, the joy of God belongs to you.

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

(Suggestion) Do a short version of morning/evening exercise.

Frequent Reminder: Repeat idea.

Response To Temptation: (Suggestion) When tempted to think that the world causes your pain, or to believe in any form of danger and attack, choose the joy of God instead of pain.

COMMENTARY

This is a tough lesson. It confronts me with another of those blocks we’ve been talking about: the apparent reality of pain. As the lesson very clearly states, pain seems to bear witness to “a nightmare of abandonment by an Eternal Love” (2:5). “It witnesses to God the Father’s hatred of His Son...” (1:7).

Anyone who has experienced serious pain knows what this is talking about. Anyone who has had a loved one enduring deep, constant pain, knows the questions it raises in the mind. “How could God allow this to happen, if He is love?” Even the milder forms of pain tell the same story, raise

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the same questions.

I am not going to pretend that I have entirely succeeded in removing this block from my mind. I find it hard to write about this lesson because I recognize that a very present part of me still sees pain as real, rather than illusion. Yet, I do believe that what the lesson says is true. I choose to believe it, and I want to believe it. So I do not see myself as in conflict over this issue. I am learning, more and more, to look my fears straight in the face, and to recognize that I still do believe, in large measure, that pain is real. And if this lesson is true, this must mean that part of me believes there is no God (3:3–4), that the impossible has happened, and Eternal Love has abandoned me. If I have been reading the Text with any discernment, this is not news to me. What then? Do I need to wallow in guilt because my mind has not yet been entirely renewed? Of course not. “The time has come to laugh at such insane ideas. There is no need to think of them as savage crimes, or secret sins with weighty consequences” (4:2–3). If the way to remember the Love of God is to look without judgment on my denial of Him, then seeing these “insane ideas” in my mind is a necessary part of the process, and an indication of progress, not regression. And the cure is not guilt, but laughter!

Basically we have two choices in regard to pain. Either it is caused by something outside of us, which means ultimately that we are innocents suffering at the hands of an angry God (or that there is no God and we are subject to blind fate), or it is caused by myself, my own thoughts. If the former is true I have no hope of escape. If the latter is true, I *can* escape by changing my thoughts. I prefer to believe the latter! Even if I am wrong, what have I got to lose?

The Course’s position is crystal clear: “It is your thoughts alone that cause you pain. Nothing external to your mind can hurt or injure you in any way...No one but yourself affects you” (5:1–2,4). It takes some practice to learn to use these thoughts without any guilt. We are reponsible, but not guilty; the Course is very clear on that as well. It also takes practice, perhaps even more, to use these thoughts when interacting with someone else who is in pain. May God forbid that we should ever use this line of reasoning to make someone guilty for their pain! The Course is equally clear that, if we are unable as yet to fully accept this, if our level of fear is still too high to rely solely upon the mind to relieve pain, a compromise approach is necessary. To attempt to forgo medication, for instance, when to do so increases our fear, is counterproductive (see T-2.IV.3–5 and T-2.V.2). Healing is the release from fear; what increases fear cannot be healing. Let me, then, learn to increasingly apply this lesson in ways that my level of fear can tolerate. Let me realize, for instance, that the person who cuts me off in traffic has not hurt me; only my thoughts about it hurt me. Let me realize that the person who seems to reject my love has not brought me any pain; only my thoughts about it cause me pain. Let me practice with physical pain as well as I can; if I have a headache, upset stomach or cold, let me realize that the source is my thoughts, not anything outside of my mind. Let me realize that if I take medication I am masking the symptom, not curing the problem, and let me give equal attention to the healing of my mind. If I experience more severe or chronic pain, let me deny what it seems to witness to (God’s anger or non-existence), laugh at the idea that God is angry, and realize that the pain is only showing me that my mind is mistaken in what I think I am (2:3). Let me not focus on making the pain go away, but on healing the thinking that causes it. Using “magic” (physical means) to alleviate the pain while I devote myself to retraining my mind simply makes sense, and frees my mind to do what it needs to do.

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And let me take frequent holy instants, to “come without defense into the quiet place where Heaven’s peace holds all things still at last” (9:1). Let me feel the Love of God within me, and set aside my unmerciful self-judgment (9:4), even if I can do so only momentarily. I can testify to having experienced this, at least; I have seen pain disappear during the holy instant, both in myself and in a friend who was in chronic pain. These holy instants can train us to deeper and more lasting release from all pain, and liberate the joy that has been smothered by our pain. “Pain is illusion; joy, reality. Pain is but sleep; joy is awakening. Pain is deception; joy alone is truth” (10:4–6).