

# Workbook Lesson Support Notes

## by Allen Watson

LESSON 191

July 10

**“I am the holy Son of God Himself.”**

### **PRACTICE SUMMARY**

**Purpose:** To go past your self-perception as weak, frail and afraid and remember that you are the holy Son of God Himself. This will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment. And it will save the world from suffering.

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

(Suggestion) Say: “I am the holy Son of God Himself. I cannot suffer, cannot be in pain; I cannot suffer loss, nor fail to do all that salvation asks.” Then seek to go past your images of yourself as weak, frail, helpless and attacked and remember that you are God’s holy Son, with all power in earth and Heaven.

**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:** Say: “I am the holy Son of God Himself. I cannot suffer, cannot be in pain; I cannot suffer loss, nor fail to do all that salvation asks.”

**Response To Temptation:** When tempted to believe you are other than God’s Son, say: “I am the holy Son of God Himself. I cannot suffer, cannot be in pain; I cannot suffer loss, nor fail to do all that salvation asks.”

### **COMMENTARY**

Once again the Course sounds its keynote: You are as God created you. Anything God creates is like Himself—holy, sinless, guiltless, an endless spring of Love, and immortal. We are not human beings seeking a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings who *think* we are having a human experience. We did not suddenly spring into existence at birth (or at conception, or at 13 weeks in the womb, or whatever the latest wisdom is), and we do not pass out of existence when the body stops functioning. We are aspects of an immortal being, existing entirely outside of time. “I am the holy Son of God Himself.”

How we see ourselves determines how we see the world. It may not be obvious at first, but if we see ourselves as other than the holy Son of God, we are “giving to the world the role of jailer to the Son of God” (1:3). If we see ourselves as separate, isolated beings, we are inevitably cast in the role of victim. We become a mote of dust in a hurricane, whirled about by the universe without any consideration for our well-being.

“There is no sight that fails to witness this to you. There is no sound that does not speak

of frailty within you and without; no breath you draw that does not seem to bring you nearer death; no hope you hold but will dissolve in tears” (2:5–6).

“Deny your own Identity, and you assail the universe alone, without a friend, a tiny particle of dust against the legions of your enemies” (3:2).

The world then takes on an appearance that reflects this mistaken identity we have assumed. That is what projection does. The world becomes our jailer, our victimizer. If we deny our Identity as the holy Son of God, as God created us, we make the world into a place of chaos, evil, sin and death. The world and everything in it is a threat to us, and we resent the world for it, although we are the ones who have laid this role on the world! As I look around at the world today, let me ask myself, “What have I done that this should be my world?” And let me answer myself, “I have denied my Identity as God’s Son.” Thus, to accept my Identity is to forgive the world for what it did not do to me.

Rectify that single mistake, and we have changed the world we see. Because Identity cannot truly be denied, and therefore, the world cannot truly be as we see it.

“Yet what is it except a game you play in which Identity can be denied? You are as God created you. All else but this one thing is folly to believe. In this one thought is everyone set free. In this one truth are all illusions gone. In this one fact is sinlessness proclaimed to be forever part of everything, the central core of its existence and its guarantee of immortality” (4:1–6).

Our imagined identity as not-the-Son-of-God is no more than a silly game, with no real effects and no real consequences. If we can begin to accept our Identity, all illusions that derive from this error disappear.

Again we are asked to “practice” recognizing our identity in the holy instant. For a brief time, we “let today’s idea find a place among [our] thoughts” (5:1). In that holy instant we rise far above the world (5:1) into a place of safety, where we recognize the impossibility of the world’s victimizing us because we see our own eternal, invulnerable nature. And from that place of safety we *return* to the world and set it free (5:2). Notice the similarity of this description to the earlier one in Lesson 184 (paragraph 10). In the holy instant we accept Atonement for ourselves, we recognize our true Identity. And then we return to bring the message of this shared Identity to all the world, that it may be free with us.

The realization of our Identity is enough to free us from every problem forever, and to free the world with us. To cling to our little, individual identity is to perpetuate “a devastating image of yourself walking the world in terror, with the world twisting in agony because your fears have laid the mark of death upon its heart.” (7:5) Do I really want to go on playing this silly, tragic game? Do I want to continue to hold the world to task because it has not met my needs, but has denied me what is my right? Or will I recognize today that I have done this, I have denied my Self and blamed the world for it?

In the latter part of this lesson it speaks in glowing terms of “the Son of God” Who “has come in glory to redeem the lost” (8:3). Who is this “Son of God?” It is not speaking of Jesus. It is speaking of *you*.

“Your glory is the light that saves the world. Do not withhold salvation longer. Look about the world, and see the suffering there. Is not your heart willing to bring your weary brothers rest?

“They must await your own release. They stay in chains till you are free. They cannot see

the mercy of the world until you find it in yourself. They suffer pain until you have denied its hold on you. They die till you accept your own eternal life. You are the holy Son of God Himself. Remember this, and all the world is free. Remember this, and earth and Heaven are one” (W-pI.191.10:5–11:8).

## LESSON 192

July 11

**“I have a function God would have me fill.”**

### **PRACTICE SUMMARY**

**Purpose:** To fulfill your function by forgiving your brother his sins and so experiencing that you are what he is: the Son of God. This will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment. And it will save the world.

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

No specific instructions.

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

No specific instructions.

**Frequent Reminder:** Repeat idea. Be merciful to your brother, the Son of God.

**Response To Temptation:** Whenever someone tempts you to anger, realize you hold a sword over your head which will fall or be averted by your choice. Realize that you owe this brother thanks, for he has given you a chance to free yourself and is thus your savior.

### **COMMENTARY**

In Heaven we have a high and holy function: it is creation. The first paragraph describes it as well as it can be put into words, although when it comes down to it we on earth cannot even truly conceive of what it is (3:1). Creation is to complete God, to extend Love in His Name. What does that mean? We cannot fully know until we are there again, experiencing its meaning directly.

On earth, therefore, we have “a function in the world in its own terms” (2:1), something we can grasp and understand in the context in which we find ourselves. “Forgiveness represents your function here” (2:3). “Forgiveness is the closest it [creation] can come to earth” (3:3). Creation is formless; forgiveness is creation translated into form, a kindly dream so close to Heaven that, when we fully enter into it, our eyes are “already opening to behold the joyful sights” the happy dreams are offering us (3:4–6).

Forgiveness as presented in the Course is far more than just letting go of specific grievances we hold against those we feel have wronged us. It is a radical shift in our perception of the entire world. The basic stance of the ego is to see the world as the cause of our unhappiness. There seems to be ample reason for such a view. How can we ever be content when nothing lasts, when pain and suffering seem to be everywhere, when things and persons dear to us are snatched away by fate, and when, no matter what we do, death awaits us at the end? Forgiveness means that we set aside such a view of the world, and allow the Holy Spirit to replace it all with a new perception. It includes even a reassessment of our own bodies, in which we disidentify with them and no longer see ourselves as bound to them. We come to see the body as “a simple teaching aid, to be laid by when learning is complete, but hardly changing him who

learns at all” (4:3). We realize that we are, in reality, a “mind without a body” (5:1). “Only forgiveness can relieve the mind of thinking that the body is its home” (5:5).

That is the goal to which the Course is leading us. Yet although forgiveness is far more than letting go of specific grievances, it begins there. Through working with the specifics we learn the principles, and gradually learn to generalize them and apply them to the entire world, including our physical cages.

It may seem we are being asked to give up a lot. Indeed, we are being asked, eventually, to give up the entire world, including our bodies; this entire “life” in which we think we live. Yet, when it has been achieved, when our anger at the world is gone, we “will perceive that, for Christ’s vision and the gift of sight, no sacrifice was asked, and only pain was lifted from a sick and tortured mind. Is this unwelcome? Is it to be feared?” (6:1–3)

If we can come to forgive the world we will see it as the illusion it has always been, and let it go gladly, aware that it was never more than a nightmare of pain and death. Paradoxically, if we have not forgiven it, we end up “worshipping what is not there” (7:4). We value it precisely because it punishes us, because in our insanity of guilt we secretly believe we deserve it.

Our anger at the world imprisons us. We become the jailer, vigilant to hold the world at fault, and in so doing condemning ourselves to prison with the prisoners we are watching. Unless the “jailer” forgives “everyone he sees or thinks of or imagines” (8:1), he has to live in the jail keeping watch on the criminals. This is the very thing that holds us to this world; not its beauty, not its potential, but our anger at it for not being what we think it should be. Our anger is holding a sword above our own heads (9:4).

Therefore, the way out of prison is to release all the prisoners. We can learn this by recognizing that every time we are tempted to be angry, which can be anything from intense fury to a mild twinge of annoyance (W-pI.21.2:5)s, we are being offered an opportunity to release ourselves. We can be merciful instead of wrathful. We can forgive. We can even be grateful for the opportunity (9:7). This is our only true function here (10:6). This is *the* lesson all of life is teaching us. This *is* A Course in Miracles.

## LESSON 193

July 12

**“All things are lessons God would have me learn.”**

### **PRACTICE SUMMARY**

**Purpose:** To go past your unforgiveness and so experience the freedom and peace that lie beyond it. This will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment. And it will save the world.

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

As you practice, think about all the things you kept to yourself to solve alone. Then give them all to the Holy Spirit. He will show you how to see them through the eyes of forgiveness, so that they may disappear.

**Remarks:** Give all the time you can today, and give a little more. This is what time was made for. For now you would go in haste to your Father’s home, from which you have been away too long. Do not hold mercy off another day, minute or second.

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

Apply the lesson, “I will forgive, and this will disappear,” to the happenings of the previous hour. Do not let it cast its shadow on the hour to come. Thus you unloose the chains of time and remain unbound while still in time.

**Frequent Reminder:** (Suggestion) Repeat idea.

**Response To Temptation:** Whenever pain seems real in your perception, hold these words in full awareness: “I will forgive, and this will disappear.” To every apprehension and care, to all that speaks of terror, and whenever you are tempted to choose death, say: “I will forgive, and this will disappear.”

**Remarks:** These words give you power over the events that seemed to have you at their mercy. They release your mind and every mind from bondage. They end all pain, temptation, tribulation and guilt. They give you the key to Heaven’s gate.

### **COMMENTARY**

The central thought of this lesson sounds similar to things said in many spiritual teachings: That there is a lesson in everything, if we are open to see it and to learn. But the meaning here is quite different. Many people believe that every event, even every adversity, carries some meaning for us. “What is the lesson in this for me?” is the natural question when something seems to go wrong. If we follow this line of thinking, we can spend a great deal of our time trying to figure out the answer to that question, over and over, and we can become quite puzzled at times when we cannot seem to find what “the lesson” is.

But this Workbook Lesson is quite forthright in telling us, flat out, that the lesson is always the same in content, no matter what the form. We do not need to waste our efforts trying to figure out what the lesson is. There is only one lesson. It is always the same.

“Each lesson has a central thought, the same in all of them. The form alone is changed, with different circumstances and events; with different characters and different themes, apparent but not real. They are the same in fundamental content. It is this:

*Forgive, and you will see this differently.” (2:3–7)*

Lest we miss the point, it is stated again in slightly different words towards the end of the Lesson:

“This is the lesson God would have you learn: There is a way to look on everything that lets it be to you another step to Him, and to salvation of the world. To all that speaks of terror, answer thus:

*I will forgive, and this will disappear.” (13:1–3)*

Forgiveness is the central theme of the Course. It entails, as we saw yesterday, a radical shift in our perception, one that allows the light of Heaven to shine upon everything we see. Forgiveness is the one lesson that everything, literally everything, is teaching us. Everything can teach us this lesson because, in our madness, we have a grievance against the universe. What the Course is teaching us is a different way of looking on everything, a way that allows us to see it, not as a threat, not as some kind of loss, not as an attack that deprives us of our happiness, but as a step to God, and to the salvation of the world.

When the Course tells us, as it did in earlier lessons, that forgiveness offers everything we want, that forgiveness is the key to happiness, we cannot at first understand. We are confused by the message because we do not see unforgiveness as a major problem in our lives. The Lesson recognizes this: “Certain it is that all distress does not appear to be but unforgiveness. Yet that is the content underneath the form” (4:1–2).

The consistent direction of the Course’s instruction is towards helping us to recognize, in all the wide variety of forms of distress in our lives, this same underlying content. Gradually, as we study the Course and apply it to our daily lives, we begin to recognize the one, unique problem that besets us, whatever form it may appear to take: unforgiveness. Forgiveness is the answer to every problem, the “hidden” lesson in every distressing event of our lives.

I am not saying that you had a flat tire because you got angry at the grocery clerk, nor that you suffer lack of success in your relationships because you haven’t forgiven your mother or father. Although sometimes such things may be true, the lesson God is trying to teach us is more far-reaching than that. What ultimately must be corrected is our unforgiveness of everything and everyone in the world, everything that appears to be outside of our own minds. Our general attitude towards the world is at issue here.

When I first read this lesson, I thought it was saying that whenever something went wrong in my life I had to start searching my heart for what or whom I had not forgiven. Often that search was just as frustrating as trying to figure out, “What is the lesson in this?” I went through a period in which, one by one, I dug up every imaginable grievance I had against anyone, and tried to let it go. That can be a useful exercise, but it is only scratching the surface of what real forgiveness means. Forgiveness is aimed at transforming my perception of everything I see.

What does the Course mean by unforgiveness, or misperception? Hear this very clear definition, and let it sink into your awareness:

“How can you tell when you are seeing wrong, or someone else is failing to perceive the

lesson he should learn? Does pain seem real in the perception? If it does, be sure the lesson is not learned. And there remains an unforgiveness hiding in the mind that sees the pain through eyes the mind directs” (7:1–4)

“Does pain seem real in the perception?” That is the sure indicator of unforgiveness, as the Course understands it. Remember that difficult Workbook Lesson about choosing the joy of God instead of pain? Forgiveness is the answer. What is forgiven no longer hurts. In response to the question, “How can you tell when you have really forgiven someone?”, someone once said, “You know you have forgiven someone when you feel comfortable in their presence.” That is saying the same thing; when you have forgiven, there is no more pain. Another way of picturing it is that you are free to laugh with the person. God’s Will is that laughter should replace all tears (9:4–5).

Forgiveness is what time was made for (10:4). This is where our attention is best focused. This is what speeds us on the way to Heaven. In our quiet practice times, we can “think about all things we saved to settle by ourselves, and kept apart from healing” (11:4). We do not know how to look on them so that they disappear, but the Holy Spirit knows; give them to Him. We are even advised to stop every hour, review the hour that has passed, and bring each little grievance to Him for healing, so that it does not carry over into the hour that follows. “Let no one hour cast its shadow on the one that follows” (12:4). This is the way we learn to “remain unbound, in peace eternal in the world of time” (12:5).

## LESSON 194

July 13

### **“I place the future in the Hands of God.”**

#### **PRACTICE SUMMARY**

**Purpose:** Another giant stride. To go past your fixation on and fear of the future and so experience a holy instant, free of the bondage of time. This will intensify your motivation and strengthen your commitment. And it will save the world.

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

Let the future go. Place it in God’s Hands. And then rest there yourself, untroubled, certain only good can come to you. Thus you call His memory to come to you and replace all your insane thoughts with the truth.

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

Use the lesson, “I place the future in the Hands of God,” to forgive the happenings of the previous hour. Do not let it cast its shadow on the hour to come. Thus you unloose the chains of time and remain unbound while still in time.

**Frequent Reminder:** Give as much consistent effort as you can to the idea today, to make it part of you.

**Response To Temptation:** If you are tempted to engage in resentment or attack, repeat the idea, and you appeal to the Holy Spirit to choose for you and leave temptation behind.

**Remarks:** Make today’s idea a rule of thought, a habit in your repertoire of response to temptation. (Notice that we are presumed to be building a repertoire of ways to respond to temptation!) Be sure that if your perception is faulty, it will be corrected. If you forget, you will be reminded.

#### **COMMENTARY**

The block to remembering our Self that is dealt with by today’s lesson is the “fear of future pain” (7:6). Again, the holy instant is a major part of the remedy. All the references to “in no one instant” and “the instant in which time escapes the bondage of illusions” are indirect references to the holy instant, which is directly referred to in 5:3: “Then is each instant which was slave to time transformed into a holy instant.”

The idea is a simple one: placing the future into God’s Hands. Yet it is referred to as another “giant stride” toward quick salvation. (The other “giant strides” were in lessons 61, 66, 94 and 135.) This giant stride is said to take us all the way to the lawns that welcome us to Heaven’s gate. It is the remedy for anxiety, pits of hell, depression, thoughts of sin, and guilt. How can this simple idea be so powerful?

Think, for a moment, how your life and your mental attitude would change if you deeply and fully knew—not just *believed* but *knew*—that your future was wholly in the hands of a loving God. Isn’t it fairly easy to see how this would remove anxiety, fears of hell, depression,

temptation and even guilt? Simple as it is, this is an extremely powerful idea, and a powerful one to practice.

Once again we are not expected to suddenly shift from a state of near-constant anxiety (Ernest Becker, in his book, “The Denial of Death,” refers to man’s so-called normal state as one in which there is “the rumble of panic underneath everything”) to one of blissful trust in God. We are being asked to practice having *instants* of such trust, free of panic. For a moment, just for a moment, “let the future go, and place it in God’s Hands” (4:5). In so doing, we will understand that by doing this we have given past and present to God as well. In that holy instant we will be free of grief and misery, pain and loss. The light within us will be free to shine and bless the world.

In any particular instant, when we take that instant for itself, without past or future, we cannot feel depression, experience pain, or perceive loss; nor can we experience sorrow, or even die (3:1–3). Every such experience depends on our awareness of past or of the future to sustain it and give it the illusion of reality, but none of them exist in the present moment. Take grief, for instance. Grief is so clearly based on the past that it hardly requires explanation to say that if the past is momentarily put out of our minds, grief would vanish. The mind is calling up memories of our loved one, and then insisting that the absence of that loved one now demands emotional pain. Yet when the loved one was part of our life, there were thousands of moments in which they were not physically present with us, and we were still happy; why, then cannot we be happy now? Grief is really nothing more than a cruel mental trick we are playing on ourselves. The future enters in to grief because we envision an endless string of moments that lack the beloved. But those moments are not now; again, it is a mental trick. Grief does not exist when we are wholly in the present moment, in the holy instant.

As we learn to give the future into God’s Hands, one instant after another, we are released. “And so each instant given unto God in passing, with the next one given Him already, is a time of your release from sadness, pain, and even death itself” (3:4). Note the similarity to yesterday’s practice of applying forgiveness at the end of each hour to all that has passed in the hour, freeing the hour that follows. This kind of thing, says the lesson, needs to become “a thought that rules your mind, a habit in your problem-solving repertoire, a way of quick reaction to temptation” (6:2). That is what all this practice is about: developing new *habits* of spirituality that break the pattern of our deranged thinking, freeing us for a new experience. The more we experience, the more we will want it, until eventually it takes over our minds entirely.

## LESSON 195

July 14

### **“Love is the way I walk in gratitude.”**

#### **PRACTICE SUMMARY**

**Purpose:** To go past your ingratitude—your envy and false gratitude—and so experience the freedom and peace that lie 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

Thank your Father that you are separate from no living thing and are therefore one with Him. Rejoice that there are no exceptions to this oneness, for they would reduce your wholeness. Give thanks for every living thing, and so recognize God’s gifts to you.

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

Use the lesson, “Love is the way I walk in gratitude,” to forgive the happenings of the previous hour. Do not let it cast its shadow on the hour to come. Thus you unloose the chains of time and remain unbound while still in time.

**Frequent Reminder:** (Suggestion) Repeat idea.

**Response To Temptation:** When tempted to think of anger, malice or revenge, or to see yourself as mercilessly pushed about by the world, substitute these thoughts with the idea for the day.

#### **COMMENTARY**

Gratitude is viewed in this lesson both from a dark side and a light side. The lesson first considers how, so very often, when our thinking is aligned with our egos, our gratitude is really a kind of attack on others. Then, it goes on to consider sincere gratitude, which can only occur when joined with love (4:3).

The dark side of gratitude comes from an ego perspective. This is the “gratitude” that prays, “Thank God I am not as others; thank God I am better off.” It is the kind of gratitude based firmly on comparisons. It is the thankfulness we feel when we have a bigger house than others, a better car, a more attractive spouse. It is a kind of thankfulness that depends on others who have less, who suffer more than we do. It comes from a view that sees our brother as the rival for our peace (3:1), and rejoices when he is in distress. This kind of “gratitude” is really nothing more than a form of vengeance. And if we examine ourselves honestly we will find ourselves indulging in this kind of false gratitude far more often than we realize.

True gratitude is something far different. “We thank our Father for one thing alone; that we are separate from no living thing, and therefore one with Him” (6:1). “We offer thanks to God our Father that in us all things will find their freedom. It will never be that some are loosed while others still are bound” (4:4–5). This gratitude gives “thanks for every living thing, for otherwise we offer thanks for nothing” (6:3).

Today I am joyful that the gifts I have received belong to everyone. I am grateful for

every living thing, every person I meet. I rejoice that everyone goes with me, that no one is excluded. I am grateful that each of you who read this is a part of me, that none of you can ever lose your inheritance and so diminish me. I recognize that if anyone is diminished, I am diminished, and I thank God that “everything has earned the right to love by being loving” for all is part of my Self (8:6).

Today, if I feel badgered by the world, or pushed about without any thought or care for me, I will choose to replace such foolish thoughts with gratitude (9:1–4). “God has cared for us, and calls us Son. Can there be more than this?” (9:5)

Another word for gratitude is “appreciation.” I offer you these thoughts about appreciation from the Course:

“Only one equal gift can be offered to the equal Sons of God, and that is full appreciation.” (T-6.V(A).4:7)

“Only honor is a fitting gift for those whom God Himself created worthy of honor, and whom He honors. Give them the appreciation God accords them always, because they are His beloved Sons in whom He is well pleased.” (T-7.VII.6:1,2)

“There are no idolaters in the Kingdom, but there is great appreciation for everything that God created, because of the calm knowledge that each one is part of Him.” (T-10.III.6:1)

“God knows His Son as wholly blameless as Himself, and He is approached through the appreciation of His Son.” (T-11.IV.7:2)

“Only appreciation is an appropriate response to your brother. Gratitude is due him for both his loving thoughts and his appeals for help, for both are capable of bringing love into your awareness if you perceive them truly.” (T-12.I.6:1,2)

“In the holy instant we share our faith in God’s Son because we recognize, together, that he is wholly worthy of it, and in our appreciation of his worth we cannot doubt his holiness. And so we love him.” (T-15.VI.2:5,6)

## LESSON 196

July 15

### **“It can be but myself I crucify.”**

#### **PRACTICE SUMMARY**

**Purpose:** To take this one step in the way of salvation, that you may go ahead from here rapidly and easily. To go past the belief that there is an enemy without that you fear. This will free you of the fear of God so that you can welcome Him back into your holy mind.

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

No specific instructions.

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

Use the lesson, “It can be but myself I crucify,” to forgive the happenings of the previous hour. Do not let it cast its shadow on the hour to come. Thus you unloose the chains of time and remain unbound while still in time.

**Frequent Reminder:** (Suggestion) Repeat idea.

**Response To Temptation:** Whenever tempted to believe that you can attack another and thereby escape attack yourself, repeat idea.

#### **COMMENTARY**

This is a restatement of one of the fundamental lessons of the Course, the first step of forgiveness in another form: taking the problem back from outside ourselves, withdrawing the projection, and seeing that “I am doing this to myself.”

The ego likes to misuse this idea to punish us, or to make us think we inevitably punish ourselves. The ego makes us think we are inherently self-destructive. The truth is, we do self-destructive things but we have a choice in the matter. We don’t have to do that, and at the core it is not our will to do so. We are not devils; we are the holy Son of God.

The block to awareness this lesson addresses is our belief that we have injured or “crucified” the world. It is the belief that we have made ourselves into monsters who cannot be trusted, ready to lash out without provocation to hurt and to kill.

The course calls the acceptance of today’s idea—that any way in which we crucify another is actually crucifying ourselves— “one step we take in leading us from bondage to the state of perfect freedom” (4:1). It urges us to take “every step in its appointed sequence” (4:2), that is, not to skip steps. Today’s idea is a step that is differentiating self from the body and the ego: “Thus do you also teach your mind that you are not an ego... You will not believe you are a body to be crucified” (3:1,3). Because we believe we made ourselves into egos, we think we are guilty. Because we believe in guilt, we made the body to suffer punishment. Recognizing that we are the ones inflicting punishment upon ourselves is the first step in freeing ourselves from the whole mess. To recognize that we are the ones inflicting punishment we have to step back from the ego and body, and become aware of a greater part of ourselves. We thus realize that the Self

is something other than ego or body, something greater than both. This something greater also includes my brothers and sisters. We are all part of that Self. The “others” I thought I injured are really parts of my Self.

If we believe that we can “attack another and be free yourself” (6:1) we are really reacting, says the lesson, from a hidden fear of God; from the belief that God is other, an enemy who waits to destroy me. My relationship to those around me always reflects the unconscious belief I have about my relationship to God, to the ultimate Unity and Whole. “The fear of God is real to anyone who thinks this thought [that I can attack another and be free myself] is true” (6:4). If I can attack another and still be free, so can God. Therefore, God is to be feared.

Paragraph 7 seems crucial to me. It is saying that the thought I can attack others and still be free has to be *changed in form* before I can even question the idea, at least to the point where I stop being afraid of retaliation and start to become responsible, start to realize that “it is but your thoughts that bring you fear, and your deliverance depends on you” (7:3). If I begin to realize that I am not attacking others, but attacking myself, I can stop being afraid of retaliation from these “others” I thought I was attacking. Before this thought changes, I am afraid of others; after it changes, I realize my fear is coming from my own thoughts. If that is true, I have the potential for changing those thoughts.

It seems to me from the lesson that the turning point, the point at which the fear begins to abate, is found in 9:2: “If it can but be you you crucify, you did not hurt the world, and need not fear its vengeance and pursuit.” Freedom from fear of vengeance from the world is the start of freedom from fear of God, when “God...can be welcomed back within the holy mind He never left” (8:5).

I feared my own strength and freedom because I thought I was dangerous! I thought I was a threat to the world; I thought that I had injured it. No wonder I don’t want to be strong and free. If I were, I might destroy the universe. I thought I might attack and damage things to the point where the universe would turn in anger and wipe me from the face of the earth. In fact I have secretly believed, all along, that this describes things exactly as they are, and that is why I have been afraid, both of the world and of God.

The Course seems to be saying here that our unconscious fear of ourselves, hidden by our projection of cause to outside factors, has to become conscious, at least for a brief, terrifying moment. “When you realize, once and for all, that it is you you fear, the mind perceives itself as split” (10:2). “Now, for an instant, is a murderer perceived within you, eager for your death, intent on plotting punishment for you until the time when it can kill at last” (11:1).

This seems like a terrible moment; why would we deliberately seek it? “Yet in this instant is the time as well in which salvation comes” (11:2) Now, seeing the enemy within instead of outside our mind, we no longer have reason to fear God. Recognition of our own terrible responsibility makes us realize that it has not been God Who was punishing us; it has been ourselves. We stop projecting our own dreams of vengeance onto God. “And you can call on Him to save you from illusions by His Love, calling Him Father and yourself His Son” (11:4).

## LESSON 197

July 16

### **“It can be but my gratitude I earn.”**

#### **PRACTICE SUMMARY**

**Purpose:** To go past the special block of requiring visible gratitude from others and so to experience what lies beyond this: your gratitude toward your Self and all its parts and God’s gratitude toward you. 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

No specific instructions.

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

Use the lesson, “It can be but my gratitude I earn,” to forgive the happenings of the previous hour. Do not let it cast its shadow on the hour to come. Thus you unloose the chains of time and remain unbound while still in time.

**Frequent Reminder:** (Suggestion) Repeat idea.

**Response To Temptation:** (Suggestion) When tempted to withdraw a gift you have given, repeat idea.

#### **COMMENTARY**

This lesson identifies itself as “the second step” in freeing our minds from the belief in outside forces pitted against us. Yesterday’s lesson was the first step (W-pI.196.2:1–2). It taught us that our attacks are always directed at ourselves, and that the attacks we thought were coming from outside of ourselves were really coming from our own minds. In other words, “it is impossible that you be hurt except by your own thoughts” (W-pI.196.8:3).

Today’s lesson takes the other side of the coin from attack: gratitude. This is definitely a step beyond yesterday’s lesson. We may understand that our attack is coming from ourselves, and yet not realize that any gratitude we receive is *also* coming from ourselves, and not from outside forces.

I remember one time, while attending a workshop of Ken Wapnick’s with a friend, that Ken was talking about how to respond to criticism and even outright attack from people who were close to us, from friends and family. Ken’s response was that we need to realize that such attacks are just the other person’s ego responding to their perception of our own ego; “Don’t take it personally,” Ken advised. A day or two later, my friend went to Ken with a personal issue. He’d begun to lead some groups in healing techniques and in study of the Course, and had received many glowing compliments of how well he was doing. He was worried that all the praise (or gratitude) would go to his head. Ken’s advice to him was quite memorable, coming on the heels of the earlier advice about criticism: “Don’t take it personally!”

While some of us may have problems with *receiving* gratitude, we have a much greater problem with *not* receiving it. Every Course student goes through the experience of expressing

love, kindness and forgiveness to someone, only to have it rejected or thrown back in their face. This lesson directly addresses the way we react to such a situation. What we are being asked to do is to express that kindness and love, to “give our gifts,” without any attachment to the response of the other person. All the gratitude we require, the lesson says, is *our own gratitude* for the opportunity of giving and forgiving! (3:3) Gratitude does not come from outside us any more than attack does.

If we fail to understand this, we will typically react to having our gifts rejected by taking them back, mentally or perhaps even physically. “Well, I tried to forgive you and overlook your error, but if this is how you are going to treat me in response, then to hell with you!” And quite obviously (if we simply look at it honestly), our attempts at kindness have turned into attack! (1:2–3)

The lesson says it quite directly: “It does not matter if another thinks your gifts unworthy” (4:1). In other words, in our giving, let us be completely unconcerned with the response of the person we are giving to, and whether or not they express gratitude. Our giving to them is sufficient gift to ourselves, and our own gratitude for the gift we have given is all that we need. If we take back the gifts we give when they are not received with “external gratitude and lavish thanks” (1:3), then we will always suspect that God’s gifts are equally undependable. If we take back our gifts, we are taking them away from ourselves. I am the one who needs to be grateful for the gift I have given, for I am the one who has received it! (3:5)

To help us understand why external gratitude isn’t necessary, Jesus explains that there is a part of the other person’s mind that *is* grateful, even when that isn’t expressed outwardly (4:2). The other person’s “right mind” is very grateful to you for the gift, and receives it with thanks. The gift will be held, waiting until the person is consciously ready to receive it. As the Manual puts it: “No teacher of God should feel disappointed if he has offered healing and it does not appear to have been received. It is not up to him to judge when his gift should be accepted. Let him be certain it has been received, and trust that it will be accepted when it is recognized as a blessing and not a curse” (M-6.2:7–9).

The Manual goes on in a way that very clearly echoes the thought we have been discussing: “It is not the function of God’s teachers to evaluate the outcome of their gifts. It is merely their function to give them” (M-6.3:1–2). This entire chapter in the Manual, and the one that follows, might be very interesting reading in light of today’s lesson.

If we fail to learn this second step, that gratitude as well as attack comes only from within ourselves, we will forever be uncertain about the gifts of God (5:3).