

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

Lesson 219

August 7

“I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”

“I am not a body. I am free.”

“I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Review VI

Purpose: To carefully review the last 20 lessons, each of which contains the whole curriculum and is therefore sufficient for salvation, if understood, practiced, accepted and applied without exception.

Morning/Evening Quiet Time: 15 minutes—at least

Repeat: “I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”

Close eyes and relinquish all that clutters the mind; forget all you thought you knew. Give the time to the Holy Spirit, your Teacher. If you notice an idle thought, immediately deny its hold, assuring your mind that you do not want it. Then let it be given up and replaced with today’s idea. Say: “This thought I do not want. I choose instead (today’s idea).”

Remarks: We are attempting to go beyond special forms of practice because we are attempting a quicker pace and shorter path to our goal.

Hourly Remembrance: Repeat: “I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”

Frequent Reminder: As often as possible, as often as you can.

Repeat: “I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”

Response To Temptation: Permit no idle thought to go unchallenged.

If you are tempted by an idle thought, immediately deny its hold, assuring your mind that you do not want it. Then let it be given up and replaced with today’s idea. Say: “This thought I do not want. I choose instead (today’s idea).”

COMMENTARY

Well, we don’t get much choice today. We’ve got to take another look at the fact that we are not bodies.

The belief that I am a body, I think, is what put us here in this world, wearing a body. I may say I believe I am not a body, and that I understand what I am saying, but I’m still wearing a body.

That shows that my words and the deep belief of my mind are not entirely in synch. The reason the Course has had us repeating this idea for the last twenty days (it started with Lesson 199) is certainly not because we already believe it and don’t need it; obviously, the Course is recognizing that our belief that we are bodies is deeply imbedded in us, and the repetition is necessary to begin counteracting that belief. Remember that in Lesson 199, it suggested we make

this idea a part of our practice *every day*. Our identification with our bodies is not an idea that will be easily dislodged.

The juxtaposition of the words “I am not a body” with the words “I am free” is interesting. If I had written the Course I would probably have said, “I am not a body. I am a spirit,” or something like that. Why do you suppose Jesus put these two thoughts together?

The body is an enslaving thing. All of us are slaves to our bodies. Think how much time and energy of our so-called life in this world is devoted to caring for the body. We feed it, we work to house it and cloth it, we wash it, we devote entire rooms in our house to taking care of the needs for elimination and cleansing, we buy all sorts of gadgets to groom it. Every week or so we clip our nails. We make appointments for haircuts. Look at the cookbook section in a bookstore some time to get a feel for the thought and care that goes into just the feeding aspect. Look at our supermarkets, our clothing stores, shoe stores. Most stores in a mall have to do with caring for the body. Look at the expense we devote to health care and hospitals.

What if I am not a body? What if this great focus of effort and attention is all misdirected? What if we are majoring in minors? What if the center of gravity in our lives began to shift from caring for the body to caring for the spirit? What would my life and your life be like if that happened? What if I was as consistent in seeking holy instants as I am in feeding my face? What if I began stopping several times a day to feed my spirit as regularly as I do to eat, or go to the bathroom? We find it so easy to say to a friend, “Care for a cup of coffee?” What if it were just as easy to say, “Care to spend a few minutes in meditation with me?”

Just thinking about this makes it evident how unbalanced our lives are and how centered on our bodies. It makes me realize how far we have yet to go. And since change begins in the mind, just reminding myself as often as I can remember to do so, “I am not a body,” is a good way to begin the great shift. Perhaps something as simple as letting my meals be a reminder to say a prayer can help, not because praying over food makes it any better, but because it helps me remember that I need my spiritual nourishment as much, or more, than I need physical food. Each time I become aware that I am taking time and effort to care for my body, let it remind me also to care for my spirit.

Think, too, of the freedom that will come to us when we realize that our body is no big deal. What I am is not something that wears out, grows old and dies. What I am is not something that is a “brief candle,” as Shakespeare called it, but an eternal star shining forever in the heavens. The body is deserving of care because it is a useful tool for the situation in which we find ourselves, but no more than that. Like a car it is good for the purpose it serves. But the body is not “me” any more than my car is “me” (auto ads to the contrary). Think of all the anxiety and constant concern that would be lifted from our shoulders if we can think of our bodies in this way. Changing our mind in this respect is worth all the effort it will take.

Lesson 220

August 8

“I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”

“There is no peace except the peace of God.”

“I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Review VI

Purpose: To carefully review the last 20 lessons, each of which contains the whole curriculum and is therefore sufficient for salvation, if understood, practiced, accepted and applied without exception.

Morning/Evening Quiet Time: 15 minutes—at least

- Repeat: “I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”
- Close eyes and relinquish all that clutters the mind; forget all you thought you knew. Give the time to the Holy Spirit, your Teacher. If you notice an idle thought, immediately deny its hold, assuring your mind that you do not want it. Then let it be given up and replaced with today’s idea. Say: “This thought I do not want. I choose instead (today’s idea).”

Remarks: We are attempting to go beyond special forms of practice because we are attempting a quicker pace and shorter path to our goal.

Hourly Remembrance: Repeat: “I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”

Frequent Reminder: As often as possible, as often as you can.

Repeat: “I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.”

Response To Temptation: Permit no idle thought to go unchallenged.

If you are tempted by an idle thought, immediately deny its hold, assuring your mind that you do not want it. Then let it be given up and replaced with today’s idea. Say: “This thought I do not want. I choose instead (today’s idea).”

COMMENTARY

To see ourselves as bodies is to be in conflict. Peace can be found only in God. Searching for peace in the realm of the physical is doomed to failure, because the body is an expression of conflict.

The prayer in this review lesson is about not wandering from “the way of peace.” What might that mean? Obviously, it refers to any unpeaceful state of mind, any thought of antagonism, or anger, or attack, or hatred. The Course calls us to mental vigilance, watching our thoughts for anything that opposes peace, and, as soon as such a thought is detected, bringing it to the presence of the Holy Spirit for healing. We are told to think along these lines: “This is not what I want. I want the peace of God.” So when we sense our thoughts moving into conflict mode, we respond. Perhaps we pray, “Let me not wander from the way of peace.”

Wandering from the way of peace, however, includes more than overt attack. The ego can disguise attack very subtly; indeed the Course sees even our special love relationships, our false forgiveness, and our ego’s attempts at empathy as veiled attacks. If there is no peace except

God's peace, then to seek for peace in some other way is really a hidden attachment to attack. If there is only one road to my destination, and I choose not to follow the road, I am choosing my destination's opposite. It is really seeking peace through war, which is impossible. The ego, for instance, often seeks for illusory peace through force, attempting to physically or mentally overpower the situation. We cannot find peace by attempting to browbeat the world into submission. On any such road, we are not moving toward peace; we are lost.

The way to God's peace is through following the Holy Spirit, "Him Who leads me home." When we try to solve our problems on our own, we are not following the way to peace. "The ego always tries to preserve conflict. It is very ingenious in devising ways that seem to diminish conflict, because it does not want you to find conflict so intolerable that you will insist on giving it up." (T-7.VIII.2:2,3). Trying to use our own ingenuity to resolve conflict, then, is another way we wander from the true road to peace.

When conflict seems to arise today, let me remember my lesson, that there is no peace except the peace of God. Let me instantly seek peace, but not in my own way. Let me turn to the Holy Spirit within and ask His direction.

"When you feel the holiness of your relationship is threatened by anything, stop instantly and offer the Holy Spirit your willingness, in spite of fear, to let Him exchange this instant for the holy one you would rather have. He will never fail in this" (T-18.V.6:1,2).

Part II, Introduction

August 9

The Introduction to Part II of the Workbook is the last set of practice instructions we will receive for the next 160 days. The final instructions will be for the last five lessons, and do not really change much. So, since we will be following this set of instructions every day for the next five months, we need to pay close attention and fix them in our minds. I will mail out this set of comments from time to time, just to remind us all.

Remember that the Workbook is designed to train us in practicing, and to help us form a habit of daily practice that will endure until engaging with God in our lives has become a moment-to-moment way of life, with no need for any further practice. For a very few, this happy habit might be formed in a single year of doing the Workbook, although I know of no one for whom this is true. For most people, it seems, the pattern of practice being taught is still poorly formed and sporadically practiced after only one pass through the Workbook, and many find repeating the Workbook very beneficial, and its clear structure a necessary support in continuing to develop the desired habits.

Before we go over what the desired pattern of practice is, though, let me encourage you with a few observations from my own practice and that of several friends. Do not be discouraged if, on reading over the description of the daily practice, you realize that you are still far from “matching up” to the pattern. The form of daily practice described in this Introduction is the *goal*; being distressed because you don’t match up to it right now is like being upset that you can’t play Tchaikovsky’s First Concerto after only a few weeks of practice. Forming habits takes a lot of time. Just do the best you can each day, and practice forgiving yourself when you don’t measure up to your intentions. Whatever you do, keep at it! Don’t allow the ego to kill your motivation to practice by pointing out how poorly you are doing it. Failure to follow the instructions fully is not a reason to stop practicing; it is a reason to return to practice with renewed vigor, as soon as you realize you have slipped.

The goal of our practice is to completely retrain our minds. It is to become so habituated to listening to the Voice for God that it becomes natural, something we do without even thinking about it, the first response to every temptation. The goal is to respond to every ego thought without fear, and instantly bring it into the holy place where we meet with God in our minds. The long-term goal of our practice, as Lessons 135 and 153 put it, is to arrive at the place where life becomes one continuous holy instant, in which we never cease to think of God. The short-term goal of Workbook practice is to form the habit of daily practicing that will take us to that long-term goal.

What, then, is the pattern of daily practice this set forth for the next 160 days?

1. Spending time with God each morning and night, “as long as makes us happy” (2:6). The result we desire is “direct experience of truth alone” (1:3), or an experience of “rest” and “calm” (3:1), or experiencing the presence of God (4:1, 4:6). In sum, we desire to enter the holy instant; indeed, this Introduction twice refers to our morning and evening practice times as “holy instants” (3:2, 11:4), or “times in which we leave the world of pain, and go to enter peace” (1:4). These experiences of holy instants are called “the goal this course has set” and “the end toward which our practicing was always geared” (1:5).

So every morning and evening practice period is meant to bring us to the holy instant, and “we

will use as much [time] as we will need for the result that we desire” (2:8). The time is flexible, perhaps even a half hour or longer if we need or want that much time.

2. Hourly remembrance (2:9). Once each hour during the day we will pause to remind ourselves of the lesson for the day, using the thought for the day to “calm our minds at need” (3:1). But the hourly remembrance is not simply a repeating of the words; it is a brief time in which we “expect our Father to reveal Himself, as He has promised” (3:3). Ideally this will be two or three minutes in which we can be quiet, perhaps closing our eyes, to refocus on our goal and regroup our thoughts, bringing any grievance or upset of the past hour to the Holy Spirit for healing (see W-pI.153.17 and W-pI.193.12). When such an extended pause is impossible, briefly turning our thoughts to God and reaffirming our goal is sufficient.
3. Response to temptation. Whenever we are “tempted to forget our goal” (2:9) we need to call to God. That the temptation mentioned is “to forget our goal” implies that all the rest of the time *we are remembering it!* So in between the hourly remembrances, any time we notice our minds are about to wander from our goal, or have wandered, we call to God to help us return our minds to Him.

This is a rigorous spiritual practice. It demands considerable effort to form such habits. But the results are more than worth it. The goal of the Course, the whole purpose of Workbook practice, has been to bring us to this kind of direct experience of the truth. Without such direct experience, the concepts of the Text will be nothing more than empty concepts.

We are offered a little more detail about how to spend our extended morning and evening times. The specific words of the day’s lesson, as it appears in the Workbook, are of diminishing importance. This is reflected in the fact that no more than a half page is given to them. The words of the lesson are not the focus any more; they are “but...guides on which we do not now depend” (1:1,2). The primary goal is direct experience of the truth, or the holy instant. Reading the daily lesson and repeating its main thought is only the beginning (2:1); having used the words to focus our minds, we spend our time waiting for God to come to us (3:3, 4:6). These times are called “periods of wordless, deep experience” (11:2). The bulk of our morning and evening times should be spent thus, in silent waiting and receptivity, without verbal thought.

If you look ahead at the lessons in Part II you will see that every one contains a short prayer to God the Father. There is no specific mention of these prayers nor how to use them, but I believe the following words give such instruction:

“We say some simply words of welcome, and expect our Father to reveal Himself, as He has promised” (3:3). “So our times with Him will now be spent. We say *the words of invitation that His Voice suggests*, and then we wait for Him to come to us” (4:5–6, my italics).

Those “words of invitation,” suggested to us by God’s Voice, are the prayers given to us each day. They are words suggested for our use, to invite God to speak to us, to offer welcome to Him. Actually speaking these prayers, praying them, can be a powerful tool in bringing us the direct experiences with God these lessons intend for us.

“Instead of words, we need but feel His love. Instead of prayers, we need but call His Name. Instead of judging, we need but be still and let all things be healed” (10:3–5).

So the morning and evening times are not intended to be spent in thinking about the concepts of the Course, nor in saying prayers for ourselves or for others, nor in making decisions about what to do or making judgments of how to solve our problems. They are meant to be times of

experience and not thought. Simply feeling God's Love. Simply repeating His Name in our awareness of relationship with Him. Simply being still, letting go, *letting* all things be healed, like a patient lying quiet as the Healer does His work. "Sit silently and wait upon your Father" (5:5).

There are words of encouragement in this Introduction, assuring us that we couldn't have come this far if the goal were not our true will, if, in our hearts, we did not want God to come to us and reveal Himself. This *is* our will, in case we are having any doubts, or looking at what is being asked of us and questioning whether or not we want it deeply enough. We do.

Jesus says, "I am so close to you we cannot fail" (6:1). "For now we cannot fail" (5:4). He reviews the way we have come, from our insane wish that God would fail to have the Son He created, to our recognition that illusions are not true. The end is near, he tells us. I think it is important to realize that he is speaking in the context of eons of time; "near" is a relative term, and probably is not referring to days or weeks or months. He says here that "the need for practice [is] almost done" (10:1). Yet in the Manual (Chapter 16) he makes it clear that some kind of practice is part of the life-long habit of the teacher of God. "Almost done," as well, is relative to the billions of years we have spent in separation. We *are* very near the goal, in that context! One last item about our daily practice for the next five months. Before each set of ten lessons, there are "instructions on a theme of special relevance" (11:2). I call these the "What is..." sections of the Workbook; there are fourteen of them. Notice this carefully: we are supposed to read one of these sections *every day*, preceding either our morning or evening quiet time. Thus, each section will be read ten times. And each time we read it, we are asked to read it "slowly" and to think about it for a while.

Going along with this instruction, therefore, in the daily lesson comments I send out I will include my thoughts for that day about the current "What Is" section. I plan to comment, usually, on just a few sentences from the "What Is" section each day, covering the entire page over the period of ten days.

LESSON 221

August 9

“Peace to my mind. Let all my thoughts be still.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Part II

Purpose: To take the last few steps to God. To wait for Him to take the final step.

Morning/Evening Quiet Time: as long as needed.

- Read the written lesson.
- Use idea and prayer to introduce time of quiet. Do not depend on the words. Use them as a simple invitation to God to come to you.
- Sit silently and wait for God. Wait in quiet expectancy for Him to reveal Himself to you. Seek only direct, deep, wordless experience of Him. Be certain of His coming, and unafraid. For He has promised that when you invite Him, He will come. You ask only that He keep His ancient promise, which He wills to keep. These times are your gift to Him.

Hourly Remembrance: Do not forget.

Give thanks to God that He has remained with you and will always be there to answer your call to Him.

Frequent Reminder: As often as possible, even every minute.

Remember the idea. Dwell with God, let Him shine on you.

Response To Temptation: When you are tempted to forget your goal.

Use idea as a call to God and all temptation will disappear.

Reading: preceding one of the day’s moments of practice.

- Slowly read “What is...?” section.
- Think about it a while.

Overall Remarks: Now, in this final part of the year that you and Jesus have spent together, you begin to reach the goal of practicing and of the course. Jesus is so close that you cannot fail. You have come far along the road. Do not look back. Fix your eyes on the journey’s end. You could not have come this far without realizing that you want to know God. And this is all He requires to come to you.

COMMENTARY

As I emphasized in discussing the Introduction to Part II, a large part of our two longer daily practice times are meant to be spent in wordless quiet. Receiving our healing, listening rather than talking. Today’s lesson is a great one for inducing that state of mind. We begin by directing our minds to be peaceful, our thoughts to be still.

The opening prayer in the first paragraph speaks of coming in silence, and in the quiet of our hearts, waiting and listening for God’s Voice. The words used—”quiet,” “silence” (twice), “the deep recesses of my mind,” waiting, listening, coming to hear His Voice—all these words are pointing us in the same direction, fostering the same attitude in us. An attitude of receptivity. A passiveness, we the feminine to God’s masculine, the receiver to the Giver of Life. We still our own thoughts, and allow God’s thoughts to come to us. We call to Him, and await His answer.

Jesus is with us as we quietly wait. He voices his confidence that God is with us, and that we will hear Him speak if we wait quietly with him. He asks us to accept his own confidence, telling us that his confidence is our own confidence. Often, I have found it helpful to realize that Jesus symbolizes the part of my own mind that is already awake. His confidence really *is* my confidence, a confidence I have denied so that I see it as outside myself.

We wait with only one goal: to hear His Voice speaking to us of what we are, and revealing Himself to us. In these times of quiet, this is what we are listening for: an awareness of the purity and perfection of our own being as He created us, and an awareness of His Love, His tender care for us, and His peace that He shares with us in these peaceful moments.

How can we hear a message without words? What we listen for is the song of love, eternally sung, forever thrumming its harmony throughout the universe. It is a song we hear wisps of in the eyes of our beloved, in the laughter of children, in the loyalty of a pet, in the expanse of a peaceful lake or the stately flowing of a river, and in the wonder of a well-told fairy tale. It is the song to which our hearts resonate, showing their true nature. It is our eternity calling us to dance. It is the Father sharing His Love with His only Son.

What is Forgiveness? (Part 1)

“Forgiveness recognizes what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred” (WpII.1.1:1).

Forgiveness is a different way of seeing yourself.

I want to emphasize the words “you thought” and “to you” in that description of forgiveness. It does not say, “What your brother did has not occurred”, but rather “What *you thought* your brother did *to you* has not occurred”. It is not a denial that an event happened, but rather a different way of seeing yourself in relationship to the event. You thought that you were affected by it, hurt by it, damaged by it, whatever “it” was; in fact you were not affected by what your brother did at all! You are affected, so the Course tells us, only by your thoughts.

First and foremost, forgiveness means seeing yourself differently in relation to an event. It does not begin with seeing an event or another person differently. When you forgive, what happens first is that you recognize that you have not lost your peace or your love because of what happened; you lost it because you chose to lose it. You decided, at some point, to let go of the peace of God in your heart. The event then came along to justify your loss of peace. You projected the loss of peace onto the event and said, “That is why I am upset.”

Therefore, once your thought in regard to yourself has been corrected, you now can see your brother is innocent in spite of his action. He may indeed have done something despicable. You don’t have to approve of what he did, or like it, or put up with it like a doormat. However, his action or words did not hurt you. It was not what he did that took away your peace. He did not affect you, he did not injure you. You now can see that “sin” did not occur, and that he has done nothing that warrants guilt. He has perhaps made a grievous mistake, but that hurts only himself, not you.

So much of what the Course talks about is implied in this simple statement, “what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred.” You thought he injured you, your self, because you are identified with your ego feelings, with your body, with your possessions, with your family members and their bodies and possessions and feelings. The Course teaches that we have identified incorrectly. We are not our bodies. We are not our possessions. We are not the ego with

all its hurt feelings. We are something much grander and vaster than that, something that cannot be touched in any way by external forces.

To fully forgive, our identification with our bodies has to be completely over. None of us have attained that, yet. That is why the Course so confidently implies that not one of us has ever, yet, completely forgiven anyone! That is why it says that if only one person completely forgives another, the world would be healed. (That is what Jesus accomplished, and because of it, the world is already healed. We just haven't been ready yet to receive it.)

A large part of my dealing with the Course has been in recognizing that, far from having no one to forgive, I have everyone to forgive.

If, in your picture of any situation, you still see yourself—or someone close to yourself—as having been in some way injured or hurt by the situation, you have not yet completely forgiven it in your mind. The Course teaches that if pain is real in your perception, you have not yet been completely healed.

Now, I haven't gotten past the first line on this page and probably I've got us all, including myself, feeling a little guilty at the fact that despite all our study of the Course we haven't yet learned to forgive. So I have to stop here, back off, and say: This is completely normal. Don't be surprised. And don't feel guilty about it! Before we can learn to forgive we have to admit that we are not forgiving! We need to recognize all the ways we still make pain real in our experience and belief, and just recognize that we are doing so. Our first lesson in forgiveness is to forgive ourselves for being unforgiving. As it says in the fourth paragraph: "Forgiveness...is still, and quietly does nothing...It merely looks, and waits, and judges not." Treat yourself that way! Get in touch with the part of you that does not want to forgive, that does not want peace. Look at it, and do nothing, just wait without judging. It will disappear (in time) and peace will come of itself.

LESSON 222

August 10

“God is with me. I live and move in Him.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Part II

Purpose: To take the last few steps to God. To wait for Him to take the final step.

Morning/Evening Quiet Time: as long as needed.

- Read the written lesson.
- Use idea and prayer to introduce time of quiet. Do not depend on the words. Use them as a simple invitation to God to come to you.
- Sit silently and wait for God. Wait in quiet expectancy for Him to reveal Himself to you. Seek only direct, deep, wordless experience of Him. Be certain of His coming, and unafraid. For He has promised that when you invite Him, He will come. You ask only that He keep His ancient promise, which He wills to keep. These times are your gift to Him.

Hourly Remembrance: Do not forget.

Give thanks to God that He has remained with you and will always be there to answer your call to Him.

Frequent Reminder: As often as possible, even every minute.

Remember the idea. Dwell with God, let Him shine on you.

Response To Temptation: When you are tempted to forget your goal.

Use idea as a call to God and all temptation will disappear.

Reading: preceding one of the day’s moments of practice.

- Slowly read “What is...?” section.
- Think about it a while.

Overall Remarks: Now, in this final part of the year that you and Jesus have spent together, you begin to reach the goal of practicing and of the course. Jesus is so close that you cannot fail. You have come far along the road. Do not look back. Fix your eyes on the journey’s end. You could not have come this far without realizing that you want to know God. And this is all He requires to come to you.

COMMENTARY

Again we are brought to the Presence of God, without words, in quiet. Our only awareness is of God, His Name upon our lips.

What does it mean to “live and move” in God? This is the message that the Apostle Paul brought to the Athenians, speaking of the “unknown God,” and saying that “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:16–28). The lesson speaks of the omnipresence of God—that God is everywhere and everywhen. In beautiful imagery, the lesson turns our thoughts to the all-pervading Presence, never apart from us, “nearer than hands and feet,” as the Bible says.

This is imagery and not (in my opinion) literal. If the world is illusion, as the Course has so often said, He is not literally “the water which renews and cleanses me” (1:3). It speaks of our spiritual reality, where we *really* are. God is the reality of all things in which we look to the world for

sustenance, the true Source of our life. We think we live in the world, but we live in God. We think our body contains our life, but He is our life. We think we breathe air, but we breathe Him. God is our true food and our true drink, our true home. We do not live and move in the world; we live and move in God.

Reading this lesson aloud is an excellent exercise. Or turning the first part into a prayer: “You are the Source of my life... You are my home....” Use these words at the start of your practice period to set your mind into a consciousness of being immersed in and filled with God, kept in His loving care. Then, be still, and let yourself sink into that Presence, to rest with Him in peace a while.

What is Forgiveness? (Part 2)

“Forgiveness,” it says, “does not pardon sins and make them real. It sees there was no sin” (W-pII.1.1:2–3). This is the whole distinction between true and false forgiveness, which the Song of Prayer calls “forgiveness-to-destroy.” There is such a difference between seeing sin in someone and struggling to overlook it or to refrain from the desire to punish, and seeing not sin but a mistake, a call for help from a confused child of God, and naturally responding with love. When the Holy Spirit enables us to see the “sin” of another in this way, suddenly we can see our own “sins” in that same very different light. Instead of trying to justify our own errors, we can admit they are mistakes and simply let them go, without guilt.

Sin is simply “a false idea about God’s Son” (1:5). It is a false self-appraisal projected onto everyone around us. It is the belief that we are truly separate, attackers of God’s Love in our separation; it sees attackers everywhere.

Forgiveness is seen here (1:6–7) in three steps. *First*, we see the falsity of the idea of sin. We recognize that no sin has occurred; the Son of God (in the other or ourselves) is still the Son of God, and not a devil. He has been mistaken, but he has not sinned. *Second*, closely following on the first step and a natural consequence of it, we let the idea of sin go. We drop it. We relinquish our grievances, abandon our thoughts of attack. Only the first step depends on our choice; the second step follows as its inevitable result. When we no longer see attack, what reason is there to punish with counter-attack?

The *third* step is God’s part. Something comes to take sin’s place; the Will of God is freed to flow through us unhindered by our illusions, and Love follows its natural course. In this we experience our true Self, the extension of God’s own Love.

All we need do, then, if it can be called doing, is to be willing to see something other than attack, something other than sin. We need only to be willing to admit that our perception of sin is false. When we do, the Holy Spirit will share His perception with us. He knows how to forgive; we do not. Our part is merely to ask to be taught by Him. He does the rest, and everything flows out of that simple willingness.

LESSON 223

August 11

“God is my life. I have no life but His.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

(See Part II Practice Summary, and also Part II Introduction)

The practice instructions are included with these lessons as a separate sheet. Save that sheet, place it at the back of your set of commentaries, and refer to it whenever you need to refresh your memory. Since the instructions are identical through Lesson 360, there is no need to reprint the instructions every day. I suggest as well periodically re-reading the Part II Introduction, or my comments on it, to remotivate yourself.

COMMENTARY

Our only mistake is thinking that we have some sort of life apart from God. We do not. God is Life. He is Being. He is Existence. He created all that there is, and there is nothing apart from Him. “Nothing can be apart from Him and live” (W-pI.156.2:9). “I do not exist apart from Him” (W-pII.223.1:2).

Most of my time here on earth I have spent thinking of myself as someone or something apart from God. Most of my spiritual seeking has been a striving to “get back to God,” as if He were unimaginably distant from me. He is not distant. He is not Something separate from my Self. “I have no life but His” (lesson title). There is a blessing often used in Unity churches which ends with the words, “Wherever I am, God is.” Yes. My life is God’s life. My thoughts are God’s Thoughts. There is nowhere to go. There is nothing to do to find Him; He is here. He is with me. He is my life. If I live, I am participating in God.

There is a blessed relief that washes over us when we realize our unity with God. All the bitter struggle, all the fruitless longing, all the aching sense of being on the outside looking in,—all of it ends. A thought of pure joy fills our minds. At times it bubbles over into laughter, a certain compassionate amusement at the ludicrous idea we have tormented ourselves with, that we could ever, in any remote or tiny way, be separated from Him. Can the sunbeam be separate from the Sun? Can an idea be separate from the mind that thinks it?

And so we turn again to the quiet place within, where all this is already known. We ask to “see the face of Christ instead of our mistakes” (2:1). We affirm that we no longer want to be lost in forgetfulness. We state clearly that we want to leave our loneliness and find ourselves, as we have always been, at home. And in the quiet, God speaks to us, and tells us we are His Son.

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS? (Part 3)

The second paragraph (of W-pII.1, pg. 391/401) is all about *unforgiveness*. The distinguishing characteristic of an unforgiving thought is that it “makes a judgment that it will not raise to doubt, although it is not true” (2:1). The distinguishing characteristic of a forgiving mind, then, is that this mind *will* be willing to cast doubt on its own judgments! The unforgiving mind is saying, “My mind is already made up; don’t confuse me with facts.” The forgiving mind is saying, “Perhaps there is another way to look at this.”

In the section discussing the ten characteristics of *advanced* teachers of God (Chapter 4 of the

Manual for Teachers), the final characteristic is “open-mindedness.” It says:

“As judgment shuts the mind against God’s Teacher, so open-mindedness invites Him to come in. As condemnation judges the Son of God as evil, so open-mindedness permits him to be judged by the Voice for God on His behalf” (M-4.X.1:3–4).

The willingness to let go of our own judgments and hear the judgment of the Holy Spirit is what makes forgiveness possible. An unforgiving mind “is closed, and will not be released” (2:2). The forgiving mind is open. Over and over the Course asks us simply to be *willing* to see things differently, simply to be willing to question what we think we know, simply to “do this: “Be still, and lay aside all thoughts of what you are and what God is; all concepts you have learned about the world; all images you hold about yourself” (W-pI.189.7:1). With judgment set aside, “What then is free to take its place is now the Will of God” (1:7).

LESSON 224

August 12

“God is my Father, and He loves His Son.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

(See Part II Practice Summary, and also Part II Introduction)

COMMENTARY

These lessons are helping us remember who we are: God’s Son. Who we are is an Identity that is far beyond anything we can imagine, “so lofty...that Heaven looks to It to give it light” (1:1). In Lesson 221 we were silently waiting for God “speak to us of what we are” (W-pII.221.2:6). In 222, we learned that what we are exists in an environment of God. In 223, we recognized that we were not separate, but existed entirely in union with God. And now, we remember our true Identity as His Son. Our Identity “is illusion’s end. It is the truth” (W-pII.224.1:6–7).

The truth of what we are is the end of all illusions. Or, the flip side, a mistake about what we are is the source of all illusions. We have forgotten it, but in these times of quiet with God, we ask Him to remind us, to reveal that Identity to us. We are “lofty, sinless, glorious and great, wholly beneficent and free from guilt” (1:1). Reading these words, notice how our conscious minds instantly question it, instantly recoil from the audacity of saying such things. It only shows how thoroughly we have deceived ourselves, how well we have learned our own lies. Yet something within, on hearing these words, begins to sing. Something within recognizes the melody of Heaven and starts humming along with it. Listen to that humming. Tune in on it. It is your Self, responding to God’s Call. Say it! “God IS my Father, and He LOVES His Son.”

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS? (Part 4)

The unforgiving thought “protects projection” (W-pII.1.2:3). Our minds, tormented with their own guilt, have projected the blame for our condition outside ourselves. We have found a scapegoat, as Adam did with Eve: “The woman gave me the fruit to eat. It was her fault.” And so we cling to our unforgiveness, we *want* to find blame in the other, because to forgive, to let it go, would be to open the closet door that hides our guilt.

The more we cling to unforgiveness, the more we blind ourselves. The more solid our illusory projections seem to be, until we think it would be impossible to see in any other way. The distortions we impose on reality become “more veiled and more obscure” (2:3). Our self-deceptions become harder and harder to see through, “less easily accessible to doubt.” All we are being asked to do is to doubt them, to question our projections, to listen to a little reason.

Unforgiveness blocks the way to this and tightens our own chains.

We see guilt in others because we *want* to see it there, and we want to see it there because it keeps us from seeing guilt in our own minds. Yet seeing the guilt in ourselves is the only way we can have it healed. If we deny we are wounded we will not seek the remedy. If we deny our own guilt and project it onto others, we will not bring ourselves into the healing Presence within, which is the only place it can be undone. If our mind is closed, if we are not willing to doubt our version of things, we are shutting the door to our own healing. Only in opening our mind, in loosening our determined grasp on finding others to be wrong, in allowing that “there must be a better way” (T-2.III.3:6), can we find our own release.

LESSON 225

August 13

“God is my Father, and His Son loves Him.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

(See Part II Practice Summary, and also Part II Introduction)

COMMENTARY

Love is reciprocal. We receive God’s Love for us by returning it to Him; there is no other way to receive it, “for giving and receiving are the same” (1:1). This *exact* phrase recurs six times in the Course, and there are many others very much like it. We may think we understand what it means, but the Course assures us that no concept it teaches is more difficult for us truly to learn.

The way to know God’s Love blazing in our minds is to return It to Him. If, in our times of quiet yesterday we focused on feeling His Love of us, let us today focus on our awareness of our love for Him. Donna Carey has a beautiful song I was listening to on tape just a day or two ago, which says, “I’ll be forever in love with You.” I wish I could send you all this song; it expresses so beautifully what I feel this lesson is saying. “I’ll dance in the light of Your Love, forever in love with You,” she sings.

What would it be like to have the Love of God “mine in full awareness, blazing in my mind and keeping it within its kindly light”? Is this not what, in our heart of hearts, we all want? Let me cultivate this sense of love in our hearts today. Let simply this be our focus. Nothing complex, nothing even conceptual, just letting our hearts sing with love for God, basking in His Love for us. As the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament put it, “I am my Beloved’s, and He is mine.” To know God as the Beloved is one of the highest of spiritual expressions.

Have you ever sat in stillness with one you deeply love, simply gazing into his or her eyes, without words? That stillness of love is what this lesson is leading us to, a silent communion of love given and received, acknowledged and returned, flowing in an endless current that energizes and transforms our minds and hearts.

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS? (Part 5)

In contrast to the stillness today’s lesson speaks of, an unforgiving thought is frantically active. It has to be. It must be frantic because it flies in the face of truth, and attempts to make real an illusion. Frenetic activity is often the sign of unrecognized unforgiveness. Things that seem to oppose what we want to be the truth keep popping up, like gophers in the silly “bang the gopher” game for kids, and we have to keep bashing them down to maintain our version of reality.

Stilling our mind and becoming quiet, in and of itself, is often enough to begin dissolving our unforgiveness. Unforgiveness cannot exist in quiet. You cannot be peaceful and unforgiving at the same time. “Peace to my mind. Let all my thoughts be still” (Lesson 221). One thing that can foster this peace and stillness is focusing on the very exchange of love that is the center of today’s lesson. The power of our affection for God, and His for us, can quell the stormy thoughts and bring, even if only briefly, a moment of quiet peace, in which unforgiveness simply dissipates.