

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

Lesson 255 • September 12

“This day I choose to spend in perfect peace.”

Practice instructions

See complete instructions on page XXX. A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

Practice comments: Today is the first of three days of peace in Part II (the other two are 273 and 286). All are attempts to have a day of undisturbed peace, and all highlight the importance of our ability to have such a day. So really “give today to finding” (1:6) the peace God wills for you.

Use your repetition of paragraphs 1 and 2 as a device for dedicating the day to this purpose.

Practice frequently, in the faith that this peace really is there, and that your practice can lay hold of it for you.

Commentary

Peace does not seem to be purely a matter of choice: “It does not seem to me that I can choose to have but peace today” (1:1). Our egos would have us believe that peace can be taken from us, or given to us, by things outside our minds. It is not so.

If I am God’s Son, and therefore like Himself, I have the power of decision, the power to simply *choose* peace (1:2–3). God says it is so; let me have faith in Him, and let me act upon that faith. Let me give it a try! Let me choose to spend this day in perfect peace. The more I determine to “give today to finding what my Father wills for me,” which is the peace of Heaven, and “accepting it as mine” (1:6), the more I will experience that peace. I will probably also find a lot of things that pop up trying to disturb that peace. But I can respond to these things simply by saying, “I would choose peace instead of this,” or “This cannot take away the peace my Father has given me.” As I do this, the peace I choose and experience will “bear witness to the truth of what He says” (1:4).

Remember, your mental state isn’t perfect, nor is it expected to be perfect. You are in training; this is a course in mind training. When I practice guitar chords, especially new ones, at first placing my fingers in the right position takes a lot of concentration and effort. I am forced to break the rhythm of the song, slowing down so I can place my fingers just so. I don’t expect to get it right every time. Getting it wrong and correcting myself is part of the training. Eventually, with time, my fingers start forming a habit pattern; they go more and more frequently into the right configuration to strike the chord without any buzzing or dead notes. The training period is a time of doing it wrong, doing it deliberately with conscious concentration, until it becomes a habit I no longer have to think about. That is what we are doing in these lessons: practicing the habit of peace.

Our aim today is to spend the day with God (2:1). We, His Son, have not forgotten Him, and our practice is witness to that fact. The peace of God is in our minds, where He put it. We can find it, we can

choose to spend our day there, in peace, with Him. We *can* do this; God assures us we can. So let us practice. Let us begin. Let us accept His peace as our own, and give it to all our Father's Sons, along with ourselves (1:6).

What is Sin?

Part 5: W-pII.4.3:1-2

Our illusions come from, or issue from, our untrue thoughts. Illusions are not really “things” at all; they are symbols, standing for imaginary things (3:1). They are like a mirage, a picture of something that is not really there at all. Our thoughts of lack, our feelings of unworthiness, our guilt and fear, the appearance of the world attacking us, even our bodies themselves—all of them are illusions, mirages, symbols representing nothing.

Sin is “the home of all illusions” (3:1). The idea of our inner corruption, our bent nature, houses every illusion. The thought of sin and guilt makes an environment that fosters and nourishes every illusion. What needs changing is that thought of the mind. Take away the thought of sin, and our illusions have no place to live. They simply fall down into dust.

These illusions, which come from untrue thoughts and make “sin” their dwelling place, “are the ‘proof’ that what has no reality is real” (3:2). Our bodies seem to prove to us that sickness and death are real, for instance. Our senses seem to prove that pain is real. Our eyes and ears see all kinds of evidence of guilt, of the reality of loss, and of the weakness of love. The world seems to prove that either God does not exist, or that He is angry with us. These things that our illusions seem to prove have no reality at all, and yet they seem real to us. All of this is housed in our belief in sin, and without that belief, they would simply cease to be.

Lesson 256 • September 13

“God is the only goal I have today.”

Practice instructions

See complete instructions on page XXX. A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

Commentary

The title of the lesson talks about our goal. The first two sentences speak of the *means* to the goal:

The way to God is through forgiveness here. There is no other way. (1:1–2)

We are speaking of means and end. Just the other day I read the Text section on “Consistency of Means and End” (T-20.VII), which reasons how, if we accept the goal, we must accept the means for getting there.

The means is forgiveness, and the Course continually insists that forgiveness is not difficult and cannot be difficult, because all it asks is that we recognize that what has never been has not occurred, and only the truth is true. How can it be difficult to be what you already are? If we experience forgiveness as difficult, there can only be one reason: we do not want the means because we still do not want the goal.

In other words, any difficulty stems not from something inherent in forgiveness, but from my unwillingness. It points me right back to recognizing what I am choosing, back to recognizing that I always have exactly what I want. Forgiveness seems difficult because I want it to seem difficult, and I want the means to appear difficult so I can project my unwillingness out onto the means God provided, blaming that means instead of recognizing myself as the cause of the problem.

“There is no other way” (1:2). If the problem is sin and the whole idea of sin, the only solution must be forgiveness. “If sin had not been cherished by the mind, what need would there have been to find the way to where you are?” (1:3). We are trying to find our way to God and we’re already there! There would have been no need for such foolishness if we had not “cherished” sin. We (in listening to our ego thoughts) wanted to find a reason for separation, and sin, guilt, and fear provided the reason. We made it all up, and we must be the ones to let it go.

If we simply woke up, the dream of sin would be over. But we are too terrified to wake up, and the dream of sin and guilt has seemingly become self-sustaining. There seems to be no way out. “Here we can but dream” (1:7). But—and this is a big “but”—“we can dream we have forgiven him in whom all sin remains impossible, and it is this we choose to dream today” (1:8).

So I spend my days, noticing the dream of sin and forgiving it, over and over, more and more, until there is nothing left to forgive. At that point, my fear of God will be gone, and I will awake.

As I notice fear or guilt in myself today, or judging thoughts about those around me, let me look at those thoughts and recognize how insignificant they are, how meaningless. Let me be undisturbed by it all, and know my peace is inviolate. Let me understand that none of it matters, and I am still at rest in God. It is not this I want; I have no goal except to hear God’s Voice.

What is Sin?

Part 6: W-pII.4.3:3-4

If “sin” is something real, the implications are enormous. And quite impossible. What does the reality of sin seem to prove? “Sin ‘proves’ God’s Son is evil; timelessness must have an end; eternal life must die” (3:3). If the Son created by God has sinned in truth, then God’s Son must be evil. Is that possible? If the Son of God is evil, then what was created eternal must now be brought to an end; the eternal Son of God must die. “Justice” would demand it. Is it possible for something timeless to end, for something eternal to die? Of course not; these things are absurd. Therefore, sin also must be absurd. It cannot be.

Sin also “proves” that “God Himself has lost the Son He loves, with but corruption to complete Himself, His Will forever overcome by death, love slain by hate, and peace to be no more” (3:4). The thought that God would lose what He loves always seemed impossible to me; it made the whole idea of hell and eternal damnation seem completely inexplicable. I used to think, “If I go to Heaven, and my father [who did not believe in God] goes to hell, how could I ever be eternally, blissfully happy in Heaven, knowing my father is suffering eternally in hell? If I could not be happy with this, how could I be in Heaven? And if I could not be happy with this, how could God?”

If sin is real, the Son created to be God’s own completion is now corrupt; God has only corruption to complete Himself. His Will has been totally thwarted. Evil wins. There can nevermore be peace.

Therefore, sin simply cannot be real. Guilt and fear follow sin into the unreality. If there is no sin, there is no guilt. If there is no guilt, there is no fear. How else could peace exist? “Sin is insanity” (1:1). It simply cannot be, if God is God, if His Will is to be done, if His creation is eternal. This is what forgiveness shows us:

Sin remains impossible, and it is this we choose to dream today. God is our goal; forgiveness is the means by which our minds return to Him at last. (W-pII.256.1:8-9)

Lesson 257 • September 14

“Let me remember what my purpose is.”

Practice instructions

See complete instructions on page XXX. A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

Practice suggestion: As you begin your day, I suggest spending a moment going through the day you normally have, trying to see how you are usually serving contradictory goals. See yourself reaching after the goals of the world, and then at other times reaching after the goal of God. Try to get in touch with how divided this makes you feel, how it makes you unsure of who you are, and how it makes you feel that you will never reach either set of goals—the earthly or the heavenly—simply because you are giving each set only half of your energy.

Then spend another moment imagining what your day would be like if you only pursued the goal of God today, if you unified your thoughts and actions behind that single goal, and therefore achieved only what God would have you do today. Ask yourself how that day would feel. And then dedicate today to being *that* day.

Commentary

The purpose this lesson is alluding to is forgiveness (2:1). Over and over, the Course tells us that forgiveness is our function, our purpose, our reason for being here. And it is our *only* function:

I am the light of the world. That is my only function. That is why I am here. (W -
p1.61.5:3–5)

Forgiveness is my function as the light of the world. (W-p1.62.Heading)

What if, today, I remembered that forgiveness is my only purpose? What if I realized that, whatever else happens, if I forgive everything and everyone I see today, I have fulfilled my function? What if I realized that all the things I think are important are nothing compared to this purpose? When I am behind that slow driver while trying to get someplace on time, forgiving is my purpose, not getting there on time. In any situation of conflict, forgiveness is my goal, not winning. When the person from whom I am seeking signs of love fails to respond, forgiveness is my goal, not getting the response I seek. And so on. What kind of difference would it make if I really made forgiveness my primary goal, my only goal?

If I forget the goal, I will always end up being conflicted, trying to serve contradictory goals (1:1–2). The inevitable result of conflicting goals is “deep distress and great depression” (1:3). Sound familiar? As we begin the spiritual path we are almost always conflicted, because we have adopted a new, higher goal without really letting go of the older ones. We’re trying to serve two masters, which reminds me of the time I had a job where I was taking orders from two bosses! What a time of distress and depression that was! The only way to peace of mind in our lives is to firmly settle on a single purpose or goal (2:3), and to continually put that above everything else. We need to “unify our thoughts and actions meaningfully,” by recognizing that God’s Will for us is forgiveness, and seeking to do only that (1:4; 2:2).

What is Sin?

Part 7: W-pII.4.4:1-3

The lesson compares our belief in sin, and the projected illusions we have made to support that belief, to “a madman’s dreams” (4:1). The dreams of a madman can be truly terrifying; likewise, our outpicturing of sin in this world can also be very frightening. “Sin appears indeed to terrify” (4:1). Sickness, death, and loss of every kind cannot but result in terror in us. The illusion is not gentle.

“Yet what sin perceives is but a childish game” (4:2). None of it really has any lasting consequence. In the light of eternity, our wars and plagues are no more real and no more frightening than a child’s imaginary war between superhero action figures. There is no question that this is very hard to accept, particularly when you are in the middle of it all, believing it to be real. Yet it is what the Course is saying. If the body does not really live, it does not really die. “The Son of God may play he has become a body, prey to evil and to guilt, with but a little life that ends in death” (4:3). But that is not really the case. It is just a game we are playing. None of it really means what we think it means.

When we go to a movie, we may weep when a character we have identified with suffers loss or dies. Yet a deeper part of our mind knows we are watching a story; the actor did not really die. And at some level, the Course is asking us to respond to what we call “life” in the same way, with a deeper level of knowledge that knows that any life God created cannot ever die. The character in the movie may die, we may weep, and yet underneath all that, we know it is only an imaginary game, and not the final reality.

Lesson 258 • September 15

“Let me remember that my goal is God.”

Practice instructions

See complete instructions on page XXX. A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

Commentary

Have you noticed we are into a series of “let me remember” days? Starting with yesterday’s lesson, there are four “let me remembers” in a row: “what my purpose is,” “that my goal is God,” “that there is no sin,” and “God created me.” There was one earlier lesson also (Lesson 124): “Let me remember I am one with God.”

That is one of the things Workbook practice is all about: remembering. How often during the day does the lesson for the day cross my mind? How often do I pause to reflect on it for a minute or two? How often does my state of mind reflect my only purpose, or God as my goal? And how much of the time does my mind reflect something quite contrary? The purpose of set times—morning, evening, and hourly—is to retrain my mind to think along the lines of the Course. There is no question in my mind that we need such training and such practice.

All that is needful is to train our minds to overlook all little senseless aims, and to remember that our goal is God. (1:1)

The “little senseless aims,” however, loom large in our consciousness, and do not seem little to us; they preoccupy our minds and keep them from their true goal. So training is “needful.” The memory of God is in us already (1:2); we don’t have to dig for it. “God is in your memory” (T-10.II.2:4). All that we need to do is “overlook” or give up “our pointless little goals which offer nothing, and do not exist” (1:2); they are obscuring the memory of God within us. With them out of the way, the memory of God will come flooding back into our awareness.

The “toys and trinkets of the world” that we so avidly pursue cause “God’s grace to shine in unawareness” (1:3). God’s sunlight is shining, but we do not see it; we go shopping. Not just in malls for things, but in relationships for specialness, in the marketplace for power and influence and wealth, in the bars for sex, and with our TV remote controls for entertainment. Do I want the memory of God? All that is needful is that I be willing to train my mind to stop blinding me to it.

“Let me remember.” Oh, God, let me remember!

God is our only goal, our only Love. We have no aim but to remember Him. (1:4–5)

What else could I want that compares with this? Each time today that my heart is tugged to “shop” for something else, let it be a signal to my mind to stop, and to remember: “My goal is God.”

A poem I learned in my Christian days pops into my mind. Some of those folks knew what they were talking about:

My goal is God Himself.

Not joy, nor peace, nor even blessing,
But Himself, my God.
At any cost, dear Lord, By any road.

A Course friend sent us some baseball-type caps imprinted with the letters “MOGIG.” They stand for “My only goal is God.” I think I’ll wear that hat today as I work; it will be a good reminder.

What is Sin?

Part 8: W-pII.4.4:4

While we are all deeply involved in the drama of this “childish game” (4:2), reality continues. It has never changed. “But all the while his Father shines on him, and loves him with an everlasting Love which his pretenses cannot change at all” (4:4). Our “pretenses,” the childish game, the playing at being bodies that suffer evil and guilt and death, has not changed and cannot change the deep, abiding reality of God’s Love; the endless, perfect safety in which we dwell in Him.

The changelessness of Heaven is in you, so deep within that nothing in this world but passes by, unnoticed and unseen. The still infinity of endless peace surrounds you gently in its soft embrace, so strong and quiet, tranquil in the might of its Creator, nothing can intrude upon the sacred Son of God within. (T-29.V.2:3–4)

In a sense, God’s Love guarantees our eternal safety. Because His Love is “everlasting,” so are we. While His Love endures, we endure also.

The Son of Life cannot be killed. He is immortal as His Father. What he is cannot be changed. He is the only thing in all the universe that must be one. What *seems* eternal all will have an end. The stars will disappear, and night and day will be no more. All things that come and go, the tides and seasons and the lives of men; all things that change with time and bloom and fade will not return. Where time has set an end is not where the eternal is. God’s Son can never change by what men made of him. He will be as he was and as he is, for time appointed not his destiny, nor set the hour of his birth and death. (T-29.VI.2:3–12)

Lesson 259 • September 16

“Let me remember that there is no sin.”

Practice instructions

See complete instructions on page XXX. A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

Commentary

The concept of sin includes the idea that what I have done or thought or said has in some way irretrievably altered what I am. We think of sin not as a smudge of dirt on a clean surface, but as some kind of dry rot that has settled into the fabric of our being.

When Jesus says there is no sin, he is saying that our ideas are wrong. Nothing we have done has altered what we are in any way. The surface is uncorrupted and can be simply wiped clean. We are created with an amazing psychic layer of Scotchgard protectant. Underneath the layers of grime, we are still the holy Son of God.

If we think of sin as we normally do, the goal of God seems unattainable (1:1). If we see it as Jesus does, we can understand that the goal is already attained; it is not something to attain, it is something to celebrate.

When we see sin in another as dry rot, we feel justified in our attacks (1:3). When we see it as surface smudges, our love responds with a desire to wipe the surface of our brother’s mind to reveal the beauty hiding in the dirt.

We are all aware of some self-destructive habit patterns. All of them come from the sense that we deserve punishment and suffering because we are guilty (1:4). We are unworthy of health, happiness, and uninterrupted joy. We think the evil is *in* us rather than *on* us.

When we fully accept the truth of our own innocence, we have opened the way to complete abundance and health. The universe is set up to support us, good is continually flowing our way, but we constantly block it off because, unconsciously, we don’t think we deserve it. All this comes from the belief in sin.

Sin makes us afraid of love (2:2). To be afraid of love is insane, but then, “sin is insanity” (W-pII.4.1:1). If God is the Source of everything that is, then all there is must be Love; there can be no opposite, no fear, no sin (2:3–5). To remember that there is no sin is to accept our own perfect innocence, and the perfect innocence of all that is. And all the evidence we perceive that seems to prove otherwise is an illusion made up by our own minds.

What is Sin?

Part 9: W-pII.4.5:1–4

How long, we are asked, will we maintain this childish game of sin? That is all it is, a foolish game. Not an awful, terrible thing; just immature minds playing with “sharp-edged children’s toys” (5:2). I think it is no coincidence that in the famous biblical chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13, the Apostle Paul speaks

of how, when we are children, we speak as children and act as children, but when we are grown, we “put away childish things” (1 Cor 13:11). That is what the lesson is asking us to do. It is asking us to grow up. “Sin” is a sharp-edged childish thing we have been playing with for eons. It is time for us to lay it aside, and to assume our “mature” role as extensions of God’s Love.

It is time for us to put away these toys. Time to lay aside the whole concept of sin and guilt, the idea that we can do (and have done) something that immutably changes our nature. Something that merits everlasting condemnation and punishment. It is time to look around us and to realize that nothing, absolutely nothing, falls into this class. Sin, as a class or category of human behavior, simply does not exist. There are no sins, only mistakes. Nothing is beyond correction. Nothing bans us from God’s Love. Nothing takes away our eternal inheritance. Nothing can separate us from the Love of God.

How soon will you be ready to come home? Perhaps today? (5:3–4)

We have left home. We have run away because we believed we were evil and had done something unforgivable. But nothing is unforgivable. It is only our own belief in sin and guilt that keeps us here, homeless. Home is still waiting for us. Like the son in the parable of the prodigal, we sit in our pigsty lamenting our loss, while the Father watches at the end of the road, asking, “How soon will you be ready to come home? I’m here; I still love you. I’m waiting for you.” Today, now, in this holy instant, let us be still a moment, and go home.

Lesson 260 • September 17

“Let me remember God created me.”

Practice instructions

See complete instructions on page XXX. A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

Practice suggestion: Think of something you wish you hadn’t done, or wish you had done better. Try to get in touch with how doing that thing seemed to make you into something undesirable. Perhaps it seemed to make you stupid, or selfish, or inconsiderate, or petty. Then repeat these lines:

In my eyes, that action made me _____.

Let me remember God created me.

I cannot make me [the attribute you used in first line], because God created me [choose an attribute that contrasts with the one you assigned yourself].

Commentary

In the Course’s reasoning there is an intimate, unbreakable connection between acknowledging our true Source (“I am as God created me”) and knowing our true Identity. Once we acknowledge God and only God as our Source, all questions about our identity disappear, because we are whatever God created us to be. “Now is our Source remembered, and Therein we find our true Identity at last” (2:1). If our goal is to remember who we truly are, the only way to that goal involves accepting God as our Author. All our false self-concepts derive from the idea that, somehow, we made ourselves, or at least have played a prominent role in shaping ourselves.

In our “insanity,” we thought we made ourselves (1:1). Perhaps we grudgingly acknowledge God as the original creator, and yet we all believe that, since that time, we have been the primary factor in shaping our own lives and destiny. We must believe that, if we believe in sin. Would *God* create sin? Yet if He did not, and sin exists—who made it? So whether or not we consciously admit it, we *do* believe that we made ourselves, if we believe we are anything other than totally innocent and perfect. In sum, we think that “God created us; we screwed things up.”

And yet, the Course would argue, we have not left our Source. God is all there is, and everything that is, is in Him. We are still part of Him. Therefore we cannot be what we think we are. We cannot separate ourselves from Him as we think we have. Separation not only never happened; it *cannot* happen.

If we simply remember God created us, we will simultaneously remember our Identity (1:4–5). Just as the nature of a sunbeam is defined by the nature of the sun, so we are defined by our Source. This is what Christ’s vision shows us as we look upon our brothers and ourselves. We are sinless and holy “because our Source can know no sin” (2:2). We are, therefore, “like each other, and alike to Him” (2:3).

Let me remember, today, that God created me. My Source defines what I am. I am not defined by my past, by my upbringing, by my unkind words or deeds. Nor are my brothers defined by theirs. We are, all of us, defined by God. And what we are is His perfect Son.

What is Sin?

Part 10: W-pII.4.5:5–8

There is no sin. Creation is unchanged. (5:5–6)

This is what remembering our Source tells us. “Sin” is only a childish game we have invented, and it has had no effect whatsoever on God’s creation. It is a game played only in our imagination; it has not changed reality one iota. The “Fall” never happened. There is nothing to atone for, nothing to pay for. The door to Heaven is wide open in welcome.

All that we need do, then, is to stop imagining this childish game. All that we need do is to cease imagining that guilt—our own or that of another—has any value at all, and to let it go. We hold on to guilt and sin only to maintain our illusion of separateness. Is it worth the price we pay? When we let go of sin, separateness is gone, and Heaven is restored to us.

Would you still hold return to Heaven back? How long, O holy Son of God, how long?
(5:7–8)

Lesson 261 — September 18

“God is my refuge and security.”

Practice instructions

See complete instructions on page XXX. A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

Practice suggestion: Search your mind for things in this world that you believe make you safe.

Then, with each one, affirm that God is your safety. You may want to use the following form:

I think that my bank account [or job, or spouse, or family, etc.] makes me safe.

I see myself living within the walls of its protection.

But I live within God, not in this world.

In Him I find refuge; in Him I am safe.

Commentary

If you have read over the preceding page in the Workbook on “What Is the Body?” you will have noticed that the last paragraph of that section talks about how we “will identify with what [we] think will make [us] safe” (W-pII.5.5:1). The thought is echoed in the start of this lesson: “I will identify with what I think is refuge and security” (1:1). If we have a home which makes us feel safe and secure, for example, we will identify with that home. The thing which makes us feel safe becomes part of our identity. If the connection is strong enough, it will actually *become* our identity in our minds. We begin to see our “citadel” (1:2) of safety as an essential part of ourselves. “I will behold myself where I perceive my strength” (1:2).

This is what we have done with our own bodies. We mistakenly see our bodies as that which makes us safe (“safe from love,” actually—see WpII.5.1:1–3). The body becomes the thing that protects us from God, or from the conflict between love and fear within our minds: you “interpret the body as yourself in an attempt to escape from the conflict you have induced” (T3.IV.6:3). Seeing the body as what makes me safe, I identify with it and perceive my “self” as existing within it. I also perceive my individual ego identity in the same way. It protects me from “losing myself” in the unity love encourages. I therefore encourage my sense of “danger” and even engage in “murderous attack” (1:3) because these things seem to protect my individuality from the inroads of other “selves.” The same dynamic is reflected in the world in people and even nations who violently attack others, claiming they are only seeking to preserve their own peace. The stance is obviously self-contradictory. How can we “find security in danger” or “peace in murderous attack” (1:3)?

Our true security is in God. “I live in God” (1:4), and not in my body nor my ego self.

In Him I find my refuge and my strength. In Him is my Identity. (1:5–6)

To know this as true, we have to release our hold on the thoughts that identify us with our bodies and our egos, and we have to begin to give up attack as a way of life and self-preservation. Attack does not preserve the Self; it preserves the ego, the false self. It preserves fear, chaos, and conflict. The only way, therefore, to truly find peace and to find “Who I really am” is to put an end to our protection of the false self, and to remember that our true everlasting peace is found only in God (1:7- 8).

May I, Father, come home to You today. May I, in entering into Your Presence in this holy instant, feel that sense of peace and security that is mine in truth, in my Identity in You. May I be able to sigh, “Ah! Home!” and feel the release of tension it brings to be here, in You. May I find my Self, and let go of all false identification with lesser things. Be my refuge, today, Father. “The eternal God [is thy] refuge, and underneath [are] the everlasting arms” (Dt 33:27). May I allow myself to fall back into Your arms today. When the day presses on me, be my refuge, my fortress and my high tower. Let me escape to You in the holy instant, and know the safety of Your Love.

What Is the Body?

Part 1: W-pII.5.1:1–3

What is the body? Who, outside the Course, would have answered as does this paragraph? “The body is a fence the Son of God imagines he has built, to separate parts of his Self from other parts” (1:1). The body is a fence. What a strange concept that is! (It is an idea expanded on in the Text section entitled “The Little Garden” [T-18.VIII].) Its purpose (the reason the ego made it) is to keep something out; to separate parts of my Self from other parts. The body is a tool for division and separation; that is why we made it. It is a device intended to protect us from our wholeness. My body separates and distinguishes me from all the other “selves” walking this world in other bodies.

We believe we live “within this fence” (1:2), i.e., in the body. Is there anyone who can deny that this is how they approach life, the fundamental presupposition behind nearly all their actions? We think we live in the body, and we think that when the body decays and crumbles, we die (1:2). Much fear surrounds the death of the body. When our quadriplegic friend, Allan Greene, was still living next door, with only one leg and withered arms, and fingers black and shriveled, dead on his hand, most people found it profoundly disturbing to meet him (although somehow, in his presence, many of us quickly got over that discomfort because of his awareness of not being that body). Why do we generally feel such discomfort around disfigured, maimed, or dying people? One reason is that it triggers our own buried fears of the decay of our own bodies, and behind that, the fear of death itself.

The Course is leading us to a new awareness of a Self that does *not* live in a body, a Self that does *not* die as the body decays and crumbles. It is leading us to disengage ourselves from our identification with this bodily, limited self, and to strengthen our sense of identity with the noncorporeal Self.

Why have our egos made the body as a fence? What is the fence keeping out? Strangely, it is keeping out *love*. “For within this fence he thinks that he is safe from love” (1:3). Why would we want to keep love out? Why would we ever believe we needed something to keep us “safe” from love? Love lets in all the parts of our Self we are trying to keep out. Love destroys our illusion of separateness. Love understands that we are not this limited thing we believe we are, and that our brothers are parts of us; it constantly extends, giving and receiving, like a magnetic force drawing all the fragmented parts of the Self together again.

Have you ever experienced, in a moment of intense love for another person, a surge of fear? Have you ever felt like you were about to lose yourself if you gave in to this love? That feeling gives you some hint of the abject fear the ego has of love. The ego wants you looking for love (because you know you need and want it) in order to keep you satisfied (and trapped), but it never, ever wants you to find it. Love represents the loss of the ego identity. To the ego, it *is* death. And so the body is manufactured to keep love out, as a means of preserving our sense of separateness.