

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

Lesson 290 • October 17

“My present happiness is all I see.”

Practice instructions

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

“Unless I look upon what is not there, my present happiness is all I see” (1:1). That is the real key: not looking at what isn’t here. So often we are looking at the past, or as I was doing as I lay in bed this morning, the future. Neither past nor future is here. By definition they are “not now.”

What Jesus is saying here is that if we can stop for a moment looking at past or future, what we will see is present happiness. As one guru says, “You are always already happy.”

What does this have to do with the leading lesson on the Holy Spirit? “What I perceive without God’s Own Correction [the Holy Spirit] for the sight I made is frightening and painful to behold” (1:4). The future is frightening; the past is painful. I need the corrective spectacles of the Holy Spirit to see the truth.

The world I see is painful because the ego made it to support itself. If I just go on looking at it through the eyes the ego made, I am going to see witnesses to evil, sin, danger, and guilt. I need to see it a different way.

I’m not being asked to blind myself, to bury my head in the sand and pretend the world is not there. I’m being asked to willingly put on corrective lenses and see the world differently, as a witness to love, joy, and peace. First of all, in this lesson, I am being asked to look within and notice that without reference to the past or the future, I am naturally happy. I am being asked to stop looking at what *isn’t* there. Seeing what *is* there in a different way is the next stage, and there will be little effort to it because I will start from a place of happiness.

If I am already happy, nothing in the present can change that because I don’t approach it from a sense of lack. I don’t approach it at all, I am already in it.

This is a great technique for meditation: as thoughts arise, if they concern the past in any way, just let them float by. If they concern the future in any way, just let them float by. If you can do that, what you will discover, always, is your present happiness. You don’t have to manufacture it because it always exists.

What Is the Holy Spirit?

Part 10: W-pII.7.5:3-4

The Holy Spirit is His gift, by which the quietness of Heaven is restored to God's beloved Son. (5:3)

I am so grateful today for this gift, without which the quietness of Heaven would be forever beyond my reach. If I were to try to summarize this page's answer to the question it poses, "What is the Holy Spirit?" I would put it something like this:

The Holy Spirit is God's gift to us to restore our minds, caught in illusion, back to peace and sanity. He is a changeless link between our minds and God's. Through His awareness of both the eternal truth of God and our insanity, He is able to utilize the very illusions we have made to lead us back to reality. We bring our illusions to Him. He translates our illusions from witnesses to fear into witnesses to love, giving us a completely new perception of everything we see. This new perception is so aligned with truth that it enables the end of perception, and the final transfer of our minds to their original state of knowledge.

Would you refuse to take the function of completing God, when all He wills is that you be complete? (5:4)

Once again the Course appeals to us to actively take our part in this process, and to accept our function as given by God: to complete Him. That is a startling phrase, isn't it? Elsewhere the Course tells us that whenever we question our own value, we should say, "God Himself is incomplete without me" (T-9.VII.8:2). A little later it explains, "God is incomplete without you because His grandeur is total, and you cannot be missing from it" (T-9.VIII.9:8). It tells us, "Without you there would be a lack in God, a Heaven incomplete, a son without a Father" (T-24.VI.2:1).

Of course it is impossible that God should be incomplete: "God is not incomplete, and He is not childless" (T-11.I.5:6). The point is that if we are part of God, then God would be incomplete if we were not forever united with Him. We cannot be missing from God; therefore, let us take the part in Him given to us, and end our *refusal* to do so. Our part in completing God is to be complete: "All that He wills is that you be complete" (5:4). We are being asked only to bring our illusions of incompleteness to the Holy Spirit, that He can dispel them and restore to us the awareness of our eternal completion.

The process of bringing our illusions to the Holy Spirit often seems fearful because, from our perspective, it seems to entail loss. We *are* being asked to give up something. But the something we are asked to give up is only our illusion of separation, our illusion of incompleteness. We give up our lack, and remember our wholeness. This is, as Lesson 98 puts it, a bargain in which we cannot lose:

You are being asked for nothing in return for everything. Here is a bargain that you cannot lose. And what you gain is limitless indeed! (W-pI.98.6:3-5)

Lesson 291 • October 18

“This is a day of stillness and of peace.”

Practice instructions

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

I write my comments on this lesson at the end of the day (so that it is awaiting you in your morning e-mail).¹ My day today seemed to be anything but a day of stillness and peace, more like a day of staggering pace. I was rushing about meeting my body’s needs, stocking up on groceries I’d let run down to nothing, buying some vitamins, razor blades, and so on. In the back of my mind was a booklet waiting its finishing touches (and already behind schedule), a flyer for an upcoming workshop, phone calls to make, a stack of correspondence-school papers to read and respond to. I had lunch at 3:45 pm and supper at 8:15. My details are different from yours, but I’m sure lots of your days are similar in tone, if not in content.

We all have the demands of time and circumstance upon us. How do we find inner peace in the midst of it? This lesson speaks of “Christ’s vision,” which “looks through me today” (1:1). “His sight shows me all things forgiven and at peace, and offers this same vision to the world” (1:2). The peace being spoken of here is the peace that comes from a different perspective, an *inner* peace. Elsewhere the Course acknowledges that when we live in this world we are involved in “busy doing” (T-18.VII.8:3). It isn’t that the busy doing ceases. It’s that our mind can be at peace even in the midst of busy doing, a “quiet center” from which we operate (same reference).

I was not doing so well at maintaining that quiet center today, or rather, at remembering it was there and making use of it; I was operating more on the surface of my mind. As a result, I felt a little frantic. This lesson calls me back to home base. The vision Christ offers me is one of loveliness and holiness (1:4–5). It is the sight of a forgiven world, whose forgiveness includes my own. It is the peace of knowing that, although I may forget the toilet paper or fail to write the needed letter, my Self is unchanged, God is my Father, and I share the holiness of God Himself.

In my hyper-activity today there was a certain sense that, somehow, my salvation depended on remembering everything I had to buy or finishing all the tasks I hoped to accomplish. What a relief to know I was wrong! Even in my study of the Course, sometimes, an anxiety creeps in, thinking I have to understand everything perfectly in order to find my way home. Instead, as I read this lesson, I can relax:

I do not know the way to You. But You are wholly certain. Father, guide Your Son along the quiet path that leads to You. Let my forgiveness be complete, and let the memory of You return to me. (2:3–6)

¹ I have left this sentence almost exactly as it first appeared when the lesson commentaries were first mailed out by electronic mail on the Internet, in order to preserve the original feel of immediacy in the whole paragraph.

What Is the Real World?

Part 1: W-pII.8.1:1–2

The Course's discussion of the term "real world" is somewhat paradoxical. We've read its statement, earlier in the Workbook, that "There is no world!" (W-pI.132.6:2). How, then, can there be a *real* world? It even admits there is a contradiction in the term (see T-26.III.3:3). And here we are told, in the opening statement on the topic, "The real world is a symbol" (1:1). A symbol is not the thing it represents; it only stands for something else, as the word "tree" stands for the object we call by that name. The real world is only a symbol, "like the rest of what perception offers" (1:1).

The word "tree" is not a tree. Likewise, the real world is not the thing it represents or stands for. It only symbolizes it. What does the real world symbolize or stand for? "Yet it stands for what is opposite to what you made" (1:2). We made separation; the real world symbolizes unity (but is not itself that unity). We made fear; the real world symbolizes love (but is not itself that love). We made error; the real world symbolizes truth (but is not itself that truth).

The world itself is nothing but a symbol of a thought. It can symbolize the thought of fear, or it can symbolize the thought of love. It can, in our perception, consist of "witnesses to fear" or witnesses to love (W-pII.7.2:2). The world itself is not the reality of anything; it merely stands for something that exists in the mind, as all perception does. It is "the outside picture of an inward condition" (T-21.In.1:5). What changes in the transformation effected by the Holy Spirit is not the world itself, but how we see it; what it symbolizes for us. This is why the message of the Course to us is this: "Seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world" (T-21.In.1:7).

The real world that we seek, and which is the goal of the Course for us, is not, then, a changed world, but a changed perception of the world.

Lesson 292 • October 19

“A happy outcome to all things is sure.”

Practice instructions

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 I often do, I suggest that you make today’s idea more specific in your practicing of it. Think of a situation that is weighing on you or worrying you. Then say, “*A happy outcome to this situation is sure.*” Realize there is no time limit on when that happy ending might come, yet also realize that “it is up to us when this [outcome] is reached” (1:3).

Commentary

God’s promises make no exceptions. And He guarantees that only joy can be the final outcome found for everything. Yet it is up to us when this is reached; how long we let an alien will appear to be opposing His. (1:1–3)

“It is up to us when this is reached.” We keep coming back to that: *When* we experience the outcome of joy in all things is *up to us*. My experience of anything less than total joy is due to my own choice to “let an alien will appear to be opposing His.” It seems to me as if *my own will* is at times opposing God’s. It seems as if I don’t want to let go of the little creature comforts, the physical, mental, and emotional indulgences I continually grant myself in the illusion that I need them.

The law of perception states, “You see what you believe is there, and you believe it there because you want it there” (T-25.III.1:3). If I see in myself a will that differs from God’s, I see it because I believe it is there. I believe my will *is* different from God’s will. And I believe that because I *want* to believe that. If I am alike to God in every way, God and I have only one Will, and the alien will I perceive has no meaning. That is the exact truth! The alien will *has* no meaning! It does not exist. That is why I want to see “my” will as opposed to God’s, and why I do. The apparent conflict in my life is just the ego’s vain attempts to hold on to its identity, which is wholly illusory.

The truth of the matter is that what I see—my resistance to the will of God, which is my perfect happiness—does not exist. I am projecting that from my mind. What I see is an illusion of myself. It is not real, and therefore carries no taint of guilt.

And while we think this will is real, we will not find the end He has appointed as the outcome of all problems we perceive, all trials we see, and every situation that we meet.
(1:4)

All of us go around most of the time consciously or unconsciously disturbed by the undercurrent of resistance to God we believe exists within our selves. We think it is *real*. We read *A Course in Miracles* and determine to be more loving, more forgiving, and then we encounter a deep resistance to the entire idea, a seemingly immovable wall that will not allow us to change. We have an addiction we can’t break. We find one relationship in which forgiveness seems impossible despite all of our efforts. We determine that “today I will judge nothing that occurs” (W-pII.243.Heading) and then, minutes later, flare up in

anger over some small unfairness. And we feel despair, we feel we cannot do it. Somehow we are incorrigible. Some part of us is beyond redemption. Some part of our will is implacably opposed to God.

As long as we believe that this part of us which seems opposed to God is *real*, Jesus is saying, we won't find the real world. We won't find our escape. We won't find the "happy outcome to all things."

We have to come to the point where we are simultaneously fully aware of that stubborn knot within us, and aware that it is not real. We have to get to the place where we *see* it, *own* it, and *take responsibility* for it, and yet do so entirely without guilt. To look on the ego's darkness without guilt is possible only if, as we look, we have abandoned all belief in its reality. That is what the Holy Spirit will enable us to do. Through His enabling, we will come to see that the ego is an illusion of ourselves projected from our minds, nothing more than an illusion, and therefore nothing to be upset about. "Yes, I see the knot of resistance in me, but what I see is not really there. I am seeing it, but it isn't real. It doesn't change anything about reality. I am the beloved Son of God, even if I can't see that now."

We want the ego knot to change. We want it to go away. And while we believe in its reality, it won't. The ego *is* incorrigible. Self-forgiveness involves accepting that about ourselves. The ego will always be the ego, that's the bad news. But the ego is not who we are, and that's the good news.

When we catch ourselves listening to the ego, believing in the reality of an alien will, we can come to the point of learning not to take it seriously. It's as if we say, "I was dreaming again. Now, I choose to be awake." And if we find we are not ready yet for full wakefulness, if the appearance of resistance in ourselves still seems real, we can say, "Yes, I see that, I'm not awake yet, and it still *seems* real, but at least I am *aware* that I am dreaming." The ego is of no consequence. It's "no big deal," as Ken Wapnick says. Even if we seem to be caught in the dream, we don't have to accept guilt about it.

Yet is the ending certain. For God's Will is done in earth and Heaven. We will seek and we will find according to His Will, which guarantees that our will is done. (1:5-7)

All the raging of the ego, all the apparent struggle: it's all a dream. The ending is certain, and is totally unaffected by the ego's madness. There *is* no will opposing God's, and therefore, His Will and ours *will* be done. My will and God's are in fact the same, which *guarantees* the outcome. The craziness of the ego dream has no effects, just as a dream has no effect on the physical world. The craziness of the ego is just a play of images in the mind, and nothing more than that. In the end there will be nothing but joy.

We thank You, Father, for Your guarantee of only happy outcomes in the end. Help us not interfere, and so delay the happy endings You have promised us for every problem that we can perceive; for every trial we think we still must meet. (2:1-2)

"Help us not interfere." That is our prayer. Resisting the ego, being guilty about it in ourselves, striving to change it, or demeaning ourselves because of it, are all forms of interference. They all make the mistake of believing the ego is real, believing there really is an alien will in us that opposes God. To not interfere is to recognize that the ego is just a dream about ourselves, and that nothing need be done about it. The most potent force "against" the ego is the simple thought: "It doesn't matter. It doesn't mean anything." Just bring it to the Holy Spirit and let Him handle it. Just say, "Look, I'm dreaming again." And let it go.

What Is the Real World?

Part 2: W-pII.8.1:3-4

The world is a symbol, either of fear or of love. "Your world is seen through eyes of fear, and brings the witnesses of terror to your mind" (1:3). The voice we choose to listen to, within our minds, determines what we see. If we listen to fear, the world we see symbolizes fear, and is filled with "witnesses of terror."

The world thus tells us what we tell it to tell us.

When we listen to fear, we see things in the world that justify our fear. We see hatred, attack, selfishness, anger, conflict, and murder. All of these things are *interpretations* of what we are seeing. There is another interpretation possible in every case. We can join our perception to that of the Holy Spirit, and He will enable us to see the world differently.

“The real world cannot be perceived except through eyes forgiveness blesses, so they see a world where terror is impossible, and witnesses to fear cannot be found” (1:4). When we listen to love or forgiveness, we see things in the world that justify love. Nothing we see witnesses to terror. Imagine a world in which “terror is impossible,” where nothing you see is saying to you, “Be afraid!” That is the real world as the Course defines it. Everything is seen “through eyes forgiveness blesses.” The interpretation of everything we see becomes entirely different from the one we are used to.

The mind determines which world we see. With the help of the Holy Spirit we can choose what we want to see, and we will see it. The world we are looking at may or may not have changed, but the interpretation we put upon it will have done a 180. No longer will we see any of the vast variety of forms of fear the ego has invented; in their place we will see nothing but love, or the call for love. Nothing we see will call for condemnation and punishment. Everything we see will call only for love.

Lesson 293 • October 20

“All fear is past and only love is here.”

Practice instructions

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: The following exercise is based on this lesson’s teaching that your fear is caused by your past mistakes. Their presence in your memory tells you that punishment is on the way, that you better be afraid because you’ve got it coming to you. But these past mistakes are gone. If you could open your eyes and see the present, you would see that only love is really here.

Now for the exercise. Look ahead into your day and identify anything you are afraid of, any event that’s causing you worry or anxiety, or that you would simply like to avoid. Try to identify several such fears. With each one you find, say:

*This fear is past
because my past mistakes are gone.
And only love is here,
Because God is here.*

Commentary

I think of fear as related to the future, yet here it says “all fear is past.” This means more, I think, than that my experiences of fear are all over. Understood that way it is almost wishful thinking. What it seems to actually mean is that fear itself is in the past. Fear comes from the past, it exists in the past only. When the past is real to me, with “all my past mistakes oppressing it” (1:3), then I have fear (and only then). What I fear is that the past determines the future. If my past is filled with mistakes and things of guilt, and I consider it to be real, this generates my present fear of the future.

The source of fear is making the past real in the present.

The Course teaches us that “the past that you remember never was” (T-14.IX.1:10). At first it seems difficult to say to myself, “The things I think happened in the past did not ever happen; they are not real.” Perhaps it is easier to say, “The past never existed in the way I think it did.” That seems more conceivable, more acceptable. To say that is only a step toward the truth, but I think it can be a helpful step. We begin by admitting that our memories of the past are, to say the least, distorted.

Each one peoples his world with figures from his individual past, and it is because of this that private worlds do differ. Yet the figures that he sees were never real, for they are made up only of his reactions to his brothers, and do not include their reactions to him.
(T-13.V.2:1–2)

More than that, the past we imagine we know is filled with reasons for guilt and attack. We remember wrongs done to us, and wrongs we have done. That perception must shift. If we accept the judgment of the Holy Spirit, the perception of guilt must go. Forgiveness is a kind of selective remembering. We can

begin to see the past and everything in it as either the expression of love or a call for help.

This is a kind of intermediate position. In a way we are still believing that the past is (or was) real, but we are deciding to see it differently. The ultimate truth is that time itself does not exist, the world does not exist, bodies do not exist. They are nothing but the play of thoughts in our mind.

A physical analogy helps me. Does an ocean wave exist? Is a wave real? In one sense, yes; in another, no. There is no such thing as a wave apart from the ocean. What we call a wave is no more than the play of physical energy on water. The water, the ocean, is (in this physical plan) what is real; the wave is here one moment, gone the next; in this moment comprised of one set of water molecules, in the next comprised of a wholly different set of molecules. A wave does not exist *in itself*, independent of all else.

The entire physical universe is nothing more than a wave in Eternal Mind. Mind is all that is real.

In this sense, then, nothing of the past is real. All of the past of a wave no longer exists. The past wave is totally and completely gone. Where it passed now lies placid and calm, unaffected by the wave. Waves do not change the ocean.

Some may be able to see it this way, to understand at least in concept that the past simply does not exist. Some of us may need the simpler form, “It never happened the way I think it did. Guilt was never real.” The simpler form will eventually lead to the fuller form, so it simply doesn’t matter.

When I experience fear, then, one thing to look for is the belief in the past that is behind it, perhaps hidden, but surely there. Only the past makes me fearful of the future. That is why young children are so often lacking in fear: they have no memory of past disasters to give rise to the fear. When I feel fear, let me remember that it depends on my perception of the past, and affirm: “What I remember never happened as I think it did. There is nothing to fear.”

When I deliberately choose to exclude the past from my consideration of the present, “in the present love is obvious, and its effects apparent” (1:4). The constant burden of the past, dredging up remembered horrors, totally blocks this awareness of love’s presence from my perception. All our *learning* is nothing but an accumulation of ideas about the past. Therefore all of it is nothing. We begin to *unlearn*, to deliberately forget what we think the past has taught us, and in that we find true perception and eventually true knowledge.

The world that we see, when we see without the fear carried over from the past, is the real world. This is the world we are asking to see today in this lesson. Underneath all the sounds of fear, the world is singing “hymns of gratitude” (2:2). The perception of the Holy Spirit is able to penetrate through the veneer of fear we have placed over reality. When we share His perception, we realize the past is gone, and we see and hear what is here *now*, when “love is obvious.” Let me, then, join in the prayer: “I would see only this world before my eyes today” (2:4).

What Is the Real World?

Part 3: W-pII.8.2:1–2

“The real world holds a counterpart for each unhappy thought reflected in your world; a sure correction for the sights of fear and sounds of battle which your world contains” (2:1). If the real world contains counterparts for each unhappy thought, then it must consist of happy thoughts. The difference is in the thoughts about what is seen, and not in the objects of perception. In this sentence it seems almost as though the real world is like a library of videos, each consisting of a different interpretation of some person or event in our lives. We can choose to watch the videos of the Holy Spirit or those of the ego. Same scenes, but different Director, with a different meaning given to everything.

“The real world shows a world seen differently, through quiet eyes and with a mind at peace” (2:2). The difference lies in the peacefulness of the mind doing the perceiving. This is the first of three references to the state of the mind that is doing the seeing. Others are “the mind that has forgiven itself” (2:6) and “a mind at peace within itself” (3:4).

We all assume that our perceptions of the world are telling us something real about the world. In fact, they are telling us something about our own state of mind. The sights of fear and sounds of battle we perceive are only reflections of the fear and battle within our own minds. When our minds have been brought to peace, the world takes on a different appearance because our minds are projecting their own state upon the world. Let me, then, seek the healing of my own mind, and the healing of the world will take care of itself.

Lesson 294 • October 21

“My body is a wholly neutral thing.”

Practice instructions

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 a number of features of your body that you either like or dislike.

With each one, say:

I see this [name the bodily feature] as [good, bad].

It is neither good nor bad.

It is a wholly neutral thing.

Commentary

This statement sums up the Course’s attitude towards the body. It is “neither good nor bad” (2:2); it is *neutral*. It derives its value or its harm from the use to which we put it, the purpose that it serves.

There is a view of the body that sees it as inherently good, always deserving that we respect its wishes. If I am sexually aroused by someone I should indulge that urge. If I am hungry I should eat; if I am tired I should sleep. All repression of physical desires is wrong. This view is incorrectly identifying the body with my self. It deifies the body and makes it not only good, it makes it God.

There is another view that sees the body as inherently evil. Therefore I must master and repress all my bodily urges. This approach denies that the body is in any way an expression of my self. It makes a devil of the body. It produces endless guilt over every physical desire.

The body, says the Course, is not good and not bad. It is neutral. Not sinful, nor sinless. Its only usefulness is in awakening from the dream, or in communicating salvation. Such an approach does not make the mistake of identifying myself with my body. It does not make me wrong for having urges, nor does it make me wrong for ignoring some of those urges. It neither exalts nor condemns the body. It accepts the body as a tool, useful for the purpose of truth and nothing else. It sees no purpose in purely bodily ends.

The lesson states, “I am a Son of God” (1:1). And I am not “another thing,” “mortal and corruptible” (1:2–3). God did not create the mortal and corruptible body, and a Son of God has no use for what must die (1:4). Yet if the body is seen as a neutral thing it “does not see death” (1:5). Why? Because “thoughts of fear are not invested there, nor is a mockery of love bestowed upon it” (1:5). We (apparently) experience death when we see the body as evil (“thoughts of fear”) or as good (“a mockery of love”). Holding the body as neutral “protects it while it has a use” (1:6). In other words, to the mind that is healed, the body is immortal until its work is done. It lasts as long as it is needed for the mind’s purposes of healing in this world, and then it is simply “laid aside” because it no longer has a purpose (1:7). This is not *death* but simply the end of the body. As *The Song of Prayer* puts it, “We call it death, but it is liberty” (S-3.II.3:1).

When a mind that is healed no longer needs the body, the body is simply laid aside. “It is not sick nor old nor hurt. It is but functionless, unneeded and cast off” (1:8–9). There have been a few who have experienced this kind of bodily end that is not death. Robert tells me of reading of a Tibetan monk who,

one day, announced to his followers that his work in the body was almost finished and that he would be leaving the body in a few months. He named the exact date. And on that day, he sat in meditation in full lotus, and simply left. He was “not sick nor old nor hurt.” His body was simply “unneeded” any more.

How can we attain to such a high state, and such a gentle death (if it can even be called “death”)? The lesson indicates that our path lies in the direction of gradually coming to see our bodies as “of service for a while and fit to serve, to keep its usefulness while it can serve, and then to be replaced for greater good” (1:10). It is neither a burden nor an end in itself. It is simply a tool. We use it, in this dream, “to help Your plan that we awaken from all dreams we made” (2:3), and for nothing more than that. Seeing the body as neutral is what protects it while it has a use in this plan. As we align our minds with God’s plan, we value the body for its usefulness in fulfilling the plan, and not for itself. We neither exalt it nor abuse it. We do not strive either to keep the body or to leave it. We simply use it to fulfill our function.

What Is the Real World?

Part 4: W-pII.8.2:3–6

When we see the real world, “Nothing but rest is there” (2:3). No conflict, no “battle.” I think that when I truly see the real world, there will be very little or no sense of urgency. There is a kind of attitude towards spirituality that instills what is almost a mode of panic: “We have to fix things, we have to get it right, and right away!” This is not rest. The sight of the real world is a restful sight, one that fills us with assurance that “nothing real can be threatened” (T-In.2:2) and therefore there is no need for panic.

“There are no cries of pain and sorrow heard, for nothing there remains outside forgiveness” (2:4). I do not think this means that we become indifferent to the world’s suffering. In the Text, the Course tells us: “Love always answers, being unable to deny a call for help, or not to hear the cries of pain that rise to it from every part of this strange world you made but do not want” (T-13.VII.4:3). What I think this line means is that the cries of pain and sorrow are not heard as witnesses to fear, but as calls for help, as something requiring a response of love rather than a response of terror. The healed mind that sees the real world is not distraught by the cries of pain and sorrow because it knows that “nothing...remains outside forgiveness.” Nothing is beyond hope or help.

And the sights are gentle. Only happy sights and sounds can reach the mind that has forgiven itself. (2:5–6)

Underneath the sounds of fear, the mind that has forgiven itself hears the hymns of gratitude (see W-pII.293.2:2). The song of love is louder than the dirge of fear. Everything that is seen carries in it the note of redemption.

There is a way to look on everything that lets it be to you another step to Him, and to salvation of the world. (W-pI.193.13:1)

Lesson 295 • October 22

“The Holy Spirit looks through me today.”

Practice instructions

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

My eyes are Christ’s. “Christ asks that He may use my eyes today” (1:1). And in the prayer at the end, Christ’s eyes are mine. “Help me to use the eyes of Christ today” (2:2). Two ways of saying the same thing: to ask that Christ look through my eyes, or to ask that I see through His eyes, is to ask that His vision, His eyes, replace my own limited vision.

Christ asks for my eyes to “offer peace of mind to me, and take away all terror and all pain” (1:2). He is not asking me for sacrifice, but asking so that He can give a gift to me. He offers to take my perception from me because my perception shows me terror and pain; He offers to replace it with His own vision, showing me peace, joy, and love.

As we give our lives to God we begin to experience that rather than living we are being “lived.” The Holy Spirit is looking through our eyes. He is speaking through our lips. He is thinking with our minds. It is an experience of being taken up and carried through life by a limitless energy of love that is far greater than we can contain because it includes everything.

Sometimes I seem so far from that, and yet I know that it is as near to me as breathing. Nearer. This morning I ask, Father, for grace to surrender to that flow of love, to surrender to the Holy Spirit, now, in this moment, and over and over through the day, that I may share His vision of the world.

In a way this lesson is the entire Course: to let the Holy Spirit look through me, to bathe the world with eyes of love. To walk through the day with no purpose in its outward things, yet to live with a hidden agenda, a secret mission: *I will be love in this situation*. That is all it is about, and nothing else matters, nothing else is real. I am the light of the world. I am here to “allow the Holy Spirit’s Love to bless all things which I may look upon, that His forgiving Love may rest on me” (2:2). That is what my life is about, that is all it is about. I am here only to be what I am, to be my Self, which is Love.

What Is the Real World?

Part 5: W-pII.8.3:1–3

What need has such a mind for thoughts of death, attack and murder? (3:1)

“Such a mind” as what? “A mind at peace” (2:2). A “mind that has forgiven itself” (2:6). “A mind at peace within itself” (3:4). Can I imagine what it would be like for my mind to be at peace within itself? Can I imagine what it would feel like to have completely forgiven myself, to have no lingering regrets over the past, no fear of future, no hidden guilt, and not one shred of a sense of failure? To be at peace,

and to have totally forgiven myself, are the same thing. They must be. How can I be at peace if I have not forgiven myself for something? How can I forgive myself for something if I am not at peace about it?

Let me look at myself and be willing to face the self-condemnation that is hidden in the dark closets of my mind. I know it is there. It is the source of the constant vague uneasiness that haunts me, the tendency to look over my shoulder, the seemingly slight anxiety that comes with an unexpected letter or telephone call. Something in me is expecting to be “found out.” But this self-judgment is the source of more than just my personal feelings of uneasiness. It is also the source of all of my thoughts of “death, attack and murder” (3:1). My fear of death comes from my buried guilt. My instinctive attacks on those around me are a defense mechanism I have developed to fend off judgment for my “sins.” My desires to take life from others for myself (in the extreme, murder) come from the sense that something is lacking in myself.

And all of these contribute to my perception of the world; they are the reason why I see “sights of fear and sounds of battle” (2:1) everywhere. If my mind were at peace, if I had forgiven myself, I would see the world differently. I would see without these filters that distort my vision. I would see the real world. All “such a mind” would see is “safety, love and joy” (3:2).

Without guilt in my mind, “What is there it would choose to be condemned, and what is there that it would judge against?” (3:3). Guilt in my mind has driven me insane, and the insane world I see is the result of that guilt. That is why the Holy Spirit “knows that all salvation is escape from guilt” (T-14.III.13:4). If my mind had no guilt, it would see no guilt in the world, because all the guilt I see is nothing but the projection of my own. When I see someone as guilty today, when I would judge, let me remind myself: “You never hate your brother for his sins, but only for your own” (T-31.III.1:5). The problem I am seeing is not out there, in the world, but within my own mind. Let me then turn to the Holy Spirit and ask His help in removing guilt from my mind, that it may no longer block my perception of the real world. Let my goal, today and every day, be to have “a mind at peace within itself.” From such a mind, free of guilt, the sight of the real world will arise quite naturally, with no effort at all, for I will be seeing clearly for the first time.

Lesson 296 • October 23

“The Holy Spirit speaks through me today.”

Practice instructions

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: You may want to think of the people you expect to interact with today, and with each one ask the Holy Spirit the following questions:

What would You say through me to [name]?

How would You have me tell [name] that he/she is pure and holy as God Himself?”

Quiet your mind. Try to clear it of any preconceptions. Listen deeply. Repeat your questions if nothing comes at first. You may want to have pen and paper in hand, and write down anything that comes to mind.

Commentary

When I allow the Holy Spirit to *look through me* (yesterday’s lesson), sharing His perception, then He also *speaks through me*.

Not that I become God’s gift to the world in the egoic sense, the oracle who has the answer for all mankind. No, not that. But He does speak through me. He speaks the word of welcome, of acknowledgment, of appreciation, and of gratitude. Through me, the Holy Spirit communicates to my sisters and brothers, “You are safe. You are whole. You are loved.”

Having damned the world, now I would set it free. Having plastered everyone with guilt, layering it on with a heavy hand, now I would lift that guilt from everyone. Why grant this escape to all and sundry? Because I want it for myself, and this is the only way to get it. If my brother dies guilty, I die with him. What a tremendous privilege I have, to lift the guilt from those around me, to let them know they are free!

Through me (and you) the Holy Spirit persuades the world to seek and find the path to God. I am His representative on earth, an ambassador for the Kingdom of God. To those who have not learned as yet to listen to His Voice on their own, I represent Him, speaking His words, portraying His attitude and His Love to every person I encounter. That is my function. That is my only purpose. That is my life.

I would be savior to the world I made. For having damned it I would set it free. (1:3–4)

Am I willing to become savior to my world? Some of the time I find myself wanting to escape it, to just let it fall into ruins and be done with it. The Course is clear on this point: I cannot fly off to Heaven myself and leave the world behind. I cannot reach heaven without my brothers.

The weary feeling toward the world, the sense that “I am so bone-tired of all of this mess,” hides my own judgment on myself. Deeply guilty of my own continued separation from the Father, I want to lay the blame on the world. I want to be able to feel, “It is this tiresome place that keeps me from my peace.” Peace is here; peace is now. Peace, and Heaven itself, are in me, with me wherever I go. I do not need to fly off, and nothing needs to change.

“The Holy Spirit needs my voice today” (1:1). We live in a conspiracy of silence. There are many, far more than we know, who have caught sight of Heaven. We are among them. Yet we fear to speak because

we fear people will mock us, people will think we are crazy.

How often have we hungered, craved with a deep yearning, for someone who would dare to say, in the midst of fear, suffering, loss, and terror, “I am at peace. The peace of God is very real to me.” Today, be the one to answer another’s yearning. “We teach...what we would learn” (2:1).

What Is the Real World?

Part 6: W-pII.8.3:4-5

When our mind has forgiven itself, it is “at peace within itself” (3:4), and the world such a mind sees arises from that inner peace. As we have already seen, inner peace without self-forgiveness is not possible. Likewise, seeing a world of peace comes as we extend the peace within ourselves outward. We had this stated clearly way back in Lesson 34:

Peace of mind is clearly an internal matter. It must begin with your own thoughts, and then extend outward. It is from your peace of mind that a peaceful perception of the world arises.

(W-pI.34.1:2-4)

A mind that has learned to forgive itself and be at peace “is kind, and only kindness does it look upon” (3:5). I have heard several spiritual sages remark that, if spirituality were to be boiled down to only two words, they might be, “Be kind.” I have encountered a number of people in my life who set themselves up as very spiritual, perhaps as spiritual authorities, and in the end the thing that led me to mistrust their claims was simply this: They were not kind. I have detected this same tendency in myself as well! It is far too easy to be caught up in being “spiritually correct” or being right, and to lose sight of kindness.

When I have encountered the murderous ego in myself, and have learned to forgive it; when I have discovered my own belief in my weakness and frailty, and learned to forgive it; when I have foundered in doubt for years, and learned to forgive it; when I have discovered how often I do not live up to my own high standards, and learned to forgive it; when I have struggled with my own stubborn unbelief, and learned to forgive it—then, I will be kind. I have learned to be kind by being kind to myself. Let me engrave this lesson on my heart: *The mind that has forgiven itself is kind, and only kindness does it look upon.*

If I am quick to see danger lurking in those around me, and to question another’s kind intentions, it is most likely because I am quick to question my own, and have not learned as yet to forgive myself.