

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

Lesson 339 • December 5

“I will receive whatever I request.”

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: To get the real thrust of today’s idea, you might want to try the following exercise. First, think of three things: a plan you have for today, something you want today, and a thought you have been thinking today. Then repeat the following lines to God:

*I plan to do _____, yet I would do nothing by myself, but hear Your Voice in everything I do.
Today I want _____, but I request only what You offer me.
Today I might think _____, but I accept only Thoughts You share with me.*

Commentary

This can be an upsetting idea! It means that whatever I have received, I requested. We don’t like to hear that, and it can seem harsh. “You’ve got cancer? You asked for it.” Used that way it is harsh, a weapon for separation instead of a tool for union. How could anyone desire sickness and pain? The thought seems absurd.

No one desires pain. But he can think that pain is pleasure. No one would avoid his happiness. But he can think that joy is painful, threatening and dangerous. Everyone will receive what he requests. But he can be confused indeed about the things he wants; the state he would attain. (1:1–6)

Of course nobody wants pain; nobody consciously refuses happiness. If that is so, and everyone receives what he requests, then how is it that pain and unhappiness arise? We might think of it as a syllogism, which seems to make sense:

Nobody wants pain.
Nobody, therefore, would request pain.
Everyone receives what he requests or wants.
Therefore, we cannot receive pain.

That seems logical, doesn’t it? If the first three are true, the fourth must be true. So how come I hurt? We must be missing something; our logic must be flawed. The flaw lies between the first two premises. Nobody wants pain, but nevertheless, we *do* request it; that is why we receive it.

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The lesson explains that I can be confused about what I want; that I can think pain is pleasure, or that joy is threatening. The latter is perhaps a little easier to understand since it is a common experience. Haven't you ever had the thought "This is too good to last"? Or perhaps you've found yourself very happy in a relationship and suddenly getting afraid of it because some part of you is nearly certain that if you keep your guard down you're going to get smacked good. I had a friend who somehow entered a very high and totally joyful state of mind and was there for nearly three weeks until she started thinking, "This is wonderful. I love everybody, I have no fear of anything, but if I live like this in the world I'm going to get crucified. Maybe I'm not enlightened; maybe I'm just insane." So she lost the joy, and it never came back in quite the same way.

We really do think that too much joy is threatening and dangerous. We value our suspicions. We cherish our defenses. We're afraid of simply opening up to joy. So, quite unconsciously most of the time, we request unhappiness. We choose not to be peaceful.

The confusion of pain and joy is much more deeply buried, but the Course teaches that pain validates our separateness and justifies our barriers against one another. We choose it to strengthen our ego identity. It is perhaps difficult to believe that all of our pain and unhappiness is chosen, but the Course is insistent on this point.

What can he then request that he would want when he receives it? He has asked for what will frighten him, and bring him suffering. (1:7-8)

We actually do ask for things that frighten us and bring us suffering. Much of the Text is dedicated to bringing this to conscious awareness; making us aware of what we are choosing so that we can realize how insane it is and make another choice.

Let us resolve today to ask for what we really want, and only this, that we may spend this day in fearlessness, without confusing pain with joy, or fear with love. (1:9)

We can change our minds. We can begin, consciously, to choose the joy of God instead of pain. When a moment of pain arises we can accept the fact that we are choosing it, and choose again. We can say, "This is not what I want; I choose the joy of God." We can choose peace instead of upset. One thought I repeat so often that it is practically a mantra is "Oops! I'm doing it to myself again." It is remarkable what a change this fundamental realization can make in one's life.

Read now the short prayer that closes this lesson, and start your day with these thoughts. If you've already started the day, start it over right now. Stop a moment and adopt this mindset. Setting the tone of your mind right now will carry over into the day and bring changes you can't begin to foresee now.

Father, this is Your day. It is a day in which I would do nothing by myself, but hear Your Voice in everything I do; requesting only what You offer me, accepting only Thoughts You share with me. (2:1-2)

What Is the Ego?

Part 9: W-pII.12.5:1

Yet will one lily of forgiveness change the darkness into light; the altar to illusions to the shrine of Life Itself.

The "darkened shrine" of the ego is flooded with light; the bloody altar to death is transformed into "the shrine to Life Itself." How? By "one lily of forgiveness." I think of a magical, fantasy tale, where the heroine or hero enters the black, forbidding temple of the evil god, carrying only a single flower. With great trepidation she approaches the altar and lays the pure, white lily upon it, and in a flash, the entire

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scene is transformed.

Forgiveness is that “magical.” It isn’t magic, though, it’s a miracle. “The holiest of all the spots on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love” (T-26.IX.6:1). That is the miracle forgiveness works. I have seen it with my own eyes. I have watched a relationship filled with blood and bitterness transformed into sweet, mutual devotion—through forgiveness. This is no idle theory, no idealistic fantasy; this works.

Forgiveness undoes the ego. The blackest of blackness that the ego has manifested becomes flooded with light when touched by forgiveness. We need not fear to look at our ego’s darkness; there is nothing forgiveness cannot heal.

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Lesson 340 • December 6

“I can be free of suffering 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 Workbook lessons from 221 on are meant to be used as brief introductions to holy instants of direct experience of the truth. As the introduction to Part II of the Workbook says:

Now we attempt to let the exercise be merely a beginning. For we wait in quiet expectation for our God and Father. (W-pII.In.2:1–2)

We say some simple words of welcome, and expect our Father to reveal Himself, as He has promised. (W-pII.In.3:3)

We say the words of invitation that His Voice suggests, and then we wait for Him to come to us. (W-pII.In.4:6)

The “words of invitation” seem to refer to the prayers in each lesson. The idea is that we read the lesson over and perhaps think on it a minute or two. Then, we repeat the prayer that invites God to join us. More and more, as I have worked with these lessons, I have found increasing benefit from really focusing on these prayers, and making them very personal. Then we wait, quietly, until we are aware of God’s presence with us. That is the whole purpose of the exercises.

I can be free of suffering today.

So let me remind myself of this. Freedom from suffering is my choice. I have the option, today, to be free. As I listen to God’s Voice directing me to find Christ’s vision through forgiveness, I will be free forever from all suffering (1:4). Let me think on that a moment, pray the prayer given here, and then sit quietly and wait, listening, opening my mind to that vision.

I do not live in that vision yet, or only sporadically. To me it seems I have some way to go. So I wait. I make my mind empty, available to Him, and ask Him to fill me with this vision and to enlarge it in my mind.

I was born into this world but to achieve this day, and what it holds in joy and freedom for Your holy Son and for the world he made. (1:6)

Achieving Christ’s vision fully is all that I am here for; I was born for this. Perhaps today! I open myself to it, I loose my mind from all lesser thoughts and offer it to You. In this holy instant I can find that release. Perhaps it won’t last more than a few minutes, a few seconds. Perhaps it will lodge in my mind and stay with me all through the day. Salvation is already accomplished, and I can tap into that awareness right now. Even if I forget in ten minutes, even if I “lose” the awareness, the memory will

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remain and will sustain me, transforming my day from what it would have been had I not spent these moments with You. So I give myself to this time, this remembering.

We all will remember. God will gather us all to Himself, and together we shall all awake in Heaven in the Heart of Love (2:5–6). Take heart, my soul! The outcome is as inevitable as God. The way may seem long at times, but the ending is sure, and no anxiety need touch my heart. I am content in this moment simply to be with You. There is nothing more that I need. “There is no room for anything but joy and thanks today” (2:3), and only these will I welcome into my holy mind.

What Is the Ego?

Part 10: W-pII.12.5:2

And peace will be restored forever to the holy minds which God created as His Son, His dwelling place, His joy, His love, completely His, completely one with Him.

How is it that simple forgiveness can do this? The guilt and fear induced by our belief in the ego’s reality is the cause of all our suffering. It is our mad wish to be a separated self that has caused us to see God, and all the universe, as our enemies, and filled us with nightmares of punishment. Forgiveness shows us that what we think we did to ourselves has not occurred. There is no cause for our guilt. Forgiveness releases us from the dread of punishment, and brings us to realize that our oneness with God is undisturbed. We are still “His dwelling place, His joy, His love, completely His, completely one with Him.” And in that knowledge, peace is restored forever.

When forgiveness washes over us, we realize that “I can be free of suffering today” (W-pII.340.Heading). It is the ego thought in our mind that paints unrest over the eternal calm of our mind as God created it. Letting go of that thought, even for an instant, brings immediate peace. The thought of separation, of an independent identity, was the original mistake:

That one error, which brought truth to illusion, infinity to time, and life to death, was all you ever made. Your whole world rests upon it. Everything you see reflects it...

...You do not realize the magnitude of that one error. It was so vast and so completely incredible that from it a world of total unreality *had* to emerge. (T-18.I.4:4–6; 5:2–3)

Forgiveness shows us that what we think we have done has no real consequence. It removes the barriers to our awareness of God. That terrible mistake, upon which our whole world rests, was inconsequential; our union with God remains forever uninterrupted. We rest, now and ever, in His peace.

Lesson 341 • December 7

**“I can attack but my own sinlessness,
And it is only that which keeps me safe.”**

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: This is yet another favorite prayer of mine. I’ve laid it out on separate lines to aid in praying it, and added some extra thoughts to each line.

1. Father, Your Son is holy.

And Your Son is me.

You are my Father, Who loves me more than any earthly father could imagine.

Your Love created me holy, and that is how I remain, no matter what I think of myself.

2. I am he on whom You smile

Your Smile is everything to me.

It is my sun, my Source of life, in which I abide.

What could be more joyous than feeling Your Smile shining on me?

in love and tenderness so dear and deep and still

Let me know the love of Your Smile, the tenderness of it.

Let me feel how dear is Your Love, how deep, how still.

the universe smiles back on You, and shares Your Holiness.

Your Holiness lies in Your loving Smile.

In smiling back on you, we share Your Holiness.

3. How pure, how safe, how holy, then, are we,

How pure are we. How safe are we. How holy are we.

Let me feel this purity, rest in this safety, shine in this holiness.

abiding in Your Smile,

Basking in Your Smile.

Living in Your Smile like flowers live in the sunlight and turn their faces toward its warmth.

with all Your Love bestowed upon us,

All of Your Love. How could that be?

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Let me know the joy of feeling all of Your Love bestowed on me.

living one with You,

With no distance between Us, no space for hate or discord to arise.

Living inside the warmth of Your Smile.

in brotherhood and Fatherhood complete;

The experience of brotherhood I long for is there, in Your Smile.

The perfect Father I long for is there, in Your Smile.

in sinlessness so perfect that the Lord of Sinlessness conceives us as His Son,

Only the perfectly sinless could be the Son of the Lord of Sinlessness.

And in my perfect sinlessness, I am Your Son.

a universe of Thought completing Him.

I and my brothers are a universe of thought.

So pure, so sinless, so vast, that we actually complete You.

What more hallowed honor could there be?

Commentary

Whenever I attack anyone I attack myself. When I see sin in another, my own sinlessness is being attacked, and only that keeps me safe. God says I am sinless; who am I to disagree? And why would I do that?

I am he on whom You smile in love and tenderness so dear and deep and still the universe smiles back on You, and shares Your holiness. (1:2)

How foolish, then, to attack at all, when any attack is an attack on what I am! How foolish to so attack the wonder of what I am in a vain quest for some other, lesser identity! Why would I jeopardize my experience of God's deep tenderness?

...abiding in Your Smile... (1:3)

What a wonderful thought! Sometimes I have met a person whose smile was so radiant I felt as if I could sunbathe in it. Imagine basking in God's Smile! What a warmth of love beams from such a smile! Let me spend a little time now just luxuriating in its compassionate glow.

We live one with Him, "in brotherhood and Fatherhood complete" (1:3). The oneness we enjoy is not just with the Father, but with all our brothers as well. This is the state we are meant to abide in forever. It is the state we *are* in forever, if we are only willing to enjoy it and set aside every thought of attack. "The Lord of Sinlessness conceives us as His Son, a universe of Thought completing Him" (1:3). As such we can be only sinlessness itself. My attack threatens nothing but my awareness of this perfect sinlessness.

Let us not, then, attack our sinlessness, for it contains the Word of God to us. And in its kind reflection we are saved. (2:1-2)

What Is a Miracle?

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Part 1: W-pII.13.1:1–3

A miracle is a correction. It does not create, nor really change at all. (1:1–2)

The miracle *corrects*; it does not *create*. It does not make anything new; it merely adjusts a mistaken assessment of what already is. As Lesson 341 says, we already are sinless. We do not need to become sinless. All that we need to do is to end our attack on our own sinlessness.

We think of a miracle as some amazing change in the way things are. But a miracle, as the Course sees it, changes nothing. It simply takes away a false perception. It removes the veneer of sin and guilt we have laid over our innocence, and reveals the unchanging innocence we have attempted to hide.

A miracle often has external effects, although not always:

Miracles are expressions of love, but they may not always have observable effects.
(T-1.I.35:1)

When there are such effects, something in the illusion seems to change, often drastically. Someone who was sick gets well. Two people who were at war suddenly make peace. Yet that is the *effect* of the miracle, not the miracle itself. The effect simply reveals in form what has always been true in reality—the “sick” person was always whole, the “warring” friends were always joined as one mind. The observable effect shows us that the form was never real in the first place; but the miracle is the perception that *saw* that before it was an observable effect, and by realizing the falsity of the illusion, changed the illusion.

It [a miracle] merely looks on devastation, and reminds the mind that what it sees is false.
(1:3)

The miracle looks on the illusion, and reminds the mind that it *is* illusion. We do see “devastation” in this world, but the miracle reminds us that what we see is false. We see a person’s mind twisted with guilt; the miracle reminds us that the guilt is as unreal as its apparent effects, and enables us to see the person’s wholeness and innocence behind the illusion they present to the world.

Lesson 342 • December 8

**“I let forgiveness rest upon all things,
For thus forgiveness will be given 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: The following is a visualization based on today’s lesson. It is long, so it may help if someone reads it to you, or if you read it onto tape and play it back for yourself.

Close your eyes.

Think of your current life as if it’s taking place inside of hell.

Think of various problem areas in your life and see actual flames popping up in those places.

Maybe you have a problematic relationship right now. See flames dancing there.

Maybe you are having financial difficulties. See flames coming out of your wallet or purse.

Maybe you feel alone and isolated. You might imagine a ring of flames around you, separating you from others.

Just think of various problem areas and see flames dancing in each of those areas.

Then, a little distance away, you see a massive, glorious door, the gate of Heaven.

Imagine it however you like.

Maybe it’s made of gold. Perhaps there are diamonds in it. Perhaps it is shining with an otherworldly light.

You walk toward it, and as you come nearer, you see it has a large keyhole, like you might see in a castle door.

A ray of bright light is streaming out of the keyhole, a hint of the glory that lies on the other side.

You find in your hand a large, old-fashioned key.

Look at the key, feel it in your hand.

As you look, you see that on it is engraved in beautiful writing the word “Forgiveness.”

Then you turn the key over, and on the other side it says, “of [name].”

The name is someone you deeply need to forgive, but you have been putting it off.

See whose name is there.

Realize that you have been refusing to use this key for a long time.

If going through the gate means using this key, you are not sure it’s worth it.

Maybe the flames are preferable.

How long have you been loitering there, in front of the gate, wondering if you should enter in and be at home?

You finally decide to forgive this person.

Say to yourself, “*I let forgiveness rest upon [name],*

For thus forgiveness will be given me.”

Do your best to mean these lines.

“*I let forgiveness rest upon [name],*

For thus forgiveness will be given me.”

One more time: “*I let forgiveness rest upon [name],*

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For thus forgiveness will be given me.”

Find that you have placed the key in the keyhole

And are already turning it.

You are forgiving this person at last.

The key turns all the way and you pull the door open; it takes virtually no effort.

As it swings open you find yourself face to face with a blazing light.

The light of Heaven.

The light of God.

The light of your true Self.

You are transfixed by this light,

Caught up in the ecstasy of it.

All questions are answered; all longings are satisfied.

You are home at last.

Say to God, *“I forget all things except Your changeless Love.*

I forget all things except that You are here.” (based on *The Gifts of God*, p. 126)

Spend a few moments basking in this light,

And then open your eyes when you are ready.

Commentary

As the fourth sentence says, “The key is in my hand” (1:4). Forgiveness is the key. As I forgive, I receive forgiveness—not from God as a reward for my good deed (God has no need to forgive, never having condemned), but—from myself. Forgiveness really means no more than that I “let creation be as You would have it be and as it is” (1:7). In my ego mind, I am the only one who has overlaid an illusion of “sin” onto the world around me. When I look with condemnation on the world, I am not seeing reality as it is. There is nothing to condemn, and that fact is my own salvation. If the sin I think I see in the world is really there, then I am damned with the world. Only when I let creation be as God would have it be—innocent—can I be free of condemnation.

This is God’s plan “to save me from the hell I made” (1:1). I made the hell; God gives me forgiveness as the way out. The hell I made is not real, thank God. In this Course I have come right up to the door to the end of dreams (1:4). I hold forgiveness, the key, in my hand. “I stand before the gate of Heaven, wondering if I should enter in and be at home” (1:5). In every instant today when I face the choice between judgment and forgiveness, between murder and a miracle, I am standing at that gate, holding the key in my hand, wondering if I should go in.

Let me not wait again today. Let me forgive all things, and let creation be as You would have it be and as it is. Let me remember that I am Your Son, and opening the door at last, forget illusions in the blazing light of truth, as memory of You returns to me. (1:6–8)

Forgiveness is the key; the choice to open the door is mine. To open it I must be willing to forget all illusions. I must be willing to let go of my investment in seeing my own sins in my brother and to release him.

Brother, forgive me now. I come to you to take you home with me. And as we go, the world goes with us on our way to God. (2:1–3)

Let me think of these lines with every person I meet today. “Forgive me now. I come to take you home with me.” Oh, let that be the way I greet everyone in my mind! Let us all go home together!

What Is a Miracle?

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Part 2: W-pII.13.1:4–6

It [a miracle] undoes error, but does not attempt to go beyond perception, nor exceed the function of forgiveness. (1:4)

A miracle relates to perception, and not to direct revelation. It causes a change in my perception, undoing my perceptual errors.

Wholeness is the perceptual content of miracles. They thus correct, or atone for, the faulty perception of lack. (T-1.I.41:1–2)

When my mind experiences a miracle, I see wholeness instead of lack. In regard to “sin,” which is a perception of lack of love in someone, the miracle causes me to see their love instead of their “sin.” I see them as whole, rather than as lacking. The miracle undoes my error, but it does not attempt to go beyond that. Miracles occur within the context of perception and of time; they do not try to carry me to the realm of knowledge and of eternity. They correct my perception but they do not give knowledge. “Thus it stays within time’s limits” (1:5).

The Course makes this point repeatedly; it must be important. What makes it so important to us? This: When we turn to a spiritual path, we can become overanxious. We want a miracle to translate us immediately into the realm of pure spirit. We want a quick fix. But we cannot make a transition directly from false perception to pure knowledge. We have to go through the stage of corrected perception. We can’t skip steps. The Text says it clearly: “Perception must be straightened out before you can know anything” (T-3.III.1:2). That is what miracles are for: correcting our perception. Once our perception is corrected, God can take us the rest of the way, from perception to knowledge.

Redeemed perception is easily translated into knowledge, for only perception is capable of error and perception has never been. Being corrected it gives place to knowledge, which is forever the only reality. (T-12.VIII.8:6–7)

Yet it [the miracle] paves the way for the return of timelessness and love’s awakening, for fear must slip away under the gentle remedy it brings. (1:6)

The “gentle remedy” of the miracle, in correcting our perception, “paves the way” for a return to full knowledge. Without the undoing of our false perception, we will resist knowledge and reject love; we will be afraid of it. Our twisted perception of love, for instance, believes that love means sacrifice, and that total love would mean total sacrifice. We therefore run away from it; we fear it. Such perceptions need to be changed before we would even be willing to let real love awaken within us. Because the miracle removes our fear, it opens the way for love. It ends our resistance; it removes the interference.

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Lesson 343 • December 9

“I am not asked to make a sacrifice To find the mercy and the peace of 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

The whole idea of loss or sacrifice is foreign to the Course. It tells us, “Sacrifice is a notion totally unknown to God” (T-3.I.4:1). As the first line of the lesson points out, how could ending suffering be a loss? How can happiness be gained by sacrificing? It’s ridiculous when you look at it, and yet for centuries many religions have believed that in order to find God’s mercy you have to give up something, usually something really valuable. You have to suffer to attain Heaven. You have to pay for your mistakes.

Heaven, or salvation, must be only gain. How could it be a loss and still be Heaven? Let me affirm to my Father:

You only give. You never take away. And You created me to be like You, so sacrifice becomes impossible for me as well as You. I, too, must give. (1:3–6)

Someone just today was telling me how they got trapped in a mental loop of feeling as though God had given them a dirty deal by creating them capable of experiencing this dream of suffering; it was as if God was putting us through all this for selfish reasons, or at least allowing us to go through this for selfish reasons, for what *He* can get out of it. But God only gives; He does not take away. Let me not think otherwise.

And what God gives is given forever:

As I was created I remain. Your Son can make no sacrifice, for he must be complete, having the function of completing You. (1:8–9)

I can’t lose what I am; I can’t sacrifice something of value and become incomplete, because that would be contrary to my function of completing God. For God to be complete (which of course He must be, being God), I must be complete, for He created me to complete Himself! Therefore, I cannot sacrifice; I must remain complete.

We are beset with the notion that somehow we have to earn the mercy and the peace of God. Especially when I’ve been off on some ego detour, I always feel as if I have to “go through” something to find my way back. I need to have a proper period of remorse and feeling guilty. At least I have to sleep it off! It just doesn’t seem right to snap instantly from ego madness to a state of peace and joy without paying some kind of penalty first. Yet:

The mercy and the peace of God are free. Salvation has no cost. It is a gift that must be freely given and received. And it is this that we would learn today. (2:1–4)

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Because they have no cost, mercy and peace are immediately available in every instant. I need only to be willing to freely give them and receive them.

In this instant, right now, let me give mercy to myself. Let me see my childish heart in pain over what it thinks it has done, and let me spread mercy across it like a warm blanket. Let me embrace myself with love and affirm my own innocence again. Have I forgotten who I am? That's okay. Have I been angry at a brother? I still merit mercy and peace. Have I betrayed a friend? God still counts me as His own. No sacrifice is asked; no penance; no "decent" period of mourning. I can simply, trustingly open my mind to my Friend and find welcome. I can come home to God. What am I waiting for? Let me come to Him now.

What Is a Miracle?

Part 3: W-pII.13.2:1-2

One of the most frequently repeated lessons of the entire Course is that giving and receiving are the same: "To give and to receive are one in truth" (W-pII.108.Heading). This lesson, one of the most basic the Holy Spirit wants to teach us (it is the first lesson of the Holy Spirit in Chapter 6: "To have, give all to all"—T-6.V(A).5:13), is also one of the hardest for us to learn because it is the antithesis of our normal way of thinking.

A miracle contains the gift of grace, for it is given and received as one. (2:1)

To receive a miracle, we must give it; to give it, we must receive it. Receiving a miracle and giving a miracle are one thing, not two. Many of us get wrapped up in trying to figure out whether I must forgive myself first to forgive someone else, or whether I have to forgive the other person before I can forgive myself. The answer is, neither and both. To forgive yourself you must forgive the other person, but to forgive the other person, you must forgive yourself. They are one. They seem to be two distinct actions but they are not; they are one action because my brother and I are one Self. It may often seem, within time, that one precedes the other, but in reality, both happen simultaneously.

"And thus it illustrates the law of truth the world does not obey, because it fails entirely to understand its ways" (2:2). The "law of truth" is, I think, the same as the "law of love" mentioned in the title of Lesson 344: "What I give my brother is my gift to me." Were we to completely appropriate this one thought, we would be out of here, done with the curriculum. A miracle illustrates this law; it gives a pictorial representation of it, a demonstration of it. When I give a miracle to a brother, I am looking on his devastation and realizing that what I see is false (1:3). I am seeing his wholeness rather than the illusion of his lack. My seeing that for someone else reminds them to see it for themselves, if they wish to. And when they receive the miracle, *I* am blessed. I am reminded of who I am.

The world does not obey this law, nor understand it. Unlearning the world's way of thinking about this is what the Course calls "undoing the getting concept" (T-6.V(B).3:1). It calls this the first step in the reversal of our ego's thinking. Miracles are important to us because they illustrate this law; they help us know, by experience, that giving is receiving; that I keep what I want by giving it away.

Workbook Commentary by Allen Watson

Lesson 344 • December 10

**“Today I learn the law of love; that what
I give my brother is my gift to 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.

Commentary

What if we realized that only what we give away to others will be left to us in the end? What if we recognized that everything we try to hold onto for ourselves alone will be lost? How would that change the way we live?

The lesson is referring to our gifts of love and forgiveness more than to anything physical, although the physical often symbolizes that love. “Yet he whom I forgive will give me gifts beyond the worth of anything on earth” (1:6). The Course teaches us that everything is an idea, and ideas, when given away, only increase; we lose nothing in the giving. On the other hand, when we try to save our affection for ourselves alone, we wind up empty-handed: “And as I looked upon the treasure that I thought I had, I found an empty place where nothing ever was or is or will be” (1:3). Only what is shared is real because only oneness is reality, and separateness is illusory. We can’t have something for ourselves alone because we are not alone.

How do we arise and return to God (1:9)? Through forgiving our brothers (1:6–8). Each one we welcome “fills my store with Heaven’s treasures, which alone are real” (1:7). There was a short poem I learned back in my fundamentalist Christian days that seems applicable here:

Only one life, ’twill soon be past;
Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Only the love is real; only the love is eternal.

How near we are to one another, as we go to God. How near is He to us. How close the ending of the dream of sin, and the redemption of the Son of God. (2:1–3)

I don’t think that as yet we have any idea how inextricably we are all linked to one another, or how near we really are to one another. Each time you choose to listen to God’s Voice instead of your ego, in however little a way, you help me on my way to God. Each time I open my eyes to Christ’s vision, you see a little better. You and I and all of us are really one. “I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts,” says Lesson 19. If, through my willingness to see another as whole today, I help her or him on the way to God by reminding them of who they really are, I have literally helped myself equally, because our minds are joined. How many opportunities await each of us today! How eager I should be to spread forgiveness over all the world!

What Is a Miracle?

Part 4: W-pII.13.2:3-5

A miracle inverts perception which was upside down before, and thus it ends the strange distortions that were manifest. (2:3)

So the perceptions we have learned from the ego are upside down; a miracle inverts those perceptions and makes them right-side up again. Perhaps this is a reference to the way that physical sight works. In physical sight, the image projected by the lens of our eyes upon the retina is actually upside down. The mind literally learns to see the upside down image as right-side up. In an experiment in which people were given glasses to wear that inverted the image, so that it was right-side up on the retina, the mind saw everything as upside down. After a number of days, however, the mind adjusted and saw everything again as the right way. When the glasses were removed, people now saw things as being upside down!

The perception that what I give, I lose, for instance, is entirely upside down; true perception shows me that what I give I keep. We perceive what is false, but our minds have learned to interpret it as truth. We see illusions and think them real; we believe that reality is the illusion. We fear love, and love fear. We think guilt is good, and innocence is guilty. A miracle inverts all this; it corrects our perception, inverting our understanding. The change in perception is what ends the distortion in what is being manifested (that is, showing up in form).

“Now is perception open to the truth” (2:4). When the miracle inverts my perception, and ends the distortion, I am again capable of perceiving the truth (or its accurate reflection). Until perception is corrected, truth cannot enter.

“Now is forgiveness seen as justified” (2:5). This is perhaps the most dramatic reversal of all. One of the most radical ideas in the Course is that forgiveness is *justified*. If we think of forgiveness at all from the ego perspective, we think of it as someone’s being let off the hook for no reason, “out of the goodness of our hearts.” The Course says that there is every reason to forgive. It is fully justified (see T-30.VI.2:1). What is unjustifiable is judgment, condemnation, and anger (see T-30.VI.1:1). This is simply not something that can be learned or arrived at through logic (although it is entirely logical). When we see our condemnation of someone as just, that is just how we see it. Trying to reason ourselves into seeing it differently doesn’t work. Nor can we “should” ourselves into it. If we try to force ourselves to “forgive” while still seeing guilt, we feel as though we are being untrue to ourselves.

When you give your perception to the Holy Spirit and ask to see as He sees, He gives you His perception. It simply springs into the mind. Suddenly you literally no longer see any reason to condemn, and every reason to give love. Your anger, perfectly justified a moment ago, now seems unthinkable. It is like the shift that occurs in looking at a Magic Eye illustration (where a 3-D picture is hidden in a two-dimensional one) or a figure-ground optical illusion (such as the one that can be seen either as a wine goblet or as two faces looking at one another). You are seeing it one way; suddenly you are seeing it another way. And when you see it one way you cannot see the other way. Just so is the miracle. It inverts your perception. You were seeing one way; now you see the other. You can’t “make” it happen, but when it happens, you know it.

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Lesson 345 • December 11

**“I offer only miracles today,
For I would have them be returned to 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.

Commentary

The basic thought is similar to yesterday’s: what I give is returned to me. Realizing this is so, let me decide as this day starts, and as every day starts, to offer only what I want. Miracles. To give a miracle means to see past the illusions of my brothers, and to see them as they really are, as God’s creations. It means not to accept and support the image my brother has of himself as a limited ego, a tiny fragment of mind trapped in a body. Instead, I see him as an unlimited being of spirit, magnificent in glory. In Chapter 8 of the Text we are told:

But when you look upon a brother as a physical entity, his power and glory are “lost” to you and so are yours....Do not see him this way for your own salvation, which must bring him his. Do not allow him to belittle himself in your mind, but give him freedom from his belief in littleness, and thus escape from yours. (T-8.VII.5:3, 5–6)

That is giving a miracle. Refusing to see my brother in the limited way he sees himself; seeing the Christ in him, for him. The miracle thus blesses both me and my brother, for as my mind is healed of illusions, it reflects on him as well and brings light to his mind. I give him the opportunity to see himself as God sees him.

The law of love is universal. Even here, it takes a form which can be recognized and seen to work. (1:2–3)

The “law of love” was stated yesterday: “that what I give my brother is my gift to me.” The form this law takes here is something I can recognize. It isn’t merely abstract; it takes form, it becomes concrete. When I offer miracles to those around me, they return to me, not in exactly the form in which I offered them, but in just the form I need to meet my needs as I perceive them (1:4). In Heaven there are no needs (1:5); here on earth, I do perceive needs, and the law of love adapts to my perception (1:6).

I can offer a miracle with a profound act of forgiveness, or I can offer a miracle with a smile to a passerby that tells him, “You are loveable.” I offer a miracle with every gesture of kindness, every token of courtesy, every expression of respect, and every act of caring. Whatever the form, if the content of the message is “You are loveable. You are worthy. You are innocent,” I have offered the miracle, and it will return to me.

Let me choose, Father, to enter into my day determined to offer nothing but miracles to those around me. May I say, from the depth of my heart:

Peace to all seeking hearts today. The light has come to offer miracles to bless the tired

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world. (2:1–2)

And before I step out into the bustle of today, let me pause for a few minutes and spend them simply offering peace to every seeking heart that comes to mind. No such effort is ever wasted, and I will receive as much as I am willing to give.

What Is a Miracle?

Part 5: W-pII.13.3:1–3

Forgiveness is the home of miracles. The eyes of Christ deliver them to all they look upon in mercy and in love. Perception stands corrected in His sight, and what was meant to curse has come to bless.

A miracle corrects perception, and miracles live in forgiveness. When we look with the eyes of Christ, we see with mercy and in love; we see with forgiveness. And we then “deliver” miracles to everyone we see with that corrected perception. It is not just that something changes within our minds, not just that our perception is altered; something gets communicated or “delivered” from us to those we look upon. A miracle here, and in many places in the Course, seems to include an aspect in which something passes from my forgiving mind to the minds of others. Miracles are said to be “interpersonal” (T-1.II.1:4). When I accept forgiveness within my mind, for myself or another, it extends to others. Indeed it is by extending it that I accept it:

Miracles are natural signs of forgiveness. Through miracles you accept God’s forgiveness by extending it to others. (T-1.I.21:1–2)

The phrase “and what was meant to curse has come to bless” reminds me of the Bible story of Joseph and his brothers. Because Joseph was the favorite of his father, his brothers, jealous of him, sold him into slavery in Egypt. But Joseph, because of his ability to interpret the Pharaoh’s dreams, rose to great power in Egypt. Years later, in a famine, his family came to Egypt seeking food, and Joseph was the man in control of the food supply. Instead of taking vengeance on them, Joseph told them:

God sent me before you to preserve life....it was not you who sent me here, but God....You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. (Gn 45:5, 8; 50:20)

When we have truly received forgiveness into our hearts, we will be able to see the blessing even in actions that others intend for our harm. “What was meant to curse has come to bless.” We find that, as the Text says:

Gratitude is due him for both his loving thoughts and his appeals for help [that is, what we normally see as his attacks], for both are capable of bringing love into your awareness if you perceive them truly. (T-12.I.6:2)

And *that* kind of perception is, indeed, a miracle.