

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

Remaining lessons to end of the year

LESSON 353 • DECEMBER 19

**“My eyes, my tongue, my hands, my feet today
Have but one purpose; to be given Christ
To use to bless the world with miracles.”**

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: I enjoy going through the body parts listed in the lesson one at a time, and then adding on some other things at the end:

I give my eyes to Christ today, to use to bless the world with miracles.

I give my tongue to Christ today, to use to bless the world with miracles.

I give my hands to Christ today, to use to bless the world with miracles.

I give my feet to Christ today, to use to bless the world with miracles.

I give my time to Christ today, to use to bless the world with miracles.

I give my money to Christ today, to use to bless the world with miracles.

I give my car to Christ today, to use to bless the world with miracles.

Commentary

These last ten lessons (not counting the final one) represent the state of mind to which the Course seeks to bring us. In this lesson we see the final outworking of the Course’s thoughts about the body. Not that the body becomes ignored, despised, or neglected, but rather that its every part be used to bless the world with miracles. The body is not attacked or belittled; rather, it is given a new purpose, shared with Christ.

Father, I give all that is mine today to Christ, to use in any way that best will serve the purpose that I share with Him. Nothing is mine alone, for He and I have joined in purpose.
(1:1–2)

In Heaven our function is creation, something that apparently we can’t quite fully understand until our mind awakens to Heaven, but here our function is the pure reflection of creation: the giving of miracles, the extension of forgiveness. We might say our function here is recognizing creation, since to forgive is to acknowledge our brother as God created him, and not as we have made him through the projection of our own guilt.

Let me, then, with all the determination I can muster, this day join myself with Christ’s purpose. Let

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

me give my hands, my eyes, my tongue, my feet to Him. Why not silently pray and, very specifically, do exactly that? “Father, I give my hands to Christ today to be used only for the purpose I share with Him: to bless the world with miracles.” Then repeating the same thing for other parts of my body. Remember this thought through the day and renew your gift to Christ, calling your mind back to its true purpose every time you can remember.

Thus has learning come almost to its appointed end. A while I work with Him to serve His purpose. Then I lose myself in my Identity, and recognize that Christ is but my Self.
(1:3–5)

When we have reached the point where we truly have given everything we have to Him to be used for His purpose, we have almost completed the curriculum. All that is left is to stay a little while longer, serving His purpose, sharing the light with minds that still are clouded. This is almost descriptive of an avatar, an enlightened master who is on earth only to serve those not so far along.

When that time of service is over, I will “lose myself in my Identity, and recognize that Christ is but my Self.” The ego self will dissolve and disappear; the individual will cease as a separate thing—which it never was in reality—and expand into the One Self of Christ. Nothing will be lost in this process except our separateness.

My heart, do not despair if this seems far beyond you now. It is much nearer than you dare believe. You are much more than you think you are. Simply, in gladness, give yourself to this purpose. The Holy Spirit will provide the means. Be willing simply to move in this direction, and do not judge how near or far you are, how easy or how difficult you think the way. Simply be willing for it to be. Be not anxious or restless if it seems to elude you; restlessness is only a delaying tactic. Rest, my heart. Trust. Angels watch with you, awaiting the birth of the Christ in you. Have no fear. Rejoice!

WHAT AM I?

W-pII.14.2:1–3

Our use for words is almost over now. (2:1)

Throughout the Workbook, words have been used to instruct and inspire us, and we have used the words given to us in our practicing. When we are truly ready to “graduate” from the Workbook and its level of training, we will be ready to leave specific words behind. We will be ready to spend our days in constant communication with the Holy Spirit, with no need for any special saying to act as a trigger, to entrain our minds along the lines of the Course, because, at that point, our minds will be fully trained. We will habitually practice holy instants and spend time often each day renewing our minds in God’s Presence.

Few, if any, of us are truly at that point. I know, regretfully, that I am not. I have not followed the training program given to us faithfully, and so I still need more training, in which the use of words is still essential. I still need the crutch of words; or a better analogy than “crutch”—training wheels. I will be repeating the Workbook again next year.¹ Not with reluctance or with a sense of defeat, oh no! I have made a great deal of progress in this last year, I think. The lessons stick with me during the day much more than ever before, and my mind does remember to apply them in response to “temptation.” Not always, but more frequently.

Yet in the final days of this one year we gave to God together, you and I, we found a single purpose that we shared. (2:2)

¹. refers to 1996, since the commentary was written in 1995.

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

Surely this is one of the goals of the Workbook, that we would come to realize that we share a common purpose with Jesus; we are saviors (see paragraph 3). We have begun to remember, not only our own guiltlessness, but our purpose, what we were created for: to extend love to others, as God created us by extending His Love.

And this, our gift, is therefore given us. (2:3)

Because we have learned that we are here to give blessing to the world, blessing is given to us. Because we have learned to forgive, we receive our own forgiveness. This is the law of love. This is the way love works.

When the training goal of the Workbook is fully achieved in us, we have not only found our own individual salvation, we have found that our salvation lies in bringing release to others. We are saved by saving others, forgiven by forgiving others, healed by healing others. "I will be healed as I let Him teach me to heal" (T-2.V(A).18:6).

LESSON 354 • DECEMBER 20

**“We stand together, Christ and I, in peace
And certainty of purpose. And in Him
Is His Creator, as He is in 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: I have found it helpful to make this lesson more specific: *“In this situation, we stand together, Christ and I....”* I have also found it helpful to reword it: *“I take my stand with Christ today, united with Him in purpose. And God is in both of us.”*

Commentary

This lesson expresses the awareness of my identity with Christ. The Creator is in Christ and also in me; God is in me as He is in Christ. Identical. “I have no self except the Christ in me” (1:2). This awareness of identity is where the Course is leading us. All our study of the Text, our practice of the Workbook, and our application of forgiveness in all our relationships is bringing us to this final awareness: “I have no self except the Christ in me.” “And what am I except the Christ in me?” (1:7).

As we arrive at these final lessons, we may feel as though somewhere along the line the Course has passed us by. Somewhere we missed the boat, or more likely, got off the boat and stayed behind. I know that I have often felt that way; I also know that, if I continue to practice what the Course has taught me, that will not always be true. One day the realization that I have no self except the Christ in me will resonate in my mind without any resistance or doubt.

I believe deeply that these words I’ve just quoted are true, yet I am aware there is a part of my mind that, as yet, does not believe them. My experience has not caught up to my understanding. My mind still believes that I am not identical to the Christ, and so my experience follows my belief, and I experience myself, or at the very least parts of myself, that seem to be other than this perfect Self, Who is wholly like His Father.

Does this mean the Course has failed, or that I have failed the Course? No, I don’t think so. In the epilogue, which follows Lesson 365, Jesus speaks of how the Holy Spirit will be our “Guide through every difficulty and all pain that you may think is real” (W-Ep.4:1). So he expects that everyone, having finished the Workbook, will still experience difficulties, and, sometimes, still mistakenly think that pain is real. He says there, “Whatever troubles you, be certain that He has the answer, and will gladly give it to you, if you simply turn to Him and ask it of Him” (W-Ep.1:5). Even after all this, we will still experience troubles. “This course is a beginning, not an end” (W-Ep.1:1). The Text and Workbook are meant not to bring us to the end of our journey, but to train us in the proper way to travel, to develop proper habits of spiritual practice. They introduce us to our Teacher and instill the habit of listening to Him. That is all, and that is enough.

And yet these latter lessons put words in our mouths and have us speak as if we have already arrived. Think of them as foretastes of what your mind will be like when you have finished your journey. Immerse

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

your mind in them and let them soak in, transforming you as they do. Whatever you may feel like today, whatever you may think about yourself, these words are still the truth.

Who we are is beyond the reach of time and free of every law but God's (1:1). We have no purpose but Christ's purpose (1:3). We are one with God, just as Jesus was and is (1:5). And all our learning is designed to help us unlearn everything that tells us anything different.

WHAT AM I?

Part 4: W-pII.14.2:4-5

The truth of what we are is not for words to speak of nor describe. (2:4)

Words can only take us so far. They can bring us to the door of Heaven, but cannot bring us in. All the words of the Course itself, as wondrous as they are, can do no more than that. That is not a deficiency in the Course, nor a deficiency in words as such. Words are merely symbols. They can do no more than symbols can do, and that is quite a lot, and all that is necessary. The truth of what we are will, itself, do the rest.

That truth, and the complete knowing of it, is beyond the reach of words, and therefore, beyond our reach within this world, which is a world of symbols and not of realities. Still, there is no reason for despair at that. What we are cannot be here, any more than a "real," physical person can exist within a dream, any more than a three-dimensional figure could enter a two-dimensional world. (Another example: An actual cube, with three dimensions, cannot exist on a sheet of paper; the best that can be done is a perspective drawing that *suggests* three dimensions.)

Yet we can realize our function here, and words can speak of this and teach it, too, if we exemplify the words in us. (2:5)

Even though we cannot fully *know* the truth of what we are, here in this world, we can express it; we can, as it were, create a perspective drawing that suggests that truth. How? By fulfilling the function God has given us, the function which the Course has repeatedly stated in various ways: forgiveness; to be happy; extension; to fulfill the Will of God; giving of ourselves; filling our part in God's plan; adding to God's treasure by creating our own; giving and receiving healing; using the Atonement. This is something words *can* speak of, and words can also *teach* forgiveness, if (at the same time) "we exemplify the words in us." If the words we speak run through our very beings like watermarks through a banknote, the words can convey what forgiveness is. If our lives are examples of what we are talking about, our words have power. In other words, if we fulfill our function of forgiveness, we can teach forgiveness. And that is our "perspective drawing" of the truth of our being. That is the reflection, in this world, of the Love that we are.

Consider the Course as an example of the very thing it is telling us here. Why are its words so powerful? I think that the reason is that they are spoken by one who exemplifies the words he speaks. Even in the way Jesus (the author) speaks to us, and deals with our flaws, our stubbornness and thick-headedness, our doubts and our vacillation, we can sense the reality behind the words he is giving us. Never once does he seem to become impatient with us. Never once does he belittle us or verbally snort in disgust at our stupidity. When he speaks of forgiveness, there is a spirit of forgiveness that runs through the very words themselves and conveys itself to us. When he tells us to look on everyone as our equal, we get the sense that *he* is looking on *us* as his equal. When he says we can see everyone without seeing any sin, we can tell that this is how *he* sees *us*.

That is where he is leading us, each and every one of us. It is what the Manual for Teachers, in the section on the characteristics of God's teachers, calls *honesty*.

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

Honesty does not apply only to what you say. The term actually means consistency. There is nothing you say that contradicts what you think or do; no thought opposes any other thought; no act belies your word; and no word lacks agreement with another. (M-4.II.1:4-6)

Only in fulfilling our function, only in making ourselves into an incarnation of the Course, can we come to realize and recognize its message for ourselves. Only in giving it to others, in word and in deed, can we come to receive it fully for ourselves.

LESSON 355 • DECEMBER 21

**“There is no end to all the peace and joy,
And all the miracles that I will give,
When I accept God’s Word. Why not 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

“God’s Word,” to me, is speaking here of what Jesus, in the Course, is telling me about my own Identity. It is the truth about what I am.

It is You I choose, and my Identity along with You. Your Son would be Himself, and know You as his Father and Creator, and his Love. (1:7–8)

A Christian lecturer who inspired me years ago, Major Ian Thomas, used to say that man’s purpose, my purpose as an individual, is to be “the human vehicle of the divine content.” That is what I am here for. Christ wants to be Himself in me, in the form of me. I have no other reason for being here, although the ego thinks I am here to forget God.

The Course teaches that the ego made the world and the body as an attack against God. It wants to use the world to forget God. The Holy Spirit wants to use it as a vehicle to remember God. There is no real purpose to anything except one of those two.

I am here, today as always, to reflect God’s Love. I am here to see innocence. I am here to “look on everyone as brother, and perceive all things as kindly and as good.” (W-pII.14.3:4). I am here to bless my brothers and to ask them to share my peace and joy.

“Why not today?” Why should I wait? These are the questions the lesson asks.

I am sure my treasure waits for me, and I need but reach out my hand to find it. Even now my fingers touch it. It is very close. I need not wait an instant more to be at peace forever. (1:3–6)

There is no answer to why we wait, because there are no reasons to wait. Nor has there ever been a reason. All there is to do in response is to let the constriction in our hearts unknot, to quell the resistance to the flow of love, and to open our hearts fully to every living thing. To let ourselves be love; to let love be us. To desist from the belief that we are anything else but love.

The resistance that feels so great, like a stone wall, is nothing more than a cloud, unable to stop a feather. Only my belief in its impenetrability makes it a barrier, like an elephant staked to a tiny peg in the ground, believing it cannot move because it has been trained to think it is chained to a tree. We think we are without love; we believe we are unloving. We think the ego stands like a granite battlement between us and God, keeping Him out.

The ego is a cloud. It could not stop a ping-pong ball. It is totally without strength to resist the Love of

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

God, and it cannot and will not resist. God's Love stands at the end of time, having already won. Oh, my heart! Open to that Love today! Receive it; give it. Receive it by giving it, and give it by receiving it. See it everywhere for it is everywhere, in everyone.

WHAT AM I?

Part 5: W-pII.14.3:1-4

What is "our function," spoken of at the end of paragraph 2? "We are the bringers of salvation" (3:1). Have I really considered that this is *my* function? Have I begun to realize that, each day as I live my life, this is what I am really living for—to bring salvation to the world? We are not talking here about rescuing people; we are talking about seeing them as God created them, and seeing them that way so clearly and so strongly that our vision of them begins to open *their* eyes to the same thing. We are talking about holding such an unambiguous picture of their innocence that they can see their own innocence reflected from us.

We accept our part as saviors of the world, which through our joint forgiveness is redeemed.
(3:2)

We save the world by forgiving it. And we exercise this forgiveness as *joint* forgiveness, along with Jesus. We join with him in lifting guilt and blame from each person we interact with. This is how the world is "redeemed," bought back from its slavery to guilt and fear.

And this, our gift, is therefore given us. (3:3)

Once again the oft-repeated theme: We receive forgiveness as we give it.

We look on everyone as brother, and perceive all things as kindly and as good. (1:4)

This is the vision of a savior. This is how a savior sees things. To see everyone as brother is to see them as our equal, sharing in the guiltlessness of God's creation. To see all things as kindly is to realize that even what appears to be attack does not make the "attacker" unkind; behind the fear that drives the apparent attack is still a kind and gentle heart. Some of us, perhaps, have begun to realize this about ourselves and about others. We acknowledge that we have made mistakes, and that we have acted unlovingly, and yet we know that underneath that mask of anger and selfishness our hearts are kind. We do not want to hurt but we feel driven to it by circumstance; it seems the only way we can survive. That is the ego's lie to us, that attack is necessary for survival. The Course asks us:

Do you not think the world needs peace as much as you do? Do you not want to give it to the world as much as you want to receive it? For unless you do, you will not receive it. If you want to have it of me, you must give it. Healing does not come from anyone else.
(T-8.IV.4:1-5)

There is no living thing that does not share the universal Will that it be whole. (T-31.I.9:1)

Our path to salvation lies in coming to realize that all living things share the universal Will to be whole, that everyone wants peace just as we do, and that, beneath all the masks we wear so faithfully, what we are, all of us, is love.

LESSON 356 • DECEMBER 22

**“Sickness is but another name for sin.
Healing is but another name for God.
The miracle is thus a call to Him.”**

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: I have found it helpful to reword the final line. Instead of “*The miracle is thus a call to Him,*” I say, “*To heal is thus to speak His Name.*”

Commentary

It seems to me the Course is always equating things you don’t expect to be equated, like it does here: Sickness is another name for sin; healing is another name for God. And toward the end of the lesson, “To call Your Name is but to call his own” (1:6), that is, the Son’s own name, or my own name. The Course suggests that when we find God we will have found our Self, and when we find our Self, we will have found God; we and God share the same Name. It seems to be constantly saying that things we believe are quite different are in reality the same. Its advice for a new year is “Make this year different by making it all the same” (T-15.XI.10:11). The Course is constantly boiling everything down to just one problem, the separation, and one solution, the Atonement. And it tells us that complexity is of the ego; therefore, simplicity is of God.

How are sickness and sin the same thing? First, dispense with what this does *not* mean: that being sick is a sin. Anyone who has gone through the entire Workbook and studied the Text cannot possibly hold that mistaken understanding; that is most definitely not the meaning here. There is no such thing as sin; we only imagine there is. This lesson is most emphatically not saying that if you are sick it is because you are a sinful person, or that being sick makes you a sinner. Being sick is nothing to be guilty about! If you are sick, and anyone even suggests to you that “you must be doing something wrong because spiritual people don’t get sick,” stop listening to that person. The thoughts of our minds do indeed cause sickness. “All sickness is mental illness” (P-2.IV.8:1), according to the *Psychotherapy* supplement. But mistaken thoughts are not “sin”; they are simply mistaken.

When the lesson says that sickness is another name for sin, it means that the sickness of the body is a reflection or manifestation of the mind’s belief in the reality of sin. Sickness, says the Course, can be a kind of self-punishment, in which we attack ourselves because of our guilt, hoping thereby to avert the punishment of God we are expecting. “Sickness is anger taken out upon the body, so that it will suffer pain” (T-28.VI.5:1).

I believe that when the Course uses the word sickness it is usually referring to the thought of sickness and not to the physical symptoms. (“Sickness is of the mind, and has nothing to do with the body” [M-5.II.3:2].) A crippled limb, for instance, can be used by the ego to further thoughts of inadequacy, guilt, and separation, or it can be used by the Holy Spirit to break a person’s identification with the body and to turn them to God. It is the thought, and only the thought, which is important.

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

Sickness is “a defense against the truth” (W-pI.136.Heading). We have to remember that in the thought system of the Course everything, including sickness, is a choice we have made, and that choices must have some purpose behind them. The important thing is not the physical symptom. The important thing is the choice, and the purpose behind it.

When we choose to be sick, at some level we are choosing to identify ourselves as a body rather than a spirit or mind. The “truth” we are defending against is that we are a spirit or mind. We are defending against the realization that we are one with God and with everyone else, in God. “The strange, haunting thought that [we] might be something beyond this little pile of dust [is] silenced and stilled” (W-pI.136.8:4) when we are sick. Sickness makes the body seem very real, the only real thing. It seeks to let the illusion of the bodily identity take the place of the truth of our mind, our spiritual identity.

How is that like sin? According to the Workbook, sin “is the means by which the mind...seeks to let illusions take the place of truth” (W-pII.4.1:2). That is exactly what sickness does! When I see “sin” in myself or in a brother, it proves the “sinner” is evil, and therefore separate from God. When I see “sickness” in myself or in another, it proves the body is real and therefore separate from God.

Sin and sickness are the same in that both are means that the mind uses to try to prove that the separation is real. They are not the same in form, but they are identical in purpose. They are both the ego’s attempt to prove that I am what I am not. It is the thought of separation which the Course aims to heal, not the physical symptom of sickness, and not the specific behavior of a person. The Course is concerned with the cause and not the effect.

I do believe that if the mind is healed—if the person is healed on the level of thought (which is the level of cause)—it will often result in changes in the form of the person’s life. Behavior will often change when thoughts change; physical health will often improve when thoughts change. The change on the level of the body, however, is never the concern of the Course. The body is insignificant (M-5.II.3:12), which means it is without meaning. If the body is insignificant, it means that the body signifies nothing. If our thoughts align with God’s Thought, the body will serve the purpose of the Holy Spirit whatever its form. Even if the body dies. The Course is concerned only with healing the mind because the body does not matter.

“Healing is but another name for God.” To heal the mind, therefore, means to recognize the identity of my mind and God’s mind. To be healed is to recognize that I share God’s nature. When the Course talks of healing, it is not talking about getting over the flu! It is talking about letting go of my identification with this body that appears to be suffering chills and fever, recognizing that the body is not my Self, but that I am the eternal Son of God. It is speaking, as always, of a change of mind. When the identity of myself and my body is broken, I will know that what happens to the body does not affect who I really am; therefore, what happens to the body does not matter to me. It may get well and it may not; if I am no longer identified with it, I don’t care which it is.

Sin and sickness are the same thing in the sense that both are manifestations of our belief in separation and our resulting (but mistaken) guilt. They are both healed through the miracle of forgiveness. Healing is a return to wholeness, a return to our true Self, and since our Self is one with God, all healing is a return to God. To offer a miracle of forgiveness or healing is “thus a call to Him.”

Another way of putting this is that all healing leads to God in the end, even if we are not thinking of or believing in God as we experience it. If it is healing, it is of God. The *Psychotherapy* supplement says, “The patient need not think of truth as God in order to make progress in salvation” (P-1.5:1). If there is healing, and if there is forgiveness instead of condemnation, God is there, even if He is not named or acknowledged. Everyone who learns to forgive will remember God.

It does not matter where he is, what seems to be his problem, nor what he believes he has become. (1:2)

God answers when we call, even when we don’t realize we are calling Him. He answers even when we think we do not deserve an answer. I believe there are hundreds of times we have called on God, and He has answered, and we never made the connection. We failed to recognize Him even as we received His

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

help. Our very pain and fear, the Course says, is a call for help. Do you imagine that if the Holy Spirit recognizes all calls for help as what they are, that He does not answer every one of them?

He is Your Son, and You will answer him. (1:3)

He answers us with His Name, which is a shorthand way of saying His Being or His Nature. We are answered by what God is, because what He is is what we as His Son are. God is without sin, and so are we; without sin we cannot be sick, because sickness comes from belief in sin. When I realize my total innocence I “cannot suffer pain” (1:5). God’s Name is what speaks to me of that innocence and tells me it must be so. How could God’s offspring be unholy?

Let me learn, then, to call on God (whether I use that word or not). Let me open my heart to innocence, gentleness, and mercy. Let me make healing my aim, for myself and for others. In every encounter today let me remember: I am here to heal; I am here to offer miracles; I am here to release from guilt.

WHAT AM I?

Part 6: W-pII.14.3:5–7

Our function, then, is to bring salvation to the world. “We do not seek a function that is past the gate of Heaven” (3:5). In other words, we do not disdain this “lowly” calling of bringing healing to this world of form; we do not try to claim that we are fulfilling our function of creating (which is our function in Heaven), and cannot be bothered with the base forms within the illusion. Doing that is what one of my old Christian teachers used to call “being too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use.”

Knowledge will return when we have done our part. (3:6)

“Knowledge” refers to the perfection of Heaven, to direct knowing of the truth, rather than the lower avenue of perception of forms. “Our part” is to purify our perception of forms. Our part is to work within the illusion, to turn the nightmare into a happy dream; only when we have done this will knowledge return.

We are concerned only with giving welcome to the truth. (3:7)

We are not trying to directly apprehend the truth. We are not focused on having mystical experiences of God, on bypassing the world of form and leaving it behind, although, to be sure, we *do* to enter the holy instant frequently to renew our vision of Heaven. Our primary concern, however, is on “giving welcome to the truth”; that is, preparing ourselves for it, making things ready for it, educating ourselves to accept it. And that is something that goes on within this world, within this illusion we call physical life. Here, the many holy instants we experience (and which we desire to experience above all things) lead to a result: the Holy Spirit sends us out in “busy doing” here within the world, carrying with us the quiet center we have found in the holy instant, and sharing it with the world (see T-18.VII.8:1–5).

LESSON 357 • DECEMBER 23

**“Truth answers every call we make to God,
Responding first with miracles, and then
Returning unto us to be itself.”**

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

An idea is conveyed here, one that is a running theme through the Course, that we find our way to God through others; we see Christ first in our brothers, and then in ourselves (1:2). When we call to God, truth always responds. The first response is “miracles,” which we offer to others through our forgiveness. Then, truth returns to us “to be itself.”

Your holy Son is pointed out to me, first in my brother; then in me. (1:2)

This is the way of *A Course in Miracles*. “As I look upon Your Son today,” that is, as I see the Christ in those around me, “I hear Your Voice instructing me to find the way to You, as You appointed that the way shall be” (1:4). We hear the Voice that directs us to God as we look on Christ in others. Another way of stating this theme is that we see the face of Christ, and then remember God.

The two stages of the answer are 1) miracles, and 2) the apprehension of truth as itself.

Miracles, in the form of forgiveness offered to my brothers, are only a symbol of the truth. Forgiveness is only “truth’s reflection” (1:1). In the miracle I see the Son of God, first in my brother and then in myself.

As miracles accumulate and our mind is trained, truth itself begins to dawn, which is the realization of our Identity with God. That isn’t our worry, says the Course. We don’t need to work to make that happen. Concentrate on the first step, and the second will come of itself. It is God’s gift to us.

Many spiritual paths, I think, make a mistake in focusing on God-realization directly. The effort may eventually work because the purpose is right, but it takes a long time, and enormous effort (see T-18.VII.4:9–11). The effort to do what is not doable, to make happen what has already happened, to find what we have never lost, can become a struggle of endless frustration, a perfect vehicle for the continuation of the ego. This kind of spiritual seeking results in the type of person who is “too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use.” Here we find the Pharisee who passes by the injured traveler because he does not want to be tainted. The religious bigot. The self-righteous fundamentalist. His prayers are so important that he ignores his family and its needs.

The Course is saying that the path to heaven is “through forgiveness here” (W-pII.256.1:1). Don’t get lost in the search for an abstract experience of union with God. Rather, practice forgiveness. Pay attention to the practical. Concentrate on union with your brother, and union with God will be given you. Work with the material given you, the relationships that are at hand. Don’t try to run away in some spiritual retreat; it will fail. You will be attempting to grasp at something you are not capable of grasping now. You can’t skip over this process. The way to God is through your brother; he is your savior. There is no other

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

way.

The path of the Course is anything but narcissistic or solitary. It teaches us clearly that we cannot find God alone, or in ourselves alone; and we cannot find God anywhere unless we find Him everywhere. “He is approached through the appreciation of His Son” (T-11.IV.7:2). By learning to see those around us as the Son of God, as God’s perfect creation, we learn that we are part of that creation as well. This leads us to the memory of God Himself. The way to God lies through the person next to us:

“Behold his sinlessness, and be you healed.” (1:5)

WHAT AM I?

W-pII.14.4:1-3

This passage is reminiscent of the paragraph in the introduction to Review V:

Let this review be then your gift to me. For this alone I need; that you will hear the words I speak, and give them to the world. You are my voice, my eyes, my feet, my hands through which I save the world. The Self from which I call to you is but your own. To Him we go together. Take your brother’s hand, for this is not a way we walk alone. In him I walk with you, and you with me. Our Father wills His Son be one with Him. What lives but must not then be one with you? (W-pI.rV.In.9:1-9)

Christ sees through our eyes. Our ears are those that hear the Voice for God. Our minds are the minds that join together. As bringers of salvation, we have only one single function: to hear the words Jesus speaks, and give them to the world. And what is the kernel of those words? Seeing the world with no thought of sin; hearing the message that the world is sinless; joining in union to bless the world.

Am I a blessing to those around me, or a burden? Do I lift guilt from them, or do I lay it on them? I have not really grasped the message of the Course until I have realized that I am here to be a channel of God’s grace to the world and to release everyone I come in contact with from their guilt, most especially from the guilt that I have laid upon them.

LESSON 358 • DECEMBER 24

**“No call to God can be unheard nor left
Unanswered. And of this I can be sure;
His answer is the one I really want.”**

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: I have had difficulty relating to the wording of today’s lesson, so I have used this rewording:

*God loves me so much that He always hears
And always answers
And gives me the answer I really want.*

Commentary

The ego is constantly working to convince us that we want many different things, things that often compete with one another. We have listened to our egos for so long that we are quite confused about what we want. An early Workbook lesson tells us, “I do not perceive my own best interests” (W-pI.24.Heading).

Since I am so confused about what I really want, it is far better to leave that choice in the hands of the Voice for God.

You Who remember what I really am alone remember what I really want. (1:1)

I need to remind myself of this fairly often—usually any time I get caught up in thinking that I want something very much. “I want that new computer.” “I want a loving, intimate, and committed sexual relationship.” “I want a better job.” I need to remind myself, “Wait a minute, Allen. Remember! You don’t clearly remember who you really are, so how can you know what you really want?”

Part of the learning the Course is taking us through is learning to listen to the Holy Spirit. And part of that lesson is realizing that He speaks *for us*, and not just for God. I may think that what I want conflicts with what He seems to be wanting for me, and I need to realize that what He wants for me is what I really want, even if my ego is telling me differently.

Your Voice, my Father, then is mine as well, and all I want is what You offer me, in just the form You choose that it be mine. (1:4)

So often I am inclined to think that I want what God wants to give, but then I dictate the form in which that must come to me. I hear that God’s Will for me is perfect happiness, and then I decide the form that happiness must take. I need to take it a step further, as this lesson does: I want what God wants, and whether I can see it or not at the moment, I want it in just the form He chooses to give it, and not the form I think it must take.

I am reminded of many times, as a parent, when I tried to convince one of my sons that he didn’t really

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

want what he thought he wanted. Perhaps he was saying, “I want the red gumball!” And I would say, “No, Ben, the red one isn’t sweet; it’s hot cinnamon and you won’t like it.” And he would say, “I want the red one!!” We do exactly the same sort of thing with God, far more often than we care to admit.

Let me remember all I do not know, and let my voice be still, remembering. (1:5)

Let me realize, when I think I know what I want, that I don’t really know. And let me simply shut up and stop throwing a tantrum; let me be quiet, and listen to my Father’s Voice. He speaks for me as well as for God; He knows what I really want, and wisdom is taking His advice. He loves us; He cares for us; He has promised always to be with us. Let me trust Him even when I don’t understand, knowing that (Oh! It seems awful sometimes to say these words; so belittling!) Father knows best.

Let me not forget myself is nothing, but my Self is all. (1:7)

The little, individual ego “I” is nothing; Who I really am is everything. The Holy Spirit always speaks from the perspective of that larger Self. He does not seek to benefit and coddle the little “I.” He is always working with us to bring us to full awareness of Self. At times what He gives may go contrary to the little “I,” while leading us on to full realization of the Self. That is why our picture of what we want is so often distorted, and what He wants for us seems at times to be something we do not want. We are confused about who we are. He is not. So let us trust His wisdom, be still, and know that He is God.

WHAT AM I?

Part 8: W-pII.14.4:4

And from the oneness that we have attained we call to all our brothers, asking them to share our peace and consummate our joy.

We attain oneness gradually. In reality we don’t strictly “attain” oneness; we remember it, we become aware of what has always been. But, in time, it *seems* as though we attain it bit by bit. We begin with very brief holy instants, flashes of remembrance, like a forgotten dream we are struggling to recall. Those moments of memory come more and more frequently, more and more clearly, and last longer and longer, until one day we remember fully and forever. Each instant we are in that oneness, we recognize that we are not there alone, and cannot be there alone. We experience peace and joy, and yet our joy cannot be *consummated* until everyone shares it with us, and wakes up to the reality of who and what they are. So we call to them, we reach out to them.

The state of mind we are seeking, which we might call the enlightened state of mind, is one which perceives its connection to all of God’s creations, and is moved irresistibly to re-establish the full communication of that perfect oneness in all its parts. As the “bodhisattva” of Buddhist tradition foregoes Nirvana to save others, being unwilling to pass into that state of perfect bliss until “every blade of grass is enlightened,” so the right-minded continually call out to all their brothers, asking them to share their peace. Jesus exemplifies this attitude as he speaks in the “Circle of Atonement” section in the Text:

I stand within the circle, calling you to peace. Teach peace with me, and stand with me on holy ground. Remember for everyone your Father’s power that He has given him. Believe not that you cannot teach His perfect peace. Stand not outside, but join with me within. Fail not the only purpose to which my teaching calls you. Restore to God His Son as He created him, by teaching him his innocence. (T-14.V.9:4–10)

Stand quietly within this circle, and attract all tortured minds to join with you in the safety of its peace and holiness. (T-14.V.8:6)

LESSON 359 • DECEMBER 25

**“God’s answer is some form of peace. All pain
Is healed; all misery replaced with joy.
All prison doors are opened. And all sin
Is understood as merely a mistake.”**

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

Today I want to share some thoughts just on the first line of this lesson. Yesterday we were reminded that “no call to God can be unheard nor left unanswered” and that “His answer is the one I really want” (W-pII.358.Heading). Today we are told that when God answers, the answer “is some form of peace.” So the answer that I want is peace. Every call to God is answered with some form of peace, and that is what I really want, despite what I may think to the contrary.

I think that when we begin to grasp that what we really want is peace—in every situation—things start to fall into proper perspective. Say it looks like I may lose my job, or a relationship that I believe I need. Say it looks as if I don’t have enough money. I find myself, more or less, praying for that job, or that relationship, or that money. Or perhaps I’m not up to prayer so I just obsess about the situation. I’m thinking this is what I want.

If, when that happens, I can begin to recognize that what I really want is some form of peace, I’ve made a giant step. It isn’t the job I want; it’s the form of peace I think it brings. It isn’t the relationship I really want; it’s the peace I think lies in it. It isn’t the money I need; it is the peace of mind I think it buys me.

The prayer of the heart does not really ask for concrete things. It always requests some kind of experience, the specific things asked for being the bringers of the desired experience in the opinion of the asker. (M-21.2:4–5)

When I begin to realize that I am not really asking for things but for the experience of peace I think they bring me, I can start to ask for peace directly, bypassing my (perhaps) mistaken opinion that a certain “thing” will bring me that experience. I can open my mind to the possibility that God will bring me the peace of mind I seek through another avenue than the one I see.

Once I can begin to let go of my insistence that the answer must come in a certain form, I will much more quickly be aware of God’s answer. I may find I can experience the peace of God completely independent of form. I may find that the peace comes to me in a form I could never have anticipated. I will lose my anxiety over whether or not the form I first envisioned as what I needed ever comes to me at all. If peace of mind comes, I am satisfied because this is all I really ever want.

To tie this in with the rest of the lesson, just briefly, “Help us forgive, for we would be at peace” (1:9). Peace is impossible if my mind is blinded by unforgiveness. Peace is incompatible with anger. A lack of peace is always some kind of unforgiveness, although often it is difficult to see how that could be. When I

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

ask for peace I am asking to be taught to forgive, whether I recognize it or not. If I make peace my goal above all else, I will learn forgiveness.

WHAT AM I?

Part 9: W-pII.14.5:1-2

Whether we really know it or not, “We are the holy messengers of God” (5:1). That is our function; it is what we were created to do—express God. This is our job here, and we won’t be completely happy until we are carrying it out. The way this is worded here seems significant; we are “carrying His Word to everyone whom He has sent to us” (5:1); it does not say, “to whom we are sent.” It is not so much that we go out looking for people to give the message to; rather, they come looking for us. That is a different attitude than the one which says, “Let us go out and convert the world.” This is simply a passing along of the message of peace and the fact of forgiveness to everyone who comes into our lives. People don’t just “happen” to show up in our lives; they are sent. And they are sent because we have something to give to them.

Let me begin to learn to ask myself, when someone shows up in my life, in my time, or perhaps in my face: “What do I have to give to this person? What is the Word of God I can communicate to her? What does God want to say to this person through me?” Or, in much simpler terms, “How can I be truly helpful to this person?”

Doing this—actually doing it, not just thinking about it—is how I learn that the Word of God is written on my heart (5:1). And doing this is *how my mind is changed* about what I am and what I am doing here. My mind won’t be changed just by trying to change my mind; it is changed by carrying God’s Word to everyone He sends to me. When I engage in that kind of active serving and forgiving of my brothers and sisters, I begin to form a new opinion of myself. I begin to see myself in a different light. That is the Holy Spirit’s plan of salvation.

LESSON 360 • DECEMBER 26

**“Peace be to me, the holy Son of God.
Peace to my brother, who is one with me.
Let all the world be blessed with peace through us.”**

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

This is for all practical purposes the last “regular” lesson of the Workbook. The last five days of the year will be spent on a single lesson, which gives us an idea of how every day can be spent by a Course “graduate,” if we can use that term. This final lesson, then, sums up and concludes the practice of the Workbook.

Peace be to me; peace be to my brother; peace be to all the world through us. That is one way of summarizing what the Course is all about: finding peace within ourselves, sharing that peace with another, and together sharing it with all the world. Finding it within ourselves is the basis. Sharing it with another confirms it within us, and the relationship gives us a microcosm in which to learn to extend that peace. Having learned to share together, we then extend the peace to all the world.

Father, it is Your peace that I would give, receiving it of you. (1:1)

The peace we receive and give is God’s peace. It is the peace that comes of knowing we are God’s creation: “In holiness were we created, and in holiness do we remain” (1:5). “I am Your Son, forever just as You created me, for the Great Rays remain forever still and undisturbed within me” (1:2). Nothing God placed in me in creation has been lost. God, eternally at peace, extended Himself to create me, and His peace extended into me and included me in its stillness. That stillness always exists. There is a place in you, and in me, that is at perfect peace always. We can find that peace at any instant we choose to do so. To find it all we need do is to be still, to stop our interference. The peace is always there.

I would reach to them [the Great Rays] in silence and in certainty, for nowhere else can certainty be found. Peace be to me, and peace to all the world. (1:3–4)

This morning, close your eyes for a time—for as long as it takes. Let the thoughts that have been occupying your mind just float away, detached. Do not push them away; do not hold on to them. Just let them go, and try to become aware of that place within yourself that is always at peace. Do not strive to find it; let it find you. Simply be still. Simply make yourself receptive to the peace and it will appear, because it is always there. Sit in silence. If a noise comes to your attention, don’t let your mind “stick” to it. You have no other purpose than to be still. You have no other goal right now but to say, “Peace be to me.”

And when you touch that peace, or when it touches you, however briefly, let yourself add, “and peace to all the world.” Gently wish that peace for all your brothers and sisters. That is all we are here for. That

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

is all that really needs to be done. It will be enough.

Your Son is like to You in perfect sinlessness. And with this thought we gladly say "Amen."
(1:6–7)

The thought of perfect sinlessness brings the Course to its conclusion; that is its goal.

But the content of the course never changes. Its central theme is always, "God's Son is guiltless, and in his innocence is his salvation." (M-1.3:4–5)

When I have accepted my own perfect sinlessness, and have extended that thought to include the entire world, salvation is accomplished. To do so is to perfectly forgive all things. Sinlessness and peace go together. Only the sinless can be at peace; only the peaceful are sinless. The message of the Course is one of radical innocence. All are innocent, and no one must be condemned for others to be free.

WHAT AM I?

Part 10: W-pII.14.5:3–5

Our function here is to "bring glad tidings to the Son of God, who thought he suffered" (5:3). The Son of God who thought he suffered is you, me, and everyone who comes into our life. What a wonderful calling! To announce, as the prophet Isaiah said in the Old Testament:

...to preach good tidings unto the meek; ...to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to [them that are] bound;...to comfort all that mourn; ...to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.(Is 61:1–3)

This season of Christmas is said in the Gospels to be a time of "great joy...to all people" (Lk 2:10). In the Course we have a continuation of that message, and we are its heralds. We can announce, "Now is [the Son of God] redeemed" (5:4). The way is open for every one of us to find our way home, and to know first our perfect forgiveness, and then the immensity of God's Love.

And as he sees the gate of Heaven stand open before him, he will enter in and disappear into the Heart of God. (5:5)

As these "glad tidings" are received, we will all, in the end, enter in through the heavenly gates, symbolic of entering into the awareness of perfect Oneness. In that Oneness we will disappear into the Heart of God. That word "disappear" does not, in any sense, mean that we shall cease to exist, or that we will be absorbed and somehow blotted out by the absorption. It is just that all sense of difference and separateness will be gone, along with all desire for it. We will disappear in the Oneness, but we will be *in* that Oneness, profoundly a part of it, radiantly fulfilling our function, shining forever in the eternal glory of God.

PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS FOR LESSONS 361-365

Purpose: To place your practice and your life in the hands of the Holy Spirit, so that from here on, He becomes for you what the book has been. He becomes the Guide for your practice and for your entire walk through life. From now on, you follow in His way, and lead your brothers along that same way. The keynote of this way is extending forgiveness to others and thereby learning that you are forgiven.

Morning/evening quiet time: As long as you need for the effect you want.

Repeat the words of the lesson at the beginning. As you do, realize that these words are an acknowledgment that you have not understood (W-pII.fl.6:1), that your belief in a sinful world has been mistaken (W-pII.fl.1:5). So now you come before God’s Voice with empty hands and ask to be shown, to be taught how to love (W-pII.fl.6:1).

The words	The meaning
<i>This holy instant would I give to You.</i>	I set my past beliefs aside and give this practice period to You, so that it may become a holy instant.
<i>Be You in charge.</i>	I set my thoughts and words aside and place You in full charge of this practice period.
<i>For I would follow You, certain that Your direction gives me peace.</i>	I do this because then You can come in and lead me along Your way, Your way of love. And only on that way will I find peace.

After repeating the words, enter into Open Mind Meditation. Simply open your mind to the presence of the Holy Spirit, and hold that openness without the aid of words. For this purpose, I find it helpful to imagine that your mind is His holy temple. Normally, it is your bedroom, to fill with clutter as you please. But during this practice period, it is His temple, to be filled only with His presence. He is in charge. This means that you leave the shoes of your thoughts and words at the door. Whenever you forget and bring your dirty shoes into His temple, repeat “*Be You in charge.*” Aside from those times, hold the awareness that your mind is His temple *wordlessly*. Be filled with confidence that He will hear and will come into this holy place.

When He comes, He may give you a word to repeat. He may give you a thought to dwell on. He may speak to you. You may hear God’s Voice tell you, “You are My Son, and all I have is yours” (see W-pII.fl.6:3). Or He may simply grant you “stillness and a tranquil, open mind” (W-pII.361-365.1:3). However He shows up, He has come to lead you into a life based on following Him along His pathway of forgiveness.

Hourly remembrance: One or two minutes as the hour strikes (reduce if circumstances do not permit).

Do a miniature version of the morning practice. Repeat the idea as an invitation to the Holy Spirit, and then wait in wordless silence for Him to come to you.

Frequent reminder: As often as possible within each hour.

“Repeat [the idea], and allow your mind to rest a little time in silence and in peace” (W-pI.rIII.In.10:5).

Response to temptation: Whenever you feel upset.

Repeat the idea as a way of calling on the Holy Spirit to dispel your upset.

LESSON 361 • DECEMBER 27

**“This holy instant would I give to You.
Be You in charge. For I would follow You,
Certain that Your direction gives me peace.”**

Practice instructions

See instructions on page XXX.

Commentary

I will be doing commentary on the “Final Lessons” and “Epilogue” sections intermingled with the daily commentary for the next five days, since the actual lesson is the same for all five days.

So we come to the final lessons of the year. Today and for the next four days we have the same lesson, which gives us the very simple directions by which we are to live the rest of our lives. The intent of the Workbook is to aid us in forming the very habit portrayed by this lesson: to give each instant to the Holy Spirit, asking Him to be in charge, committing ourselves to follow His direction in everything, knowing that He always leads us towards peace.

The introduction to this simple lesson (“Final Lessons”) is one that we would do well to read each day for these five days. Each day as we read this over, along with the lesson, we follow the reading with a time of quiet in which we seek a holy instant of communion with our Father and His Voice.

We are not seeking for words:

Our final lessons will be left as free of words as possible. We use them but at the beginning of our practicing, and only to remind us that we seek to go beyond them. Let us turn to Him Who leads the way and makes our footsteps sure. (W-pII.fl.1:1–3).²

What we are seeking is that communion with Him. We open ourselves to the experience of peace. We give our lives to Him, asking to be directed in “all our thoughts to serve the function of salvation” (W-pII.fl.3:1). We are here to remember God through forgiving our brothers, through sharing His reality with everyone.

We are as free of words as possible in these times of practice, and yet “if I need a word to help me, He will give it to me. If I need a thought, that will He also give” (W-pII.361-365.1:1–2). He will give whatever I need. Sometimes there will be words; sometimes, thoughts. And sometimes, nothing but “stillness and a tranquil, open mind” (W-pII.361-365.1:3). We present ourselves to Him and wait for Him to give whatever we need. We do not tell Him what we need; we leave that to Him.

Each day we can begin like this. And during the day, often, whenever we can, we stop and once again renew the set of our minds, our determination to make no decision by ourselves, without Him. These lessons have been, as the Workbook’s epilogue says, “a beginning, not an end” (W-Ep.1:1). They have trained us in a practice that is meant to continue for the rest of our lives until our entire life has become a holy instant.

Whenever you can today, remember these words and repeat them: “This holy instant would I give to You.” He will never fail to hear you.

². reference translates as Workbook, Part II, Final Lessons (introduction), paragraph 1, sentences 1 to 3.

LESSON 362 • DECEMBER 28

**“This holy instant would I give to You.
Be You in charge. For I would follow You,
Certain that Your direction gives me peace.”**

Practice instructions

See instructions on page XXX.

Commentary

The Workbook leads us to this point: “to Him we give our lives henceforth” (W-pII.fl.1:4). If the idea of giving our lives to God seems unappealing, consider the alternative: “For we would not return again to the belief in sin that made the world seem ugly and unsafe, attacking and destroying, dangerous in all its ways, and treacherous beyond the hope of trust and the escape from pain” (W-pII.fl.1:5).

The idea that we want something other than God is what made all this mess. There is nothing other than God. “The belief in sin” referred to is nothing more than our belief that we succeeded in making something separate from Him. We don’t really want this, although we have believed we did. This belief is the source of all our pain, so let us return our lives to the Source of all joy instead. Let us give our lives to be directed by His Voice, the Holy Spirit.

Let us give this holy instant and every instant into His hands.

His is the only way to find the peace that God has given us. It is His way that everyone must travel in the end, because it is this ending God Himself appointed. (W-pII.fl.2:1–2)

Don’t let those words “the only way” scare you off. This isn’t saying *A Course in Miracles* is the only way to God; it is saying that the route of forgiveness, the truth that we are all innocent before God, is the only way, whatever the form it may take. God created us all to be His expression, and His Will will be done in the end. As it says in the Text introduction, we don’t have any choice about the content of the curriculum, just about when we learn it.

In the dream of time it seems to be far off. And yet, in truth, it is already here; already serving us as gracious guidance in the way to go.(W-pII.fl.2:3–4)

Robert wrote an article for our newsletter on the topic “How Long Until We Are Out of Here?” or in other words, “How long until we reach the end of the journey?” The Course is full of the paradox stated baldly in this sentence: The truth is already here, and yet—in time—it seems to be far off. Both are true, each in its proper context. A dream that lasts only a few seconds can seem, within the dream, to last for years. Isn’t it possible that a dream that lasts only for a “tiny tick of time” (T-26.V.3:5) can seem to last billions of years? Within the dream of time, our journey home seems to be taking a very long time. In reality it is already over, and the power of its ending is present now, guiding us through the dream.

So what should we do? How, then, should we live? Should we proclaim, “It’s all over!” and just kick back and relax? No; to us the dream is still real. Therefore:

Let us together follow in the way that truth points out to us. And let us be the leaders of our many brothers who are seeking for the way, but find it not. (W-pII.fl.2:5–6)

In his article, Robert reaches the conclusion that “how long” is an irrelevant question, and that we should be equally content whether we go home tomorrow or in 10,000 AD. Our function in the meantime is to be the light of the world as long as we are in it. We are to lead home all our brothers who are still lost, still floundering. We are to forgive the world; to bring the message of guiltlessness to everyone; to

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

extend the peace and love we have found to all the world.

This is what we do when we say, "For I would follow You, certain that Your direction gives me peace." What direction? The direction of forgiveness, the direction of forgiving the world. That is the direction which "gives me peace." Working out our forgiveness of the world becomes the content of our days. It is when we have accepted this as the one function that we want to fulfill that the Holy Spirit will arrange everything for us, providing everything we need as we go.

LESSON 363 • DECEMBER 29

**“This holy instant would I give to You.
Be You in charge. For I would follow You,
Certain that Your direction gives me peace.”**

Practice instructions

See instructions on page XXX.

Commentary

Once again we repeat this “holy instant” lesson. It seems as if the author is telling us, “Having received all the thoughts we have given you, there is really nothing left for you to do except to put your life into the hands of the Holy Spirit.” Helen Schucman, who wrote the first parts of the preface to the Course some time after completing the Course itself (the final section of the preface, “What It Says,” was taken down from the same inner dictation as the rest of the books), said there:

The Course makes no claim to finality, nor are the Workbook lessons intended to bring the student’s learning to completion. At the end, the reader is left in the hands of his or her own Internal Teacher, Who will direct all subsequent learning as He sees fit. (preface, pp. ix-x)

That is exactly what these final five days are reinforcing, leaving us in the hands of the Holy Spirit for our further instruction.

The Workbook is a primer, one that is intended to ready us for the ongoing instruction of the Holy Spirit. It serves as a kind of crutch while we are too weak to stand on our own. I sometimes like to think of the Workbook as training wheels on our spiritual bicycle. The training wheels are there to keep the child who is learning to ride from falling over. Once he learns to keep his balance, the wheels become unnecessary, while the rider continues to learn to ride his bike better and better, perhaps learning to do wheelies, ride with no hands, or even do off-road dirt bike maneuvers. The learning isn’t over when we are done with the Workbook; there is much yet to learn.

The training of the Course is a mind training. The Workbook offers mental “training wheels,” the structure of daily thoughts and suggested practice exercises. Its purpose is to initiate us into the Course’s form of spiritual practice, which consists of mentally engaging with God, morning, evening, and moment to moment throughout the day. Its words give us something to grasp while we try to form this new habit. In the beginning it is very structured, and the structure gets fairly demanding. Over time it eases off, in the assumption that we have begun to form the habits it is attempting to impart. Here, in the final lessons, the structure is about to fall completely away; the training wheels are being removed. We are left in the hands of the Holy Spirit alone, with no book to guide us.

Some, perhaps, may be motivated enough to apply themselves diligently throughout the entire first year they do the Workbook, following its instructions (or trying to) every day. If indeed one were to do this, a single year would be enough to form the habits of spiritually engaging with God. For most of us, however, once is not enough.

I have to confess at this writing, this next year (1997) will be, I think, my ninth pass through the Workbook. My first took me most of three years. Since then I’ve done it once a year except for one year I decided I wanted to do something different for a while. I’m a slow learner; as this year ends, I still haven’t formed the daily habits the Workbook is trying to teach us. I’m doing much better each year, but it is still a rare day I remember to practice my lesson every hour, much less recall it briefly five or six times in between the hours—and that is what the practice instructions consist of once we are several months into the book. So I am doing it again, not just so that I can share daily comments with you folks, but because I still have much to learn myself.

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

Yet even though I don't feel I can take this lesson as fully as it is meant, letting go of the Workbook to go on in my private instruction with the Holy Spirit, I can still take it for each time of practice and remembrance through the day. "This holy instant would I give to You." Every instant can be a holy one. Let's try to remember, today, as often as we can. Each time we do, let's give the instant to Him to be made holy. Or rather, let's give it to Him for His purposes in recognition that it is holy.

As the introduction to this lesson stressed:

Unto us the aim is given to forgive the world. It is the goal that God has given us. (W -
pII.fl.3:2-3)

That is the purpose the Holy Spirit has, and each instant given to Him is used for that purpose: forgiving the world. "It is our function to remember Him on earth" (W-pII.fl.4:1). We remember Him by forgiving: "For all that we forgive we will not fail to recognize as part of God Himself" (W-pII.fl.3:5). Our brothers are our saviors; through our forgiveness of them, we remember God.

LESSON 364 • DECEMBER 30

**“This holy instant would I give to You.
Be You in charge. For I would follow You,
Certain that Your direction gives me peace.”**

Practice instructions

See instructions on page XXX.

Commentary

I’m going to suggest that for the last two days of this year you read through the epilogue following the last lesson, as well as the lesson. I will share a few comments based on the epilogue over the next two days (all of the Course quotes that follow are from the epilogue unless otherwise indicated); however, your practice should still be of the final lesson.

The epilogue echoes two of the themes of this final lesson: *following* the Holy Spirit as our Teacher and Friend on the path, and the *certainty* of our reaching the end of the path successfully.

Your Friend goes with you. You are not alone. (1:2–3)

You are as certain of arriving home as is the pathway of the sun laid down before it rises...Indeed, your pathway is more certain still. (2:1–2)

Today I will discuss the theme of following, and tomorrow, the certainty of arriving home.

The epilogue makes it clear that even when we complete the Workbook and have achieved the purpose it sets for us, having developed a daily habit of giving our lives over to the direction of the Holy Spirit, we have only begun our journey, and there is more to go. The path ahead may yet be long. There will yet be difficulties along the way. Why else would Jesus emphasize the certainty of the ending unless we believed we still have reason to doubt?

We are told this course is a beginning, not an end (1:1). We can expect troubles (1:5) and problems (1:7). We will still be going through lessons, although not the “specific” ones of the Workbook (3:1). “Efforts” will still be required (3:3). We will experience “difficulty” and will still have times in which we think that pain is real (4:1). We are still on the way to Heaven, but not there yet (5:4). We need guidance (5:5), so there must be obstacles or a path that at times seems unclear. We are still on the road towards home (5:7). “We will continue in His way” (6:2). Jesus says he will never leave us without comfort, so comfort will still be needed (6:8).

I am pointing out all the indications that a major portion of our journey is still ahead, because we are so easily inclined to think otherwise; we get impatient and want the journey to be over. The positive themes of this epilogue are designed to counteract the discouragement that may come over us when we realize that there is a long way yet to go.

First, we have a Friend Who goes with us. A “Friend!” Has my experience with the Workbook taught me that? The Holy Spirit is my Friend. (Perhaps, for some of us, that Friend has personalized as Jesus.) Has my interaction with Him been enough that He has earned my trust, “by speaking daily to you of your Father and your brother and your Self” (4:4)? There are such wonderful promises given to us here of His helpfulness. We cannot call on Him in vain. He has the answers for everything we might ask, and He won’t withhold them. All we need to do is ask. He speaks to us of what we “really want and really need” (2:4).

He will direct your efforts, telling you exactly what to do, how to direct your mind, and when to come to Him in silence, asking for His sure direction and His certain Word. (3:3)

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

We do not need to worry about the length or complexity of our journey. We have a Guide. The Workbook is not the journey; it is a training camp that prepares us for it, introduces us to our Guide, and teaches us to trust Him. By doing the Workbook we have learned how reliable and knowledgeable He is; now, we are ready to set out on the journey itself, walking with Him in confidence that He knows how to bring us home.

LESSON 365 • DECEMBER 31

**“This holy instant would I give to You.
Be You in charge. For I would follow You,
Certain that Your direction gives me peace.”**

Practice instructions

See instructions on page XXX.

Commentary

The last lesson of the year! But certainly not, I hope, our last holy instant. I find myself, as the New Year approaches, thinking of this lesson in terms of “This holy *year* would I give to You.” Ah, I really feel that resonating within, finding a common tone echoing from a deep, perpetual longing.

The epilogue, as I was saying yesterday, talks about how our journey continues after the formal study of the Workbook with a continuing walk with the Holy Spirit as Guide through what may yet be a very long journey. The second point that the epilogue makes strongly is that the end of the journey is certain:

You are as certain of arriving home as is the pathway of the sun laid down before it rises, after it has set, and in the half-lit hours in between. Indeed, your pathway is more certain still. (2:1–2)

We can “walk with Him, as certain as is He of where you go; as sure as He of how you should proceed; as confident as He is of the goal, and of your safe arrival in the end” (4:6). I think that often my feelings of “How much longer is this going to take?” really translate into suppressed fears of “Am I ever going to arrive home?” We convert the length of time into a witness to the idea that we’ll never make it. If I *really knew* that my pathway is as certain as the sun, and more, I could “travel light and journey lightly” (T-13.VII.13:4) no matter how long it takes.

I think the attitude the Course encourages in us is:

1. To hold on to this certainty that arriving home is guaranteed,
2. While at the same time being completely unconcerned with how long it may take.

The Text tells us that how long is only a matter of time, and time is just an illusion. It asks us not to be restless, and points out that being restless on a journey to peace is rather inconsistent.

The end is certain, and the means as well. To this we say “Amen.” (5:1–2)

Let *me* say “Amen” as well. “Yes, so be it, and so it is.” Why is the end so sure? We have the Holy Spirit with us. “And He will speak for God and for your Self, thus making sure that hell will claim you not, and that each choice you make brings Heaven nearer to your reach” (5:4). He is the guarantee. His presence makes the ending sure. And He is certain because He knows the end depends on us, and nothing is more certain than a Son of God.

We go homeward to an open door which God has held unclosed to welcome us. (5:7)

Ah, what a beautiful picture! I could have called my booklet *The Journey Home* by that title: *Homeward to an Open Door*. Thank You, God, for the open door.

God’s angels hover near and all about. His Love surrounds you, and of this be sure; that I will never leave you comfortless. (6:7–8)

What more do we need? The Holy Spirit is in us. Angels hover near and all about. God’s Love

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

surrounds us, and Jesus promises: I will never leave you comfortless.

Can you get a sense of that as this year comes to a close? Can you close your eyes for a moment and feel Them all around you? Can you realize the holiness of this moment, the birth of Christ in you now moving out into the world to transform it with light? They are here, and They are watching, and as Jesus often says in the Course, They give you thanks for your willingness to open to the light. Let us, then, as the year ends, give Them thanks for giving this light to us.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

Congratulations! You have finished the entire Workbook. If you are new to the Course in this last year, you may not realize how many students begin the Workbook and don't finish it, so finishing is no minor accomplishment. It really deserves congratulations.

Having completed a pass through the Workbook, there are two questions that might occur to you now:

- Should I repeat the Workbook lessons, or is one time through enough?
- If I feel I am done with the lessons, what should I do now to continue my work with *A Course in Miracles*?

Should I repeat the Workbook?

I believe the answer to this question is very much up to you. Yet, in a general way, I can give you an answer. This answer is my opinion, but it is based on some objective observations about the Workbook and its training goal, and some common sense.

The common sense portion is this: How do you determine whether or not to repeat *any* class, in any subject? You ask yourself, "Have I learned what the course was intended to teach?" If you have, you don't need to repeat it. If you haven't, you could very likely profit from repeating the class.

When I was in high school I took three years of French. The last two of those years were from an absolutely *awful* teacher. When I entered college, I took a placement test in French to answer the question "How much French did the high school classes teach me?" The answer turned out to be "Almost none." I placed in French 1 at the college level; I started all over. There was no shame in that. It did not mean I was an incompetent French student. In fact, I ended up majoring in French, spending a year living in France, and being mistaken for French by a French student at the university!

We don't happen to have a simple, written test you can take to determine if you have learned what the Workbook set out to teach you. There is no shame if you haven't learned it yet. I would say, to be perfectly honest, that I do not know one single person who has ever really gotten all there is to get out of the Workbook in just one year. My personal opinion—and there is absolutely no support for this in the words of the Course itself—is that everyone could benefit from doing the Workbook two, three, four, or even more times.

The key piece of information you need to answer the question "Have I learned what the Workbook was intended to teach me?" is: What does the Workbook try to teach us? What is its main goal for us? If you know the answer to that question, it is fairly easy to determine whether or not you have learned it, whether or not the purpose of the Workbook has been achieved in your case.

If you have been reading these commentaries and Robert's practice instructions with understanding, you already know the answers. Whereas the ultimate goal of the spiritual practice given to us by the Workbook is to train our minds to look on everyone and everything in the world differently, to always think with God, to listen always to the Voice for God, and to forgive the entire world, the immediate goal of the Workbook is much more attainable and practical.

That immediate goal is to train us in daily spiritual practice, to establish in our lives the *habit* of spending time every morning and evening to meet with God and to set our minds on His truth, the *habit* of turning our minds within to God every hour or so for a minute or two, the *habit* of thinking frequently of God or of spiritual thoughts in between those hourly remembrances, and the *habit* responding immediately to temptation with some thought of God, some tool from the problem-solving repertoire that we have developed over the year of our Workbook practice.

So the answer to "Should I repeat the Workbook?" is: If you have established these habits of daily spiritual practice to the degree that you can and will carry them on, daily, without the continuing support of the Workbook, then you do not need to repeat the Workbook. You may still *choose* to repeat it, but you do not need to. If, however, you *have not* established these daily habits of spiritual practice, then you should re-enroll yourself in the program that is designed to help you form such habits—the Workbook!

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

You probably can fairly easily answer the question for yourself about how strongly you have formed the habits of spiritual practice. If you are still missing your quiet time lots of mornings or evenings; if you rarely remember the lesson every hour, and even more rarely remember it between the hours; if your ego often rises up and seizes control of your mind without being challenged by your right mind, refusing to listen to the ego; then you surely can benefit from doing the Workbook again.

If, on the other hand, you *have* formed strong habits of spiritual practice—not necessarily perfect habits, but real habits, fairly consistent—then you may be ready to set the Workbook aside. Just like when you have been using training wheels to learn to ride a bicycle, the only way to know for sure if you are ready is to try it without the training wheels. The first time I tried continuing my spiritual practice without the Workbook, it was a dismal failure, the equivalent on a bicycle of falling over within one hundred feet. I'd read through the Workbook about six times by then, too! (I had not really tried to follow the practice instructions, however, so it is no wonder that I hadn't formed good habits of practice.) Within a few weeks, I wasn't doing any spiritual practice at all! I realized that I wasn't yet ready to set aside the "training wheels," and I resumed doing the Workbook lessons.

What do I do after the Workbook?

The Manual for Teachers offers very clear instructions for continuing our daily spiritual practice after we have completed the Workbook, in a section titled "How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day?" (M-16). If you think you are ready to move on without the Workbook, this is where to find your instructions. And if you are wondering whether or not you are ready, reading over these instructions and asking yourself, "Am I ready to do this?" will help you make up your mind.

The section begins by talking about an *advanced* teacher of God. It says, basically, that an advanced spiritual teacher does not need any structure or program; the question of how to spend his day is meaningless, because the advanced teacher lives in constant contact with the Holy Spirit, and simply follows His guidance moment to moment.

However, it goes on to say, the *ordinary* teacher of God—for instance, someone who has just completed the Workbook (and completing the Workbook is a prerequisite to bearing the title "teacher of God")—still *does* need structure. Not as much structure as someone doing the Workbook, but not as little as an advanced teacher. Something in between. This person is not yet ready to live without structure; she or he is still in training, still learning to listen to the Holy Spirit in every moment. The Manual then goes on to tell us what that structure should be, in some detail.

As we have pointed out in our introduction to Part II of the Workbook, and also in "Preliminary Notes on Workbook Practice" in *A Workbook Companion, Volume I*, the instructions given here in the Manual sound remarkably like the fully matured pattern of practice established toward the end of Part I in the Workbook, and carried on through all of Part II. Here they are, as I presented them in Volume I:

The post-Workbook practice, in simple outline, is this:

1. Begin the day right, as soon as possible after waking. "As soon as possible after waking take your quiet time, continuing a minute or two after you begin to find it difficult" (M-16.4:7). The goal in this time is to "join with God." We should spend as long as it takes to do that until it becomes difficult; the length of time is not a major concern (4:4–8).
2. Repeat the "same procedures" at night; just before sleeping if possible (5:1).
3. Remember God all through the day (6:1–14).
4. Turn to the Holy Spirit with all your problems (7:4–5).
5. Respond to all temptations by reminding yourself of the truth (8:1–3; 10:8; 11:9).

It would be good to read over all of Section 16 of the Manual if you are considering post-Workbook practice, and to spend some time carefully studying what it has to say in detail. The outline I have given here just gives the general ideas. It may be enough to let you decide whether you feel ready for carrying out this program.

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

Are you ready to spend as much time as it takes to join with God every morning and evening? It might be just a few minutes; it might be an hour. Do you feel confident you know what to do in that time, without the Workbook at hand to give you some specific practice instruction? Are you comfortable enough with the basics of Course meditation to undertake it on your own?

Do you feel you have a habit of remembering God all through the day, and will be able to do that without having a specific thought from the lesson for the day to call to mind? (You may pick some thought for yourself from the Text or Workbook, to use like a lesson thought.)

Have you begun to turn to the Holy Spirit with all your problems as a matter of course, as a habit?

Are you able to respond to temptation with the truth on your own? Or would it still be more helpful to you to have a Workbook lesson that gives you some suggestions about doing that?

If your answers to these questions are mostly positive, then you are ready to leave the Workbook behind. If you find yourself mostly answering “No,” then you can probably benefit from repeating the Workbook.

Hints for post-Workbook practice

Let me offer some practical hints, if you have decided to move on to post-Workbook practice. I have found it helpful to make a list of useful thoughts from the Course (not just the Workbook), thoughts that I have found effective in responding to temptation, or thoughts that have helped me, in meditation, to move more quickly into that “quiet center.” Some people have begun to compile a notebook containing such thoughts or passages from the Course. You may want to categorize these, for instance, passages useful in working on forgiveness; passages useful when in fear; and so on.

If you look through the Text you will find a number of passages that are in italic type. These passages are nearly all different forms of suggested spiritual practices. They will all say something like this: Whenever you feel troubled by anything, say to yourself...and then comes the part in italics. You may want to make a collection of these passages and then spend several days working with each of them.

You may be studying the Text and be struck by something you are reading, seeing how it applies to a situation in your life. Take that passage and turn it into your own, personalized spiritual practice. Use it to lead in to your meditations; use it for hourly remembrance and for response to temptation.

Speaking of studying the Text, by all means, do study it! Don't just read it, study it. Give yourself plenty of time for such study. I don't really think you can carefully study the entire Text in much less than three years of daily reading and study. I once *read* the entire Text in about two months, but it has taken me the last four years to *carefully study* every chapter.

Just because you are not going through the Workbook lessons day after day, don't think that you can't do a lesson every now and then. Sometimes, a particular lesson from the Workbook will come to mind; follow your instinct, and do the lesson.

Do you remember a few lessons, as you went through the Workbook, that seemed particularly effective or powerful for you, so that, perhaps, you wanted to stop and spend a week or two on just one of them? Well, now you can do that! You can set your own program. The point now is to maintain a habit of consistent, daily practice, but you, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, are now setting your own individualized curriculum.

One of the techniques we practice with in the Workbook is coming up with related thoughts. Often, the thought you choose to practice with may be one of those related thoughts, rather than words that come directly out of the book.

Some days, you may not have any particular words at all to practice with; you may simply use the day to practice constantly seeking and finding the peace of God.

The basic idea for post-Workbook practice is that you can use any of the techniques and practices given anywhere in the Course, and you can focus on whatever you feel you most need, or whatever works best for you.

And remember, the point is to continue with such practices indefinitely until, like the Workbook itself, you no longer need them. Your life will be a continuous holy instant. It may seem impossible, but the

Workbook Lesson Commentary by Allen Watson

Course promises that God will make it possible for you:

In time, with practice, you will never cease to think of Him, and hear His loving Voice guiding your footsteps into quiet ways, where you will walk in true defenselessness. For you will know that Heaven goes with you. Nor would you keep your mind away from Him a moment, even though your time is spent in offering salvation to the world. Think you He will not make this possible, for you who chose to carry out His plan for the salvation of the world and yours? (W-pI.153.18:1-4)