

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

LESSON 39

My holiness is my salvation.

Another lesson on *holiness*. This one makes it clear that *holiness is the opposite of guilt*. The Course is using the term *holiness* in this specific sense, as an opposite to guilt. So the answer to the opening question, "If guilt is hell, what is its opposite?" should be obvious to you. As the lesson itself says, "We are dealing only in the very obvious" (1:4). This isn't rocket science! When you escape from guilt you have recognized your holiness, and *that* is what the Course means by *salvation*: "...all salvation is escape from guilt" (T-14.III.13:4).

The declaration of our freedom from guilt and of our need to *recognize* that freedom runs all through the Course. This is not a part of the Course's message; it is the whole of it. For instance, from the Text:

Loudly the ego tells you not to look inward, for if you do your eyes will light on sin, and God will strike you blind. This you believe, and so you do not look. Yet this is not the ego's hidden fear, nor yours who serve it. Loudly indeed the ego claims it is; too loudly and too often. For underneath this constant shout and frantic proclamation, the ego is not certain it is so. Beneath your fear to look within because of sin is yet another fear, and one which makes the ego tremble.

- . What if you looked within and saw no sin? (T-21.IV.2:3-3:1)

That is what the ego fears: that we will look within and see *no* sin! That we will recognize our holiness.

If you feel any hesitation in stating today's lesson (or Lesson 35) with strong conviction, it is because you are not quite convinced that guilt is hell. In some part of your mind, you still think guilt serves a useful purpose. The Text declares:

As long as you believe that guilt is justified in any way, in anyone, whatever he may do, you will not look within, where you would always find Atonement. The end of guilt will never come as long as you believe there is a reason for it. For you must learn that guilt is always totally insane, and has no reason. (T-13.X.6:1-3)

The moment that you realize guilt is insane, wholly unjustified and wholly without reason, you will not fear to look upon the Atonement and accept it wholly. (T-13.X.8:6)

Pay close attention to paragraphs 5 to 11, which provide a longer instruction for the practice than usual. The prescribed practice calls for “sustained concentration” (9:3), which the author admits “is very difficult at first,” so he advises short relaxation breaks if you find the concentrated mind-searching to be difficult. Notice, also, that he *actively encourages* introducing variety into the practice periods (10:1). From what is said in other lessons as well, I understand this to mean making up variations on the idea of the day. Instead of saying, “My holiness is my salvation,” you might say, “Freedom from guilt is my salvation,” or “I escape from hell by releasing myself from guilt.” As long as the central meaning is the same, you can use whatever words you like.

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LESSON 40

I am blessed as a Son of God.

You can't read the first paragraph of today's lesson without realizing just how important it is to your success in learning this Course to *do the daily practice as instructed*. It says that *very* frequent short periods of practice are *necessary*. It *urges* us to attempt to practice every ten minutes and to “adhere” (stick to) it. Three times, for three possible causes of a break in our schedule, it drums the message home: try again...try again...try again. In the second paragraph the author says, “You can practice quite well under any circumstances, if you really want to” (2:4).

Is today's practice a hardship? Hardly! It just asks us to remind ourselves very frequently of how blessed we are, and to celebrate the joys of belonging to God's family. It asks us to make a positive affirmation about ourselves every ten minutes. Oh, what drudgery! Oh, what a burden!

What may surprise you is just how difficult it is to remember to do this! What does it say about how entrenched your ego is, and how strongly it resists your recognition of how blessed you are? We do not realize how much the ego dominates our mind and our thinking. Today's practice may help us become more aware.

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LESSON 41

God goes with me wherever I go.

To anyone who attends a Unity Church, today's idea isn't news. Every Sunday service ends with the words, “Wherever we are, God is, and all is well.”

Let me recommend an additional practice you can try some time during the day today. Take paragraphs 3 and 4 of the lesson, read them aloud to yourself, slowly, replacing the words “you” and “your” with “me” and “my.” “Deep within *me* is everything that is perfect,” and so

on. It may not affect you as it does me, but when I do this, I can never make it through without its bringing tears of joy to my eyes.

The importance of the new form of practice today cannot be over-emphasized. It will show up again in lessons 44, 45, 47, 49 and 50.

To get some perspective on how important this lesson is, I recommend reading Robert Perry's article on "Meditation in the Course," which I will attach at the end of these notes.

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LESSON 42

God is my strength. Vision is His gift.

The second sentence contains a powerful word of encouragement. Don't gloss over it: "You cannot fail in your efforts to achieve the goal of this course" (1:2). Why? Because your achievement of that goal is God's Will. What God wills, happens. When we pray, "Thy Will be done," this is what we are praying for: the final enlightenment of every living thing. Whenever you feel discouraged about your progress on the spiritual path, remind yourself that God is your strength. The omnipotent power of Universal Mind supports what you are doing. It isn't all up to you!

In fact, that has always been true. You are always on track, and you are exactly where you are meant to be right now, learning what you are meant to be learning (see 2:3-4). It's all a classroom, and everything has a purpose. You can relax and enjoy the ride.

Once again, in the practice, you are encouraged to invent variations of the lesson idea for yourself. The Workbook is providing you with another tool for spiritual practice here, one that you can use in your daily spiritual practice for the rest of your life.

Another thing I'd like to point out here is in 7:2. The Course refers to itself as "a unified thought system in which nothing is lacking that is needed, and nothing is included that is contradictory or irrelevant." In other words, this is a complete spiritual program with no fluff. Nothing is missing, and there's no fat that needs to be trimmed. You do not need to supplement the Course with bits and pieces from other spiritual traditions, nor is there anything in the Course that you can safely skip over and leave out. Ultimately, the Course will stand or fall as a whole.

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LESSON 43

God is my Source. I cannot see apart from Him.

This is the second "God is" lesson. There will be six "God is" lessons in all.

The contrast between *perception* and *knowledge* is one of the key distinctions made by the Course. Perception belongs to the realm of separation: I, over here, perceive something separate from myself over there. Knowledge, on the other hand, belongs to the realm of oneness: what is part of my Self is not perceived, but known directly, without separation. This is why God does not perceive; God *knows*.

Salvation makes use of perception to lead us to knowledge (1:5; 2:3-4, 7).

Today, the practice is designed to help us realize that if we want to see anything with true vision, we must look with God. We must use “the eyes of forgiveness” (5:4); we must share Christ’s vision of the world.

Notice how this lesson builds on the previous one: Vision is God’s gift. I cannot see apart from Him. Tomorrow’s lesson will continue the theme of sight.

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LESSON 44

God is the light in which I see.

Vision is a gift given us by God (Lesson 42). Apart from God we cannot see (Lesson 43), because the very light in which we see *is God* (Lesson 44).

Clearly, in these lessons we are talking about a different kind of seeing; this is not physical sight, using our body’s eyes. “You do not see outside yourself, nor is the equipment for seeing outside you” (2:2). This seeing is a kind of inner vision. It requires a connection with the light of God within us (2:3-4).

On being told that we must learn a new kind of vision that necessitates discovering the light of God within us, we naturally wonder, “How do I find that light? How do I connect with it?” This lesson is the Course’s answer. In a word, the answer is *meditation*. It does not use that word; instead, it refers to “a form of exercise which has been suggested before” (3:2, referring to Lesson 41) “and which we will utilize increasingly (3:2 again, referring to upcoming lessons such as 45, 47, 49 and 50, as well as many later lessons). As you read over today’s lesson, with its instructions to close your eyes and “sink into your mind” (7:2), it is obviously presenting a form of meditation. As Robert Perry’s article (attached) suggests, “meditation is a major part of the practice of the Course.” Today’s lesson calls this meditation “a major goal of mind training” (3:3). Robert says:

It is by far the most common exercise for the morning and evening practice periods, which are the longest practice periods of each day. This pattern continues even when one is finished with the Workbook. Post-Workbook practice is discussed in the Manual for Teachers, in the section entitled, How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day? According to this section, the foundation of post-Workbook practice is morning and evening “quiet time,” time devoted to God. Since this “quiet time” is something that was learned by “having gone through the workbook” (M-16.5:5), there is only one thing it can be: meditation.

Putting it bluntly, if you really want to learn the message of *A Course in Miracles*, you are going to have to learn to meditate. You may have tried meditation before and found it difficult. *That is exactly why you need it!* “It requires precisely what the untrained mind lacks. Yet this training must be accomplished if you are to see” (3:4–5). Christ’s vision can only be seen using the light of God within us, and the best way to reach that light is through the practice of meditation.

Meditation is difficult precisely because it brings about release from your ego. At first that can feel like losing your identity. Remind yourself, if that feeling arises, that reaching the light is to escape from darkness; it is heaven, not hell (6:2; 5:5–6). Meditation is seeking the light of God within yourself, and nothing to be afraid of.

How important does Jesus think meditation is? Listen to the final paragraph (emphasis mine):

Throughout the day repeat the idea often, with eyes open or closed as seems better to you at the time. *But do not forget. Above all, be determined not to forget today.*

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LESSON 45

God is the Mind with which I think.

For me, what the Course means when it says that my real thoughts “are nothing that you think you think” (1:2), and “Nothing that you think are your real thoughts resemble you real thoughts in any way” (1:4), is that all thinking that occurs within the context of a separate mind, of me as an individual confined to a body, simply isn’t thinking at all! That is so because we are not separate. My mind is not apart from your mind or all minds. We are one. Only thinking that occurs within that framework of Oneness, within “the Mind of God” (2:1), is true thought.

The lesson speaks of attempting to reach your real thoughts, which are in the Mind of God, through meditation. It instructs us, in paragraph 7, to seek “the thoughts that you thought with God in the beginning” which continue to exist, “completely unchanged” (7:1–2). What it is speaking of is, in fact, a mystical experience of total Oneness. R. M. Bucke, the author of *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901), described it like this:

Cosmic Consciousness is a third form which is as far above Self Consciousness as is that above Simple Consciousness. With this form, of course, both simple and self consciousness persist (as simple consciousness persists when self consciousness is acquired), but added to them is the new faculty ... The prime characteristic of cosmic consciousness is, as its name implies, a consciousness of the cosmos, that is, of the life and order of the universe ... Along with the consciousness of the

cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment or illumination which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence -- would make him almost a member of a new species. To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation and joyousness, and a quickening of the moral sense, which is fully as striking and more important both to the individual and to the race than is the enhanced intellectual power. **With these come, what may be called, a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, not a conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has it already.**

Bucke includes a description of one person's experience of this inner light:

His mind deeply under the influence of the ideas, images, and emotions called up by the reading and talk of the evening, was calm and peaceful. He was in a state of quiet, almost passive enjoyment. All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around as it were by a flame colored cloud. For an instant he thought of fire, some sudden conflagration in the great city, the next he knew that the light was within himself. Directly afterwards came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe. Into his brain streamed one momentary lightning-flash of the Brahmic Splendor which has ever since lightened his life; upon his heart fell one drop of Brahmic Bliss, leaving thenceforward for always an after taste of heaven. Among other things he did not come to believe, he saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all, that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love and that the happiness of every one is in the long run absolutely certain. He claims that he learned more within the few seconds during which the illumination lasted than in previous months or even years of study, and that he learned much that no study could ever have taught.

The illumination itself continued not more than a few moments, but its effects proved ineffaceable; it was impossible for him ever to forget what he at that time saw and knew, neither did he, or could he, ever doubt the truth of what was then presented to his mind. (*Cosmic Consciousness*, pages 7 and 8)

It's unlikely (but always possible) that you will have such a peak experience today. Unless you have already had such an experience you cannot imagine its potency and impact, which is literally life-changing. But that is what you are going for: "an altar dedicated in Heaven to God the Father and God the Son" (8:4). There are lesser tastes of it, glimpses of the face of Christ, for the Course promises, "Vision will come to you at first in glimpses, but they will be enough to show you what is given you who see your brother sinless" (T-20.VIII.1:1).

“This is no idle game” (8:7). Don’t underestimate the importance of these exercises, and do not despair of finding the light within you.

Meditation in the Course

By Robert Perry

Meditation is one of the truly time-honored practices in the world's spiritual traditions. In many of them it is the center point. Because of this, many students who come to the Course wonder what place meditation has in the Course. At the least they hope it is all right to continue their former meditation practice while doing the Course.

Meditation is not the main focus of the Course; forgiveness holds that place. Still, in my personal opinion, meditation is a major part of the practice of the Course. First, I want to give my reasons for holding this opinion. Then I will discuss the style of meditation taught by the Course. I will conclude with some final remarks about the Course and other styles of meditation.

The place of meditation in Course practice

"Meditation" is unfortunately a very fuzzy word, meaning many different things. The taxpayer who is meditating on--mulling over--the impossible tax situation he is in, the murderer who is premeditating his next murder, and the yogi who is meditating in a cave, are not all doing the same thing. "Meditation" as I am using it refers to a spiritual practice of clearing the mind and focusing its attention, either on a single mental object or on the mind itself and its arising contents. The purpose of this is to awaken a different state of consciousness.

To get a sense of the importance of meditation in the Course, simply read lessons 41 and 44 in the Workbook. These lessons introduce the practice of meditation. It is not called "meditation," here or anywhere in the Course, but that is exactly what this new "kind of practice" (W-pI.41.8:6) is. It fits to a tee the definition I just gave and stands comfortably alongside many traditional forms of meditation.

These two lessons almost blare trumpets at the announcement of this important practice, which is billed as "a major goal of mind training" (W-pI.44.3:3). They speak glowingly of "our first real attempt to get past this dark and heavy cloud, and to go through it to the light beyond" (W-pI.41.5:3). They promise that this is a practice "which we will utilize increasingly" (W-pI.44.3:2), and also promise that, "We will go into more detail about this practice as we go along" (W-pI.41.8:6).

The Workbook keeps this promise, making meditation an absolute staple of its program. It is by far the most common exercise for the morning and evening practice periods, which are the longest practice periods of each day. This pattern continues even when one is finished with the Workbook. Post-Workbook practice is discussed in the Manual for Teachers, in the section entitled, *How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day?* According to this section, the foundation of post-Workbook practice is morning and evening "quiet

time," time devoted to God. Since this "quiet time" is something that was learned by "having gone through the workbook" (M-16.5:5), there is only one thing it can be: meditation.

Finally, *The Song of Prayer* tells us that prayer on the lower rungs of the ladder is characterized by supplication and entreaty, by asking God for specific things. True prayer, on the other hand, is "a stepping aside; a letting go, a quiet time of listening and loving...a giving up of yourself to be at one with Love" (S-1.1.5:1,5). In other words, active asking is a lower form of prayer. Receptive communion is true prayer. This receptive communion is precisely what meditation is designed to achieve. True prayer, then, is meditation; or, more precisely, true prayer is *successful* meditation.

This positive stance toward meditation, however, seems to be refuted by some very pointed remarks made in the Text. The section, *I Need Do Nothing*, is one of only two places in the entire Course where the word "meditation" is used. There we are told that "long periods of meditation aimed at detachment from the body" (T-18.VII.4:9) are unnecessary and "very time consuming, for [they] look to the future for release from a state of present unworthiness and inadequacy" (T-18.VII.4:11).

Yet I do not think that this implies what it seems to--that meditation is unnecessary or is not part of the Course. For, in place of these long periods of meditation, this passage advocates the holy instant, an instant in which you completely forget the body, its doings and the supposed need to earn your way into Heaven over time. Yet this holy instant looks very much like Workbook meditation. In fact, the meditation instructions in the Workbook are perfect mirrors of the holy instant discussions in the Text. The meditation instructions are, quite simply, instructions in entering the holy instant.

Therefore, I feel that the Course is cautioning us only against those kinds of meditation which seek, through long periods of strenuous effort, to scale the cliff that supposedly leads from sinfulness to worthiness. It is urging us to practice a different kind of meditation, in which we lay aside all our beliefs about God, ourselves and our supposed unworthiness, and sink in sweet forgetfulness into our natural condition of oneness with God.

This dual idea--that the Course values meditation yet with important stipulations--is supported by some of the original dictation Helen and Bill received. Early in the dictation of the Course, both Helen and Bill were practicing traditional meditation. Bill was even extolling its virtues to his friends. Bill writes that he "emphasized importance to [a friend] of silent meditation, making his mind as blank as possible at the same time every day" (Wapnick, *Absence from Felicity*, p. 315). Jesus implicitly approved of this practice, though twice he stressed the danger of meditation as a solitary path, emphasizing that it must be combined with relationship with others. Both of these passages made it into the Course, though in each the word "meditation" was changed or removed. One of these passages is quite famous, making its original wording a real surprise:

Your [Bill's] giant step forward was to *insist* on a collaborative venture. This does not go against the true spirit of meditation at all. It is inherent *in* it. Meditation is a collaborative venture with God. It *cannot* be undertaken successfully by those who disengage themselves from the Sonship...(*Absence from Felicity*, p. 287; see T-4.VI.8).

You [Helen] have made the mistake of looking for the Holy Spirit in *yourself* [alone], and that is why your meditations have frightened you. By adopting the ego's viewpoint, you undertook an ego-alien journey *with the ego as guide*. This was *bound* to produce fear (*Absence from Felicity*, p. 302; see T-5.III.4:6-7).

Workbook meditation instructions

The following is a brief overview of the basic style of meditation taught in the Workbook, as I understand it. The Course gives many different specific forms and examples of meditation, but almost all of them have in common a particular deep structure. This basic method very much emphasizes *intent* over *technique*. There is no counting, no repeating of meaningless sounds, no focusing on physical objects, no breathing or posture instructions and no concentrating on parts of the body. The sole focus is the mind's intent to get past interference and reach its Creator. And even this somewhat active, intentional focus is ultimately meant to fall away as our role recedes and God Himself increasingly takes over the time of meditation. As we become more and more proficient, it is expected that, "We say some simple words of welcome, and expect our Father to reveal Himself, as He has promised" (W-pII.Intro.3:3).

• INTRODUCTION

Repeat the idea for the day slowly a few times, then more or less release it as a consistent focus. Thereafter, you do not use the idea repetitively, but selectively, in response to specific problems that arise.

At the beginning of the practice period, repeat today's idea very slowly. Then make no effort to think of anything (W-pI.41.6:3-4).

• MAIN BODY

The main body of the meditation consists of two dimensions, a negative and a positive. Though they can be described as distinct, they actually occur more or less simultaneously. Together they instruct you to sink down and inward into your mind, *past* your egoic thoughts (the negative dimension) and *toward* the light of God in you (the positive dimension).

• Negative

The assumption behind the negative dimension is that on the way toward your goal you are passing *through* and *away from* a dense mass of the ego's insane thoughts, often spoken of as clouds. This dense mass is what normally preoccupies your mind and obscures your Self from awareness.

Try, instead, to get a sense of turning inward, past all the idle thoughts of the world. Try to enter very deeply into your own mind, keeping it clear of any thoughts that might divert your attention.

From time to time, you may repeat the idea if you find it helpful. But most of all, try to sink down and inward, away from the world and all the foolish thoughts of the world (W-pl.41.6:5-7:2).

- Lay aside or forget about your thoughts, memories, beliefs and self-concepts. This is not just a process of stopping your thoughts, but also of “leav[ing] behind everything that you now believe” (W-pl.44.5:4). This may include an active phase of calling to mind and individually dispelling such beliefs.

Simply do this: Be still, and lay aside all thoughts of what you are and what God is; all concepts you have learned about the world; all images you hold about yourself. Empty your mind of everything it thinks is either true or false, or good or bad, of every thought it judges worthy, and all the ideas of which it is ashamed. Hold onto nothing. Do not bring with you one thought the past has taught, nor one belief you ever learned before from anything. Forget this world, forget this course, and come with wholly empty hands unto your God (W-pl.189.7).

- Sometimes you are asked to envision yourself passing these thoughts by, perhaps even picturing them as actual clouds you pass through or as a door that you open.

Determine to go past the clouds. Reach out and touch them in your mind. Brush them aside with your hand; feel them resting on your cheeks and forehead and eyelids as you go through them. Go on; clouds cannot stop you (W-pl.69.6:2-5).

- View passing or distracting thoughts with detachment, without personal involvement. See them as powerless and pass them by.

Then try to sink into your mind, letting go every kind of interference and intrusion by quietly sinking past them....Try to observe your passing thoughts without involvement, and slip quietly by them (W-pl.44.7:2,5).

- Continue to keep your mind perfectly open, clear, still, free of content.

...keeping it clear of any thoughts that might divert your attention (W-pl.41.6:6).

Open your mind to Him. Be still and rest (W-pl.128.7:7-8).

- To dispel any kind of interference--thoughts, fear, loss of concentration or “withdrawal” (drowsiness, lethargy)--repeat the idea and/or replace the interference with your will to succeed.

If you feel yourself slipping off into withdrawal, quickly repeat the idea for today and try again. Do this as often as necessary. There is

definite gain in refusing to allow retreat into withdrawal, even if you do not experience the peace you seek (W-pl.74.6:3-5).

Do not allow your intent to waver in the face of distracting thoughts. Realize that, whatever form such thoughts may take, they have no meaning and no power. Replace them with your determination to succeed (W-pl.rII.Intro.4:1-3).

- **Positive**

The assumption behind the positive dimension is that you are approaching your Self, God, the light in you. While travelling past the clouds of insane thoughts, you are going *toward* the light which they obscure. This positive focus is a very important part of Workbook meditation.

- Feel yourself going toward the truth, the light, God, your Self. The most prevalent form of this is to feel yourself sinking down and inward, going deeply into your mind. I find it interesting that the main direction is downward and inward rather than upward (I can only find one fleeting reference to ascent). One reason for this may be that the very direction of downward and inward affirms that our goal is already within us, rather than something outside or above us, something that needs to be attained or earned.

Sink deep into the peace that waits for you beyond the frantic, riotous thoughts and sights and sounds of this insane world (W-pl.49.4:4).

- Have a sense of the **holiness** and **importance** of this attempt. Realize that it will have great benefits for yourself and for others.

For this kind of practice only one thing is necessary; approach it as you would an altar dedicated in Heaven to God the Father and to God the Son. For such is the place you are trying to reach....remind yourself that this is no idle game, but an exercise in holiness and an attempt to reach the Kingdom of Heaven (W-pl.45.8:4-5, 7).

- Have **confidence** and **expectancy** about the results. Trust that results will come. Believe that it is perfectly natural to reach God, that it is the natural outgrowth of what God is and the natural desire and direction of your own mind.

Have confidence in your Father today, and be certain that He has heard you and answered you....Try, as you attempt to go through the clouds to the light, to hold this confidence in your mind (W-pl.69.8:1, 3).

- Be aware of your **desire** to reach God. Remember how much you **want** to reach the light.

...remembering only how much you want to reach the light in you today,-now! (W-pI.69.6:1).

- Let the power of God, Self, Holy Spirit take over. **Surrender** to this power. Let it give you an experience. Trust God to do His part.

If you are doing the exercises properly, you will begin to feel a sense of being lifted up and carried ahead. Your little effort and small determination call on the power of the universe to help you, and God Himself will raise you from darkness into light (W-pI.69.7:1-2).

The Course and other styles of meditation

Just because the Course teaches a particular style of meditation does not mean that Course students should avoid all other styles. In fact, the Course itself departs from its usual method in lessons 183, 184 and 187. In these lessons it employs a very ancient technique that in India is called *japa*: the mantric repetition of God's Name. This suggests to me that the Course is not rigid about using a particular technique. Should a Course student use a meditation technique from outside the Course? I suspect that is between the student and the Holy Spirit. I do suggest that you give the techniques in the Workbook a serious try. For many years the basic method described in this article didn't do a thing for me. More recently, though, it really helped me past a particular block and has since become my personal style of meditation. However, I think the really important thing is not to fret over techniques; it is simply to meditate.