

A Course in Miracles

*Jump Start Your
Workbook Practice*



Instructions and Commentaries to
Get Your Workbook Practice
Off the Ground

By Patti Fields

Dear Friend,

If you are reading this, then you have found yourself drawn to *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM or “the Course”). It is not by chance we meet here on the pages of this book. We have been united because we share a common purpose -- to remember our true Self as pure love and we share a common path (ACIM) that leads to this remembering.

ACIM is comprised of three main books and is designed around an educational model. There is a text to study (“Text”), a workbook to practice (“Workbook”), and a manual to use as a resource (“Manual”).

As a student, I began a Workbook practice while only periodically reading the Text. Although this was the best way for me to approach ACIM, many of the teachings I practiced remained obscure to me because I had not completed my study of the Text.

For many students the Workbook is also their first introduction to the Course. Although the Course instructions make it clear there is no set order in which to complete the curriculum; (“*The ways in which (we) study them, (will) depend on (our) particular needs and preferences.*” (Preface.viii)), understanding the teachings from the Text does help deepen our practice of the lessons. My hope is that by adding these lesson commentaries to your daily Workbook practice it will introduce and / or reinforce the teachings from the Text, which in turn will provide a means to propel you toward the *experience* of *What you are*. It is the experience that helps wake us up to the truth. For when we experience peace, we know we are peace. When we experience love, we know we are love. When we experience joining with others, we know there is no separation and we know we are one.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you in this way. As I teach, I deepen my own understanding. Let’s begin our journey together with the first 100 lessons of *A Course in Miracles* and see what experiences await us.

Please feel free to print and share this book with others.

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Chapter 1 - How to Use This Book

A common challenge among Course students is in knowing *how to* use the Workbook as a daily practice. For new students, the Workbook instructions and lesson goals can be confusing. The focus of this book is to make it easier to understand and practice the lessons. Each lesson commentary, will introduce the underlying teachings of the lesson, explain how it applies to everyday life, and provide guidance on how to follow the lesson instructions. Using these commentaries with the first 100 lessons will provide a strong foundation to jump-start your practice.

The lesson commentaries presented in this book are not meant as a substitute, but rather a complement to the Workbook lessons. It is recommended that you first read the Workbook lesson and then read the commentary presented here. After obtaining a clearer understanding of what the lesson is trying to teach you through experience and how it can be applied, you can refer back to the Workbook lesson and conduct the practice.

Throughout this book, you will see references made to various sections. All references are from second edition of *A Course in Miracles*, published by the Foundation for Inner Peace.

- References to the Text begin with the letter “T” followed by chapter #, section #, paragraph #, and sentence #(s). (e.g., T.31.VII.12:1-5)
- References to the Workbook begin with the letter “W” followed by lesson # or review #, paragraph #, and sentence #(s). (e.g., W.131.3:4)
- References to the Manual begin with the letter “M” followed by section #, paragraph #, and sentence #(s). (e.g., M.6.2:6)

The Goal of the Workbook

The Text sets forth a beautiful thought system that speaks of our sinlessness, our holiness, and the never-ending experience of peace that is our natural inheritance. But without the experience of what we learn from the Text, these beautiful ideas remain just that -- ideas, contemplated or imagined, but not experienced. It is necessary to experience the truth of these words in order to fully realize *What you really are*. “*The reason for the course is that you do not know what you are.*” (T.9.I.2:5). Remembering *What you are* as a holy Son of God is the solution to all of your perceived problems. Why? Because being your Self, is realizing what is natural about you -- you already are peace, joy, sinless, perfectly safe and wholly loved. The whole curriculum of *A Course in Miracles* is designed to lead you to this realization.

How Does the Workbook Accomplish The Goal of The Realization of Self?

Nowhere in the pages of ACIM will you find “how to” *become* our Self, “how to” *grow* to be this Self, or “how to” *better* our current self. Why? We already are our Self. We are currently this Being of pure light and love. What we learn as students of *A Course in Miracles* is “how to” remember that which we already are. The Course teaches that the light is constantly shining in the mind, but the mind remains unaware of this light because it is covered up with false beliefs. Therefore, the realization of the Self becomes a journey of releasing (or removing) anything that is blocking the Self from being known.

Think of it as if the sun were the “Mind of God” and the one large sunbeam that shines as a natural extension of the sun were the Sonship. The sun never ceases to shine or be present. But what can cover the sun and make it *appear* as if it doesn’t exist are clouds. The clouds represent the false beliefs that block the sun. Our mind has held false beliefs for so long that we have forgotten the sun and its sunbeam are there. It’s like a series of never-ending gloomy days in Rochester where the clouds cover every inch of the sky for days that even the natives who know the “sun will come out eventually” begin to doubt the sun’s existence.

The Course teaches us that just because we only see clouds when looking within, does not mean the Light is not there. All that is required is a willingness and desire to release the false beliefs (the clouds) in order to let the Light shine.

The Workbook is the means by which we learn to replace our ego thoughts with loving thoughts – the only thoughts that are true. As we let these thoughts shine from our minds, we will look on a world of light. It is this changed perception of what we see, brought about from a letting go of what we think, that brings about the experience of *What* we are.

Chapter 2 - Your Workbook Practice

The Course has three instructions for conducting your Workbook practice:

1. Complete only one lesson each day,
2. Follow the lesson instructions and practice it as indicated, and
3. Do not exempt any person, situation or thing from the application of the lesson.

Notice that the instructions do not mention that you have to believe in or accept the ideas presented in the lessons to make them meaningful. In fact, you may experience strong resistance to an idea presented and may even feel you want to “close the door” or move on to the next lesson. This is an expected reaction from the ego because it’s whole thought system is being threatened. Although you may react unfavorably to the lesson it is important to make a commitment to apply it as stated.

A Day in the Life of a Student

Generally, your daily Workbook practice is divided into four parts: morning, frequent repeats throughout the day, times of temptation when you are distressed or upset, and evening.

1. Morning Practice

Practice is conducted when first waking or during a time that is best suited for quiet reflection without interruptions. The lesson usually includes:

- A repeat of the lesson idea – as you repeat the idea, you will become aware of its true meaning,
- A mind searching period when you become aware of ego thoughts,
- An application of the idea to either a suitable subject or a thought, and
- A concluding statement comprised of words of truth.

This type of practice serves 4 purposes:

1. To become aware of Holy Spirit thoughts in your mind.
2. To train your mind to “go to” Holy Spirit’s thoughts instead of ego thoughts.
3. To learn there is another way to “see” the external world.
4. To experience peace.

2. Frequent Repeats throughout the Day

Throughout the lessons, you will see instructions to repeat the idea “three to four times a day”, “at least every half hour, more if possible”, “at least once an hour”, “as often as possible”, or “as frequently as possible”. Although these instructions are meant to help us realize the goal of peace quicker, many times this is where students “fall off the wagon”. If you miss a practice (or two or three...), it’s important to not give up or feel guilty. It is, however, very important to understand the reason why you are missing a practice. (W:RIII:3)

- Are you unable to practice because you are too busy to devote the time to it? If so, then simply return to it when you can, without the need to “make up for” missed practices.
- Are you **unwilling** to practice? This unwillingness can occur for many reasons. You may find the idea you are asked to practice preposterous or feel some underlying threat to your way of thinking. Whatever the reason, be honest about the fact that you are unwilling to practice and simply remind yourself that your practice does offer you what you want.

In both instances, refrain from thoughts of guilt and simply return to your practice.

3. Practice During Times of Temptation

“Temptation” is merely a moment when you are tempted to believe in the false. It is a moment when you are listening to the voice of the ego and are tempted to believe what the voice is saying. Temptation will often feel like an upset, a disturbance of peace, anger, fear, guilt, confusion, pain, or dislike of yourself or someone else. During these times, your mind has an automatic response to entertain ego thoughts, and it is very tempting to believe these thoughts.

If we practice during times of temptation, we can really experience the benefits of applying the Workbook lessons. It’s during moments of distress when we need peace the most. Peace will return when we let go of ego thoughts and access the thoughts of the Holy Spirit.

At first, it may be just repeating words with the hope for a changed experience. But, as you continue to apply the Workbook lessons during times of distress, you will find that the Course delivers its promise of peace. A mind trained to think along the lines the Text sets forth (W.intro.I), is a mind that is at peace. And peace, is the motivation for this Course (T.8.I.1.1).

4. Evening Practice

An evening practice of the lesson is best done at a quiet time before you go to sleep. The evening practice is just as integral to walking the path of ACIM as during the day.

In addition to practicing the lesson, your evening practice can also include:

- Focusing your mind on thoughts of peace, gratitude, safety and love. Many times our sleeping dreams are an extension to our daytime “nightmares”. Notice what you are filling your mind with before going to sleep. Is it the nightly news, a novel story of unanswered love or enemies poised to attack, or your own troubled and fearful thoughts that you take with you into your sleeping dreams? Why not train your mind, even at night, to rest your mind on thoughts of peace, gratitude, safety and love?
- Offering your dreams over to the Holy Spirit to be used as a way to release false ideas, teach truth and clarify confusion. There is no difference between our waking dreams and our sleeping dreams to the Holy Spirit. He can use both to reawaken us to the truth of What we are.

When conducting an evening practice:

- Follow the instructions for the day’s lesson.
- Review your experiences with the lesson during the day.
- Express gratitude to the Holy Spirit for His guidance and love.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to use your night dreams to teach, heal and guide you.
- Repeat: *“Tonight I let all my thoughts be still of You and of Your love. And let me sleep sure of my safety, certain of Your care, and happily aware I am Your son.” (W.232.1:4-5)*

5. Additional Practice Suggestions

- Write the idea for the day and any relating thoughts that might help you remember it on a post-it note. Stick them in your car, on the refrigerator, at your desk, or anywhere that works for you to remind you of how / what you need to practice that day.
- Keep a journal by your side during your morning and evening practice to write any thoughts, discoveries, or reflections of your practice.
- Printout the instructions at the end of each lesson commentary and take them with you to use throughout the day.
- Purchase a timer (circlepublishing.org/bookstore) to use as a reminder to practice throughout the day.

Chapter 3 - Lesson Commentaries

Please read the ACIM Workbook Introduction before practicing Lesson #1.

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #1.

1. ***“Nothing I see in this room (on this street, from this window, in this place) means anything.”***

How open-minded are you? At the beginning of my work with *A Course in Miracles*, I would have classified myself as a very open-minded person. I gave others freedom to believe what they wanted and live the way they wanted. I was open to others' points of view and frequently enjoyed a good conversation of different ideas and beliefs. So I began my practice with the Workbook in earnest believing that I possessed the most important ingredient to train my mind -- an openness to learn. I sat down in great anticipation to practice my first lesson. I didn't get past the title "Nothing I see in this room means anything" before my mind closed up tight. I realized that I may be very open-minded to what others believed but was closed when I was asked to question what I believed! My resistance grew as I continued on repeating, "This table does not mean anything. This chair does not mean anything." After each sentence, I added something of my own: "of course it does!" So my practice sounded like this. "This foot does not mean anything. Of course it does!", "This pen does not mean anything. Of course it does!" I knew exactly the meaning of this table and that chair and this pen. The resistance to practicing my first lesson was amazing. I took some comfort from the words stated in the introduction -- *"You need not believe the ideas, you need not accept them, and you need not even welcome them. Some of them you may actively resist. None of this will matter or decrease their efficacy."* (W.In.9:1-3) I had no idea that I would need to call them to mind so soon.

As we read in the introduction, Part I of the Workbook is designed to "undo the way you see now." (Int.3:1) Why do we need to change the way we see everything and everyone? The world we see now is derived from a false thought system designed by the ego to give witness to you as a separated self, on your own, apart from God. The Course maintains that we are not bodies separated from heaven and from God, but rather Spirit -- forever One with our Creator. What we are "seeing" is a false image -- an illusion presenting itself as real. By believing this image is real, we are stuck in our way of seeing and do not know there is another reality to see. An open mind is the most valuable thing we can bring to our Workbook practice. We all may believe we have an open mind, but how can that be when we think we already know what it is we are seeing? If we think we know, we won't ask. Remember the child-like nature of a two year old that frequently asks, "What's that?" They point to everything and anything and over and over repeat, "What's that?" They have an inquisitive open mind to learn about everything. As adults we find this "child-like" asking to go against our adult nature of already knowing. And yet, *"The bible tells you to become as little children. Little children recognize that they do not understand what they perceive and so they ask what it means."* (T.11.VIII.2:1-2)

Lesson #1 may seem like a simple exercise, but it really is not. This lesson introduces three important elements for a successful Workbook practice:

- Having an open mind by practicing being child-like as you look about the room, removing all meaning you have given everything.
- Training your mind to apply these ideas indiscriminately to everything you see. (We have a tendency to hold onto certain illusions because they seem more valuable and meaningful than others. If you apply this lesson to all illusions, you will take giant leaps toward meeting your goal, which is to be at peace)
- Developing a morning and evening practice routine. As you venture further into the Workbook, it is beneficial to have an established time set aside each day to devote to your healing.

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for Lesson #1

This lesson requires two practice periods (morning and evening), each lasting about a minute or so, completed in a comfortable, leisurely way.

- Repeat: “*Nothing I see means anything.*”
- Now slowly look around and whatever you see say, “*This _____ does not mean anything.*”
- Now broaden your vision to look past your immediate area to things further away from you. For each object your eyes rest on repeat, “*This _____ does not mean anything.*”

Remain indiscriminate. Do not purposely exclude or include anything. The idea is to easily and fairly apply this idea to whatever you see.

For the beginning lessons there is no practice required during the day.

2. ***“I have given everything I see in this room (on this street, from this window, in this place) all the meaning that it has for me.”***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #2.

Lesson #1 was a practice in seeing our world from the viewpoint of a child who looks at an object and has no idea what it is or its purpose. Did you notice yesterday while practicing, that your mind attached meaning to the object the minute your eyes settled on it? In order to apply the idea “This _____ does not mean anything,” you had to first erase the meaning you already had given it before you could see the object with an open mind. Most likely you found this challenging because you had to create a blank slate for every object and pretend it didn’t mean anything. Maybe your practice sounded something like this: “I will make-believe this table (chair, pencil, picture, etc.) doesn’t mean anything.” If so, don’t get discouraged. It is a wonderful practice in awareness of how convinced we are of the meaning of everything.

Today’s practice asks us to consider that nothing has any meaning in and of itself. We have a tendency to believe that the meaning came from the object itself and not from our own mind. Today’s practice helps us become aware that the meaning of any form comes from us. The meaning you gave it yesterday really was coming from your own mind. This can be understood when we see all the different meanings people give to things. Perhaps to you the meaning of a hand is to make music, while to others the meaning is to chop wood. Perhaps to you the meaning of a window is to allow sunlight in, while to others, it’s to keep insects out. Perhaps if someone speaks in a loud voice, to you, it means you are being attacked, but to someone else, it means what is being said is very important.

Although this lesson seems like a simple practice of looking around the room without discrimination and saying the idea for the day, it actually is the foundation of the whole thought system for the Course. Nothing happens outside of you, that first hasn’t happened within your mind. I encourage you to be excited about this seemingly simple idea, because as you practice and accept this, you will be taking giant steps towards achieving peace.

Lesson #2 is a practice to help you:

- Realize and accept that nothing has an inherent meaning. Meanings come from our minds.
- Realize and accept that all things are equal in value. You will have a tendency to attach special meaning to some things (your cat sitting on your lap) while other things have less meaning to you (a pencil). Applying this idea without discrimination trains your mind to see all things as the same.

Instructions for Lesson #2

This lesson requires two practice periods (morning and evening), each lasting about a minute or so, completed in a comfortable, leisurely way.

- Repeat: *“I have given everything I see in this room, on this street, from this window, in this place, all the meaning that it has for me.”*
- Now slowly look around at the things that are near you and whatever your glance rests on say: *“I have given _____ all the meaning that it has for me.”*
- Now broaden your vision to look past your immediate area to things further away from you taking in what is in front, to the side and behind you. For each thing you glance at repeat: *“I have given _____ all the meaning that it has for me.”* Remain indiscriminate. Do not purposely exclude or include anything. The idea is to easily and fairly apply this idea to whatever your eyes rest on.

3. ***“I do not understand anything I see in this room (on this street, from this window, in this place).”***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #3.

Our practice today is to realize that even though we have assigned meaning to something from our past learning (Lesson #2) we do not know the true meaning of anything. In other words, now that you become aware that it is *you* that gives everything its meaning, you begin to realize that you really don't know what you're seeing. This is not a “put-down”. It is this awareness that you need in order to move forward and eventually obtain the goal of peace. Ego thoughts convey that you completely understand everything you see, therefore, there is no reason to ever question it. The Course practice asks that you begin to question everything in order to make room for a new meaning.

According to dictionary.com the definition of “understand” is “to perceive and comprehend the nature and significance (purpose) of something”. Based on this definition, when you practice looking around the room, you are saying “I do not know the true nature or purpose of this _____”. This seemingly small statement opens up a whole new world to you. “I do not understand. Please explain to me the true nature and purpose of this,” is the entire basis for learning what the Holy Spirit wants to teach you. It is the one statement that can literally bring Heaven to your full awareness.

Let's use symbolism to explain this idea -- cup symbolizes “Heaven” and coffee symbolizes “the ego's meaning and understanding of everything in the world”. If you fill a cup with coffee, can you see the cup? When you fill up a form with your own meaning can you see Heaven? If you want to see truly, all you need to do is empty out the coffee (your meaning). Once the cup is empty of content, what the cup looks like is perfectly clear.

Today we practice emptying out the content of the cup and having a truly open mind -- one that holds no judgment about what it sees -- a mind that is empty of content so the truth can be revealed -- a mind that is open to seeing something that it never saw before. The significance of this practice and the rewards of being willing to say “I don't understand anything I see” is captured in this statement in the teacher's manual: *“Only the open-minded can be at peace.” (M.4.X.1:6)*. Therefore, as you practice today you become one step closer to peace.

Instructions for Lesson #3

This lesson requires two practice periods (morning and evening), each lasting about a minute or so, completed in a comfortable, leisurely way.

- Repeat: *“I do not understand anything I see in this room.”*
- Now slowly look around you and whatever your glance rests on say: *“I do not understand _____”*
- Now broaden your vision to look past your immediate area to things further away from you -- taking in what is in front, to the side and behind you. For each thing you glance at, repeat: *“I do not understand _____.”*
- Be careful not to exclude anything from this application. If anything has an emotional charge to it, simply put the feeling aside and repeat: *“I do not understand _____”*.

4. ***“These thoughts do not mean anything. They are like the things I see in this room (on this street, from this window, in this place).”***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #4.

When practicing the previous lessons, we were asked to become aware of the relationship between external things and the meanings we gave them. Today, instead of focusing on external things, we are turning our attention inward to our thoughts.

You may already be aware that you have many thoughts. Before I became a student of ACIM, I began a practice of quieting my mind for the purpose of attaining a sense of peace. As my mind became still and I began to notice my thoughts, I was amazed at the hodge-podge of different thoughts that occupied my mind. I found many of them disturbing. Often, I would end my quiet time because when I focused on disturbing thoughts, it took me away from peace rather than towards it.

This lesson introduces a practice that allows us to bring awareness to our thoughts, but in a way that *restores* us to peace.

As we notice our thoughts, what is the one hook that keeps us replaying them over and over in our mind? It is our *belief* in them. And because we believe them, our thoughts do not seem meaningless at all. Perhaps during your practice time, your mind begins to think about the person in the parking lot who took your parking space. You may be thinking something like, “she was rude and inconsiderate”, “she knew I had been sitting there but she took it anyway”, and “I think she even enjoyed being mean to me”. If you believe these thoughts, you will have much resistance in realizing that these thoughts are meaningless, because to you, they tell the truth about something!

The Course teaches that we have two thought systems that fill our mind: 1) the ego’s thoughts and 2) the Holy Spirit’s thoughts which are our real thoughts. The thoughts about the woman in the car are clearly ego thoughts, but what if you were in the parking lot and someone offered *you their* spot? What then? Your thoughts may be something like: “what a nice person -- she is so kind and thoughtful” and “she deserves many blessings”. You might be tempted to think these “good” thoughts are not ego thoughts. But if you look closely, you will notice that both scenarios involve a judgment of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, involve two separate people in a world where there are limited parking spaces, and involve a world where someone has to sacrifice in order for someone else to “win”. Because these thoughts speak of separation, lack and sacrifice, they cannot be thoughts of the Holy Spirit.

It is imperative to our learning that we begin to entertain the idea that *all of our ego* thoughts are meaningless. That includes happy, sad, good and bad thoughts. This lesson requires us to practice using both our “bad” as well as our “good” thoughts, as way to learn that all ego thoughts have nothing to do with truth and therefore mean nothing. This will help us loosen our “grip” on ego thoughts and make room for the thoughts of the Holy Spirit to be heard.

As you travel along the path of ACIM, you will often find yourself using a form of this exercise as a way to regain your peace of mind.

Instructions for Lesson #4

This lesson requires up to, but no more than four practice periods each lasting a minute. It can also be used anytime throughout the day when you have a particular thought you recognize as harmful.

- Note the random thoughts that are crossing your mind.
- Then repeat: *“These thoughts do not mean anything. They are like the things I see in this room (on this street, from this window, in this place).”*
- Identify each thought (good or bad) by the central figure or event it contains.
- Repeat: *“This thought about _____ does not mean anything. It is like the things I see in this room (on this street, from this window, in this place).”*

5. ***“I am never upset for the reason I think.”***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #5.

Imagine you called me on the phone. I noticed right away that you were upset so I asked, “Why are you so upset?” Would you know? Of course you would. You would have no trouble searching for an answer and would immediately respond with the reason for your upset. “I didn’t get the job I wanted”, “the baby woke up from her nap early”, “a person scratched my car in the parking lot”, “I lost \$20”, etc.. In other words, as a result of this or this or this happening, “I am upset”. What if I then replied, “Actually, you are not upset for the reason you think”. How would you react to me? My guess is, you would now add *me* as one of the causes of your upset!! Notice how attached we are to the cause of our upset. We think we know why we’re upset. Along comes today’s practice which asks us to put that “knowing” aside and say “we don’t know the reason why we’re upset”.

Again, like the previous lessons, we are asked to create a space within our mind that is open. So far, we’ve “emptied out” the meaning, thoughts and understanding. Today, we empty out the cause of our upset. Later we will find out what *is* the cause of our upset, but today we practice letting go of what we think it is.

This one statement, “I am not upset for the reason I think”, can be a wonderful tool to let go in times of distress. It acts like a hook that prevents your mind from getting lured into dealing with the external situation and serves to bring you to center where you can access peace. Even though you may be resistant in applying this lesson today, your practice will help etch this idea in your mind. Once there, it will always be available to you as a way to return to peace during times of upset.

The word “upset” has many different expressions. We can feel sad, worried, depressed, anxious, fearful, etc. Our instructions today recognize that we currently believe there are different types of “upsets”. Therefore, we will practice as if they are different by naming the upset. As we continue our mind-training, we will soon realize that all upsets are all the same: absence of peace.

Instructions for Lesson #5

This lesson requires practice periods each lasting no more than a minute or so and throughout the day when you are experiencing upset.

- Search your mind for people, events, situations that are upsetting you.
- Identify the feeling and the cause.
- Begin with: *“There are no small upsets. They are all equally disturbing to my peace of mind.”*
- Repeat: *“I am not (feeling word) at (cause) for the reason I think.”*
 - e.g., *“I am not angry at mom for the reason I think.” “I am not afraid of losing my job for the reason I think.”*
- If you are **less willing or unwilling** to apply today’s idea to one of your upsetting situations, say: *“I cannot keep this form of upset and let the others go. For the purposes of these exercises, then, I will regard them all as the same.”*
- If upset during the day, repeat: *“I am not (feeling word) at or about (cause) for the reason I think.”*

6. *"I am upset because I see something that is not there."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #6.

In practicing Lesson #5, we carefully searched our mind for forms of upset and their causes. Once discovered, we said, "I am not upset for the reason I think". Picture yesterday's practice in this way: you are in a classroom and the teacher asks you to come up front and write down all the stories of upsets and their causes. You spend a good ten minutes frantically writing on every inch of the white board. You stand back and view your work satisfied that you only reported what really happened. The teacher responds, "All the causes you wrote as the reason for your upset are not correct. Please erase them so I can write the correct answer." Yesterday's practice was the act of erasing from your mind the causes of your upset. By repeating "I am not upset for the reason I think", you were in essence erasing each cause in order to leave a blank space for the teacher to write the correct answer. Today's practice is the beginning of the teacher writing in the real cause of your upset. The correct answer will be given in two parts. Today begins part one when we learn that we are seeing something that is not there. Tomorrow's lesson is part two when we are shown what really is there.

The teacher begins by writing on the white board that the reason you are upset is because you see something that is not there. This seems to confuse you even more, but it is an important step to opening your mind just a bit further to encompass part two. Imagine you are a young child sitting in the audience watching a magician act. You've never seen a magic show and do not know that the role of a magician is to make illusions (things that are not real) appear real. You watch as the magician begins sawing a woman in half. You can't believe your eyes! You are horrified and very upset at what you are seeing. If someone were to ask you why you are upset, you would respond without a doubt in your mind, that the cause of your upset is the magician and what he is doing to the woman. If you wanted the upset to go away, your solution would be to tell the adult to go on stage and stop that man from hurting the woman. The adult sees that you are terribly upset and wants you to return to peace, but he doesn't help by stopping the woman from being hurt, for he knows she is not really being hurt. He helps by informing you that what you are seeing is not really there and teaching you about how illusions are made. How?

He begins calming you with this statement: "You are upset because you are seeing something that is not there." Of course, you are confused because you really believe it is there. You must learn that what you see with your physical eyes is not really happening. The woman is not really being sawed in half. What would be your reaction if you trusted the adult to tell you the truth and began to accept the idea that a woman being sawed in half is not really happening? You would immediately begin to feel some relief. You would not completely understand because you have not yet learned how illusions are made to look like reality, but accepting that they are not reality is a huge first step.

The goal of today's lesson is to begin to train your mind to question everything you see as "real" and entertain the idea that your physical eyes deceive. What you think is there is not.

Instructions for Lesson #6

The instructions for today's lesson are similar to yesterday's lesson. This lesson requires three to four practice periods each lasting no more than a minute or so and throughout the day when you are experiencing upset.

- Search your mind for people, events, situations that are upsetting you.
- Identify the feelings and the causes.
- Begin with: *"There are no small upsets. They are all equally disturbing to my peace of mind."*
- Repeat: *"I am (feeling word) at (cause) because I see something that is not there."*
- If you are **less willing or unwilling** to apply today's idea to one of your upsetting situations, say: *"I cannot keep this form of upset and let the others go. For the purposes of these exercises, I will regard them all as the same."*
- If upset during the day, repeat: *"I am (feeling word) at / about (cause) because I see something that is not there."*

7. *"I see only the past."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #7.

Lesson #7, "I see only the past", is the "first time idea" presented in the Workbook. The concept of "time" and the use of time are very important tools used by the ego to keep you seeing something that is not there. It's important to remember in practicing today that it is not expected that we *completely* understand the concept of "time". In our study of the Text and further Workbook lessons, we will learn more about time. For the purpose of our practice today, it is important however, that we begin to become aware of the ego's deceptive use of time and how this idea causes us to see something that is not really there.

Time is part of the illusion and has no reality whatsoever. Time really cannot be part of *reality* because "time" suggests that what is eternal and timeless (Heaven) can be broken apart into a past, present and future. The ego counsels however, that there really is a past, present and future and of all of these, the only time that is truly meaningful is the past. The ego teaches that without our past thoughts we would not know what anything means. The past *is* the way we learn how to *judge* what the present is and *determine* what the future will be. We use the past to tell us what we are seeing now.

This lesson uses a great example of a cup to explain how we use our past experiences and ideas to determine what we are seeing. Let's look at another example. A child touches a hot stove and gets burned. To the child his past learning and experience can be summarized this way: the "past" stove = pain. In a present moment the child sees a stove. He uses the past to give him enough information in which to judge what he is seeing. Therefore, the "present" stove = pain. With this judgment in place it is safe to say that the "future" stove = fear of pain. In this time equation, the present acts merely as the bridge to carry the past to the future. Notice how the present moment is filled only with the past. So, is the child really *seeing* the stove as it is *now* or seeing the stove as it was in the *past*?

This lesson states that we *see everything* this way. "I see only the past," is a complete statement. It doesn't say "sometimes I see only the past". Although we believe we are seeing the present moment with clarity we really have covered our eyes with the lens of the past and are not seeing clearly at all. The analogy that works for me here is to think of myself at the eye doctor's office trying to read the chart on the wall (the present moment). Each lens the doctor asks me to view through represents my past thoughts. I continue to view my past until I find the lens that will bring the chart into focus. Then, we conclude that we are seeing with 20/20 vision. But like the stove, are we seeing perfectly? In essence, the Course teaches that what we think is 20/20 vision is really blindness. If we are to perceive any given moment in our lives truly, we must begin to recognize that we are blind to the present moment because we have covered it over with experiences of the past. The Holy Spirit teaches we must be in the present moment free from judging what anything means in order to let the mind see *reality*. Today's lesson begins the freeing process by practicing that what we are seeing is not the present moment, but only the past. Once we accept this idea, we will be ready to let go of the past to make room for real vision.

Instructions for Lesson #7

This lesson requires three to four practice periods each lasting a minute or so.

- Look about you. Do not linger on any one thing or omit anything specifically. Apply indiscriminately to whatever catches your eye.
- Glance briefly at each subject and repeat: "*I see only the past in this _____.*"
- Then move onto the next subject.

8. ***“My mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.”***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #8.

In the previous lesson, we learned that we only see the past because our mind covers over the present moment with a thought about the past. If we are ONLY seeing the past, then our mind must be chock full of past thoughts because we are “seeing” all the time. The Course would agree. We are completely preoccupied with past thoughts. Furthermore, what we are seeing is really only a projection of our past thoughts. Therefore, we are not really seeing anything except our past thoughts about the present moment. Now, we take our learning one step further in entertaining the idea that our thoughts that came from the past are actually “thoughtless idea(s)” (W.8.3:2).

The Course maintains this idea throughout its curriculum. There seem to be two thoughts occupying our mind: the Holy Spirit’s thoughts which are our real thoughts and the ego thoughts which are all false thinking. This lesson is teaching us that any thoughts of the ego held in the mind and then seen “out there” covering over the present moment is not *real* thinking. So when we are preoccupied with past ego thoughts, we are not thinking at all! This is something we must accept in order to leave a blank slate for the Thoughts of the Holy Spirit. Why?

If our mind rambles with past thoughts and we think they are important and relevant to our existence, we will concentrate even more on keeping them. But, if we believe that our rambling past thoughts are really nothing -- just wondering imaginings that have no meaning and are not relevant to understanding our world, then we easily will let them go. Letting go of our past thoughts is a major threat to the ego, because the present moment without any past judgment or meaning reveals the truth.

The ego needs your allegiance to this idea so it tells you that you need your past thoughts to recognize the *now*, otherwise you will have no way of knowing anything. Therefore, the ego stages a defense -- fill the *now* with past thoughts.

Let’s say you see your partner fall asleep on the couch. When you look at this neutral scene it reminds you of a past experience when your dad use to do the same thing. In the past, sleeping on the couch = leaving you, not being available when you needed him. Because you have filled the *now* with these past thoughts, the scene takes on the judgment and meaning of the past. The ego is happy about this because these past thoughts continue to support the belief that you can be: 1) abandoned and 2) you are different than both your partner and your dad. These thoughts keep the belief in separation alive and well. The Holy Spirit wants to show you the truth about your partner, but you are preoccupied with your past thoughts. If you realized that you are just preoccupied with past thoughts and these thoughts are meaningless in helping you understand what is happening, then you would immediately let the past go and be open to the truth. This is exactly what the ego doesn’t want, for the idea of separate bodies and perceived sins vanishes in the light of truth and the ego goes with it.

Today we will practice with our eyes closed. This helps us understand the law of seeing. We currently believe that our seeing is dependent on what our physical eyes report and our thoughts are only a result of the outside cause. This is completely turned around in the Course. It is our inward thoughts (cause) that determines the outward effect. Practicing with our eyes closed, we can “see” our thoughts independent of the physical objects around us. This helps with our learning that all objects are neutral in themselves and it is our thoughts that provide meaning to them.

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Instructions for Lesson #8

This lesson requires four to five practice periods each lasting a minute or so. If you become irritated while conducting this practice, three to four practice periods is sufficient.

- Close your eyes.
- With as little investment as possible, search your mind and note the thoughts you find there.
- As you come upon one, name it; *“I seem to be thinking about _____ (person, object, situation, emotion).”* Be specific when naming the central figure and the theme.
- Continue on for about a minute
- Then conclude with this statement: *“But my mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.”*
- If you find that you become irritated when conducting this practice, repeat: *“I seem to be thinking about this lesson and how upset I am while practicing it. But, my mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.”*

9. *"I see nothing as it is now."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #9.

The first eight lessons have presented some major upsets to our understanding of the world, our interaction with the world, and the relationship between our thoughts and the world we see. It can feel as if we have just exited a spin ride at the amusement park and we are a bit wobbly on our feet. Don't despair, for this lesson is a pep talk given by our sympathetic and compassionate Teacher. He is sympathetic because He knows exactly what is happening and what we are experiencing and wants to tell us it's okay to be confused, disoriented and even disturbed at some of the ideas we are asked to practice. He encourages us not to give up -- that with each little step we take and each lesson we practice, we are walking toward peace of mind. We are reassured that our understanding is not necessary at this point. In fact, by recognizing that you do not understand you are actually taking a giant leap toward your goal in releasing false ideas. It is our admission that we *do not understand* that will actually help us move forward to releasing the ego.

The ego teaches that it does know and because we think the ego is wise, we listen to the ego's voice. The most important thing we can do in learning the lessons of the Holy Spirit is to first admit we do not know. Reading this on paper makes perfect sense, but the actual practice of it seems more challenging. How many times have we looked at situations, events, people and think we know exactly what is going on? We seem so sure of our understanding of what they said or did and we even go so far as to believe we know exactly what they were thinking! You can see why we might be resistant to saying "I really don't understand anything about what just happened." And yet, this is precisely what we need to do. *"Those who remember always that they know nothing, and who have become willing to learn everything, will learn it."* (T.14.XI.12:1)

What we are learning in today's lesson is that what we see are just shadows (past) cast over the light (present). When we repeat the idea "I see nothing as it is now", we are realizing that what we see are shadows that are taking on the shape of a typewriter, a telephone, a door, a face, etc. It seems like a simple practice. The words are not complicated and the lesson appears to be an easy thing to repeat when looking at all objects we "see". But, they are more than that. These words are the abracadabra of spiritual seekers -- the words that open up the doors to the truth. Remember the ego needs our allegiance to the idea that we see everything correctly and we understand exactly what is we are seeing. With these words "I see nothing as it is now" we have declared the ego voiceless and rendered its guidance unimportant in our understanding. Recognizing we do not see anything as it is now, but there is One who does. Thus, we direct our attention to the Holy Spirit and *"the Guide Whom God has given you will speak to you."* (T.14.XI.6:10)

Instructions for Lesson #9

Please note, in all of our lessons we are asked to remember this essential rule:

- Apply these ideas without exclusion or specific inclusion.

This is very important to the training we are undergoing. For we are learning there are no differences between illusions. All are equally illusory or unreal. In this lesson we are given counsel to *"be sure you are honest with yourself in making this distinction. You may be tempted to obscure it."* (W.9.5:2-3) If you find you want to exclude something or include something, simply be honest with this tendency without guilt and recommit to the practice of applying the idea indiscriminately.

This lesson requires three to four practice periods each lasting a minute or so.

- Indiscriminately glance around the room; first to things that are nearest to you and then to things that are further away.
- Repeat: *"I do not see this _____ as it is now."*

10. ***“My thoughts do not mean anything.”***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #10.

What have we learned so far about ego thoughts? 1) The ones we are aware of are meaningless, 2) all ego thoughts rest on the past, and 3) we bring forward all thoughts of the past into the present thereby blocking the truth.

Lesson #10 is another lesson about ego thoughts. We learn in today's lesson that ego thoughts are *my* thoughts, and *my* thoughts are meaningless and tell me nothing. In essence, we are personalizing the thoughts in our mind. In lesson #4 we used the term “these thoughts” emphasizing the impersonal ego thoughts that run around in our mind. Today, we are changing “*these thoughts*” to “*my thoughts*”.

In practicing the words “*my thoughts*” we begin to realize that when we observe ego thoughts, we believe they are *our* thoughts. We can see this when we search our mind for thoughts. When you have a thought, do you not believe it is *your* thought? When you observe a hurtful or a judgmental thought, might you say, “I can't believe *I* thought that”? Since we are completely identified with the ego, we must learn that all “*my (ego) thoughts*” do not mean anything. When we learn that we are not the ego, but a holy Son of God, “*My thoughts*” are the Holy Spirit's thoughts (real thoughts). Until then, all of our current thinking must follow one general rule -- thoughts are nothing, meaningless and void of any truth.

Realizing that what we are currently thinking is meaningless is crucial in reaching our goal of inner peace and true vision. Why? If you believe your thoughts are meaningful and represent the truth of what you see, why on earth would you ask for help in changing your mind? *“Those who remember always that they know nothing, and who have become willing to learn everything, will learn it. But whenever they trust themselves, they will not learn. They have destroyed their motivation for learning by thinking they already know.”* (T.14.XI.12:1-2) Isn't this the basic understanding of all learning?

Try teaching a two year old how to tie her shoes when she insists she already knows! Try teaching a teenager how to drive a car when he believes he already knows! Try teaching a student of the Course what something means when they believe they already know exactly what it means. What fast learners we become if we can say to our Teacher, “My thoughts about _____ do not mean anything and seem to be about nothing. Can you teach me the truth?”

You may like the sound of this and understand how it makes perfect sense for your practice today, but notice what happens when you observe a passing thought such as “That dog barking is disturbing my peace while I'm trying to practice. The neighbor is so inconsiderate”. Will you be resistant to repeating “My thoughts about this dog and my neighbor do not mean anything?” This resistance is really fear. The ego is very frightened when it does not know the meaning of anything. I equate the feelings this lesson sometimes evokes to what elderly people must feel when they begin to experience dementia. It is scary for them to look at their world with no idea of what something is, what it is for, and what it means to them.

The point of the lessons is not to terrify, but to teach. Learning cannot be done in fear. We learn best with love and through love. Practice today with gentleness toward yourself, as it is difficult to learn and accept that the ego is not you. Come to the Teacher with the *willingness* to see your thoughts as meaningless. That is what He needs to teach you to see a whole new world full of peace, joy and love.

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Instructions for Lesson #10

This lesson requires five practice periods each lasting **no more than** a minute or so. If you experience any discomfort*, reduce the practice time to half a minute or less.

- Close your eyes.
- Repeat: *“This idea will help to release me from all that I now believe.”*
- Search your mind for all thoughts that are available to you.
- If it is helpful, you might imagine that you are watching an oddly assorted procession going by without any meaning.
- As each thought crosses your mind repeat: *“My thought about _____ does not mean anything.”*
- Repeat any time a thought distresses you.

*Until we realize that we are not the ego, any discomfort in practicing these lessons will be associated with an experience we are having. That is why it is advised that if you feel discomfort, the practice should be reduced to a half a minute or less.

11. “My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world.”

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #11.

Before we begin to look at the details of this lesson, I would like to ask you a few questions: What prompted you to begin your workbook practice? What brought you to *A Course In Miracles*? Did you achieve everything you set out to in this life only to discover an emptiness that you couldn't explain? Did you find yourself going through the motions of daily living feeling the meaningless of it all? Maybe you have made every effort to do the right thing, be a responsible person and work hard, but the rewards of “clean living” never seemed to come. Or, maybe like me, you have been hit with tragedy, illness, or loss and are looking for the meaning of suffering and how to stop it. The reasons that caused us to take the first step on this spiritual path may be different, but what we are looking for is exactly the same. We all want peace, freedom and happiness.

What if you realized that the key to having all that you seek is right here in this lesson? You might find yourself practicing more diligently today -- putting in a bit of extra effort and bringing to your practice a more open mind. Well, get ready to practice because today's lesson holds the key to your release *“This idea is your release made sure.” “The key to forgiveness lies in it.” (W.11.1:5) “It contains the foundation for the peace, relaxation and freedom from worry that you are trying to achieve.” (W.11.3:4)*

This lesson is a first attempt to make a major correction in our mind. What needs correcting? It is the belief that the world determines our thoughts, feelings and experiences. Currently, we believe the world exists separate from us. The world does its thing and then we have thoughts, feelings and reactions based on what the world does. The world is cause and our thoughts (and experiences) are its effects. If you have ever said, “You make me feel guilty, sad, afraid, angry” than you know you operate under this belief. Are you shocked to find out that *this* is the error that needs correcting and that correcting this one idea will give you the key to the treasures you have been searching for? What is the correction? It is this: *“Your thoughts determine the world you see.” (W.11.1:2)* Our thoughts are the cause and the world we see (and experience) its effect. This is a complete reversal of what we believed! Think of how freeing it would be to learn that the world is not the cause of anything and the real cause (your thoughts) can be changed, therefore you always have the power to change your experience. Never again will you feel victim to the world nor feel that the world denies you anything.

Today, we practice the link between our thoughts and the world we see by bridging yesterday's idea (all my thoughts are meaningless) with today's idea (my thoughts show me the world). These two ideas merge to become: *“My meaningless thoughts (cause) are showing me a meaningless world (effect).”*

Today's lesson is *“the first idea we have had that is related to a major phase of the correction process” (W.11.1:1)* Now, we see the benefits in embracing this correction and therefore we are *“glad indeed to practice the idea in its initial form.” (W.11.1:4)*

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Instructions for Lesson #11

Notice that in previous lessons you rested your attention on an object and *then* repeated the lesson idea. The instructions for today's practice are different. You should not linger on anything in particular, but rather glance *rapidly* around the room while repeating *slowly* without a sense of urgency or haste today's idea. I find the practice of glancing rapidly and repeating the idea slowly helps me learn how to respond peacefully to an ever-changing scene that my eyes see.

This lesson requires three to five practice periods each lasting a minute or so. Repeat the practice three times and if you do not experience resistance or uneasiness and feel inclined to do more, as many as five practice periods may be undertaken. More than five times is not recommended.

- With eyes closed repeat slowly: "*My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world.*"
- Open your eyes and look all around without pausing. Move from one thing to another fairly rapidly while repeating unhurried and leisurely with no sense of urgency or effort: "*My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world.*"
- At the end of a minute, close your eyes and repeat: "*My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world.*"

12. ***“I am upset because I see a meaningless world.”***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #12.

Does the world upset you? Are you upset when you watch the news, listen to the radio, hear conversations at work, or listen to someone’s sad story? I doubt too many people would dispute the following statement: “I am upset because the world is scary, hurtful, violent, etc..” Everywhere we look we “see” sadness, fear, evil and hostility. It makes perfect sense that the reason we are upset is because we “see” this world out there. Ah...to the ego this makes sense, but to the Holy Spirit, this needs reinterpreting.

Here is the first point of the lesson: the world is actually neutral and has no meaning in and of itself. It is you that is providing the meaning. This idea seems impossible! And yet it is part of the major correction this course is trying to make in our minds. Let’s see how this idea might begin to make sense. Imagine a scenario where someone was late for an appointment with you. This is a neutral event. Neutral, that is, until you interpret what it means.

When someone is late for an appointment, it can mean that you now have unexpected free time and with this meaning you feel happy. It can mean that you are being disrespected and with this meaning you feel angry. It can mean that the person blew you off and with this meaning you feel rejected. This event has no meaning until the person “seeing” it provides its meaning. That is why an outside picture of someone being late can be interpreted in a multitude of ways depending on who is placing meaning on this neutral event. It may strike you that we do this all the time. The minute our eyes rest on something our mind rushes to interpret what it means.

This ushers in the 2nd point of this lesson: you are very busy giving the world its meaning because without the meaning you give it, it *is* meaningless. A meaningless world is exactly what you’re trying to avoid seeing. Why? Because, a meaningless world would provide a blank slate for the Holy Spirit to write the truth on it.

This brings us to the 3rd point of this lesson: it is the discovery of the truth that is really upsetting you. Why would the truth upset you? The truth speaks of oneness, love, and innocence no matter what outside form is presented to it. Are you willing to hear and see the truth instead of the ego’s thoughts on the situation? If your boss yells at you, are you ready to release your interpretation and meaning and make way for the truth of your oneness with your boss? If someone steals your parking space, are you ready to hear only a call for love? If someone hurt you, are you ready to see their innocence? *“The truth (may) upset you now” (W.12.5:8)*, but take heart, the truth will not always upset you. There will be a time (if not now) when you will welcome a meaningless world so the Word of God can be written on it. This will *“make you indescribably happy.” (W.12.5:3)*

In conclusion, this lesson teaches:

- You are giving the world all of its meaning
- Until you erase all of your meaning you will not know truth.
- And when you erase “your” meaning, the ego becomes very upset.

Instructions for Lesson #12

This lesson requires three to four practice periods each lasting for no more than one minute. Stop if you experience discomfort, distress or strain.

- Glance around the room slowly, pacing yourself as if you are keeping a steady tempo to a song. Avoid long rests or quick glances on a subject. Give everything you see equal time and attention.
- Repeat: *“I think I see a ____ world, a ____ world, a ____ world.”* Use whatever adjectives come to mind. They can be “good” or “bad” attributes (pleasant or unpleasant ones).
- At the end of a minute repeat: *“But, I am upset because I see a meaningless world.”*

13. “A meaningless world engenders fear.”

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #13.

Point one: All upsets are really just forms of fear.

In Lesson 12 we learned that a meaningless world is very upsetting to the ego. We have called this upset many things such as: anxiety, worry, depression, anger, or hatred. Today, we give one name to all of these upsets – “fear”. You may have heard Course students reference this quote often: “(We) have but two emotions, love and fear”. (T.13.V.1:1) Today’s practice is a reference to this quote and begins to train our mind to think of all of our upsets as fear.

Point two: Meaninglessness engenders fear for two reasons:

1. In Lesson #12 we were introduced to the idea that the world we see is meaningless. To render something as meaningless is like taking a giant chalkboard where we have written thoughts of separation, lack, guilt and sin, and erasing everything on it, leaving a blank slate. It is this moment right here that the ego fears. Why is the ego so afraid? An empty chalkboard provides plenty of room to write the truth and the truth is in direct opposition to the ego’s ideas. Where the word “guilt” was written you now see the word “love”. Where “separation” was written, now “oneness” is seen. With the ego thoughts erased and replaced with truth, where is the ego? Nowhere, for the ego is not a real ‘thing’ but only the thoughts of guilt and separation held in the mind. When you erase the thoughts you erase the ego.
2. On this blank slate of “meaninglessness”, we are also afraid of what God might write on it. What could we possibly think God would say that would engender so much fear? We believe God would write something like this: “How dare you throw away Heaven and all My gifts, try to leave home and be your own boss? You kicked me off my throne and now you must pay for this original and unforgivable sin”. We fear God’s vengeance and His wrath. Why would we freely give Him the chalk if we think that all He will do is write our punishment on the board? This is the underlying fear that we carry around with us always. It is the fear of the worst punishment of all to those who abandoned Him -- banishment from the Kingdom forever.

Point three: The ego is in competition with God to fill the empty space with meaning.

Picture this chalkboard free of any thoughts (meaningless world) and made ready to be written on. Who will write on it? God or the ego (which you currently believe is “you”)? Who wins this competition? The ego is trying to save its life here. Its own survival is at stake. Therefore, the ego reminds us that we do not want God writing His meaning on it because He will write of our guilt and sin. Of course, none of this is true. The Holy Spirit (Voice for God) would write words of guiltlessness, innocence and purity. But unless we are willing to enter into a moment of meaninglessness without fear, we will not know this. Therefore, it is essential to our healing that we “*learn to recognize the meaningless, and accept it without fear.*” (W.13.3:1)

We may not accept these ideas completely and may even encounter some resistance to them. That is fine. We are not asked to understand or even accept the ideas presented in today’s lesson. Today’s lesson focuses on *awareness*. First, we become aware that we are looking at a meaningless world. Second, we become aware of the emotion of fear that arises when we see a meaningless world. Third, we become aware that this fear is the fear of what God would write on the space provided by meaninglessness.

Instructions for Lesson #13

This lesson requires three to four practice periods, each lasting no more than a minute or so.

- Close your eyes
- Repeat to yourself: “*I am looking at a meaningless world.*”
- Open your eyes and look about while repeating: “*I am looking at a meaningless world.*”
- Close your eyes and conclude with this statement: “*A meaningless world engenders fear because I think I am in competition with God.*”

14. "God did not create a meaningless world."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #14.

Seventeen years ago, my daughter died at birth. This event brought to the surface many unanswered questions that I had secretly asked for years. How could a loving and omnipotent God create a world of violence, pain, poverty, disease and death? How could I continue to be in relationship with a God, who after creating such a world, refused to step in and save His children from painful events? As much as I had tried to reconcile a loving God with the suffering in the world, I could not come up with answers that made sense. The only solution was to completely break away from God. I stopped going to church and stopped praying. Even though outwardly I rejected God, secretly I still looked for a way to believe in a loving God again. When I found *A Course in Miracles* I knew the answers had finally come.

"God did not create (this) meaningless world". (W.14.6:8) Upon reading this for the first time, I was in shock. I had never read such an idea before. The world I see is not His creation? How liberating to learn this! My initial reaction was like a child running through the streets shouting "Hurray! God is still Love!" This reaction is exactly what today's practice is for -- to realize the liberation that comes from the realization that God is still love and this (the world you see) is not *His* idea. But as freeing as this message is, many of us may experience pain or fear with today's practice. I know that I did after my first initial elation. Why would there be a fearful response to this message?

Let's realize for a moment the implication of this idea. If God did not create this world we see than who did? We did. "*It is of our own making.*" (W.14.1:5) Therefore, by practicing and embracing this idea we can no longer blame God for what we see. Can you feel the defenses already formulating in your mind? Please don't spend much time formulating a defense as to why you are not to blame for the airplane crash, an illness, or the war. Because you will miss the freedom this message brings. Yes, the world we see is made from our own thoughts, but the world we made is an illusion. It is not real. It has no real effect and cannot harm You or others in any way. We are dreaming of a world full of pain and suffering, but like any dream you have at night, it is all illusory. Some of the dreams are "*our personal repertoire of horrors (while others) are shared illusions*". (W.14.6:1-2) Regardless of whether it is a personal or global dream, nothing real is happening. No one really dies, or suffers, or is sick. It may appear real while you are dreaming, but upon waking, you will realize nothing really happened at all.

As you practice today, try to go beyond the initial fear you might feel to the peace this idea can bring to your troubled mind. The peace being offered here is similar to the feeling you have after waking up from a horrible nightmare. How often do we wake in the morning from a nightmare and say to ourselves, "Thank God, that was not real." As you practice today, remember that even though the nightmare seems real, you are perfectly safe and resting comfortably in your Father's arms."

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Instructions for Lesson #14

This lesson requires three practice periods each lasting a minute at the most. (If you feel comfortable, you can do more practice periods, but do not extend the practice time). It can also be used throughout the day when something disturbs you.

- Close your eyes
- Think of all the horrors in the world that cross your mind
 - Do not use general terms such as illness, or disaster. Name each specifically (e.g., cancer, hurricane Katrina, heart attack)
 - Include anything that you are afraid might happen to you or someone else
 - Use anything that may arouse fear in you
- Name each one that occurs to you and then deny its reality by repeating: *“God did not create that _____, and so it is not real.”*
- Conclude the practice period with: *“God did not create a meaningless world.”*
- If something disturbs you during the day, repeat the idea using these words: *“God did not create a meaningless world. He did not create (specify the situation which is disturbing you) and so it is not real.”*

15. ***“My thoughts are images that I have made.”***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #15.

Yesterday, you practiced the idea that everything you see in the world (concentrating on all forms of devastation that you could think of) is not real. As you went through your “personal repertoire of horrors” and repeated “God did not create that _____, and so it is not real”, did you notice any resistance coming up? Most people do resist this teaching. Why? Because, to you it seems very, very real. And why is that? Because you see it happening before your very eyes! You swear you are “seeing” cancer, war, the airplane crash and because you “see” it with your eyes, you conclude it must be real. Inside, (or maybe outwardly) you might have said, “How can this be unreal? I see it!” Our Wise Teacher responds to this outpouring of frustration in this way, “Let’s pause for a moment and ask this question; what exactly are you seeing?” Your frustration at this question grows, for it’s so obvious what you are seeing. You point to the event or circumstance out there as your answer and inside secretly wonder if the Teacher has lost His mind. The Teacher realizes as you point to the world “out there”, that you are insisting the world happens apart from your mind and independent of you. Because of this, you need an understanding of the cause and effect relationship between your thoughts and the world you see. Today’s lesson introduces this idea.

We begin with this idea -- what you “see” and claim as solid and real are merely images made from your thoughts. To grasp this idea, we will use the analogy of a spot light and a big, white screen. Do you remember when you were a child and you would watch home movies or a home slide show? The adults would turn on the projector and get ready to show the movie and inevitably the children would put their hands in front of the light to make shadows appear on the screen. The children would make images of dogs, chickens, people etc. just by changing the shape of their hands. Now substitute the hands with your thoughts. A thought takes shape within the mind and just like the hand; it is placed in front of the light. What you see on the screen is the image made by the thought. Two things are significant about these images made from your thoughts:

- Because your thoughts appear as images on a screen you do not recognize them as nothing.
- Because you think these images are real, you fail to notice the light surrounding these images.

When children make shadows appear on the screen, it doesn’t mean the light is not there. It only means they have blocked the light momentarily. If you look around the edges of the shadow of a dog, you can still see the light on the screen. By the same token, when we understand the images appearing before our “eyes” are illusions made from our thoughts and we ask for real vision, we will begin to notice that light is always present around the edges of the image. *“This is a sign that you are opening your eyes at last.”* (W.15:3:4)

There are many questions about these or edges of light or “light episodes” that may need some clarification. What are they? The light episodes are a symbol of true perception.

What is their purpose? It shows that there is something else to see beyond the solid physical form. This can have the effect of opening up your mind to accept there *is* something else to see.

What if I don’t have light episodes? You may or may not experience “edges of light” (W.15.2:2). It doesn’t matter in terms of your progress toward true perception. It is addressed in this lesson simply to acknowledge that they may occur and if they do, *“do not be afraid of them”* (3:3). Whether you have them or do not, *“they will not persist”* (W.15.3:5) because experiencing light episodes is not the goal you are trying to achieve.

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Instructions for Lesson #15

This lesson requires three practice periods each lasting a minute or so. If you begin to feel uneasy, less than a minute will do. If you feel completely comfortable with today's practice you can conduct four practices. However, it can also be applied as needed throughout the day, if you experience upset or a disturbance.

- Repeat: "*My thoughts are images that I have made.*"
- Look around the room randomly.
- When your eyes rest on the subject, continue to look at the subject while repeating very slowly:
"*This _____ is an image that I have made.*"

16. *"I have no neutral thoughts."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #16.

This lesson makes some pretty powerful statements about our thoughts. Let's take a closer look.

Everything you see is a result of your thoughts. Take a moment and think of something that is bothering you. (It can be as simple as the kids being noisy as you try to do your practice, or as scary as your partner being sick.) Repeat to yourself "What I am seeing is a result of my thoughts."

A neutral thought is impossible. "Every thought you have brings either peace or war; either love or fear."(W.16.3:1)

For many of us, we begin walking a spiritual path because we are tired of the world dishing out its suffering, conflict and pain. We are looking for a way that will lead to the world acting differently towards us, giving us a break, bringing us abundance, keeping out the bad, and only bringing to us the good. What you will notice about lesson #16 is the obvious omission of anything that has to do with how to manipulate things in the outside world in order to get the "good" world and keep out the bad. Rather the teaching is this: it is your own thoughts that are the cause of your distress and has nothing to do with the world "out there". Repeat to yourself, "Only my thoughts contribute to my peace or lack thereof."

Your thoughts "give rise to the perception of a whole world" W.16.2:2), therefore there are no idle thoughts. We'd like to believe that we can spend time entertaining thoughts within our own mind and as long as we don't act on them, they really have no significance. For instance, we might spend a few minutes thinking mean thoughts about the neighbor, but feel that as long as we greet them with a smile, it really has no impact on us. According to today's lesson, this idea would be incorrect. Our thoughts do impact us, as they determine our whole perception of the world. If we have thoughts of attack, then we see attack. If we have thoughts of an inconsiderate neighbor, then we see an inconsiderate neighbor. Repeat to yourself, "I have no idle thoughts."

I'm always intrigued by the straightforward way these statements are delivered. This is not what I would call a "soft approach" to learning. This is a "hit them between the eyes" approach that tells me that accepting the power of my mind must be of major importance to my journey of Self discovery. And yet many of us hesitate in accepting the power of our thinking because it brings up guilt. Today's lesson addresses this reaction by teaching a similar idea that we first practiced in lesson #14 --all false thinking only multiply *illusions* and in reality make *nothing*. "*What seems to be its (false thinking) influence and its effects have not occurred at all.*" (W.198.2:6) Teaching us how to become aware of our thoughts and their power is meant to free our mind, not imprison it with guilt. How does it free our mind? Once we recognize that it is our thoughts that are in need of correcting, we can then choose to release the false and accept the true. If everything you see is a result of your thoughts, then thoughts of peace, see peace. Thoughts of joy, see joy. Thoughts of joining, see brotherhood. Today's practice is not to bring you down, but to lift you up and out of the world of perception seen by false thinking, and to the real world seen by true thinking.

An important emphasis in today's lesson is to become aware of *every* thought you hold within your mind. We tend to dismiss many of our thoughts as unimportant, especially our deeply hidden fear thoughts. When they peak through our awareness, we pretend they do not have any real impact on our lives. With this reasoning we bury them once again in the unconscious thereby missing the opportunity to clear our mind of ALL false thinking. As we practice allowing all thoughts to be a suitable subject for our workbook practice, we begin to let go of our habit of allowing thoughts to stay buried and begin a new habit of bringing all thoughts to the Holy Spirit for healing.

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Instructions for Lesson #16

This lesson requires four to five practice periods each lasting a minute or so. If you feel strain, three will be enough. You can also reduce the length of the exercise period if feeling any discomfort. This practice can also be used throughout the day when a particular thought arouses uneasiness.

- With eyes closed, begin searching your mind for any and all thoughts (little or big, important or unimportant)
- Repeat: *“I have no neutral thoughts”* then as your mind catches a thought, hold it in your awareness while you tell yourself, *“This thought about _____ is not a neutral thought.”*
- During times of uneasiness, repeat: *“This thought about _____ is not a neutral thought because I have no neutral thoughts.”*

17. *"I see no neutral things."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #17.

The purpose of today's practice is to continue our learning of how cause and effect really operate in the world. Currently, we believe that the world is the cause and the thoughts that follow are its effect. Today, we take another step at reversing this idea. As stated clearly in W.17.1:3, *"It is always the thought that comes first"* (the cause) and the world that follows is the effect of thought.

Today's idea is: *"I see no neutral things because I have no neutral thoughts"* (W.17.2:2). What does it mean to have no neutral thoughts? "Neutral" as defined in the dictionary means "to not align, support or favor any one nation, position or idea". Therefore, having no neutral thoughts, means that all our thoughts align with, support, or favor a particular position or idea. When reviewing your thoughts, you can see that all your thoughts do indeed favor an idea or position about something. It doesn't matter what the thought is about (the weather, the first cup of coffee in the morning, politics, or your bank statement), each thought contains a smorgasbord of ideas and positions. We are never thinking about something with neutrality. Thus, we do not see neutral things.

As an example, I'm sitting at my kitchen table writing this while also looking out my window at my neighbor who is installing a chain link fence. Having no neutral thoughts, I begin to favor a position and align with an idea. My thoughts could be something like this: "The fence is ugly. Now my property value will go down and I will end up losing money because of what he did." My thoughts could also go another way and favor a different position and idea: "I'm glad he chose a chain link fence because it provides a more "open" feeling to the backyard. My neighbor just saved me a bunch of money because I was going to fence in my yard for my dog and now half the work is already done." It doesn't matter if I spin my thoughts to sound better, either way I am favoring a position or an idea. I'm establishing my position with my thoughts and this takes me out of the neutral zone. Therefore, am I seeing a neutral fence? No because my thoughts about it are not neutral. Furthermore, my reality, as I define it, is highly subjective. Reality could be either "an ugly fence, an inconsiderate neighbor and less money in my bank account" or "a great fence, a considerate neighbor and more money in my bank account" depending on what position and idea I favor. With such variable perceptions of "reality", could I reasonably conclude that what I perceive *is* the one and only true reality? *"In view of its highly variable nature, this is hardly likely."* (W.17.1:6)

This brings us to the second teaching of this lesson. Regardless of the position you favor or the idea you align with, anything you see from these thoughts (good or bad) is not *"really alive or really joyous"* (W.17.3:2). When reading this statement, it is helpful to remember that the Course classifies anything really alive as formless Spirit and anything really joyous as the extension and creation of pure love. With this definition of "alive" and "joyous" anything that has to do with a body (form) and everything in the world (except for pure love) would naturally be excluded. Having trouble grasping this idea? You're not alone. It is very difficult for our minds to embrace such a radical teaching. It may be helpful to think of it as if you are in a dream and everything in the dream *seems* to be really alive and really joyous, but it is all really nothing. They are all just images made from a mind that is asleep. Do not be discouraged to learn that everything you see is illusory (not really alive). The only reason you are seeing illusion is because you have not yet encountered *"any thoughts that are really true and therefore really happy."* (W.17.3:3) The key words in this sentence are "not yet". "Not yet", but someday we *will* become aware of true thoughts and this will lead us to true happiness.

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Instructions for Lesson #17

This lesson requires three to four practice periods each lasting a minute or so. If you experience resistance, continue the practice periods and reduce the practice time to less than a minute.

- With eyes open say to yourself: *“I see no neutral things because I have no neutral thoughts.”*
- Look around you and rest your glance on each thing you note long enough to say:
 - *“I do not see a neutral _____, because my thoughts about _____ are not neutral.”*

Note: As you glance around you all things are suitable subjects (animate and inanimate, pleasant or unpleasant). Remember you are training your mind to see what is truly alive and joyous. Currently, you believe that alive means dog, cat, person, plant and not alive means picture, statue, curtain etc. You also distinguish between happy alive things (my dog) and unhappy alive things (my dead plant), happy inanimate things (a picture of your family), and unhappy inanimate things (a broken vase). An essential part of training your mind to see truly is to learn to put all forms in one category -- unreal.

18. "I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #18.

Upon first observation, this lesson seems easy, simple, and not very relevant. You might be tempted to say, "Ho hum.... I'll practice this quickly and move on to juicier lessons" (I know I did the first time around). Not so fast. Today's practice is an important exercise that introduces a fundamental aspect of the thought system of the Course: Minds are joined. This idea is fundamental to understanding how salvation is accomplished and we first encounter it here in Lesson #18. Salvation is the realization that you have never been, nor could ever be, separate from God and the Sonship. To be saved from pain, suffering, loss, fear and guilt we must realize this separation is false. And yet, we find the idea that we are separate to be a major belief that we think is true! We believe we have separate minds housed in separate bodies, and are living separate lives. We believe our separate mind thinks private thoughts and therefore has separate experiences. If you have ever uttered the words "no one understands me" or "no one knows how I feel", if you have ever felt that you were the only one having an experience of fear, guilt, or loneliness, then you know how strongly you believe in separation. Just because we believe it strongly, does not make it true. Today, you try to break through this strong belief by practicing that what you experience is shared.

As you follow today's instructions to learn that our minds are joined, turn it into an awareness practice, as well. Notice the *experience* you are having when you rest on subjects -- this could be talking to someone at work, watching the news, noticing a chair, looking at the sun, etc.. Then allow your mind to open up to the idea that you are not having this experience alone.

Instructions for Lesson #18

This lesson requires three to four practice periods each lasting a minute or so.

- Look about you selecting random subjects for the application of the idea.
- Keep your eyes on each one long enough to say: "*I am not alone in experiencing the effects of how I see _____*".
- At the end of the practice period, conclude with: "*I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing.*"

19. *"I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #19. This lesson is a reinforcement of ideas already presented in the previous lesson.

#1: The cause and effect relationship: You may notice that today's idea only differs from yesterday's idea by one word. Lesson #19 uses the word "thought" and Lesson #18 uses the word "seeing". It appears to be the same practice. But the slight variation is a lesson in understanding that the relationship between thought and seeing is interchangeable. What you think you will see, and also what you see, must be what you think. The order does not matter because thoughts and seeing are never separate. It is not always easy to see the relationship between our thoughts and their results because the process used for seeing happens so quickly. When you are watching a movie on the big screen, are you aware of how it is that you are seeing this movie? If you were to slow down the process in the projector, you would see that each frame of the film stops for a fraction of a second in front of a light source. The light source illuminates the image on the frame and casts it through a lens onto the screen. What is happening in the projector room is occurring so fast (24 frames per second!) that it is tempting to believe the movie is just appearing before your eyes. Similarly, if we were to slow down the process of how we see our movie, we would begin to understand the real cause and effect relationship that is operating in our lives. To summarize:

- The mind begins with a thought.
- The mind makes a mental image of that thought.
- The mental image is expressed outward.
- The mind looks upon this expression and has an experience.
- Therefore, this experience is a result of a thought in your mind.

What you see and experience are the effects of your thoughts. You have learned this in previous lessons and have discovered a *personal* reason why awareness of your thoughts is beneficial to *you*. In addition, this lesson tells us that our thoughts not only determine *our* experience, but they determine *others'* experiences, as well. That is because nothing is personal or private when minds are joined.

#2: Our minds are joined: This is not a welcomed idea for two reasons:

- We believe that joining is unsafe. After all, haven't we been taught that the way to be safe is to set boundaries and keep others from trespassing into our personal space? Do we not get upset when others tell us what to believe? Do we not get an eerie feeling when someone can read our thought? These are all forms of our individuality and we stand strong against merging with another's space, idea or mind. We see it as death, rather than freedom.
- We shy away from feeling responsible for someone else's experience. We learn early on in life that it is best to be an island unto yourself so you won't be influenced by others and so others will not have an effect on you. Having an effect on another is not a welcomed idea that we embrace readily.

We must learn to hear the good news in the message. Because our minds are joined:

- Thoughts of love and peace held in your mind, result in others experiencing love and peace.
- We are never alone, never without the strength of the Sonship, and therefore always cared for and safe.
- Most importantly, the plan for salvation will work. If minds are connected and you make a choice to awaken, this influences all minds to wake up, as well. If your mind wakes up to the truth and heals, then all minds will heal.

#3: Applying to random subjects without withholding one from the lesson. We have a tendency to want to keep some illusions and say the truth does not apply to them. Because we have this temptation it becomes very important to practice indiscriminately where nothing is excluded and everything is included. This practice will be continued throughout all remaining lessons, although the instructions will only be given from time to time.

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Instructions for Lesson #19

This lesson requires three to four practice periods (do not attempt more than four) each lasting a minute or so and “as needed” throughout the day.

- With eyes closed repeat: “I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts.”
- Spend a minute searching your mind for random thoughts. (Be careful not to exclude any thought from this exercise by believing it is too little or too important)
- Name the central person / theme
- As you hold it in your mind say: “*I am not alone in experiencing the effects of this thought about _____.*”

20. *"I am determined to see."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #20.

"The purpose of the workbook is to train your mind in a systematic way to a different perception of everyone and everything in the world." (W.Introduction) This different perception is real vision and shows us a world joined together in love and peace. To obtain real vision and learn how it is accomplished, you must learn certain fundamental principles that build on each other.

If a math student wants to learn how to divide, she must first learn the principles of adding, subtracting and multiplying. Once these are understood, division makes perfect sense and is easy to learn. Similarly, this is how the Course is helping us learn how to see a different perception of the world, our brothers and sisters and ourselves. The first principle we learned was the principle of cause and effect which established the link between our thoughts and the world we see. We then moved on to learn that it is our past thoughts that overshadow the present and blocks it from our sight. Next, we learned that that the world we see are images made from our thoughts, and finally, what we see and experience is a shared experience because minds are joined.

In Lesson #20, we are introduced to another principle that will help us understand how vision is possible. We decide what it is we want to see. This has major implications. First, seeing with real vision is in our grasp. *"Your decision to see is all that is required."* (W.20.3:1). I find this to be a relief because it seems impossible to go from seeing a world of separation to seeing a world of love and peace. Here we read that we have control over the seeing process. It is not something that we must wait for to happen or that we need someone to give us x-ray vision in order for it to happen. We already have the power button right at our fingertips. That power button is our wanting it. If we want it, we will decide for it and that is what we will have. Wow! That's an amazing statement. If I want and am determined to have vision, it will be given. Our lesson today will not let us get away with entertaining any ideas of weakness, powerlessness or being a victim. It states clearly and unequivocally, that You, being the Son of God, have all power in Heaven and on earth. If you are determined to see, vision is given to you.

Another implication in the idea for today is that any situation that is resulting in upset *can be* seen differently. Again, we are not a victim of the world we see. Rather, we can choose what it is we want to see and experience. In our learning today, we are being asked to take responsibility for our part in what we are experiencing and to recognize our true desire is to see with real vision. We are making a statement of intent that we no longer want to be in this present state of separation, unhappiness and disharmony. We want a change and the change begins with a decision to want something else. No longer do we wait on the world to change. We recognize that to be happy, to be at peace, to see a world of love, we are willing to change our mind. This begins with our determination.

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Instructions for Lesson #20

This lesson requires a repeat of the idea every half hour throughout the day and when any situation, event or person upsets you. (Helpful Hints: use a timer set every half-hour, place post-it notes everywhere you will be for the day, or set the alarm on your cell phone)

*Notice the commitment requirement for today. It's quite a change from previous lessons! Until now, you have been led slowly and gently through the lessons and haven't been required to put forth much effort. The purpose of this approach was to allow you to gain experiences, learn ideas, and enter in to the classroom without coercion or force. It is important for the student to realize that they are here by choice and want to learn what is being taught. Do you feel this way? Are you hooked on the subject matter, see the goal as something you want and are willing to put forth a bit more effort? See your frequent practices today not from the viewpoint of a disgruntled student who mumbles under his breath how unfair the teacher is being, but rather as a content student knowing that he will benefit greatly from the assignment and does it willingly.

- Repeat: "*I am determined to see*" slowly and positively (done in this manner you are implying that you are not being coerced. You really want to say it because you are determined to change your present state for a better one and one you really want.
- If you forget on the half-hour, do not be distressed but make every effort to remember.

21. "I am determined to see things differently."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #21.

In today's lesson we have an opportunity to practice what we learned from yesterday's idea that the mind decides what it wants to see. We are asked to apply this idea, not to a flower or a sunset, but to the thing that seems most difficult to see differently-- that which arouses anger in us. In today's practice you will conduct an inner exploration of all the people and situations that have, or currently are arousing anger in you. It's easy to find the "big" things that arouse anger. But, you are also asked to become aware of and apply today's idea to the "little" things that seem to arouse only slight irritations in order to learn there is no such thing as being a little angry. (You could compare this with the old saying, "There is no such thing as being a little pregnant".) "A slight twinge of annoyance is nothing but a veil drawn over intense fury." (W.21.2:5) Could this be true? Let's examine it a bit closer.

Think of the "slight irritations" we might feel during the day like: someone takes your parking space, you're kept waiting on hold while on the phone, or your heels are run over by a shopping cart driven by a person who obviously cares more about getting their task done than your well being. The list could go on and on. During these situations, what is the underlying thought going through your mind? Are you saying "I am the victim here. I suffer because of you therefore, you owe me."? All anger, whether little or big, has this underlying thought. With this thought, is there a slight accusation here -- a little idea that someone else caused you to suffer? Even if you express it as only being slightly irritated, you are still blaming them for the cause of your pain. There's nothing "little" about it.

This lesson teaches another important point. Holding onto justified anger and justified counter-attack is a perfectly designed plan to keep the belief in guilt alive. Let's take a close look at the cycle of anger and counter-attack to understand this point. If someone (or the world) fails to meet our needs, takes from us or does not follow what we want them to do or be, do we not feel justified in our anger? We believe we are entitled to make demands, that they meet our needs, and then we tell them how guilty they are for failing us. But, think about every time we get angry and attack the person or situation that has failed us. After this cycle, are we not wrought with guilt? In the past, when I yelled at my kids (attack), even though it seemed justified at the time, I felt guilty. We see the plan of the ego at work here. Seeing an attacking world justifies my anger which results in responding with a counter-attack. This counter-attack leaves me feeling guilty for acting lovelessly. This cycle guarantees that I will always remember I am guilty. Remembering I am guilty blocks the awareness that I am the guiltless Son of God.

Today's lesson is not only a practice in decision making, it also serves to break this cycle of anger and attack. "I am determined to see things differently" is used to stop fueling our anger with justification, thus stopping this cycle and the residual feelings of guilt.

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Instructions for Lesson #21:

This lesson requires five practice periods each lasting a full minute. Also, practice this lesson when situations arise during the day that arouses the feeling of anger.

While practicing you may notice you are resistant to seeing your anger situations differently. Beware of the temptation to believe that some people or situations that arouse anger couldn't possibly be seen differently. Recognize this as simply part of the plan to keep the belief in guilt and then be determined to apply today's idea remembering that your release from guilt is what will be the end result.

- Repeat: "I am determined to see things differently".
- Close your eyes.
- Search your mind carefully for situations past, present, or anticipated that arouse anger in you (the anger barometer can range from low to high.) Include every situation regardless of how angry you feel.
- Be as specific as possible as to what, who, or the attribute you are angry about.
- Hold each one in your mind while you tell yourself:
 - "I am determined to see name of person differently" or
 - "I am determined to see name of situation differently" or
 - "I am determined to see specify the attribute in name the person differently.

22. "What I see is a form of vengeance."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #22.

Do you see an attacking world? Have you ever felt taken advantage of, rejected, judged or blamed? If you believe something was taken from you or have been hurt in some way or have sacrificed your own needs to take care of others, then you are seeing an attacking world. How do we stop the world from attacking us? In yesterday's practice we became aware of the ego's solution for solving the problem of an attacking world -- stage a counter-attack. We also learned that this solution always leads to feelings of guilt and therefore, really does not free us. Today's lesson examines the ego's solution and its boomerang effect of guilt.

The ego teaches there is no cause for guilt because you acted in self defense. After all, why should you feel guilty if they started it first (and deserved it)? Let's see how this plays out in our everyday exchange with each other. If someone steals our parking space (attack), we might yell at them outright or wait for them to leave and then write a nasty note and place it on their windshield (counter-attack). If someone forgets an item in the checkout line and we have to wait (attack), we might give them a look of disapproval (counter-attack). If a partner tells us that we have caused them pain (attack), we might respond with a litany of grievances we have against them (counter-attack). If a store clerk is rude (attack), we might talk about them behind their back (counter-attack). Don't we feel totally justified when we engage in these counter-attacks? After all, "they" started it first!

This reminds me of what I would say when my mom would walk in while I was having a squabble with my sister right at the time I was pushing her. My defense was, "She started it!" With the belief that they are the ones who started it, our defense and subsequent counter-attack is justified. In fact, we could describe our behavior as "I was only acting in self defense". Can't you just feel the relief of guilt in these words? The ego recognizes that we are uncomfortable in its solution to deal with an attacking world because we are left with guilt. It doesn't want us to give up our anger and counter-attack so it gives a solution to the guilt we feel. We are free from guilt because they are to blame. At first this may seem tempting, but one must then ask, "Does this solution stop the world from attacking us?" Let's be honest. This solution doesn't work. Our world continues to be a series of attack, anger, and counter-attack. This is the vicious cycle this lesson refers to that preoccupies our entire world. Who among us would not like this vicious cycle to stop? If you are willing to let go of the ego's solution to an attacking world with the understanding it just doesn't work, then you are open to learning another way. Lesson 22 and Lesson 23 support this other way. Let's keep an open mind as we practice these lessons so we can truly be free of attack.

The first thing we must learn is the attacking world we see is a form of vengeance. To understand this, it is helpful to remember that vengeance means "Infliction of punishment in return for a wrong committed". (Dictionary.com) According to this lesson, it is not an attacking world we see, but retaliation for an attack we already made. What, when and where did this first attack happen? Deep in our unconscious is the belief that we attacked God and His Creation by desiring to be separate and special. We believe our wish to split our oneness apart into separate and special pieces was fulfilled and we fully expect retaliation for this first attack. Therefore, the world we see is not a world attacking us, but rather the world taking vengeance for this wrong we committed.

Once we understand that the attacking world is coming from a mind that believes it shattered Heaven, we are then asked to really question the belief that we did indeed shatter Heaven. To us, this belief is certain. The world as we see it is our proof that we did indeed bomb Heaven and shatter it into a million separated forms. But our evidence is flimsy, at best, for the Course teaches that what we hold up as proof is just an illusion or a dream, and therefore does not exist. To realize this, we are asked to look closer at our evidence and notice that everything we look at is perishable and will not last. Only what is everlasting and unchanging is real. So, our evidence is thrown out on the basis that it doesn't exist.

Now we have an escape plan from an attacking world. The attacking world we see is the result of the mind believing it attacked Heaven and is looking for retaliation. To see a different world we need to release the thought that we attacked Heaven by realizing the separated world (that is our proof of the attack) does not exist. The question is "Are we ready to see this world does not exist?"

We often think to give up this world is a sacrifice. This lesson addresses our idea of sacrifice by asking, "Is it a sacrifice to give up something that will not last, where everything dies and is not even real?" Is it not good news to teach that all that you fear, all that you hate, and all that you would attack does not exist? "Is this the world you really want to see?" (W.22.3:8) This sounds like a rhetorical question because the obvious reply would be, "Well, when you put it that way, of course I don't want this".

When practicing today's lesson, keep in mind these points:

1. We made this world from our thoughts. Everything that we see, that we hate, and that we would attack originated in the mind.
2. The mind that thought these ideas in the first place is dreaming. Therefore, what you look upon is not "real" and just a dream.
3. There is another world to see other than this world. If you are truly having a dream, you, the dreamer, are designing your own experiences. "If you are the dreamer, you perceive this much at least: that you have caused the dream and can accept another dream, as well." (T.28.II.4:2)
4. As the dreamer, I decide what I want to see.

Instructions for Lesson #22:

This lesson requires at least five practice periods each lasting at least one minute.

- Look at the world about you.
- As your eyes glance slowly over objects and people say: *"I see only the perishable. I see nothing that will last. What I see is not real. What I see is a form of vengeance."*
- End the practice session by saying: *"Is this the world I really want to see?"*

23. ***"I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts."***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #23.

The first line of this lesson states: "The idea for today contains the only way out of fear that will ever succeed". If that isn't an attention grabber, then I don't know what is! When we are in fear we believe it is the external circumstances that are the cause of fear. Therefore, we try to rearrange the outer world in such a way that we might "feel better". We change jobs, change partners, exercise more, eat less, earn more money, or get new friends -- all in an attempt to make the fear go away. After numerous attempts to combat fear in this way, do our efforts bring the desired results we seek? If we were completely honest, the answer would be "no". Even if we managed to have our outside world look safe for the moment, deep within is a fear that at any time the rug could be pulled out from underneath us leaving us feeling unsafe, unloved and/or unsatisfied.

Why doesn't this way out of fear work? Because we've changed everything except for the cause of the fear. Think of an artist taking metal (thoughts) and molding it into a sculpture (world). She decides she does not want to look at *metal* (the world made by thoughts) anymore. She attempts to rearrange the sculpture, but no matter how she changes the sculpture, it's still made of metal, and therefore she is still looking at metal. How can she really change the metal she sees? She must change the material she used (thoughts) in order to make a different sculpture (world).

I think we can all agree that seeing an attacking world is frightening. In today's lesson, we learn the way out of fear has nothing to do with finding new ways to change our outside world. "It is with your thoughts that we must work." (W.23.1:5) Once again we are led to look inward at the true cause of the world we see. Because an attacking world is scary to see, we may find this idea welcoming at first. That is until you see what an attack thought is. You may discover that it's not so easy to give them up. That is why today's lesson can also be considered "a motivational pep talk" helping us to understand why it is in our best interest to release these thoughts. To deepen our practice today, let's first consider what an attack thought is.

If an attack is an expression of anger than an attack *thought* is an expression of anger in thought form. When you think someone is selfish, or inconsiderate, stupid, etc. these are attack thoughts. When you have anger at the world or at God because both have failed to meet your needs, these are attack thoughts. When you judge someone for being less spiritual or "ego driven", these are attack thoughts. When you think of how someone has failed to do the "right thing", these are attack thoughts. *All* of these thoughts must be let go in order to release fear. Feel some resistance here? Why is it so difficult to let attack thoughts go?

In previous lessons we learned that our thoughts are the cause and the world its effect. When are we most resistant to this idea? We are most resistant when we are angry with someone, the world, ourselves or God. This is when we are most likely to lose sight that the problem is within our mind and not in the external circumstance. It appears that "this" event, situation or person is the cause of our pain. This lesson reminds us that our thoughts are the cause and the world you see the effect even when we are angry and believe we have been attacked. This is good news. If the cause is within our minds, then we can elect to let go of these thoughts and we don't have to wait "on the world to change".

Still having trouble giving up your thoughts about what the world or others have done to you? Try answering the following questions to lower your resistance to letting these attack thoughts go:

- Does the cycle of "attack" then "justified anger" then "counter-attack" ever stop? Of all of the many clever ways you have tried to get the world to stop attacking you, has any of them worked?
- Where is your peace of mind in such a world?
- Would you really want to continue this cycle if you are being offered a way out?

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for Lesson #23:

This lesson requires five practice periods each lasting one minute, and throughout the day, if the need arises.

- Repeat slowly as you look about you: "I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts".
- Close your eyes and search your mind for **all** thoughts of attack. This includes both thoughts of attacking others and thoughts of being attacked by others.
- Hold each thought and say: "I can escape the world I see by giving up attack thoughts about _____".
- Dismiss the thought and go on to the next thought of attack.

24. "I do not perceive my own best interests."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #24.

How many times a day are you called upon to make decisions or resolve situations? Should you go out to eat or stay home? What clothes should you wear? What house should you buy? What job should you take? When you make a decision or attempt to resolve a situation, aren't you really seeking happiness? When you try to determine your plan of action, are you saying, "What will serve my best interest?" or "What will bring me happiness?" Before you become concerned that this is "ego driven", let's remember that it is God's Will that you have perfect happiness. You want to be happy and God wants that, too. The problem is that we just do not know what will truly make us happy. We think we know, so we forge ahead trying to fix things and make decisions that we think will ultimately bring us happiness. But, let's be honest, when the situation gets resolved, we are often left feeling less than completely happy and many times disappointed. Our practice today is to expose *our* way of resolving things so we can see just how confused we are about what will bring us happiness. With this realization we might consider trying not to resolve things ourselves and allowing ourselves to be taught what is really in our best interest.

Here is an example of how to do your practice today:

First, we are asked to choose a situation that is unresolved in which we are concerned about. Let's say **I am hungry and want to eat**. I want a resolution to this situation so that the outcome will be good for me and make me happy. To resolve this, I must decide what to eat, where to eat, and with whom to eat. If I can answer these questions correctly, then the outcome will be one of happiness. So far, this all makes sense. Here is where we get off track. The reason our resolutions leave us feeling less than perfectly happy is because we have conflicting goals -- we want the situation to serve us and we make demands the situation cannot possibly be meet. Let's see how this plays out.

What demands are we making when we find ourselves hungry and wanting to eat?

"In this situation involving my hunger, I would like the following to happen:

- The food to completely satisfy me
- To make the right decision so I have no regrets
- To not spend money so I don't feel guilty
- To not eat alone
- To not have to clean-up
- To have a quiet and peaceful meal

Look closely at the demands made on this situation of "I am hungry and want to eat".

Do they all have to do with putting food in my stomach? No, I want to be satisfied, I don't want to feel guilty and I don't want to spend money.)

Do any of these demands conflict with each other? Yes, I don't want to clean up (which eliminates eating at home) *and* I don't want to spend money, but going out costs money. I want to eat with someone and I want peace and quiet.

How can one resolution meet all of these demands and conflicting goals? If I decide to go out to eat, then I spend money. If I go out to eat, the food might not be satisfying and I'll regret my decision. If I stay in and cook, then I have to clean-up. If I invite my neighbor, then I don't have peace and quiet. Can we see that all these conflicting goals and high demands will not bring us complete happiness? Can we see that we really don't know what resolution is in our best interest?

My experience of practicing this lesson is one of relief. On some level, I always felt incompetent when attempting to achieve an outcome that would be satisfying and make me happy. Now, I can rest knowing there is One Who does know how to resolve each situation in a way that will serve my own best interests and lead to my perfect happiness.

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for Lesson #24:

This lesson requires five practice periods each lasting two minutes.

- Repeat: *"I do not perceive my own best interests"*.
- Close your eyes and search your mind for unresolved situations you are concerned about.
- In the resolution of this situation what goals do you want to meet? *"In this situation involving _____ I would like _____ to happen, and _____ to happen, etc. "*
- After uncovering these goals say to yourself: *"I do not perceive my own best interests in this situation"*.

25. ***"I do not know what anything is for."***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #25.

Do you consider yourself a go-getter? Do you set goals and strive to meet them? Do you have a "bucket list" of what you want to accomplish before you die? Even if you do not consider yourself a goal-oriented person, I bet you have basic goals in life, such as: comfort, friends, sufficient sleep and financial stability. Of all these goals you might have, would you say they serve personal interests and are designed to meet your needs, wants and wishes? Let's look at just a few. What is your job for? You might answer that your job is to fulfill you and give you value or your job is to give you money so you can buy things. What is your relationship for? You might say that your partner is there to help you feel loved and special or your partner gives you a sense of belonging or acceptance. What is a cup for? A cup is to hold things that will serve my body's needs. Notice that every single goal is to serve our personal interest and designed to meet the needs of the body. It fulfills you, gives you value, gives you money to buy things for the body, helps you feel loved, makes your body feel special, or gives your body nourishment. It's not difficult to see that the purpose and meaning of everything in this world when defined by the ego, is to serve the "individual me". As we pursue these goals and continue to define the purpose and meaning of everything in this world as the means to serve "me", we strengthen the idea there is a "me" that needs to be served. And yet, the Course teaches that the very idea of there being an "individual me" is the root of all of our problems and the cause of our unhappiness, fear and dissatisfaction. The letting go of this "individual me" is the remedy to our problems. How can we do that if we continue to pursue and obsess with these personal goals of the ego? In order to free our minds and remember Who we really are, we must first stop striving for goals that only serve to imbed us in the very identity from which we want to free ourselves. To the Holy Spirit, the only purpose and meaning of this world is to lead us out of this condition of forgetfulness and remember the truth about our Self. *"Forget not that the healing of God's Son is all the world is for. That is the only purpose the Holy Spirit sees in it, and thus the only one it has."* (T.24.VI.4:1)

This idea differs greatly from the ego's purpose for everything in this world. To the ego, the world is here to reflect and reinforce the belief that we are all separate. Here, there are two answers to the question, "What is it for?" To the ego, a chair, a pencil, a job, a partner is to serve the needs of the individual and maintain the false idea of specialness. To the Holy Spirit, the only purpose of everything made in this world is to provide the means to awaken. *"Whatever is seen as means for truth shares in its holiness, and rests in light as safely as itself."* (T.24.VII.5:7) This is a very different purpose than what we've been thinking. That is why today's lesson is a step toward embracing fully the Holy Spirit's meaning and purpose for everything. The first step is to recognize that you do not know the purpose of anything.

Are you willing to look at a chair and say "I don't know what this is for"? Are you willing to look at your relationship and say "I don't know what this is for"? To the ego this is an outrage. But to you, who is not the ego, this is the realization or opening for which the Holy Spirit has been waiting. Now, He can teach you the meaning and purpose of everything you see and His teaching will bring you joy. Your learning begins with the willingness to see chairs, cups, pencils, body parts, relationships, jobs, and etc. without any preconceived meaning or purpose.

The other day I was at the breakfast table with my daughter and she had a cup of water next to her. She said to me, "Why do you think we call that a cup? Who said it was a cup? Who decided what this cup is for?" Yes! The realization needed for true learning. *The Bible tells you to become as little children. Little children recognize that they do not understand what they perceive, and so they ask what it means. Do not make the mistake of believing that you understand what you perceive; for its meaning is lost to you. Yet while you think you know its meaning, you will see no need to ask it of Him.* (T-11.VIII.2:1-3,5)

Practicing this lesson is an important part in being at peace. An open mind ready to receive the Holy Spirit's message of truth can only occur if we are willing to completely surrender our own ideas of what everything is for and ask: *"What is this for? I do not know"*. I have often used this idea in times of struggle and confusion. I recognize that if I am not at peace, I have given the meaning and purpose over to the ego. The quickest way back to peace is to say these words: "I do not know what _____ is for". Now I am ready to learn.

Instructions for Lesson # 25:

This lesson requires six practice periods, each one lasting two minutes.

- Repeat slowly: *"I do not know what anything is for"*.
- Let your glance rest on whatever happens to catch your eye no matter if it is near or far, important or unimportant, human or nonhuman.
- With your eyes resting on each subject say: *"I do not know what this _____ is for"*.
- Do not take your eyes off of the object until you complete this sentence.
- Move on to the next subject and apply today's idea as before.

26. *"My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #26.

This lesson recognizes that we all feel vulnerable. Even if on the outside, we appear to have it all together, inside (sometimes completely buried into our unconscious) is a constant fear that some harm will come to us. This fear shows up as worry, anxiety, over-planning, and controlling behavior. It can be over a myriad of external forms such as the economy, illness, environment toxins, flu vaccines, etc. What should we do about all this fear? It seems the only way to combat this underlying terror is to fix or control the outside world. I think we can all agree this has not worked. The Course wants to free us from fear because it is impossible to experience peace when we are experiencing fear. I'm sure we would all agree with that! But, the solution is not what you think it is. This lesson teaches that to be in a state of peace (free from fear, anxiety and worry), you must recognize that you are invulnerable to the effects of the world. It does not teach that peace returns only when the world stops attacking you. It teaches that you are fearful because you believe in a false concept of you. Does this idea seem like a stretch for your mind to embrace? Let's explore this to get clarity.

#1 Your True Self was created by God for the purpose of extending and creating Love. This Self is whole and complete and perfect. This Self is invulnerable ("immune to attack"). This Self is changeless and cannot experience the effects of attack, fear, loss or pain. This Self is the truth of who you are. And if something is the truth, then it is always true no matter what one might otherwise believe.

#2 Your false self is a concept the mind invented. You are pretending to be something other than your True Self. This false self feels separated from its home -- all alone in a scary world in which there never seems to be enough to go around. This self feels empty and lacks what it needs to be completely happy (love and safety). This self feels vulnerable ("can be attacked") and is at the mercy of an attacking world. This attack can harm this self in many ways by bringing pain, loss, and fear upon it.

All fear, anxiety and worry are a result of identifying "you" as this "false self". Think of it this way: You are a bright light, formless, and joyful and know that you cannot be changed in anyway. You decide to put on a costume. This costume is made of an opaque cloth and when you put it on, it completely blocks the light that you are. This costume is a human body, and has covered over the light. It now appears as if the light doesn't exist at all. "You" begin to identify with this costume (or human body) and act as if you are this costume. You enter into a state of forgetfulness. You become so lost in this false identity that you begin to fear what could happen to the costume. The costume feels vulnerable to attack but the Light that You are -- the Light behind the costume knows it is perfectly safe.

This lesson is a step toward seeing that all fear of attack we have is a result of us believing we are the costume. How do we stop identifying ourselves with the costume when it feels so real? The lesson makes the following points:

We would not see an attacking world where there is much to be afraid of unless we held these false beliefs:

1. We attacked our True Self who is invulnerable and made this other "false self" who is vulnerable, and
2. We have the capability within ourselves to attack, thus it stands to reason that others have this capability within them, as well.

We have spent years trying to get the world to stop attacking so we can be "OK". We have grown weary from our efforts and have only managed to increase our fear. Finally, we are presented with a way that actually leads to peace. We feel vulnerable and fearful because of our own thoughts about who we are NOT because the world is attacking us. The remedy is simply to change your mind about Who you are.

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for Lesson #26:

This lesson requires six practice periods each lasting a full two minutes. If discomfort is experienced, decrease the time to one minute, but not less.

- Repeat: *"My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability"*.
- Close your eyes and think of a situation that you are concerned about. Write down what you are afraid will happen. (What are you worried about? What are you fearful of?)
- Spend a good amount of time on each situation -- finding five or six distressing possibilities for each one.
- Say for each outcome on the list: *"That thought is an attack upon myself"*.
- After the practice period is concluded, repeat: *"My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability,"* once more.

27. *"Above all else I want to see."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #27. This lesson is a practice which will prepare us to practice Lesson #28.

Let's begin with a review of our learning up until now. The main message conveyed in previous lessons was: if you want perfect happiness, peace and joy, then your perception needs to change. Throughout the previous lessons, we were given what is needed to heal our perception. We learned to recognize the power of our thoughts and release our meaning of them, give up attack thoughts, and engage our will to heal our perception.

In Lesson #27, we are discovering another element that contributes to healing our perception. We must *want* a healed perception! Of course, this implies that our wanting something will result in our getting something. (To "want" something is to crave it, wish for it, or long for it.) If we learn that we want and value truth, then we will succeed in finding the means to see truth. If we want and value separateness then we will succeed in finding the means to see separateness. Therefore, this lesson opens our mind up to receive a different desire than we are use to. What desires have we had? In the past, we desired to be right and others to be wrong. We desired to change our outside circumstances in order to be OK. We desired to succeed in our careers and relationships in order to attain the ultimate desire --specialness. Today's lesson is a practice in putting our desire for healed perception or real vision at the top of the list. This vision comes from the Holy Spirit, not from our body's eyes and shows us the truth about everyone and everything. This vision shows us a loving, peaceful and joyful world.

Let's review what we are asked to repeat: "Above all else...."

The words "above all else" mean that above my wanting to be special, above my wanting to place my blame and anger on others, and above my wanting this world, I want to see the Truth. We then are asked to make statements to counteract the ego's voice telling us that this is sacrifice. Just by repeating this lesson, the ego screams of "loss" as if it were the victim, but remember the ego does not want the same things as you do. The ego wants to stay alive and can only do this if you refuse to see the world in Love. So the counsel of the ego will tell you not to do this for you will ultimately lose. We need to counter that voice with these words "*Vision has no cost to anyone. It can only bless.*" (W.27.2:3-5)

Instructions for Lesson # 27:

This lesson requires many repetitions for maximum benefit. Practice this lesson every thirty minutes and more often (every fifteen to twenty minutes), if possible.

Repeat: "*Above all else I want to see*".

If your ego is arguing with this frequency by stating, "This is impossible today; I am so busy", ask yourself, "How much do I want today's idea to be true?"(W.27.4:2) In other words, it is your desire or wanting that is in question, and not whether you have the time.

Remember, there is no cause for guilt if you forget or even if you find yourself resisting. "Do not be disturbed by this, but try to keep on your schedule from then on." (W.27.4:5) We all have busy lives and it may seem like an impossible task to repeat this one line frequently during the today. But make every effort to do so, for the benefits in the long run will be great. Throughout my many years of practice, I still find myself repeating this lesson when I am disturbed in any way by what is happening in my life. Your attempts to repeat this frequently will firmly plant these words in your mind and will be available for you in all the years to come. "*If only repeating this once.....you can be sure you have saved yourself many years of effort*" (W.27.4:6)

28. "Above all else I want to see things differently."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #28.

In this lesson we are asked to work with individual objects, situations or people. But in paragraph four, it explains that by applying this to "specifics", it in essence, the same thing as applying it to the *universe*. If you are making a commitment to see a table differently and the table is part of a dream, then you are making a commitment to see the dream differently. In order to see things in the dream differently a chain of events within your mind must happen first. (W.28.3-4)

You must:

- Withdraw all you ideas about (person, object or situation)_____. (These ideas come from your past learning.)
- Withdraw all of your beliefs about the purpose of this _____. (The purpose assigned to everything comes from your past learning.)
- Open your mind to what _____really is and what purpose it serves.
- Accept a new way of seeing this _____.

Let's look at an example. Imagine that as a child whenever you did anything that was displeasing to one of your parents, they would immediately hit you with an apple. Based on this past experience, you learned certain things about an apple. An apple is hard, can travel fast and hurts when it touches you. You learned the purpose of an apple is to inflict pain and punishment. Now when you see an apple you think you know exactly what it is and its purpose.

When applying this lesson to the apple you are repeating, "Above all else I want to see this apple differently. In order to see the apple differently your mind engages in the following steps.

1. *Recognize* that what you learned about this apple is from your own isolated past experience of it.
2. *Accept* that there might be another way to look at it. (Other than what you learned)
3. Be *willing* to withdraw your own ideas about it including the purpose it serves.
4. Say, "Above all else, I want to see this apple differently".
5. Ask: "What is this person, situation or object?" and "What is its purpose?".
6. Allow the Holy Spirit to tell you what it is and the purpose it serves.

Your mind is now open so that the Holy Spirit can guide you to really see the apple. In this open space, void of all thoughts and meaning from the past, the essence of the apple can be revealed to you. You can learn of its sweet flavor, its soft texture, and its beauty in color. Now you can see what its true purpose is -- to give joy and nourishment.

Instructions for Lesson # 28:

This lesson requires six practice periods each lasting two minutes and throughout the day if you are experiencing upset.

- Repeat: "Above all else I want to see things differently".
- Choose the subjects *randomly* (this would include your eyes landing on a table or on the TV reporting scenes from Iraq).
- With a fixed gaze on the subject repeat the idea slowly and as "thoughtfully as possible" using the name of the subject your eyes happen to rest on.
- Say: "Above all else I want to see this _____differently".

* If, while practicing this exercise, you experience strong feelings, try applying steps 1-6 (above) first. This creates an open mind in which the Holy Spirit can then tell you what you are looking at and what true purpose it serves.

29. "God is in everything I see."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #29.

We have two choices for seeing:

1. **The ego** sees through the body's eyes and reports back to the mind its reality of the world: separated forms, each distinct and unique, trying to co-exist together, while maintaining their individuality.
2. **The Holy Spirit** sees through spiritual "eyes" and reports back to the mind the Real world: Light, the Holy Son of God, joined in perfect oneness, who shares a common purpose -- to extend love. *"In His sight the Son of God is perfect and He longs to share His vision with you." (T.12. VI.4:6)*

I think it is fair to say that right now we see what the ego sees. Certainly, we are not seeing God in everything we see. To help us understand how it is possible that God is in everything, let's take a quick look at the Course's teaching on how we came to "see" separated forms.

First, there was God. God being only Love, extended Himself and created Light. This Light is the Son of the Father, created in the exact likeness of Its Creator. When a thought of what would it be like to not be Light, but something else. "Unique and special and set apart from Light" came into mind and was desired. The Light put a dark cloth over itself. It fell asleep and began to dream itself into many fragments of Light -- each covered over with a body to block out the Light.

Another way to think of this is the costume analogy. Think of putting on a Halloween costume. When someone looks at you, they see a false image of who you are. What is inside the costume is who you really are. The "real you" hasn't been lost just because you put a costume over it.

Awhile ago, my daughter became really frightened when seeing someone on the porch dressed like the character in the movie "Scream". The guy started to talk to her and tried to convince her that inside the costume was a nice, gentle man and the costume wasn't him. But she wasn't accepting that because she rested her eyes on the costume and that was all that was real to her.

This lesson is asking us to practice the idea that everything we see is wearing a costume (or a dark cloth) and its purpose is to keep what is beneath the costume hidden from sight. In truth, the only reality is the Light within the costume. This is the reason why everything can be looked upon with love and appreciation. But remember, it's not the costume that we love and appreciate. It's what lies within the costume that is deserving of our love and appreciation. This unites us because we are the same, and therefore we share the same purpose -- to shine this light.

Another aspect of this lesson that might be confusing is how can a table, a lamp, a door have this light within it? Jesus recognizes our reaction (W.29.2:2) -- "you may find this idea very difficult to graspsilly, irreverent, senseless, funny and even objectionable." And yet, "today's idea is the whole basis for vision". (W.29.1:5) Here we see that our complete understanding is not necessary. Practicing the idea of knowing that even a waste basket has the Light of God in it is how we come to understand this idea. For now, see if you can grasp the idea with the following analogy.

Picture a white movie screen without any images displayed on it. Now the movie begins and you see a snail, a garbage can, a person, etc.. Even though the form is there, is it not true that the white screen is still there as well? In this way, every form is superimposed over the white screen. Thus, the white screen is in every image you think you see.

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for Lesson # 29:

This lesson requires six practice periods each lasting two minutes. In addition, repeat the idea "God is in everything I see" at least once an hour throughout the day.

- Repeat: "God is in everything I see".
- Randomly select subjects. (Do not "self-direct" subjects. Your tendency would be to exclude certain things.)
- Name each subject.
- Repeat: "God is in this _____ (subject)".

If you notice resistance when applying this try repeating:

- My sight shows me a false image.
- Nothing is as it appears to me now.
- Therefore, I do not know what is within them.
- Then repeat "God is in this _____ (subject)".

30. "God is in everything I see because God is in my mind."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #30.

It might be helpful for our practice today to recap the foundation on which the Law of Seeing rests. The world we see is a reflection of what is within our minds. Let's use the projector analogy to explain this. In this analogy, the projector is our mind and it holds the movie (all our thoughts) and the act of projecting is to take what is within the projector (mind) and place it on a screen. *"(The world you see) is the witness to your state of mind -- the outside picture of an inward condition. As a man thinketh, so does he perceive."* (T.21.Int.1:5) Therefore, if you want to see a peaceful world, you must begin with your thoughts.

The ego would advise against this idea and counsel you to not look within where all you will find is guilt, fear and self-hatred. The Holy Spirit would counsel that the fear, guilt and self-hatred you believe you have within your mind are false, because you never actually did separate. What you really have within your mind, hidden by this dark cloth of guilt, is **GOD**. What does that mean? You have everything that *is* God within your mind including: innocence, love, joy, happiness, and peace. It's already there and available to access at any moment.

When will we know that God, and all that is God, is our minds? We will know when we see reflections of God *outside* us. The Law of Seeing is still in effect. What we see outside is just a reflection of what is inside. This is good news because when we look around and see love, joy, peace and innocence, we know that love, joy, peace and innocence are within us. This is why this lesson is a "springboard" into real vision. You are learning to see what is within your mind that you didn't know was there. Once found, the Law states that you will naturally see it all around you. This Law was established by God and can never change. This gives us reassurance that what you see is what you are learning when practicing the workbook lessons.

This lesson is healing our perceived wound of separation. It tells us that the innocent, the holy and the lovely are still within you. If you are experiencing something else (guilt or fear) then you are not really "seeing". It's a mirage -- a dream -- none of it true. But, what is TRUE, stays forever within your mind and is ready to access. With the help of the Holy Spirit and the Course, you can, and will train your mind to see and experience only love.

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Instructions for Lesson # 30:

This lesson requires frequent practice periods throughout the day. There are two different practice instructions. Devote several practice periods to each one:

- Look around slowly while repeating: “God is in everything I see, because God is in my mind”.
- Realize that this idea applies to everything you see *now*, as well as, to things that are *beyond the range* of your sight. (There are cars behind that building. There are people in the other aisle of the grocery store.)
- To help you get accustomed to the idea that real vision does not depend on the body’s eyes, practice looking within, rather than looking outside.
- With eyes closed, repeat “God is in everything I see because God is in my mind” using whatever subjects come to mind.

31. "I am not a victim of the world I see."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #31.

Let's begin by exploring the meaning of "victim". If I were to say the reverse of today's idea -- "I *am* a victim of the world I see", I am in essence saying "I suffer because of you". The "you" could be someone else, an event and / or situation, the world at large, or even God. This accusation suggests that I am at the mercy of this person, situation, world or God.

I remember during a particularly difficult time in my life when someone asked me how I was doing. "Well, if the world would just leave me alone long enough to catch my breath, I would be OK", I said. Now that's a victim statement if I ever heard one! Haven't we all said this statement in one form or another? Let's take a moment and reflect on the implications of believing we are a victim.

If we truly are a victim, the only chance we have to minimize the pain and stop the attack from this person, situation, world or God, is to stage a strong defense. We might try to control circumstances or others, initiate a counterattack, or display an image of strength and independence (I don't need you) as a way to defend ourselves against harm. If you've tried this method of self-defense against pain and suffering, then perhaps by now, you are realizing it just doesn't work.

What is the conclusion we come to after making numerous unsuccessful attempts to ward off attack, pain and suffering? "No matter how hard I try, I keep getting knocked down. As soon as I get back up, there is always something to knock me down again. As clever as I am in finding ways to protect myself, I am still fearful that I will be the victim again." Now that we've established ourselves as victims what is the mantra we repeat? "I am a victim." I think we can all agree that this is a hopeless way to live in the world.

I've always had a love / hate relationship with the idea: "I am *not* a victim of the world I see". I love it because if I am not a victim, then I have the power to change things. I do not have to be afraid of outside forces that can hurt me. I can bring people closer to me instead of keeping them at arm's length for fear I will be victimized. This feels like a "*declaration of my independence in the name of my own freedom*".
(W.31.4:2)

Even with this realization however, I found in the past, I would resist this message. When I would entertain the idea that I am not a victim, I would remind myself, "Surely my reaction (upset and hurt) is totally justified. Just look at what they are doing!" Why such resistance to giving up my idea of being a victim? When I release others from being responsible for what has happened, the finger points back to me as the guilty party. This seems like a double edge sword. If others are the cause of my suffering and I am at their mercy, then I'm off the hook. But, the price I pay for this is the inability to change my experience. I can reclaim my power to determine my experience if I embrace the idea that I am not a victim, but then I feel guilty for what I have done.

The Course lifts us from this dilemma. Yes, you are responsible for what you see and what you experience. However, all that you experience and see that is not love is nothing. It is merely an image or mirage -- something in a dream that has no real effect on you. This may be a difficult leap for many because the belief that the body is our identity and therefore, all that happens to a body is happening to "me" is still a deeply cherished belief held in the mind. As we grow to accept that this world isn't real, we will be free to claim the power of our mind without guilt, recognize the cause and effect relationship between our thoughts and the world, and discover the way to wake up. This all begins with today's idea.

We have grown attached to the idea of being a victim as a way to be free of guilt. Therefore, we must make a statement that we are no longer dependent on this idea. "I am not a victim of the world I see" is the building block for the next three lessons when we learn the true cause and effect relationship between our thoughts and the world we see.

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Instructions for Lesson #31

This lesson introduces slight changes in the practice instructions. These new instructions will be used (with slight variations) more often and include:

- Two longer practice periods of three to five minutes-- one in the morning and one at night.
- Frequent practices throughout the day versus an hourly practice.

This lesson requires two practice periods each lasting three to five minutes. In addition, repeat today's idea as often as possible throughout the day.

- With eyes open repeat: "*I am not the victim of the world I see*", two to three times as you slowly look about you.
- Close your eyes and survey your inner world of thoughts.
- Watch your thoughts go by like you would watch a parade. Notice your thoughts long enough to say "Hmmm that's interesting" but not long enough to begin to put meaning on them. As you sit quietly and watch your thoughts go by, repeat the idea for today as often as you care to, but with no sense of hurry.
- Throughout the day, repeat "*I am not a victim of the world I see*" as often as possible. You will be motivated when you remind yourself that *this* is the way to freedom, not only for you, but for the world.
- Practice the idea today any time you find yourself tempted to see yourself as a victim. If this arises, make a statement that you will not yield to this temptation and will not put yourself in bondage any longer. It is freedom that you want and practicing today's idea is the way to have it.

32. "I have invented the world I see."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #32.

Yesterday you practiced "*I am not a victim of the world I see*". You may have had some resistance in fully accepting this idea, but you practiced with a bit of willingness, realizing that it was a step toward freeing yourself from an attacking world and loss of peace. If you experienced any resistance to yesterday's idea, then you may have difficulty in learning what comes next.

Lesson #32, packs a huge punch in the opening paragraph. The reason *why* we are not victims even though we may feel helpless in the face of all that is done to us, is because *we invented* it. What?! But it doesn't stop there. It gets even better. The paragraph goes on to explain that not only did we invent it, but we have the power to give it up (or not), to see it (or not) "as we wish".

The first time I read this lesson I screamed inside, "This can't be true! There is no way I made up what I'm seeing and certainly no way I am wishing for it!" (My resistance was so strong I'm not even sure if I practiced it the first time around!) I can tell you now after experiencing miracles as a result of accepting and practicing this teaching, I've seen the true freedom this message brings. So, I encourage you to practice even if you don't quite understand or accept the words. You are not expected to believe this or accept it as true. You are only asked to practice it.

To understand the idea for today let's take a closer look at the word "invent". The process of invention first starts with imagination. From imagination, the mind forms an image. This mental image is combined with will, desire and the power to create, and then projects out a form that represents the image held in the mind. As an example, I use my imagination to form a mental picture of something that sits on a counter, is square, where things pop out of it and it burns things. This mental image mixes with my determination, desire and the power to create. The result is called a toaster. What I see sitting on my counter is merely an outside example of the image that began in my mind.

The Course teaches that this is how we "see" our world. It is all made from mental images that are projected from the mind and then seen outside. Because we see what our mind made-up (or we imagine), we are not victims. As an example, if the toaster burns me am I a victim of the toaster? No, because I invented it and it is doing exactly what I invented it to do: to burn things.

This lesson is reinforcing two points:

1. My inner thoughts and outer world are interconnected. Like the movie projector analogy, whatever I see on the screen is only a reflection of what is in the projector. By the same token, whatever I see in the world is only a reflection of what is in my mind.
2. When I no longer want to see this world it will change. (I can choose not to be the victim.)

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Instructions for Lesson #32

This lesson requires two practice periods (morning and evening) each lasting at least three and no more than five minutes and as often as possible throughout the day. This lesson also requires that you begin your practice when you anticipate few distractions and feel “reasonably ready”.

The first time I did the workbook lessons, I read this and realized (without guilt) that I couldn't just jump out of bed and start my practice. It gave me permission to get myself ready to be with God. I know for myself, as soon as my feet hit the ground, my mind is going a mile-a-minute. So, I began a routine of sitting in the dark with a lit candle and hugging a cup of coffee and just letting my thoughts run any which way. Just letting my thoughts pass thru without hanging on any particular one, helped clear my mind of distractions so I was better able to concentrate on the words I was about to say. I found this the perfect way for me to ease into my morning practice. To prepare for your practice, think about what would be most helpful to you.

- With eyes open repeat: *“I have invented the world I see”*, two to three times, as you slowly look about you, surveying your outer world.
- Close your eyes and survey your inner world of thoughts.
- Watch your thoughts go by in the same manner as yesterday's -- like watching a parade.
- As you survey your inner and outer worlds, try to keep this idea in mind -- both are in your own imagination.
- As you sit quietly and watch your thoughts go by, repeat the idea for today as often as you care to, slowly and not in a hurried manner.
- Throughout the day, repeat *“I have invented the world I see”* as often as possible.
- Practice the idea today whenever anything distresses you by saying: *“I have invented this situation as I see it”*.

33. "There is another way of looking at the world."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #33.

Do you believe there is another way of looking at the world? Do you believe there is another way to look at war, the news on TV, your partner being late for dinner, and your child home with the flu? If, in this moment, you do not believe there is another way to look at a child that is sick or an empty seat at the dinner table, it is safe to conclude that you will be stuck in the upset feelings this perception evokes. If you want to be free of your upset, you must begin to recognize that you do have a choice in how you see things. The purpose of this lesson is for you to begin *"to recognize that you can shift your perception of the world"* (W.33.1:1) and thereby return to a state of peace. To aid in this recognition it may be helpful to reinforce the teaching of how you are seeing what you're seeing.

Remember what we learned in yesterday's lesson that what you see is a projection of an image in your mind. We used the movie projector analogy to teach that what is on the screen is merely an outside image of what is in the projector. If you and I were in a movie theater watching a movie and I asked you, "Is there another way to see a different movie?" You would smile at such a silly question and answer, "Of course! Just change the film in the projector". The answer to the question "Is there another way of looking at the world?" receives the same response. "Of course, just change what is in the mind."

Today's idea is one of the many lessons in the workbook I use as a "stopper". If you see a situation that is upsetting, stating the idea for today, "There is another way of looking at this" STOPS your mind from spiraling even deeper into ego thoughts and upset. The more you practice pulling your mind back from falling into ego thoughts, the more "muscle-memory" you build which establishes a habit of going to right-minded thoughts (Holy Spirit thoughts). This is particularly useful in times when you become extremely upset. To practice just how useful the idea for today is as a "stopper", the instructions suggest you sit quietly and repeat this idea over and over. When you do, you will start to notice an inner shift as you release the upset, breath slower, and become less agitated.

Instructions for Lesson #33

This lesson requires two practice periods (morning and evening) each lasting a full five minutes and as frequently as possible throughout the day.

Note: During your morning and evening practice, use a slightly different technique to survey your inner and outer world. Try letting your mind flow from the outer to inner effortlessly without any breaks while repeating this idea. It's important to remain detached and uninvolved as you survey your worlds.

- While glancing around your external world, repeat: *"There is another way of looking at the world"* as often as possible, but in a comfortable, leisurely way.
- Then close your eyes and review your inner thoughts in a casual, unhurried manner all the while repeating: *"There is another way of looking at the world"*.
- As you go about your day, try repeating the idea as frequently as you can.
- When a situation arises which tempts you to become disturbed and / or the instant you become aware of distress, repeat: *"There is another way of looking at this"*. During times of upset, it may be helpful to close your eyes and repeat several times to yourself: *"There is another way of looking at this"*.

34. ***"I could see peace instead of this."***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #34.

This lesson completes the teachings of the previous three lessons: I am not a victim of the world I see (W.31) because I invented what I'm seeing (W.32) therefore there is another way to look at it (W.33).

"I could *choose* this other way and see *peace instead of this.*" (W.34) emphasizes two main ideas: peace is an internal matter and I can choose to have peace or not. Both of these points represent a complete reversal from how we normally think. Therefore, it may be helpful to look at them one at a time.

Peace is an internal matter.

This idea teaches us that peace is not contingent on what is happening in the outside world. Rather, peace is an *internal* matter that "begins with (our) own thoughts and then extends outward." (W.34.1:3).

How often have we thought the exact opposite? We believe peace is dependent on what is happening in the external world and peace is experienced only when events, situations, or others are peaceful. If you have ever secretly thought or said out loud; "I would be at peace if you would stop _____" or "I could have peace if only this _____ (event/situation) wasn't happening", you can begin to understand how today's lesson teaches the complete reversal of what you currently believe.

We choose peace (or not).

This idea teaches that peace is a choice we make. When I first read this lesson, I really resisted this idea. When I was in upsetting situations, feeling depressed or intense fear, it seemed impossible to me that peace was even available, let alone it being a choice I could make. Luckily, our understanding or acceptance is not necessary to practice, so I embarked on the application of today's idea resistance and all. As I practiced a shift began to happen. If I repeated the idea over and over during times of extreme upset, I would begin to feel a shift in my inner experience. It would start as a slight lifting of the upset and then continue to release like letting the air out of a balloon slowly. This was when the experience of this idea made it seem possible to me. In addition to learning that peace is a choice I make within my mind and independent from what is happening in the external world, I also learned another very important lesson the Course tries to teach in various ways -- we determine our experience.

Today, we practice with our eyes closed in order to reinforce the idea that the disturbance of peace is a result of what is happening within the mind. When a person or an event pops into your mind, concentrate on your thoughts instead of the external form. You may be more aware of emotions rather than thoughts. If so, use your emotions instead of thoughts to practice today's lesson. Whether entertaining thoughts or feeling emotions, all are considered inroads to your peace of mind and therefore can be applied to today's idea.

As a suggestion, for one practice during an upset or negative emotion, make the commitment not to stop repeating the idea until you feel a sense of relief. This helps overcome your defenses against the truth and will provide you with an experience that you will not be able to deny. After experiencing peace, you will conclude that peace *is* an internal matter. Just one experience is all you need to recognize these truths.

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Instructions for Lesson # 34

This lesson requires three practice periods (morning, evening and one other time that seems most conducive to readiness) each lasting five minutes. In addition, today's practice requires shorter applications as frequently as possible, and whenever you feel your peace is threatened.

Longer practice periods:

- With eyes closed, search your mind for any distressing or upsetting thoughts or emotions.
- Notice them all casually and as each crosses your mind repeat: *"I could see peace instead of this"*.

Shorter practice periods:

- When a specific form of temptation occurs, repeat: *"I could see peace in this situation instead of what I now see in it"*.
- When the form shows up as an emotion repeat: *"I could see peace instead of this"*.
- When the negative emotion overpowers you, repeat: *"I can replace my feelings of _____ with peace"*.

Note, all of these statements are declarations that you are not a victim of the world you see. You can replace your feelings and you can choose to see something different. The reward is peace.

35. "My mind is a part of God's. I am very holy."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #35.

In Lesson #34 we practiced that we *can choose* to see peace. Look around at your environment and what do you see? Do you see a world that is attacking you? People who don't understand or appreciate you? A place that is scary? Upon seeing this you might be saying, "HOW exactly *do I* see peace instead of this dog-eat-dog world?" This lesson responds by directing our attention to the root of the problem, because the root, when firmly planted in the mind, sprouts a whole world right before our eyes. What is this root? It's the decision of the mind to hold onto an image that it is separate. Let's examine how a decision to be a separated self results in what we see.

Paragraph three explains this chain of events:

1. You decide the image of yourself you want to be (an autonomous, independent, separated individual).
2. You want to protect this image.
3. Therefore, you make an environment that will make you look like an autonomous, independent, separated individual.
4. When you look at the environment, you then conclude, "I must be this separated self."

Example: You are playing a virtual reality game. In this game, you can become anything you want. The instructions are as follows:

1. Decide the image of yourself that you want to be.
2. You decide a "great tennis player".
3. Program into the game the environment that would make you look like a "great tennis player".
4. You program in a tennis court, a ball and racquet, an unworthy opponent, and clapping spectators.
5. You put the virtual reality glasses on and see this environment.
6. As you look at the environment you made, you conclude: "I am a great tennis player".

The Course says this is the game we play to make up our world. We begin with the decision to be a separated self. We want to make this image appear to be real so we program into the game things that make us look like a separated self. As we look at the environment we made, we conclude, "I am a separated self".

Because your environment reinforces your belief that who you are is a separated self, it becomes necessary to go through steps to replace this image of yourself.

Step One: In order to give up something, we first have to notice that it is there. This lesson brings to our awareness the image that we want to protect. That is why the mind-searching aspect of this lesson is important.

Step Two: Once we've uncovered these images of ourselves, we are then asked to replace them with the truth: "But my mind is part of God's. I am very holy".

I love using the word "but" when practicing this lesson. The ego's voice is very loud and often the only thing we hear. We need a word that stops the ego's message in its tracks. "But" is a very strong word that psychologically has that effect. Dictionary.com describes "but" this way: "on the contrary", "having an objection to", and "were it not for".

After step one, when we list all these ego descriptions that we would normally buy hook, line and sinker, we are now saying, " *I have an objection* to that belief" or "that might be true *were it not for* the fact that my mind is part of God's. *On the contrary*, I am very holy".

One final note:

The idea we are to repeat reestablishes our connection and dependence on our Source by focusing on where we originated from. We are a part of the Mind of God. From this point, it is not a stretch that we would be holy because anything that is a part of God *is* holy. Therefore "I am very holy" is a natural conclusion.

Instructions for Lesson # 35

This lesson requires three practice periods (morning, evening and once during the day) and as often as possible throughout the day, each lasting five minutes.

- Repeat: *"My mind is part of God's. I am very holy"*.
- Close your eyes and search your mind for attributes about yourself. Include everything that comes to your mind; positive or negative, desirable or undesirable, grandiose or debased. Generally, I find it challenging to come up with attributes I assign to myself. That is why I use the specific instructions outlined in paragraph #7.
 - I close my eyes and let events, situations or people appear in my mind.
 - I watch my reaction to this. I apply a word that would describe my reaction to it.
 - I write it down saying: *"I see myself as _____ (descriptive word)"*.
 - Do not use force in this process. If nothing occurs to you, relax and allow attributes to surface naturally. Be careful not to exclude something that comes to mind. This is equally as important as not straining to think of something.
- Name each one. *"I see myself as _____."*
- Then repeat: *"BUT my mind is part of God's. I am very holy"*
- Apply this as often as possible throughout the day whenever you are giving yourself a descriptive term. Repeat: *"I see myself as _____. But my mind is part of God's. I am very holy."* If nothing in particular occurs to you, simply repeat today's idea to yourself with your eyes closed. *"My mind is part of God's. I am very holy."*

36. *"My holiness envelops everything I see."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #36.

In Lesson 34 and Lesson 35 our practice focused on *experience* rather than learning. The result was a glimpse into a new way of experiencing the world. Experience is a wonderful way to teach. It motivates the student to keep moving toward the goal and proves to them that what they are learning is not only possible, but attainable. As an analogy, let's say we all signed up for a course to learn how to make ice cream. We attend class everyday with the hope that at the end of the course we will reach our goal. One day, the professor surprises us and brings in homemade ice cream for everyone. We haven't quite mastered how to make it on our own and we still have much to learn, but we are given the experience of the end result *now*. As we experience the ice cream, we are more motivated than ever to learn how to make it ourselves so we can have it all the time. This is how I see the practice of Lessons 34 through Lesson 36. We are experiencing the end goal now as a way to motivate us to learn how to have this experience all of the time.

In Lesson 36 we are asked to practice seeing our holiness everywhere we look. Why is this important for us to learn we are holy and innocent? Remember that the world is a mirror. It reflects what is in our mind. Because of this, the world can provide a way to see our self. Think of it this way. How do I know what color eyes I have? I can't see the color of my eyes unless I see them reflected from a mirror. When I look "out there" I see the color blue and now I know my eyes are blue. Seeing our holiness works the same way. When we look "out there" we see a reflection of our holiness. That is how we know we are holy.

To practice this, we are asked to see everything in our outer world *enveloped* in our holiness. The use of the word "envelop" is worth noting here. This word means to "wrap up in or encase completely with, as if with a covering". Try this visual practice when applying today's idea:

- Visualize yourself coming in contact with the holiness within your mind. (You may want to see holiness as light).
- Then watch it extend out to completely wrap, encase or cover what you are seeing. I found when practicing visually like this, the experience was more profound.

Instructions for Lesson # 36

This lesson requires four practice periods (morning, evening and two distributed evenly within the day) each lasting three to five minutes, along with frequent practices throughout the day.

- Close your eyes and repeat: "*My holiness envelops everything I see*" several times slowly.
- Open your eyes and casually look around, applying the idea to what you see.
- Repeat: "*My holiness envelops that _____ . My holiness envelops that _____ .*" (When you say the word "envelop" do the visual exercise of watching this object / person encased in holiness).
- Conclude by repeating the idea with eyes closed.
- This lesson does require closing your eyes as part of the shorter practice periods throughout the day. You may be tempted to think you do not have time to practice during the day with your eyes closed. You would be surprised at how many times you can actually accomplish this: at the kitchen sink, in the car, vacuuming, even brushing your teeth!

37. ***"My holiness blesses the world."***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #37.

In yesterday's lesson we practiced a new way of seeing. We went within our mind to connect with holiness and extended this holiness to the outside world which resulted in "seeing" holiness everywhere. Through this practice we reinforced our learning of the Law of Seeing; we see from the inside--out. This law has always been in effect, but up until now, the ego has been in charge of this "seeing". Thoughts of guilt resulted in seeing a world of separation, pain, suffering and sacrifice. You may have heard that *A Course in Miracles* is a mind training program. Yes, we are indeed training our mind. We are training our mind to reach in and connect with holy thoughts instead of ego thoughts. When we acknowledge and connect to something other than darkened thoughts within our mind, we become free of pain and suffering. Yesterday, we exercised our mind-muscle by training it to connect with holy thoughts and see these thoughts cover (envelop) everything in the outer world. Today's practice differs in that instead of my holiness *enveloping* the world, my holiness is *blessing* the world.

A blessing, according to dictionary.com means, "To pronounce holy". If you, in recognizing your holiness, bless someone, you are saying that what is within you must be within them also. The blessing you give today breaks down the differences erected to keep us apart, and returns your mind to the awareness of Oneness.

This lesson also addresses the question: What is my purpose? We all have a great purpose. We are here to save the world! That's a pretty tall order and we might think that involves sacrifice and hardship, but the Course's way to save the world is completely different than what you might think.

The Course begins its plan to save the world by stating the real problem -- the real cause of the world's suffering. The belief that we are separate, alone and abandoned by God is the root cause of the world's suffering. How can we help save the world? We must show everyone that this is not so. We are not separate, alone and abandoned by God; we are dreaming of exile all the while being one with everything. How do we show them (and ourselves) this? First, accept our holiness, and then see this holiness in all things. "*Those who are released must join in releasing their brothers, for this is the plan of the Atonement.*" (T.1.III.3:3) The plan is to acknowledge holiness within ourselves and then bless all things and pronounce them holy as well. When we see holiness, both within and without, we see oneness. When we see oneness, we realize we never separated from God or from each other. This is the Atonement -- the acceptance that the separation never occurred. With this acceptance, guilt is gone. With the absence of guilt, the mind only holds thoughts of holiness and because the Law of Seeing is always in effect, Heaven is restored to our awareness.

Instructions for Lesson # 37

This lesson requires four practice periods (each lasting three to five minutes), frequent practices throughout the day, and during times of upset.

- Repeat: "*My holiness blesses the world*" while looking about you. Apply it to whatever you see.
- Close your eyes and apply the idea to any person who comes to mind. Using his / her name say; "*My holiness blesses you, (name).*"
- Continue either with eyes closed or with eyes opened. You can alternate between applying the idea to what you see around you and to those who are in your thoughts.
- Conclude with a final repeat of "*My holiness blesses the world*" with eyes open and then with eyes closed.

Throughout the day:

- When encountering people throughout the day, silently say to them; "*My holiness blesses (name).*"
- This is a powerful practice and has the potential to completely transform your interaction with them.

During times when feeling irritated:

- Say; "*My holiness blesses (name)*" and see what happens to your anger. You will find that you cannot hold thoughts of anger and thoughts of holiness at the same time.

38. "There is nothing my holiness cannot do."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #38.

Today's idea teaches us the way to peace -- the way to be free of anger; fear, depression and anxiety forever. If we accept today's idea fully we will never again believe we are powerless.

The main teaching of today's idea is that we exist in the Mind of God. We are a Son of God (part of His Creation). We have within our minds, all the power that comes from being a part of God. Let that sink in for a moment. Right now, within your mind you already have everything that you need to work miracles, to love without demands, to have the peace that passeth all understanding. In this very moment, if you fully accepted this truth, you would be completely free of the laws of the world. When I allow this to sink in, it feels like a flower is blossoming into its full glory. A feeling of joy wells up inside of me and overflows. This lesson gives me hope when terror strikes me, when anger overwhelms me, when I feel there is no way I can forgive, and when the world seems to be in control of my happiness. The purpose of this lesson is to teach us that we have dominion over all things, and not because our egos are powerful. *"We have dominion over all things because of What we are". (W.38.5:5)*

Currently, we believe we are two selves: one that is the ego and one that is the Self that God created in His likeness. If you believe you are a body and spirit, then you believe you can be split in two and have two opposing identities. The Course teaches that we are only one Self; the other being a delusion of the mind. This lesson states that the power of God is available when we are willing to "wake up" from this delusional state and realize that an individual, separate identity is not who we are. *"Nothing is required of you to reach this goal (realizing that you are created by God) except to lay all idols and self-images aside, go past the list of attributes, both good and bad, you have ascribed to yourself, and wait in silent expectancy for the truth." (W. 94.4:1).* Repeating today's idea: *"There is nothing my holiness cannot do"*, is the practice of laying aside this false self and declaring that the one we truly are is the one that God created us to be.

How does this restore our mind to peace, free us from anger, fear and depression and the feeling of being powerless? When we lay aside all beliefs about who we are and accept the truth of our holiness and our creation as a Son of God, then the power to move mountains, raise the dead and heal the sick are restored to our awareness.

As we practice this lesson, be willing to set aside everything we believe about ourselves and wait for the truth of our holiness to dawn upon our minds. And then apply the power of our holiness to any situation that seems to trouble you.

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for Lesson #38

This lesson requires four practice periods each lasting a full five minutes, frequent practices throughout the day and during situations that are disturbing your peace.

- Close your eyes.
- Search your mind for any sense of loss or unhappiness of any kind within you or someone else.
- Repeat: *"In this situation involving _____ (name it) in which I see myself (himself, herself), there is nothing that my holiness cannot do".*
- For frequent applications throughout the day, apply a general statement; *"There is nothing my holiness cannot do."*
- For situations that are disturbing your peace, apply this specific statement: *"In this situation involving _____ (name it) in which I see myself (himself, herself), there is nothing that my holiness cannot do".*

39. ***"My holiness is my salvation."***

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #39.

This lesson begins with a question: *"If guilt is hell, what is its opposite?"* It asks again in paragraph 2: *"If guilt is hell, what is its opposite? This is not difficult, surely"*.

It feels as if we have wandered into the classroom and before we can even get settled in our seats the teacher poses this seemingly abstract question; *"If guilt is hell, what is its opposite?"* To the teacher the question has an *obvious* answer, but to us, the students, the answer is *not* obvious. We begin to wonder if we are in the right class or if we missed a few classes.

The teacher continues; "If you could see that the guilt you feel is hell and your freedom lies in realizing that you are not guilty (the opposite of guilt), then you would not need to attend anymore classes (read the text) or do any homework (workbook lessons), because you will have already learned what this course is trying to teach you." Upon hearing this, we see a quick and easy way out of class: accept this statement and graduate. The only problem is that we don't necessarily agree with the teacher's statement. Guilt is the basis of all our problems? Will guilt save us from all that troubles us? We're not even sure we feel guilty. Haven't we learned that guilt can be useful to keep us from doing bad things? Isn't guilt justified and warranted in some situations? With all of these questions running thru our minds, we realize that we do not believe that guilt is hell or that accepting its opposite is freedom. Instead of running for the exit, we take our seat. We have a lot to learn.

The teacher realizes that we do not accept the idea that guilt is the cause of our hell, so instead of asking us to accept the idea that guilt is the whole problem and seeing our innocence as the whole solution, the teacher presents it in a way that makes sense to us.

We are asked to become aware of all feelings that are upsetting (i.e. uneasiness, depression, fear, anger, worry, feeling unsafe). These feelings are then categorized as "unloving thoughts". Now here is something that is obvious to us. It is logical that these feelings are unloving toward me and others. We begin to feel that we are on the same page as the teacher now as the teacher states "It is this that you need saving from". We all nod in agreement. We couldn't quite see that it was guilt that we needed saving from, but we can definitely see that it would be helpful to be free from these unloving thoughts. This lesson is really teaching that all these unloving thoughts are the result of believing we are guilty. They are guilt's effects. If the cause of my unloving thoughts is guilt, then it is easy for me to see that what saves me from hell is to see my innocence (holiness).

So let's answer the question posed at the beginning of this lesson. *"If guilt is hell, what is its opposite?"* *"If guilt is hell, then innocence is heaven"*. If we want to be 'saved' and go to "heaven" (oneness) we must begin to realize and accept our holiness.

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for lesson #39

This lesson requires four practice periods each lasting a full five minutes, at least three to four times per hour throughout the day, and during times when you are tempted to believe that your holiness is not the answer to the problem.

*The practice instructions require a large time commitment. The reason we have to practice it so frequently is because we don't believe accepting our innocence and holiness is the end to our hell. If we believe our salvation comes from doing something else, then we will seek it where it is not. As an analogy, if we are dying of thirst and believe we will be saved by going left into the desert, but the pure, fresh stream water is to the right, we must be convinced that going right will save us. This lesson is training our minds to go in the direction that will save us.

- Repeat: *"My holiness is my salvation."*
- Close your eyes and search for unloving thoughts in whatever form they may appear: uneasiness, depression, anger, fear, worry, attack, insecurity, and so on.
- After the initial mind-searching (stated above), concentrate on specific situations, events or personalities you are having unloving thoughts about.
- Apply the idea to each of them: *"My unloving thoughts about ____ are keeping me in hell. My holiness is my salvation"*.
- It may be helpful to intersperse within the five minutes of practice time these two ideas:
 - Repeat today's idea slowly: *"My holiness is salvation"*.
 - Relax and do not think of anything.
- End the practice period by repeating: *"My holiness is my salvation"* and then add, *"If guilt is hell, what is its opposite?"*.

Throughout the day, three to four times per hour and more if possible.

- Repeat: *"If guilt is hell, what is its opposite?"*.
- Say: *"My holiness is my salvation"*.

During temptation:

- Repeat: *"My holiness is my salvation from this"*.

40. *"I am blessed as a Son of God."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #40.

Today, we begin by looking at the practice instructions for this lesson. Instead of longer practice periods we will engage in very frequent shorter ones and focus on remembering rather than un-learning. What is it that we are remembering? We are holy Sons of God. Our one problem, as often stated in the Course, is that we have forgotten this. Seeing our problem as one of forgetfulness, this lesson requires us to frequently repeat the truth to help us remember. This reminds me of a reoccurring skit on the PBS program "Sesame Street". In this skit a mom asks her daughter to go to the store and buy a "loaf of bread, a stick of butter and a carton of milk". In order to remember, the little girl repeats over and over "a loaf of bread, a stick of butter and a carton of milk" until she gets to the store. Because she repeated it so many times, when she arrives at the store she remembers what her mother told her. This describes our practice for today. God, our Father, has proclaimed that we are blessed as His holy Sons. We keep forgetting this and so we are asked to repeat: "I am blessed as a Son of God" every ten minutes throughout the day to help us remember. That equates to 84 times by the end of the day! This may seem impossible to us, but to Jesus, if we really want to practice, we will. He states: "*You can practice quite well under any circumstances, if you really want to.*" (W.40.2:4). But he also realizes that the problem is our forgetfulness, so he gives us encouragement: "*If you forget, try again. If there are long interruptions, try again. Whenever you remember, try again.*" (W.40.1:4-5). Do you get the impression that this is very important to achieving the goal of this course?

Let's take a closer look at the phrase, "*I am blessed as the Son of God*". The word "blessed", first introduced in Lesson #37, means to "pronounce holy". It reminds me of the words you hear at a wedding, "By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife. What God has joined let no man put asunder." This lesson is saying to us, "*By the power God vested in the Holy Spirit, He pronounces us holy. What God has proclaimed as True let no ego put asunder.*" You are blessed *because* you are the Son of God. The ego has tried to put that asunder by making a body, developing a personality, calling this other self a name, but that does not affect the Son of God in any way, because God has proclaimed you holy.

There are two aspects to practicing today. In the shorter form, when you only have a brief time to practice, simply repeat the idea. But whenever possible, a longer practice is beneficial. This longer practice adds another element to the phrase "I am blessed as a Son of God". We need to include attributes that come from being a Son of God. Before you begin your day, take a few moments and think of what these attributes might be and jot them down. If you need help in describing a Son of God, think of the spiritual masters that have walked the earth whose essence is pure acceptance, gentleness, joy, peace, calm, etc. All of these wonderful qualities are what make up the Son of God. They are not something you try to be, but rather who you already are. (Like a tree that is majestic, strong, stable and colorful. It is these things *because* it is a tree.) You are happy, peaceful, loving, patient and perfectly safe *because* you are a Son of God.

Instructions for Lesson #40

This lesson requires a repeat of today's idea once every ten minutes.

*Establish in your mind that you *will* practice and decide on a reminder to help you remember such as a timer, a rubber band around your wrist, every time you sit in a chair, look at your computer, etc.

- With eyes open or closed repeat: "*I am blessed as a Son of God*".
- Then add several of the attributes you associate with being a Son of God, applying them to yourself.
- For example, "*I am blessed as a Son of God. I am happy, peaceful, loving and content*".
- "*I am blessed as a Son of God. I am calm, quiet, assured and confident*."
- For a brief practice, repeat: "*I am blessed as a Son of God*".

41. "God goes with me wherever I go."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #41.

Pain and suffering can be referred to in many ways: worry, helplessness, fear, anxiety, misery, depression, anger etc. If we looked deeper into these feelings we would see that they all portray an overwhelming sense of loneliness and abandonment. We might be tempted to believe these feelings are there because someone has hurt us or because we are not in a relationship, but the real root of this pain is the belief that we have been abandoned by God. The Course states that all pain and suffering are a result of this belief. We make many attempts to come up with ways to ease the world's pain, but one thing we never do is question whether the belief that caused of the pain is true. This lesson makes a bold statement regarding this: The "*effects cannot be cured because the problem is not real.*" (W.41.2:3) The initial problem of being without God is not a problem at all because you are **not without God**. This lesson sets out to prove we are not without, nor have we ever been, without God. In recognizing this, we will have finally found the real cure for our pain and suffering.

This reminds me of the cowardly lion in the Wizard of Oz. He believed he had lost the most important aspect of a lion's true nature -- courage. Because he believed this was true, he experienced anxiety, worry, helplessness and misery. It wasn't until the lion experienced himself *as courageous* that he realized he had not lost his courage. What happened to his pain and suffering? It disappeared with the realization that he hadn't lost his courage after all. It was merely covered up with his crazy thinking. We are like the lion. We experience anxiety, worry, fear and loss because we believe we have lost our natural state- oneness with God. We do not realize that we are still one with God because we have covered up this truth with a heavy cloud of insane thoughts. Just like the cowardly lion who learned he had not lost his true nature when he experienced himself as courageous, we too will learn that we did not lose God when we *experience God within us*.

The meaning of today's idea: "*God goes with me wherever I go*" is the end of suffering, the end of loneliness, the experience of perfect peace, joy and safety. What eased the lion's suffering was realizing that all he ever needed to be perfectly safe and happy was within him. In today's lesson we are realizing that all we ever need is within us, as well. It can be obscured with "dark clouds" but it can never be lost. Remembering this, you can "*indeed afford to laugh at fear thoughts*". (W.41.10:1)

Instructions for Lesson #41

This lesson requires one long practice period (as soon as you get up in the morning, if possible), lasting three to five minutes, and frequently throughout the day.

Please note: This lesson is one of three forms of meditation found in the Course. In today's practice we pass through heavy clouds of false beliefs to access the truth (God). Robert Perry has written an article using Lesson #41 as an example of how to have a Course-based meditation practice. You can access the article at: <http://circleofa.org/articles/MeditationInTheCourse.php>.

- Sit quietly with eyes closed.
- Remind yourself that to reach God within your mind is the most natural thing in the world.
- Believe that it is possible and wait in expectancy for the experience.
- Repeat: "*God goes with me wherever I go*" very slowly.
- Make no effort to think of anything. Get a sense of turning inward, away from the world and all the foolish thoughts and enter very deeply into your own mind.
- If you find it helpful repeat from time to time the idea, "*God goes with me wherever I go*".
- Throughout the day, repeat "*God goes with me wherever I go*" very slowly with eyes closed, as often as possible.
- Concentrate on the holiness this implies, the unfailing companionship that is yours and the complete protection that surrounds you.

42. "God is my strength. Vision is His gift."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #42.

What seems to be troubling you? Are you wondering if you are ever going to be at peace? Are you doubtful that you are strong enough or wise enough to handle what is in your life right now? Do you believe that the fear, depression, anxiety, anger is so real and strong within you that you cannot imagine the possibility of having a different experience? Notice in these comments that the underlying belief is weakness. Ultimately, all these statements are saying, "I am so weak. I do not have the strength or the power to overcome the forces at work in my life". Sometimes, we have momentary feelings of strength. But that is usually when we "talk ourselves into it" and convince ourselves that we *can* handle this, and that we can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. We muster up our reserve strength and plow ahead hoping that we don't lose steam half way to the goal. For years this is how I ran my life. I prided myself in being strong. In learning how to look closely at the inner hidden beliefs I came to realize that my "super strength" was a result of an intense fear that I really was weak and that the world would overtake me. I felt that if I showed my weakness I would be devoured. If you share in these feelings, this lesson can have a powerful impact on you, like it did me.

When we try to find strength in what is inherently weak (separated self), we are bound to feel fear. What happens to the fear if we believe there is something within us that is inherently strong and has the power to "dispel the night"? We would feel calm and reassured and the fear would disappear. Today's lesson can have that effect. Yesterday we practiced that God goes with us wherever we go because God is in our mind. If God's power is strength, then we always have strength within us, and it is available to use in any circumstance or state of doubt and fear we might find ourselves experiencing. God is available to us now. His strength is there to cure all pain. His peace will calm all troubled minds. His joy will lift all spirits. His love will conquer all fear. When repeating these words: "God is my strength", think of what this means for you. "*You can receive (all of these things) at anytime, anywhere, wherever you are, and in whatever circumstances you find yourself.*" (2:2)

What is this vision that is God's gift to us? The vision of who we are (Love) and where we are (Heaven). It is not a gift we give ourselves. We don't need to search high and low for this vision, try to imagine this vision, or buy (doing good deeds, being a good person) this vision. It is freely given with no demands. We need do nothing to deserve it nor do we need to pay it back with sacrifice. Think of the most wonderful gift you've ever received and imagine receiving this with no strings attached. You were given it because you are loved and cherished. If we were to multiply that feeling by infinity, then we would begin to sense what it's like to receive the gift of vision from our God.

There is a promise in this lesson that can calm a troubled mind. The strength that God gives, the vision that is His gift, and the goal of this course, are all guaranteed. You have all of these things because it is the Will of God. This is saying that God's Will reigns. It's a "done deal". In the end, God has the ultimate say. Your ego might think that it is losing its freedom in hearing this statement, but your soul is calmed and assured by these loving words. The part of you that longs to be reunited with God knows that in this reunion with Him, - all that you are looking for will be found. And with God wanting the same thing, the end is guaranteed. Now we can relax knowing there is no mistake that cannot be corrected by the Holy Spirit and all that happens can be used to help achieve the goal of this Course - to wake up to our True Self.

In our practice we are asked to say the idea for the day and let our minds flow to other course-related thoughts. The purpose of this is to show us that everything we are practicing is relevant to learning the end goal and that all things are interconnected and support the end goal. This is helpful when we seem to be practicing an unrelated idea and do not see the relevance. It asks for our trust that in the end it all combines to give us what we want. Stringing these thoughts together is helping us develop a unified thought system.

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Instructions for Lesson #42

This lesson requires two practice periods (preferably in the morning and close to bedtime), lasting three to five minutes each, and frequently throughout the day. (If morning and evening are not possible, practice when you feel ready and can sit quietly by yourself.)

*Today you are disciplining your mind. You are asked to allow your mind to go uncensored toward course-related thoughts that reflect today's idea. If you notice the mind wandering toward ego related thoughts, practice pulling it back from wondering, setting it in the proper direction and then letting the mind flow again.

- Repeat slowly: *"God is my strength. Vision is His gift"* with eyes open, looking about you.
- Close your eyes and repeat: *"God is my strength. Vision is His gift"* even slower than before.
- Try to think of thoughts that occur to you in relation to the idea for today. For example:
 - *"Vision must be possible. God gives truly."* Or *"God's gifts to me must be mine, because He gave them to me."*
- If unrelated thoughts (or no thought) come to mind open your eyes and repeat: *"God is my strength. Vision is His gift"*.
- Throughout the day as many times as you can, repeat: *"God is my strength. Vision is His gift"*.
- Every time you repeat this idea, you are reminding yourself that the goal of the Course is important to you.

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

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #43.

To better understand this lesson it might be helpful to have a quick review of how A Course in Miracles defines the one and only problem that we have.

The Christ Mind resides in the Mind of God (state of Heaven and oneness). The Mind had a thought. "I wonder what it would be like if things were different than they are. What would it be like to be set apart and above all the rest?" The Mind began to fantasize what it would be like. The nature of fantasies is that what appears in the mind can look and feel very real. When the mind experienced this fantasy, it believed that it shattered oneness into a million separated parts and Heaven (oneness) was no more. The point the Course makes over and over is that this never happened. The mind's thinking did not have any effects. The Christ Mind never left Heaven and did not succeed in shattering Heaven. However, what did happen was the mind became lost in a fantasy and fell into a deep, deep sleep. This sleep broke off communication with God because the mind was elsewhere, listening to its own thoughts.

Our experience, although appearing to be very real, is only a dream --an illusion -- a hallucination. It is a *dream* of separation. It is not reality. It is a mind lost in a fantasy. God and the Christ Mind are still one and still reside in the awareness of oneness. Therefore, everything that appears in this dream of separation is seeing apart from God. God does not see this dream, in the same way that you do not see the dream your partner is having at night. You are both in the same place but one mind is off having its own dream. If we are seeing apart from God, then we are seeing an illusion. So the question is: can we really see apart from God? Yes, we can see fantasies. But fantasies are not real. A desk when seen through your dreaming eyes appears to be solid and real, as would any desk in your dreams at night. If you see a stranger, this person appears to have a body, a personality, a behavior, as would any stranger in your dreams at night. You cannot really "see" the desk or "see" the stranger. Why? Because, you are dreaming.

Being lost in a dream and believing it is real, can feel like there is no way out. But, we are not to worry because God has a plan. He knows communication has been shut down because His Love is blocked and He cannot impart His Joy. He sends into the mind that is dreaming, the Holy Spirit, who becomes our link between Heaven and the dream. The Holy Spirit is like a huge telephone line that links us directly to the Voice of God. Anytime we pick up the phone we can hear God speaking to us. He is speaking words of love, joy and peace. He is reminding us of our home and beckoning us to wake up so we can partake in the riches of His love and care. While in the dream state, there is a way to see God and that is with the Holy Spirit. If we "see" something with the Holy Spirit, we are getting a glimpse of the truth. (Tomorrow's lesson will touch on this.)

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for Lesson #43

This lesson requires three practice periods (one in the morning, one in the afternoon and another one when it is convenient) each lasting five minutes each and frequently throughout the day.

- Repeat: *"God is my Source. I cannot see apart from Him"* with eyes open.
- Glance around you applying the idea to what you see. Use four to five subjects.
 - Randomly select these subjects. Do not discard one or purposely include one. For example, *"God is my Source. I cannot see this desk apart from Him."*
- With eyes closed repeat: *"God is my Source. I cannot see apart from Him"* and let related thoughts come to you. For example: *"I see through the eyes of forgiveness."* *"I see the world as blessed."* *"The world can show me myself."* *"I see my own thoughts, which are like God's."*
- If your mind wanders draw it back by repeating the idea and glancing around the room. Then continue on with eyes closed.
- Throughout the day repeat frequently: *"God is my Source. I cannot see apart from Him"*.
 - When with someone repeat: *"God is my Source, I cannot see you apart from Him"*.
 - In a situation or event (especially if something is distressing you), repeat: *"God is my Source, I cannot see this apart from Him"*.
 - If no particular subject presents itself merely repeat *"God is my Source. I cannot see apart from Him"*.
- Try not to allow any long periods of time to slip by without remembering today's idea.

44. "God is the light in which I see."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #44.

This lesson begins by comparing darkness with the light of Creation. It differentiates between dark and light throughout the Text and Workbook by stating that if you are in darkness then you are not in light and if you are in light, then you are not in darkness. *"The darkness cannot choose that it remain. The coming of the light means it is gone."* (T.29.III.3:8-9) You may not realize you are in darkness. After all, you can still see right? We believe we are seeing correctly, but the Course refers to our "seeing" in this way. You have closed your eyes and are seeing in the dark. We cannot really see in the dark. We think we're seeing real things, but they are just a parade of images going by. We mistake them for something real *because* we have forgotten that we have closed our eyes. As an analogy, imagine you are out at midnight. In the dark, everything takes on a nightmarish image. The tree rustling in the wind is a ghost. The squirrel crossing your path is something huge that startles you. The person walking toward you is someone that might attack you. If you want to illuminate what you are seeing so that you are not scared of the dark, you get a flash light. As you walk along the path you point the light toward what you are seeing. The ghost is merely a tree and is breathtaking. The squirrel is tiny, and in the light, is actually cute. The person walking toward you is not an attacker but, your long lost friend. My how things look different in the light!!

The way to truly see is to find the light that will give us sight. *"Within the dream of bodies and of death is yet one theme of truth; no more, perhaps, than just a tiny spark, a space of light created in the dark, where God still shines."* (T.29.III.3:1) We can find this light if we know where to look. This light is not outside of us. It is not a huge spot light coming from the sky. It is within us. The beauty of it being within us is that we can turn it on at any time to bring clear sight. And we do not have to be afraid of the things that go bump in the night any longer.

Today's practice is the same form of meditation you practiced in Lesson #41. This lesson makes a distinct point about your experience. In order to reach this light you must travel through the insignificant thoughts that have nothing to do with your destination. These insignificant thoughts are ego thoughts. You may notice a resistance to go past these thoughts because you associate yourself AS the ego. Therefore, you don't see *random* thoughts, you see *your* thoughts. You believe they are important to you because they *belong to you*. When traveling inward to find this light your ego is upset. It's like getting passed over when picking teams on the school playground. This lesson states it more bluntly: to the ego *"it is a loss of identity and a descent into hell"*. (W.44.5:6) As we journey through the Course, we will surely lose our identity as the ego. But for now, in order to lower the resistance, *"stand aside from the ego by ever so little and you will have no difficulty in recognizing that its opposition and its fears are meaningless"* (W.44.6:1)

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Instructions for Lesson #44

This lesson requires at *least* three practice periods lasting three to five minutes each (longer is recommended if there is no sense of strain), and throughout the day as often as possible.

Before you begin:

- Get a sense of the importance of what you are doing and its immeasurable value to you.
- Be aware that you are attempting something very holy and something that will free you from all that seems frightening.
- If resistance occurs when practicing, pause and repeat today's idea, keeping your eyes closed.
- If fear arises, try opening your eyes and repeating today's idea.

Practice:

- Repeat: "*God is the light in which I see*" with your eyes open.
- Close your eyes slowly, repeating the idea several more times.
- Try to sink into your mind, letting go of every kind of interference and intrusion by quietly sinking past them. Slip by your passing thoughts (Let your thoughts pass by) without involvement.
- Throughout the day repeat: "*God is the light in which I see*" often, with eyes open or closed, whichever is better for you at the time.
- Be determined to not forget to practice throughout the day.

Using visualization can help with this practice. As an example, if you have trouble "quietly sinking past" your thoughts, see your mind travel through a light, misty fog or fluffy clouds to the light that is in the center. Also, when going inward it may be helpful to look at your body as melting away and your mind as sinking in toward the light.

How do you know when you've arrived? You have a sense of inner calm and peace. This is the quiet center -- the place within where God still shines. When you access the light, let it expand in your mind. You can visualize it burning off the fog as it expands to encompass your whole mind.

45. "God is the Mind with which I think."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #45.

Part of the awakening process is to uncover all the ego thoughts that we keep hidden. We must be willing to bring them up to the surface in order to have them healed. When we embark on this, we begin to wonder if there is no end to these ego thoughts. It seems to be a bottomless pit full of fear, guilt and self-hatred. It can be quite discouraging to discover all these thoughts because they seem so far away from Light. We believe that in our desire to be separate, we threw out Light and replaced it with darkness and ego thoughts. While practicing the last few lessons, we discovered something else within our minds -- God, light, strength and vision. We are being taught through experience, that we did not throw anything away. We merely covered it up when we closed our eyes and fell asleep.

Imagine making this discovery. It's as if you had a beautiful heirloom from your grandmother who loved you unconditionally. You dreamt that you were in a "cleaning out stage" and took this piece and threw it away. When you realized what you had done, you were horrified. In a moment of insanity, you thought you didn't want it. Seeing it gone, you longed to have it back. Believing you could never have it back, you were devastated and overcome with loss. Suddenly, you awake from your dream and notice the heirloom on your dresser. What would it feel like to realize that you still have the cherished item that represents all the love that you felt from your grandmother? You were only dreaming you threw it away. This is what it would feel like to discover you still have the Light within you and you remain as God created you.

Today's practice teaches about our real thoughts. Real thoughts are seen as the opposite of ego thoughts and represent our communication with God. With ego thoughts, the mind is actively engaged in judgment and projection. With real thoughts, the mind is actively engaged in love and extension, and is connected to God in a very intimate way. Real thoughts emanate from God, to the Son, and extend out to all of Creation. It is helpful to see real thoughts as a formless expression of love rather than words. Real thoughts are in the mind and we will attempt to reach them.

Today, we practice with the meditation form we have used for the last few lessons. We pass by the unreal thoughts and sink down into your real thoughts.

To pass by the unreal it is helpful to engage your mind in some declarations of intent:

- I will deny the world in favor of truth.
- I will not let the thoughts of the world hold me back.
- I will not let the beliefs of the world tell me that to reach God is impossible.
- I will realize that God wants this for me and it is possible.
- I will realize that I want this for me.
- I will realize I cannot fail in doing what God would have me do.

Instructions for Lesson #45

This lesson requires three practice periods lasting five minutes each and throughout the day as often as possible.

When approaching this practice take a moment to reflect on what you are about to do. You are approaching an altar dedicated to God and His Sons; Heaven is the place you are trying to reach.

- Repeat: "God is the Mind with which I think" to yourself, closing your eyes as you do so.
- Spend a short time thinking a few relevant thoughts to today's idea.
- After you have added four or five thoughts of your own, say: "My real thoughts are in my mind. I would like to find them".
- Quietly sink past your unreal thoughts and go inward and reach to the eternal.
- When you approach your real thoughts you have found the inner altar that reflects such holiness and love you cannot help but feel its effects. Your real thoughts will reflect peace, joy, love, safety, contentment -- oneness. You have found the most cherished and most loved aspect of yourself. You did not throw it away. It has been held for you in safe-keeping just waiting to be discovered.
- Throughout the day, repeat today's idea as often as possible. When repeating the idea take a moment to appreciate your mind's holiness and thank God for the thoughts He is thinking with you.

46. "God is the Love in which I forgive".

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #46.

To understand this, we must revisit the story of the separation when the first condemnation took place. In the creation, God extended Himself to His creations and created His Son perfect, where only love and oneness exist. A curious thought entered the mind of the Son: "What would it be like to experience a state different than this?" With the thought came the desire for this experience, and with desire, the mind became lost in a fantasy and fell into a deep sleep. Mistaking the fantasy for reality the mind concluded that it had sinned against God and had done the unforgivable. Thus, the mind had the first experience of guilt. This began a two part defense strategy to rid itself of guilt – first, push the guilt into the unconscious, and then project it onto others -- hoping that by seeing guilt in another it would prove it no longer had it.

This original desire and perceived act of separation are buried deep in the unconscious. We may not be aware of committing the perceived crime of separation, but we all have some awareness of the defense strategy. We need only look at our judgments on others and the denial of our own guilt to see that this disassociation from guilt is happening all the time. Notice how finding fault in another seems to "elevate" you. You may not be perfect, but you certainly would not do what they did! Or how about when someone accuses you of doing something wrong? Isn't your first line of defense to point out their flaws to ease your guilt?

The Course counsels us to not be deceived with this tactic. Guilt is not released by seeing it outside you. It is merely being extended like taffy that is stretched, and now seen everywhere. Think of this the next time you see guilt in someone else -- it is really your own guilt stretched and seen outside of you. Therefore, "as you condemn only yourself, so do you forgive only yourself." (W.46.1:5)

It's important to remember one very important fact: there is no need to seek forgiveness from God because *He* does not condemn you. Why? Because, the separation never happened. It's all a dream in the mind. Knowing it's a dream, would He condemn His children for what they did not do? Would God punish His children for dreaming? When a child is having a nightmare, would a parent go into their bedroom and tell the child that they are bad for having the dream and must seek forgiveness for what they did in the dream? No. The parent would shower them with love and kisses, helping them realize they are safe and sound, and assure them they never did the thing they dreamed they did. God, our Father, wants to save us from our nightmares and shower us with love just like any loving parent.

God wants you to turn away from dreams of fear and condemnation so you can rest in the remembrance that you are blessed, you are loved, and you are innocent. How is this accomplished? First, you must forgive others from *your* condemnation. This is necessary because you believe it is your brother who is guilty, and therefore fail to see that it is *you* who needs God's Love. Practice today with a grateful heart. To forgive others *is* to forgive yourself, and through God's love, you will wake up from your nightmares and remember that you are completely innocent.

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for Lesson #46

This lesson requires three practice periods lasting five minutes each and throughout the day with frequent repetition.

- Repeat: *"God is the Love in which I forgive"*.
- Close your eyes and search for someone you have not forgiven. (Anyone you do not like is a suitable subject.)
- Say: *"God is the Love in which I forgive _____ (name)"*.
 - It may be helpful to use a visual of light (God's Love) shining on the person in front of you to reveal their innocence.
- Now apply this to yourself saying, *"God is the Love in which I forgive myself"*.
 - Picture this same light shining away all illusions about yourself to reveal the holiness and glory that you are.
- Devote the remainder of your practice time to adding relevant thoughts to today's idea. For example:
 - *"I cannot be guilty because I am a Son of God"*,
 - *"I have already been forgiven"*,
 - *"No fear is possible in a mind beloved by God"*, and
 - *"There is no need to attack because love has forgiven me"*.
- Conclude your practice time by repeating: *"God is the Love in which I forgive"*.
- Throughout the day devote shorter practice times to repeating: *"God is the Love in which I forgive"* or a related form of this idea.
- Be sure to include during the day, the more specific application as stated above. Also, practice when you have negative reactions to anyone, present or not, tell him / her silently: *"God is the Love in which I forgive you"*.

47. "God is the strength in which I trust."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #47.

This lesson is very powerful. When we can accept this idea as the truth and apply it to our lives, it has the ability to bring peace to anything that is troubling us. To help grasp the full impact of this lesson, let's focus on a current concern you have.

- Bring to mind a situation that is causing you concern. It could be a relationship or career issue, or perhaps something that is happening to a loved one.
- In this situation, circle all those below that apply to the way you're feeling.

Anxious Fearful Apprehensive Depression Anger
Loss of control Inadequate Confusion Panic Unsafe

- Are you scared that in the end you won't come up with the right solution, your solution will not result in happiness, or that you will make a devastating choice that will lead to pain and suffering?

If you circled any of the above, or answered "yes" to this question, would it be accurate to conclude that in this situation you believe you are frail and weak? You may not always be aware that you see yourself this way. Most of us are not. Usually, we are too busy masking these feelings of weakness by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps and mustering up the courage to plow ahead. If we were made aware, we fear we would sink instead of swim. This lesson asks us to pause for a moment and notice that these feelings are there. You may be asking at this point, "why on earth would I do that?"

In order to heal, the Course tells us over and over, to not hide from your beliefs of weakness and frailty by plowing ahead and puffing up your image of strength in your own mind. Expose these beliefs so they can be corrected. *"The recognition of your own frailty is a necessary step in the correction of your errors."* (W.47:6:1)

The reason we believe we are inadequate, frail and weak is because we are trying to find strength in what is inherently weak -- our ego self. We are putting trust in the self that feels guilty, fearful and separated from God. This is not a good plan! It's like the story of the three pigs that built their house with weak materials and expected the weak materials to protect them. We know deep down that our ego is a belief that we are weak, even though we try to pretend it's strong. We know the truth. So when the winds of change come, we are fearful and anxious because we have built our house with sticks.

If you trust in your own strength, you will not gain confidence. But, confidence can be gained, if you trust in the strength of God instead. We have been practicing in the previous lessons to access the Kingdom of Heaven within. Through these practices we have discovered the light that we are, our real thoughts and pure love. Today, we are about to discover something else that resides deep within the center of our mind -- strength that will provide:

- Safety in every circumstance,
- Confidence to find solutions that will bring happiness (peace) and guarantee the right solution, and
- A deep sense of peace that can only come when we know that God is in charge.

Take a moment and review your situation. How would you feel if you knew you were safe? How would you feel if you had complete confidence that the situation would be resolved in a way that only happiness can come of it or if you knew you would be at peace no matter what? Today, we will reach within our mind, to find the source of real strength. Isn't it good news to learn there is a place in you where there is perfect peace, where nothing is impossible, and where the strength of God abides? All you need is to have confidence in the strength of God that is within you.

(Continued on next page)

Instructions for Lesson #47

This lesson requires four practice periods lasting five minutes each and throughout the day with frequent repetition.

- Close your eyes and repeat: *"God is the strength in which I trust"*.
- Spend a minute or two searching your mind for situations in which make you feel fearful and are causing you concern. Dismiss each one by telling yourself: *"God is the strength in which I trust"*.
- Practice the inward meditation we have been using in past lessons:
 - Go past the clouds and fog which are your concerns that "churn and bubble on the surface".
 - Sink inward to the center of your mind where light, real thoughts, love and strength reside.
 - Feel this deep sense of peace and know you are in His safe keeping and all is well.
- Throughout the day repeat today's idea often and use it as your answer to any disturbance.
 - Say to yourself: *"Peace is my right because I give my trust to the strength of God"*.

48. "There is nothing to fear."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #48.

When you first repeat this statement "there is nothing to fear", you may not be saying it as a statement of fact, but rather as a question followed by an argument against the statement. "There is nothing to fear? Oh really! Just look around. I see lots of reasons for fear -- the unpredictable stock market, dwindling gas supply, loss of jobs, disease, and random violence. The reasons are endless as to why this statement cannot be true." And yet, we are asked to repeat this statement "very frequently and as often as possible" not as wishful thinking or speculation, but as a fact. The reason the statement "there is nothing to fear" is a fact, is because all the things we fear *are* illusions. (An illusion is something that is not real, but we see as real.) Our challenge is that we "*believe in illusions and do not see that illusions are not true.*" (W.48.1:2)

Have you ever witnessed someone having a night terror? Night terrors are different than nightmares. When you look at the dreamer, instead of seeing someone lying asleep on the bed, you see the person's body interacting with the dream as if it were real. If the dreamer sees a monster chasing them in the dream, their bodies will thrash around on the bed trying to get away from the monster. The realness of this experience for them is undeniable. Now imagine while the dreamer is lost in this night terror, you can clearly see there is no monster and that they are perfectly safe. If you spoke to them and said as a statement of fact: "There is nothing to fear". Do you think the dreamer would believe you? No, because they are lost in the realness of their experience.

This describes our condition. Truly, there is nothing to fear, and yet, we are lost in our dream of fear. Realizing our predicament, Jesus gives us a way to see there is nothing to fear while still dreaming. We have actually been practicing the way to recognize there is nothing to fear since Lesson #35. Through our practice, we have discovered a whole different aspect of our mind. In the center of our mind there is light, love and the strength of God. The reason we can practice "there is nothing to fear" as a fact is because we have within us, the Holy Spirit, who holds the vision to see all illusions as not real. When we look at an illusion and deny its power by saying "there is nothing to fear", you are going past all the false imaginings to Reality. For a brief moment, you allow the love and strength of God to release you from your nightmares. "*The instant you are willing to do this, there is indeed nothing to fear.*" (W.48.3:3).

Instructions for Lesson #48

This lesson requires frequent practices throughout the day.

- Repeat: "*There is nothing to fear*" as often as you possibly can with eyes open.
- A few times throughout the day repeat the ideas with eyes closed and really concentrate on the meaning of the words.
- Repeat: "*There is nothing to fear*" especially in times of distress when anything disturbs your peace of mind.
- During times of distress, I like to repeat a version of today's idea: "Because of the strength of God within my mind, there is truly nothing to fear". This helps me to remember not to rely on my own weakness to dispel the fear, but to remember that the strength of God is where my safety lies.

49. "God's Voice speaks to me all through the day."

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #49.

Over the last few days, we have been training our minds to go the center where God abides -- where there is light, love, real thoughts and strength. Yesterday's lesson brought us to the conclusion of these practices -- if this place resides within my mind and it holds perfect safety, peace and joy, then truly, there is nothing to fear.

Today's lesson teaches us about an additional attribute of our mind. "*The part of your mind in which truth abides is in constant communication with God, whether you are aware of it or not.*" (W.49.1:2) This means there is a part of your mind that is communicating with God without interruption. Therefore, you are not practicing in order to *activate* this place within your mind; you are practicing in order to bring *awareness* to what is *already happening* within your mind.

To help us understand this, let's take a moment to remember what happened in the separation. The Sonship was created as a loving extension of the Father and exists in unity with God. In this state of Oneness (Heaven), there is a beautiful song playing in the mind of the Sonship. This song of thanksgiving and joy plays the notes of innocence, holiness, constant peace, perfect safety and wholeness. To fulfill the wish to be separate, something had to be done to block the melody of oneness. How was this accomplished? By filling the mind with "*raucous shrieks and sick imaginings*" (W.49.4:2), "*beliefs in our own inadequacy*" (W.47.4:1), "*heavy clouds of insane thoughts*" (W.41.5:2), and "*unloving thoughts that result in fear, worry, attack, depression, anger.*" (W.39.6:2). Think of it this way: your parents are playing the most beautiful symphony ever written and when heard, it creates emotions of overwhelming joy and peace. However, you insist on cranking up your heavy metal band music so you can't hear it.

Like listening to heavy metal music, the wild thoughts in the mind can be quite a distraction from hearing the quiet Voice within. Therefore, we must first train our minds to be very still in order to hear the melody that God placed within our minds. Eventually, we will be able to go along with our daily activities constantly hearing the song of love playing in our minds. Have you ever gotten a song 'stuck in your head'? Hearing God's Voice all the time will be the same way. You can be talking, walking, playing, eating, working, etc. and God's Voice will speak to you. "*It is possible even in this world to hear only that voice and no other. It takes effort and great willingness to learn.*" (T.5.II.3:9-10) Today, we make the effort and are willing to learn to hear God's Voice.

If you have ever felt alone in this world -- as if you did not belong, you will find great peace in today's practice. There is a place where you *do* belong, where you *are* welcomed and loved. There is a place where you *will* find your Father waiting for you to envelop you in His loving embrace. God is calling out to you with His song of love and joy. To hear this call of love we are learning to quiet the mind and sink past all other sounds. It is God's Will that we find this place within our minds. Let us practice in confidence that God's Will, *will* be done.

Instructions for Lesson #49

This lesson requires at least four practice periods (more if possible) lasting five minutes each and frequent practices throughout the day.

We will use the meditation technique we practiced in previous lessons:

- Listen in deep silence.
- Become very still and open your mind.
- Go quietly past all the loud shrieks, confusing thoughts, and sights and sounds of this insane world.
- Sink deep into peace.
- Hear God's Voice "*call to you lovingly, reminding you that your Creator has not forgotten His Son*". (W.49.2:6)
- Throughout the day repeat this practice very frequently, with eyes closed when possible (open if necessary), and realize that you are inviting God's Voice to speak to you.

50. *"I am sustained by the Love of God."*

Before reading this commentary, please read Workbook Lesson #50.

It is really no surprise to read in today's lesson that we put our faith in the things of this world to sustain us. Who among us has not practiced a version of a "self-improvement" program or tried to win friends and influence people? In fact, there was not one thing on the list in W.50.1:4 that I have not tried at one time or another to answer my problems. What is interesting about this, is the realization that everything in the world that we give magical powers to, has to do with the body. The health of the body, the like or dislike of the body, the protection of the body, the maintenance of the body... Have we ever given thought to the idea that each time we seek out something in the world to sustain us, we are paying homage to the ego and making a statement: "I am not the holy Son of God, I am a separated body"? We identify so much with the body that to practice reaching for the love of God instead of trying to be liked, trying to protect the body, or improve the personality seems insane. The temptation is great and the identification with the body is strong. But alas, we have motivation to ignore the temptation to tend to the body personality. What is the motivation to try another way? It is the realization that everything we have put our faith in eventually fails. Relationships crumble, jobs are lost, illness comes and goes, friends turn into enemies, money is here and gone... Is it really that difficult to leave our "seek and do not find" method behind and try something different to solve our problems and bring peace to our troubled minds?

This lesson is a way to get off the merry-go-round of "seek and do not find". It leads us to a place within that gives us what we need *"to protect us from all circumstances, lift us out of every trial, and raise us high above all perceived dangers of this world"*. (W.50.3:2) By discovering this place within our mind, we can turn away from the world toward a place where nothing can threaten us, nothing can disturb us, and nothing can intrude upon our calm. *"Can pills, money, protective clothing, influence, prestige, being liked, knowing the right people"* (W.50.1:3) give us this state of mind? Our part is to realize that nothing in this world will sustain us, that we need to stop searching outside ourselves and turn our attention inward where the Love of God is waiting to be remembered. Everything we desire awaits our remembering. It's just not where we thought it was. Look within and you will find it.

Instructions for Lesson #50

This lesson requires two practice periods, one in the morning and one in the evening, lasting ten minutes each.

- Repeat: *"I am sustained by the love of God"*. Let this idea sink deep into your consciousness.
- Repeat it. Think about it and let related thoughts come.
 - i.e. *"Only the love of God will protect me. I put all my faith in the Love of God within me. This is the answer to every problem."*
- Allow peace to flow over you like a blanket of protection and surety.
- If idle or foolish thoughts begin to disturb your mind, reject them by repeating: *"I am sustained by the love of God"* and sink once again into peace.