

LESSON 13 • JANUARY 13

“A meaningless world engenders fear.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: The same as yesterday.

Exercise: Three or four times, for one minute or so (no more).

- Close your eyes and repeat the idea.
- Open your eyes and look slowly around you. While doing so repeat over and over, “*I am looking at a meaningless world.*”
- Close your eyes and say, “*A meaningless world engenders fear, because I think I am in competition with God.*”

Remarks: Do not worry if you do not believe the closing statement. You may think it is crazy and you may resist it. All of that is fine. Simply note your resistance, whatever forms it takes, and tell yourself that the real reason for it is that this statement awakens your underlying fear of God’s vengeance. Deep inside you believe that by rushing in and writing your meaning on the world’s blank slate you have temporarily defeated God. As a result, you believe you now face His wrath. To cope with this belief you have shoved it down into your unconscious, but today’s concluding statement brings it back toward the surface. This is why you fear the statement and are eager to dismiss it. Because of all this, do not dwell on it or even think of it except during the exercises.

Commentary

More specifically than upsetting us, the meaningless world we see sparks fear within us. After spending several days convincing us, so it seems, that the world is meaningless, the Course “reverses course”:

Actually, a meaningless world is impossible. Nothing without meaning exists.
(1:2–3)

The introduction to the Text states that “nothing unreal exists” (T-In.2:3), and now we are told nothing meaningless exists. The situation is not that meaningless things exist and we are afraid because we see them; what is happening is that we *think* we perceive things without meaning, and rush to write our meaning on them. We see no meaning because we are unwilling to see the meaning already written on them by God.

When we see the meaningless it arouses anxiety in us:

It represents a situation in which God and the ego “challenge” each other as to whose meaning is to be written in the empty space the meaninglessness provides. The ego rushes in frantically to establish its own ideas there, fearful that the void may otherwise be used to demonstrate its own impotence and unreality. And on this alone it is correct. (2:2–4)

If the ego did not rush in to give its meaning to things, the meaning established by God would, indeed, demonstrate the unreality of the ego. That is why the ego imagines it sees an empty space of meaninglessness to write in; it fears the meaning God has already given. We assign our own meaning to everything.

The Course is insistent that if we did not rush in to write our own meaning, the message we would hear would be one of love and beauty. This is true no matter what the outside “situation” appears to be. For instance, a brother may be totally deceived by his own ego and verbally

attacking us. The message we hear in his words, no matter their form, is the message we *choose* to hear. We assign the meaning we think our brother is giving us. If my mind were attuned to the Holy Spirit, no matter what anyone did or said, I would hear a message that affirms the Christ in me and engenders my love. (For a long—and somewhat complex—section on this very topic, see Text, Chapter 9, Section II, “The Answer to Prayer,” which says, in part, “The message your brother gives you is up to you. What does he say to you? What would you have him say? Your decision about him determines the message you receive” [T-9.II.5:1–4].)

The idea that we are in competition with God and fear His vengeance because of our competition may, as the lesson admits, seem preposterous. It asks us to practice the lesson anyhow. At this level we are mainly trying to become aware that we are afraid to leave anything without meaning, although we don’t realize fully *why* we are afraid of that. It is asking us to work at being willing to say, “I do not know what this means.” We really are afraid of that! The lesson also asks us to note any form of fear carefully. Not to try to overcome it; just notice it. Notice that leaving something without an assigned meaning makes you anxious, and let yourself consider that maybe the reason is that somehow, somewhere deep down in the darkness of your unconscious, you are afraid of the meaning God might write there if you let Him.

