

LESSON 157 • JUNE 6

“Into His Presence would I enter now.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To usher in our first direct experience of Heaven. This is a holy day, a crucial turning point in the curriculum, the beginning of a new journey. Today will launch your ministry. Your only purpose now will be to bring to the world the vision that reflects what you experience today. And you will be given power to touch everyone with that vision.

Morning/evening quiet time: At least five minutes; ideally, thirty or more.

Approach this practice with a sense of sanctity, for you are attempting to pass beyond the veil of the world and walk into Heaven. Repeat the idea (you may want to repeat it over and over again), and let it bring you into that deep place in your mind, the place of stillness and rest. Then wait there “in still anticipation and in quiet joy” (4:3), for the experience promised you. Trust that your Self will carry you to where you need to go. He will lift your mind to the highest reaches of perception, to the holiest vision possible. Here at “the door where learning ceases” (2:3), you will pause for a moment, and then walk through that doorway into eternity. You will pass beyond all form and briefly enter Heaven.

Today is meant to be your first experience of what the Text calls revelation, direct union with God and your Self. Yet if it happens (and tomorrow’s lesson will seem to acknowledge the obvious fact that it may not; see W-pI.158.11:1), it will not be your last. You will come into this experience increasingly. Each time will bring both you and the world closer to the day when this experience will be yours for all eternity.

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

Repeat the idea and spend a quiet moment with it, seeking to enter into the Presence of your Self. Then thank God for His gifts to you in the previous hour, and let His Voice tell you what He wants you to do in the next hour.

Commentary

Experience and Vision

Today I’d like to share some thoughts based mainly on Lesson 157, but with some references to Lesson 158 also. This lesson introduces a series of lessons designed to lead us into the holy instant, which is a major goal of the Workbook. From this point on, “Every lesson, faithfully rehearsed, brings you more swiftly to this holy place” (3:3).

The Course talks here of both an *experience* and of *vision* which results from the experience. The holy instant contains a moment of knowledge—something beyond all perception—from which we return with the vision of Christ in our minds, which we can offer to everyone.

The experience spoken of here is simply entering the Presence of God. It is “a different kind of feeling and awareness” (1:4) in which we “learn to feel the joy of life” (1:6). It is called elsewhere the holy instant. Lesson 157 calls it “a touch of Heaven” (3:1) and a moment in which we are left to our Self. It is an instant in which “the world is quietly forgot, and Heaven is remembered for a while” (6:3). We leave time for a moment and walk into eternity (3:2). It is not something we do ourselves; the Holy Spirit, the “Giver of the happy dreams of life” and “Translator of perception into truth,” will lead us (8:2).

The vision spoken of is the result of the experience. This is not “a vision,” something that is seen, but “vision,” a way of seeing. We are not talking of some trance state, some appearance within our minds of mystical sights. We are talking about a different way of seeing the world, a different mechanism of sight, something other than the physical senses. Eastern religion might talk about opening the Third Eye to indicate the same sort of thing.

In experiencing the holy instant, we have awakened a different way of seeing. That new sort of vision does not disappear when we “come back to the world,” so to speak (7:1). It is only a figure of speech to say we come back. We never left. Or perhaps better, since Heaven is what is real and this world is the illusion, we never came here at all. What “comes back” with us, into the dream, is the remembrance of God and Heaven, the remembrance of what we saw in that holy instant. We continue to see glimpses of it beyond the sight of the world, seeing the “real world” beyond the world, and beyond that, Heaven.

Each (apparently separate) holy instant we experience strengthens this new vision, this new mechanism of seeing. This is the purpose of the Workbook’s recommendations for daily morning and evening periods of meditation; they are practice sessions, exercises to develop our new vision. We are meant, of course, to exercise this vision constantly during the day, to have repeated holy instants all day long. If we compare this to learning a language, the meditation sessions are like language labs and grammar studies. The concentrated language exercises are not an end in themselves but are meant to prepare us and improve our speech and understanding as we go out and actually use the language. Likewise, meditation is not an end in itself. It is an exercise to strengthen spiritual vision, but the purpose is to go out into daily life and begin using that new vision as often as possible.

Lesson 157 says, “We cannot give experience like this directly. Yet it leaves a vision in our eyes which we can offer everyone” (6:2–3). I can’t give you a holy instant directly. I can tell you about it, but you have to do the work yourself and have the experience yourself.

What I can give you or offer to you is the new vision, the new way of seeing the world. The vision we can all teach, as fledgling teachers of God, is that of forgiveness and love within the world. I can teach you that it is possible to see the invisible beyond the visible, to see the undimmed truth behind the clouds of doubt, fear and defense. I can teach you to “see no one as a body. Greet him as the Son of God he is, acknowledging that he is one with you in holiness” (W-pI.158.8:3–4). By seeing you without guilt I teach you that seeing without guilt is possible.

And in willingness to practice the vision, willingness to ask to be shown a different way of seeing, the experience of the holy instant comes.