

## LESSON 184 • JULY 3

### “The Name of God is my inheritance.”

#### Practice instructions

**Purpose:** To go past the inheritance you gave yourself—the little, separate things of the world, each with its own name—and experience the inheritance that God gave you: everything, all of Heaven. This experience will help “make your weak commitment strong; your scattered goals blend into one intent” (W-pI.In.181-200.1:1).

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

The practice in this lesson is the same as yesterday—what I call Name of God Meditation—with perhaps a slightly modified emphasis:

- Close your eyes and repeat today’s idea one time.
- After that, simply “repeat God’s Name slowly again and still again” (W-pI.183.6:1). As you repeat this Name (remember you can use a name of your own choosing), realize that you are calling upon the awareness of all of reality, including the true reality of all your brothers. You are really asking for the inheritance God gave you as His Son. He has passed on to you everything He has, which is everything there is. This is what you are asking for, so ask with desire.
- When your mind wanders to all the little names that denote the things of this world, use God’s Name to dispel those names, remembering that everything that is real has only one Name.

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

Do a short version of the morning/evening exercise. Close by asking for God’s guidance for the coming hour and thanking Him for His gifts in the past hour.

#### Commentary

There is a lot we could think about in this lesson. The way names, which are symbols, are based on separation and distancing of things. The way that perception is built up by these names and distinctions. How all of this forces us to view wholeness as an enemy. The way that the learning of the world consists primarily in learning all these names and ways of classifying things.

All of this is in contrast to the reality that is represented by the Name of God. The Name of God stands for wholeness, oneness, “the one Identity Which all things share” (10:2). Our perception has taught us an illusion, based on thousands of names for discrete parts we see as separate things; reality, however, is wholeness, undifferentiated, unseparated. The picture of parts we have manufactured hides the reality of the wholeness from us.

So, then, are we to attempt to completely set aside our perception of parts with separate names, and to live, somehow, seeing only the oneness? Is it somehow “wrong” for us to use the names and symbols of the world, to act as though Marilyn is different from Bob? Are we to treat a bluebird like our own baby? No. The lesson affirms the absolute truth, but it does not insist we attempt to make this world fit into that picture.

First, it says quite clearly that learning all the little names and symbols of separation “is a phase of learning everyone who comes must go through” (7:2). As some teachers of transpersonal psychology (the branch of psychology that teaches that ultimate wholeness transcends individual ego development) have said, you cannot transcend the ego until you have developed a healthy ego. Ego development seems to be a necessary step in our overall growth. Children have to

become healthy, adult egos before they can successfully go beyond the ego. If an adult is still wrestling with problems of personality development that, in “normal” growth, should have been handled in childhood or adolescence, those problems probably need to be addressed, on their own level, before the person seeks to transcend their ego entirely.

I am extrapolating on the lesson a good deal here, and expressing what have to be classed as opinions, not necessarily something taught by the Course. But I do think this section comes pretty close to implying this: *everyone* has to pass through the “teaching of the world” (7:1) stage before they can begin to question its premises. We do not want to stop short at the teaching of the world (7:4), but it does seem we have to pass through it. “In its proper place, it serves but as a starting point from which another kind of learning can begin” (7:5).

Not only do we all need to pass through the world’s kind of learning as a starting point, but after we have begun to “go beyond all symbols of the world,” there is still reason for us to continue to use them: we have a teaching function (9:1). We still continue, for instance, to call people by name, to treat them as individuals with individual needs, but we are “not deceived” (9:3) by these apparent differences. The names and symbols of the world are necessary for purposes of communication, but “they become but means by which you can communicate in ways the world can understand, but which you recognize is not the unity where true communication can be found” (9:5). We are using the symbols of the world to communicate the fact of wholeness; we are using symbols to undo the symbols.

This is a tricky game. It is easy, remaining in the world and playing by the rules of separation, so to speak, to forget the reality these symbols of separation are hiding. That is exactly why the practice of holy instants is so important!

Thus what you need are intervals each day in which the learning of the world becomes a transitory phase; a prison house from which you go into the sunlight and forget the darkness. Here you understand the Word, the Name which God has given you; the one Identity which all things share; the one acknowledgment of what is true. And then step back to darkness, not because you think it real, but only to proclaim its unreality in terms which still have meaning in the world that darkness rules.  
(10:1–3)

Practicing with the Name of God enables us to let go of “all foolish separations...which kept us blind” (14:3). In our quiet times we remember the wholeness and forget the differences. We may still see differences, but what we see has not changed the truth (13:3). All things still have one Name. In our practicing we renew this awareness, and then we “step back to darkness”; we return to the world of symbols and dreams in order to proclaim to it the reality we have experienced in the holy instant:

*Father, our Name is Yours. In It we are united with all living things, and You Who are their one Creator.* (15:1–2)

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## THINK NOT YOU MADE THE WORLD?

There is a very puzzling statement in Workbook Lesson 184, so puzzling that I have been asked about it several times:

Think not you made the world. Illusions, yes! But what is true in earth and Heaven is beyond your naming. (W-pI.184.8:1-3)

The apparent problem with this passage is obvious: The Course tells us many times that we made the world, yet here it says with great emphasis that we should *not* think we made the world. What's more, it suggests that there are "true" things in the world, the very world we have been repeatedly told is an illusion!

How can we harmonize this passage with the rest of the Course? It's too easy just to ignore it, to pass it off as Helen having a bad day, a glitch in taking down the Course, or that the Course is just inconsistent. I think such a passage calls for a serious attempt to reconcile what is said with the rest of the Course.

Our first impulse when facing this kind of issue is often to draw upon our overall understanding of the Course. We ask ourselves: Based on the Course's overall thought system, how can I explain this passage? Many readers, no doubt, have already asked themselves this question in the course of reading this article.

I think there is a far better way. The answer to this kind of question almost always lies in *immediate context*, in the material immediately before and after the puzzling passage. Read that material very carefully, looking for words and ideas that also occur in your puzzling passage. So let's do that with the passage we are looking at here. You might even want to go to Lesson 184 and read it from the start through paragraph 8, where our passage occurs.

If you read the lesson from the beginning, you notice a central topic which also occurs in our passage: the topic of *naming* ("naming" being the last word of our passage). The beginning paragraphs of the lesson talk about our process of giving names to everything around us. We are told that assigning something a special name appears to "carve it out of unity" (1:4), making it seem to be "a separate entity" (1:3) with its own "special attributes" (1:5). In the wake of this naming project, we end up with a "reality" composed of distinct entities separated by the unnamed space between them. The naming process is thus really a *making* process, whereby we become (at least in part) the author of what we name—which is why there is so much pride in inventing a name that sticks. This discussion of naming concludes by saying, "This is the way reality is made by partial vision, purposefully set against the given truth" (4:1).

Do you notice anything important about this sentence? Here we have another idea found in our passage: the idea of us making our own reality. This lesson appears to be talking about a somewhat different concept of making the world. Usually, the Course seems to be referring to us making the world through an unconscious process of dreaming time and space into "existence." Here, the Course is talking about a process closer to the surface: using names to separate our perceptual field into distinct and separate entities.

Let's now go on to the lines immediately following the passage we are trying to explain:

When you call upon a brother, it is to his body that you make appeal. His true Identity is hidden from you by what you believe he really is. His body makes response to what you call him, for his mind consents to take the name you give him as his own. And thus his unity is twice denied, for you perceive him separate from you, and he accepts this separate name as his. (8:4–7)

To explain our puzzling passage, we need to answer a specific question: What are the illusions we made and what are the true things we didn't make? The answer to this question is right there in the lines just quoted. They contain a clear contrast between two things, one illusory and one real. Can you spot these two things? The illusory thing is the body, which merely *seems* to be what our brother is. The real thing is our brother's "true Identity," who he *really* is, which (as we know from elsewhere in the Course) is the Christ, a bodiless, boundless spiritual Self.

So, very simply, the illusions we made are bodies, the forms of this world, the visible aspect of this world. Yet behind each illusion is a brother, who is an invisible, spiritual mind, and who ultimately is the Christ Himself. This brother is real. He was not made by us but created by God. He is not even really in this world. His true location is Heaven. He seems to be here, however,

trapped inside this body. That, I believe, is why our confusing passage speaks of “what is true in earth and Heaven.” The true things in this earth are not really in the earth at all; they are part of Heaven.

The confusion in our passage is really explained by now. But before pulling together what we have discovered, I would like to uncover a little more, just to show how much meaning there is here. Notice, in the lines quoted above, how the process of naming is carried further than before. A whole process is sketched, which goes something like this: You have in front of you a human body. You believe that this body is who your brother is. You express this belief by calling your brother by the name the world has given him. This name does not designate his true Identity, Which is one with all things and so could not have a special name. This name stands for a particular separate entity moving through space and time. It stands for a physical body. Thus, simply by calling him this name, you affirm that he is a separate body. Then, upon hearing your call, he accepts this name as his own. His mind thinks, “Yes, that is me. I am the body with that particular name.” As a result, his body responds to you, standing in for his actual identity and playing its role. This is how “his unity is twice denied.” By calling him a unique name, you have denied his true state of oneness with all reality. When he accepts this name as actually referring to him, he too has denied his oneness.

Now we are in a position to understand our initially puzzling passage with complete clarity. All we need to do is pull together all the things we have discovered through inspecting its immediate context. Here again is the passage:

Think not you made the world. Illusions, yes! But what is true in earth and Heaven is beyond your naming. (W-pI.184.8:1-3)

And here is what we have discovered that it means:

First, you made a world of separate bodies in order to hide the unified field of minds which lay behind those bodies. Then, you *named* each body, further cementing the idea that this separate body—rather than the mind behind it—was the true person. Through this double process (of making forms then naming the forms) you made the world you see. But you think you made much more than this. Through this process, you think you made your brother (one of those unified minds) into the creature you see before you. You think you carved him out of unity; changed him from a boundless, unified spirit into a separate physical creature, designated by a special name. What an arrogant thought! For you only made the illusions of the world. Your brother was not made by you and so cannot properly be named by you, nor shaped and molded by your naming. He is far beyond all that. His reality may seem to be encased in a body, may seem to be part of this world, but in truth he abides in Heaven, where God placed him.

If we look carefully at the immediate context of any passage in the Course, we not only gain clarity, we also gain a much fuller meaning than we saw before.