

LESSON 185 • JULY 4

“I want the peace of God.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To let go your attachment to the things of the world, so that you can unify your intent behind the peace of God, realizing that His peace is the only thing you ever really wanted.

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

- Search your mind carefully for the dreams—the things in this world—you still cherish. Locate them not by the words you use, but by your desire for them. “Consider but what you believe will comfort you, and bring you happiness” (8:4). In other words, be honest in your search. However, don’t be dismayed by what your honesty uncovers. You may feel shame over certain dreams and be tempted to conceal them. Instead, realize that all dreams are one. Of every dream you thus uncover, ask this question: “*Is this what I would have, in place of Heaven and the peace of God?*”
- The goal is to reach a place where you can say with real sincerity, “*I want the peace of God.*” To really mean this, you must also mean that you *don’t* want the things of this world, for the two are mutually exclusive. It also helps to realize that “I want the peace of God” does not mean “I have come to want His peace,” but “I have come to realize that His peace is the only thing I ever wanted.”

Remarks: The point today is to unify your intent. “You have been weak at times, uncertain in your purpose, and unsure of what you wanted, where to look for it, and where to turn for help in the attempt” (10:5). Today, try to have a single intent. Ask for God’s peace and mean it. “Make this request with deep sincerity” (10:3). Make the request for everyone, not just yourself, for this is what everyone wants. Realize that you are uniting your intent with the call of every heart and with the Will of God Himself.

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

Kind of interesting that a lesson about the peace of God falls on the day that celebrates a revolution (Independence Day in the USA). Our local Unity minister suggested that instead of “Independence Day” we should celebrate “Inner-dependence Day,” which I thought was a nice play on words and quite appropriate.

This lesson teaches two seemingly opposing things. First, it teaches us that we do not yet really mean it when we say, “I want the peace of God.” For if we meant it, we would have it. “No one can mean these words and not be healed” (2:1).

Many have said these words. But few indeed have meant them. You have but to look upon the world you see around you to be sure how very few they are. (2:6–8)

Indeed, all you need to do is watch the evening news. Or spend one day at your job.

Second, it teaches us that, in spite of our obvious dedication to things other than peace, at heart we *really do* want the peace of God. All of us do. “We want the peace of God. This is no idle wish” (7:2–3). “You want the peace of God. And so do all who seem to seek for dreams” (10:1–2).

The task the Course sets before us is uncovering and fully accepting *both* of these facts. To accept them fully, they must be accepted as true of everyone, not just of ourselves. Underneath all the seeking for illusions, everyone wants peace. This is something that is universally true, a fact that can be totally depended upon. It is true, as the line I quoted in the last paragraph asserts, even of those who seem to be seeking for something else. They may not be *aware* that the peace of God is what they really want, but it is true, nevertheless (10:4). Our job in interacting with others is to remember this universal longing of every heart, and to join ourselves with it in the other person, even when they are totally unaware of it themselves.

Yet before we can firmly believe that we, and everyone, want the peace of God above all else, we have to face the fact that we have foolishly believed we wanted something else more than peace. For if we wanted only peace, we would have only peace; that is how the power of our minds works. So there must be something, or some things, that we have valued more than peace. Our first job, then, is uncovering these competing desires, assessing them honestly, recognizing that they are only idle wishes, and letting them go in favor of peace.

We want the most amazingly trivial things instead of peace. I watch a young child burst into tears and throw a tantrum because he cannot have his favorite breakfast, and I think, "The only difference between him and me is that I have developed sophisticated ways of camouflaging my tantrums." I share a house with Robert Perry and his family and another single man, and we often have guests. I have found myself losing my peace over empty ice cube trays and vanishing rolls of toilet paper. I have given away my peace in concern about who last emptied the garbage.

Perhaps, today, we can all stop ourselves when these "little" moments of separation occur and ask ourselves, "Is this what I would have, in place of Heaven and the peace of God?" (8:8). Do I really value a roll of toilet paper more than God's peace?

Let me point out one more interesting observation of this lesson: you cannot have peace alone. "The mind which means that all it wants is peace must join with other minds, for that is how peace is obtained" (6:1). To have peace we have to be willing to let the other person into our hearts. We have to recognize their desire for peace equally with our own.

The temptation is always to think, "I want peace; the problem is with the other person." Always remember, though: if you want peace, you will have it. No one else can take it from you. If you cannot be at peace when the other person seems to want something besides peace, what you are teaching that person is that your peace depends on their changing. This just reinforces the same belief in the other person, and they continue to believe that their peace depends on them changing you.

Our job is to see past the competing desires in that other person to the universal reality that lies underneath. However we respond to them, if we are to teach peace, our actions must affirm to that person that peace already lies within them, ready for them as soon as they are willing to receive it. We join our own intent with what they seek above all things (10:4). By our faith in that intent, however hidden it may appear, we draw it out of them; we give them the opportunity to recognize it within themselves and align their mind with it:

It is this one intent we seek today, uniting our desires with the need of every heart, the call of every mind, the hope that lies beyond despair, the love attack would hide, the brotherhood that hate has sought to sever, but which still remains as God created it. (14:1)