

## LESSON 189 • JULY 8

### “I feel the Love of God within me now.”

#### Practice instructions

**Purpose:** To go past all your thoughts of self, world, and God and so experience the Love of God within you now. This will go far towards enabling you to give your total willingness to the Course’s way.

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

This is an exercise in what I call “Open Mind Meditation”. Follow the instructions in paragraph 7 (you may even want to use them as an induction process): Empty your mind of all thoughts and try to let go of all your beliefs as well, including your highest spiritual beliefs. Even ideas from the Course must not be allowed into your mind. “Empty your mind of everything” (7:2). And then stand there, with your mental hands completely open, ready to receive God’s Love. Trust that He “knows the way to you” (8:1), and that all you need do is remove the obstacles and “His love will blaze its pathway” (9:4) into your mind. As always, whenever any words or thoughts intrude, repeat the idea and then return to waiting empty-handed for God’s Love.

**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

By this point in the Workbook, any time we see the word “now” we should be seeing it as a probable reference to the holy instant. The word “feel” also has significance, directing our attention to the realm of experience, as opposed to conceptual understanding. Given these two points we can realize that this lesson is about entering a holy instant in which we have an experience of God’s Love within us.

“There is a light in you the world can not perceive” (1:1). The lesson begins by referring, as did yesterday’s lesson, to the light that is within us, inherent in our creation. It is not something visible to the body’s sense organs (1:2), but quite visible to a different kind of sight. To see this light and to feel the Love of God are synonymous (1:7). We are being directed to experience this other kind of seeing.

We can see “through darkened eyes of malice and of fear” (3:2), or with a mind permeated with the experience of Love’s presence within the mind. What we see within determines how we see the world. Based on our state of mind, we see either a world poised to attack us, or a world that reaches out to bless us. Either picture of the world makes the other picture inconceivable to us (3:5; 4:1).

If I am seeing “a world of hatred rising from attack” (3:5), the description of the world given in paragraph 2 seems to be no more than wishful thinking. People encountering the teaching of the Course for the first time often raise this objection. For instance, I once heard a man who had listened to a lecture on forgiveness say, “You people must be crazy! All you have to do is walk down the street in New York and you can’t possibly maintain that love is all there is.” He was seeing a world of hatred rising from attack; there was no room left in his mind to see anything else.

If I am seeing the world of hatred, how can I possibly see a world of love? No logical argument will ever change my mind. What is required is something that will change what my mind is seeing within itself, because the world I see is nothing more than a reflection of that, “the

outside picture of an inward condition” (T-21.In.1:5). If I am seeing a world of attack it is because within myself I am seeing an attacking mind. “What they have felt in them they look upon, and see its sure reflection everywhere” (4:3). The holy instant can, and does, change that self-perception. “I feel the Love of God within me now.” That experience will literally transform the way I see the world. “If you feel the Love of God within you, you will look out on a world of mercy and of love” (5:5).

This is why we are asked to “lay aside all thoughts of what [we] are” (7:1), to be still, and to allow something else to enter our minds. We are being asked to set aside every conclusion we have ever made about anything, to allow—for a moment at least—that all of it may be misinformed and misguided, and to “come with wholly empty hands unto your God” (7:5). In asking us to forget even “this course” (7:5), the lesson is not saying that intellectual comprehension of the Course is not useful, but it is saying that only something that transcends the intellect can truly turn the tide of our wrong perception. Even our understanding of the Course is bound to be distorted when it is based on a mind firmly rooted in fear and in the concept of self we have built up. We may mistakenly use that imperfect understanding to dictate to God the way He should come to us. So we are asked to set even this aside, and to allow God to come to us in whatever way He wants to come.

To forget the Course is not a permanent principle, but a temporary expedient to be practiced in our moments of stillness, designed to allow a new kind of experience. It is merely part of removing the barriers to the experience of ourselves as Love, for even our ego-based “understanding” of the Course can interfere with the experience of its true meaning. So we are being told, when seeking the holy instant, to lay aside any assumption that we understand anything at all. Let everything be open to change. If we are willing to do this, “His Love will blaze its pathway of itself” (9:4).

We cannot force ourselves to see the world differently. But if we can, just for an instant, see *ourselves* differently, and feel the Love of God within ourselves, the way we see the world will change of itself, because the way we see the world *is* the way we see ourselves.

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## OPEN MIND MEDITATION

Meditation is a fundamental part of Workbook practice. Training in meditation begins early, in Lesson 41. There, we learn the Workbook’s standard “down-and-inward” technique. After that, it becomes a genuine staple of daily practice. However, as the Workbook nears its second part, meditation begins to change in form. Up until this point, we have used words as a focus in our meditations. The words aid us in keeping our focus and help carry us toward our goal. Now, however, we are asked to go beyond words, to practice nonverbally.

This is essentially a new method of meditation—new for the Workbook, at least. Indeed, it is the Workbook’s crowning method. It is taught in nearly all of the final sections of the Workbook:

- Review V—Lessons 171-180 (see the introduction, paragraph 12)
- Review VI—Lessons 201-220 (see the introduction, paragraphs 4-6)
- Part II—Lessons 221-360 (see the introduction, paragraphs 3-5)
- Final Lessons—Lessons 361-365 (see the introduction, paragraph 1)

Why is it the crowning method? Because it takes us beyond words to direct experience. Indeed, whenever the Workbook talks about going “beyond all words” (W-pI.rVI.In.4:1), it is almost always talking about Open Mind Meditation. Actually, going beyond words is important for the same reason that words themselves are important. The Course is all about entering a new world of meaning. Words are so central to the Course (which is really just one long string of them) because they point to that new world. They signify meaning, and so they serve as excellent

*mediators*. They introduce us to that world; they help us get in touch with it. Yet, like all mediators, they get in the way of direct encounter. When the parties are ready to join, the mediator's job is over. And so, ultimately, we need to set words aside if we are to have the total, *unmediated* experience of meaning.

We wait for the experience, and recognize that it is only here conviction lies. We use the words, and try and try again to go beyond them to their meaning, which is far beyond their sound. The sound grows dim and disappears, as we approach the Source of meaning. It is Here that we find rest. (W-pI.rV.In.12:3-6)

Open Mind Meditation is not just about being ushered into an ecstatic state that words cannot describe; it's about emptying our mind of words in order to *reach* that state. In this meditation, then, we clear away all words and thoughts from our mind. We hold a nonverbal intent, a pure, expectant waiting for the arrival of God. Our mind becomes like the cloudless sky, filled with nothing but "still anticipation" (W-pI.157.4:3), waiting for the sun to peek over the horizon. The nonverbal attitude we hold could be translated into the following poetic words:

The memory of God is shimmering across the wide horizons of our minds. A moment more, and it will rise again. A moment more, and we who are God's Sons are safely home, where He would have us be. (W-pII.In.9:5-7)

Unlike other Workbook meditations, we hold this attitude wordlessly; we do not repeat words to maintain it (although, thankfully, we are allowed to use words to draw our mind back when it wanders). As I have said, our mind is supposed to be empty of *all* words, even the words of the Course. Few of us find this easy. Ironically, although we all like to *talk* about going beyond words, when it actually comes to doing without them we tend to find it quite difficult. However, if we can master this technique, we will also find it deeply rewarding. And we need to try to master it. There is a reason why the final half of the Workbook's year is devoted to this method. In the end, the Course is not about looking at a painting of Heaven, it's about going there yourself.

## **Summary of the technique**

### *1. Repeat the idea for the day as an invitation to God to come to you*

Have a sense of placing the practice period in His Hands.

### *2. In preparation for direct experience, empty your mind of all words, all thoughts, and all that you think you know and understand*

You may want to use the following lines as an induction into this state of emptiness:

*I do not know what I am.*

*I do not know what my attributes are.*

*I do not know what God is.*

*I do not know what the world is.*

*I do not know what is true and what is false.*

*I do not know what will make me happy.*

*I will forget my body, its comfort and its needs,*

*I will forget the past and future, and come with wholly empty hands unto my God.*

### *3. In the silence, hold your mind in a state like a vacuum*

On the negative side, a vacuum is *empty*, yet on the positive side, this emptiness *draws fullness* to itself, it “*desires*” to be filled. The essence of the technique is to wordlessly hold in place both the negative and positive sides of the vacuum: *In a mind that is empty of words, thoughts, and ideas* (negative), *wait expectantly for a fullness to come from God* (positive).

#### *3a. Negative: Let your mind be empty of words, thoughts, and ideas*

- Empty of *words*. Don’t repeat words. Being symbols, they stand in the way of direct, unmediated knowing.
- Empty of *thoughts*.
- Empty of *all you think you know and understand*. Your “knowledge” stands in the way of real knowledge.

#### *3b. Positive: Wait for a fullness to come from God*

- Wait in silent expectancy for God (or truth, or peace, etc.). Hold your mind still, filled with pure expectancy and anticipation. Wait for God as one would wait for the sunrise.
- Open your mind to a completely different kind of knowing, a knowing beyond words.
- Be sure to *rest*; do not strain. “Open your mind to Him. Be still and rest” (W-pI.128.6-7).

### *4. Whenever your mind wanders (which will happen regularly), use words again to draw it back to silent, nonverbal waiting*

You might repeat a single word, the idea for the day, or “*This thought I do not want. I choose instead [the idea for the day].*”

### *5. Realize that the practice period is in the Holy Spirit’s hands*

Be open to Him stepping in and helping your practice in some way, perhaps by giving you a word or thought to focus on (which breaks the rules, but it’s okay if *He* breaks the rules), or just giving you a peaceful, open mind. Or He may step in and give you guidance, or a vision, or some other kind of experience. Because His activity may go outside the rules established in the previous points, it is important to distinguish between *His* activity and *your* thoughts and daydreams.

### *6. Conclude by repeating the idea for the day*