

LESSON 192 • JULY 11

“I have a function God would have me fill.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To fulfill your function by forgiving your brother his sins and so experiencing that you are what he is: the Son of God. This experience will firm up “your willingness to make your weak commitment strong” (W-pI.In.181-200.1:1).

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

As with yesterday, there are no specific instructions for today’s practice. Begin, as always, by repeating the idea, and then spend the time doing practice that you have found helpful and that you feel prompted from within to do. You may want to meditate, using either Down-and-Inward Meditation, Name of God Meditation, or Open Mind Meditation. Or you may want to focus on forgiving those people whom you are holding prisoner.

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

Spend the first minute or so as you choose, perhaps in quiet meditation or focusing on forgiveness. Close by asking for God’s guidance for the coming hour and thanking Him for His gifts in the past hour.

Response to temptation: When a brother tempts you to be angry.

“Realize you hold a sword above your head” (9:4). You may even picture this in your mind. Choose to avert the sword by repeating the idea, which means that your function on earth is to forgive, to let go of anger. Realize that you owe this brother thanks, for he has given you a blessed opportunity to choose right and free yourself.

Commentary

In Heaven we have a high and holy function: it is creation. The first paragraph describes it as well as it can be put into words, although when it comes down to it we on earth cannot even truly conceive of what it is (3:1). Creation is to complete God, to extend Love in His Name. What does that mean? We cannot fully know until we are there again, experiencing its meaning directly.

On earth, therefore, we have “a function in the world in its own terms” (2:1), something we can grasp and understand in the context in which we find ourselves. “Forgiveness represents your function here” (2:3). “Forgiveness is the closest it [creation] can come to earth” (3:3). Creation is formless; forgiveness is creation translated into form, a kindly dream so close to Heaven that, when we fully enter into it, our eyes are “already opening [to] behold the joyful sights” (3:6) the happy dreams are offering us.

Forgiveness as presented in the Course is far more than just letting go of specific grievances we hold against those we feel have wronged us. It is a radical shift in our perception of the entire world. The basic stance of the ego is to see the world as the cause of our unhappiness. There seems to be ample reason for such a view. How can we ever be content when nothing lasts, when pain and suffering seem to be everywhere, when things and persons dear to us are snatched away by fate, and when, no matter what we do, death awaits us at the end? Forgiveness means that we set aside such a view of the world, and allow the Holy Spirit to replace it all with a new perception. It includes even a reassessment of our own bodies, in which we disidentify with them and no longer see ourselves as bound to them. We come to see the body as “a simple teaching aid, to be laid by when learning is complete, but hardly changing him who learns at all” (4:3). We realize that we are, in reality, a “mind without a body” (5:1). “Only forgiveness can relieve the mind of thinking that the body is its home” (5:5).

That is the goal to which the Course is leading us. Yet although forgiveness is far more than letting go of specific grievances, it begins there. Through working with the specifics we learn the principles, and gradually learn to generalize them and apply them to the entire world, including our physical cages.

It may seem we are being asked to give up a lot. Indeed, we are being asked, eventually, to give up the entire world, including our bodies; this entire “life” in which we think we live. Yet, when it has been achieved, when our anger at the world is gone, we

will perceive that, for Christ’s vision and the gift of sight, no sacrifice was asked, and only pain was lifted from a sick and tortured mind. Is this unwelcome? Is it to be feared? (6:1–3)

If we can come to forgive the world, we will see it as the illusion it has always been, and let it go gladly, aware that it was never more than a nightmare of pain and death. Paradoxically, if we have not forgiven it, we end up “worshipping what is not there” (7:4). We value it precisely because it punishes us, because in our insanity of guilt we secretly believe we deserve it.

Our anger at the world imprisons us. We become the jailer, vigilant to hold the world at fault, and in so doing condemning ourselves to prison with the prisoners we are watching. Unless the “jailer” forgives “everyone he sees or thinks of or imagines” (8:1), he has to live in the jail keeping watch on the criminals. This is the very thing that holds us to this world; not its beauty, not its potential, but our anger at it for not being what we think it should be. Our anger is holding a sword above our own heads (9:4).

Therefore, the way out of prison is to release all the prisoners. We can learn this by recognizing that every time we are tempted to be angry, which can be anything from intense fury to a mild twinge of annoyance (see W-pI.21.2:5), we are being offered an opportunity to release ourselves. We can be merciful instead of wrathful. We can forgive. We can even be grateful for the opportunity (9:7). This is our only true function here (10:6). This is *the* lesson all of life is teaching us. This is *A Course in Miracles*.