

## LESSON 197 • JULY 16

**“It can be but my gratitude I earn.”**

### **Practice instructions**

**Purpose:** To realize the truth of today’s idea, to realize that you don’t need visible gratitude from others, that your own gratitude for your gifts is sufficient.

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

Once again there are no specific instructions. The focus of the lesson is on being grateful for the gifts that you give others, especially the gift of forgiveness. Often, says the lesson, you will withdraw your gift of love and forgiveness unless it is received with “external gratitude and lavish thanks” (1:3). When you are tempted to withdraw your love, you should realize that “your gratitude is all your gifts require” (3:3). You have the right to be grateful, for your gifts are given to you. Also, remind yourself that somewhere deep in your brother’s mind, he is thanking you. And realize that God Himself has received your gift and thankfully acknowledges it. So instead of taking it back, be grateful to this brother of yours. Be grateful for what he is, for the fact that, as part of your Self, he makes your Self complete.

How do you turn these ideas into a practice period? One possibility is to search your mind for times when you felt that another didn’t show enough gratitude to you. With each case, repeat the idea, realizing that your own gratitude is all your gift requires, and that by snatching your gift away, you snatch it away from yourself. Then replace your ingratitude with gratitude toward yourself and toward your brother, for being part of your Self.

After spending time practicing gratitude in this way, you may want to spend the rest of the practice period in meditation.

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

Search your mind for the happenings of the previous hour that are still burdening your mind. With each one, let it go by repeating the idea. Realize that you can give that situation the gift of love right now, and that the only gratitude you need in return is your own.

**Response to temptation:** (Suggestion) whenever you feel incensed because another is not sufficiently grateful to you.

Repeat the idea, realizing that your gifts were received by you, and that the only gratitude you require is your own.

### **Commentary**

This lesson identifies itself as “the second step” (1:1) in freeing our minds from the belief in outside forces pitted against us. Yesterday’s lesson was the first step (W-pI.196.4:1–2). It taught us that our attacks are always directed at ourselves, and that the attacks we thought were coming from outside of ourselves were really coming from our own minds. In other words, “It is impossible that you be hurt except by your own thoughts” (W-pI.196.8:3). Today’s lesson takes the other side of the coin: gratitude. This is definitely a step beyond yesterday’s lesson. We may understand that our attack is coming from ourselves, and yet not realize that any gratitude we receive is *also* coming from ourselves, and not from outside forces.

I remember attending a workshop of Ken Wapnick’s with a friend, when Ken was talking about how to respond to criticism and even outright attack from people who were close to us. Ken’s advice was to remember that such attacks are just the other person’s ego reacting to its perception of our ego; “Don’t take it personally,” Ken advised. The next day my friend went to Ken with a personal issue. He’d begun to lead some groups in healing techniques, and he had

received many glowing compliments. He was worried that all the praise (or gratitude) would go to his head. Ken's advice to him was quite memorable, coming on the heels of the earlier advice about criticism: "Don't take it personally!"

While some of us may have problems with *receiving* gratitude, we have a much greater problem with *not* receiving it. Every Course student goes through the experience of expressing love, kindness, and forgiveness to someone, only to have it rejected or thrown back in their face. This lesson directly addresses the way we react to such a situation. What we are being asked to do is to express that kindness and love, to "give our gifts," without any attachment to the response of the other person. All the gratitude we require, the lesson says, is *our own gratitude* for the opportunity of giving and forgiving! (3:3). Gratitude does not come from outside us any more than attack does.

If we fail to understand this, when someone fails to acknowledge our gifts, we will typically react by taking them back. "Well, I tried to forgive you and overlook your error, but if this is how you are going to treat me in response, then to hell with you!" And quite obviously, our attempts at kindness have turned into attack! (see 1:2-3).

The lesson says it quite directly: "It does not matter if another thinks your gifts unworthy" (4:1). In other words, in our giving, let us be completely unconcerned with the response of the person we are giving to, and whether or not they express gratitude. Our giving to them is sufficient gift to ourselves, and our own gratitude for the gift we have given is all that we need. If we take back the gifts we give when they are not received with "external gratitude and lavish thanks" (1:3), then we will always suspect that God's gifts are equally undependable. If we take back our gifts, we are taking them away from ourselves. I am the one who needs to be grateful for the gift I have given, for I am the one who has received it! (3:5).

To help us understand why external gratitude isn't necessary, Jesus explains that there is a part of the other person's mind that *is* grateful, even when that isn't expressed outwardly (4:2). The other person's "right mind" is very grateful to you for the gift, and receives it with thanks. The gift will be held, waiting until the person is consciously ready to receive it. As the Manual puts it:

No teacher of God should feel disappointed if he has offered healing and it does not appear to have been received. It is not up to him to judge when his gift should be accepted. Let him be certain it has been received, and trust that it will be accepted when it is recognized as a blessing and not a curse. (M-6.2:7-9)

The Manual goes on in a way that very clearly echoes the thought we have been discussing:

It is not the function of God's teachers to evaluate the outcome of their gifts. It is merely their function to give them. (M-6.3:1-2)

This entire section of the Manual, and the one that follows, might be very interesting reading in light of today's lesson.

If we fail to learn this second step, that gratitude as well as attack comes only from within ourselves, we will forever be uncertain about the gifts of God (5:3).