

LESSON 198 • JULY 17

“Only my condemnation injures me.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To go past your argument with forgiveness and truly embrace it. If you accomplish this, it will be cause for great celebration, in Heaven and on earth, for it will mean that today your deliverance has come.

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

Although we have no specific instructions, we are told today to practice forgiveness (9:1; 10:4). The lesson assumes that we are familiar with forgiveness, but that we have been opposing it, arguing with it (4:3), trying to find other ways to happiness. Instead, today, we are supposed to take a major step forward in ending our argument with forgiveness and accepting it as our way home. “Now is the time for your deliverance” (13:4). To take this step forward, we are given extremely powerful lines as the focus of our practice: “*Only my condemnation injures me. Only my own forgiveness sets me free.*” One way to use these lines would be to call to mind various people in your life and then apply these lines to each one specifically: “*Only my condemnation of [name] injures me. Only my own forgiveness of [name] sets me free.*” Or, you may want to search your mind for situations in your life in which you are experiencing pain or stress. Identify the person who seems to be the source of the stress and say, “*Only my condemnation of [name] injures me. Only my own forgiveness of [name] sets me free.*”

After this forgiveness practice, you may want to use the remainder of your practice period for meditation.

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

Apply the lines we are given today (“*Only my condemnation injures me. Only my own forgiveness sets me free*”) to the happenings of the previous hour that still have you wrapped in their chains.

Response to temptation: (Suggestion) when tempted to succumb to any form of suffering or injury.

Realize your pain really comes from a condemning thought and say, “*Only my condemnation injures me. Only my own forgiveness sets me free.*” You may want to use the more specific form of these lines that I suggested above.

Commentary

When I condemn another, I am offering injury to myself. How is that so?

When I condemn anyone, I am wishing injury on them, some form of punishment for their “wrong.” At the very least, my condemnation states that the person is less worthy of love. I am believing, therefore, that I can injure, even that I would be justified in offering injury or withholding love. The principle I have established by this belief, however, can be turned against me. I can be injured, too. If I measure my love to others according to my perception of them, I am affirming that this is how love works. Therefore, I am asserting that God measures His love to me based on my appearance or my current state of character development, for instance. Do I really want that?

In reality, “Injury is impossible” (1:1). Neither God, nor my true Self as His creation, can be injured in any way. Nor have they been. But “illusion makes illusion” (1:2), and the illusion of condemnation makes the illusion of injury. We will continue, therefore, to experience injury until we lay down condemnation as an undesirable tool, “unwanted and unreal” (1:4).

There is a principle that lies underneath the surface of this lesson that is really quite important in understanding the Course. Injury is impossible; so is condemnation (2:5). “What seems to be its influence and its effects have not occurred at all” (2:6). Thus, as the Course says in many places, the separation never happened, there is no sin, there is no death, sickness is illusion, and even our bodies and this world do not really exist. “There is no world!” (W-pI.132.6:2). We are not really here where we think we are; we are asleep in Heaven, dreaming of exile. The apparent problem has already been solved, and indeed, it never happened! This is the truth on the level of what the Course calls knowledge or Heaven.

And yet...what? For there is an “and yet” to the Course’s teaching. It does not state the ultimate truth and stop; it has something to say about the apparent illusion. It affirms with meticulous care the unreality of the illusion, *and yet* it deals with it!

What seems to be its influence and its effects have not occurred at all. Yet must we deal with them a while as if they had. (2:6–7)

What are the influence and effects of condemnation? Every form of “injury” imaginable. The apparent effects of our self-judgment include the making of the world and of bodies as well. These are the things, then, that we must deal with *as if they had really occurred*—for a while. Time itself is an illusion, yet the Course talks a good deal about saving time, and urges us to use time wisely, particularly in the practice instructions that are part of these lessons. It knows time is illusory, and yet it deals with it as if it were something real, using the very illusion to lead us out of illusion; using time to bring us back to eternity.

We meet illusion with illusion; we meet the effects of condemnation with forgiveness. In reality there is nothing to forgive because nothing happened. But to undo the *illusion* of what happened and so become aware of the unchanging reality, we need the illusion of forgiveness.

The Course affirms that this world is illusion, and yet, for a time, it teaches us to deal with it as if it were not an illusion; as if it had really occurred. The only way to thus deal with it is to forgive it, to proclaim to it that “there is no condemnation in God’s Son” (10:1). Forgiveness is the bridge that brings illusion to the truth, that provides the escape passage out of illusion entirely.