

## LESSON 199 • JULY 18

**“I am not a body. I am free.”**

### **Practice instructions**

**Purpose:** To go past your identification with the body, to experience the freedom of abiding in the boundlessness of God. To free your mind from bodily limits and give it to the Holy Spirit’s use, that He may use your body to carry the message of freedom to those who still think they are imprisoned in a body.

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

As is usual by now, we are left on our own to decide how to spend our longer practice periods. Choose some form of practice that reflects today’s goal. The goal is to realize that you are not a mind imprisoned within a body, but rather that you are a “mind within the Holy Spirit” (6:6), a mind that “rests in God” (2:3). Your mind, then, is inherently free, “unlimited forever” (2:1), and your body is gone from your self-concept. The body, then, rather than the slave master, becomes “a worthy servant” (6:6) of the Holy Spirit’s plan to extend forgiveness to every mind. It will then return to mind whenever it is needed to communicate forgiveness.

I would suggest a meditation in which you try to feel your mind surrounded by the Holy Spirit, resting in God, unbound by any limits whatsoever. Sink into the feeling that this is your home, not the body, so that the body vanishes from your picture of yourself.

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

Search your mind for the events of the past hour that are still compromising your peace. Notice how each one has something to do with the body—how your body was treated by another’s body, what your body said or did, how it feels, how well it is functioning, how it looks, etc. Then free yourself of these bodily limits by repeating, “*I am not a body. I am free. I hear the Voice that God has given me, and it is only This my mind obeys.*” This means that your mind does not obey the body, it only obeys the Voice of freedom.

**Response to temptation:** (Suggestion) when tempted to engage in any thoughts which reinforce a bodily identity.

Repeat, “*I am not a body. I am free. I hear the Voice that God has given me, and it is only This [rather than the body] my mind obeys.*”

**Overall comments:** This is a hugely important idea. To make progress on this path, we are told, we must accept this idea and even “hold it very dear” (3:1). We are encouraged to use it in all of our practice periods, even beyond today, for it will boost the power of each lesson we combine it with (5:3). Indeed, in a couple of days, we will be instructed to use it precisely in this way for twenty straight days.

### **Commentary**

To the ego, today’s idea is “quite insane” (3:2). Yet it is one of the basic principles the Course uses to free us from our bondage. The lesson attaches a great deal of importance to it, more than to most ideas the Course presents. We are told to “cherish” it and “practice it today and every day” (5:1). And evidently Jesus expects us to integrate the idea that “I am not a body” into every practice period from now on! (5:2).

Let’s face it: Before we encountered the Course, the body was something we took for granted. If we knew anything, we thought, we knew we were a body. Our bodies held a very different place in our lives from every other physical object. If someone stepped on a CD we owned, we might say, “Hey! You’re breaking my CD.” But if they stepped on our toe (part of our body), we

would say, “Hey! You’re stepping on *me!*” It is part of our consciousness. “I” am where my body is. We say, “I am eating. I was asleep. I am in my car. I am sick.” And all of those “I’s” refer to the body. Even if we have been Course students for ten or fifteen years, we are probably still saying those same things, and still, out of habit, thinking of the body as our self.

The ego has expended millennia of effort at mentally programming into the mind the identity of “me” and the body. It isn’t something the mind will let go of easily; it is a habit of thought that will take a great deal of counterprogramming to unlearn. That is why we are urged to make it a part of daily practice. The body-as-self identity will not be broken by a few simple repetitions. We all still believe in it. As Ken Wapnick has said, if you doubt that you still believe in the identity of body and self, just try holding your breath for ten minutes.

What are we to do with our awareness that we hold this false belief about ourselves? The lesson tells us, “Be not concerned” (3:2). Like a runner practicing to break the four-minute mile, we need not be concerned that we haven’t done so yet. We just need to keep on practicing, doing what needs to be done to achieve that goal. Our goal is to realize we are a “mind...[that] no longer sees itself as in a body, firmly tied to it and sheltered by its presence” (1:4). That is the state of mind in which total freedom is found. When we have entered that state of mind, we will be right-minded, and in the real world. Our only concern now is to move in that direction.

The holy instant offers us foretastes of that state of mind. The body recedes from awareness in the holy instant, and what we are aware of is oneness, something so vast no body or collection of bodies could ever contain it. As we experience this state more and more it will come to dominate our consciousness. We still have a body, but we realize we are not bound to it. It becomes simply

[a] useful form for what the mind must do. It thus becomes a vehicle which helps forgiveness be extended to the all-inclusive goal that it must reach, according to God’s plan. (4:4–5)

Ironically, the more we detach our mind from our body, the more perfect the body becomes. “It becomes perfect in the ability to serve an undivided goal” (6:4). If perfecting the body is the goal, we will never achieve it; the body will find wholeness only when our goal becomes unified with the Holy Spirit in seeking to extend forgiveness to everyone and everything, which places the body in its proper place. Trying to hold on to the body destroys it; letting it go brings it health.

The body is not the home of the mind; the Holy Spirit is (6:1). Our aim in practicing, in each holy instant we take, is to free our mind from its connection to the body, and to give our mind to the Holy Spirit for His purposes. Our energy then is not directed at acquiring food or clothing, or housing, or physical well being, but at bringing forgiveness to the world. If we do this, the Holy Spirit promises that He will take care of all the rest. As Jesus put it in the Bible: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mt 6:33).

Or, as the Course puts it: “Once you accept His plan as the one function that you would fulfill, there will be nothing else the Holy Spirit will not arrange for you without your effort” (T-20.IV.8:4).