

## LESSON 23 • JANUARY 23

**“I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts.”**

### Practice instructions

**Purpose:** To learn “that you are not trapped in the world you see, because its cause can be changed” (5:1).

**Exercise:** Five times, for about one minute.

- Repeat the idea slowly as you look about you.
- Then close your eyes and search your mind for thoughts of attack and being attacked. Hold each one in mind and say, “*I can escape the world I see by giving up attack thoughts about \_\_\_\_\_.*”

**Remarks:** It is important to include thoughts of attack coming *from* you and thoughts of attack coming *at* you. The lesson says that these are just two different forms of the same thought. In fact, if you look closely, you will notice that every attack thought contains both aspects. When you are angry with someone, there is always an element of “He caused me pain in some way (which means he somehow attacked me) and that’s why I am angry.” And whenever you see someone attacking you, there is an accompanying anger, displeasure, or frustration directed *at* him. Thus, it is all the same, and it is all attack. Seeing this can motivate us to let it all go.

**Response to temptation:** Whenever you notice yourself having attack thoughts.

Repeat the idea as a way of dispelling those thoughts. You might want to make it specific by using the same form as above: “*I can escape the world I see by giving up attack thoughts about \_\_\_\_\_.*”

### Commentary

This is one example of a statement that sums up the message of ACIM for us. We do not escape from the world by controlling it, manipulating it, fixing it, or trying to make it better. We escape by an act of mind, by giving up attack thoughts. The world I see is the effect of attack thoughts in my mind, and therefore I can “escape” from it by changing my mind. This is “the only way out of fear that will ever succeed. Nothing else will work; everything else is meaningless” (1:1–2).

“It is with your thoughts, then, that we must work” (1:5). The Text puts it like this:

You must change your mind, not your behavior, and this *is* a matter of willingness. You do not need guidance except at the mind level. Correction belongs only at the level where change is possible. Change does not mean anything at the symptom level, where it cannot work. (T-2.VI.3:4–7)

The world is the symptom level; the mind is the level of causation.

It is very hard for most people to accept this dictum of the Course: “There is no point in trying to change the world” (2:3). As often as I have read this I keep running my head up against it. I find myself trying to change some outward factor, something in the world around me, thinking that such a change will somehow make things better. All this accomplishes is to alleviate some symptoms, like taking a cough drop when I have a cold. It cures nothing. Or, as Marianne Williamson has said, it is like trying to solve the problems on the Titanic by rearranging the deck chairs. What works is changing my thoughts about the world, because my attack thoughts are the cause of the world I see.

“You see the world that you have made, but you do not see yourself as the image maker” (4:1). We don’t recognize the power of our mind; we use the very images made by the mind to mask the mind’s power. We resist being tagged as the image maker. We want it to be someone else’s fault, even God’s.

Vision already holds a replacement for everything you think you see now.  
Loveliness can light your images, and so transform them that you will love them,  
even though they were made of hate. For you will not be making them alone.  
(4:4–6)

Every single thing we made out of our hate, our attack, and our rage can be transformed if we join with the Holy Spirit to let His light shine on them. Every special relationship, whether it seems hateful or loving, can become a source of blessing to the world. Every act of vengeance can be turned into salvation. This is what a miracle does. “The holiest of all the spots on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love” (T-26.IX.6:1).

We are not trapped in the world “because its cause can be changed” (5:1). Then follows a wonderfully brief summary of the process, which Ken Wapnick has labeled the three steps of forgiveness. It is found in a single sentence: “This change requires, first, that the cause be identified and then let go, so that it can be replaced” (5:2).

1. “This change requires, first, that the cause be identified....” We must recognize mind as the cause. We must become aware that we are constantly “making” the ego every moment within our own minds, by our thoughts. We must become aware that we are responsible for what we see.

2. “...and then let go....” Having recognized the mind as cause, we must choose to change our mind about the world. We must realize that the thoughts we have been thinking are not the thoughts we want because, as the lesson said yesterday, we have realized this is not the world we want to see. It does not say anything here about coming up with new thoughts; it merely says we let go of the old ones. All that is needed is a willingness for change, a recognition that “I no longer want this.”

3. “...so that it can be replaced.” The third step is the replacement of attack thoughts with holy thoughts, thoughts of love and peace. The next sentences are extremely important here: “The first two steps in this process require your cooperation. The final one does not” (5:3–4). *The replacement step is not our job!* We cooperate in identifying the cause, uncovering the ego within our minds, and we cooperate in letting go of those ego thoughts, but the replacement with God’s thoughts is not our job. That just happens.

When something happens to upset me, this is all I need to remember:

1. The cause is not outside, but is instead my own thoughts.
2. I do not want these thoughts.

Step 3 takes care of itself, for if I take the first two steps, I will see that my false images have *already* been replaced. The true thoughts spoken of earlier are already in my mind, but they are masked by the false ones. Remove the false, and the true is seen to be already there.

Within the practice instructions there is one other idea worth singling out:

Be sure to include both your thoughts of attacking and being attacked. Their effects are exactly the same because they are exactly the same. (7:1–2)

An “attack thought” is not just a thought I have about attacking another; it is also a thought of *being* attacked. If everything I see is a reflection of my thoughts, then what seems to be attack coming at me from outside is really my own thought of attack bouncing back at me.

Fears of all kinds are attack thoughts. Uneasiness when a highway patrol car cruises by is an attack thought. Worry about competition at work, or in a relationship, is an attack thought.

Cheering when the Death Star blows up is an attack thought. Watch your mind on Super Bowl Sunday!

We have a lot of giving up to do. The result is worth it.