

LESSON 333 • NOVEMBER 29

“Forgiveness ends the dream of conflict here.”

Practice instructions

See complete instructions. A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

Practice suggestion: Pick a situation in which you are experiencing conflict. Say:

I perceive conflict in this situation.

This is my dream of conflict.

Forgiveness ends the dream of conflict here.

Commentary

This is a magnificent lesson! It states unmistakably, in very certain terms, that we cannot dodge correcting our mistaken thoughts of conflict. Each one must be faced squarely and forgiveness applied. Our thoughts of conflict “must be resolved” (1:1). They will not simply go away. We cannot bury our heads in the sand. Consider the list of defensive tactics that our egos persuade us to use. Conflict is (1:2):

Evaded: We sidestep the issue. When we sense a loss of peace, we watch TV or go shopping. When we become aware of a wall between us and a brother or sister, we walk away, or make ourselves very busy. We avoid facing the conflict in our minds.

Set aside: We shelve the issue “for later consideration,” a later that never seems to come.

Denied: We pretend it isn’t there. “Me, angry? No, I’m fine; no problem.”

Disguised: We blame our upset on a bad mood, hormones, a headache, or a bad day at the office. We paint over our inner rage with “pink paint,” as Marianne Williamson so colorfully puts it (pun intended). We smile and choke down the anger or pain. Whatever we are feeling, it cannot be a thought of murder.

Seen somewhere else: “It’s not my problem! It’s all her fault.” “I wouldn’t be feeling these awful feelings if he wasn’t being so damned selfish.”

Called by another name: We deny that what we are feeling is attack or hatred; perhaps we call it “righteous indignation” or “setting my boundaries” or “standing for the truth.”

If the conflict in our minds is to be resolved, it cannot be “hidden by deceit of any kind” (1:2). That is the summation of all these tactics. We are trying to *hide* the fact that thoughts of hatred, rage, or murder have actually entered our minds. This ingrained habit of hiding our egos, pushing them into the closet when company comes, has to end if the conflict is to be escaped.

This doesn’t mean that, instead of hiding our egos, we should flaunt them and indulge them. The purpose is not to express the ego but to expel it. But we cannot do that if we continue to hide it, and sometimes the process of ripping the mask off the ego will mean that, for a short time at least, we will give vent to the ego instead of covering it up. Sometimes the rage must be expressed before we realize how deep-seated it really is. Yet this is only a transitional phase; there is a healing that we seek.

By contrast with the cover-up, our intent should be:

To see the ego conflict exactly as it is: In other words, to recognize hatred, attack, self-isolation, grandiosity, anger, and the desire to kill for exactly what they are. To stop playing innocent.

Where it is thought to be: This means getting in touch with the situation as your ego sees it. Admitting, for instance, that you really believe your spouse is sadistic, or that you actually do see yourself as unlovable.

In the reality which has been given it: Here we recognize just exactly what we think the situation is, as egos. We understand that we see ourselves as alone in the universe, clawing our way through life and barely surviving. We admit that the conflict seems *really real* to us. If we are not perfectly peaceful and constantly joyful, there *is* a reason, and the reason is always some aspect of ego we are clinging to, but simultaneously denying. We have to see the reality we have given to it.

With the purpose that the mind accorded it: This one takes real discernment. The conflicts we experience exist for a purpose, a purpose given to them by our minds. The purpose is always to support our own egos, always some form of ego autonomy, some illusion of independent, separate existence. Whatever the conflict, *we* give it its reality, and we do so for some hidden, insane reason of the ego. Here is where we uncover our fear of love, our fear of joining, our addiction to separation. Here is where we discover our hidden belief in guilt and the desire to punish ourselves.

Only when we are willing to go through this kind of ruthless self-examination, taking total responsibility for our own thoughts, will the defenses of the ego be lifted, and the truth be free to shine away the ego. The truth is forgiveness (1:4 and 2:1); it is forgiveness that shines away all conflict and all doubt. When I have uncovered my own ego in this way, forgiving others is the most natural and the easiest thing in the world, because I have admitted that my ego is self-generated, and the other person had nothing to do with it. I have been acting for insane reasons which I no longer accept nor want. But if this is true of me, it must be true of everyone. The conflict has been unreal, illusion fighting illusion, fear reacting to fear. And with that realization, my own guilt melts, and the way of return to God is open.