

LESSON 339 • DECEMBER 5

“I will receive whatever I request.”

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: To get the real thrust of today’s idea, you might want to try the following exercise. First, think of three things: a plan you have for today, something you want today, and a thought you have been thinking today. Then repeat the following lines to God:

I plan to do _____, yet I would do nothing by myself, but hear Your Voice in everything I do.

Today I want _____, but I request only what You offer me.

Today I might think _____, but I accept only Thoughts You share with me.

Commentary

This can be an upsetting idea! It means that whatever I have received, I requested. We don’t like to hear that, and it can seem harsh. “You’ve got cancer? You asked for it.” Used that way it is harsh, a weapon for separation instead of a tool for union. How could anyone desire sickness and pain? The thought seems absurd.

No one desires pain. But he can think that pain is pleasure. No one would avoid his happiness. But he can think that joy is painful, threatening and dangerous. Everyone will receive what he requests. But he can be confused indeed about the things he wants; the state he would attain. (1:1–6)

Of course nobody wants pain; nobody consciously refuses happiness. If that is so, and everyone receives what he requests, then how is it that pain and unhappiness arise? We might think of it as a syllogism, which seems to make sense:

Nobody wants pain.

Nobody, therefore, would request pain.

Everyone receives what he requests or wants.

Therefore, we cannot receive pain.

That seems logical, doesn’t it? If the first three are true, the fourth must be true. So how come I hurt? We must be missing something; our logic must be flawed. The flaw lies between the first two premises. Nobody wants pain, but nevertheless, we *do* request it; that is why we receive it.

The lesson explains that I can be confused about what I want; that I can think pain is pleasure, or that joy is threatening. The latter is perhaps a little easier to understand since it is a common experience. Haven’t you ever had the thought “This is too good to last”? Or perhaps you’ve found yourself very happy in a relationship and suddenly getting afraid of it because some part of you is nearly certain that if you keep your guard down you’re going to get smacked good. I had a friend

who somehow entered a very high and totally joyful state of mind and was there for nearly three weeks until she started thinking, “This is wonderful. I love everybody, I have no fear of anything, but if I live like this in the world I’m going to get crucified. Maybe I’m not enlightened; maybe I’m just insane.” So she lost the joy, and it never came back in quite the same way.

We really do think that too much joy is threatening and dangerous. We value our suspicions. We cherish our defenses. We’re afraid of simply opening up to joy. So, quite unconsciously most of the time, we request unhappiness. We choose not to be peaceful.

The confusion of pain and joy is much more deeply buried, but the Course teaches that pain validates our separateness and justifies our barriers against one another. We choose it to strengthen our ego identity. It is perhaps difficult to believe that all of our pain and unhappiness is chosen, but the Course is insistent on this point.

What can he then request that he would want when he receives it? He has asked for what will frighten him, and bring him suffering. (1:7–8)

We actually do ask for things that frighten us and bring us suffering. Much of the Text is dedicated to bringing this to conscious awareness; making us aware of what we are choosing so that we can realize how insane it is and make another choice.

Let us resolve today to ask for what we really want, and only this, that we may spend this day in fearlessness, without confusing pain with joy, or fear with love. (1:9)

We can change our minds. We can begin, consciously, to choose the joy of God instead of pain. When a moment of pain arises we can accept the fact that we are choosing it, and choose again. We can say, “This is not what I want; I choose the joy of God.” We can choose peace instead of upset. One thought I repeat so often that it is practically a mantra is “Oops! I’m doing it to myself again.” It is remarkable what a change this fundamental realization can make in one’s life.

Read now the short prayer that closes this lesson, and start your day with these thoughts. If you’ve already started the day, start it over right now. Stop a moment and adopt this mindset. Setting the tone of your mind right now will carry over into the day and bring changes you can’t begin to foresee now.

Father, this is Your day. It is a day in which I would do nothing by myself, but hear Your Voice in everything I do; requesting only what You offer me, accepting only Thoughts You share with me. (2:1–2)