

LESSON 41 • FEBRUARY 10

“God goes with me wherever I go.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To get in touch with God’s Presence deep within you, so that you experience the fact that He goes with you wherever you go. This is the real cure for all human ills, which are merely symptoms of our illusory separation from God.

Longer: One time, for three to five minutes, as soon as possible after rising.

- Close your eyes, repeat the idea very slowly.
- Then let your mind go blank and focus all your attention on sinking down and inward. Sink past the cloud of insane thoughts on the surface of your mind and toward the Presence of God at the quiet center of your mind. “Try to enter very deeply into your own mind” (6:6). Repeat the idea occasionally if it helps, but spend most of your time gently willing yourself to sink toward the core of your mind, where all is still. Hold in mind the confidence that you can make it, for reaching this place is more natural than anything in this world. When thoughts arise, simply slip past them on your way inward. It will help dispel them if you repeat the idea.

Remarks: This is the Workbook’s first meditation exercise. It is labeled “our first real attempt” (5:3) to reach the light within. As this quote suggests, this practice is extremely important in the Workbook. Paragraph 8 clearly signals that we will be engaging in “this kind of practice” (8:6) more, receiving more instruction in it, and growing in it, until we reach the point where “it is always successful” (8:5).

Frequent reminders: Often.

Repeat the idea according to the instructions in paragraph 9. To get a sense for that, I suggest that you repeat it right now following the instructions below, all of which are drawn from paragraph 9:

- Repeat “it very slowly, preferably with eyes closed.”
- Repeat it again and “think of what you are saying; what the words mean.”
- Repeat the words again and “concentrate on the holiness that they imply about you.” If He goes with you and He is holy, then you are holy.
- Repeat them again, concentrating “on the unfailing companionship that is yours.”
- Repeat them again, concentrating “on the complete protection that surrounds you.”

Response to temptation: Whenever you have fear thoughts.

Remember the idea. If you really connect with its meaning, you will be able to laugh at the fears that seemed so heavy an instant before.

Commentary

Innumerable problems seem to have arisen from our perception of ourselves as separate from God. A sense of loneliness and abandonment, depression, anxiety, worry, helplessness, misery, suffering, and intense fear of loss all stem from this root problem. Most of our lives are spent, if we look at things objectively, with various ways of trying to circumvent and overcome these problems.

But the one thing [we] do not do is to question the reality of the problem. Yet its effects cannot be cured because the problem is not real. (2:2–3)

A spiritual teacher, Adi Da, once wrote a book subtitled *The Imaginary Disease That Religion Seeks to Cure*. That is what separation is: an imaginary disease. How can you cure a disease that does not really exist? The answer is obvious; you cannot. There is no cure because there is no disease. This is why all our attempts to “cure” ourselves do not work. We cannot find the way “back” to God because He has never left us; God goes with us wherever we go. All of our strife and drama is just foolishness, “despite the serious and tragic forms it may take” (2:5).

Deep within you is everything that is perfect, ready to radiate through you and out into the world. It will cure all sorrow and pain and fear and loss because it will heal the mind that thought these things were real, and suffered out of its allegiance to them. (3:1–2)

We carry the “cure” for our disease deep within us. This cure heals, not by overcoming the “illness” but by healing our belief in the reality of the illness. God is always with us. How could we ever, in any way, ever be separate from the Infinite? How could we ever be apart from All That Is? The very idea is insane and impossible.

We understand that you do not believe all this. How could you, when the truth is hidden deep within, under a heavy cloud of insane thoughts, dense and obscuring, yet representing all you see? Today we will make our first real attempt to get past this dark and heavy cloud, and to go through it to the light beyond. (5:1–3)

How reassuring to have our Teacher tell us that he understands we do not believe this as yet. Oh, perhaps we hold an intellectual belief in God’s omnipresence, but we do not believe it to the core, in a way that banishes all our fear, sorrow, pain and loss. That is the purpose of this lesson: to get past “this dark and heavy cloud” and to reach the light.

This lesson is the Course’s first introduction to the practice of what we might call traditional meditation. While the Course does not make such meditation a primary focus, it definitely accords it a place of great importance. Meditation in the Course consists of sitting with eyes closed and making “no effort to think of anything” (6:4), but attempting to enter deeply into our own mind, to sink down and inward while trying to keep the mind “clear of any thoughts that might divert your attention” (6:6). The purpose, as has been stated, is to become aware of the light within ourselves. Or, in more traditional terms, to experience a sense of God’s presence with us. We are attempting to reach God today.

This meditation exercise, says the lesson, can achieve startling results the very first time you try it. That may not happen for you the first time, but “sooner or later it is always successful” (8:5). That certainly implies that we are expected to repeat the exercise, and to expect *something* as a result.

Clearly, if this idea of God’s presence is meant to banish our loneliness, we can expect to develop a very clear and tangible sense of Someone Who is always with us, in every moment. When we begin to develop this sense we may be tempted to think it is our imagination. This is no imagination! It is the *absence* of this Presence that is imaginary.

“You can indeed afford to laugh at fear thoughts, remembering that God goes with you wherever you go” (10:1).