

LESSON 42 • FEBRUARY 11

“God is my Strength. Vision is His gift.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To realize that vision comes not from you but from the strength of God in you, and that therefore you can receive it under any circumstance and cannot fail to find it eventually.

Longer: Two times, for three to five minutes, (early) morning and (late) evening.

- Repeat the idea slowly, looking about you. Close your eyes and repeat it even slower.
- Then step back and let only thoughts related to the idea come to mind. Do not strain or actively try to think them up. “Try merely to step back and let the thoughts come” (6:2). I find it helpful to repeat the idea and watch for the germ of a related thought to spark in my mind somewhere during that repetition. Then I put words to that germ.
- If your mind wanders, repeat the idea and try again. If related thoughts stop coming, repeat the idea with eyes open and eyes closed as at the beginning. If no related thoughts come at all, just repeat this beginning phase over and over.

Remarks: This is our first lengthy instruction in the practice of letting related thoughts come (which was introduced in Lesson 38). Over time, the Workbook will try to make this practice a habitual part of our overall repertoire.

Frequent reminders: The more often the better.

Repeating this idea, which consists of two parts, will begin to show you that all the parts of the Course come together into a unified whole. It will also remind you that the Course’s goal—vision—is a genuine priority for you.

Commentary

Question: Why can we not fail in our efforts to achieve the goal of this course?

Answer: Because God wills us to achieve it.

If that answer sounds somewhat demeaning to you, don’t be surprised at having such a reaction. With our minds permeated by ego thinking, it can seem personally insulting to be told that the guarantee of our success is that “God wants it that way,” as if we don’t have any choice in the matter. But the fact is, we don’t.

As the introduction to the Text puts it:

It is a required course. Only the time you take it is voluntary. Free will does not mean that you can establish the curriculum. It means only that you can elect what you want to take at a given time. (T-In.1:2–5)

The curriculum is learning who we are, and we don’t have any say in establishing that; we are what God created, and we cannot change that. The only choice is how long it takes us to accept the fact of what we are, instead of trying to be something we are not.

The Text talks about how separation took root in our minds when we refused to accept ourselves as creations of God and wanted to create ourselves. We’re still fighting that same silly battle. It still seems insulting to be told that the outcome is inevitable; we are what God created and can’t be anything else, no matter how much we might wish for it.

It is God’s strength and not ours that gives us our power. We can’t give ourselves vision, but neither can we forever refuse His gift to us. Even if we resist, eventually we will capitulate. And if we cooperate, our success is guaranteed.

Werner Erhard, the founder of Erhard Seminars Training (est), once said that it is easier to ride the horse in the direction in which it is going. That is what the Course is asking us to do; to join our will to God's, and to recognize that we really do want exactly what He wants to give us, and has given already. "What He gives is truly given" (2:1).

If we can accept that our will and God's are the same, we can enter into spiritual life as a sure thing. We can say, "Vision must be possible. God gives truly" (4:5-6). Or "God's gifts to me must be mine, because He gave them to me" (4:7). We can walk through life with a calm assurance. "Those who are certain of the outcome can afford to wait, and wait without anxiety" (M-4.VIII.1:1).

There is an idea that gets tossed into the middle of this lesson, seemingly unrelated, although it is closely related. "Your passage through time and space is not at random. You cannot but be in the right place at the right time" (2:3-4). The more you go on with this path (and similar ones) the more you know this is absolutely true. There are no random events; everything has a purpose. And you cannot miss! You can't screw it up. Oh, you can make mistakes; the Course is quite clear about that. It tells us: "Son of God, you have not sinned, but you have been much mistaken" (T-10.V.6:1). But even our mistakes can be used by the Holy Spirit for our benefit: "The Son of God can make no choice the Holy Spirit cannot employ on his behalf" (T-25.VI.7:5). Even if you make the "wrong" choice, nothing has really happened; no permanent damage has been done. "Nothing is ever lost but time, which in the end is meaningless" (T-26.V.2:1). The Holy Spirit can take whatever you give Him and turn it to your good.

So you can't help being in the right place at the right time; you can just relax in life and enjoy the show, instead of being anxious about it all. Why is this so? Because of the strength of God, and His gifts. Your reaching the goal is His Will, and what God wants, God gets. After all, He's *God*.

One further comment: In the instructions for practice you are asked to let thoughts occur in relation to today's idea; this kind of rehearsing of related thoughts is another type of meditation that is quite common in the Workbook. Then it says, "You may, in fact, be astonished at the amount of course-related understanding some of your thoughts contain" (5:2).

You may, however, instead be very puzzled over what the heck this means! The first time I tried this exercise my mind was virtually blank. Remember that the Workbook often assumes that you have studied—not just read, but studied—the Text before you began these exercises. It isn't a requirement, but it is assumed to be the general case.

For anyone who has done that, related thoughts will indeed come easily, or if you are on a repeat pass through the Workbook, same thing. If, after trying for a minute or two to find related thoughts, you find that they do not come easily, take the advice given a little further on in the lesson: "If you find this difficult, it is better to spend the practice period alternating between slow repetitions of the idea with the eyes open, then with eyes closed, than it is to strain to find suitable thoughts" (6:3). The presence of this kind of instruction shows that the lessons can accommodate people who haven't already studied the Text in depth.