

LESSON 47 • FEBRUARY 16

“God is the strength in which I trust.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: “To reach past your own weakness to the Source of real strength” (4:1), so that you gain confidence in the face of all problems and decisions.

Longer: Four times (more are urged), for five minutes (longer are urged).

- Close your eyes and repeat the idea.
- Search your mind for situations about which you have fear. Release each one by saying, “*God is the strength in which I trust.*” Do this for a minute or two.
- The remainder is another exercise in meditation. Sink down in your mind, beneath all your worried thoughts, which are based on your sense of inadequacy. Reach down below these to the place in you where nothing is beyond your strength, because the strength of God lives in you. You might imagine you are sinking down beneath the choppy waters on the surface to the peaceful depths where all is still. “You will recognize that you have reached [this place] if you feel a sense of deep peace, however briefly” (7:2). Remember (as previously instructed) to draw your mind back from wandering as often as needed, and to hold in mind an attitude of confidence and desire.

Frequent reminders: Often.

Repeat the idea.

Response to temptation: When any disturbance arises.

Repeat the idea, remembering you are entitled to peace because you are trusting in God’s strength, not your own.

Commentary

It is reported in the Gospel of John that Jesus said, “The Son can do nothing of himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing....I can do nothing on my own initiative, as I hear, I judge” (Jn 5:19, 30). Basically that is what this lesson is telling us: We cannot do anything by ourselves. When the lesson speaks of “trusting in your own strength” (1:1) it is talking about attempting to do anything by ourselves, as an independent unit, separate from God and His creation. It is talking about operating as an ego. The lesson is saying that it is simply impossible.

Another example from the Gospels may help. Toward the end of his time on earth, Jesus compared himself to a vine, and his disciples to branches in the vine. He was speaking, I believe, from the perspective of the Christ; or perhaps it would be better to say the Christ was speaking through the man, Jesus. He said: “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me....apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:4–5).

Think about it. Where does the vine leave off and the branch begin? The branch is *part of* the vine. That is its whole existence. It cannot operate independently; it cannot “bear fruit” if it is cut off from the vine.

We are parts or aspects of the Sonship, and the Son is one with the Father. “What [God] creates is not apart from Him, and nowhere does the Father end, the Son begin as something separate from Him” (W-pl.132.12:4). Sounds a lot like a vine and its branches, doesn’t it?

When we try to operate independently we can do nothing. As we normally think of ourselves, what is there we can wholly predict and control? How can we “be aware of all the facets of any problem” and “resolve them in such a way that only good can come of it?” (1:4). Left to ourselves, left to the limited resources of the self as the ego sees it, cut off from everything, we

simply cannot do it. We don't have what it takes. "If you are trusting in your own strength, you have every reason to be apprehensive, anxious and fearful" (1:1).

The lesson is asking us to recognize that we are not limited to what we may think of as our own strength; "God is the strength in which I trust." It is asking us to operate based on our union with God. From where we are at the start of things, it is going to seem as if we are dealing with some kind of external God, a "Voice" that speaks within our minds or operates in circumstances to guide us:

Since you believe that you are separate, Heaven presents itself to you as separate, too. Not that it is in truth, but that the link [the Holy Spirit] that has been given you to join the truth may reach to you through what you understand. (T-25.I.5:1-2)

So it may seem as if we are being asked to "submit" to a superior force, when in fact all we are doing is aligning ourselves with all the rest of our own being, from which we have dissociated ourselves. The Holy Spirit speaks for us, as well as for God, for we are one (see T-11.1.11:1; T-30.II.1:1-2; W-pI.125.8:1; W-pI.152.12:2).

When we realize we cannot live on our own—when we accept our dependence on this Higher Power—God becomes our strength and our safety in every circumstance. His Voice tells us "exactly what to do to call upon His strength and His protection" (3:2).

When we fear, we must be trusting in our own independent strength, which is nonexistent. Simply feeling inadequate for some task is a form of fear, arising from the belief I am on my own. "Who can put his faith in weakness and feel safe?" (2:3). When fear arises, let me remind myself that I do not trust in my own strength, but God's. That reality can pull me up from fear to a place of deep, abiding peace.

To recognize our weakness as independent beings is a necessary beginning (6:1). If we deceive ourselves into believing we can handle everything on our own, without God, without our brothers and sisters, we will crash and burn eventually. But that recognition is not the point at which to stop; we must go beyond that to realize that we have the strength of God, and that confidence in that strength "is fully justified in every respect and in all circumstances" (6:2).

Nearly every time I meditate I repeat, silently or aloud, the words that come near the end of this lesson:

There is a place in you where there is perfect peace. There is a place in you where nothing is impossible. There is a place in you where the strength of God abides. (7:4-6)

Let us, today, pause frequently to reach down below "all the trivial things that churn and bubble on the surface of [our] mind" (7:3), to find that place.