

LESSON 7 • JANUARY 7

“I see only the past.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To begin to change your ideas about time, which are the foundation for all that you see and believe. Your mind will resist this change, in order to maintain the stability of your world, yet it is that world which keeps you bound.

Exercise: Three or four times, for one minute or so.

Look about you and apply the idea specifically and indiscriminately to whatever catches your eye, saying: “*I see only the past in [this shoe, that body, etc.].*” “Do not linger over any one thing in particular, but remember to omit nothing specifically” (5:1).

Commentary

As the lesson says, this “is the rationale for all of the preceding” lessons (1:2). “It is the reason why nothing that you see means anything” (1:3), and so on through the previous six thoughts. Because we see only the past, every one of those previous ideas is true. It makes this lesson an extremely important one, one we need to take in and consider very seriously.

Notice how absolute the thought for today is: “I see *only* the past.” We may find this “particularly difficult to believe at first” (1:1). If anything, that is an understatement. If you find the concept difficult to accept, be reassured that the Teacher realizes your difficulty and accepts it in you.

The Course lays an unusually heavy emphasis on this concept, not only here, but also in the Text. For instance, three sections of Chapter 13, from “The Function of Time” (T-13.IV) through “Finding the Present” (T-13.VI), deal with how we see time and the fact that “the ego invests heavily in the past, and in the end believes that the past is the only aspect of time that is meaningful” (T-13.IV.4:2). It speaks of the shadow figures from the past, built upon illusions, that completely block out our sight of present reality. It says:

To be born again is to let the past go, and look without condemnation upon the present. (T-13.VI.3:5)

“Everything you believe is rooted in time, and depends on your *not* learning these new ideas about it” (2:1, my emphasis). Whatever we have learned, we learned from the past; that cannot be disputed.

Therefore, everything we think we know is based on the past. We look at the present through the filter of our past learning. The Course urges us not to let our past learning be the light that guides us in the present (see T-14.XI.6:9). Instead we need to turn, in the moment, and inquire of the Holy Spirit to show us His vision of the present.

The illustration in the lesson about the cup makes the point that our identification of things depends on the past, and our reactions to things come from past experiences. “You would have no idea what this cup is, except for your past learning” (3:6). And, “This is equally true of whatever you look at” (4:2).

What we are “seeing” is the past, pure and simple. At the moment there may seem to be no alternative to this; we may wonder what other way of seeing is possible. But there *is* another way; the Course will bring us to that eventually. For now, simply let this lesson sink in: “I see only the past.”