

LESSON 71 • MARCH 12

“Only God’s plan for salvation will work.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To truly recognize that only God’s plan will work and to rejoice in this, for it means escape from the hopelessness of the ego’s plan and from the pointlessness of trying to follow both plans at once.

Longer: Two times, for ten to fifteen minutes.

- The first part is another exercise in thinking about the idea. Specifically, reflect on the two parts of the idea. Part one: God’s plan will work. According to recent lessons, God’s plan involves contacting the light within and letting go of grievances, both of which mean changing your mind. Part two: other plans won’t work. This lesson tells us that the ego’s plan involves seeking outside yourself for happiness, holding grievances when the outside doesn’t cooperate, and refusing to change your mind. Try to reach the conclusion, based on logic and your experience, that *only* God’s plan holds any hope of delivering actual happiness.
- The second part is the Workbook’s first exercise in asking for guidance. Ask God to reveal His plan for you for today. Ask, “*What would You have me do? Where would You have me go? What would You have me say, and to whom?*” The willingness you are demonstrating just by doing this entitles you to an answer, so listen with confidence. “Refuse not to hear” (9:8). Once you ask, listen for the subtlest inner promptings—it doesn’t need to come in words. If you don’t hear anything, you might want to repeat the questions, making them more specific: “*What would You have me do today?*” or “*Where would You have me go after lunch?*”

Frequent reminders: Six or seven per hour, for half a minute or less.

Repeat the idea as an affirmation of where your salvation really comes from.

Response to temptation: Whenever you are tempted to hold a grievance.

Be alert all day to grievances. Respond to each one by saying, “*Holding grievances is the opposite of God’s plan for salvation. And only His plan will work.*”

Commentary

After being told yesterday that salvation comes from me and only from me, it is a little annoying the next day to be told that only God’s plan will work and that the plan I believe in (which is the ego’s) isn’t worth anything. It kind of seems like give and then take away, doesn’t it? But it isn’t really saying anything different. The ego’s plan involves looking for salvation outside of myself; God’s plan is wholly centered on my change of mind. In God’s plan, salvation comes from me; in the ego’s plan, it comes from any place *except* me.

To the ego, salvation means “that if someone else spoke or acted differently, if some external circumstance or event were changed, you would be saved” (2:2). In the ego’s view, basically I’m okay, I am the innocent victim; the problem is with something outside of me. Whenever I am thinking, “If this were different, I’d be okay,” I am believing in the ego’s plan of salvation because I am demanding “the change of mind necessary for salvation...of everyone and everything except” myself (2:5).

Don’t get tripped up by the religious-sounding phrase “plan for salvation.” It may remind you of some cheap Bible tract announcing “God’s plan of salvation.” What salvation boils down to here is simply, “I’d be okay; my problems would be solved.” And the ego’s plan, simply stated, is “If this were different, I would be saved.”

In the ego's plan, the mind's only purpose is to figure out *what* has to change for me to be saved (which presupposes that it *isn't me* that has to change). The ego will let us pick anything that won't work (which includes everything in the class of things I am looking at—things outside of myself—since salvation comes from me and not something outside me). The ego has me look everywhere but in the one place in which the answer lies—my own mind.

God's plan for salvation is that I look for it where it is: in myself.

For this plan to work, however, there is a condition: I have to look in myself *and nowhere else*. I can't be looking for salvation in myself *and* from outside. This just divides my efforts between two different plans. There are two parts to today's idea: 1) God's plan will work, and 2) other plans (i.e. the plans I make up) won't work.

The second part, the lesson implies, may seem depressing. We may feel a flare of anger. In fact, what keeps us from simply accepting God's plan is that we want to be right; we want our plans to work. We'd rather be right than happy, most of the time, although we don't consciously think that. But the ego's plan consists of holding grievances. Haven't you ever had the experience of realizing that you *could* just let a grievance go and be happy, but that somehow it seems to feel good to be angry? You don't want to let go. You'd rather be *right* than happy.

The lesson is saying, "You can be saved simply by changing your mind. Nothing outside you has to change in order for you to be happy. You can simply choose happiness, right now." And our response, typically? "Hell, no! I won't be happy unless s/he changes first." We're holding on to our plan for salvation and refusing God's.

Surprisingly, the practice for today is not primarily about letting go of grievances, or looking within for salvation. It is about listening. It is about asking guidance from God. The emphasis is on taking our hands off the reins of our lives and giving them over to God. If we can learn to do that, we may begin to learn that His plans work better than our own.