

LESSON 76 • MARCH 17

“I am under no laws but God’s.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To really understand that you are under no laws but God’s, to see the freedom in this idea, and to rejoice that it is so.

Longer: Two times, for ten to fifteen minutes.

- In the first phase, briefly review the different “laws” you believe in. These include *bodily* laws, such as laws of nutrition, medicine, and economics; *social* laws, such as laws of reciprocity and good relationship; and *religious* laws, which set forth what you must give to God in order for Him to grant you His gifts.
- Dismiss these “laws” with the thought that there are no laws but God’s. Then wait in receptive silence to hear God’s Voice (this is another exercise in listening to the Holy Spirit). While listening, from time to time repeat the idea, as an invitation to God’s Voice to help you really understand the idea. When you hear the Holy Spirit, He may tell you that God’s laws, in contrast to the world’s “laws,” only give. They do not ask for payment before they deliver you their endless blessings. He may go on to tell you of all the blessings these laws offer you, including the limitless joys of Heaven, all of which stem from God’s infinite Love for you. Remember to listen in *confidence*, knowing that even if you hear nothing now, God’s Voice is still speaking to you, and that your listening today will bring you closer to really hearing. If you do hear something, you may want to write it down afterwards.
- Conclude by repeating the idea.

Frequent reminders: Four to five per hour (at least).

Repeat the idea as a declaration of freedom from all the tyrannical laws of this world and an acknowledgment that you live only under the blessing of God’s Love.

Response to temptation: Whenever you feel subject to the laws of this world.

Repeat the idea. Because we usually take the laws of the world for granted, we don’t always realize when we feel oppressed by them. Therefore, you may want to periodically scan your mind for the things that are weighing on you and identify the laws behind them. At any given moment, for instance, you might find that you feel oppressed by the laws of hunger, of time (you may be working against a deadline), of money (you may feel a shortage), and of social dynamics (you may be in a politically delicate situation). Note the laws you feel oppressing you and respond by repeating the idea as a real declaration of your freedom from them.

Commentary

This is perhaps one of the most challenging lessons in the Workbook. It confronts, head on, a whole panoply of security blankets and substitutes for salvation that we have developed, and that we have convinced ourselves we depend on. It shocks us by its radical assertions. If we are open to what it says, we will begin to see that the Course is challenging all of our basic assumptions about life and about ourselves. We are far more entrenched in the ego’s illusions than we have heretofore realized.

The following scenario forms the background to this lesson:

1. We are perfect, formless mind, each of us parts of a seamless whole, but we have wished to separate off and fragment a small piece of mind to call “me.” Moreover, we have not only wished to do so, we have convinced ourselves that we have actually done it. Our sense of identity has

become restricted to this little fragment of mind. Our mind has felt enormous guilt because of this belief, which is false.

2. We have made up a world filled with bodies for two reasons: first, to support our illusions of separateness; and second, to escape from the guilt in our minds by projecting that guilt onto the world and the “others” who fill it. We have become primarily identified with our own body, rather than even with the fragment of mind we perceive as being “within” the body.

3. Believing we are the body, and that we (our bodies) are endangered by many things in the world, we have devised an endless list of means for protecting and preserving our bodies. These are the “laws” of the world spoken of in this lesson.

The first sentence of Lesson 76 refers to an earlier statement, in the first three paragraphs of Lesson 71, that pointed out how many senseless things we have looked to for our salvation (which can be understood as protection, or safety, or even happiness). In Lesson 71, the key factor about each of these things was this thought: “If this were different, I would be saved” (W-pI.71.2:4). Lesson 76 now adds the thought that “each [of these things] has imprisoned you with laws as senseless as itself” (1:2). For example, if we look to good physical health to “save” us, we become bound by a myriad of laws governing health: nutrition, medicine, and so on.

The lesson identifies many of the so-called laws we believe ourselves to be subject to: the need for money (paper strips and metal discs); the use of medicine to ward off disease; the need for physical interaction with other bodies (sex, companionship); laws of medicine, economics, and health (nutrition, exercise, sleep, vitamins); any way we try to protect the body; “laws” of friendship, of “good” relationships, and reciprocity (being fair); even “religious” laws.

We are not actually bound by any of these laws (1:3). That is a stunning and almost unbelievable statement. In order to understand our freedom from these laws, however, we “must first realize salvation lies not there” (1:4). In other words, we have to realize that our bodies and our egos are not what need preservation. We have to undo the mistake we have made in identifying what and who we are. That undoing, of course, is what the entirety of *A Course in Miracles* is all about.

In saying that we “bind” ourselves “to laws that make no sense” (1:5) as long as we are seeking for salvation by attempting to change something—anything—other than our minds, the Course is telling us that our subjugation to these laws of the world is something that we have *chosen* and are continuing to choose, moment to moment. Following the dictates of our own ego in its attempts to preserve itself at the expense of our reality, we blindly continue to look for salvation outside of ourselves. That blind pursuit is what binds us to the laws of the world. By implication, ending that mistaken pursuit will *free* us from the laws of the world.

We think miracles mean sudden healing of the body, or the arrival of money from an unexpected source, or the appearance of someone or something we believe will bring us happiness. To believe this is still to seek for salvation from outside of our own minds, and will continue to bind us to the laws of the world. What’s worse, it also continues to make our separated, ego identity seem real to us.

The idea of living without any need for money, or medicine, or physical means of protection appeals to everyone. That state can be ours, but paradoxically, not by seeking for it. The world and its laws are not where freedom lies. Having all the money we need magically provided is not freedom. Having perfect physical health is not freedom. Having “good” relationships is not freedom. Freedom has nothing to do with our bodies. Freedom can be found only within ourselves.

“The body is endangered by the mind that hurts itself” (5:2). All of our physical lack and suffering is unconsciously engendered by our minds, in an attempt to keep the mind from consciously realizing that it is its own victim (5:3–5). Because of our primal guilt, caused by our belief in the reality of separation, our mind “attacks itself and wants to die” (5:5). This is why we think we are bodies (which do die). The “laws” we think we must obey in order to save our

bodies are just the mind's attempt to camouflage the real problem, which is its own thoughts of guilt and separation.

“God’s laws forever give and never take” (9:6). The “laws” we see are not like this; therefore they cannot be real, because they do not come from God. And “there are no laws but God’s” (9:1). In today’s practice we are asked to consider our foolish laws, and then to listen, deep within, to “hear the Voice that speaks the truth to you” (9:2). This Voice will tell us of God’s undying Love, His desire that we know “endless joy” (10:5), and His yearning to use us as channels for His creation (10:6). If we hear this message of Love within ourselves, our thoughts of guilt and separation will vanish. We will realize Who we are. And in so doing, our insane desire to attack and kill ourselves will be over. The *cause* of our false seeking will go, and with it, our bondage to the “laws” that govern these idols we have made.

By bringing our imaginary “laws” into direct confrontation with what the laws of God must be—laws in which there is no loss, no giving and receiving of payment, no exchanges nor substitutions, but only God’s unconditional Love—we are bringing our illusions to the truth. (See T-14.VII.1–4, for an excellent discussion of just why these two systems of belief need to be brought together so that the falsehoods will vanish in the light of the truth.)