

LESSON 9 • JANUARY 9

“I see nothing as it is now.”

Practice instructions

Exercise: Three or four times, for one minute.

Look about you, applying the idea without discrimination or exclusion to whatever you see. Begin with things near you: “*I do not see this [telephone, arm, etc.] as it is now.*” Then extend the range outward: “*I do not see that [door, face, etc.] as it is now.*”

Remarks: You may accept this idea, but you do not really understand it, nor are you expected to. Understanding is not the prerequisite for this practice; rather, understanding is the *goal* of this practice. These exercises are meant to undo your illusion that you understand things and, by clearing this blockage away, allow true understanding to finally dawn on your mind. So at this point simply practice the idea, even if you do not understand it, find it disturbing, or even actively resist it.

Commentary

If I see only the past, and my mind is preoccupied with past thoughts, then obviously I see nothing as it is now. I love the fact that the lesson goes on to say, “But while you may be able to accept it intellectually, it is unlikely that it will mean anything to you as yet” (1:2). The Course clearly recognizes a vast difference between intellectually accepting an idea and truly understanding it, so that it has become a part of us. I think of the stages of grief when a loved one dies. Immediately after the death, we may intellectually accept that our beloved is gone, but we have not truly grasped and assimilated that fact. It takes time for the reality of it to sink in.

Likewise, we can accept the idea that we see nothing as it is now, but it may be some time before the meaning of that fact truly begins to dawn on us. Fortunately, the lesson goes on to say that our understanding, at this stage, is not necessary. In fact, what *is* necessary is the recognition that we *do not* understand! You might say that one of the things we are to grasp from this lesson is that we don’t understand it!

It makes a kind of sense if you think about it.

These exercises are concerned with practice, not with understanding. You do not need to practice what you already understand. (1:5–6)

Some people may feel that it doesn’t make sense to work with an idea you don’t fully understand or believe. I’ve heard people ask questions such as “How can I work with a lesson like ‘I am the holy Son of God Himself’ if I don’t really believe that?” And the answer is, if you believed it already, you wouldn’t need to work with the lesson! Helping you understand or believe is what the practice is for.

The attitude of recognizing our real ignorance is vital to learning. Without it, our false “understanding” gets in the way of learning. So when a lesson such as this one, “I see nothing as it is now,” rubs you the wrong way or leaves you feeling that you don’t really know what it is talking about—just be honest that you feel that way. Don’t make the mistake of pretending you already understand when you don’t. The lessons are designed with our ignorance in mind.

“It is difficult for the untrained mind to believe that what it seems to picture is not there” (2:1). Difficult? Nearly impossible is more like it. The idea is disturbing; most of us will actively resist it in some way or another. *That’s okay.* That does not keep you from applying the idea anyhow, and that is all that is asked of us. (Remember the introduction to the Workbook and its last two paragraphs? If not, read them over in this regard.) Just do the exercises anyhow, even if your mind is resisting the entire idea; it will still have the desired effect.

Notice how the lesson talks about “each small step” (2:5) clearing away a little darkness until understanding finally comes. The tone of these lessons, and indeed the entire Course, should not lead us to believe that we will reach enlightenment quickly. It comes in small steps, little by little. The Course does say that full enlightenment could come to any of us in any instant, if we could but open to it; it is nearer to us than our own hands and feet. But it also says that it will take much longer to make us willing to open than it will take for that final transformation of mind to occur. It says:

By far the majority are given a slowly-evolving training program, in which as many previous mistakes as possible are corrected. Relationships in particular must be properly perceived, and all dark cornerstones of unforgiveness removed. (M-9.1:7–8)

Notice: a “slowly-evolving training program” is the norm. So don’t be so restless or feel like you’re working against some deadline; take things at the pace they come, and work with the exercises in this Workbook. Be content to slowly evolve. Don’t worry if understanding does not leap full-blown into your mind tomorrow!

The exercises are again deceptively simple, things like “I do not see this computer screen as it is now.” How does saying this help me? I can’t say for sure. I do know that the more often I repeat an idea, the more reasonable it starts to seem. Maybe that’s all there is to it. I know it has helped me, at times, to remind myself in some situation that seems fearful or out of control that “I do not see this situation as it is now in reality.” I can reassure myself that what I am seeing, which seems to be causing my fear, is not the reality of things. I may not have any idea what the reality is, but it helps to know that what I am seeing ain’t it! The idea is less reassuring when I apply it to something that I *do* like: “I do not see this romantic relationship as it is now.” Hmmm, not sure I like that. But if it does nothing more than begin to shake my faith in what I see, the lesson is doing its job even if I don’t fully understand it or like it.

