

LESSON 138 • MAY 18

“Heaven is the decision I must make.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To make the choice for Heaven, “the choice that time was made to help us make” (7:1).

Longer: Two—the first and last moments of your day, for five minutes.

Use these five minutes to make a firm, definitive choice for Heaven. Begin by saying, “*Heaven is the decision I must make. I make it now, and will not change my mind, because it is the only thing I want.*” Then spend the rest of the time bringing your mind to a place where you truly mean these words. This will probably involve bringing to light unconscious beliefs that life is a terrifying exercise in which all hope is finally swallowed up in death, and in which death is, sadly, the only escape from conflict. Bring this belief system to light and call on Heaven’s help, and you will see that this view is totally invalid, “nothing but an appearance of the truth” (11:2). Then set this hellish view of life, divested of all reality, next to the alternative: Heaven. If you do, you will see that choosing Heaven is so obvious and natural that it is no choice at all.

Shorter: Hourly, for a brief quiet time.

Consciously reaffirm the choice you made in the morning by saying, “*Heaven is the decision I must make. I make it now, and will not change my mind, because it is the only thing I want.*” There is a real emphatic note in these lines, so you might want to emphasize “must” and “now” and “will not.”

Remarks: Devote the evening practice to reaffirming the choice you made at the beginning of the day and reinforced every hour of the day. By ending in this way, you make the entire day about the choice for Heaven.

Commentary

The lesson makes some stark contrasts between this world and creation. One is a realm of duality, in which “opposition is part of being ‘real’” (2:2). The other is a realm of unity, of perfect oneness: “Creation knows no opposite” (2:1). This is a classic discussion about what can be called duality and nonduality.

Nonduality, or oneness, is what is real. Where there is only oneness there can be no choice, because there is nothing between which to choose. If oneness is reality, then choice, any choice, is an illusion and nothing more. Choice is impossible, inconceivable. That is the reality.

Within our dream, however, choice is not only possible; it is inevitable, it is life. Within this world, truth cannot enter because it would be met only with fear; the choicelessness of oneness seems the ultimate threat to a mind that thinks duality is all there is. Therefore, in this world, we are learning to make one, final choice. It is a choice to end all choices, the choice between illusion and reality. Time exists for nothing but this choice, to “give us time” to make it. We are being asked to choose Heaven instead of hell.

Years ago, before I encountered the Course, I had been through a lot of things, read a lot of books, and attended a lot of seminars. I sat down one day to try to distill, in writing, what I had learned from life. I was writing for my sons, then in their teens. I recall quite clearly that at that point in my life, I felt I was only sure of two things:

One, you can trust the Universe.

Two, happiness is a decision I make.

I won't bother to comment on the first item here, but the second is something very fundamental to the Course, the realization that nothing outside my mind makes me happy or unhappy; my happiness is entirely the result of my own choice.

When I first read this lesson in the Workbook I was stunned by the similarity of the concept, even the very words. "Heaven is the decision I must make." Perhaps the fact that I had arrived at this conclusion on my own was one of the reasons I took so rapidly to the Course; it confirmed what, to me, was the essence of my own personal wisdom, words that as far as I knew were entirely my own. Here was this book, saying the same thing. In saying that we must choose Heaven, and that this is "the decision" we have to make, the Course is saying that learning this is what life is all about. It is "the choice that time was made to help us make" (7:1). It is a choice, a decision, that accepts the total responsibility of the mind for the way it perceives reality.

But the lesson is saying far more than this. The discussion of duality and nonduality in this lesson explains clearly why so many of us, indeed most of us, experience such tearing, inner conflict over accepting the simple truth. We have become convinced that opposites and conflict are not simply part of life, they *are* life. They *are* reality to us. "Life is seen as conflict" (7:4). This belief shows up, for instance, in the somewhat frivolous objection that Heaven, where nothing changes and there are no opposites, sounds boring. We are addicted to the drama, devoted to the delicious agony of indecision. To be without choices, to us, seems like death. To finally and completely resolve the conflict appears to us like the end of life itself.

Yet that is what the Course promises and asks of us: the end of all conflict. When this truly dawns on our minds, we often recoil in mortal terror.

These mad beliefs can gain unconscious hold of great intensity and grip the mind with terror and anxiety so strong that it will not relinquish its ideas about its own protection. It must be saved from salvation. (8:1-2)

It is unconscious; we do not realize what is going on. But we literally run away from the truth, and shrink from total love, not knowing what we are doing. Virtually everyone who works with the Course over any length of time experiences something like this in their life. It seems as though we are being asked to die. And in a sense, we are: die to life *as we have known it*.

The only way out is through. Through fear to love. "Heaven is chosen consciously" (9:1). For a decision to be conscious, *both* alternatives must be seen clearly. We have to see hell in the plain light of day, as well as Heaven. Our fear of hell, our terror of destruction, our agony of guilt must be "raised to understanding, to be judged again, this time with Heaven's help" (9:3). It was our own mind's desire for an alternative to Heaven that made hell, and we must understand that duality is a beast of our own making—and that our desire had no *real* effect.

"Who can decide between the clearly seen and the unrecognized? Yet who can fail to make a choice between alternatives when only one is seen as valuable; the other as a wholly worthless thing, a but imagined source of guilt and pain?" (10:2-3). Our making of duality has seemed like such a monstrous thing; buried in our unconscious, it was "made enormous, vengeful, pitiless with hate" (11:4), but when it is brought into conscious awareness, "now it is recognized as but a foolish, trivial mistake" (11:5). Our guilt over it is all that holds it in place. When we look at it again, "this time with Heaven's help," the choice to let it go becomes the only possible decision we can make. And in that decision, we are released.