

LESSON 153 • JUNE 2

“In my defenselessness my safety lies.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To learn that “defenselessness is strength” (6:1), for it rests on awareness of Christ’s strength in us, a strength so great that it can never be attacked.

Morning/evening quiet time: At least five minutes; ideally, thirty or more.

This practice sounds the same as yesterday’s, where you laid aside the self-concepts that portray you as weak, and let the awareness of your true Self arise in you. Here, you do the same thing, with special emphasis on getting in touch with His strength in you. If you succeed, you will realize that you have no need for defense, for you were created unassailable. Let the morning time be your preparation for a day of defenselessness. Clothe yourself in the strength of Christ.

Hourly remembrance: One or two minutes as the hour strikes (reduce if circumstances do not permit).

- Repeat the idea, remembering while you do that Christ remains beside you, giving you His strength, making defending yourself unnecessary.
- Then sit quietly and wait on God. Thank Him for His gifts in the previous hour. And let His Voice tell you what He wants you to do in the coming hour.

Response to temptation: Whenever you feel tempted to defend yourself.

Repeat the idea as a way of calling upon the strength of Christ in you. Then pause a moment and listen for Him saying, “I am here” (19:6).

Overall remarks: The Workbook clearly considers this lesson a turning point. We are given here our practice instructions for the next *forty-eight lessons!* And we are told (in paragraph 20), that our “practicing will now begin to take the earnestness of love” (20:1). Rather than being a fulfillment of duty, it will be a sincere and natural expression of our heart. Let us take this step forward in confidence. Jesus asks us to “be not afraid or timid” (20:2), because we simply cannot fail. God will make sure that we make it to our goal.

Commentary

In regard to our practice, notice that this lesson presents instructions that are to be followed “for quite a while” (15:1). Specifically, the form of practice given today continues for every lesson through Lesson 170. They are given this once and not referred to again except in brief mentions; we are supposed to remember the instructions from this lesson. Notice, too, that the instructions about what we are to do in this five- to thirty-minute period each day are rather vague. Mostly they are summed up as “giving our attention to the daily thought as long as possible” (15:2). We are told that our “practicing will now begin to take the earnestness of love” (20:1). The longer practice periods have become “a time to spend with God” (15:5); we enjoy His loving Presence so much that half an hour seems too short! To some degree, by this time, our practicing has switched from sessions with a drill sergeant to a rendezvous with our Lover. If that hasn’t happened for us yet, it will: “There can be no doubt that you will reach your final goal” (20:3).

The lesson opens by pointing out that this world is *not* a safe place: “It is rooted in attack” (1:3). Peace of mind in *this* world is impossible (1:5). On every side are things that provoke us to defensiveness (2:1–2). But defenses affect not only what is outside of us; they affect ourselves.

They reinforce our sense of weakness (2:4), and since they ultimately do not work (2:4), they betray us. We are betrayed by the world outside and by our own defenses within (2:5–6).

It is as if a circle held it [the mind] fast, wherein another circle bound it and another one in that, until escape no longer can be hoped for nor obtained. (3:1)

We are trapped in concentric vicious circles of attack and defense; we find ourselves unable to break out of the attack-defense cycle (3:2–3).

We do not realize how profoundly our minds are threatened by the world around us. If we try as hard as we can to conceive of someone caught deep in a frenzy of intense fear, “The sense of threat the world encourages is so much deeper, and so far beyond the frenzy and intensity of which you can conceive, that you have no idea of all the devastation it has wrought” (4:3). All of us, the Course is saying, are living in blind panic masked by a superficial act of being calm. Panic is always there, just below the surface. Think of the things that threaten us constantly, and the attention that is paid to them in our personal lives and in the media. Nuclear holocaust. Street gangs. Drunk drivers. *All* drivers. Corrupt politicians. The greedy power structure. Threatening economic collapse. Food additives, depletion of the ozone layer, vitamin-depleted foods, growth hormones in our milk, nitrates in the bacon, cholesterol, saturated fat, sugar, polluted water supplies, drought, heat waves, blizzards, floods, hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, alien invasion, lying news media, insects in our homes, aging bodies, untrustworthy love partners or business partners, AIDS, cancer, heart disease—the list could go on and on. And we have not begun to speak of the threat of foreign invasion or economic takeover, racial animosities, or religious intolerance.

We are slaves of the world’s threat (5:1). “You do not know what you do, in fear of it. You do not understand how much you have been made to sacrifice, who feel its iron grip upon your heart” (5:2–3). Try to imagine, for a moment, what it would be like to be completely *without* any and all fear concerning the things we have mentioned. If you are like me, you can’t even *imagine* it. We have become so accustomed to the subliminal hum of fear! Nor do we realize how much we have sabotaged our own peace by our stance of constant defensiveness (5:4).

The choice this lesson presents to us (6:3) is between two things: the “silly game” (6:4) of defensiveness, played by tired children too sleepy to remember what they want (a bit like how I feel right now!), and the “game that happy children play” (12:1), a joyous game that teaches us that the game of fear is gone. The happy game is “salvation” (12:1), or functioning as a minister of God in the world, offering the light to all our brothers. In brief, we can spend our time trying to defend ourselves, or we can drop our defenses and reach out in love to the world. Those are the only options.

The game of defensiveness is a deadly one. In defensiveness “lies madness in a form so grim that hope of sanity seems but to be an idle dream, beyond the possible” (4:2). Defenses bind us into an attack-defense cycle that never ends.

Defenselessness is based on the reality of what we are. “We need no defense because we are created unassailable” (9:1). It witnesses to our strength. As God’s ministers we are protected. We need no defense *because* we are “the ones who are among the chosen ones of God, by His election and [our] own as well” (10:6).

To choose defenselessness is to choose the strength of Christ, instead of our own weakness. To reach out to heal, instead of contracting inward in self-defense, puts us in an unassailable position. Our true safety lies, not in protecting what we have, but in giving it away, because this firmly identifies us with the Christ.