

## LESSON 170 • JUNE 19

**“There is no cruelty in God and none in me.”**

### **Practice instructions**

**Purpose:** To stand before your devotion to cruelty as a means of safety, see it as a meaningless idol, and choose to serve this idol no longer.

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

We need to look honestly at our belief that attacking others in self-defense keeps us safe. This amounts to a belief that *cruelty* keeps us safe, since all attack intends to hurt and the intent to hurt is cruel. This has enthroned cruelty as a god in our mind, a god we dare not question.

Yet today, we must question this god. We must look dispassionately at our belief that cruelty means safety. So first, get in touch with this belief in you. Note how you do believe that, when attacked, your attack in return will keep you safe. Then be willing to question this belief. Consider the possibility that your own defense against an attack is what gives it power in your eyes. Consider the possibility that your own cruelty is ultimately what makes you afraid. And consider that this belief that cruelty equals safety is just that—a belief, an idea to be calmly re-examined, not a god to be worshipped.

Now turn to another aspect of this belief. You realize that God wants you to lay down your arms, to give up attack and defense. This makes Him appear to be cruel, for He seems to want to strip you of your protection. He apparently wants you to be all meek and saintly while you get run over. As soon as you see cruelty as the god that protects you, then the real God of Love will seem cruel, as if your protection does not matter to Him. Look at this belief. Be willing to question it. Is it possible that He wants your safety more than you do? Is it possible that “love is your safety” (W-pII.5.5:4)?

In looking at both beliefs—that cruelty is your god and that God is cruel—you are standing before the same idol, and making a choice. “Will you restore to love what you have sought to wrest from it and lay before this mindless piece of stone?” (8:4). While trying to make this choice, keep repeating the idea “*There is no cruelty in God and none in me.*” Consider that God is only Love and that your nature is like His, that cruelty is quite simply unnatural for you. Genuinely try to “look for the last time upon this bit of carven stone you made, and call it god no longer” (11:2).

If you succeed, you will walk out upon a new world, which you will see through new eyes. You will look on the same people, but whereas before you saw danger in them, now you will see God’s glory in them. Where before your heart was filled with fear and cruelty, now it will be filled with nothing but love.

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

Repeat the idea, trying to renounce your allegiance to cruelty and to accept the love that is your true nature. Then thank God for the gifts of His Love that came your way in the hour gone by. And let Him tell you how to express the newfound love in your heart in the hour to come.

### **Commentary**

The basic thought today’s lesson contains is that our attempts at defending ourselves are what make external attack seem real to us.

We fear because we believe, somewhere deep in our hearts, that we have attacked, and deserve punishment for our attack. We sense within ourselves a belief that “to hurt another brings

[us] freedom” (1:4). This belief lies behind every attack we attribute to self-defense. No matter how hard we try to justify our attacks, something in us knows that our intent is to hurt the other person because we believe that hurting them will somehow free us from something. In a nutshell, we believe that we are inherently cruel.

We project our belief in attack onto something external; we see the attack as coming from outside of our own mind. In reality, there is nothing outside of our mind; we are the ones who attack ourselves by our guilt, but we believe we see the attack external to ourselves, justifying further attack on our part. Thus fear and defense become the means of preserving ourselves. And “love is endowed with the attributes of fear” (5:3); that is, because love would counsel us to lay down our defenses, it becomes something to fear. Love becomes dangerous.

From this perspective, fear and cruelty become a “god,” an idol, something to be preserved at all costs. To let go of fear becomes the ultimate danger. We fear being without fear more than anything else; we cling to our fear, believing that it protects us.

Taken to the extreme, this “worship” of fear and cruelty ends up being projected onto God Himself; we see Him as a vengeful God, breathing fire, threatening us with hell, ready to dupe us with His talk of love, laughing with savage glee as we go down to defeat. In fact, it is our fear of God, buried as well as we can bury it, disguised in many forms when it leaks out of our unconscious, but ever present, that is “the basic premise which enthrones the thought of fear as god” (9:4). Ultimately, all our defenses are defenses against God. Buried deep in our psyche is our conviction that the universe is out to get us. Most of our lives, if we look at them with honesty, are spent in buttressing our fortifications against “things” that seem to threaten us.

The Course calls on us to lay down our defenses as the only way of discovering that the threat is unreal (2:6–7). God is not angry. The universe is not out to get us. If God appears to us to be separate from us, only the walls we have erected make it seem so. We are the victims only of our own defenses.

We have no reason to fear. We are not cruel; we cannot be, for God Who created us has no cruelty in Him. There is no punishment hanging over our heads. We are the innocent Son of God, the Son He loves. Without that primal fear, there is nothing to project upon others; when we cease to project our fear, there is no perception of attack from without; when no attack is perceived without, there is no need for defense.

If we assess our “god” of fear and defense honestly we have to see that it is made of stone. It has no life; it cannot save us. Fear begets fear; attack begets attack. The wars of the world testify to this endlessly. Hurting others *never* makes us safe; it only adds to the cycle of fear and attack.

To realize that our trusted method of securing safety is worthless, that our champion warrior is a traitor, can be a terrifying moment. The missile silos in which we have placed all our trust are pointed at our own hearts! “This moment can be terrible. But it can also be the time of your release from abject slavery” (8:1–2). To think of giving up defense entirely can momentarily paralyze us with fear. But it can be the moment in which we are free to recognize that what we fear does not exist, and the “enemy” we have striven to keep out is allowed to enter, bringing His peace with Him.