

LESSON 118 • APRIL 28

(105) “God’s peace and joy are mine.”
(106) “Let me be still and listen to the truth.”

Practice instructions

See Review III practice instructions.

Commentary

The substitutes that I have made are what stand in the way of my accepting God’s peace and joy. I already *have* God’s peace and joy, but my ego has decided they are not enough. As the Course says, I want “more than everything” (T-29.VII.2:3); my own wholeness is not enough. That section of the Text actually says that my seeking for “more than everything” is shown by the very fact that I am in this world. “No one who comes here but must still have hope, some lingering illusion, or some dream that there is something outside of himself that will bring happiness and peace to him” (T-29.VII.2:1). “Happiness and peace” is what I am looking for, but outside of myself. I have denied that they are within me, where God placed them.

In order to find the peace and joy that are inherently mine, I have to “exchange” all the substitutes I have made. I have to let go of looking for happiness anywhere outside of myself. That isn’t easy, in my experience. It seems to happen gradually, over time. Little by little we learn that what we are looking for in the world simply isn’t there, not in any lasting way. Little by little, in parallel, we begin to take little tastes of our internal joy and peace. As we begin to weigh the two experiences it starts to become obvious that the peace and joy that come from within are much more reliable and satisfying than that which comes from without. We may try for a time to hold on to both, but it doesn’t work. Eventually we will let go, and fall back into the arms of God. Eventually we will simply accept God’s peace and joy.

My voice keeps trying to declare how things should be. Essentially the Course is telling us to stop listening to our own advice: “Resign now as your own teacher” (T-12.V.8:3), it urges us. We have to stop thinking we are in control, that we know what to do and what is needed, and learn to listen. Like a drowning person, our own efforts to save ourselves are the biggest barrier to our Life Guard. We need to trust Him, to lie back and let go.

The best way I know of to learn to do this is to practice doing it. To simply sit down for five, ten, fifteen minutes (whatever the lesson calls for, whatever seems right) and, after very briefly reviewing the idea of the day, just to be quiet. It seems hellaciously difficult, many days, to simply be quiet. The minute I try my mind starts reminding me of things: “Don’t forget to make that phone call. You need yogurt from the store. What are you going to do about your relationship with X? You haven’t done your laundry this week. You are overweight and you’re going to die.” I take a deep breath. Another. Another. I repeat the words for the day, “Let me be still and listen to the truth” (2:1). Or I say, “Help!” to the Holy Spirit. I let the thoughts come and go. I step back and watch them and try not to get drawn in. And I listen; maybe there is some word from my Teacher that will come. And sometimes, there is. Sometimes I just get very quiet, and the chatter of thoughts subsides, if not completely, to a dull, background murmur, like a crowd in a busy restaurant that I’m not really paying attention to. I practice getting quiet and listening. I don’t know about you, but I think it is a worthwhile exercise. Sometimes, it even carries over into my day, and I find myself listening to the Voice and not to myself as I move through it. And that’s what it’s all about.