

LESSON 79 • MARCH 20

“Let me recognize the problem so it can be solved.”

Practice instructions

Longer: Two times, for ten to fifteen minutes.

- Try to free your mind of your perception of your problems. Do your best to “entertain some doubt about the reality of your version of what your problems are” (8:3). Try to realize that the many-ness of your problems is a smokescreen, hiding the fact that you have only one problem. Do not, however, define what this one problem is.
- Then ask what your one problem is and wait for the answer. Even though the lesson has said your problem is separation, set that aside and listen for an answer that genuinely comes from within you.
- Then ask what is the answer to the one problem. In asking about the problem and the answer, apply your training in how to listen to the Holy Spirit: wait in mental silence, wait in confidence (“We will be told”—7:6), and periodically repeat your request while you wait.

Response to temptation: Whenever you see a problem.

- Recognize that this is simply the one problem showing up in disguise. Say immediately, “*Let me recognize this problem so it can be solved.*”
- Then try to lay aside what you think the problem is. If you can, close eyes and ask what it is. You will be told.

Commentary

This lesson, with the next, presents one of the clearest statements of an important Course principle: “One problem, one solution,” as it is stated in Lesson 80 (1:5). These lessons merit repeated reading until the concepts they teach become embedded in our thought processes.

I seem to be faced with a multitude of problems, overwhelming in number and complexity, ranging from tiny to titanic, constantly shifting, changing, appearing and disappearing in the moments of my life. If I pause to consider things objectively from this viewpoint the only possible response is blind panic. Attention paid to one problem obliterates dozens of others, equally deserving of my attention, from conscious consideration. Like Lucy and Ethel on the pie conveyor, as things speed up I can only start stuffing some of the “pastries” down my shirt, trying to hide them before my failure to handle them becomes evident.

Seen from the perspective of specialness, my problems doom me to failure after failure, with every moment increasing my overwhelming sense of inadequacy.

What if all of these problems were really just one? What if I already had the solution to that one problem? I can scarcely imagine the universal sense of relief that would run through my being if I could grasp that this were true: All of my problems are one, and that one has already been solved.

Could this be? Yes. If I think my problems are many and separate, if I have failed to recognize the one problem in them all, I could already have the answer and not know it. I could even be aware of the answer without realizing its application to what seem to me to be very different problems. “This is the situation of the world. The problem of separation, which is really the only problem, has already been solved. Yet the solution is not recognized because the problem is not recognized” (1:3–5).

To break free of this illusory imprisonment, then, my first step must be to recognize *the* problem in every problem. I have to become aware of what the problem is before I can realize that I already hold the solution to it. As long as I think the problem is something other than my

separateness from God (which has already been so completely resolved that it has become a nonissue), I will continue to think I have problems and lack the solution. I will look for “salvation” from my problems everywhere but where the answer is because I have already discounted the answer as irrelevant to the problem at hand. “Who can see that a problem has been solved if he thinks the problem is something else?” (2:3).

The seeming complexity of the world is nothing more than my mind’s attempt to *not* recognize the single problem, thus preventing its resolution (6:1). My greatest initial need, therefore, is to perceive “the underlying constancy in all the problems” (6:3). If I can see the separation at the root of every problem I would realize that I already have the answer, and I would *use* the answer. I would be free.

Again, this lesson is so wonderfully forgiving. Even the idea of seeing *all* my problems as variations on the theme of separation may seem an impossibly daunting task. So the lesson tells me:

That is not necessary. All that is necessary is to entertain some doubt about the reality of your version of what your problems are. (8:2–3)

The only thing I have to do is to doubt? Hey, I can handle that; I’m pretty good at doubting.

All I am being asked to do is to “suspend all judgment about what the problem is” (10:4). “Suspend” means to temporarily abate; the lesson does not even ask me to lay aside my judgments forever. Just for an instant. Just allow myself to doubt my personal perspective on things and consider that there might be another way of looking at it.

So today I am called to doubt. To doubt my version of what my problems are. To think to myself, “I’m probably not seeing this with complete clarity. I’m probably muddling the issues here somewhere.” And then to ask, “What *is* the real problem here?” That kind of practice *even I* can handle. Thank You, God, for such a simple Course!