

Workbook Lesson 1, Nothing I see means anything

I just completed Lesson 1 for the morning. I noticed that the mind did not want to focus on the reading of Lesson 1. During the exercise it wanted to run ahead of the item I was on and pick the next item for the exercise. I also briefly noticed meanings that had been given to objects. I could see that the mind seeks identification with pretty nails, sore feet, cluttered tabletop, etc. I could also see that the purpose of these meaningless identifications is actually identification of awareness with thought. The meaningless identifications, whether they are positive or negative identifications, have the purpose of marrying awareness with thought as if 'I am thought.'

Workbook Lesson 1 says, "Make no allowance for difference in the kinds of things" to which today's idea applies. As I see it, that is because there is only one purpose at work in every attached meaning and that is identifying awareness with thought.

The instructions for Workbook Lesson 1 say that the exercise should not be ritualistic. The mind has the ability to repeat something, like a trained monkey repeating tricks it has been taught. This could be called *mindless mind*. In mindless mind, awareness is distracted. For example, I can say, "That TV does not mean anything" while thinking about an email I need to write later today. This distraction is an ego preservation technique, because nothing is seen in the process, awareness has not become aware. When nothing is seen, nothing is healed.

The instructions also say "a comfortable sense of leisure is essential." The comfortable sense of leisure is the peace that comes when awareness is fully present. With this "comfortable sense of leisure," seeing happens.

In *The Way of Mastery*, Lesson 1, it was said, "I have done all this; I must undo it." But it is important to note that it also said, "But I have no idea how I did this. Therefore, I must surrender to something else."

The mind, which has the purpose of identifying awareness with thought, cannot be trusted to heal this misidentification. Something else must guide this healing process. That is intuitive wisdom, which comes from the part of awareness that is not identified with thought. Intuitive wisdom is much more subtle than thought, but very clear in its wisdom.

(From this part forward, I will use the term "attention" to refer to the part of awareness that is identified with thought and the term "clear awareness" to refer to the part of awareness that is not identified with thought.)

NTI Luke, Chapter 12 says, "What *you* are focused on, and have always been focused on, is thought. In every moment in your seeming interaction with the world, *you* are focused on thought."

In the previous sentence, clear awareness is talking to attention. The “you” in the sentence is attention. You, attention are focused on thought. Clear awareness is pointing out the misidentification that has occurred.

Workbook Lesson 2, I have given everything I see all the meaning it has for me

NTI teaches that everything we experience on the path of healing is either willingness or resistance. It equates willingness with joy and resistance with delay.

Willingness is the quality or state of being prepared to do something.

Joy is the emotion evoked by well-being.

The student of healing wants to learn the difference between the feeling of willingness/joy/well-being and the feeling of resistance.

Willingness could be said to be a feeling that might say (if it had a voice), “Okay. I see what is going on here. This is not comfortable, but I have decided to heal. Therefore, I am grateful for this healing opportunity, which is presenting itself now.” That attitude has readiness and well-being in it; therefore it is willingness/joy.

Resistance can be experienced in a variety of ways, but it does not have readiness or the sense of well-being in it. Some examples of resistance are believing one is guilty or unworthy, being worried, blaming another, getting defensive, being distrustful, fearing the future, resenting authority, stress and not wanting to do one’s spiritual practice.

NTI Luke, Chapter 12, recommends, “When resistance arises in your mind in any form, let it go immediately *in gratitude* as valueless.” This describes a method of returning to willingness.

A return to willingness may start with remembering that you want healing. That may be followed by remembering that in order for something to heal, it needs to be seen (brought into awareness). You can feel grateful that this has been brought into awareness so it can be healed. You can remember you have given this all the meaning it has for you, and then you can choose to rest from that meaning. Resting from meaning (resting from believing) gives clear awareness the opportunity to heal the misidentification of attention with this thought. (It allows the old neural pathway to dry up and enables a new, healthier neural pathway to be drawn in the brain.)

Be aware that this healing occurs through recognition (seeing) and resting. That is your job in healing. Clear awareness does the rest. (Clear awareness can be equated to the Holy Spirit.)

Rest, Accept and Trust (RAT) is a simple reminder of your job in the healing process.

1. **Rest the mind** by withdrawing your attention/belief from obsessive thinking. If that is challenging, try positive healing self-talk such as, “Ok, just breathe now. Take a deep breath. Now another. This is okay. This is coming up now because I have decided to heal. I want to heal. And in order to heal things must come up. I am happy this is here, but I do not want to give it my attention. I want to rest attention away from this so it can be healed. I will focus attention on my breath. I trust healing is happening. I am happy for this opportunity.” Etcetera or something similar.
2. **Accept the feeling.** Allow it to be. Realize that as this feeling comes into awareness and is seen, it is healing. Stay out of the way. Do not try to change anything. It is just a feeling, emotional energy and nothing more. Let it be as it is. Be grateful that healing is mysteriously occurring.
3. **Trust that healing is occurring.** You have done your part by resting and accepting. Clear awareness (God, Holy Spirit) is taking care of everything else. You have gotten out of the way so healing can happen. That is all you were asked to do.

Workbook Lesson 3, I do not understand anything I see

The brain is reprogrammed as attention’s misidentification with thought is healed. There are some things we can do to assist in the reprogramming of the brain.

1. An open-heart increases efficacy. Examples of an open heart are:
 - a. Having a positive spiritual aspiration or purpose. For example, one may want to see with the eyes of God or know Love as the only reality.

Note: If your goal has a negative focus such as, “I want to stop suffering,” consider a positive focus that feels genuine and authentic for you. For example, you may want freedom, happiness or lightness. A positive goal is much more effective than a negative goal because attention is focused on the ideas stated in your goal. It is much better to have attention focused on the idea of freedom or lightness than it is to have attention focused on the idea of suffering.
 - b. Maintaining a sense of well-being. One way to maintain a sense of well-being when the crap is coming up is to remember this thought-stream or emotion is coming into awareness because you *want* to heal. Remembering healing is what you want is extremely helpful.
 - c. Trusting that healing is occurring.

2. Repetition & practice with new programming. Examples of new programming include resting the mind, remembering the daily lesson, thinking about your spiritual aspiration, etc.
3. Visualization. For example, imagine yourself resting the mind, imagine yourself remembering to do the workbook lessons, imagine yourself wanting awakening/truth more than anything else, etc. The brain cannot tell the difference between something real and something imagined. Research shows that anytime you are thinking (including imagining), you are engaged in conditioning neural pathways.
4. Meditation. Meditation is concentrated rest away from mental activity. Therefore, it gives clear awareness ample time to heal the mind.
5. Observe/watch old programming without feeding it. Be aware of it, but don't believe it and don't fight against it. As you observe old programming in action, watch with *a sense of curiosity*. Become familiar with your triggers. For example, you might watch old programming to discover what it feels like in your body just before an old neural pathway begins to fire. (e.g., What happens in me just before I scream at my daughter?)
6. Discover how you can stay motivated to stick with gentle healing because *you want to*. Healing is an authentic journey for you when you are aware that you are on this journey because you *want to be here*.

Workbook Lesson 9, I see nothing as it is now

The three most recent workbook lessons are "I see only the past," "My mind is preoccupied by past thoughts," and today's lesson, "I see nothing as it is now." The first three chapters of NTI Romans give some context for these workbook lessons.

According to NTI Romans, Chapter 2, judgment, which means decision, is the tool we use to create experience. This statement does not need to be taken on faith. This statement can be directly explored by watching our minds and experiences very carefully and noticing the relationship between them.

If I decide I don't like someone's attitude, what experience do I have?

If I decide that I have been rude and thoughtless, what experience do I have?

If I decide it should be as hot/cold as it is outside today, what experience do I have?

If I decide I should not have eaten that piece of cake, what experience do I have?

If I decide to let all things be as they are, what experience do I have?

If I decide to focus on the consciousness in myself and every person I meet, what experience do I have?

It takes very little looking to see there is a direct relationship between judgment/decision and experience.

This teaching is also a review of last week's reading assignment in NTI Luke Chapters 12, 16 & 17. That reading said that everything is given meaning by the thinker. We make an unevaluated judgment about something, and then that is the meaning it has for us. As Romans goes on to add, we then experience the effects of the unevaluated judgment we have made. This is a very simple summary of how we go about creating our experience, through one unevaluated judgment after another. NTI Luke also tells us that we then take an unevaluated judgment and reapply it when a similar set of circumstances arises. Or as the Course workbook says, "I see only the past."

If we look, this process can be seen as true even if we adhere to the idea that the world is real and I am a person. Even in a 'very real world' as a 'person' at least the vast majority of my experience comes from my own decisions. However, both NTI Luke and NTI Romans take this further.

NTI Luke says that we experience separation because we decided things are separate from one another. We decided not to see them as whole. NTI Romans goes even further. In NTI Romans there is only one essence, which we might call 'God.' Within this essence, a creative question arose and was seen as having value.

There's nothing wrong with that. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a creative God. What a wonderful step in the natural growth or evolution of all-that-is!

But according to NTI Romans, something went wrong when two ideas arose in this creative mind. One idea was to notice that everything created is still the essence of God, since the essence of God is all-that-is. This option would have allowed creative play alongside remembrance of truth. The other option was the idea that something major had just changed. The essence that was ceased to be and something else had come into existence. According to NTI Romans, the 'caster of attention' cast its attention on this second idea, decided this option was true, and truth was forgotten as attention began a very deep journey into fantasy.

Is this true? As I sit here as an apparent 56-year old woman in my living room typing on a computer keyboard, can I look and see if there is some truth to this story?

I can see this much. It is true that I make decisions by casting attention. Thoughts come into the mind. I do not actually 'think' them. They appear. Some of them seem to capture my interest, and I cast attention on them. Typically, casting attention is followed by a value judgment or decision. The first value judgment or decision is simply, "This idea is meaningful." From there, attention goes more deeply into the

idea and makes additional judgments like this is good or bad, I like it or don't like it, I can allow it or I need to change it, etc. Regardless of what those follow on decisions are, they lead deeper into the game of that thought and that thought becomes a 'real' part of my 'world.'

This is the exact process that NTI Romans just described, and I can see that this process plays out over and over again with my mind.

NTI Luke talks about "unevaluated judgments."
NTI Romans refers to "judgment without basis."

I feel like just looking at those two statements, contemplatively casting my attention there for a few moments.

The Commentary on Mind from *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* says that mind cannot be ignored entirely because it is the tool of perception. NTI Romans agrees with this if we see mind, judgment and decision as synonymous. Without mind, perception would not be. Mind (judgment, decision) is a tool that allows God to be creative. Again, there is nothing wrong with that. The problem comes from unevaluated judgments and judgment without basis. The problem comes from being on auto-pilot instead of being a conscious creator (caster of attention & decision maker).

"I see only the past."
"My mind is preoccupied by past thoughts."
"I see nothing as it is now."

Everything I see comes from unevaluated judgments I have made topped off with reapplying that same unevaluated meaning when similar circumstances arise. That is judgment without basis, the cause of delusion.

"... all you need do is unweave your way out of fantasy. You reverse the 'laws' that made it by ceasing to play the game."

Rest, accept/allow and trust. Let go of judgment without basis.

Workbook Lesson 10, My thoughts do not mean anything

NTI Romans, Chapter 4 says, "Existence is Love, and Love is existence." I don't feel this is something to think about. Thinking can argue against this fact and keep us blind to its truth. I think this is something that is discovered through practices like awareness-watching-awareness and the loving consciousness methods of meditation. However, I see this as a fact. Existence (or being) and love are absolutely synonymous.

According to the online Merriam-Webster's dictionary, existence is "reality opposed to appearance."

The thinking mind may argue that existence is not love. It may argue that existence is hell. That is certainly the experience for some individuals, but that is because they are focused on appearance, not reality, especially the appearance of thought.

The energy of thought is not existence. It is appearance. The online Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines appearance as an "external show."

The early workbook lessons are helping us discover that our thoughts are an external show. For example, today's workbook lesson (10) says, "you might imagine that you are watching an oddly assorted procession going by, which has little if any personal meaning for you."

The problem is that attention has become so engrossed in the external show that it does not know the difference between what it is and the show it watches. But there is a difference between the essence of attention and the show it watches. Being unaware of this difference is delusion. Discovering this difference is freedom.

Workbook Lesson 11, My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world

Jesus was my first model of spiritual perfection. Of course, that is common for someone raised in the western world. Had I been raised elsewhere it might have been Buddha, Krishna, Elijah or Muhammad, for example. It doesn't really matter what symbol represents spiritual perfection. The point of NTI Romans, Chapter 6 is that the idea of spiritual perfection exists in my mind because spiritual perfection is within me.

If we were to get very specific, we would say, "I am spiritual perfection." That is the truth. However, most spiritual students see spiritual perfection as a goal, so although NTI Romans does say, "This is your truth," it also points within as the direction to go to realize spiritual perfection.

Because Jesus was my first model of spiritual perfection, and because NTI is based on the New Testament, Jesus is used as the symbol of spiritual perfection in NTI. We are told that Jesus (spiritual perfection) is in us. We are told that we are Jesus (spiritual perfection). We are also told that Jesus represents our true desire (spiritual perfection). NTI Romans, Chapter 6 says:

"...the model that rises to the top of your mind is the symbol of the man called Jesus. This is because Jesus represents your true desire. Jesus is the freedom you want to be. Everything else that floats within the universe of the mind is from a past desire and is not your current desire now."

Our recent Course lessons have told us “I see only the past” and “My mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.” As we did the mind searching the workbook exercises required, we may have been able to see that we were thinking about circumstances from our past. However, we might have also seen ideas about the future.

NTI Romans explains how all of our thoughts are from the past. All of our thoughts, whether they are from memory or imagination, are the echo of the desire to experience something other than truth (NTI Romans 2). That is a past desire.

When we cast attention on thoughts about the world as if it is real and about ‘me’ as if I am this person, we give attention to a past desire to experience ourselves as something other than our truth. More than that, we give attention to a past desire to *believe* ourselves to be something other than our truth.

That is a past desire, not our current desire. Our current desire is to realize truth.

When we look at the world, we look through the filter of our mind. (NTI Luke)

Our mind is preoccupied with the past. (ACIM Workbook)

The past is meaningless to us now, because it isn’t our current desire or purpose. It has no value for us. Yet, we continue to give those thoughts value. Therefore, our meaningless thoughts are showing us a meaningless world, a world of untruth when we seek truth.

NTI Romans 6 says, “You may let the past go. You need not keep anything you do not want. Focus your eyes on Jesus (your true desire) and know the love in your own Heart.

In order to let go of the meaningless thoughts that show us a meaningless world, we need to remember what we want now. That is the key. Remembering what we want now will help us transcend the habit (reprogram the brain) of casting attention on stories that represent a past desire, a desire that is meaningless to us now.

Workbook Lesson 13, A meaningless world engenders fear

Today's lesson shares an idea that is really important for anyone who wants to awaken beyond the ego point-of-view.

"The ego rushes in frantically to establish its own ideas ... fearful that the void may otherwise be used to demonstrate its own impotence and unreality. And on this alone it is correct. It is essential, therefore, that you learn to recognize the meaningless, and accept it without fear."

This also tells us how we "unweave" our way out of fantasy. (Reference NTI Romans, Chapter 3.)

Politics, relationships, spiritual discussions and more present us with wonderful opportunities to see the opinions and beliefs we want to cling to and defend. If we pay close attention we can feel the energy arise within that "I must make this point," "prove that I am right" or get the other one to "see it my way." This energy is the ego rushing in frantically to establish its own ideas so that it remains potent, seeming real and 'me.'

If we want to unweave our way out of fantasy, it is "essential, therefore, that you learn to recognize the meaningless, and accept it without fear." In other words, feel that energy rushing forth inside of us and do nothing to satisfy it. Hold back on our opinion. Do not try to prove we are right. Let the other have their point of view. Etc.

Feel the ego squirm. Rest, accept and trust. Let it squirm. Do nothing. The threads are pulled out of the ego tapestry as we become comfortable with not placing meaning on everything we perceive.

Note: One fun exercise today might be to write down the things that seem important to you, the things you've noticed yourself feeling fired up about recently, and then look at the list you have written and say to yourself, "I am looking at a meaningless world. A meaningless world engenders fear because I think I am in competition with God." This may help you to rest, accept and trust instead of rushing forth with opinions and defense in those same or similar circumstances in the future.

Workbook Lesson 14, God did not create a meaningless world

Some important comments about Workbook Lesson 14:

When one does this workbook lesson, it is helpful to do it with the attitude of *wanting to uncover false beliefs and see through them to truth/reality.*

There is another attitude that is not helpful to healing. It is an attitude that comes from fear. It is an attitude of denial and repression. It is the attitude that avoids looking too hard and denies feeling/experience to the best of its ability. It is the attitude that has become cliché regarding the ACIM or non-duality student: A person's family member dies and the ACIM/non-dual student says, "He/she was just an illusion anyway."

That sick form of denial is not what we are after with this workbook lesson. We seek truth by seeing through illusion.

Here are a couple of tips that might help you practice today's workbook lesson with a healing attitude.

NTI Romans 2 says that we made the building block of “judgment, or decision, and this became a new creative force. It allowed for experience without creation.” If we equate the word “creation” in this sentence with truth or reality, experience is something different from truth. However, experience is experienced. If you don’t believe me, pinch yourself or slap yourself in the face. You felt it. Right? It was experienced.

When doing workbook lesson 14, you aren’t denying that the ‘horrors’ are experienced, because they are. You are simply denying that they are truth or reality. This is necessary, because in order to see what is real, first you must remove your belief that the horrors are reality.

Here’s another way to look at it: NTI Romans 2 says that the illusion began with a curiosity. Well, we are going to use that same tool, curiosity, to help unweave our way out of illusion. The curiosity we are using is “What is reality?” or “What is truth?”

When you say, “God did not create that war, and so it is not real,” realize war is experienced, but experience is not reality. Something else is reality. Have the willingness to see right through suffering to truth. Have the curiosity, “What is real?” Let that curiosity grow in you so that it becomes a motivating force within you.

In short, do not deny that experience is experienced, but be intensely curious to see and know truth.

Workbook Lesson 16, I have no neutral thoughts

Here are some definitions to consider while contemplating NTI Ephesians, especially chapters 3 & 4:

mind – a conscious substratum or factor in the universe; a complex of elements that feels, perceives, thinks, wills and especially reasons. (Note: A “complex” is a whole made up of complicated or interrelated parts. One definition of “reasons” is the sum of intellectual powers.)

spirit – an activating or essential principle that influences

Christ = consciousness. **consciousness** – the totality of conscious states (Note: A “state” is a mode or condition of being. In the Alan Watts audio, Alan refers to everything as consciousness, including rocks.)

This week’s reading and audio are worthy of deep contemplation, and they are highly related to today’s workbook lesson. Today’s workbook lesson says, “There is no more self-contradictory concept than that of ‘idle thoughts.’ What gives rise to the perception of a whole world can hardly be called idle. Every thought you have contributes to truth or to illusion; either it extends the truth or it multiplies

illusions.”

NTI Ephesians likens the totality of what we are to a body. So does Alan Watts. Alan refers to each person as being like a nerve ending in the body, which feeds back into the body’s central mechanism.

According to NTI Ephesians, this body is made up of mind and spirit, which really cannot be separated but are spoken of separately in order to help us gain understanding. The “mind” is referred to as “the great receiver.” The “spirit” is the great deliver. We are also told that each individual is a microcosm of this same mode of functioning.

Since we perceive ourselves as individuals, it is probably easier to look at this from the individual perspective first.

“Mind is the great receiver.” On an individual basis, this means that the thoughts that come into your mind are not really thought by you. They are received from the mind (the central system) of the totality. This is why yesterday’s workbook lesson said “you think you think.” You do not think thoughts. You receive thoughts, and then you either cast attention on them or you don’t.

When you receive a thought, the first decision that is made is whether this thought is worth attention or not. If it is decided that the thought is worth attention, attention is given. Attention is spirit, an activating agent. Once you cast attention onto a thought that has been received by mind, that thought is re-activated and sent back into the central system where it can be delivered as an influencing agent throughout consciousness. (Note: NTI calls the totality “Christ”, but “consciousness” is the appropriate non-religious term.)

So if we put this all together, here is an example of how this ‘loop’ works.

I receive a thought of attack in my mind. Maybe it shows up as a thought about the president or a thought about his protestors. I decide that thought is worthy of my attention and I cast attention on that thought. By casting attention on the thought, I reactivate the spirit of the thought, which is attack. This sends the spirit of attack back into the central system and it is redistributed upon the totality. It shows up in many ways: It shows up in the minds of others as attack thoughts, who most often will strengthen it by casting attention upon it; it shows up as violence and war on the world scene; it shows up as cancer in bodies; it shows up as one animal killing another for survival; it shows up as weeds taking over a landscape killing all of the other plants; it shows up as a violent storm, etc.

Or as another example, I receive a right-minded thought in my mind, like the thought to rest, accept and trust. This time, I decide this thought is worthy of my attention, and I cast attention deeply and consciously upon it. This idea of resting from false thoughts is blessed with the activating agent of my spirit and sent back to

the central system. It is redistributed upon the totality and shows up in a variety of ways. Someone is given a spiritual book by a friend, and it ignites a new curiosity. Another who has been struggling in the spiritual path intellectually has his/her first genuine realization from within, and the spark of truth-seeking is reignited with new vigor; another person awakens; another begins teaching from the flow of spontaneous wisdom; a female lion feels compassion for an injured calf and protects it so it can heal in peace; a forest that was burnt down begins to regrow; a woman's cancer spontaneously heals; a scientist suddenly realizes a cure for a disease that has plagued humans for generations; a polluted atmosphere begins to spontaneously regenerate itself, a new beautiful song comes through a young songwriter, etc.

NTI says there is a shift occurring. It is a shift from wanting something different than truth to wanting to know our truth. It also says, "Determine where within the the shift you choose to be And join the operation of the body there."

There are no neutral thoughts. How will you cast attention?

Workbook Lesson 17, I see no neutral things

If my memory serves me correctly, the first time I did this workbook lesson I didn't fully believe it. For example, I thought I saw a neutral wall or a neutral TV or a neutral trashcan. That was only because my judgments were much more repressed then. This time, as I looked about me, it was as if I could remember (not specifically, but generally) all of my judgments about walls and TVs and trashcans, etc.

For example, I remember thinking that one friend should not paint her walls, and in that thought there was a judgment against her. There was a judgment that she was wrong for wanting her walls to be different. I thought she should be happy with 'what is' instead of needing to change it.

I've also thought that people shouldn't want big TVs, and I have thought that some TVs are too small. (The mind is fickle.)

Workbook Lesson 17 reminded me of the reading from NTI Luke 12, which said:

"Whenever you look at anything with the body's eyes, there are thoughts in your mind about that thing. If you look at a chair, for example, you may think it is pretty, worn out, available, desired, not desired, clean, dirty, etc. etc. The thoughts that come into your mind seem automatic, without any awareness or evaluation on your part. You may make judgments about the chair based on your thoughts, and you may choose to sit there or not sit there based on your judgment. But you never look at, evaluate or question the thought you hold about the chair, and that is only a chair.

"The process that you call thinking, of which you are mostly unaware, goes

on within your mind regarding everything in your world. You make unevaluated judgments about the work you do, the relationships you have, the pastimes you choose and the person you think of as yourself. These unevaluated judgments define everything and everyone within your world. And they are allowed within your mind without your awareness, your questioning or your evaluation.”

In NTI Romans 2, we learned that judgment creates experience and experience covers/hides truth. In Ephesians we learned that the experience we create is shared with the entire world, which keeps passing the experience around through the process of unevaluated believing (casting attention). Somewhere, sometime, someone needs to begin evaluating the thoughts that are received and deciding if attention should be cast there or not. And that someone is me. That time is now. It happens here.

I am grateful that my unevaluated judgments are coming out of repression. If I can see them, I can consciously evaluate them. If I do not see them, the loop of unconscious sharing continues.

Workbook Lesson 20, I am determined to see

Yesterday I got an email from a man who had heard numbers indicating how rare awakening is. His question was, “Do I have a snowball’s chance in hell of getting free?” Here was my answer:

In the Gentle Healing Group, I am leading people to Inner Peace, Consistent Joy and Love for All. I am doing that because I know from my own experience that it IS absolutely possible for any human who wants that, for anyone who wants to come to that point of realization.

The key in the paragraph above is the wanting.

Although most people don’t realize it, we always get what we want. It’s just that humans do not understand what ‘wanting’ looks like. ‘Wanting’ and ‘casting attention’ are the same thing.

Think of your mind as a TV with many, many channels, and you get to pick the channel you want to watch. What programs do you watch in the mind all day?

As NTI Ephesians has taught, when we cast our attention on a thought that has been received, it is activated by spirit, sent out into the oneness for manifestation, and it comes back too. We always receive what we cast attention upon. Casting attention is wanting, and we always get what we want.

So with today’s workbook lesson, we are taking beginning steps toward casting our attention differently. Today we practice once every half-hour casting our attention

on the idea, "I am determined to see." When our attention is on this thought with our whole heart, whole mind and whole soul ... when this is the only channel we watch... we will see. We have to, because getting what we want is the nature of what we are. We always get what we want; we are already free.

I'd like to comment on something from the Alan Watts audio, "The Spiritual Journey as the Self." In the audio, Alan Watts points out that dreaming and awakesness are simultaneous. The ego-centric consciousness that experiences the dream is at the surface of consciousness. It is a form of consciousness, but not the totality of consciousness. At the same time that this form of consciousness experiences the dream, awake-consciousness exists as itself without a dream.

This is why Jesus said, "The kingdom of Heaven is within." The ego-centric consciousness is at the surface of consciousness, experiencing the dream, like the waves of the ocean are at the surface of the ocean experiencing the weather, but when you go within and get to the bottom of the limited ego-centric consciousness, you reach its edge. This would be like diving deep into the ocean and getting to the point where the day's weather has no more effect; you can no longer tell if it is a sunny day or stormy day, because the sea at this level is unaffected.

When you go beyond the edge of ego-centric consciousness, you cross a threshold. That is figuratively the ego's death. Beyond that threshold, you find present awakesness. This awakesness is not found by moving forward in time to the day when you are finally awake, but by going deeper into the present where awakesness already is.

Workbook Lesson 22, What I see is a form of vengeance

Comments on Workbook Lesson 22, What I see is a form of vengeance:

"Vengeance" is retaliation for something. It could be called returning like for like.

The world as "a form of vengeance" comes from the thinking-seeing loop. For example, if there is an idea in the mind that I am not as good as others, I begin looking out at the world through the filter of that idea, and I perceive others who are smarter, prettier, more committed, etc. This 'seeing' strengthens my idea about me.

One day my boss says to me, "I don't think you put 100% of your effort into this project. You must not understand how important it is to our success."

When the boss says this I experience a quick feeling of shame, which morphs into embarrassment and then anger. I walk away thinking angry thoughts about the boss. I think about how the boss doesn't understand just how difficult that project was. I think about how no one else helped me with the project. I decide everyone on the team is out for their own success. There's no teamwork here!

I begin to look around the office and notice the cliques that have formed. There are small groups of people who band together, but overall there is a complete breakdown of team.

I feel myself getting angrier.

One day I notice a woman I work with glance at me as I walk by with an armful of new contracts that need to be reviewed. She quickly turns around and says something that I can't hear to the person at the next desk.

Oh, I know what she said! They are talking about how incompetent I am. They are talking about how I never review the contracts thoroughly enough. But do they offer to help? NO!!!!!!

Hatred begins to boil within me. I start to hate my job. I dread walking into that place everyday. I decide I need to find another job. ... And the story continues.

This loop of retaliation in my mind makes the world of vengeance that I perceive.

However it is also more than that, because I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts, and I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing. As I give attention to the thoughts and perceptions in my 'personal' world, I activate them with spirit, and the spirit of those thoughts and perceptions (unworthiness, anger, hatred, victimhood, etc) go out into the world and are shared. They become manifest as other thoughts, as other perceptions and as circumstances in form.

This is why today's workbook exercise ends with the question, "Is this the world I really want to see?" That question is intended to generate heart-willingness within us, so we will have the desire to step out of our old habits, which is the thinking-seeing loop, and step into new habits, new ways of casting attention.

First comes willingness. New habits are born out of genuine willingness.

Workbook Lesson 23, I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts

I am so excited about today's workbook lesson. This lesson tells us exactly how to heal, and it tells us "this way cannot fail." Let me outline the steps to healing that are outlined in this workbook lesson.

1. "You must learn that it is [attack thoughts] you do not want." Although this sentence is stated in the negative, 'you do not want', it is a statement of desire. Our first step in healing is to want healing. Honestly, the more we want healing, the more we will heal. If you feel that it is possible that you do not want healing enough, it is very good to put contemplative-effort, inquiry-

effort and awareness-effort into increasing your desire for freedom (for healing). You can do this by noticing how much you are suffering and/or how much others are suffering while continually asking yourself questions like, "Is this the world I want to see?"

As you recognize that you do not want suffering, the desire for freedom increases. However, remember we saw that the brain is re-programmed best with a positive goal. So, the awareness that you do not want suffering is used to drive up the awareness that you do want freedom, happiness, love, etc. And then focus on the positive goal. Any positive goal that feels genuine for you and that motivates you to spiritual practice is good.

2. "This change [from attack to love, darkness to light, illusion to truth] requires, first, that the cause be identified and then let go, so that it can be replaced. The first two steps in the process require your cooperation. The final one does not." Without stating it directly, this is talking about Rest, Accept and Trust.

First the cause needs to be identified. The cause is casting attention on thoughts that have been received by the mind. Sometimes the thought comes in and we cast attention on it so quickly, that we never see the thought. Our first indication that we have cast attention on a thought is the emotion we are feeling. Rest and Accept is what we do when we notice we have slipped into the cause by casting attention on a thought (or thought stream). Rest and Accept is how we let go. Rest is the opposite of casting more attention. Accept is the opposite of repressing a false belief in the form of emotion. Through resting the mind and accepting the emotion as it is, we let it go. Trust is realizing that Rest-Accept is the only part of the healing process that requires our cooperation.

3. "Hold each attack thought in the mind as you say [the workbook lesson for the day]." One challenge to healing is that the neural pathways in our brain are so well formed that they are like waterslides. The "attack thoughts" slip by so fast that we do not really see them. It's like our brain is on automatic pilot.

Let me give you an analogy. When you first learned to drive a car, you had to really pay attention to everything you did. "Put the key in. Now put your feet on the break. Turn the key in the ignition. That's enough; let go of the key. Keep your foot on the brake and put the car in reverse. Turn and look over your shoulder. Now move your foot from the brake to the gas and give it just a little gas; not too much; back out slowly, etc. ..."

Now you don't have to give so much attention to driving. You can carry on a conversation with someone and do all of this pretty efficiently because neural pathways have been formed in your brain. Your brain can *almost*

drive a car without your attention, and unfortunately sometimes it does drive a car without your attention. That's an example of how the brain can operate on auto-pilot because of well-formed neural pathways.

The brain can also believe thoughts on auto-pilot because a neural pathway has been formed for those types of thoughts. If a completely alien thought is received for which there is no neural pathway, it will call to your attention so a value-decision can be made, but if you have already formed grooves in your brain for a certain type of thought, the brain doesn't need your attention to process that thought through the already formed neural pathway.

However, the brain does need your attention to stop a thought from sliding down an old neural pathway, and it does need your attention to create a new neural pathway. This is why you have to hold a thought in awareness as you say the workbook lesson for the day.

Imagine the thought as a child who is about to go down a waterslide that is too dangerous for the child's age. You need to reach out, grab the child and then gently redirect it to an age-appropriate slide.

That's similar to what we are doing as we heal (reprogram the brain). We reach out and grab the thought with our awareness and hold it still so it doesn't slide down the old neural pathway, and then by holding it as we say the current day's workbook lesson, we redirect it to a new neural pathway.

The new neural pathway is a different type of waterslide. Instead of a waterslide of belief, which tosses the thought back into our oneness to be shared and sent back to us, the new one is a waterslide that takes the thought to the exit door, and the thought drops out of the game. *A Course in Miracles* calls this process "forgiveness."

4. "There is no point in trying to change the world. It is incapable of change because it is merely an effect. But there is indeed a point in changing your thoughts about the world. Here you are changing the cause."

When we give too much attention to the world, we are not giving attention to our thoughts and they are rushing around splashing down the old neural pathways doing what we have already trained them to do. Since we are not alone in experiencing the effects of our thoughts, the world continues to turn in the same way that it always has. If we want to have a positive effect on the world, we must turn our attention inward and give healing attention to the image-maker, the process of casting attention that goes on within our minds.

This morning when I turned on my computer, I saw these two headlines. "U.S. President Donald Trump tells the Mexican President to stop the 'bad hombres' or he'll order the U.S. military to do the job," and "Trump blasts

‘dumb’ Australia refugee deal.”

The thoughts I saw in my mind were, “He’s so dumb,” and “He’s insulting leaders and creating enemies everywhere.” My thinking along these lines did not go any further than that because I immediately gave these first two thoughts healing attention. I held them in my awareness as I said slowly, “I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts about Donald Trump.” And then I released those thoughts to slide down the new waterslide that I had just redirected them toward, the healing slide that goes to the exit door.

Workbook Lesson 26, My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability

Today’s workbook lesson says, “...what would have effects through you must also have effects on you. It is this law that will ultimately save you, but you are misusing it now. You must therefore learn how it can be used for your own best interests.”

This is referring to the Law of Love, which we learned about in NTI Ephesians last week. The mind receives an idea. If we cast attention on it, we activate it and deliver it to our oneness (which ACIM calls projection). What we deliver, we also receive.

That can also be summed up with, “What I think I see (project); What I see, I experience; What I experience, I think.” Etc.

Today’s workbook lessons says “this law will ultimately save you.” The Rules for Decision from ACIM are beginning steps in helping us use this law for our true best interests.

The exercise that is introduced in today’s workbook lesson is an incredibly helpful exercise. This exercise can work in a way that is similar to Root Cause Inquiry. For example, I woke up late this morning so I am doing my Gentle Healing Homework instead of being in the Sanctuary this morning. I noticed a bit of concern about not being in the Sanctuary, so I practiced today’s exercise on that. Here’s how it worked:

“I am concerned about not being in the Sanctuary. I am concerned people will think I don’t care. I am concerned that if they think I don’t care, they won’t care. I am concerned if they don’t care, they will quit coming. I am concerned if they quit coming, Awakening Together will fall apart. I am concerned Awakening Together will end. I am concerned I will not have direction in my life. I am concerned I will be nothing. That thought is an attack upon myself.”

Do you see how letting one fear into awareness naturally led to the next underlying fear until finally a root fear was gently exposed? That is why the workbook lesson says, “As the list of anticipated outcomes for each situation continues, you will probably find some of them, especially those that occur to you toward the end, less acceptable to you.” That is because the ones that occur near the end may be the

ideas you have been denying.

This is very exciting to me. This exercise allows hidden ideas to come up into the light of awareness where they can be healed, and it happens in a very natural, gentle way. Today's exercise is really valuable. However, don't work too hard at trying to expose denied thoughts. Just practice the exercise gently, and see what appears.

Workbook Lesson 33, There is another way of looking at the world

Today we are doing the meditation, "There is another way of looking at the world." As you do the meditation, the ego may utilize a trick. The trick is letting the lesson slide back and be repeated in the background of attention while thoughts sneak forward to reclaim the foreground of attention. Be aware of this and do not let it happen. Put your heart on the lesson so it remains in the foreground as you survey thoughts, which should be at a further distance.

Lesson in the foreground. Thoughts at a distance.

It is as if you are at the movies. The lesson is closer to you, a part of you. The thoughts are out there on the screen. This promotes genuine healing.

Also, take this tip from NTI Colossians 3 with you for all of our workbook lessons:

May you practice your lessons in this way:

~Be grateful for the truth that you know.

~Practice it with Wisdom, and pray that more truth be given.

~Be grateful to your brothers who show you what you have learned.

~Welcome your lessons in vigor, that you may grow in mastery of the way.

~Embrace all that you see, knowing it comes from you.

~Correct that which needs correction.

~And immerse the mind in the reflection of truth.

Workbook Lesson 38, There is nothing my holiness cannot do

The workbook lesson, "There is nothing my holiness cannot do," may give the impression that the mind can pick a problem or form of suffering and then decide to 'heal' it miraculously. This is not the best way to understand the lesson. There is too much 'me' and what 'I perceive as wrong' in that.

A better way to understand the lesson is along with the teachings from NTI Ephesians, Colossians and Luke 9: As we contemplate our truth, the clean energy of our truth goes into the world as grace. As grace, it will do what it does to correct misperceptions and miscreation. However, we are not to select the miracles or even look for their evidence. We simply continue our role of contemplating our truth, and we let grace take care of the miracles.

One thing is for sure: Since you receive what you give, you will experience corrected perception if you contemplate truth instead of focusing on false perception and its stories.

Workbook Lesson 39, My holiness is my salvation

Yay!!!! Here we go!

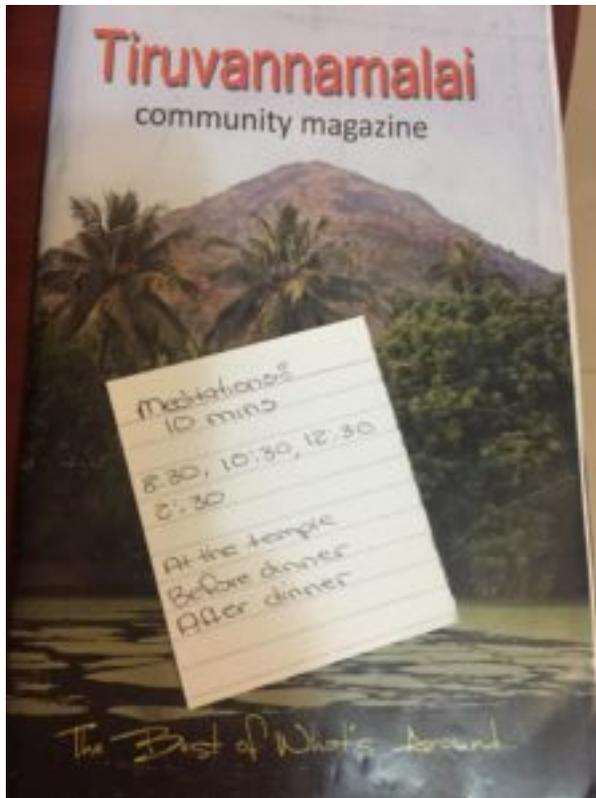
If this was an aerobics class, lessons 1-38 were the aerobic warmup; we were increasing intensity to get our heart rate up into the aerobic zone. Now our heart rate is up there, and it's time to throw ourselves whole-heartedly into this activity.

Of course, we aren't here to burn off fat or calories. We are here to burn off ego.

As you begin exercise 39, My holiness is my salvation, start by remembering how important healing/awakening is to you. Find your motivation. Realize your excitement about giving yourself fully to today's workbook lesson. Feel your inner motivation. (That will come from the heart, not the mind.)

Once you are aware of how valuable this goal and its means (the workbook lesson) are to you, create a plan for accomplishing the longer practice periods. Set a stretch goal ... aim to do more than the minimum ... but stay with wisdom and do not set a goal that is beyond what is reasonable for you (and therefore possibly self-defeating.)

Jacquelyn and I are roommates now in Tiruvannamalai, India, so we are doing the practices together. We feel that seven 10-minute meditations fit our schedule well today. Here is a picture our our plan:



Also, take advantage of the flexibility in the instructions for today's longer practice periods to rest with the lesson, allow related thoughts into the mind and to sit quietly paying attention to awareness. At your next Gentle Healing meeting, Ken will read the awareness-watching-awareness instructions to you. I'd like to see you putting at least a little awareness-watching-awareness into each practice session, either starting today or next week after Ken reads the instructions to you. When the instructions allow flexibility, like today, it can be interspersed anywhere during the practice session. If the instructions are more specific, you can linger a little longer after the practice session for a bit of awareness-watching-awareness. If you decide to include it in today's practice, a few seconds to 2 minutes of awareness-watching-awareness is enough. Longer is also okay if awareness-watching-awareness is comfortable for you.

This week I have found myself coining a new term, "divine greediness." Be divinely greedy by being excited to practice the day's lesson. Be excited to say it to yourself 4 or more times per hour today, like someone was handing you a gold coin 4 times per hour and all you had to do was remember to stick your hand out to receive it. The longer practice periods are worth a one ounce bar of gold!!

Be divinely greedy and love today's lesson. We only have this lesson for today, and then it is gone. Eat it up while it is here!!!

Workbook Lesson 41, God goes with me wherever I go.

In this workbook lesson, Jesus begins to teach awareness-watching-awareness meditation (beyond thought). He also says that we will go into more detail about this kind of practice as we go along, and we will. At your next Gentle Healing group, Ken will read very specific (very helpful) instructions for this type of practice. Next week, we will spend 3 days with Lesson 44 and two days with Lesson 45 in order to slow down and put extra emphasis on brief periods of awareness-watching-awareness practice.

However, you don't have to wait.

In addition to the 5 minute practice for Lesson 41, which is awareness-watching-awareness practice, you will say the lesson with eyes closed as often as you remember throughout the day, hopefully several times an hour. Jesus asks you to contemplate what "God goes with me where ever I go" means. One way to do that is to close your eyes, say the lesson to yourself, and then spend 3-5 seconds noticing present awareness.

This is great practice!!!!

If you aren't sure what awareness is, try this week's Gary Weber meditation again. He starts by having us watch the breath, which calms and quiets the mind, and then he asks us to look to see what is watching the breath. That is awareness. Awareness is aware of the breath.

Awareness is different than the mind. The mind can think about the breath, but awareness is aware of it.

Being aware of awareness is a primary (direct) path of awakening, so it will be emphasized as part of our practice as we move forward. With Lesson 41, you can begin to experiment with noticing awareness for brief periods of time (3-5 seconds) throughout the day.

Workbook Lesson 43, God is my Source. I cannot see apart from Him.

During this lesson's practice sessions, we are asked to allow related thoughts to come to us. The lesson says, "Any thought related more or less directly to today's idea is suitable. The thoughts need not bear any obvious relationship to the idea, but they should not be in opposition to it."

We have seen this practice of 'allowing related thoughts' a few times now. This is a very helpful practice.

We all have the ability to listen to thoughts that reflect truth and point toward truth. When we allow thoughts into our mind that are related to the workbook lesson, we

are tuning into that ability. The more we tune into that ability, the easier it is to access those thoughts.

Imagine it this way: You know from NTI Ephesians that we receive thoughts rather than think thoughts. Imagine thoughts flying through the air with darker (more untrue) thoughts being at a lower, heavier vibration level and with true thoughts being at a higher, lighter vibration level. Both types of thoughts are flying by, but your receiver (the mind) is tuned at a level that picks up on the heavy, more dense thoughts. Because it is so used to the density of these thoughts, it doesn't even notice the lighter ones.

During these practices, you are learning to retrain or retune your receiver so that it notices and becomes accustomed to the lighter thoughts. Your mind is becoming sharper/more sensitive (more discerning) so that it notices the difference between the lower vibration and higher vibration thoughts, and then tunes itself to pick up the higher vibration thoughts and pull them in so you can cast attention on them.

In the Course, listening to the higher vibration thoughts is commonly called listening to the Holy Spirit or the right mind. This is the training we go through as we allow related thoughts into our mind during these practices.

It is possible that your ego will tell you that you are only making up the related thoughts that come to you as you practice the workbook lessons, but if you remember that you don't make up thoughts, YOU RECEIVE THEM, then you will know the thought about making up related thoughts is just a lower vibration thought trying to pull you back into the lower vibration thought stream again. Stay high.

The workbook gives great instructions for staying with the higher vibration. It says, "If you find your mind wandering; if you begin to be aware of thoughts which are clearly out of accord with today's idea, or if you seem to be unable to think of anything, open your eyes, repeat the first phase of the exercise period, and then attempt the second phase again. Do not allow any protracted period to occur in which you become preoccupied with irrelevant thoughts. Return to the first phase of the exercises as often as necessary to prevent this."

Workbook Lesson 44, God is the light in which I see.

This is the lesson we will stay with for 3 days in order to practice awareness-watching-awareness meditation. You can see "light" and "awareness" as synonymous, because in this context, they are.

I recommend reading the workbook lesson in full at the beginning of each of the 3 days. If you are comfortable with meditating longer than 5 minutes, go ahead and meditate longer. However, there is no need to introduce strain or a sense of self-competition. Also, you can use the shorter practices to look at awareness many

times during the day for 3-5 seconds.

If you would like to review the awareness-watching-awareness meditation instructions, please go to these links:

General instructions. Please read #10-52.

http://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter07.htm

Further Clarification: Please read #1-166.

http://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter08.htm

(Note: You can ignore the instructions at the above links about how long to practice. You can follow the duration instructions in the Course workbook instead.)

Day 2 with Workbook Lesson 44

Yesterday I wrote that “light” and “awareness” are synonymous in Lesson 44. If you read Lesson 44 with this realization, it speaks clearly. For example, the lesson says “light and life must go together, being but different aspects of creation.” In this sentence, “creation” is a term used to mean the ‘totality of reality’. It doesn’t refer to form. It refers to the cumulative aspects of reality, such as life (isness), awareness (light), intelligence (knowledge) and love (embracing-allowance).

In Lesson 44, we are focused on one of those aspects, light (awareness). We are told, “In order to see (true vision), you must recognize that light is within, not without.” In other words, we don’t see by sunlight or light bulb. Seeing isn’t with the eyes at all. We see with awareness. As Michael Langford says in *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss*, “Awareness is not thought. Awareness is that which is aware of thought. ... Awareness is not emotions. Awareness is that which is aware of emotions. ... Awareness is not the objects seen by the eyes. Awareness is that which is aware of the objects seen by the eyes.”

The other day I was taking a shower in Pondicherry, India. While in the bathroom, the electricity went out. That bathroom had no natural light, so when the electricity went out I could not see anything at all. It was as dark as the darkest cave. But I was aware I could not see. The light of awareness was continuous. This is why Lesson 44 says, “An essential part of this equipment is the light that makes seeing possible. It is with you always, making vision possible in every circumstance.”

Again, in Lesson 44 we are focused on the aspect of reality known as awareness. Because awareness is an aspect of reality, focusing on awareness is a means of awakening to reality. Therefore, as we practice awareness-watching-awareness as our means of meditation for Lesson 44, we are indeed “attempting something very holy.”

Workbook Lesson 45, God is the Mind with which I think

In order to have openness to what this lesson points toward, we may need a different understanding of the words “thought” and “think”.

In the awareness-watching-awareness practice instructions, Michael Langford defines thought as “the words of your native language in your mind.” Thoughts can also come as pictures, as they did for Temple Grandin and possibly for some of you. However, when Lesson 45 says, “You think with the Mind of God. Therefore you share your thoughts with Him, ... They are the same thoughts, because they are thought by the same Mind,” it is not referring to the words of your native language in your mind and it is not referring to picture thoughts. This is important to know, because if you are looking for the right words in your mind or the right pictures, you will remain focused on form and not go beyond form, which is where your “real thoughts” are realized.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “thought” simply as “past tense and past participle of think.”

“Think” has a few different definitions, but the one that applies most in this context is “to have in mind” with “mind” defined as “consciousness.” (Think = To have in consciousness.)

So a ‘thought’ is something in consciousness. Our ‘real thoughts’ are the aspects of reality. I wrote about some of these aspects the other day. Life, awareness, and embracing-allowance (love), to name a few. These will not show up in your mind as word-thoughts or picture-thoughts. Word-thoughts or picture-thoughts that point toward your real thoughts or which reflect your real thoughts can appear in your mind, but to directly experience real thoughts, one needs to transcend our fascination with word-thoughts and picture-thoughts.

Today and tomorrow as we practice Lesson 45, we go beyond word-thoughts and picture-thoughts to see if we can realize the aspects of reality (our real thoughts), which are always with us because they cannot leave us.

Remember – We will stay with Lesson 45 for two days (except if you are using this opportunity to catch up with the group.)

Workbook Lesson 46, God is the Love in which I forgive

The human idea of love is typically very different from the love of God. Since our ideas about love can be mistaken, we can also misunderstand a lesson that uses the word ‘love.’ So, let’s take a minute to look at ‘love.’

Love may be best defined as openness. Other words that help us grasp the meaning of love are allowance, non-judgment, non-interference. An example of love is the

space in the room where you are sitting now (or the space outside, if you are outside now). If you contemplate the space around you, notice it is open, allowing, non-judgmental, and non-interfering. For example, if two lovers decide to make love in the space around you, the space does not get in the way of that. Its openness naturally allows that. Likewise, if one person violently murders another person in the space around you, the space does not get in the way of that. Its openness is as equally open to murder as it is to making love. The openness of space is so naturally open, it can't be anything but open. Judgment and interference are impossibilities for the space around you.

God (our true nature) is exactly the same. It is completely open and it cannot be anything but completely open. Love = openness.

One extra practice that you can add to today's practice, if you want to, is the practice of taking some time to notice your natural openness. Your natural openness is not the mind. The mind obviously judges, rejects, condemns, etc., but there is a part of you that doesn't. That is your true nature.

You might start this extra practice by spending a few moments contemplating the space around you. Notice its intrinsic openness. And then close your eyes, and look for your intrinsic openness. You might notice that your intrinsic openness allows all sounds and all sensations. Notice there is no block to anything in your openness. It is simply openness. If the mind begins to chatter, look to see the openness that allows the chatter. This openness is completely natural for you. It's an openness you cannot close.

If you notice your inherent openness for even a fraction of a second today, you have taken a giant step forward into realizing your true nature.

Today's lesson points toward abidance as our natural open Self. In that abidance, there is nothing to forgive. However, before we fully realize our natural Self, we tend to believe the mind's judgments. We can move toward the state of abidance through forgiveness. Forgiveness is open-allowance-without-clinging. It might look like this:

~ Someone insults me. (Happening)

~ I get angry. (Effect of believing the mind's judgment of the previous happening.)

~ I see my anger. (Awareness)

~ I remember my purpose. (Heart)

~ I practice Rest – Accept – Trust. (Open-allowance-without-clinging)

~ The temporary event ends as all temporary events do.

For those of you who know Michael Langford's Loving All Method, Rest-Accept-Trust is the same as "emotionally allow" in his Loving All instructions. Both Rest-Accept-Trust and "emotionally allow" are forms of forgiveness.

Workbook Lesson 47, God is the strength in which I trust

We are spending two days with Lesson 47, because it represents an important shift. It represents a shift from trusting in 'me' to trusting in a mystery that the mind cannot begin to fathom.

Last week I wrote about some of the aspects of reality: life, awareness, intelligence, and love (unconditional-allowance). Another important aspect of reality is mystery; reality can never be fully understood.

There's a story in the Bible about a rich man who wanted the kingdom of heaven, but was not willing to give up his riches for it. After Jesus' encounter with the rich man, Jesus told the disciples, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

The disciples became very concerned, because this particular rich man was known to be very pious. They asked, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus responded, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

The rich man's perception of money as security can be likened to us trusting our own strength, individual knowledge, values, etc. We must be willing to leave these 'riches' behind and shift our trust from them to mystery. It is mystery that guides us to awakening. It is mystery that makes all things possible.

Last night one friend said she doesn't understand awareness-watching-awareness meditation. I asked her to have the intention to realize awareness-watching-awareness and continue to try each day. One day the awareness of awareness will come on its own. This is an example of trusting mystery, trusting that the awareness of awareness will come. Our part is the willingness, and practice is the action-quality of willingness. The results come through mystery.

Workbook Lesson 48, There is nothing to fear

Today's workbook lesson does not have a period of meditation. At our last Gentle Healing group meeting, I asked you to practice 5 minutes of awareness-watching-awareness meditation each morning even if the workbook lesson does not include meditation. This is a reminder of that request and, hopefully, a little bit of inspiration regarding the request.

Our reading this week is NTI James. In NTI James, Chapter 4, we are reminded, "You always receive as you have asked, ... You ask from the process of creation through desire, which you give your energy to." And then we are told, "Quietness is attentiveness."

For most of us, the goal of Gentle Healing is Self-Realization. Yet, we have to admit that most of our attention (energy) goes to the world and thoughts about the world. That shows we still have a strong desire for illusion (and we always receive as we ask).

If we want Self-realization, we must begin to reverse what we do with our energy. We must begin to give attention to within, away from the world and our thoughts. This is the purpose of awareness-watching-awareness meditation.

Quietness is attentiveness to the Self.

By taking time and focusing attention on awareness, we genuinely ask for Self-Realization. And we *always* receive as we ask.

Nisargadatta Maharaj taught that in order to realize the Self, we must overcome the obstacles of "desire for the false and fear of the true." How do we overcome these obstacles? By our action. When we turn attention away from the world and thoughts, we are overcoming the desire for the false. When we place attention with awareness (changeless being), we are overcoming our fear of the true.

There is nothing to fear. Close your eyes and practice a bit of awareness-watching-awareness each day. In this way, you ask for Self-Realization.

"Whoever recognizes that he has been desiring what he does not desire, and chooses to desire again in a new way, chooses also to save himself from a multitude of distractions in order to settle within the peace of his own Heart." ~ NTI James

Workbook Lesson 49, speaks to me all through the day

God's Voice is silent. It communicates with no words at all. We 'hear' God's Voice more as an intuitive feeling. An example of God's Voice is the feeling 'all is well.' When we feel 'all is well' under all circumstances, we are listening to God's Voice consistently.

God's Voice prompts us in daily life, if we are willing to 'listen'. It may come through as a feeling that 'I don't need to do anything' about a particular situation; 'I can wait' or have patience. It may come through as a feeling that 'it is best if I say nothing now'. Or it may come through as a feeling that 'it is best if I say this particular thing now'. It may come through as awareness, noticing that 'I am listening to an out-of-control mind now' and a reminder to breathe and shift attention, etc.

The brain has the ability to translate God's silent Voice into your language, which means you can hear God's Voice as words/thoughts. This may or may not happen for some individuals. It may happen sometimes, but not all of the time.

When I first became a scribe, my experience was listening to a Voice (a thought stream that did not seem like my own). It was like taking dictation. I would simply listen and write what I heard. However, as I became a more experienced scribe, I noticed that I was *feeling* the Voice, and my brain was selecting the words that would best communicate what I felt. I could sense the silent communication and had full understanding of it before the brain supplied the words.

I am sharing this so you will be open to 'God's Voice' in whatever way it comes to you today. If you close your eyes for 5 minutes and have no other experience except feeling more relaxed after the 5-minute practice, you heard God's Voice. That's it.

I am going to share something specifically for those of you who are beginning to scribe the inner voice with language. The ego will fight the process of scribing with doubt. I am going to share a post from 2008, when I was experiencing extreme doubt about scribing, so you can see the Voice's response to me. It may help some of you to move through your doubts and allow the conversations with the inner Voice to continue.

Question: What about...

Ahhhh! I'm having a tough time asking this next question. It is hard because there is so much judgment and fear in my mind. I am judging the question and I am judging me as the scribe. I have a huge fear that I am just writing what I want to hear. This fear is so big that it makes me want to throw down my pen and runaway and hide. I feel it in my chest.

Before I continue, what would you share about my fear?

Answer: A scribe creates her ability to scribe. This is a creation in that it takes the formless and brings it into form. (In this way, I do not use the word "creation" in the way that A Course in Miracles uses the word. I use "creation" in the way of an artist.)

An artist creates his painting or his sculpture or his magnificent musical piece of work, but any great artist will also tell you the work was born through him. He both created it and he didn't. He created the piece of work by allowing it to be born through him in a specific form.

The scribe does this. She allows the birth of formless into form as a specific expression through being a scribe.

Because the scribe is a partner or co-creator in the birthing of what may be considered "holy words," she can also feel guilt or fear about these

words. She can fear that her ego sometimes does the writing. She can fear she is not open enough or hearing deep enough. She can even fear that she is making up the entire scribal experience and there is no co-creation with anything divine. The latter may be the greatest fear for many people who are scribe.

The best thing a scribe can do is allow the flow of words that comes through her. She can feel the flow as it comes through at a consistent rate without a break in the flow. Trust this flow that keeps flowing like a river running downhill. It is different than thought, which is rambling and seems to fire from all directions. It is a steady flow that seems to come from one consistent source. As long as the words are coming in this flow, write down the words that you hear.

Your next question frightens you because it is a question that addresses the greatest fear that you have. You are afraid that your fear will be a block to hearing Me or that it may be your ego that answers. You are also afraid, since you fear that scribing may be a human creation rather than a co-creation with the divine...you also fear that asking this question may be exposing yourself as a fake. You've had this fear for a long time, and it comes up around many questions. It is time to look at your greatest fear, because it is your greatest fear that hurts you the most.

I understand that facing your doubts is difficult for you, but that is only because you fear your doubts are real. In facing them, you will learn they are not real. In willingness and readiness, and out of a pure desire to take this step, ask the question you fear to ask now. ...

Workbook Lesson 50, I am sustained by the Love of God

One error that creeps into the minds of many spiritual students is "magical thinking." Magical thinking is believing that spiritual practice protects us and makes us happy by correcting the things in the world that we think need correcting. This error is fairly common and is fiercely protected by the ego, so it isn't always easily let go.

Why is this error protected by the ego? Lesson 50 answers that question. "All these things are cherished to ensure a body identification." Valuing magical ideas is the same as valuing pills, money, etc, because the emphasis is on valuing form.

Everything that is born will die. Each one of us does well to accept this fact. When we accept that the body-personalities that we perceive ourselves to be are temporary and can end at anytime, we are ready to seek for our eternal Self. Our eternal Self is beyond everything temporary and is affected by none of it. The realization of our eternal Self as our truth is 'salvation', 'awakening', and 'eternal life'.

"Only the Love of God will protect you in all circumstances. It will lift you out of every trial, and raise you high above all perceived dangers of this world into a climate of perfect peace and safety." This refers to truth realization. When you know what you are, you are not affected by the ups and downs of this world because you know yourself as beyond it.

A perfect illustration of this is the story of Ramana Maharshi's death. When his body was dying of sarcoma, his devotees were in great sorrow. They thought they were losing their master. But Ramana responded to them by saying, "Where can I go? I shall always be here." He knew himself *as* eternal life. He identified with eternal life, not the temporary body.

Contemplate Lesson 50 carefully today, and watch your mind for every scrap of magical thinking. "Put not your faith in illusions. They will fail you. Put all your faith in the Love of God within you; eternal, changeless and forever unailing."

Here is a link to a song that may help you in this contemplation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llKPujyRgek>

p.s. Because magical thinking is such a strong ego defense (to keep us identified with the body), people often ask me questions like, "Should I take medication?" I resonate with Byron Katie's response. She says that the body is the doctor's business, not hers.

Let the doctor play games with the body. If the doctor says to take a medication or go through a certain procedure, go ahead, but watch your mind for the idea that this will save you. Identification with the body is an error. You are not the body.

Ramana Maharshi allowed his devotees to call a doctor, and he submitted to the doctor's operations. His attitude seemed to be the same as Byron Katie's. His body was not his concern or his business. He let those who saw the body as important make decisions about the body.

Review I

The instructions for Review 1 are fairly flexible. For example, you are told that "if any one of the five ideas appeals to you more than the others, concentrate on that one."

The flexibility in the instructions allows you to develop a personal relationship with the review lessons.

When Helen scribed the review lessons, she also wrote a paragraph below each lesson. We do not know if this paragraph was fully scribed or if it is a reflection of her personal relationship with the lesson. In the instructions, you are asked to read these paragraphs, but you are also told that it is "not necessary to cover the comments that follow each idea either literally or thoroughly in the practice periods."

Try, rather, to emphasize the central point, and think about it as part of your review of the idea to which it relates." This might be because the comments are Helen's personal relationship with each lesson. Rather than emphasizing her personal relationship, it is more helpful for you to develop your own personal relationship.

One way to develop your own personal relationship with the lessons is to contemplate each lesson and then write your own comments, comments that reflect your relationship with the lesson.

My intention for the review period is to spend time each morning contemplating the day's review lessons and writing my own comments. Throughout the day, I will spend at least two minutes each hour deeply contemplating one lesson and the comments I wrote for that lesson. At the end of the day, I will reread the lessons and comments in the workbook along with my own comments.

If this feels right for you, please feel free to do the same. Developing your own relationship with the lessons as we do the review can be extremely, extremely helpful.

Lesson 51, Review 1-5

1. **Nothing I see means anything.** I do not see with the body's eyes. I see either with the mind or the heart. It is not what I see, but what I see *with* that gives meaning. When I see with the mind, I am lost in an individualistic illusion that has no meaning at all. When I see with the heart, I am in communication with my true Self. When I am in communication with my true Self, I know my real thoughts. My real thoughts are meaning.
2. **I have given what I see all the meaning it has for me.** This is true when I see with the mind. When I see the world through my individual point of view, I see an individual world. No one else sees a world exactly like the world I see when I see through the mind.

When I see with the heart, however, it is different. When I see with the heart, meaning is not supplied from the outside or by thoughts. The meaning *is* my Self. What I am, I see. If I see anything that is not what I am, it is as thin as aging gauze.

3. **I do not understand anything I see.** When I see with my mind, my seeing is colored by my thoughts. Sometimes my thoughts are so dense, I walk about in the world without seeing the world at all; all I see are the thoughts in my mind.

My thoughts are an obstacle; they hide or distort everything I see. Things that are hidden or distorted are not understood. Far from it. They are missed entirely.

4. **These thoughts do not mean anything.** My unique point of view is 1 out of 7,376,000,000 unique points of view in the world today. It is as if each of us is walking around with a box on our head. Our unique worlds are drawn on the inside of our boxes, and that is all we see. We argue that we are right about our points of view, but we are not right. We are blind. In order to see, we need to take the boxes off of our heads.
5. **I am never upset for the reason I think.** When I am upset, it is because of the box on my head. I will know peace-life-love if I remove the box, because peace-life-love is what I am.

Lesson 52, Review 6-10

6. **I am upset because I see what is not there.** Whenever I am upset, it is because I am looking at the inside of my box. There isn't a single exception to this statement. Some ideas may be drawn inside my box in bold colors, and I mistake them as important because of their boldness, but I am looking at a colored box. The box deceives me.

Some people may have a few ideas written on the inside of their boxes that are similar to some ideas I have written inside mine, and if we get together and compare what we see, we agree that we are right; but that does not change the fact that we are each looking at a limited colored box. Our boxes deceive us.

If we took our boxes off, cut them open and laid them flat on the ground so we could see everything written on them, and then we took all of the boxes on everyone's heads and did the same, we would be amazed at the ideas and stories that colored the vision of each individual person. Instead of being angry at those who disagreed with us, we would have compassion. "Oh," we would say, "That is why you felt that way. I see the writing on your box. I understand now."

7. **I see only the past.** The writing inside my box started with a single idea scratched upon its surface. "I." As I stared at the one idea inside my box, I bumped into someone, and another idea was scrawled inside my box. "Other." I held something soft and pleasurable in my hands, and then felt the "other" take it from me. "Mine," "victim" and "defend" appeared on the box. And in this way, the ideas multiplied until a complex web of ideas colored the inside of my box, all birthed out of the original idea, "I".
8. **My mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.** This box has become its own little universe. It is filled with so many ideas, that it entertains me all day everyday and all night every night. With so much entertainment coming from

the box, I have lost the sense of curiosity about the outside world. I have become so accustomed to the dark that I no longer crave the light.

9. **I see nothing as it is now.** With the box on my head, I see only what is scrawled upon the box. That is blindness. Because I have accepted the box as my universe, and because I have become comfortable in my own little world, whether I am happy, upset or suffering because of what is written on the box, I feel sheltered by it. I don't know what is outside of my box, and I don't really want to peek outside to see. To me, the known is better than the unknown. I have become accustomed to the familiar scribbles inside my box.
10. **My thoughts do not mean anything.** Common sense can see that this spell, my fascination with my box, needs to be broken. It isn't healthy. It isn't true. ... *It isn't true.* ... That's the problem. I fooled myself into thinking that the world inside my box is true, but it isn't true. The box deceives me.

Lesson 53, Review 11-15

11. **My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world.** When I see with the mind, I am lost in an individualistic illusion that has no meaning at all. When I see with the heart, I am in communication with my true Self. When I am in communication with my true Self, I know my real thoughts. My real thoughts are meaning.

My real thoughts have a different quality than meaningless thoughts.

Meaningless thoughts are stories—maybe that is why they are so entertaining, but I want to remember that when the quality is story, the thought is not true. Story is individual interpretation, based on the scribbles inside the box. Highly individualized, these stories have no meaning at all.

My real thoughts are more like attitudes or a general environment in which everything is seen. My real thoughts include all-is-well (peace), open-embracing-acceptance (love), an inherent sense freedom—a sense of soaring from within (joy), intimacy with everything (oneness), and compassion for anyone who suffers because of belief in the box.

12. **I am upset because I see a meaningless world.** Whenever I am not at peace, I am believing the box. Remembering this is enough to shift me from belief in the box to my real thoughts.

My real thoughts include compassion for myself, open-embracing-acceptance of what is, and the realization that all is well. By resting in these realizations, I rest in my real thoughts. As I rest in my real thoughts, I remember what is true, because my real thoughts *are* true.

13. **A meaningless world engenders fear.** One idea written inside the box is that its stories are meaning. When I believe this idea, I draw a sense of security from the box. I believe that staying in the box is safety. I believe anything outside of the box is dangerous.

I want to overcome this backwards thought. There isn't safety in the box. The story that is playing now may seem like a good one, but it is fragile. Good can turn to bad in an instant in the box. *Look at the box honestly.*

Eternal peace-life-love is realized *only* by abandoning the box.

This is my prayer:

Let me overcome my attraction to the box and realize all-encompassing love for the truth that is known when the box is removed.

14. **God did not create a meaningless world.** I can have confidence that if I want it, the box will be removed. I can have confidence in that because the box is not true. It remains on my head only because I am holding it there. If I let go, a wind will come and blow the box away.

My job is to learn *not* to reach for the box, so that the wind can blow it away. *I am ready* to learn that lesson now. My readiness is demonstrated by consistently letting go of the box.

15. **My thoughts are images I have made.** I have drawn what's inside the box by being interested in the box's drawings. As I stare at the drawings that are already there, the drawings multiply.

I have two choices. I can continue to be fascinated with the box, and the automatic scribbling will continue. Or I can let go of the box and discover the freedom of the endless world outside of the box.

Which choice do I want? Which choice makes sense?

Lesson 54, Review 16-20

16. **I have no neutral thoughts.** It is time for maturity. Maturity begins by realizing who I am, what is true and what is false. This is wisdom. Maturity lives from wisdom.

What I am is living-intelligent-open-awareness.

What is true is what I am, life-intelligence-love-presence.

What is false is form. Form is the manifestation of story, changing story.

To live with maturity is to stay in touch with what is true. Allow the false to be. Allow it to be as incidental, while abiding lovingly with the true.

17. **I see no neutral things.** Everything perceived with the senses is the manifestation of thought. There is no difference between the thoughts in one's brain and the form sensed with the body. Maturity does not see a difference between these things.

To live with maturity is to stay in touch with what is true. Allow the false to be. Allow it to be without undue emphasis. Interact with it appropriately. Interact with it while abiding lovingly with the true.

18. **I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing.** Abide lovingly with the true, and radiate truth. Forget the truth, and radiate confusion. To radiate is natural and uninterrupted, so it is *always occurring*. Maturity is aware of this fact, so it lovingly abides with the true in order to communicate consistently the compassionate message of truth.

19. **I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts.** To wander from my realization of truth is to spread confusion. At this stage, spreading confusion is still a possibility for me. I can get lazy, go back to sleep and forget what I know, but I don't have to. I don't have to, and I don't want to. I am fully capable of remaining awake and aware now. It is time for maturity, and I am ready to be responsibly and lovingly mature. There's nothing else that I need. My stage of awakening to wisdom is complete.

20. **I am determined to see.** Seeing is nothing more than a present choice to abide with truth. I can do this now, and so I will.

Lesson 55, Review 21-25

21. **I am determined to see things differently.** I do not know how enlightenment sees. It seems to me that if I decide on a belief about what enlightenment sees, I may restrict myself to my belief. I do not want to be restricted by my imagination of truth. I want the genuine experience of truth. Therefore, my strategy for 'seeing' is this: I will continually increase my focus on God, while simultaneously letting go of everything in me that I recognize as not God. As I take care of myself in this way, I trust seeing will take care of itself.

22. **What I see is a form of vengeance.** What I see has changed, because my mind—*my attention*—has changed. My seeing is more joyous and more reverent than before. I spontaneously notice the majestic power of a bird's flapping wings as it passes overhead, and it takes my breath away. I hear silence amidst the sounds of this world and feel its peace in my heart. I see 'problems' as temporary and life as unending. So where is there room for

improvement?

I see life as busy. I see humans creating their own busyness unnecessarily. I realize I am caught in this cycle. Busyness needs to be questioned, because it keeps us centered in the world instead of in God.

What I see is a form of busyness. ~ha ha~ Okay, this tells me what I need to work on, and so I will.

23. I can escape from this world by giving up attack thoughts. I want to put more focus on God. I can feel it in the core of my being.

I recently had a dream that showed I want to take the solitary trek to God, but I am allowing myself to be pulled back into the world by 'others.'

Do I want to take the solitary trek that is calling me?

Am I willing to give up what I think others want in order to do this?

24. I do not perceive my own best interests. The ego is willing to hi-jack this calling for aloneness with God. It is eager to plan my escape. I cannot *think* about how I will take this solitary trek, because ego will be in the thinking. My best guidance is to say 'yes,' and then remain present for in-the-moment intuition as it occurs. It knows the way. Thinking does not.

25. I do not know what anything is for. Therefore, I cannot judge. To judge is to invest in ignorance. To be, is to be centered in wisdom.

Lesson 56, Review 26-30

26. My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability. What business does one who wants to be immersed in God have thinking about the world? Find the way of living that does not require thinking. It is a path that is right here at your feet now, but all that you think must be let go to see it.

27. Above all else I want to see. This is another way of saying, "Above all else I want to be immersed in truth-awareness." One who wants to be immersed in truth-awareness must keep God on her mind. A loving, devotional attitude is best. Worship God in every experience. Let the false self be lost in the devotional thought of God.

28. Above all else I want to see differently. When what you see does not shine with true awareness, look to see what your thoughts are. Your attention has strayed from your heart. Your sight witnesses to your attention. Be grateful that the world has awakened you, and bring your attention back to God. Sing a silent song of devotion, and reawaken to your heart.

29. **God is in everything I see.** Life-intelligence-open-awareness is always present. Reflect on it, and it will be reflected to you. Sing of it, and it will sing to you. Dwell on it. Be with it. Stay with it.

30. **God is in everything I see because God is in my mind.** Close your eyes for a moment and feel your own heart. Notice your presence as open awareness. Be aware of your silent intelligence. See that you are life. Look within, and see yourself.

Lesson 57, Review 31-35

31. **I am not the victim of the world I see.** Resistance may arise as I follow this commitment I have made to remain fully immersed in God, but I am not the victim of resistance. I am not the victim of my habits. I am not the victim of the apparent wishes of others. I can know and remember my heart. I can listen to and follow my heart. I can remain in my heart. The choice is mine, and there are no real obstacles.

32. **I have invented the world I see.** My personal point-of-view is a box on my head. It is as meaningless as that. Give it no power. Forget the box. Live restfully, trusting in the heart with a not-knowing head.

33. **There is another way of looking at the world.** Focus my attention on the songs of the heart. Let these songs whisper to me throughout the day. Sing with them, and the eyes of devotion will show the way to see.

34. **I could see peace instead of this.** Stay with this simple practice. Focus attention on the spontaneous songs of the heart. Let them whisper the truth to me. Sing the songs as I work and as I play. Let the eyes of clarity show the way to see.

35. **My mind is part of God's. I am very holy.** I can trust the music as bad, as the tune may seem to be, ~ha ha~, because the heart of the music is holy. The heart of the music is truth. The heart of the music is what I truly want, what I dearly desire, and what is true for me to know. Immerse myself in these out-of-pitch songs, and I live in harmony with my truth.

Lesson 58, Review 36-40

36. **My holiness envelops everything I see.** When I sing songs of devotion, the heart's eyes look out on the world. The heart's eyes are God's eyes. They are one and the same. I can see the universe with God's eyes because God is my truth. When I look with God's eyes, I see God.

37. **My holiness blesses the world.** Remembrance blesses the world. The only

cause of pain is forgetfulness, so remembrance blesses the world. When I make the little bit of effort that it takes to stay in the heart, my mind is filled with remembrance. Remembrance communicates remembrance. The pain of the world is weakened as I abide in remembrance.

38. **There is nothing my holiness cannot do.** I need not direct my holiness; it knows the way better than I do. I abide in the heart, remain there, dwell there, and the energy of holiness is released through the power of my willing attention. Holiness set free heals the world. Holiness set free reveals truth.
39. **My holiness is my salvation.** One who has forgotten the truth is lost. One who abides in the heart is remembering. Remembrance is freedom. Be willing to remember. Sing the songs of the heart.
40. **I am blessed as a Son of God.** There is unlimited power in the heart of God. That power is life-intelligence-love. That power is my gift, and it is with me now. By keeping my attention with the heart, I keep my attention with this gift. Attention is the energy that unwraps the gift. I live the gift by abiding with it. I give it attention, and I know it is what I am.

Lesson 59, Review 41-45

41. **God goes with me wherever I go.** The ego does too. This is because both are in my mind. One is my true Self. The other is an imposter, a habit. Am I ready to break this entrenched habit? What do I want for myself?
42. **God is my strength. Vision is His gift.** The ego's resistance feels strong, but it is not my strength. If I give into the pull of habit, I am weakened. The ego confuses weakness for strength. However, I know the strength of God, so I am not confused. Let me choose the quiet strength of God over the noisy weakness of ego.
43. **God is my Source. I cannot see apart from Him.** I am at home in my heart. I am myself as God's quiet strength. Let me rest deeply within myself frequently, so that I become familiar and the ego feels strange and out-of-place.
44. **God is the light in which I see.** The ego confuses thinking with seeing, but thinking is not seeing. Thinking is attention on the box. The box is blindness. Seeing comes through openness, through open awareness. Only openness can see. Decided is blind, and all thinking is full of 'decided'.
45. **God is the Mind with which I think.** My real thoughts are a way of being. My real thoughts are all-is-well (peace), open-embracing-acceptance (love), freedom—a sense of soaring from within (joy), intimacy with everything (oneness), and compassion for anyone who suffers from ignorance. I am the

heart of God. Thinking is being my Self.

Lesson 60, Review 46-50

46. **God is the Love in which I forgive.** I am ready for advanced forgiveness now. Advanced forgiveness is letting go of all ego thought, even that which appears benign and necessary, like thinking through a problem that needs to be solved. Letting go of ego can feel like letting go of 'me.' However, the spaciousness in which this happens and the spaciousness that remains when it is done, is what I am. Let me prepare myself for this completion by resting deeply in myself frequently, so that I become familiar and the ego feels strange and out-of-place.
47. **God is the strength in which I trust.** In order to forgive, I cannot rely on the judgment I have trusted in the past. That judgment is thinking. The mind itself is ego; it calls thinking, 'me.' It feels safe with itself. But my error is confusing it with the light that I am. Let me know the light as myself by resting deeply in the light frequently. In the light, I am detached from the mind. In the light, I know myself.
48. **There is nothing to fear.** All fear comes from the belief that I am the body-mind. The body is vulnerable. The mind can suffer. But I am neither. I am the light that imparts reality, because I am reality itself. Reality is invulnerable to anything that comes and goes with time. Let me know myself by placing attention with myself frequently. As I see what I am as myself, I know there is nothing to fear.
49. **God's Voice speaks to me all through the day.** All I need to do is listen. Listening is a simple shift of attention. I shift attention from habitual thinking to that which is in the heart now, from past and future to presently guiding. It is not difficult. All it takes is the desire to leave the ego for truth. Desire paired with trust.
50. **I am sustained by the Love of God.** Fear of God comes from the belief that I am different than God. In seeing myself as the same, there is nothing to fear. There is mystery, but mystery can be trusted. I rest knowing mystery can be trusted, and I am the light.

Workbook Lesson 61, I am the light of the world

Here are some things to contemplate as you contemplate today's workbook lesson:

In our reading from 'I Am That' at the last Gentle Healing Group, Nisargadatta pointed to your reality as that which "imparts reality to all it touches." I said that your reality, awareness/attention, is the light of the world, and I asked you to be aware of that as you contemplate today's lesson.

Nisargadatta said, "One could say that the true becomes the father of the false." How do we "impart reality" to the false? With that in mind, how can we accept our "role in salvation" instead of imparting reality to the false?

Can you look during your contemplation periods today and see that you are awareness? Can you see that you are more intimately awareness than the body? More intimately awareness than the mind?

What gives power to a thought and makes it seem meaningful? Can you see that it is your attention that makes a thought seem meaningful?

What causes an emotion like anger or jealousy to become manifest in your body? Can you see that attention on thought creates emotion? Can you see for yourself that your attention is an activating force?

Notice that you have freewill regarding where you place your attention/awareness. Play with that during one or two of your contemplation periods. Place attention on different feelings in your body, on different sounds, and different sights. Notice you are the caster of attention.

What does your freewill regarding attention have to do with salvation? What does freewill regarding attention have to do with "all the images you have made about yourself"? What does your freewill regarding attention have to do with 'fathering the false' or realizing truth?

Lesson 62, Forgiveness is my function as the light of the world

What is forgiveness? It is letting go of the untrue and placing attention with the true instead.

When you read *A Course in Miracles*, it is helpful to know that the thoughts its scribe suffered from were attack thoughts. Her mind fiercely attacked nearly every person she ever met. There were a few people who sparked compassion in her, but the majority of her experience was one of attack. Since this was her primary experience, the Course focuses on attack. After all, she was writing this Course for herself.

Each one of us must begin this journey of forgiveness from where we are now. There is no place else to start. That means one thing we can each do is become familiar with the types of thoughts that plague our mind the most, and begin by letting go of those thoughts first.

In my story of 'The Code,' I was focused on letting go of hate thoughts. That job was big enough for me at that time. There were other times on my journey when I was focused on letting go of expectations of others, of thoughts of foreboding or of self-judgment. Now I am letting go of simple busyness of mind, which I can finally see is

nothing but fear-energy.

If you notice your thinking patterns, and then sit down and contemplate what you see with inner wisdom, what type of thinking is helpful for you to focus on first? What type of thinking causes you the most unhappiness now? If you pick one genre of thought that causes unhappiness in you and begin by focusing forgiveness on that type of thought, you can make progress fairly quickly (in weeks or months) with one type of thinking. From that, you will increase forgiveness skills, and you will see genuine results. You will have the actual experience of more freedom. This encouragement will increase both your willingness and confidence.

As you contemplate today's workbook lesson, why not ask within, "Where shall I begin the process of forgiveness?" See if some genuine insight comes. If it does, begin this journey by practicing forgiveness with those thoughts with vigilance.

Lesson 63, The light of the world brings peace to every mind through my forgiveness

The purpose of today's workbook lesson is to motivate us to practice forgiveness. When you allow related thoughts to come to you today, allow the thoughts that motivate you. Maybe your motivation is a little different than 'salvation of the world.' That's ok. Whatever it is, let it come.

For my morning contemplation, I put pen to paper and just let the thoughts come as they did. I wrote that I want what I have always wanted:

- 1 - Truth
- 2 - Purity/Be Only Love

This was clarifying for me. Sometimes people say they are awakened, and then they do things I do not understand, things that go against my own heart. At this stage, that is all I need to know. What they do goes against my heart. Truth without purity, if that is possible, is not my desire. That does not motivate me. I want truth with purity. I trust that truth with purity, because of what it is, is healing for the world, and I am happy to let that energy flow through me to heal the world.

I have rewritten today's lesson for me in order to have more motivating power for me. My lesson is:

The light of the world brings peace to every mind through my forgiveness. I am the means God has appointed for the salvation of the world. I am purity, pure peace, pure love, truth unadulterated. That is my nature. My nature is realized through forgiveness.

As I look at this, I feel motivated. Each time I say it to myself, my heart opens. It is the right version of today's lesson for me.

Feel free to find the right version of today's lesson for you. And then, let additional related thoughts come to you throughout the day.

Lesson 64, Let me not forget my function

It may be helpful to pick a few lines from today's lesson that really jumped out at you, and write a few related thoughts about each of those sentences. I did that this morning after practicing the longer morning meditation. Here is my journaling:

“The purpose of the world you see is to obscure your function of forgiveness, and provide you with a justification for forgetting it.” The world presents many things to think about. I can see that the world is nothing but endless stimuli for thought. However, my purpose now is to ‘forget everything. Become the spontaneous moment and nothing else.’ I am heart-committed to my purpose. Therefore, I will recognize the world's stimuli *as temptation*, and I will remember my purpose. I will do this, because I want to. I am ready to let go of endless attention on mind.

“Your function here is to be the light of the world.” The light of the world is the purity of what I am, untainted by story-focused thinking. It is the Self as it is. Nothing else.

“Only by fulfilling the function given you by God will you be happy.” The mind cannot be perfectly happy. The mind itself is fear energy. When the mind begins to wander, subtle to intense fear fuels its wandering. It promises happiness at the end of its search, but it never finds what it promises, because its basis is fear.

“Let not the form of the decision deceive you. Complexity of form does not imply complexity of content.” Every decision is one of fear or freedom. To let the mind seek for the solution is to choose the perception of fear. To watch and see how spontaneity unfolds is freedom. Fear hides being. Freedom reveals it.

Lesson 65, My only function is the one God gave me

We are going to spend two days with lesson 65, because lesson 65 represents two important objectives.

1 – Realizing total commitment to awakening by realizing truth is the only thing we really want.

2 – Seeing that mind's thinking is filled with other goals & desires, which distract from our commitment to awakening.

As we've learned from both NTI Ephesians and The Code, the thoughts that show up in our mind and seem like our personal thoughts are not really ours. They are part of the code. They are made up by totality's deluded fascination with the dream. As

totality involves itself with dream-thoughts, more dream-thoughts become manifest. We experience those manufactured thoughts as ‘my thoughts’, but they aren’t what they appear to be. That means the goals imbedded in those thoughts are not ours either. Ultimately, it also means that we are not the character/person those thoughts tell us we are. The entire thought-driven identification is a hoax.

The word “salvation” as it is presented in *A Course in Miracles* means awakening from this hoax, from this deluded fascination with the dream, and awakening to our truth. It is called “salvation” because all suffering—ours, the suffering of others and the suffering of the planet—comes from the dream and is activated by attention on the dream.

Remember, the real is the father of the unreal. The unreal gets its apparent reality from our attention. The unreal seems real, because the one engrossed by it is real. It seems real because we are looking at it through our attention, which is real.

What are we? It’s time that we turn our attention from this temporal illusion to discover what we, the watcher, is.

“My only function is the one God gave me.” That function is determining the difference between what is unreal and what I am, removing attention from what is unreal and abiding as myself. Ultimately, abiding as myself—being who I am—is my function.

As you look at thoughts today and tomorrow, try to see beyond the story being presented to the *content* of the thought. The content is the energy that the thought represents. Is it fear? Worry? Guilt? Unworthiness? Attack? Defense? Jealousy? Control? Etc.

After you notice the content, ask yourself, “Is [content] what I want?” It will be easy to see it isn’t. Then you can genuinely go on to say, “This thought reflects a goal that is preventing me from accepting my function.”

Lesson 66, My happiness and my function are one

Commentary on Happiness:

Happiness is our natural state, quite literally. This is difficult for many people to believe since the ego is constantly chattering that we need one thing or another in order to be happy. However, the only thing that blocks our natural state is belief in the ego’s ideas. Therefore forgiveness, which is removing attention from ego, is the means of realizing happiness.

Let me give you an example of happiness as our natural state. We’ve all experienced happiness. Sometimes we experience happiness because of the simplest things. For example, imagine you are biting into the best piece of fruit or best chocolate you’ve ever tasted. The fruit is juicy and full of flavor. The chocolate is creamy; you just

want to hold it in your mouth until it melts on your tongue.

During the brief period of time that you are giving your full attention to the fruit or chocolate, you are happy. Why? It's because you aren't listening to ego. You have literally disengaged from ego to give your full attention to the experience of this piece of fruit or this chocolate.

Every time you disengage from ego and bring your attention fully to the present, you are happy. You may make the mistake of thinking it was the fruit or candy (or hike or playing with your grandchildren, etc) that made you happy. However, in actuality you are happy because you temporarily disengaged from ego, so there was nothing to block your natural state.

In the language of *A Course in Miracles*, the act of removing your attention from ego is called forgiveness. *A Course in Miracles* teaches that forgiveness is your function. Since disengaging from ego returns you to your natural state, our function (forgiveness) and happiness are one.

In order to see that this is true, pay attention to your experience. Notice that whenever you are not happy, there is a thought or story present that is driving your experience. Whenever you are happy, notice you are being present with your current experience and not caught up in ego ideas in that moment. By observing this in yourself, you will come to see that ego blocks happiness and happiness is natural when we are not lost in ego's thoughts or perceptions.

Lesson 67, Love created me like Itself

This tip is for those who are new to meditation.

As you know, we are now practicing awareness-watching-awareness for at least 10-15 minutes per day. Today's workbook lesson gives good instructions for moving into the awareness-watching-awareness practice. It says:

"You may find it necessary to repeat the idea for today from time to time to replace distracting thoughts. You may also find that this is not sufficient, and that you need to continue adding other thoughts related to the truth about yourself. Yet, perhaps you will succeed in going past that, and through the interval of thoughtlessness to [your Self.]"

The difference between meditation and simply sitting quietly with eyes closed is that in meditation we are doing two things: 1) We are removing our attention from thinking & mind-wandering. 2) We are attempting to place our attention with truth. We may not know what that means, so we go about it with the attitude of being an 'inner astronaut', observing and exploring the inner environment looking for the Self.

For beginning meditators, and on some days for seasoned meditators, step 1 takes some gentle effort. We need to softly work at not being lost in thinking. As today's lesson recommends, we can repeat the workbook lesson to ourselves to remove attention from thought and to go back to being the inner astronaut. However, sometimes if we use the same idea too much to make this transition, the mind will begin to mindlessly repeat that idea while we are lost in thought at the same time...*even while the idea is being repeated by the mind*. When we notice this is happening, we can move to related thoughts. This will bring our attention out of being lost in thought, because it will take more attention (focus) to allow the related thoughts to come clearly.

Whether you are repeating the workbook lesson for the day or allowing related thoughts, let the words come slowly with space between them. Also allow as much space as possible between sentences, and move into exploring the inner environment during the space between sentences. This space between sentences may gradually become longer and longer until you are involved in the inner exploration and the sentences are no longer needed to ground your attention in meditation (or they are only needed from time-to-time).

If you would like to review the instructions for awareness-watching-awareness meditation, read sentences #10-52 at:

http://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter07.htm

If you want further Clarification, read #1-166 at:

http://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter08.htm

Lesson 68, Love holds no grievances

Two specific parts of 'What the Bleep' are with me today as I contemplate Lesson 68, Love holds no grievances:

1 – Our brain processes over 4 billion bits of data per second, but we only aware of about 2000 bits of data per second. We select the data that is most related to our individual body, and pay attention only to that.

2 – At the quantum level, one thing can appear in many places simultaneously.

These have communicated in my mind in this way:

Our one awareness is the one observer. It appears to be in many places at one time—in many bodies at one time—but it is one awareness. However, at the experiential world level, when awareness sees through a particular body it biasedly selects only the perceptual data that it feels pertains to it. This is the limited individual point of view and the idea of 'me'.

So as I contemplate, "Love holds no grievances," it has morphed for me. "Grievance"

is redefined as 'limited and biased point-of-view'. In other words, "Love holds no grievances" for me today means:

Love—wholeness, or the awareness of totality as my Self—holds no limited and biased point-of-view.

As a result of this contemplation, my awareness is noticing and questioning 'personal' points of view today, whether they appear to be grievances or not.

Lesson 69, My grievances hide the light of the world in me

a.k.a., My personal points-of-view hide my wholeness.

Many people undertake spiritual practice with this personal point-of-view in tact:

I am not worthy of God/awakening. I have to struggle against God/reality to try to awaken. (Of course, in the end it is never going to happen anyway, because I am not worthy of it.)

It's important to notice that Lesson 69 says the opposite:

"Your little effort and small determination call on the power of the universe to help you, and God Himself (reality itself) will raise you from darkness into light. You are in accord with His (its) Will. ... Have confidence in your Father (source) today."

We can lack the desire and intention for awakening, which is to be "too loose." When we are "too loose" we do not call on God (the universe) to help us awaken.

We can also have the hidden attitude stated above where we feel we have to struggle with all of our might for something we will never quite be able to reach, which is to be "too tight." This reinforces the ego's belief system.

I am a fan of "the middle way." The middle way is between too loose and too tight.

The middle way attitude recognizes that the goal of Self-realization is "dearer to us than all else." It softly and lovingly holds this acknowledgement in the heart.

The middle way attitude gives willing attention to spiritual practice, because the goal of awakening is "dearer to us than all else." It continues in the direction of awakening, even amongst other things that are happening in life, with an underlying confidence that:

- Awakening is possible for me
- Awakening is God's (the universe's) will for all of us
- If I simply put one foot in front of the other consistently and do not forget my

purpose, God (the universe) will recognize my readiness and naturally respond by doing its part

When we walk the middle way, we remember to practice and we practice willingly, but we also have confidence in something beyond the little self to assist in bringing us to truth. We don't have lack of interest, and we aren't struggling like we have to bend the universe against its will. We have confidence that we are working in cooperation with God (the universe) in a joined will, one we are becoming fully ready for now. ... God (the universe) was already ready.

“Your little effort and small determination call on the power of the universe to help you, and God Himself (reality itself) will raise you from darkness into light. You are in accord with His (its) Will. ... Have confidence in your Father (source) today.”

Lesson 70, My salvation comes from me

In Jesus' day, people thought 'salvation' was being freed from Roman occupancy and returning the government to a righteous Jewish king (messiah) that would be selected by God. This religious governmental structure was called “the kingdom of God.”

“Now when [Jesus] was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” ~ Luke 17:20, 21

When today's lesson says, “My salvation comes from me,” it means the same thing that Jesus meant when he said, “the kingdom of God is within you.” However, there is a lot more within you than the little self. “My salvation comes from me” does not mean that the little self saves itself. It cannot. Nor does it mean that absolutely nothing is required of the little self.

It may be helpful to look at it this way: There is no clear dividing line between the little self and truth. The little self's mental chatter is like the foam on a wave. The personal sense of self is like a wave. Internal wisdom is like the part of the ocean that can be reached by the light of the sun. The source is like the depth of the ocean that is beyond the sun's reach. Although on the one hand there are degrees of difference between these aspects of the ocean, they are all ocean.

In this figurative example, you are the ocean. If you are the ocean, then you are the mental chatter, the individual sense of self, internal wisdom and the source. So when we say “Your salvation comes from you,” all these parts of you can participate in your salvation.

- The part of the mind that engages in mental chatter can contemplate the workbook lesson or practice inquiry instead of chattering meaninglessly

- The sense of self can rest in awareness instead of resting in mental chatter
- Inner wisdom can provide guidance
- The source can awaken us entirely

As you see, my salvation comes from me, but it doesn't come from one part of me in a vacuum. All parts of me cooperate in salvation. From the perspective of the little self, I have a part in my awakening and God (grace, the universe) has a part in my awakening too. So as yesterday's lesson emphasized, I do my part and trust that God (the deeper parts of the ocean) will do its part.

Awakening is a focus for the whole of me, or all of me, as one joined will.

Lesson 71, Only God's plan for salvation will work

Today, I burst out laughing when I read, "The role assigned to your own mind in this plan, then, is simply to determine what, other than itself, must change if you are to be saved."

What a silly idea! This is saying that we believe suffering is salvation. To discover this for yourself, notice how you feel when your mind says, "If this were different (or if he/she/I were different), I would be saved (happy, safe, loved, etc)." Notice that as your mind chatters about what needs to be different, you aren't happy. In that very moment, happiness is hidden from you. The thought that 'something needs to be different' *is* suffering.

Logically, can suffering be salvation?

It gets crazier, we also believe salvation is suffering. To see this, notice how you feel when you are asked to allow a situation/person to be as it is. Sometimes it seems as if allowing things to be as they are is unthinkable! Also, notice how you feel when you are asked to surrender (let go of) the way you think.

When we notice that we believe suffering is salvation and salvation is suffering, we see how confused our way of thinking is. We also see that we need help that comes from beyond our confused, habitual way of thinking.

In today's workbook lesson, we are instructed to ask God, "What would You have me do? Where would You have me go? What would You have me say, and to whom?"

In my experience, it is entirely possible that you will hear something when you ask these questions, and it is entirely possible that you won't. However, either situation can be success. Let me explain how.

When something was weighing on my mind, such as a grievance or fear, a time of quiet 'asking for guidance' led me to see the situation differently. I received guidance regarding my mind in the situation. When this type of guidance came, I wrote it down. It doesn't matter if it was brief or a long conversation with God, I found writing it down helpful so I could reflect on it, accept it, and follow it.

However, if there was nothing weighing on my mind, I usually did not receive guidance during a quiet time of 'asking.' Instead, I felt peace or devotion as I sat quietly, but later in the day guidance would spontaneously arise when I needed it. I had opened a channel during the quiet time of sitting, and the channel was being used when it was needed.

We need guidance that is beyond the thinking mind. We open to this guidance by asking for it, and then by being receptive to receive it. In the Tess Hughes video, she called this "prayer." Prayer was one of the three practices that she recommended for the spiritual aspirant. The other two were meditation and inquiry. As we move forward with Consistent, Gentle Healing, we will incorporate all three practices into our lives more and more.

Here is an example of guidance that I received when something was weighing on me:

Situation: Because of a snow storm, I cancelled my commitment to attend a meeting at a friend's house about a proposed new tax. I was supposed to bring muffins for everyone. Jasmine, who was 7 years old, was looking forward to playing with the other kids who would be there. I felt guilty for canceling and letting everyone down.

Question: Spirit, what would you have me see in this situation? What shall I do?

Answer: See that you believe the guilt. You aren't just noticing that you feel guilty. You believe that you are guilty. You believe that you are guilty because you made commitments that you are breaking, and there is a concept in your mind that to be good you must be responsible, and to be responsible you must keep your commitments. You are also feeling selfish since you made this decision because you did not want to go in this weather. You feel you did not think of your friend's feelings or your daughter's feelings before making the decision, and you believe a good person would have considered the feelings of everyone; a good person would have thought of everyone as Self. You do not see yourself as being a good person. This is why you feel guilty.

Now look at that. There are concepts in your mind that tell you that you are good or bad, based on what you do or do not do, or even based on what you think. You believe this. You cannot see your way out of believing this. You

believe that it is true that you must behave in a certain way or you are not good. And yet, there are several opportunities everyday for you *not* to behave according to your own standards for good.

Stop deciding for yourself what is good. I tell you that you are good. Good has no opposite just as Love has no opposite. Good and Love are One, and One is all there is. This is what you have not accepted with your concepts of good and bad. You believe there are opposites and you believe you can judge what is what. All of this you must let go of.

Instead of this burden that you have laid upon yourself, try this instead. Give your burden to me. Say, "I know I must be wrong." Hand it to me without reservation of any concept that you believe must be true. Be willing to be fully wrong and ready for rest.

Now, sit quietly and open yourself to Love. Trust that Love will fill your mind. As the lightness begins to come in, welcome it. Let it be at home in your mind. Enjoy the lightness. You may feel a temptation to feel guilty for enjoying the lightness. I am still with you, and you may hand that temptation over to me. Think of me standing beside you waiting to take each burden as it comes to your mind. Hand it over quickly. You do not need to examine it or ask if it is true. I relieve you of that duty. I will judge for you. Hand it to me and let me take care of it. You are free to enjoy the lightness in your mind. That is what I want you to do . . . enjoy the lightness in your mind.

And now, notice as the lightness becomes brighter. It is more than lightness now, it is happiness. Happiness is blossoming within your mind. Accept it. It is yours. I give it to you. It is my gift to you, and it makes me happy to see you accept it.

Notice your heart. Notice the feeling in your heart. That is love. That is your love. Focus on the love that is within you and notice that it is you. This is your reality, and this love you have to give is not dependent on what you do or do not do in your life. This love is always there and you are always willing to share it. Feel this love, and let yourself be fully immersed in it. This is you. Within this love, you can see that it does not matter what you do or do not do; you are always free to extend this love in any situation. Do not worry about what you do or what you decide. It isn't important. Stay with the love and be willing to extend the love. Rest your mind and place your faith in me. If you do this, everything else will be natural for you.

The rest of the story: Jasmine was very disappointed that we didn't go to her friend's house this morning. She cried for about twenty minutes. Within love, I held her while she cried without judging me, her or the snow for the situation. I loved her, knowing that she was OK, I'm OK and that the outcome would be happy.

When she was ready, we made alternate plans. I decided to stick with my original thought about not driving in today's heavy snowfall. I suggested that we put on our snow boots, walk to McDonald's for lunch and then walk to the nearby children's science museum. Jasmine hugged me and said, "Thank you, momma." Then, we ate fresh, warm muffins for breakfast.

After returning to my right-mind, I was able to look at the "hell" I went through earlier. It's clear that I had done nothing wrong in deciding not to drive to my friend's house today. My only mistake was listening to the ego's interpretation of that decision.

Lesson 72, Holding grievances is an attack on God's plan for salvation

Today's workbook lesson says, "the ego is the physical embodiment of [its wish to replace God]." We saw how this physical embodiment occurs in the movie, "What the Bleep Do We Know?"

First, there is the ego. It is the idea of "me." The brain as a whole does not have this idea. It collects data from the senses and processes that data without the bias of an idea like "me." However, because we are attached to the idea of me, we filter through the data the brain collects and processes, and we pay attention to only the very little bit of data that centers around "me." According to "What the Bleep," the brain processes 4,000,000,000 bits of data per second and we choose to be aware of only 2,000 bits of that data. That is a very limited perspective!

Secondly, the cells of the body are formed and reformed based on the thoughts we choose to cast our attention on. For example, if I choose to notice whenever people seem to pay more attention to others than to me, I create a "not wanted" self-image. That creates a specific chemical reaction in the body; the *feeling* of not being wanted. The cells in my body drink that chemical. It tastes like Kool-Aid (or Tequila) to them, and they want more, so they reform in order to create receptors for more of the "not-wanted" cocktail. Next, they send signals that say, "Hey, give us some more of that not-wanted juice!" We pick up that signal and filter through the data the brain collects in search of "not-wanted." When we see anything that satisfies that need, we cast attention on it, giving the cells the chemical they desire. Giddy with their addiction, they create even more receptors for that chemical, and the process continues.

The body is literally the physical embodiment of the ego, the idea of "me." The body reinforces that idea by craving specific chemicals, and we reinforce the body's cravings with the thoughts and perceptions we decide to cast our attention on.

Obviously, we need to be liberated from this body-me attachment.

Just like any addict, we cannot depend on the addicted self to free us from the addiction. It wants the addiction too badly, even if the addiction is terribly painful. We need to look for help from clarity, which is the non-addicted Self within, the deeper parts of the ocean of our Self.

Today's workbook lesson is an important part of the process of being liberated from "me" and "the body." Today we realize the addicted self cannot liberate itself, and we ask the clear Self to help. Specifically we say, "I do not know. Tell me, that I may understand." In this way we open up to receive the realizations we need to receive in any way our clear Self can find to reach us. That means there are no limits on how this clarity may get our attention. We give it permission to come by any means, and we open ourselves to receive it.

Lesson 73, I will there be light

Today we cross a threshold. We have stepped into a new level of commitment within ourselves. We are more willing for truth-realization today than we were yesterday.

Now we know that we crave pain and suffering, regardless of whether we experience that as grievances, stress, arrogance, unworthiness, guilt, jealousy, anger, suspiciousness, self-hatred, fear, worry, inertia, or whatever. We also know that we want happiness-love-freedom more than we want suffering. It is the latter realization that has ushered us across the threshold to a deeper commitment.

That's today's tip. We are more committed now. This has happened naturally as we have practiced the workbook lessons one day at a time. Today's deeper commitment is one miracle in a series of miracles that are bringing us home.

Lesson 74, There is no will but God's

Some people feel fear, sacrifice or doubt upon hearing the idea, "There is no will but God's," but that is due to a lack of understanding. God's will is what you are, life-awareness-intelligence-open-freedom. You are that, and in being that you are God's will.

The funny thing is, you can't stop being that (even though you can deny you are that), so you can't stop being God's will.

You *are* God's will.

So now that we've got the truth out there, let's look at the rest of this workbook lesson. There are three more important points in today's lesson.

During the longer practice today, you are asked to "deal quickly with any conflict

thoughts that may cross your mind. Tell yourself immediately: There is no will but God's. These conflict thoughts are meaningless."

This is the same teaching that we find in NTI 1 Thessalonians:

"When fear intrudes on peace, you will hear it if you are listening. There will seem to be a slight upset, a stab thrust upon your peace, and an immediate desire to deny the thought or feeling that has intruded on your peace. ... Do not accept temptation to deny the interruptions to peace. Pick them up and look at them in joy. For you have recognized that which you were tempted to deny. Do not deny the thought that has occurred, and do not accept it. Set it aside because it is not true. And continue joyously on the path of peace."

Today's workbook lesson and NTI 1 Thessalonians outline the practice that heals our mind.

1. Look at it.
2. Let it go.

And if you do that with joy or with the heart, it will be twice as effective.

Here's the way it works for me. Let's say I feel some agitation that is caused by resisting what is. I say to myself, "I see this resistance." Immediately I feel some relaxation, which is caused by acknowledging it instead of denying it. Next, I ask myself, "What do I really want?" I remember my purpose, my heart opens, and with the intelligent peace of the open heart, I let it go (which may look like letting it be).

This is the practice that consistently and gently lets go of ego until there is nothing left to let go of.

Another great thing about today's workbook lesson is that it takes another step in teaching meditation. We are asked to close our eyes and relax during meditation, but there is a difference between meditating and falling asleep. For me, there is a thin line between the two, and I need a lot of focus to meditate without falling asleep. If I do not remain aware of the fact that I am meditating, I will fall asleep. I have learned to pull myself back into awareness whenever the mind begins to drift into sleep. This workbook lesson is teaching that skill, so if falling asleep is a challenge for you, pay close attention to the instructions in this lesson.

Finally, in "The Direct Means to Eternal Bliss," Michael Langford writes: "For some people it might take a few days, others a few weeks and others a few months to start to feel something. At first it is subtle and you won't know what it is, but you will know that you like it. It is pleasant. A new subtle feeling. You are beginning to feel: eternal life-love-peace."

Tess Hughes said the same thing in the Awakening Together Satsang. That's what today's Course lesson teaches too. It says, "Joy characterizes peace. By this experience you will recognize that you have reached it."

Think about how simple that is! You are literally reaching God/Truth when meditation feels pleasant. You might experience it as lack of stress or worry, as tingling in the head, as an open heart or devotional feel, as butterflies in the belly or tingling in the legs and toes. It could show up in another way too, but when meditation feels good, you are reaching God. You are doing it !!!!!

This is important, because some people fail to recognize success in meditation because they are looking for bigger bells and whistles. Truth is subtle and simple, but it will change you. It will awaken you. So stay alert and follow the simple instructions for meditation. That is all there is to it.

Lesson 75, The light has come

Read this lesson slowly at least 3 times today.

That's it. That's my tip. Love.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

I am the light of the world. I have come.

I look around. I see that God is in the wastebasket, because God is in my mind.

The real is the father of the unreal. That figurine appears real, because I am real.

Everything is holy now, because everything appears in the light that I am, and the light that I am is holy. All other ideas about it are untrue, and so they are forgotten.

All there is, is the light that I am. Everything else, regardless of the appearance, is a reflection of the reality that I am. It testifies to what I am

It appears real, because I am real. Herein lies the peace of God. I am the peace of God.

<https://youtu.be/CaGnQc5Vmhs>

Lesson 76, I am under no laws but God's

This lesson says something very important. "... how simple is salvation."

Our confusion is thinking we need something other than salvation to save us. We think we need a healthy or beautiful body, a certain amount of money, a certain quality of relationship, etc. And because we think we need these things, we then think we need to get them by either the laws of the world or through divine intervention. Either idea is the same mistake. The mistake stems from a fundamental error, the belief that we are bodies.

Ramana Maharshi is one example of a master who showed that health is not necessary for salvation. Peace Pilgrim showed that money and house are not necessary. Jesus showed that you can be betrayed, abandoned by friends, falsely accused of crime, beaten and painfully executed, and none of that affects salvation.

Sometimes when people read Lesson 76, they miss this part of its message: "The body suffers just in order that the mind will fail to see it is the victim of itself. The body's suffering is a mask the mind holds up to hide what really suffers. ... It is for this you think you are a body."

Salvation is not divine intervention to receive the cures and fixes we think we need in order to be happy. Salvation is seeing beyond the belief that I am a body-mind. Salvation is realizing what I am, something real that cannot be threatened.

It's true that miraculous healings happen; checks miraculously arrive, etc. I've experienced these things myself. When they happen, it feels wonderful. They provide temporary relief from fear, and that does have some value. However, the keyword in that sentence is "temporary." These types of miracles provide a reprieve from fear, and they may increase our faith in something we cannot see. However, these useful effects of the miracle (reprieve from fear and a boost in faith) will wear off if we do not use the opportunity to increase our desire to realize truth, which is beyond the body-mind entirely.

Salvation is simple. You don't need a physical healing, a change in your economic situation or a change in your relationships in order to realize truth and perfect happiness. You only need to realize what you are, which is present and available to be seen in this very moment.

Today, when practicing "I am under no laws but God's," do not practice with the idea in place that you still need magic, except now you want the magic to come from God. Instead, begin to wonder, "What am I?" and "What are God's laws?" Let truth whisper into your mind and shine in your awareness.

See how simple salvation is. Absolutely nothing has to change. Salvation need not wait on anything.

Lesson 77, I am entitled to miracles

There are many wonderful pointers in this lesson. Let's look at each of them briefly:

“You are entitled to miracles because of what you are.” – Yesterday’s tip encouraged you to ask, “What am I?” Today’s lesson begins by prompting us to look in the same direction. “What am I?”

“You will receive miracles because of what God is.” – God is another word for truth. It’s time to wonder, “What is truth?”

“And you will offer miracles because you are one with God.” – What is a miracle?

The mind wants to be decided about these things. The mind defines you, defines God/truth, and thinks it knows what is and is not a miracle. However, careful observation of the mind reveals the mind is not as sure as it would pretend to be. For example, according to the mind, in one moment you are smart and in another you are stupid. So, which are you? Are you either?

Today’s lesson says, “Your claim to miracles does not lie in your illusions about yourself.” That’s another way of saying that miracles have nothing to do with the mind. Miracles are completely beyond the mind, including beyond mind’s ideas about you, God and miracles. That’s why it is good to ask, “What am I?,” “What is truth?,” and “What is a miracle?” Don’t try to find answers for these questions by thinking about them. That’s staying in the mind. Just ask.

“You have been promised full release from the world you made. You have been assured that the Kingdom of God is within you, and can never be lost. We ask no more than what belongs to us in truth. Today, however, we will also make sure that we will not content ourselves with less.” – Don’t decide what this means. Ask God to show you. Be like a little child that cannot find her own way, but willingly, openly and trustingly takes her parent’s hand and lets it guide her into realization.

“There is no room for doubt and uncertainty today.” – Put the mind aside. Put your illusions about yourself and about God aside. Be innocent, trusting and curious.

“We are asking a real question at last.” - What am I? What is God/truth? What is a miracle? Show me, that I may know.

Lesson 78 – Let miracles replace all grievances

Today’s workbook lesson is another lesson that teaches a ‘skill’ that helps us awaken. Notice how we are to begin our longer practice periods. We notice a person that we have a grievance against. We hold that person in our mind, and we review that one as we see her now. We examine her faults, etc. We let it all come out of denial to be looked at. We be honest about all of our grievances against this one person.

That’s important. As NTI 1 Thessalonians points out, we have a habit of

automatically denying the thoughts we have that intrude upon our peace. To heal, we reverse that process. First we let everything come out of denial so we can look at it, and then we

Before I finish that sentence, let me share an image that may be helpful. Imagine yourself as a glass of water, except you aren't a glass of clear water. You are a glass of murky, dirty water. As water, this makes you suffer, because you have an inherent desire to be clean water. The reason you are murky is because there is about 2 inches of mud at the bottom of the glass. Some sediment from the mud floats up and causes the murkiness. In order to be clean again, that mud needs to be lifted up from the bottom of the glass, carried to the surface and removed. When all of the mud is removed, the water will be clear again.

That is what we are doing when we look at our grievances (or fears, guilt & unworthiness) honestly. We are reaching down in our glass to the mud packed at the bottom (repressed thoughts & perceptions) and lifting the mud up so it can be removed from the glass.

So as I was saying, first we let everything come out of denial so we can look at it, and then we ...

Well, the next step really depends. You might:

- Ask God, Holy Spirit or Jesus to help you see another way. I used to imagine wrapping those thoughts, feelings and perceptions in a box, tying a beautiful bow around the box and then giving it to Holy Spirit as a gift. As I passed the gift to Holy Spirit, I let it go completely. After all, you aren't giving a gift if you hold onto it, right?
- Practice rest, accept and trust while realizing you don't want this anymore. This is a practice I moved to after I became more experienced with forgiveness.
- Practice inquiry, such as Byron Katie's "The Work," until you see through your previous way of thinking.
- Refocus your attention on awareness, and let the realization of truth heal the silly thoughts that you believed before.

No matter which of these practices feels right and genuine for you, you are letting the mud be removed from the glass. When the mud is removed, you will experience the 'miracle' of peace-acceptance. You will be able to let the person remain exactly as she is without wanting her to change in any way. If the mud is heavily packed in the bottom of your glass, you may find you will have to do this more than once before you experience complete peace-acceptance, but that's okay. It's worth it.

For years, I found it helpful to practice forgiveness through journaling. Now I prefer to do it through a meditation practice, like the one recommended in today's

workbook lesson. Either way, I recommend taking this skill as a practice that you continue beyond today's workbook lesson. Learn to look at the grievances you have with anyone and anything. Look and let go. This is how we clear the mud away. It's a silent practice. No one else needs to know you are doing it.

Lesson 79, Let me recognize the problem so it can be solved

The universe played a little joke on me today. I awoke to two Awakening Together technical problems that needed to be looked at over coffee. This was before opening the Course to see today's lesson.

What I noticed as I looked at these technical problems was the 'sensiblyness' that led the looking. It was a feeling of "Here is what I can do now; here is what I can't do now." There was no artificial sense of over-responsibility or a lot of chatter about 'me' and 'others' and 'the problem.'

When I did open the Course workbook and see today's lesson, "the problem" it spoke about was clear. The lesson called it "separation," but we experience it as thinking or mental chatter.

Things do come up that need to be handled, as they did with me today, but those things aren't actually the problem. 'Thinking' (mental chatter) is the problem. 'Thinking' is the cause of all wars. Based on what we learned from NTI Ephesians and The Code, 'thinking' is even the cause of disease, weather patterns, etc.

If we look carefully at our thinking, we can see that it IS separation. After all, each of us thinks about 'me' and 'mine.' Each of us holds to a 'personal' point of view. We don't find universal unity in the mind's chatter.

Today's workbook lesson says, "The problem of separation, which is really the only problem, has already been solved."

Early in the Gentle Healing group, we listened to an audio by Alan Watts. In that audio, he taught that our true Self is present and fully awake right now. In order to reach it, we need to dive to where it is. In other words, we need to take our attention off the thinking mind's chatter and seek inwardly toward the depth of our Self.

"Perceiving the underlying constancy in all the problems that seem to confront you [& that underlying constancy is mental chatter], you would understand that you have the means to solve them all. [You can remove your attention from mental chatter and seek your truth within.] And you would use the means, because you recognize the problem. [Clarity on the problem increases the desire to use the means to end all problems forever.]"

With that said, what do you think I should do? Should I go back to work on the two technical problems that I woke up to today, or should I be happy with the little I've done for now and go directly from this post into meditation?

Guess which answer I've decided on. :-)

Lesson 80, Let me recognize my problems have been solved

Yesterday we recognized that our only problem is listening to and believing mental chatter. When we carefully examine our mental chatter, we find it is full of untruths.

I remember once when I was going through a lot of fear regarding stories in my mind about what would happen if I quit my job, which was my guidance at the time. One day, during my daily journaling process, I was guided to list things I had feared in the past. All of the things I wrote down had caused significant fear for me. Next, I was guided to look at that list and notice how many of those fears had come true. Amazingly in my case, not one of them had ever actually occurred.

This was a big eye opener for me. Why was I listening to my mind like it was a wise counselor? It was literally making stuff up!

A few months later I had quit my job and sold my house. I was in North Carolina looking for a new house. I couldn't find anything that I could afford that didn't need significant work, and I didn't have the money for significant work. I began to really fear that I had messed up my entire life by listening to this guidance to quit my job. It was one of the greatest fear episodes I ever experienced. A friend from high school happened to come by that day and see my condition. When I told him my story he responded gently, "There's nothing wrong. You just don't know that yet."

He was right. There would be a solution. I just didn't know it yet, and I had slipped into believing my mind's made up stories again.

Have you ever noticed that not a single problem lasts forever? Everything that has a beginning has an end, and that is true for problems too. As John Lennon sang in his song, *Watching the Wheels*, "There's no problem, only solutions."

What if we knew this? Wouldn't we relax and enjoy the ride?

"You are entitled to peace today. A problem that has been resolved cannot trouble you. Only be certain that you do not forget that all problems are the same. Their many forms will not deceive you while you remember this. [The only 'problem' is believing your mind. Remember not to believe it today.] One problem, one solution. Accept the peace this simple statement brings."

We bring the problem to the answer when we remain aware that the mind's chatter is the problem. The answer is our awareness.

Awareness is that which does not come and go. It was not born and does not die. It is our truth. Our wisdom resides in awareness, not in the mind. Remain the gentle presence of awareness today.

John Lennon, Watching the Wheels:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utBr3C_G34k

Lesson 81

Congratulations. You have made it to the second review in the ACIM Workbook. I know some of you feel you have not been doing this perfectly. That's okay. We rest for a bit in the arms of this review in order to strengthen our commitment to truth.

Notice these sentences in the introduction to the review:

- Do not allow your intent to waver in the face of distracting thoughts. ... Replace them with your determination to succeed.
- Regard these practice periods as dedications to the way, the truth, and the life.
- You are dedicated to salvation. Be determined each day not to leave your function unfulfilled.

Repeatedly we are told, "Be determined and dedicated." So this is the primary objective of lessons 81 - 90. We are here to gather our motivation and strength so we may continue on with increased determination and dedication.

My tips each day during this review period will not focus on the specific lessons that we are reviewing that day. Instead, I will focus on the objective of gathering motivation and strength so we can continue with increased determination and dedication. I will be our coach.

Also, I would love for you to participate in this purpose. Over the next 10 days, if you read something, receive something from within, hear a song, etc that inspires you with increased determination and dedication, please post it in the Sharing in Contemplation Group or bring it to our next Gentle Healing meeting. Let's spend this review period motivating ourselves and one another. There is no better gift we can give now.



"Do not dwell in the desert hot of
the non-self, eating arid sand.
Come into the Heart, the
mansion cool, shady, vast, serene
and feast on the bliss of Self."
~ *The Garland of Guru's Sayings*

Lesson 82

Earlier this week someone, presumably Syria's president Assad, ordered a chemical attack on civilians/terrorists (depending on who is telling the story). In America, we saw images of the children affected in the attack. Last night US President Trump ordered an attack on a Syrian airbase. Russia, Iran and Syria say the US attack was "naively pulled behind a false propaganda campaign."

An 11-year old boy hung himself because his girlfriend and her friends pulled a prank on social media saying she killed herself. (Clearly he was pulled in by a false propaganda campaign.)

North Korea's nuclear missile campaign is increasing. Their leader has been willing to execute his own family members, so there is little to no trust that he will be responsible with nuclear weapons. His goal is to obtain the capability to strike the US.

A maid, who had been cleaning windows outside of a high-rise apartment, slipped. She held on to the windowsill and screamed desperately for help. Her employer thought it was funny. Instead of helping, she grabbed a smart phone to video it. The terrified maid fell. The employer walked over to the window to finish the story on video by showing her lying about 15-20 floors below. (Amazingly the maid survived.)

A Michigan woman, age 41, was arrested for choking a high school girl at Disney World on Wednesday night for blocking her view of the Disney fireworks show.

These are just a few of the stories in the news this week. The sad thing is, there are many, many, many more stories like them that we will never hear about. These aren't just stories 'out there.' These stories are the affect of the ego thought system.

Buddha's motivation for letting go of ego was the desire to find the end to suffering. His own suffering didn't motivate him. Personally, he didn't know suffering. He was motivated by compassion for others.

Jesus said his life was a ransom for many. Could he have had the same motivation as Buddha?

Can we look at the suffering and terror that is caused by the ego thought system, and like them, choose to let go of it?

Please take a moment to listen to this song today. And thanks for any effort that you put into letting go of the ego thought system in your mind. It is a gift to all of us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pjsUAZt1vE>

Lesson 83

I know some of you found yesterday's tip difficult. One ego preservation strategy is denying the full onslaught of suffering and terror caused by the ego thought system. If we looked directly at it, we would give it up. It's like the movie, "Inception," starring Leonardo DiCaprio. In that movie, they are going deep into another man's dream in order to plant an idea into his head. The question becomes, "How will we wake up from the dream?" The answer is to plant a 'kick' in the dream, something that will shock them awake.

If we looked at the full horror caused by the ego thought system, that would be our 'kick,' so the ego makes sure we don't look.

In spite of any suffering we may experience, our lives aren't bad. Our level of suffering is tolerable, which is why we put up with it. The disadvantage of that is that it doesn't push us to desire awakening with our whole heart, our whole soul, all of our strength and all of our mind.

However, there is an advantage to our easier lives too.

If we were overly consumed with suffering, we might not have time or energy to focus on awakening, because we would be too busy trying to resolve the problems of our suffering (or too sick/weak to do anything). Our more cozy lifestyles permit the opportunity for spiritual practice, if we will take advantage of them. And as yesterday's tip pointed out, we can be motivated by the suffering of others, if we are willing to look like Prince Siddhartha (Buddha) looked.

Most of us (if not all of us) know that we do not take full advantage of the time allotted to us for spiritual practice. Yesterday I was driving to the bank in our new AT Ride (a van donated for our Retreat House) when I heard a Christian song on the

radio. The song said that a saint is someone who, "falls down and gets up, falls down and gets up, falls down and gets up."

So, that's what we need to do. When we notice we have slipped or forgotten our purpose (fallen down), we just begin again (get up). In this way, we awaken ourselves and the world.

Here's a song to inspire us to sainthood:

<https://youtu.be/SZ-fghqc80o>

Lesson 84

Buddhists often speak of compassion. They practice compassion in many ways. It occurred to me recently to look at the life of Buddha to see what he meant by compassion.

For those of you who don't know the story of Buddha, he was born the son of a king. When he was born, a prophet foretold that he would become either a great spiritual master or a great king. His father was determined that he become a great king, so he decided to hide the world from Prince Siddhartha. (I guess his father knew that the world's suffering was the 'kick' that would put Siddhartha's feet on the spiritual path.)

Siddhartha was never allowed to go outside the walls of the great palace. Inside those walls, the king made sure Siddhartha had everything he needed for a life of constant pleasure. However when Siddhartha was a young man, he grew increasingly curious about what was outside of the palace walls. His father knew this curiosity had to be resolved, so he arranged for the prince to have a tour outside the walls. The tour was carefully orchestrated so that Siddhartha only saw young, healthy people. The old, the sick and the dying were hidden on back streets that were not part of Siddhartha's tour.

As it turns out, one curious old man peeked around a corner to get a glimpse of the prince as he passed, and Siddhartha saw him. Prince Siddhartha had never seen old age before and was immediately struck by what he saw. He followed the old man in order to learn more, and stumbled across everything his father had tried to hide from him. Old age, sickness and death.

Prince Siddhartha was overcome with compassion for everyone who suffered from these maladies. Driven by compassion, his quest became the pursuit of the end of suffering.

Now, this is what is important for us to notice. When driven by compassion to end suffering, did Siddhartha decide to be a great king so he could make new laws? Did he decide to become a doctor? A scientist? A social worker? No. He decided to seek

enlightenment. Somehow he intuitively knew that the answer to all problems rested with truth realization.

We are practicing true compassion when we dedicate our lives to the pursuit of truth realization. This is because the ego thought system is the cause of all forms of suffering.

Today I have selected a Christmas song for inspiration. It was written by John Lennon. I picked this song because it asks us, "What have you done?" This is not meant as an accusation, but as an internal question that we can each contemplate until increased motivation for spiritual practice arises within us. If we ask, motivation will come.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN4Uu00lmTg>

Lesson 85

Someone once asked me what motivates me to spiritual practice. My answer: It is the practice itself that motivates me. I find that as I dedicate myself to spiritual practice, I experience an increase in my desire for spiritual practice.

There may be some bio-chemical thing happening in the body to explain this. Just as the cells in our body can learn to crave certain emotions or specific types of food based on what we've given it, the body-mind can begin to crave spiritual practice and devotional time with God. This could be called "the positive use of craving."

What we need to notice about this is that the body-mind learns to crave what we give it, so we have to GIVE IT in order for the body-mind to begin to crave it.

That could mean that in the beginning there isn't much motivation to practice. However, in order to create the motivation to practice, we need to practice anyway. It reminds me of an Awakening Together Daily Quote from last week:

"Each step may seem to take forever, but no matter how uninspired you feel, continue to follow your practice schedule precisely and consistently. This is how we can use our greatest enemy, habit, against itself." ~ Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche

Buddha taught that when we see the cause of suffering we also see the path to ending suffering. The cause of suffering is the ego thought system. The path to ending suffering is the spiritual practice that leads to the end of the ego thought system. That understanding is our motivation to begin spiritual practice even though we may not yet crave spiritual practice. If we will do that, the motivation to spiritual practice will increase as the body-mind learns to crave it.

In other words, through spiritual practice we become a Soul on Fire:
https://youtu.be/i7lv9oMjv_0

Lesson 86

Some spiritual teachers, like Michael Langford and Ellie Roozdar, teach that awakening/enlightenment are extremely rare. Often, when people hear this, they feel discouraged. Recently, Kathy Smith expressed that discouragement during one of my Seven Steps teachings, and Michael heard it. He responded by writing a letter to Kathy. Here is some of what he wrote in that letter:

"When I make a statement that less than one out of every five hundred million humans attains [the final end of the ego], I am referring to the seven billion people living on the earth today. I am not referring to people who are practicing the truly Direct Path. Those odds do not apply to people who are practicing the truly Direct Path.

"Look at the Seven Billion humans living on the earth. Billions of them are not even on a spiritual or religious path. They are materialists who are just living this one life for whatever pleasure this one life can give them and they are not interested in anything that is not physical or material. You do not fall into that category because you have an interest in the spiritual and that is a reason to be encouraged.

"Billions of people are on some sort of spiritual or religious path. Almost all of those spiritual or religious paths are feeding the ego illusion. Most of those people have never even read one book or seen one video that describes the truly Direct Path. Let us suppose that out of the seven billion humans on earth that seventy thousand have read a book or seen a video that describes the truly Direct Path. You are one of the seventy thousand that has read books that describe the truly Direct Path and that is a reason for great encouragement!

"Whatever you do or do not do for the rest of your life with the truly Direct Path, you have been introduced to it and therefore you are way ahead in the game of awakening! That is a reason for great encouragement, not discouragement."

For those of you who don't know, "the direct path" refers to watching awareness. Everyone in the Gentle Healing Group has been introduced to this path and hopefully is practicing it a little each day. That means everyone in the Gentle Healing group is "way ahead in the game of awakening!" Our feet are solidly on the path, and this is reason for great encouragement.

By the way, Michael also mentioned in his letter that discouragement is of the ego. It is one of the ego's preservation strategies, since discouragement keeps us from spiritual practice. If we see discouragement as an ego trick, it may help us NOT listen to thoughts of discouragement.

Before coming across Michael Langford or Ellie Roozdar, I already knew that full awakening was extremely rare. Yet, I felt called to reach for it in this lifetime, and so ... well, that was that.

One song that has always encouraged me in my quest for awakening is "The Impossible Dream." Here's a link to Susan Boyle's version of that song:
<https://youtu.be/JxtDmmmJKlg>

Lesson 87

As mentioned in yesterday's tip, discouragement is of the ego. It is a very successful ego trick, because it can lead us to let go of the practice that awakens.

Today I would like to share several quotes from masters. These quotes all make the same point: Complete awakening is possible for you if you make it the priority in your life.

From Nisargadatta Maharaj:

"The desire to find the Self will surely be fulfilled, provided you want nothing else."

Questioner: How is the person removed?

Maharaj: By determination. Understand that it must go and wish it to go; it shall go if you are earnest about it.

"Try. One step at a time is easy. Energy flows from earnestness."

"The mind will rebel in the beginning, but with patience and perseverance it will yield and keep quiet."

Questioner: I have tried many times and failed.

Maharaj: Try again. If you keep on trying, something may happen. But if you don't, you are stuck.

"All will come as you go on. Take the first step first."

From The Supreme Yoga Vasistha:

"One should never yield to laziness but strive to attain liberation, seeing that life is ebbing away every moment."

"Constantly seek to discover the supreme peace."

"By their own self-effort millions of beings have attained liberation."

"The wayfarer does not despair at the sight of the long road ahead but takes one step at a time."

"By persistent effort the impossible becomes possible."

From The Way of Mastery, Chapter 10:

"The point of all of this is simple. I want to convey to you, yet again, that the life I lived as man was not unlike your very own. ... If there be anything that I can give unto you, it is simply this: ... I have overcome the world."

"You are the one who decides."

"All of your mind, all of your energy, all of your gifts, all of your very awareness must become committed to being the presence of peace."

"The wisest of students are those that hear the word and put it into practice, diligently, for themselves."

"But I can promise you, if you will take up such a path - simply, joyfully, gently, patiently - the end of your journey is certain."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0zbPA-iCh0>

Lesson 88

The ego often tells us that awakening is impossible. Or, at least it will say it is impossible for "me." However, *A Course in Miracles* says:

"In an impossible situation, you can develop your abilities to the point where they can get you out of it."

And that is what we are doing in the Gentle Healing Group. Day-by-day, step-by-step, we are developing our abilities to the point that we will become un-mesmerized by the ego and its dream, and therefore fully ready to embrace awakening. That means awakening is possible for us. In fact, if we simply keep taking steps in that direction, one step at a time, day-by-day, awakening is inevitable!

Here's a fun song to help us remember that:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_5eho0zcrs

"But the world is full of zanies and fools who don't believe in sensible rules" ... I am under no laws but God's. :-)

Lesson 89

For most of us, the spiritual path is a path of hills and valleys, of what might feel like successes and failures. There are times when we feel like we aren't doing good enough. Maybe we plan not to get angry, and then we get really angry. Maybe we plan to remember our Course lesson throughout the day, and then we forget about it for most of the day. Maybe we plan to meditate, and we fall asleep. Maybe it's something else, but it seems there are opportunities to judge ourselves as not doing well enough.

One of my favorite quotes is from the movie, "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel." Here's the quote:

"Everything will be alright in the end, so if it's not yet alright, it's not yet the end."

I noticed there was a similar quote near the end of the meta-secret film we are watching this week. In that movie one of the speakers said, "Failures are not final."

That's really an incredible concept, if you contemplate it. It means that if we haven't achieved the successful end, we are simply still in process. We are learning, growing, and moving toward our goal.

There is great power in trusting everything, in trusting the entire process exactly as it happens for us.

This time-lapse video of flowers blooming is a great symbol of the awakening process. Notice how some of the flowers open up right away, some seem to open and close as part of the blooming process, and others bloom one layer at a time. Also notice that no matter what the process looks like for these flowers, each and every one of them blooms. Once the process starts, the end is certain.

Notice how perfect and beautiful the blooming process is for every one of these flowers. Miraculous. Our processes are just as perfect. The awakening process is a miraculous unfolding, just like a flower blooming. I like watching this video in full screen.

https://youtu.be/xW_AsV7k42o

Lesson 90

I don't know about you, but I am excited for the new start that begins tomorrow ... our first lesson after the second review period. My heart is beating excitedly with joyous anticipation of the journey ahead. (It is also kind of fun that we begin this newest phase of our journey on Easter morning !!)

We are all currently working with our spiritual aspiration. After we watch the Meta-Secret film and listen to "The Secret Holy Spirit Style," we will focus within and receive our own visualization plan. The purpose of the visualization plan is to promote our spiritual aspiration.

A Course in Miracles tells us:

"The value of deciding in advance what you want to happen is simply that you will perceive the situation as a means to make it happen."

In other words, as we become crystal clear on what we want and focus on what we want, we will see clearly our part in achieving it. However, that's not all there is to it. In the Meta-Secret film we were told to expect quantum leaps. Those are the miracles that we are entitled to. As we envision our spiritual aspiration and as we do our part to achieve our spiritual aspiration, the deeper part of our Self rises to join with us, and shifts occur that are beyond our little efforts.

This will happen!

So as I said, my heart beats excitedly with joyous anticipation of the journey ahead. We can't imagine it, but it is coming because we are inviting it.

<https://youtu.be/SLp1x1kPf08>

Lesson 91, Miracles are seen in light

What is the miracle?

Today's workbook lesson says, "The miracle is always there." The miracle in this context is what you are.

What is light?

Light is awareness.

"Miracles are seen in light" means: Your truth is known in awareness.

Today's workbook lesson also says, "To you, then, light is crucial. While you remain in darkness, the miracle remains unseen."

The ego thought system is darkness. While we remain focused on the ego thought system, we are not aware of truth. We are not aware of what we are.

When today's workbook lesson is contemplated deeply, we see why awareness-watching-awareness meditation is so important to our daily practice. When we are focused on awareness in meditation, we are paying attention to our Self.

In all honesty, most of our time on any given day is focused on darkness. Most of our time is focused on the ego thought system. We are typically absorbed in it, mesmerized, hypnotized, dreaming away. But when we sit down in awareness-watching-awareness meditation, we are concentrated in reaching for our Self. This practice is "crucial" for us.

One of the best ways to focus attention on awareness and to learn to concentrate attention on awareness is Self-inquiry. This is the practice of learning to ask, "What am I?" and then LOOKING to observe the answer (rather than thinking about the answer).

Today's workbook lesson is an introduction to Self-inquiry. As we move through gentle healing together, Self-inquiry is a practice that will be practiced more and more. However, Self-inquiry is a means to awareness-watching-awareness. Awareness-watching-awareness is the primary practice. Awareness-watching-awareness is the direct path to Self-realization. It's important to see this, because then our practice time will be more focused on what is most important.

There are two more things I'd like to point out about today's workbook lesson, and then I will leave you to your practice.

1 – Today's workbook lesson says, "Your efforts, however little they may be, have strong support." This points to the quantum leaps that we can expect as we dedicate our selves to our purpose and our practice. When we combine intention with action (spiritual practice), we call out to our true Self with a power that the mind cannot fathom, and the true Self answers. This answer to our call is certain. We simply need to put out the call.

Do your part to the best of your little ability, and the true Self will do its part, and its ability is way beyond yours. Prepare to be amazed.

2 – Today's workbook lesson says, "Faith goes to what you want, and you instruct your mind accordingly." This points to the importance of developing the visualization plan you've been asked to develop this week. We will use our visualization plans in coming weeks. So if you haven't set special time aside for deep contemplation and asking in order to develop this plan, please do. It is very important for the purpose of calling forth the power of the Self, which is the power of, the power behind and the power beyond the entire Universe. As NTI Revelation, Chapter 1 says:

"You will never be asked to take a single step alone, but you must always be willing to take the lead by deciding the purpose and calling it out to Us."

Lesson 92, Miracles are seen in light, and light and strength are one

Yesterday we saw that the miracle is what you are, and light is awareness. Your truth is known in awareness. Today we learn what strength is. Strength is the natural beneficence of awareness. Beneficence and awareness are one.

The idea that you are a body in a world of other bodies is false. In today's workbook lesson, this idea is called "weakness."

The best way to overcome the "I am a body" weakness is by focusing attention on awareness (strength). As one pays attention to awareness, the sense of true Self grows stronger. As the sense of true Self grows stronger, the idea "I am a body" begins to fade.

This is why we practice awareness-watching-awareness meditation as part of our daily practice. Today's lesson gives us two 20-minute opportunities to practice awareness-watching-awareness mediation.

Today's lesson also introduces a new opportunity to pay attention to awareness, a method that can be practiced throughout the day everyday no matter where you are or what you are doing.

If you pay careful attention to yourself, you will see when you believe "I am a body." Some of the symptoms of this belief are judgment, condemnation, fear, attack, self-hatred and a sense of being separate from everyone and everything outside of your body.

Today's lesson asks us to shift our attention from that weakness ("I am a body") to strength (awareness.) Whenever we notice we are caught up in weakness, we are asked to repeat today's workbook lesson to our self. To really maximize the benefit of the moment, it is helpful to linger for a few seconds after repeating the workbook lesson. Simply linger in a relaxed state and notice awareness (isness, aliveness.)

Since this is an important new practice, here's a short video that teaches how to do that:

<https://youtu.be/9yG2INLOgdA>

Lesson 93, Light and joy and peace abide in me

Yesterday we saw that some of the symptoms of the "I am a body" belief are judgment, condemnation, fear, attack, and self-hatred. The voice in your head that we call the ego is the voice of the "I am a body" belief. Watch it as a curious observer and you will see what I mean.

"I am so stupid." "I'm pretty clever." "He is so annoying." "She is prettier than me."

"They don't ever listen to me." "I better get this done or they'll think I'm avoiding work."

Look at those sentences and the sentences that come into your mind today. Do you see the "I am a body" idea in those thoughts?

Today's workbook lesson says, "You think if anyone could see the truth about you he would be repelled, recoiling from you as if from a poisonous snake." That sense that we have about ourselves, that sense that 'I am the scum of the earth', is the voice of the "I am a body" belief.

Today's workbook lesson also says, "Today we question this, not from the point of view of what you think, but from a very different reference point."

We are going to question our 'I am a body' thinking from the point-of-view of our truth. That is, from awareness. An important part of this questioning is "What am I?" Be curious to discover what you are. Are you the body? Are you this thinking? Or are you awareness? Which one is most true about what you are? Which ones can you observe and which one is you, the observer? As you become more familiar with the true you, thoughts that do not reflect your truth lose their power.

For example, if I went into a big tirade about what a terrible tree you are, I could go on and on about how you never drop your leaves in the fall; I could go on and on about how trees are suppose to stay in one place and you are always moving around; I could go on and on about how you don't put off enough shade, and you'd just think that I am crazy. Those thoughts wouldn't affect you because you don't think you are a tree. If you aren't a tree, you can't be a bad tree.

Well, if you aren't a body, you can't be a bad or stupid or ugly body. So we question all of the beliefs and ideas that are part of the "I am a body" thought system by questioning the basis of the thought system itself. What am I?

Today you are asked to give the first 5 minutes of each hour to today's lesson. It's possible that you won't be able to do that, but give those 5 minutes when you can. During that time, wonder, "What am I?" and then look to see what the true answer is. Use the video that is attached to this post to help guide you. You might watch it as part of your practice during one or more of the 5-minute periods today.

When you can't give a full 5 minutes to today's practice, give at least the 2-5 seconds that was represented by yesterday's Bentinho video. If you say today's workbook lesson and then give a full 5 minutes (or at least 2-5 seconds) to this looking every hour today, you will take great strides in freeing yourself from the "I am the body" belief and from the thinking that goes with it.

Here's today's video: https://youtu.be/LEXng_GsrFM

Lesson 94, I am as God created me

Many people who study A Course in Miracles study at the level of mind--at the the level of thinking--so when they come to Lesson 94, they adopt the idea, "I am as God created me," including their imagination of what that means to them. It doesn't penetrate very deep, because it is only at the level of mind.

We are now at the phase of Self-inquiry. Self-inquiry has nothing to do with thinking. Self-inquiry is LOOKING. For people who believe everything is resolved by thinking, it takes practice to drop thinking and practice looking, but it can be done. With looking you have the attitude of, "What am I?" and then you LOOK with inner-looking, intuitive looking, to realize the answer.

Today's workbook lesson says that today's idea, "I am as God created me," is "the one idea which brings complete salvation." Please pardon that language. It isn't actually the idea that brings salvation, which I am sure many Course students can attest to if they choose to be honest. It is the REALIZING of this, the inner knowing if this, that is salvation.

Remember, the "I am a body" belief is the basis of the ego thought system. If you can see that you are not a body, you render the entire ego thought system meaningless. (If you did not read my tip for Lesson 93, please read it at this link: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-93-1.../>)

Again today, we will practice looking to see what we are for 5 minutes every hour. If you can't give that time every hour, give at least Bentinho's 2-5 seconds of looking each hour. (Obviously, do 5 minutes when you can and give 2-5 seconds when you can't give 5 minutes.)

Also, listen to the following 14-minute video at least once today. Your homework includes the assignment to practice awareness-watching-awareness for 10-15 minutes each day. If you are short on time today, you can count this video as your awareness-watching-awareness time today. Please listen to it with eyes closed. <https://youtu.be/wa5IF7x-ziA>

Lesson 95, I am one Self, united with my Creator.

Today's lesson is really subtle. It's an important lesson. It's also a lesson that the ego can't understand. Let's look at it carefully and slowly so it can be understood and digested beyond the ego mind.

"I am one Self, united with my Creator." If this is true (and it is true), can I do anything apart from my Creator? In order to do something apart from my Creator, we'd have to be two, wouldn't we?

This means that if I forget the lesson for a few hours, or if I remember but I have too much resistance to give 5 minutes to practice, that I am forgetting or resisting WITH my creator.

Yep. This may not seem right to you, but if it doesn't seem right it is because you are still thinking of your creator as something other than you.

Remember The Code. The entire world experience, including every thought that comes into your mind and every feeling that comes into your body, comes from our oneness and how we cast attention. Our oneness is the creator. So if we are distracted from remembering the lesson, where do those distractions come from? My creator of which I am a part. And if I have too much resistance to practice, where does that resistance come from? My creator of which I am a part.

When the ego mind thinks it understands this, it thinks, "Then I don't even need to try because everything is God." That's not a right understanding. Again, remember The Code. The code that we create has different vibrational levels in it. When we choose the highest level available to us, we raise higher in vibration.

Look carefully at today's lesson again. Look at paragraphs 8, 9 & 10. Can you see how those paragraphs are teaching you to make higher choices so you raise yourself in vibration?

~ If you forget, forgive yourself.

~ Overlook your lapses/failures; don't give them any power.

~ Try again to remember with regularity.

All three of these choices will pull you up in vibration. Their opposites would keep you down.

Paragraph 8 says, "The Holy Spirit is not delayed in His teaching by your mistakes. He can be held back only by your unwillingness to let them go." Translation: Choosing to believe a lower vibration thought/feeling cannot keep you down; only continuing to believe lower vibration thoughts/feelings can keep you down.

So when you make a mistake, correct it as soon as possible by choosing the highest vibrational thought available to you now. That is, forgive yourself, don't give power to ideas like failure or guilt, and try again.

Also, look at paragraph 14. We are the creator, which means as you choose to raise yourself in vibration, you also raise the world in vibration, and "each time you do so, someone hears the voice of hope, the stirring of the truth within his mind, the gentle rustling of wings of peace."

"I am one Self, united with my Creator." With this knowledge, I choose the highest vibration available to me today.

If you'd like to review The Code, click this link. The Bonus audio is a good one for a review: <http://reginadawnakers.com/the-classics/>

Lesson 96, Salvation comes from my one Self

The most important thing about today's lesson is that we continue to practice looking at awareness for 5 minutes every hour. When we can't do that, we at least say today's lesson to our self and practice Bentinho's 2-5 seconds. This practice of looking at awareness frequently is much more helpful than you may imagine. Literally, your salvation (awakening) comes from paying attention to your Self (awareness).

Remember, you are praying for whatever you pay attention to. We learned this in NTI Ephesians. Pay attention to the world and your thoughts about it, and you get more of the ongoing dream script. Pay attention to awareness, and you will come to know your true Self as a direct experience. (Salvation comes from my one Self.)

There are some other fun little games you can play that will help bring Self-realization into your experience.

~ When you are with another person, contemplate their awareness. No matter what they are saying or doing, contemplate the fact that underneath personality and individual thoughts, their awareness is exactly the same as yours.

~ When you are with a pet, contemplate its awareness. Notice as your pet looks out of its eyes. Realize the awareness looking out through the pet's eyes is the same awareness that looks out through your eyes.

~ When you are with nature, contemplate life. Contemplate the aliveness in a tree, an insect, a bird, a flower, grass, etc. Realize that the aliveness in nature is the same life-force that is in you, and then contemplate Life as what you are.

Today's workbook lesson says, "Spirit makes use of mind as means to find its Self expression. And the mind which serves the spirit is at peace and filled with joy."

As you look at awareness, contemplate awareness, and contemplate life, you will come to see life-awareness-intelligence as what you are. This is what the Course calls spirit. You will come to see it as playing through the human body and mind just like the air from the musician's breath plays through the flute. Seeing yourself as life-awareness-intelligence playing through the human is much different than thinking you are the human, the body or the mind. When you see in this way, you know the difference between the real and unreal. You also see your Self in other

people, in animals, and in nature. You begin to sense your eternal ongoing nature, and you experience happiness that unattached; happiness that simply is.

Today as we practice "Salvation comes from my one Self," embrace every opportunity to contemplate our one Self, and "you lay another treasure in your growing store" of Self-realization.

Lesson 97, I am spirit

Sh-h-h-h-h. Listen. What do you hear?

That's spirit.

What's listening?

Spirit.

You can't get away from it. Spirit, everywhere.

Look at this verse from the Gospel of Thomas:
Jesus said, "It is I who am the light over all. It is I who am the entirety: it is from me that the entirety has come, and to me that the entirety goes. Split a piece of wood: I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there."

Spirit.

Here's another verse from the Gospel of Thomas:
Jesus said, "I have cast fire upon the world, and look, I'm guarding it until it blazes."

What is the fire?

Realization of spirit.

Today's workbook lesson says that the Holy Spirit will take each little 5 minute period we give today, and it will be multiplied "a thousandfold and tens of thousands more. And when it is returned to you, it will surpass in might the little gift you gave as much as does the radiance of the sun outshine the tiny gleam [of] a firefly."

Fire cast upon the world, blazing.

Today, be a part of this fire. Contemplate this:
Whatever you are aware of today is spirit.
You, which is aware, is spirit.

Contemplate the everywhere-ness of spirit, the allness of spirit.

"The kingdom is within you and it is outside you." ~ The Gospel of Thomas

Let the entire day be given to contemplation of spirit. It will be with you throughout the day everywhere that you go and in everything that you do.

Lesson 98, I will accept my part in God's plan for salvation.

What is God's plan for salvation? In the language of the Course, it is forgiveness. What is forgiveness? It is removing your attention from the untrue.

Removing attention from problems.

Removing attention from grievances.

Removing attention from fears.

Removing attention from regrets.

Removing attention from jealousies and envies.

Removing attention from judgments.

Removing attention from all of our ideas about how other people should be.

Removing attention from all thoughts about our weaknesses and shortcomings.

Removing attention from our doubts that the truth is true.

Today's lesson says, "We take a stand on but one side today. We side with truth and let illusions go. We will not vacillate between the two, but take a firm position with the One."

If you notice your attention has gone to illusory thoughts, simply remind yourself that you accept your function as spirit, gently remove your attention from anything you do not want to enliven with spirit, and place attention with ...

With what?

A careful reading of today's lesson will reveal that you are being guided to place attention with happiness and gratitude. So when you catch attention with illusory thoughts, you might ask yourself, "What happiness can I place my attention with now? What can I be grateful for?"

A bird's song may catch your ear, and you might recognize the simple joy of life and place attention there. You may notice your own honest willingness for truth, and feel gratitude for your sincerity. You might feel a contraction in your chest because of the fear you were focused on a moment ago, and feel grateful that your attention can now go to rest, accept and trust.

Today is a chance to make a deeper commitment to our function. It's another new beginning. Be still during the 5-minute breaks and contemplate how much you want to make this commitment today. Enjoy the opportunity to live the commitment during the other 55 minutes of each hour today.

Today we give the gifts of happiness and gratitude to ourselves and to the world.

Lesson 99, Salvation is my only function here.

Let's simplify today's lesson:

"Truth and illusions both are equal now, for both have happened. ... [This seems true, because the] mind that sees illusions thinks them real. ... And yet they are not real, because the mind that thinks these thoughts is separate from God."

The pathway to salvation lies in the paragraph above. The key lies in "the mind that thinks these thoughts is separate...".

Take a moment to notice your mind, meaning your thoughts. It doesn't matter what they are. Notice them, whatever they are.

Next, notice what is aware of your thoughts; that is, notice awareness. Can you see that thoughts and awareness are separate? What I mean by that is, you can point (with inner figurative pointing) at thinking and say, "That's thought," and you can point at awareness and say, "That's awareness." They are different.

Now look at these two, thought and awareness. Which one is you? Which one can you look at and which one is you looking? You can decide to focus on a thought or let it go. Can you do the same with awareness, or is awareness what you are?

Look, and discover these answers for yourself.

Look at all the trouble thoughts conjure up. For example, every murder begins with a thought. Does awareness conjure up any trouble at all?

Look. Discover the answer for yourself.

When we infuse thoughts with attention, we enliven them. You can watch how this happens. Notice how a thought becomes more alive and the story grows deeper as your attention is more engrossed by it.

Is this true for awareness? Is awareness enlivened with attention or is it naturally alive even if you give it no attention?

Look. Find the answer for yourself.

If thought must be enlivened but awareness is naturally alive, which is illusion and which is real?

I said that the pathway to salvation is found in this:

"And yet [illusions] are not real, because the mind that thinks these thoughts is separate ..."

The pathway to salvation is noticing that mind is separate from you, and you are real but thoughts are not.

Contemplate this tip today. Notice the difference between thought and awareness. Notice which causes all kinds of trouble and suffering, and which is peacefully present. Notice which is you and which is not.

Lesson 100, My part is essential to God's plan for salvation.

The other night I met an Indian man who wanted to know what I had achieved thus far through spiritual practice. I told him that I am happy. He didn't seem to think happiness was evidence of progress. Maybe he would have been more impressed with stories about physical healing or divine visions. Oh, I've had those experiences too. I guess I could have told him the apple story. ~ha ha~ But when he asked what I have achieved thus far through spiritual practice, the answer that came to me as evidence of genuine progress was the answer I gave, happiness.

Along the way to Self-realization some people may have some tremendous experiences that seem to be proof of something divine, but to me the simplicity of genuine happiness is the greater boon. To be happy no matter what appears to occur or not occur is a sure sign of detachment from the world and detachment from thought. It is a sure sign of awakening to realization of one's real nature.

Happiness, openness, and confidence are the true miracles of awakening. When one isn't feeling happiness, openness and confidence, something has gone wrong. An untrue thought has gained attention.

Root cause inquiry begins at unhappiness. Whenever we are not perfectly happy, it's a good idea to look to see what untrue idea is driving us.

Sometimes it is easy to see what you've believed that's causing unhappiness, and it's easy to let it go. However, especially in the beginning, it often takes effort to uncover the ideas that block our happiness and even more effort to let them go. That's because we've taught ourselves to believe some really crazy stuff, and some of these ideas have been very heavily learned.

Today, regardless of what you experience, contemplate the fact that happiness is natural, and unhappiness is the sign that you are believing something that isn't true. This is always the case. When we accept this as true, we begin to respond to unhappiness appropriately. The appropriate way to respond to unhappiness is to look, uncover and release an untrue idea.

Lesson 101, God's Will for me is perfect happiness.

Two days ago the tip for Lesson 99 led you in an inquiry. As part of that inquiry you were asked to "Notice the difference between thought and awareness. Notice which causes all kinds of trouble and suffering, and which is peacefully present. Notice which is you and which is not."

I hope you were able to see, at least briefly, that you are awareness, which is peacefully present. This seeing helps you to understand what today's lesson points to...there is no sin.

I prefer to help you SEE something is true, rather than just deliver the information intellectually. If you can see that mind and awareness are separate, and what you are is awareness, you will have a realization that transcends the belief in sin, which goes far beyond an intellectual teaching.

Today's workbook lesson says that "suffering is causeless. Joy is just, and pain is but the sign you have misunderstood yourself." MISUNDERSTOOD YOURSELF.

This is why awareness-watching-awareness (AWA) is such an important part of our practice. Through AWA you consistently (albeit subtly) attain more and more realization that you are awareness, not thought. Be sure to practice AWA for 10-15 minutes each day. Also use the 5 minutes per hour to watch awareness. When you can't give a full 5 minutes, at least spend 3-5 seconds noticing yourself as awareness. Through AWA your identification will shift from body-mind to awareness, and that shift changes everything, even if nothing else changes.

Another way to disengage from seeing yourself as body-mind is to "abide as your Self." Ramana Maharshi gave this guidance frequently. But what does it mean?

It means abide as life-intelligence-awareness instead of as a body-mind.

How do you do that? You will learn to abide as your Self by practicing the Loving All Method, which is assigned as part of your homework this week. Please read that assignment carefully this week, preferably several times. Find what questions you have and bring them to our next meeting. We want to take the Loving All Method seriously so we can live from it.

Practicing the Loving All Method is the same practice as the vow of Happiness taught in Chapter 15 of "The Untethered Soul," which Jacquelyn shared in class last night. Both are the same as forgiveness as it is taught in A Course in Miracles. So, let's get a clear understanding of these three as one, and then go forward from this week clear on how to live from happiness/love/forgiveness.

Lesson 102, I share God's Will for happiness for me.

Today's workbook lesson tells us that we think pain and suffering buy us something, something that we want. If we are not perfectly happy, this belief is in our mind. It may not seem that way. It could even feel offensive if someone tells us that we are unhappy because we think unhappiness will get us something that we want, but it's true.

One example: When we are unhappy with the government or its policies, we think enough unhappiness like ours will generate the change we want to see.

Some of you may have thought, "Well, yea!" when you read that. There might even be fear that if you aren't unhappy, the change you want will never happen.

This belief that unhappiness will get us what we want is a deeply held belief, and it is completely screwed up. The only thing this belief does is keep us from being happy when we could be happy. Metaphysically, that's more sinister than it may sound since our energy goes out and paints the world we see.

If you want the world to be a happier more secure place, offer it a happier more secure person. Give what you want to see by being what you want to see.

In Chapter 15 of "The Untethered Soul," Michael Singer wrote:

"[Unconditional happiness] leads you to absolute transcendence because any part of your being that would add a condition to your commitment to happiness has to go. ... You have to transcend the personal, and as you do, you will naturally awaken to the higher aspects of your being."

Happiness is the way to contribute to a better world, and happiness is the path to enlightenment. If you are not choosing to be happy now, there must be something else that you think you want. What is it?

Don't simply read this and say, "Uh-huh," or click Like. Read this and look. Whenever you are not happy, you think you can get something from not being happy. What is it that you think unhappiness will get you?

Will people start acting the way you want them to act?

Will people give you attention that you want?

Will God grant your wishes like a genie?

Will your thoughts quit coming?

Will you quit making mistakes?

Will your health get better?

Will someone love you?

Just what do you think you have to gain by being unhappy? What is the hidden desire that unhappiness is chartered with resolving? AND can you see that it is not your true desire? Are you willing to let it go, and simply be happy ???

Be happy even if people act differently than you would have them act. Be happy even if you don't get attention from others. Be happy even if your wishes are not granted. Be happy even if the same thoughts keep coming in your mind. Be happy even if you make mistakes. Be happy even if the body isn't healthy. Be happy even if someone chooses not to love you.

Do you share God's Will for your happiness? Are you ready?

Lesson 103, God, being Love, is also happiness.

Today's workbook lesson begins with this:

"Happiness is an attribute of love. ... Love has no limits, being everywhere. And therefore joy is everywhere as well. Yet can the mind deny that this is so, believing there are gaps in love where sin can enter, bringing pain instead of joy. This strange belief would limit happiness by redefining love as limited, and introducing opposition in what has no limit and no opposite."

"Sin" is *that which should not be*. It is impossible to be happy with something if we judge that it should not be. This judgment, which is the fundamental judgment and the root of all judgments, is what we need to learn to let go of. There isn't one circumstance that we can withhold from our love, our happiness, our forgiveness, because if there is any circumstance that we withhold from love, we have deemed that to be separate from love. Metaphysically, we withhold healing from anything that we withhold love from. We also withhold healing from ourselves in the same instant.

The decision not to love something, not to be happy with something, not to forgive something, is the cause of all suffering everywhere in the world.

This week as you read the Loving All Method, contemplate it deeply. Look at those situations that you want to withhold from love, realize those are situations that you'd like to see healed, and then remember that love is the only healing power. We cannot guarantee that a specific situation will be healed by your love, because many others may still hold judgments against it, but we can guarantee that your love will heal something. Not least of all, your love will heal you. We can also guarantee that your love will never add to a problem anywhere. When you love, you subtract from problems; you do not add to them.

The Loving All Method is generous. It gives you options. If you find you cannot love something, you can at least accept it. If you find you cannot even accept it, you can at

least emotionally allow it. "Emotionally allow" is the same as Rest, Accept and Trust with the feelings you have about it.

Read today's lesson again, and notice how clearly it points to the Loving All Method as an important practice in accepting truth. If love is all there is, if God is all there is, then happiness is all we experience. If we do not experience happiness, we have defined something as sin. Pause, look at it. Notice you have decided that circumstance should not be, and then practice the Loving All Method with it. Love it if you can. Accept it if that is the best you can do. Emotionally allow it if love or acceptance is too much of a stretch for you now.

Gotta go. Dad is calling me to breakfast. Gotta love it.

Lesson 104, I seek but what belongs to me in truth.

This week we are looking deeply at happiness. I've said that happiness is natural, and when we are not happy it is because we decided we wanted something else. We judged a circumstance as something that should not be, and we decided we want it to be different.

Right now I sit in bed in Branson, Missouri. In about 90 minutes I will take my suitcases, go out to my car and drive to Springfield, Missouri for a gathering. It is storming outside. There is heavy rain and lightening. It's been this way for hours. If there isn't a break in the weather, I will get soaked when I leave. I have no umbrella, no raincoat and my car is parked far enough from the front door that remaining dry is an impossibility in the heavy rain. Once I am in the car, I will drive nearly an hour in the weather to the gathering I am to teach today. It's possible some people will not come because of the weather. At least one person has already cancelled. I might have heard hail last night. I could go outside today and find my car has hail damage.

Should I choose to be unhappy? Will my unhappiness get me what I want? Heck, what do I want? Do I want sunshine and bird's singing and lots of people at the gathering? Maybe I at least want dry clothes. Can't I at least have a break in the weather when I carry my luggage out to the car? If God loves me, I will at least get that, right?

This is an example of the kind of thinking people choose everyday, probably multiple times everyday. "I want this!" our mind screams, and if it isn't given we are unhappy.

"I want things my way," but maybe the trees, bushes and flowers want rain. Maybe the thunder wants to roar. Maybe the storm clouds want to dance in the sky like native Americans around a drum circle. Maybe, just maybe, if I look at today with a little bit of openness, I will enjoy this weather powwow.

Today's lesson tells us there must "be a place made ready to receive His gifts. They are not welcomed gladly by a mind that has instead received the gifts it made where His belong, as substitutes for them."

We prepare the place for happiness when we let go of wanting what isn't present. If it isn't present, it isn't a present. ~ha ha~ That's just a silly play on words that just came to me. Get it? If it isn't present (here), it isn't a present (gift)?

But seriously ... It's okay to want what's here. Wanting what is here will never bring us unhappiness. If the sun is shining, love the sunny day. That is okay! But if the rain is pouring, love the rain. If you are wet, love being wet. If you have no money, love having no money. If you don't know what is going to happen tomorrow, love not knowing what is going to happen tomorrow. The truth is, none of us really know that anyway. We only imagine we know.

Happiness isn't really a choice. Unhappiness is a choice. If we stop choosing to be unhappy by wanting something that isn't present, we will find more gifts here now than we can count, and happiness is one of them.

This life as this person is a temporary experience, like a novel or a movie. What's happening in your scene now? Enjoy it! Love the temporary. Also take time to notice, you aren't the temporary. The more you see that you aren't the temporary, the more you relax, and the temporary can be loved just as it is now.

Lesson 105, God's peace and joy are mine.

Today's workbook lesson says, "A major learning goal this course has set is to reverse your view of giving, so you can receive. For giving has become a source of fear, and so you would avoid the only means by which you can receive."

There is a divine law by which the universe operates. We introduced the basics of this law to the Gentle Healing Group when we read NTI Ephesians and NTI Colossians. In short, the law is this:

What you give, you receive.

Jesus put it this way in the New Testament:

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." ~ Luke 6:38

Divine law does not discern for you. It does not look at what you are giving and decide that you would rather receive something else. It returns to you exactly what you give.

Today's workbook lesson is pointing out that because of divine law, you cannot withhold happiness from others and know happiness.

In actuality, you cannot withhold happiness from others. They will receive what they give. However, as an example, if spitefulness is in your mind, you will feel wounded or attacked by what others say or do.

Remember: What I think, I see. What I see, I experience. What I experience, I think.

Today's workbook lesson asks you to think of "those brothers who have been denied by you the peace and joy that are their right under the equal laws of God" and tell each one "My brother, peace and joy I offer you."

This is a good opportunity to also practice the Loving All Method. What is your grievance? Can you look at that situation in your mind now and love it? Accept it? Emotionally allow it? It would be good practice to do so, and then say, "My brother, peace and joy I offer you."

Another suggestion: If you contemplate today's lesson alongside the Loving All Method, you may see the great benefit in making the Loving All Method a way of life.

Lesson 106, Let me be still and listen to the truth.

Today's lesson encourages you to have your own direct experience of truth. It says, "Be not deceived by voices of the dead, which tell you they have found the source of life and offer it to you for your belief."

One primary obstacle to true spirituality is belief. If you look at members of traditional religion, you will see that their "faith" is based on believing what they have been taught. That happens in our spirituality too. People believe what they've read or what teachers say.

True spirituality isn't about belief. It is about your own direct experience.

Our "faith" isn't based on belief. Our "faith" is based on trust. We trust the teachings enough to try it for our self. Instead of believing the teachings, we practice them, and through practice we experience truth directly.

Keep this in mind as you go forward with spirituality. There will be a lot of opportunities to believe something. Believing isn't the point. Practice is the point.

Lesson 107, Truth will correct all errors in my mind.

Yesterday's tip pointed out that true spirituality is based on trusting the teachings enough to engage in spiritual practice. The benefits of spiritual practice are highlighted in today's workbook lesson.

My outward-focused ego mind sees meditation as a waste of time. I like to meditate for a minimum of one hour, and I prefer to spend two hours in meditation. To the ego, there are so many things I could be doing with that time.

Since I've started meditating more, my house is less clean and I have missed working out in my gym. I'd love to workout and spend more time cleaning my house, but only if life rearranges itself so I can do those things without giving up time meditating.

Why has meditation become so important? When I meditate, it seems that nothing much is happening. Attention habitually goes into thought, and I gently pull it back to focus on awareness again. After a certain amount of time, attention rests more easily with awareness, but there is still some going out and pulling back that occurs. That's it, nothing else for up to two hours. But there's this intuitive feeling that I have. It's a feeling that something much more powerful is occurring. Something that is subtle to the ego, which looks for progress and tries to measure it, but something very steady and very precise.

To put it in the language of today's workbook lesson, truth is correcting all errors in my mind as I willingly pull attention out of thought and rest with awareness to the best of my ability. I feel my small, poorly skilled effort is allowing something remarkable to take place.

And that is what today's lesson tells us.

"It is impossible that anyone could seek it truly, and would not succeed. ... Give truth its due, and it will give you yours."

Lesson 108, To give and to receive are one in Truth

Today's lesson says, "To learn that giving and receiving are the same has special usefulness because it can be tried so easily and seen as true."

This lesson points to the value of making the Loving All Method a way of life. If you haven't become deeply familiar with the Loving All Method, consider reading it over 2-3 times this week. Get to know the method and the additional clarification really well. If you find there are areas of confusion in your mind, ask within regarding your confusion as a journaling practice, and see what clarity comes. You can also ask me in the Ask Regina Facebook Group, if confusion continues to linger.

Today's lesson says, "One thought, completely unified, will serve to unify all thought." That's the power of the Loving All Method. It unifies everything so that there are no opposites. It brings about a "state of mind that has become so unified that darkness cannot be perceived at all."

Here is the link to the Loving All Method for those of you who want to review it this week: http://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter12.htm

Lesson 109, I rest in God.

NTI Luke says, "Sickness must rest and be quiet. This is the way to health. Let your sickness rest."

This is why we want to rest. When our attention is caught up in our mind's conditioned thought habits, the neural pathways that are related to those habits are well worn and as slippery as water slides. When we rest from our habitual way of thinking, those same neural pathways begin to dry up. Later, we will experience this as the ability to pause and discern before going into a habitual way of reacting. Or a neural pathway may be completely healed through our rest, and we will notice that our happiness is unaffected by a situation that would have upset us before.

When you rest the mind, realize you are allowing time for healing. Rest during meditation, rest when you happen to notice that thought is all wound up and also rest when you feel an upset. Learn to relax attention away from thought. At first you may need to put attention on another thought like the day's Course lesson, because you are used to having attention on something, but the goal is to learn to rest in openness. Just be open. For me it feels like being general instead of specific. Some might call it being unclenched instead of clenched. Play with resting, and you will get the feel of it. When you feel tight, it is helpful to take a breath, relax, and then relax deeper into rest.

Today might be a good day to do one of this week's homework assignments. You can rest as you listen to the music playlist or let Adyashanti guide you into a state of rest through this week's guided meditation.

Lesson 110, I am as God created me.

Today's lesson begins by telling us, "We will repeat today's idea from time to time," and then it goes on to discuss two key practices that we need to continuously repeat until awakening has occurred. The practices are two types of inquiry.

1. After introducing the quotation that we are to say as we begin our 5-minute practice periods today, the lesson says, "Then, with this statement firmly in your

mind, try to discover in your mind the Self Who is the holy Son of God Himself." This instruction points to Self-inquiry, which is LOOKING to see what you are.

Some Self-inquiry practices that you can experiment with during meditation today are:

~ Listen to a sound in your environment & then ask, "Who hears this?" Turn attention to become aware of you, the awareness that hears.

~ If you find you were lost in thought, ask, "Who sees this thought?" Turn attention to become aware of you, the one who is aware of thought.

~ Notice the constant change that occurs in the mind, in emotions and/or in the sensations in the body, and then ask, "What is constant? What is not changing?" Turn attention to become aware of you, that which is constant and unchanging while everything else is changing.

~ Allow yourself to remember a much earlier time in your life, and then ask "What is the 'I' that was present then that is also present and completely unchanged now?" In this inquiry, the key is that the 'I' you seek is completely unchanged. Your body changed; your mind changed (opinions, education, etc). What is the same and is you?

I recommend practicing Self-inquiry during your 5-minute meditation breaks today. You could practice with different questions during different breaks. Which questions work best for you? Feel free to use other methods of Self-inquiry that you may have heard of. For example Mooji's question was, "Can the seer be seen?"

Note: The reading that I shared in our meeting this past Tuesday night from "The Untethered Soul," Chapter 3, was focused on Self-inquiry. If you need help with Self-inquiry, you could listen to that part of the meeting again. It began about 1 hour and 20 minutes into the meeting. Here is the link to the audio: <http://awakening-together.org/audio-homework-50217-gentle-healing-group-with-regina/>

2. The lesson points to another type of inquiry when it says, "Let graven images you made to be the Son of God instead of what he is be worshipped not today." This brings up the question, "What ideas of 'me' do I have that are not what I am?"

If you focus on Self-inquiry during meditation, you can use the rest of the day to ponder this second question. Be open to notice what you tell yourself about you. Notice what roles you are heavily identified with. What judgments do you make about who you are? Pay attention to discover who YOU TELL YOURSELF that you are. See how many of these false images you can uncover in your thoughts today. Realize these are images you make, and then remind yourself, "I am as God created me."

Lesson 111

One of the skills that has really benefited me on the path of awakening is contemplation. Contemplation is different than meditation. During meditation we pay attention to the true Self (awareness). Whenever attention drifts back into thought, we use Self-inquiry or another means to bring attention back to awareness.

Contemplation has a different purpose. Contemplation brings clarity to the mind, so that the mind can operate with wisdom instead of through ignorance. Contemplation provides the opportunity to learn from within yourself, to be guided from within yourself and to receive vision from within yourself.

Let's take advantage of this third review to enhance our contemplation skills. That's really what the review instructions are pointing to when they say, "Read over the ideas and comments that are written down for each day's exercise. And then begin to think about them, while LETTING YOUR MIND RELATE THEM to your needs, your seeming problems, and all your concerns. PLACE THE IDEAS WITHIN YOUR MIND, AND LET IT USE THEM AS IT CHOOSES. Give it faith that it will use them wisely, being helped in its decisions by the One Who gave the thoughts to you."

The words I have written in ALL CAPS above are words that point to HOW to contemplate. Notice there is a passiveness in contemplation. Instead of thinking hard about the lessons, you read them softly and let insight come to you, like a gift.

What I will do each day during this review period is share different tips to help you learn the art of contemplation. I will start today with a quote written by Regina Dawn Akers. This is something that came to me one day while I was contemplating a quote in *The Seven Steps to Awakening*. So, this quote itself is a fruit of contemplation:

"Contemplation is not thinking or trying to understand. Contemplation is silent diving into the restful, devotional, open heart of the words, and there being; just being in the state of contemplation without seeking to understand or get answers."
~RDA

If contemplation is new to you, try contemplating my quote above along with the paragraph I have quoted from the review instructions, and then practice contemplation with today's lesson. Don't put pressure on yourself. Just BE WITH the words with the intention to receive additional clarity or a deepening of clarity. I recommend writing down what comes and reviewing it several times throughout the day. It may come in words, as a picture, as a vision or as a feeling. If it comes as one of the latter three, consider making a few notes that will remind you of the experience later.

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 111

Miracles are seen in light. Darkness is the personal point-of-view as seen through 'my' thoughts, 'my' prejudices, 'my' fears, 'my' judgments, etc. Miracles are not seen in darkness. They are seen in light. They are seen through openness, through loving all.

Miracles are seen in light, and light and strength are one. This must also mean that darkness and weakness are one. My personal point-of-view is weakness regardless of how smart or right it may feel. Thinking of 'me,' 'what I want,' and 'how I want it' is a position of weakness. Lay weakness aside each time it is noticed, and strength is naturally received.

Lesson 112

How to Contemplate, continued:

When I was first guided to write "The Holy Spirit's Interpretation of the New Testament" (NTI), I was given instructions about how to do it. One very important instruction was:

"In order to understand the symbol, one must accept the Love of Christ. One prepares himself to accept that Love BY RECOGNIZING HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND the symbol, and then he ASKS for understanding. By OPENING UP TO RECEIVE UNDERSTANDING WITHOUT JUDGMENT, he opens up to accept the Love of Christ. With that Love comes Christ's knowledge, for they are the same and inseparable. Then the meaning that is beyond the words is understood as a Light that shines for all who look to see."

There are two main points about contemplation in this paragraph:

1 – In order to receive wisdom, I have to realize I don't understand the words I am reading.

For example, when you contemplate today's workbook lesson, do not assume you know what "light," "joy" and "peace" are, even if you have received clarity about those terms before. Let today's inspiration be free to interpret those symbols in a new enlightening way.

2 – In order to receive wisdom, I have to be willing not to judge what I receive.

The other day I was listening to Jacquelyn Eckert's teaching in the Awakening Together online Sanctuary. She commented that when she asks a question of Spirit

and receives an answer, it takes a few days before she can look at it without believing that it came from her ego. I know the feeling she is talking about. Jacquelyn is doing well when she allows herself to write what came and when she waits a few days until her ego has quieted down in order to look at it again. With practice our egos quiet down sooner. If you heard the weekly gathering she taught most recently (April 2017), then you heard that the entire gathering was based on wisdom she received from within. Thank goodness she trusted what came. This is what we all need to do. We need to trust what comes when we ask for understanding.

The two instructions above were important instructions to move me completely beyond my ego, including my spiritual ego, so that I could receive spontaneous enlightened clarity without blocking it with what I thought I already knew and without shutting it down by judging that it wasn't enlightened clarity.

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 112:

Light and joy and peace abide in me. I am light and joy and peace. That is my nature. I cannot be separated from light and joy and peace. The lightness that I am can taste other experiences, joy can mask itself as interest in problems, and peace is the openness that allows that, but I am still light and joy and peace.

I am as God created me. I cannot be otherwise. To know my true Self, pay attention to my true Self. When I look to discover what is changeless about me, what do I find?

Lesson 113

How to Contemplate, continued:

Sometimes when contemplating, the flow of wisdom begins on its own spontaneously. Sometimes the flow of wisdom begins as I focus on an inquiry. For example, let's look at this quote:

“Who cares if you're enlightened forever? Can you just get it in this moment, now?”
~ Byron Katie

If I am contemplating that quote, I might ask myself, “Am I over concerned with enlightenment? Has that become an obstacle for me? In what way is that an obstacle?” And then I look at myself to find the answers to the questions.

Or I might ask myself, “What is ‘it’ when she says, ‘Can you just get it in this moment, now?’” And then I remain open. I don't use thinking to try to figure it out. I just stay with the question, open, feeling for a sense of the answer. Something may come for me to write or I may simply continue to reflect on the question throughout the day.

Today, while contemplating the review of lesson 95, questions began to arise. I will reflect on those questions throughout the day today. Something different happened

when I contemplated the review of lesson 96. An image arose as I contemplated it, a symbol. That image flowed out of the questions that I asked as I contemplated lesson 95. The questions prompted the image.

We have to be willing to let 'pointing' come to us in whatever form it will as we contemplate, and then it is important to trust what comes. Usually, as we trust the first little bit that comes, more will follow. Today, as I wrote the first question for lesson 95, another question followed. With lesson 96, as I trusted the image of a leaf blowing across a yard, that image developed into the clarity that is written down for my reflection today.

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 113:

I am one Self, united with my Creator. 'Regina' is a temporary expression, but what expresses through her? What animates this body? What lights up this world and this mind? Can I separate myself from that?

Salvation comes from my one Self. If the wind mistakes itself for the dry leaf that it blows across the yard, it may fear the homeowner's rake. But when the wind knows itself as itself, the rake can be of no concern. Salvation comes from knowing my Self. Knowing my Self is my one function.

Lesson 114

How to contemplate, continued:

Whenever we contemplate anything, we receive the most if we are willing to be completely open, trusting and non-judgmental. If I think wisdom should look or sound a special way, I may block wisdom. It's good to look and see if we have special expectations or have put special limits on wisdom.

For example, do I expect wisdom to be poetic? Do I expect it to use words I don't use? Do I expect it to sound like A Course in Miracles or some other written scripture? Do I expect it to use certain spiritual words and avoid non-spiritual, everyday terms? Do I expect it to come from a voice in my head that is very different from my own?

Any expectations that I have about inner wisdom can block the flow of inner wisdom, so it is worthwhile to look for those expectations and let them go.

Sometimes when wisdom begins to flow, it isn't immediately brilliant to me. The first few words that appear may seem uninteresting or unorganized. I remember I've promised not to judge what comes, and I start writing whatever comes. This seems to open the flow more, and soon I have perfect wisdom for me now. And that's really all it has to be ... the perfect wisdom for me now.

If what comes feels like something that is good for you to focus on today, that's it. That's the wisdom. Don't expect anything else. All you really need is today's "daily bread." Today's daily bread, one day at a time, will take you all the way to the top of the mountain.

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 114:

I am spirit. The body experience is here. That cannot be denied. But when I look, am I the body? Thought is here. Ongoing commentary happens, but when I look, am I commentary? What experiences the body and sees thought? What am I?

I will accept my part in God's plan for salvation. Awakening is a personal endeavor. Only I can dive into my heart. Only I can question my thoughts. Only I can choose where my attention is focused. No one can do this for me, and I cannot do this for anyone else. I accept the responsibility of being inward focused and being still. I accept my part in God's plan for salvation.

Lesson 115

How to Contemplate, continued:

A common block to receiving wisdom through contemplation is perceiving the text that is being contemplated as straightforward and easy to understand. Maybe you are contemplating a sentence that is short, simple and clear. "I get it," the mind says.

Well ... that doesn't mean there isn't more to be gained through contemplation. Joseph Benner had realization after realization, resulting in a book called "The Impersonal Life," through contemplating one short quote continuously. The quote: "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

Consider this story on contemplation by William Samuel, written in his book "The Awareness of Self-Discovery":

"Once, in China, I was given a simple verse to read and then to give my interpretation. I was ready to give an answer immediately but was informed that I had twenty-eight days to think about it. 'Why so long?' asked I, with the usual impatience of a Westerner.

"'Because nothing has been read once until it has been read twelve times,' was my answer. 'Read and reread.'

"I did. Twelve times twelve to make twelve readings ... and I heard a melody I could not have heard otherwise. Since then I have known why it is that certain lines in the Bible (or any other book) that have been read countless times will one day, upon just one more reading, suddenly take on a grand new significance.

“So reader, with a very gentle touch, read and re-read. If you are earnest, and act with the earnestness you are, one day when you least expect it, you will hear and feel your Heart within complete [the] words without.”

The quote William Samuel was asked to contemplate for 28 days was: “The same moon shines on ten thousand rivers.”

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 115:

Salvation is my only function here. Getting to know my Self is my only function. For what other purpose could I have been born except the purpose of knowing my Self? The gift of life is given so we can celebrate life. The gift of awareness is given so we can love awareness. The gift of spontaneity is given so we can enjoy the miracle of spontaneity. I will embrace this birth by becoming intimately enthralled with my Self. This Regina-suit is the perfect medium for getting to know what I am.

My part is essential to God’s plan for salvation. If the plan is for the whole to be happy and celebrate, how can that be done without me? Can the whole be happy without my happiness? Can the whole celebrate without my celebration? I am integral to this plan. Most importantly, I can only know its gifts through my individual cooperation with it.

Lesson 116

How to Contemplate, continued:

Sometimes we may be asked to contemplate material we do not like. Maybe the material uses words or symbols we do not like. Maybe we don’t have any mental understanding at all, and we feel frustrated about that lack of understanding. Maybe we don’t like the source of the quote. Maybe we have judgments against the person who spoke or wrote the quote, or maybe we have judgments against the text or spiritual path the quote comes from.

Any judgments we have about the material we are contemplating will get in the way of receiving wisdom. If we have any judgments at all about the material, we serve ourselves best by being willing to look at our judgments and let them go.

Grievances block wisdom, and that includes any grievance we may hold against any written word.

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 116:

God’s Will for me is perfect happiness. That is my will too. Whenever I am not perfectly happy, it is because I want things to be different than they are. However, since things are as they are, to want it different is merely to believe mental chatter,

mental chatter that is coming from a limited personal perspective. The personal point-of-view is darkness. Miracles are seen in light.

I share God's Will for happiness for me. And miracles are seen in light. Light is open, embracing awareness. Therefore, I will remain open and accepting of everything as it is. I will follow my inner intuition and not my head. I will allow others to be as they are and love them for what they are, miraculous living freedom. I will see the Regina-life as a temporary adventure and embrace it as the miraculous adventure that it is.

"Life is like a rollercoaster. It has its ups & its downs, but it is always exciting."
~ Received from within at age 11 (the night my mom told me she was going to divorce my dad).

Lesson 117

How to Contemplate, continued:

Contemplation is a process of discovery, a process of going deeper into something or going beyond what was already known or consciously realized.

I'd like to share an article by Adyashanti. In this article he talks about "meditative self-inquiry." His meditative self-inquiry is contemplation. He does an excellent job of describing how contemplation feels.

"How I Discovered Meditative Self-Inquiry" by Adyashanti

An excerpt taken from Adyashanti's book, True Meditation

I'd like to tell the story of how I came across meditative self-inquiry. In many ways, it was very spontaneous, almost a mistake. Nobody ever taught me about meditative self-inquiry directly, and nobody even suggested that I do it. It came naturally out of years of spiritual practice and meditating.

At one point, I realized that I had these questions ... questions I think lots of people have about their practice, about their spirituality, about life. My questions were actually fairly basic. For example, what is surrender? I had heard a lot about surrender, and I thought, what is surrender, really? And what is meditation? What is it really? I had been meditating for years, but what was it really? This line of questioning ultimately led me to ask, who am I really? I noticed that these questions were running around in my mind, and I was looking for a way in which I could actually engage with them directly, and that's how I discovered meditative self-inquiry.

I found myself going to coffee shops in the evenings after work, and I would start with a question. I would take a piece of paper and a pen in hand and I would start to write about the question as if I was talking to somebody else. We are always the best in transmitting what we know when we are teaching it to somebody else, so I would sit down and write as if I were teaching the answer to someone. The agreement I made with myself was that I was not going to write a single word unless I knew in my experience that it was accurate and true. So I would take a topic like “what is surrender?” And I would start to write on it. As I said, I would not complete a sentence until I felt that the sentence was true, that I wasn’t in any way speaking outside of my own experience. In this way, I would write the next sentence, and the next sentence, and the next sentence. What I found was that I would write myself right up to the end of my knowledge about the subject I was investigating in a relatively short period of time. I found that usually within two handwritten pages, three at the very most, I would write myself right up to the edge of what I knew. And so I would come to this inner wall, and I would feel it ... not only in my mind, but in my body too. I would know: this is it; this is as far as my own experience goes.

I could sense that I had not gotten to the bottom of what my question was, so I would literally sit there with my pen in one hand, and a cup of coffee in the other hand, and I would refuse to write a word unless I knew that it was true. Sometimes I would sit right at that place for many minutes, sometimes half an hour, sometimes two hours ... but I would not write the next word until I knew that it was true and it was accurate. What I found was that the only way to move was to hold still, right there at the edge of my knowledge, and feel into my mind and my body at that threshold. Not to think about the question. Not to go into a lot of philosophizing in mind. But literally to kinesthetically hold at that boundary between what I knew and what was beyond what I knew. And what I found was that by holding at that boundary ... by feeling it, by sensing it, by knowing that I wanted to move beyond it ... that eventually the next word or sentence would come. When it did, I would write it down. Sometimes I would write no more than half a sentence before I would know, right in the middle, that I had hit the boundary again. I would stop again and I would wait. I’d hold at the boundary.

Eventually I found that I could go through this mysterious limitation, this mysterious wall of what I knew, and I could move beyond it. And I knew when I had moved beyond it, because all of a sudden everything would start to flow again. I would start to write things that I never knew that I knew. All of a sudden this deeper wisdom would come out, and I would be writing it down, and eventually I would reach a conclusion.

Now these writings were not very long. I think the longest I ever wrote was probably seven or eight handwritten pages. So they weren’t long dissertations; I was trying to make them the shortest, most succinct expressions of what I knew. And when I was finished writing, what I found, number one and most important, was that the question had disappeared. ...

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 117:

God, being Love, is also happiness. What is love? Love is not judgment. What do I do when I judge? When I judge, I reject what is. Rejection results in emotional closure. That closure blocks the natural flow of happiness, so by judging I cut myself off from happiness. Why do I judge? Because I think I need things to be a specific way in order for me to be happy. That means that I block happiness because I want happiness. That makes no sense. The way to be happy is to allow the natural flow of abundant, unending happiness. Stay open. Let everything be as it is. Let freedom be free.

I seek but what belongs to me in truth. What do I seek? Happiness? Yes, happiness is a natural desire, but that is only because happiness is natural. What I seek is what's natural. I seek my natural Self and the ease of being that. What I really want is full and complete realization of my natural Self, my true Self, which I can see means dropping everything that is unnatural, contrived. I want to know and be purely natural Self without any lingering doubt, denial or confusion.

Lesson 118

How to Contemplate, continued:

In my experience, the ego will almost always (& maybe I should say 'always' instead of 'almost always') try to block contemplation, and it will do it in any way that it can.

Peace Pilgrim said that the ego knows the weakest spot in your armor. That means the ego will say whatever YOU will listen to. Just as the spiritual path is highly individualized, the ego's attempts at blocking us can also be highly individualized.

Michael Langford has a teaching that can be very helpful here. He says, "Hundreds of times every day ask yourself 'How is what I am thinking now helping to feed the ego illusion?'"

This question can be very helpful when ego tries to block contemplation. You could edit it to be more specific by asking, "How is what I am thinking now helping to block contemplation and serve the ego illusion?"

For example, let's imagine thinking says, "This sucks. I'm just making this up, and it's not any good. It's not at all poetic." And then you ask, "How is what I am thinking now helping to block contemplation and serve the ego illusion?" That will help you see that if you listen to the previous thought you might give up on contemplation, which serves the ego quite well.

If thinking says, "This isn't deep. It isn't profound enough," you ask, "How is what I am thinking now helping to block contemplation and serve the ego illusion?" Then

you can see that if you listen to the previous thought you might give up on contemplation, which serves the ego quite well.

Here are a few tricks the ego has tried to play on me over the years:

~ When nothing was coming right away, the thought would be, "I'm not going to get anything out of this quote. It's too straightforward. There's nothing more to be had here." Or maybe the thought would be, "I don't understand this quote at all. How am I supposed to get something out of this?" (How is what I am thinking now helping to block contemplation and serve the ego illusion?)

~ When something came very quickly, the thought would be, "That came too fast. That's just me, not wisdom." (How is what I am thinking now helping to block contemplation and serve the ego illusion?)

~ When flowery poetic language came, the thought would be, "I'm just writing this to impress others. It's not genuine." (How is what I am thinking now helping to block contemplation and serve the ego illusion?)

~ When plain and simple language came, the thought would be, "This isn't anything. I'm just not good enough to receive something real." (How is what I am thinking now helping to block contemplation and serve the ego illusion?)

~ When something came through feeling or a silent knowing, and I came up with the words to describe it, the thought would be, "I should hear words." (How is what I am thinking now helping to block contemplation and serve the ego illusion?)

Etc.

You get the point. In order to allow contemplation, you need to be able to ignore the ego's attempts to block contemplation, regardless of what those attempts look like.

I had a conversation with Jacquelyn Eckert about this yesterday, and she said something funny, but helpful. If you can think a thought like this in response to ego's attempts to block you, you will be able to go right passed ego and write whatever is coming in whatever way it is coming.

Jacquelyn said, "Even if this is crap, it's the highest crap I'm capable of at this time."

~ ha ha ~

And this is why Jacquelyn IS learning to write with inner wisdom.

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 118:

God's peace and joy are mine. Peace is my natural Self. I am peace so pure that I

peacefully allow even ego insanity and emotional illusion. Nothing affects the peace that I am. It is untouchable. Joy comes from the conscious expression of my truth. Live as peace and I know joy.

Let me be still and listen to the truth. Thought is like a maze that leads into the land of lost. This land resides within peace and is embraced by peace at all times, but it is so fantasy-filled that truth is overlooked in favor of dramatic action. To realize ever-present truth, rest outside of the maze. From outside of the maze, truth is obvious.

Lesson 119

How to Contemplate, continued:

As with all things spiritual, the best way to learn contemplation is to learn from yourself. Therefore, for today's tip I'd like to share some of my favorite quotes on contemplation. As you contemplate these quotes, you learn how to contemplate through contemplation:

Abandon the words but remain established in the experience of the truth they indicate. That supreme state is beyond all concepts. ~ Yoga Vasistha

Contemplation is the art of holding a word or a phrase patiently in the silence and stillness of awareness until it begins to disclose deeper and deeper meanings and understandings. Contemplation has the power to transcend beyond the limits of analytical thought and logic, and open consciousness up to an order of wisdom and Truth that can only be described as revelation. ~ Adyashanti

The words are no more than signposts. That to which they point is not to be found within the realm of thought, but a dimension within yourself that is deeper and infinitely vaster than thought. A vibrantly alive peace is one of the characteristics of that dimension, so whenever you feel inner peace arising as you read, the [written word] is doing its work fulfilling its function as your teacher; it is reminding you of who you are and pointing the way back home. ... Allow [it] to do its work, to awaken you from the old grooves of your repetitive and conditioned thinking. ~ Eckhart Tolle

Your contemplation has to be a naked contemplation that does not rely on any luggage from the past, a contemplation that does not rely on learned beliefs and past feelings. ~ Magdi Em Be

To bring the attention to a single point and to dwell on that single point for a very long time is the way to awaken insight. Insight is not thinking and insight is not belief. Insight is a permanent new perspective. ~ Michael Langford

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 119:

Truth will correct all errors in my mind. I don't have to do anything but stay out of the maze of thought. This is the advantage of meditation, loving all and forgiveness. During meditation I sit in awareness-watching-awareness outside of the maze of thought, and truth quietly corrects the errors in my mind. With loving all I stand lovingly back from the mind's judgments about how things should be, and truth corrects the errors in my mind. With forgiveness I rest away from anything that I recognize as ego thinking, and truth goes to work correcting the errors in my mind. I get out of the way, and truth corrects all errors in my mind. How does truth correct all errors? Simply by being the truth. Take away the attention on non-truth and truth reestablishes itself, just as nature would fully reestablish itself if humans disappeared from earth.

To give and to receive are one in truth. This is the snowball effect. What I be, I gain. As I live up to the highest light I have, more light is given. As I do my best, my best gets better. As I be as egoless as I can be today, more ego is erased from my mind. As I abide in truth, truth is more deeply realized.

Lesson 120

How to Contemplate, conclusion:

In summary, here are the keys to contemplation.

- When you contemplate the written word, read slowly and repeatedly with long silent pauses.
- Toss out your beliefs, preferences and all prior knowledge as you enter the sacred ground of contemplation.
- Listen or feel inwardly for some stirring that might be the birth of insight.
- Be like an explorer, and follow what comes to see where it goes.
- Use inquiry to invite wisdom. Even "What does this mean for me?" can invite powerful personal insights.
- Reserve judgment and let the value of the contemplative experience reveal itself in its own time.
- Receive your daily bread with gratitude no matter how simple it may appear to be. Review it and practice it throughout the day. It is a step on your own personal stairway to heaven.

Regina's Personal Contemplation of Lesson 120:

I rest in God. I rest in God and truth reestablishes itself in my mind. The gift I give is rest, rest from the overactive maze of thought, rest in the stillness of presence, openness and trust. The gift I receive is truth realization.

I am as God created me. What am I? What is changeless? What is always here? What is looking?

Lesson 121, Forgiveness is the key to happiness

Today's workbook lesson describes the ego mind. This mind, as described in the lesson, may be more or less conscious for you now. You may be well aware of being torn with doubt, confused; afraid and angry, weak, blustering, afraid to go ahead, afraid to stay, afraid of every sound, yet more afraid of stillness; seeing only sin; wanting to live, yet wishing to die.

When this mind is conscious and believed, the experience is hell. When it is repressed, there is some relief, but it also breaks through into consciousness in a distorted way, projecting blame for our uneasiness away from our self. Freedom comes from the death of this mind, the end of this way of thinking.

Today's workbook lesson says of the ego mind, "It does not ask, because it thinks it knows. It does not question, certain it is right." The lesson also says that we learn forgiveness "from a Teacher other than yourself, Who represents the other Self in you."

It is time for us to begin asking within for understanding and guidance. If we are to find freedom, we need to let the teacher who knows the way take the lead.

The ego mind does not ask, because it thinks it knows. Therefore, we will ask. We will not come from ego. We will accept that we do not know, and we will ask. I encourage you to take time at least 1-3 times a week to sit quietly and ask within for whatever you need to see or realize now. Leave the question open, and let the genuine answer come.

Here is how I asked the question today, and the answer I received. Notice the first question I asked was, "What shall I ask," so that even the questions that followed were guided by the inner teacher.

Regina's personal journaling from today:

What shall I ask? How can I be myself? What is absolutely the best practice for me now?

Slow attention. Rushed attention goes in habitual directions. Even some old habits

are being reborn. You feel the disconnect even though you don't believe it like you did before. Funny how something untrue can be experienced.

Truth can be realized and blocked simultaneously. This has happened millions upon millions of times before. The ego does not give up easily, so as one nears the threshold some distraction is found, and off attention goes in the wrong direction. The memory of nearness lingers, the clarity it brought remains, and yet there is a feeling of being separate too.

Your weakness is busyness, and it comes from wanting to please everyone, to meet all demands. It is time to put personal awakening back in the forefront and let go of the wish to make others happy.

The master does nothing and yet nothing goes undone. Relinquish all mental doing, and watch what gets done.

The other thing to watch is desire. As the feeling of separation increases, desires increase. As the feeling of separation dies, desires die. When you notice yourself desiring outside of yourself, realize that is only a distortion of your calling for God, and return instead to your one true desire.

Be slow. This is your prescription now. When you notice going fast, slow down.

Lesson 122, Forgiveness offers everything I want

What do you think you want? Today is a good opportunity to look and uncover the world-based 'wants' that are driving you. Consider writing down everything you think you want, and then ask 'why.' Look deeply at your wants until you discover what you really, really want. After you've done that, read today's lesson again.

"Do you want peace? Forgiveness offers it. Do you want happiness, a quiet mind, a certainty of purpose, and a sense of worth and beauty that transcends the world? Do you want care and safety, and the warmth of sure protection always? Do you want a quietness that cannot be disturbed, a gentleness that never can be hurt, a deep abiding comfort, and a rest so perfect it can never be upset? All this forgiveness offers you, and more."

It's interesting that this lesson should come to us right after we have watched Michael Singer's interview about his personal "surrender experiment." Are we ready for our own surrender experiment?

Are we ready to let go of trying to get what we want? Are we ready to let the universe bring what it will? Are we ready to embrace anything and everything that comes while letting go of all dissenting chatter that arises in our minds?

Are we ready?

Lesson 123, I thank my Father for his gifts to me

NTI Luke, Chapter 17 says that gratitude “nurses your willingness to full health. Do not hold back on gratitude. Take time to sit in quiet and know your gratitude.”

NTI Hebrews, Chapter 12 says, “Worship in reverence and awe the true desire of the Heart by giving your gratitude to it. Through gratitude, [true] desire is increased.”

Last week, when reading Chapter 4 from the Direct Means to Eternal Bliss, we learned how important the intense desire for freedom is. We were told that it will bring us everything that is needed for success in the “quest for Freedom including the answer to all your questions, the Direct Path teachings, the solution to all obstacles, the motivation to practice, etc.” We were told that the intense desire for freedom will guide us to our inner Teacher. “Of all the factors that determine if you will or will not be free, the intensity or lack of intensity of your desire for Freedom is the most essential factor. Whatever you can do to most effectively increase your desire for Freedom should be done.”

And so, today we take a day of gratitude in order to increase our desire for freedom.

What should we be grateful for? Here are some things that NTI recommends we be grateful for:

~ “Be grateful for all that is true. All that is true is this: Life, Love, sharing, extension and joy.” ~ NTI Luke 24

~ “It is true that peace is cause for rejoicing and gratitude. It is through gratitude that peace is extended.” So be grateful for peace. ~ NTI 1 Thessalonians 3

~ “Be grateful for the process that is God” That is, be grateful that giving and receiving are one. “In this way, you come to know within awareness that which is God, and you come to accept and love thy Self.” ~ NTI 1 Timothy 4

~ “Teach the mind to be subject to the Heart by being grateful for the desire of the Heart. Through gratitude, desire is stretched within the mind. Let the desire for Love expand within the mind that is conscious, and the conscious mind will give more willingness to rest at the feet of the Heart.” ~ NTI Titus 2

~ “One may rejoice over progress as he notices his perception is being healed. ... The transition to true perception is glory. Have gratitude for your Self and this miracle, which is the symbol of your own true desire.” ~ NTI 1 Peter 1

~ “Be grateful for reminders to rest [the thinking mind].” ~ NTI Revelation 19

~ "See all things as an opportunity to learn and to practice, and be grateful for all things. There is nothing that will be placed in your path that is not a gift from Me. See it as your gift and you are blessed indeed." ~ NTI Luke 9

So today, let's take time to be grateful as we increase our desire for Freedom.

Lesson 124, Let me remember I am one with God

On Wednesday night of this week, we were gathered in the Awakening Together Sanctuary for the Michael Langford Study Group. We were reading from his book, "The Importance of Practice and Effort". On page 22, Nisargadatta Maharaj and a devotee are discussing awareness-watching-awareness meditation. The devotee said, "I have tried many times and failed."

When I read that, my first thought was, "How do you know you failed?" And this analogy came to my mind:

Where I live the internet is slower than in most towns and cities. That's because our area is somewhat rural. When I upload an audio file, it can take several minutes. As the file is uploading, I can watch a progress bar, which shows me that 1% of the file is uploaded, 2% of the file, 3% of the file, etc. So I know the upload is making progress.

However, I don't have a progress bar that shows my spiritual progress.

When uploading a file, if I ignored the progress bar and declared failure after 5 minutes because the file wasn't uploaded yet, I would be wrong. It isn't failure. It is simply in progress, but not yet complete. If I got frustrated that the file wasn't uploaded and shutdown the computer, I would prevent additional progress.

What if we were to realize that our awakening is in progress? And then with trust in that fact, what if we continue to follow instructions so that spiritual progress can continue?

When Michael Langford was teaching me to meditate, he shared some quotes with me. These are the quotes:

"Don't look for quick results; there may be none within your noticing." ~ Nisargadatta Maharaj

"Don't waste energy on thinking or evaluating how well or how badly you are doing in your meditation." ~ Annamalai Swami

“Don't be discouraged by the length of the journey, and don't slacken in your efforts to get home.” ~ Annamalai Swami

“The practice is the progress.” ~ The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss

Compare these quotes to what today's Course lessons says:

“Peace be to you today. Secure your peace by practicing awareness you are one with your Creator, as He is with you. Sometime today, whenever it seems best, devote a half an hour to the thought that you are one with God. ... Abide with Him this half an hour. He will do the rest. Your benefit will not be less if you believe that nothing happens. You may not be ready to accept the gain today. Yet sometime, somewhere, it will come to you, nor will you fail to recognize it when it dawns with certainty upon your mind. ... You will remember then the thought to which you gave this half an hour, thankfully aware no time was ever better spent.”

Nisargadatta told the devotee who thought he had failed, “Try again. ... Give attention to the reality within you and it will come to light.”

Lesson 125, In quiet I receive God's Word today

Today's lesson tells us that God/Spirit has not waited for our return to it to give its word to us. I think it is really important for us to realize that inner wisdom has always been there; we just haven't always been listening. In fact, often we have purposefully chosen the opposite of inner wisdom.

To the degree that we are unhappy or suffering, that is to the degree that we choose the opposite of inner wisdom.

The fact above can be painful for some people to look at with absolute honesty. Some of you who are reading this today will avoid accepting that statement as true, even though it would be really helpful if you did accept it as true. That is okay. As today's lesson says, you are not "led by force, but only love. ... not judged, but only sanctified." However, you will find happiness sooner if you can accept the statement above.

Let me give you an example. Yesterday I was listening to Byron Katie on Awakening Together Radio. She used to be severely depressed. She said during that time she heard the inner voice tell her to brush her teeth, but she didn't want to brush her teeth. She said she went weeks, months without brushing her teeth.

As I listened to her tell the story above, I could hear how the simple wisdom, "Brush your teeth," was a first step in moving out of her downward spiral. But what did Katie choose? For a long time she chose to continue the downward spiral. However, finally one day she realized what she was doing, and she chose to 'brush her teeth.'

By then she was so deep into the downward spiral that she says she had to "crawl" over to the sink to brush her teeth, but she did. And that was the beginning of the way out of depression. Katie said that now she always listens to that voice no matter what it tells her to do. She is completely surrendered to it. She is also completely happy.

If you would like to watch the video I just wrote about, here's the link. The part I just shared starts at about 19 minutes and 50 seconds into the video:

<https://youtu.be/9ppYMXIIdlQ?list=PLcCb8qlmwtFm2PjmbVYTFcX65PVqb9l>

Many people think it is hard to hear the voice of wisdom. I don't think that is true. I think we simply need to begin to listen to it instead of wanting to do things our own way. When today's lesson asks us to be still, quiet, silent, so the voice can speak, it really means we need to put our mind's will aside and be willing to follow that intuitive voice like Katie does. The more we do that, the clearer the voice becomes.

Lesson 126, All that I give is given to myself

Today's lesson says, "If you believed this statement, there would be no problem in complete forgiveness, certainty of goal, and sure direction. You would understand the means by which salvation comes to you, and would not hesitate to use it now."

This is true. I know it is true, because it is exactly what happened to me. I stumbled roughly with forgiveness until the day that I truly understood 'giving and receiving are one.' On that day it was like a light bulb went off in my mind. In fact, I call it my "Helen Keller moment at the well."

As you know, Helen Keller was blind and could not hear from the time she was a baby, so she had no understanding of communication. A teacher was hired to teach her sign language, but since the concept of communication was missing for Helen, sign language meant nothing. The teacher tried again and again to teach her with no results.

One day Helen threw a fit at the dinner table and threw down a pitcher of water. The teacher grabbed Helen and the pitcher and took her to the well to refill it. Once at the well, the teacher repeatedly stuck Helen's hand under the water and then signed the symbol for water against the palm of Helen's hand so she could feel it. Over and over she did this and then, a light bulb went off in Helen's mind. Suddenly she understood the concept of communication. With that, signing took on meaning. She excitedly ran around the yard asking the teacher to show her the sign for this and this and this. She became a very eager student.

Well, the day I came to understand the concept of 'giving and receiving as one', I understood forgiveness, and I became a very eager practitioner of forgiveness.

I learned 'giving and receiving are one' from scribing NTI Ephesians. It was further emphasized in 'the Code.' It is summarized by this:

What I think, I see.

What I see, I experience.

What I experience, I think.

The best way to have your Helen Keller moment at the well is to watch. How do you feel when you judge a person or situation? How do you feel when you reject a person or a situation? How do you feel when you genuinely accept what is? How do you feel when you love what is? Can you see that you directly experience your own decision to judge, reject, accept or love? Can you see that it is never different; you always experience your own decision?

Giving and receiving are one. Therefore, to have peace, be peace. To know love, be love. And to do that, let go of any thought that does not make you happy. Just let it go. That is forgiveness.

Lesson 127, There is no love but God's.

I remember the first time I read this lesson. I DID think "there is a kind of love for this, a kind for that; a way of loving one, another way of loving still another." Back then, if a mother had told me that she loves a bug in the same way she loves her daughter, I would have either been appalled or simply unable to imagine it. But today, I am that mother.

The only reason it would be difficult to understand how a mother can love a bug in the same way she loves her daughter is because one has a misunderstanding about what love is. Don't get me wrong. I have a more intimate relationship with my daughter, a longer-lasting relationship with my daughter, and a human-to-human relationship with my daughter. All of that is different than my relationship with a passing bug. But the love is the same.

How does one describe love? Love is openness. It could be described as embracing, accepting or allowing. It is joyous or compassionate, depending on the response that is pulled forth from it by the appearance. It has no lack in it, no need. One could say it is patient, although that is simply an aspect of its openness and allowance. Judgment is an impossibility for it. 1 Corinthians 13 is a reasonable description of love. I will post it in the comment section below for those who aren't familiar with that scripture.

If one contemplates love deeply, one will see there are no differences in love, just as today's Course lesson says. Therefore, a daughter and a bug are alike in the heart of love.

How does one realize love? Today's lesson has two good pointers:

1. "Escape from every law in which you now believe. Open your mind and rest." - Remove attention from thought and sit in awareness-watching-awareness. When you watch awareness, although you may not realize it, you watch love. Through watching it, resting in it, being nothing but it, you will become intimate with it, and you will begin to experience everything through it instead of through the mind's interpretations.

2. "And He Himself will place a spark of truth within your mind wherever you give up a false belief..." - Begin to question your way of thinking in every way you can. Learn to see that you have made up the ideas (laws) by which you now live and judge. Drop every idea you have made up, and you make space for love to shine through.

1 Corinthians 13, New International Version (NIV) of the New Testament

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Lesson 128, The world I see holds nothing that I want.

In 'The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss,' Michael Langford writes:

"54. What is the goal of [spiritual] practice? It is to bring the ego and its suffering and illusions to a final end so that only the true Self whose nature is Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss remains.

"55. What is most important is already described in #54 above. ..."

From there, Michael goes on to attempt to describe awakening using other symbols that might help us understand what awakening is, and I will share some of what he writes in the comments section below, but I feel we should pause and look at what he has written in #54 above first.

Today's workbook lesson says, "Each thing you value here is but a chain that binds you to the world." NTI Hebrews 7 says, "Can you imagine letting go completely that which you seem to value? Can you imagine closing your eyes and letting it fade completely away? If you can imagine letting it go, feeling peace and no loss in the imagining, you are preparing to wake up from dreams."

NTI Galatians calls the world a false god. It says the world is an effective false god because it allows us to feel joined, but it teaches separation. In other words, there are things here that we can value like nature, relationships, hobbies, etc. However, none of those things are eternal and everything in the world will eventually be replaced with suffering. As Adyashanti says, two things are certain in this world: tragedy and death.

In the movie, "The Peaceful Warrior," Dan Millman walks away from the teachings of truth because he values his life as a star gymnast who has sex with one beautiful woman after another. But then it is all taken away in a motorcycle accident where his leg is shattered. This is how he learns there is nothing worth valuing in this world, and he returns to his teacher and spiritual practice.

I recently witnessed a similar story with someone I know. He had interest in spirituality and deep mastery with part of its teachings, but when I spoke to him of disappearing into the absolute, he said the absolute wants us to enjoy the world. I knew that was a projection of his own desire to enjoy the world, and I understood his desire. He seemed to have the world in the palm of his hand. But recently, things did not appear to go so well for him. He became very frustrated with the world. Now he is focused on the direct path, awareness-watching-awareness meditation.

As recorded in the Bible at Matthew 5, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." NTI's interpretation of that is, "Blessed are those who have tired of this world, for they will be comforted."

One way to let go of our value in the world and increase our desire for awakening is to let tragedy strike so that we are disillusioned by the world. However, today's workbook lesson offers a gentler solution:

"Pause and be still a little while, and see how far you rise above the world, when you release your mind from chains and let it seek the level where it finds itself at home."

I told you that spiritual practice itself motivates me to spiritual practice. That is the gentler method that is recommended by the Course. Practice awareness-watching-awareness anyway, even if you do not think you are ready to let go of the world, and the practice itself will prepare you for awakening.

Let's review #54 from "The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss."

"What is the goal of [spiritual] practice? It is to bring the ego and its suffering and illusions to a final end so that only the true Self whose nature is Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss remains."

From 'The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss' by Michael Langford:

55. What is most important is already described in #54 above. An attempt will be made to describe the final goal further; however, such descriptions are not what is most important. The fact that when the imposter self ends, all suffering ends for all eternity and that the True Self has never had any suffering in all eternity and is always absolutely perfect love-bliss is what is most important. ...

58. Describing the final Reality as Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss is the closest one can come in words without straying too far from the human frame of reference.

59. In the final Reality, which is the only Reality, there are no worlds, no places, no dimensions, no universe, no realms, no forms, no time, no things, no beings and almost nothing that any word in the dictionary points towards.

60. In the final Reality, which is the only Reality, there are no humans, no animals, no planets, no stars and no earth.

61. The final Reality is infinite awareness aware of infinite awareness. In the final Reality, which is the only Reality, is infinite awareness aware of itself and itself is infinite awareness. ...

66. When the ego comes to its final end, what remains is Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss and nothing ever reappears. The planets, the stars, and almost everything that the words in the dictionary point towards never reappear. They were all part of the dream. Upon awakening, the dream disappears.

Comment from Regina: Based on this description, we can see why attachment to the world would keep us from awakening. That's why it is important to see, as Adyashanti said, that only two things are certain in the world: tragedy and death. Everything here can and will be taken away. Will we wait for tragedy to propel our true interest in awakening, or will we take the gentle path by practicing awareness-watching-awareness now?

Lesson 129, Beyond this world there is a world I want.

Anyone who is familiar with Michael Langford's work may have noticed "Choice A" and "Choice B" in today's workbook lesson. These choices are laid out in Chapter 5 of 'The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss.' Here are some excerpts:

"The primary means to awaken the extremely intense desire for liberation is to carefully examine two choices everyday until the extremely intense desire for liberation awakens. ...

"Choice A is Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss with no sorrow and no suffering. Choice A is Eternal Life. Choice A is to live as your true Self for all eternity. Choice A is absolutely perfect joy.

"Choice B is being identified with a body subject to suffering, sorrow, disease, death, violence, fear, anger, etc. Choice B is to allow an imposter called the ego to pretend to be yourself and to control you. Choice B is to allow an imposter called the ego, that has created all the wars, diseases, death, sorrow, suffering and evil that every human has ever experienced, to continue. Choice B is to have a temporary and therefore futile life that leads only to death."

Today's Course lesson asks us to look at these same choices. It says:

"Our emphasis is not on giving up the world but on exchanging it for what is far more satisfying, filled with joy, and capable of offering you peace. ...

"The world you see is merciless indeed, unstable, cruel, unconcerned with you, quick to avenge and pitiless with hate. It gives but to rescind, and takes away all things that you have cherished for a while. ...

"Is it loss to find all things you really want, and know they have no ending and they will remain exactly as you want them throughout time? Yet even they will be exchanged at last for what we cannot speak of, for you go from there to where words fail entirely, into silence where the language is unspoken and yet surely understood. ...

"Such is the choice."

This is what we are asked to look at today, Choice A and Choice B. It is helpful to consider these two choices honestly and deeply.

For me it came down to this: Even if this life is absolutely perfect by giving me everything I want, it will still end with death. When I looked directly at the fact that everything I enjoy is temporary and must end, I became ready to reach for what Jesus called 'eternal life.'

Here are some more quotes from Chapter 5 of 'The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss':

"The ego is the source of all evil. The ego is insane. This is true for all humans. To produce so many trillions of horrors, the ego has to be evil and insane.

"Something in you longs for an end to the imposter's dream. Something in you longs for infinite Love. Something in you longs for the end of all suffering and sorrow. Something in you longs for eternal-joy-love.

"It is possible to end the ego's dream and to discover the true Self which is free of all suffering and sorrow and whose nature is infinite-eternal-love-joy. It is possible now in this lifetime, while this body is living.

"Co-operate with your Heart. Stop listening to your ego.

"If you turn your attention away from thought and towards awareness watching awareness and sustain that look for many hours everyday, eventually the ego dream will end and the true Self will be known."

Today's Course lesson asks us to practice awareness watching awareness for 30-minutes broken up into three 10-minute segments. I ask that you extend at least one of those segments into a 15-minute segment.

We have found the pathway home. Now, let's walk it.

Tip for Lesson 130, It is impossible to see two worlds.

Today we go even deeper into 'Choice A' and 'Choice B,' which were introduced in yesterday's tip. Today we are told that we see a world of differences, which is not there, because we want to see it; we value it.

This is where *A Course in Miracles* and other truth teachings can become a little difficult to accept. You may feel resistance to this message. However, let's put any resistance we may feel aside and look at today's lesson and ourselves objectively (without judgment).

We are told that we see this world because we value it. Is that true? There is a way you can find out. How much of your time is spent thinking about you and the world from your point-of-view? And how much of your time is spent in awareness-

watching-awareness, turning attention away from the world and away from thought, and turning attention towards the Self?

If we look honestly at how we spend our time, we can see which we value more.

In "The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss," Chapter 5, Michael Langford writes, "How will you know that you have made Choice A? When you drop all unnecessary activities everyday, and use all of the free time thus created to actually practice everyday the most rapid and direct means to eternal bliss, you will know you have made Choice A."

Let's look at the story of Nisargadatta Maharaj. He said:

"My Guru told me, 'Go back to that state of pure being, where the 'I am' is still in its purity before it got contaminated with 'this I am' or 'that I am'. Your burden is of false self-identifications -- abandon them all.' My Guru told me -- 'Trust me. I tell you; you are divine. Take it as the absolute truth. Your joy is divine; Your suffering is divine too. All comes from God. Remember it always. You are God, your will alone is done'. I did believe him and soon realised how wonderfully true and accurate were his words. I did not condition my mind by thinking: 'I am God, I am wonderful, I am beyond'. I simply followed his instruction, which was to focus the mind on pure being 'I am', and stay in it. I used to sit for hours together, with, nothing but the 'I am' in my mind and soon peace and joy and a deep all-embracing love became my normal state. In it all disappeared -- myself, my Guru, the life I lived, the world around me. Only peace remained and unfathomable silence."

That is the story of how the world of differences disappeared and another, the divine Self, came into view. Nisargadatta valued truth enough to sit for hours each day with attention turned away from the world and towards the Self, until the former disappeared, and the latter shined forth as the only reality.

We contemplate this today: What do I want?

This is the "Consistent, Gentle Healing Group," and so we are increasing our time spent in awareness-watching-awareness meditation gradually. Are we now spending at least 15-20 minutes a day in awareness-watching-awareness as we are asked? Are we doing the other homework assignments, which are intended to help increase our desire for truth?

Spend today in contemplation of 'Choice A' and 'Choice B,' and ask yourself if you value 'Choice A' enough to spend time each day consciously making that choice.

Lesson 131, No one can fail who seeks to reach the truth.

Today's lesson is good news. It's just as Jesus said, "Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7)

It is popular today to say that seeking is the problem; one is already awake & needs only to let go of seeking. To me, that is kind of like saying, "You know the door opens, so why knock?"

Ramana Maharshi agreed that you are aware of the Self now, but notice what he says about it:

"Your Self is intimate to you. You are aware of the Self. Seek it and be it. That will expand as the Infinite."

At Luke 15 in the Bible, Jesus gave this example: "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?"

Having 10 silver coins could represent having some awareness of the Self, but is it full awareness of the infinite?

Let's look at some of Jesus' other symbols:

Light a lamp = bringing awareness & purpose together
Sweep the house = inquiry & forgiveness
Search carefully = awareness watching awareness

It is very good news that "no one can fail who seeks to reach the truth," but the key in that sentence is that it is the one who seeks that finds. When one is tempted to listen to recommendations to drop seeking, it might be helpful to ask, "How does not seeking serve the ego?"

Based on Jesus' example of the woman with the lost coin, it seems that Jesus recommends determined seeking. That reminds me of a quote from Nisargadatta Maharaj:

"We discover it by being earnest, by searching, enquiring, questioning daily and hourly, by giving one's life to this discovery."

Lesson 132, I loose the world from all I thought it was.

Today's lesson is an interesting lesson. Is it implying that you should be able to heal the sick and raise the dead? Does it mean you can end wars by changing your mind? Or is the main point that there is no world at all?

I have seen many Course students give their point of view in answer to those questions over the years, but I don't think we should get lost in those thoughts or those discussions. I feel this is the main point of the lesson and where we should focus our attention today:

"A madman thinks the world he sees is real, and does not doubt it. Nor can he be swayed by questioning his thought's effects. It is but WHEN THEIR SOURCE IS RAISED TO QUESTION that the hope of freedom comes to him at last."

In other words, we are not concerned with effects at all. We are not looking out to see if there is or is not sickness, war, death, etc. We are focused inward in this way:

What is the source of this thought I am thinking now? Is it ego or truth? If it is ego, I let it go because it is ego. If I can feel it is truth, I contemplate it and/or follow it, as appropriate.

If we take today's lesson down to this basic practice, and practice it, we are doing what is intended.

It's the 'keep it simple' spirit. KISS.

Lesson 133, I will not value what is valueless.

Today's lesson begins by telling us we will take a break from the theoretical and come back now to practical concerns. If we will see today's lesson as practical and not theoretical, we will shed the ego thought system.

Let me start by saying that the ego is inherently selfish. The ego always thinks of 'me' and 'mine.' It has no other point of view. Spirit, on the other hand, thinks only of purpose and wholeness. It has a broad perspective, and 'me' is completely unimportant. That doesn't mean that the individual is sacrificed. The individual is loved as part of the whole, which is completely different than the selfishness of the ego.

I will also say that one of the most challenging things to teach is dropping selfishness. The ego is extremely protective of it. Yet, if you are to know the heart of truth, selfishness must be let go.

Today's workbook lesson is excellent in its practicality, if you will use it that way. I did. The effect for me was that I saw my own selfishness in a way I had not seen it before, and this generated a change in me from a selfish perspective to a perspective of service.

When I first used this workbook lesson as a practical measure was during that period of time when Ron and I had agreed to marry, and then I began to sense that he was going to back out of that plan. I told that story in last Sunday's Weekly Gathering. (I will provide the link to the audio in the comments section below.)

At first, my reaction to realizing he would back out was a lot of ego chatter. That chatter was focused on ideas about how I could get what I wanted. It looked at the

situation from many different angles, like it was working on a puzzle, and it tried to figure out the exact strategy that would get what I wanted. And yet, somehow I was blind to the selfishness in that until I tested what I wanted against the criteria in today's workbook lesson. The test looked something like this:

1. I want to convince Ron to marry me. I remember there are only two alternatives, and in every choice I make I choose either ego or heaven. I accept that as true. I also accept there is no compromise, no 'in-between' option. This wanting is either ego or heaven, and I am here to discover which it is. If I convince Ron to marry me, will that marriage last forever? No. At best, "until death do us part." It could end in divorce before that. If I convince Ron to marry me, am I taking something from someone else? Clearly the answer is 'yes.' If he does not want to marry me, and I somehow convince him to marry me, I am taking his freedom to follow his own will from him. Is it possible that if I convince Ron to marry me, I will later feel guilty? Yes, I can see how that might occur. Therefore, my desire to convince Ron to marry me is ego and must be let go.

2. What if I do nothing? What if I simply let this unfold without grievance and let everything be? Will that last forever? Yes! I see how simply letting everything unfold and be as it is, is a non-ending state of being. If I make this choice, am I taking something from someone else? No, not at all ever. Will I feel guilty for this choice? No, it seems that I would only feel curious. And if I am completely genuine in letting everything unfold without putting my desires upon it, I would be happy.

And so, after looking at my desire using the criteria in today's lesson, I made the second choice to do nothing, let it unfold and let it be.

That is how this lesson works in a practical way.

From looking at this situation and other choices in this way, I learned to see what was selfish and what was not. I learned to drop selfishness and live in a state of service, which is 'letting it all unfold and be as it is' while intuiting my part in it, but never seeking for what 'I can get out of it.' Except for awakening, of course.

As a review, the steps in the process are:

1. Accept there are only two alternatives, ego or heaven.
2. Accept there is no compromise, meaning no 'in-between' possibility. Every choice is one or the other.
3. Accept that if you choose a thing that will not last forever, the choosing came from ego.
4. Accept that if you make a choice that takes anything from anyone else, the choosing came from ego.

5. Accept that if you feel guilt because of a choice you made, the choosing came from ego.

Link to last Sunday's Weekly Gathering, as mentioned above. You can start listening at the 33:30 point in the audio if you want to hear the story about Ron and me getting/not getting married. The story in the audio does not include the inquiry details shared in today's tip:

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/Weekly%20Gatherings/WeeklyGathering5-21-17.mp3>

Lesson 134, Let me perceive forgiveness as it is.

Forgiveness is letting go of the mind. Or said another way, it is letting go of believing the chatter in one's mind.

With that said, there are some helpful pointers in today's lesson.

1. "Because you think your sins are real, you look on pardon as deception." - I would word that this way: Because you think your thoughts are true, you think letting go of them is foolish.

It doesn't matter if the chatter that plagues you now is fear about the future, a grievance against another person, a judgment against yourself or something else. The reason it is not let go and forgotten is because you think it is true. You think your mind is right.

Why do you think your mind is right? When there are so many people on the planet who would have a different perspective than you, what makes you so sure that your mind is right?

As one's mind rises up to comprehend truth, one is happy. When one's thinking is in harmony with truth, one is happy. If one is not happy, the current thinking IS NOT TRUE. You really do not need any other measure. If you are happy and at peace, fine; let your thoughts be. But if you are not, trust that your thoughts are wrong, and let them go. That is forgiveness.

2. "Forgiveness is the only thing that stands for truth in the illusions of the world. It sees their nothingness ... and merely says to them, '... what you think is not truth.'" - Whenever you are not happy, this is what you need to say to yourself: What you think is not truth.

When a situation is upsetting you, don't try to figure it out. When peace comes, you will know what to do. Instead, realize your thinking is not true. (You know that, because you are upset.) And let your thinking go. The sooner you let it go, the better.

You do not have to go deeper into suffering before you decide to let go of thinking that is causing fear or unhappiness.

3. "The strength of pardon is honesty, ... it sees illusions as illusions, not truth." - In this context we need to see 'pardon' as 'letting go.' Letting go is ceasing to put attention on it.

It was helpful for me to see that I was being honest when I chose to let go of mental chatter. It was also helpful for me to realize I was willingly deceiving myself whenever I kept my attention with mental chatter. I knew I did not want to deceive myself, so this helped me to let it go.

4. "[Forgiveness] opens up the way to truth." - It was also helpful to realize that if I chose to believe my mind's chatter, I was blocking truth. If I want truth realization, I must free up space within the mind by letting go of the mental chatter that crowds it.

5. "do not allow your mind to dwell" - Today's lesson is speaking in specifics when it says this, but I feel this is good to remember as a generalization. Do not allow your mind to dwell on any thought. If dwelling is happening, distortion and deception are happening. Dwelling, distortion and deception go hand-in-hand.

6. "Forgiveness must be practiced." - In the movie, "Peaceful Warrior," Socrates said there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. "Wisdom," he said, "is doing it." In other words, to know about forgiveness, but not to practice it, is not wisdom. Wisdom is practicing it. In fact, wisdom is practicing it, not occasionally, but with every opportunity that is given. Each time you notice your mind dwells with a line of thinking that is not creating joy in you, be honest with yourself. The current thinking is not truth. And for that reason, let it go.

Lesson 135, If I defend myself I am attacked.

Today's lesson is about Self-inquiry, 'Who am I?' And then it is about taking Self-inquiry one-step further by living from the answer.

Today's lesson tells us that we use many forms of defense to try to protect who we think we are, and in so doing we hide the truth about ourselves from ourselves. We try to protect the body, because we think we are the body. We try to protect the psyche, because we think we are the psyche. Yet we are neither.

One form of defense that today's lesson talks about is health. All of us take some steps each day to protect the health of the body, such as eating food, drinking water, possibly taking vitamins, etc. Is this wrong? I think not. We also take care of our homes, our yards, our automobiles, etc. Basic actions that come naturally are not the problem. Obsessive thinking about health & attempts to CONTROL health are the problems.

A question we can ask ourselves is, "Do I think excessively about the health (or safety or appearance) of the body?" If so, attachment to the body is a block to truth for you.

Today's lesson tells us that the body "need merely be perceived as quite apart from you." -- Practice Self-inquiry. Ask, "Who am I?" and look to discover the truest answer to that question. "This is the body's only real defense. Yet is this where you look for its defense?"

Another form of defense that today's lesson talks about is planning. We may plan for the protection of the body or we may plan for the protection of the psyche. Either way, the "mind engaged in planning for itself is occupied in setting up CONTROL of future happenings."

Does this mean it is wrong to plan a lunch date with a friend or plan to go to a retreat or on vacation? I think not. This is not referring to practical planning that is naturally a part of a human life. Obsessive thinking about the future and attempts to CONTROL future outcomes are the problem.

A question we can ask ourselves is, "Do I think I need some things to go a certain way in order for me to be safe/happy?" If so, you have become attached to the psyche's idea of itself, and that is a block to truth for you.

Today's lesson tells us that "self-initiated plans ... are the means by which a frightened mind would undertake its own protection, at the cost of truth." -- Practice Self-inquiry. Ask, "Who am I?" and look to discover the truest answer to that question.

Today's lesson recommends that we live from the answer to our Self-inquiry. Instead of falling back into ways of being that are intended to protect the body or psyche as who I am, the lesson suggests, "Let no defenses but your PRESENT TRUST direct the future, and this life becomes a meaningful encounter with the truth..."

There is a difference between trying to control things and living from present trust. There is a difference in how they feel. This difference in feeling gives us the opportunity to be honest with ourselves, if we pay attention.

Will we accept whatever experiences come in this lifetime, whether they are what we would have preferred or not, and use them to further our awareness of truth?

Whether I am sick or healthy, I can ask, "Who am I?" and see the answer. Whether I am rich or poor, I can ask, "Who am I?" and see the answer. Whether I live in one place or another, am married or single, have this or that, I can ask, "Who am I?" and see the answer.

What if we live our lives in this way?: Although some basic planning and taking care of one's body will occur, the attitude is one of openness, allowance and trust with

only the purpose of truth realization. For example, what if I plan for a vacation, pay for a vacation and then something occurs. I cannot go and I lose the money paid. Can I live with that as happily as I would have lived with the vacation? After all, going or not going can both be a distraction from Self-inquiry, and Self-inquiry can occur whether I go or don't go, so has anything really changed at all?

Instead of living from our beliefs about who we think we are, let's begin to live from Self-inquiry with self-honestly.

Pay attention to yourself. What beliefs about yourself are you living from?

Lesson 136, Sickness is a defense against the truth.

I want to simplify this lesson so it is most helpful. Instead of focusing on sickness, I want to focus on defenses against truth.

We all have our ways of defending against the truth and then denying that we are the one who set up those defenses. Sickness has never been a big defense for me, although I can see that it is for some people. I have used 'responsibility' and 'busyness' much more than I have used sickness to defend against truth.

Let's look at what this lesson has to say about the defenses we set up against truth:

~ "Defenses are not unintentional nor are they made without awareness." -- In other words, there is a conscious decision in favor of the defense. If my defense is sickness, there could be a tickle in the throat and then an immediate, even somewhat pleasurable, acceptance of, "I'm getting sick," before I move into suffering. If my defense is busyness, there could be the joy of complaining about how busy I am to others. Or it might show up as using time on unimportant things first, until once again I create that sense of being too busy. Etc.

~ "They seem to be unconscious but because of the rapidity with which you choose. ... It is this quick forgetting of the part you play in making your 'reality' that makes defenses seem to be beyond your own control." -- Whatever our defenses are, we create situations that keep us from seeking truth with our whole heart, whole mind and whole soul. Most people, wanting to believe their defenses are genuine, deny that they choose them. However if we watch ourselves carefully, we will find ourselves making the choices that create defense situations. It can be seen, if we want to see it. (Remember not to judge yourself for what you find when you watch to discover your own defenses, but it is helpful to see how you block your own awakening so you can start to make different decisions when a similar choice-opportunity comes around again.)

~ "Yet who believes illusions but the one who made them up? Who else can see them and react to them as if they were the truth?" -- And this is what we do. Whether our defense is sickness, family responsibility, busyness or something else,

we decide to let it get in the way of seeking truth, and then we believe the situation is a genuine block that renders us helpless, because that is what we want to believe about it.

~ "[Truth] does not command obedience ... Truth merely wants to give you happiness, for such its purpose is." -- We have the power to delay our own awakening for as long as we want. Truth will not force itself on us. We are the ones who need to ask ourselves, "What do I really want?" If we decide that we are interested in truth realization, then it is helpful to find how we defend against it.

Hint: If you want to find how you defend against truth, start listening to yourself. What do you complain about? Your defense hides there.

Also, how do you finish this sentence?: "I'm not able to do the Gentle Healing homework (or not able to journal, or contemplate, or meditate, etc) because ..."

Your defense shows up at the end of that sentence.

Now remember, you might not at first believe that is your defense. It may seem like a genuine situation that is out of your control, but this lesson teaches us that we set up our defenses to look that way.

Since memory can be faulty, I don't recommend looking into the past to see if you set up this defense. If the defense is still an obstacle for you, it is because you continue to set it up as an obstacle now. Watch yourself going forward. Watch yourself for those quick decisions that you make that keep this defense in place so you can continue to avoid awakening.

Let's bring awareness to the tricks that we play on ourselves. Let's do this together, in love, as mighty companions joined in purpose.

Lesson 137, When I am healed I am not healed alone.

I have experienced miraculous physical healing. The first time it happened, it was a broken toe. I broke my pinkie toe around 5pm one evening. I was guided to put a tight sock on the foot and to ice it, but not to go to the doctor. The next morning the entire top half of my foot was black and blue and in a lot of pain. I could not touch the foot to the floor at all, so I walked on my heel. I was again guided to wear a tight sock, ice the toe, and not go to the doctor.

About 5pm that evening, 24 hours after the toe was broken, I received guidance to be healed. I sat on the sofa. I began to feel a flow of love. The love came in through the top of my head and traveled through my body to my toe. After a few minutes it stopped.

I stood up. I could stand on the foot with no pain. I jumped on the foot. No pain. It was definitely healed in only a few minutes.

I've always felt the reason I lived with the broken toe for 24 hours is so I was sure it was broken. If it had been healed too quickly, my mind would have discounted the healing by saying, "It must not have been as bad as I thought it was." But since I lived with it for 24 hours, I know how bad it was, and I cannot discount the miracle that occurred in that few minutes.

Today's lesson says, "Healing is freedom. For it demonstrates that dreams will not prevail against the truth." That was an important lesson for me. I did not fully believe in the truth. Although I pursued the truth, I believed the world was real. That belief was seriously shaken by the experience of the toe.

I have never felt the healing itself was particularly important. I have always felt that the lesson that came from the healing is what was important.

Today's lesson refers to healing as a "counter-dream." I think it is important to realize that both sickness and health are illusions. Some people make the mistake of putting health above sickness spiritually. They feel sickness is a sign of spiritual weakness or failure, and health is the badge of spiritual success. That is not at all true. There are some very healthy people who have not even started to move towards spiritual awakening, and there are enlightened people who have had sick bodies.

Sickness does not indicate that you are spiritually weak or failing. If you are one who feels burdened by this idea, please realize that it is an untrue thought.

Also, the spiritual path isn't about replacing bad dreams with good dreams. It is about awakening from dreams entirely.

With that said, we will each learn lessons as we awaken, and for some of us, physical healing will be a part of that experience. As today's lesson says, "Yet think not healing is unworthy of your function here. For anti-Christ becomes more powerful than Christ to those who dream the world is real."

This is my humble advice regarding physical healing:

~ Remember that physical healing is not the goal. It may occur along the way if it is helpful to you, but the goal is spiritual awakening.

~ Watch the mind for ideas that may create sickness or block the opportunity for healing. There are many types of ideas that fall into that category including 'miraculous healing isn't possible,' 'I am not worthy of miraculous healing,' and 'I am guilty,' especially if one sees a relationship between one's guilt and the sickness. Also, most people get a subtle pleasure from sickness. It is a pleasure that is often fleeting and can easily be denied, especially as one tires of the suffering, but if one

looks you can find it. You may like the break from work. You may like the special attention from others. Sickness can even make us feel special. Etc.

~ Notice that awareness is constant and unchanging. Awareness is the same in health and sickness. Pay close attention to notice that awareness is more intimately you than the body. Notice that the body has no affect on you whatsoever.

~ Let go of all 'rules' and 'judgments' about sickness and health. The path of awakening happens differently for different people. Some awaken through allowing sickness and noticing they aren't the body. Some receive a boost in faith through miraculous healing. There is no rule about how this has to look.

~ Remember that what is most important is what is always most important: Inquire into false beliefs; let go of ego thinking; practice awareness-watching-awareness; be tuned in for your personal intuitive guidance and follow it.

The spiritual path requires more honesty than the mind is capable of. That means that in order to know what is best for you on this path, you have to let go of your individual thinking.

Lesson 138, Heaven is the decision I must make.

Actually, I like these words: "Heaven is the decision I make." In other words, I don't need to wait for any additional learning to make that decision. I make it now.

There is an idea that there is something we have to learn about truth. There is nothing necessary to learn about truth, although some learning does help us to make the choice for truth. That's really the only purpose of learning ... to bring us to the point where we decide to decide for truth.

There's an interesting line in today's Course lesson. It says, "...the choice of Heaven seem[s] to be the same as the relinquishment of hell." If one looks carefully at that line, you will see that truth is beyond 'preferred' and 'not preferred.' Truth is something that stands true now, even if your life seems like hell because there is so much 'not preferred' happening in it right now.

This is why awareness-watching-awareness is called the direct path. It is a practice that recognizes truth is now, and it chooses to give attention to truth now; attention ignores illusion and goes directly to truth.

A Course in Miracles is not the direct path. It says that itself in today's lesson. It says, "But knowledge is beyond the goals we seek to teach within the framework of this course. Ours are teaching goals, to be attained through learning how to reach them, what they are, and what they offer you. Decisions are the outcome of your learning, ..."

In other words, A Course in Miracles is like preparatory school. It helps prepare you to make the choice for truth. And that is the only purpose of learning, to prepare you. However, it is possible to go directly to being prepared without needing to learn volumes of information first.

I share this, because I hope you will realize there is nothing to learn. You only need to become prepared to make the choice for truth. And you can make that choice now, whether your life has become a 'good dream' or remains a 'bad dream.' Happy dreams can come before awakening, but one can awaken directly from a bad dream too.

Today's lesson says, "Heaven is chosen consciously. The choice cannot be made until alternatives are accurately seen and understood. All that is veiled in shadows must be raised to understanding, to be judged again, this time with Heaven's help."

That's the purpose of inquiry, which we will go deeper into over the coming weeks. We question our thinking to see its worthlessness and untruth. As we see that clearly, we are willing to let go of our thinking and choose only truth. After all, "Who can decide between the clearly seen (aka, our thoughts and perceptions) and the unrecognized (truth)? Yet who can fail to make a choice between alternatives when only one (truth) is seen as valuable; the other (thoughts and perceptions) as a wholly worthless thing."

So let's let go of the idea that we have to be masters of learning. It's okay if we don't learn anything. It's okay if we can't remember yesterday's workbook lesson today.

Focus on the practice. When we focus on the practice to the best of our ability in every moment, we are choosing Heaven.

Lesson 139, I will accept the Atonement for myself.

I love, love, love today's workbook lesson. It is so simple and clear! Yet, I don't think I saw it that way the first time I did the Course in Miracles Workbook. I don't think I knew what it talked about then when it said, "Who is the doubter? ... He has accepted [truth] because he lives; has judged against it and denied its worth, and has decided that he does not know the only certainty by which he lives."

Complicated minds can deny the simple obvious truth. What's the truth?

You are life!

How do you know you are life? Because you live.

It's that simple. Everything else is a complication.

Let's embrace simplicity today. No matter what happens in your day today, keep turning attention to the fact that you are life.

Angry? Okay, but still life.
Sad? Okay, but still life.
Frustrated? Okay, but still life.
Laughing? Okay, but still life.
Scared? Okay, but still life.
Feeling devotional? Okay, but still life.
Stressed? Okay, but still life.
Feeling guilty? Okay, but still life.
Sick? Okay, but still life.
Full of energy? Okay, but still life.
Happy? Okay, but still life.

If you look, you will notice the one thing you can never honestly deny is that you live. When you look even closer, you will notice the one fact that is obvious: You are life.

Have you ever experienced death as a direct experience? Sure, people and pets you loved died and you perceived that, but what was your direct experience as you perceived it? Wasn't it life that perceived the concept/perception of death?

Do you have any proof of death as a direct experience?
Or is life the only thing that you can verify as a fact?

Look carefully. Forget ideas. What do you know from direct experience?

"Here is the end of choice. For here we come to a decision to accept ourselves as God created us. ... For what is life except to be yourself, ...?"

"Today accept Atonement, not to change reality, but merely to accept the truth about yourself, and go your way rejoicing in the endless Love of God." Celebrate today that You Are Life!!

You are life! And you know it, because you live.

Lesson 140, Only salvation can be said to cure, 1 of 2

The primary purpose of today's lesson is to clarify the goal.

When people believe they suffer because of a specific problem in form, it is easy to think their answer lies in resolving that specific problem. However, one problem follows another problem in the changing world of form. The only answer that resolves all problems is awakening to truth.

There are several sentences in today's lesson that attempt to make that clarification:

~ "Cure" is a word that cannot be applied to any remedy the world accepts as beneficial. ... Its forms of healing thus must substitute illusion for illusion.

~ [The patient] merely had a dream that he was sick, and in the dream he found a magic formula to make him well. Yet he has not awakened from the dream, and so his mind remains exactly as it was before.

~ What difference does the content of a dream make in reality? One either sleeps or wakens. There is nothing in between.

~ [Holiness] does not make distinctions between unrealities. ... It merely focuses on what it is, and knows that no illusion can be real.

~ There is no remedy the world provides that can effect a change in anything. The mind that brings illusions to truth is really changed.

The lesson also says, "We will try today to find the source of healing, which is in our minds because our Father placed it there for us." (In this context, "healing" is synonymous with awakening.)

This is why we practice awareness-watching-awareness meditation. We focus within on awareness, our true Self. Our true Self is the source of healing. It is the light that awakens.

We do not need to resolve our worldly problems in order to practice awareness-watching-awareness daily. Awareness is always present, so it can always be watched regardless of what problems are present in our daily life now. All we need is the desire to spend some time each day being with our true Self.

During awareness-watching-awareness, we aren't looking for anything in form to change as a result of our practice. Instead, we are taking a break from all illusions in order to focus solely on truth for a period of time.

The goal is not to change the dream. The goal is to awaken from it.

It is okay to seek resolution to problems that come up in the dream. If there is a headache, it is okay to take aspirin. If a job ends, it is ok to look for another job. However, keep in mind that this is all dream stuff. Let the dream be the dream, AND remain clear on the goal. It is possible to do both by keeping the mind focused in the direction of truth. This is often referred to as "being in the world but not of it."

Remember that the only resolution that can be a cure (a successful and permanent remedy from suffering) is awakening to truth. Everything else is temporary relief from suffering at best. Temporary relief is acceptable and can be helpful, but it isn't the goal.

Lesson 140, Only salvation can be said to cure, 2 of 2

Today's lesson speaks of "happy dreams the Holy Spirit brings" and says they are "different from the dreaming of the world."

With the mindset of the world, a happy dream would be a dream where all of my problems are resolved. I have enough money. I am healthy. There is only peace in all of my relationships. I feel free to do the things I want to do and do not feel burdened or obligated to do things I do not like to do. Etcetera.

The happy dream the Holy Spirit brings is different than that idea of the happy dream. "The dreams forgiveness lets the mind perceive do not induce another form of sleep, ... His happy dreams are heralds of the dawn of truth upon the mind."

In other words, the happy dream that the Course speaks of has nothing to do with our situation in the world. It is a dream that comes from the gradual realization of truth. Eastern traditions often call this equanimity or detachment, but since those words can be misunderstood by the mind that hasn't experienced them directly, let me explain the happy dream using different words.

In the happy dream, we are coming to know the true Self as a direct experience. We see with increasing clarity that we are not threatened or affected by anything. We are falling in love with the fact that we are the true Self and not the body-mind-personality.

As our attention moves toward the true Self as truth, and that becomes primary in our awareness, the body-mind-personality and its story shift back and become secondary. It's not that we ignore problems; when things arise that need to be dealt with we deal with them effectively. It's just that we don't feel threatened by them. Our happiness doesn't hinge on a specific outcome. We are able to be with the dream as if it is a temporary dream knowing that we are beyond it.

That's the happy dream. Although it may include health, health is not required. Although it may include financial abundance, financial abundance is not important at all. In fact, the happy dream is described well in both NTI and The Teachings of Inner Ramana:

From NTI 1 Corinthians: "What is received when all that is false has been let go is only that which reflects truth. This, which is received as truth, shall fill you with new eyes and a joyous heart. ... It is upon this recognition, which is the completeness of recognition within time, that you enter the fourth and final earthly phase of the path of truth with Me. The fourth phase is a glorious phase, upon which your feet shall barely touch the ground. As you walk the earth, you know where you walk, so that the earth is merely a symbol within the mind. You shall not know brothers, but you shall talk to them. You will not need food, but you will eat with joy. Music shall accompany you in your every moment, and yet, you will have no need for your ears.

Your sight will be changed from earthly sight to sight that is provided from Heaven. All things shall be new, and you shall have no need for any of them. In this, your joy shall be complete.”

From The Teachings of Inner Ramana: “Self-realization is all that matters, because when Self is realized nothing else affects it. Illness does not affect it. Poverty does not cause it harm. Loss of a friendship is no loss at all. The realized Self is full . . . full enough that it may allow the outward symbols to be what they may, and it does not lose its awareness of Self. Therefore, it does not lose its knowledge and awareness of love.”

As mentioned yesterday, the purpose of Lesson 140 is to clarify the goal. The goal has nothing to do with outcomes in the world. Things will always shift and change in the world. Problems will come, problems will be resolved and new problems will come to replace them. We aren’t seeking the end of the dream being the dream. We are transcending the dream and awakening from it. That is the goal.

Review Lesson 141

“My mind holds only what I think with God,” is the key thought we will contemplate as we go through this next review, so let’s begin by looking deeply at what that means.

Interestingly, the dictionary does not define ‘think’ as the ongoing mental chatter in the mind, although most people tend to think that chatter is thinking. The dictionary defines ‘think’ as “to have a conscious mind” or “to have in consciousness.”

Therefore, “My mind holds only what I think with God” means that anything we are conscious of that is not truth is temporary. Only truth is lasting. And it is this simple fact that sets the stage for the contemplation of every lesson that we will review over the next ten days.

Sometimes *A Course in Miracles* uses the term “real thoughts” to refer to the thoughts we think with God. Real thoughts are the environment of pure consciousness. You can think of them as attitudes or ways of being. Real thoughts include:

- ~ All-is-well (peace)
- ~ Open embracing acceptance (love)
- ~ An inherent sense freedom—a sense of soaring from within (joy)
- ~ Intimacy with everything (oneness).

Patience, allowance and compassion are the reflections of our real thoughts.

So, “My mind holds only what I think with God” means that only these qualities are lasting. Everything else that appears in consciousness is temporary and passing.

With this in mind, we are asked to contemplate each day's review lessons. The review instructions say, "Let each word [in the review lessons] shine with the meaning God has given it, as it was given to you through His Voice. Let each idea which you review that day give you the gift He has laid in it for you ..."

As an example, here is my contemplation of today's review lessons. They were contemplated with "My mind holds only what I think with God" in mind:

Forgiveness is the key to happiness. Forgiveness does not give value to the temporary. It gives value only to that which is lasting. Therefore, it lets the temporary come and go while it reflects only on truth.

Forgiveness offers everything I want, because all that I want is truth. Even when I make the mistake of seeking by letting attention dwell temporarily with mental chatter, I am really looking for the qualities of consciousness. Therefore, letting go of mental chatter and resting in consciousness is the answer that provides everything I want.

Review Lesson 142

The instructions for this review period have told us that we will use this review to "concentrate on the readiness for what will follow next." And then it gave us a central theme to use in that concentration:

My mind holds only what I think with God.

Each day during the review period, be sure to start with five minutes contemplating this thought. You don't need to write anything about it, although you can if something begins to come that you want to write down. However, be sure to spend five minutes marinating in this thought. Assume that it is preparing you for what will follow next, even if you do not notice the preparation at all.

After you've spent five minutes with this initial thought, go on to contemplate the review lessons for the day. As an example, here is my contemplation of today's review lessons:

I thank my Father for his gifts to me. Those gifts are not the temporary things or experiences that come to me in this lifetime. God's gifts are never temporary. God's gifts are the eternal gifts that are always present. I thank my Father for His eternal gifts, and I show appreciation for them by paying attention to them throughout my day.

Let me remember I am one with God. I cannot find God's gifts by looking for objects that are different from me. God's gifts are my nature. I will seek what is my nature. If I see something that I can separate from myself, that is not my nature. I cannot ever

be separated from my own nature. When I see something that is consistently present and cannot be separated from me ever, I have found my nature. Therefore, I have found my Self and I have found God, for they are one.

Review Lesson 143

The instructions for this review period give us a central theme to contemplate each day. That theme is:

My mind holds only what I think with God.

The instructions go on to say, "That is a fact, and represents the truth of what you are and What your Father is."

This means that what our mind holds is what we are, and what our mind holds is what God is. So if we want to find our Self, and if we want to find God, we must look for what our mind holds. What our mind holds is always present. Therefore, our search for God is also the search for what is always present.

Here is my contemplation of today's review lessons with that thought in mind:

In quiet I receive God's Word today. All of the thoughts that come and go in my consciousness are not God's Word, because God's Word is the Word, that which is before everything. In order to know God's Word, I must look beyond all of the words that distract from it. I must enter into the quiet, where God's Word is known; not heard, but known. God's Word is not other than my Self. In quiet, I realize that today.

All that I give is given to myself. Why do my thoughts appear so mesmerizing, those words that are temporary and are not the eternal Word of God? If I close my eyes and look, I find only one power that infuses thought with power. That power is my attention. I am the power that infuses thought with apparent power. All that I give attention to, I give to myself. The question then becomes, what do I want to give attention to? That is the same as asking, what do I want to have power over me?

Review Lesson 144

The central theme that we are contemplating during this review period is:

My mind holds only what I think with God.

The workbook instructions for the review period say, "It is this thought that fully guarantees salvation to the Son. For in his mind no thoughts can dwell but those his Father shares. Lack of forgiveness blocks this thought from his awareness. Yet it is forever true."

This means that when we let our attention dwell with any thought, emotion or desire that is inevitably temporary, or when we let our attention dwell with anything that it cannot dwell on eternally, we block our realization of truth.

With this thought in mind, I contemplate today's review lessons.

There is no love but God's. What, then, is love? To discover what love is I must compare human feelings of love, which do not last, to that which is always present. For example, sometimes I think I love something because it brings me pleasure, but pleasure is not constant. Therefore that is not love. Yet I notice beingness or isness is always present. That must be love.

The world I see holds nothing that I want. That's because the world I see holds nothing. It all comes and goes. Whether I perceive it as grand or totally undesirable, it has the same quality. It is not eternal; it is not held. I seek that which is eternal, that which is held, and I let the temporary be as it is.

Review Lesson 145

"My mind holds only what I think with God." It is lack of forgiveness that blocks this realization from our awareness.

The review instructions ask us to notice "the many forms in which the lack of true forgiveness may be carefully concealed." In other words, the review instructions ask us to put some effort into finding our own defenses against the truth, our own self-deceptions.

With this request in mind, I contemplate today's review lessons.

Beyond this world there is a world I want. I close my eyes and go into contemplation of this fact. I go beyond all of the thoughts that offer me something to think about. They are each defenses against the truth.

It is impossible to see two worlds. Attention will either go out towards the world and thought or it will go in towards awareness. It cannot go in two directions at once. Anything that keeps me from being aware of myself as awareness or as the watcher is a defense against truth for me.

Review Lesson 146

Yesterday my focus was watching for defenses and self-deceptions, that which keeps my attention away from my true Self. I did this because it was a request made in the review instructions. After making that request, the review instructions say:

"And yet, your mind holds only what you think with God. Your self-deceptions cannot take the place of truth. No more than can a child who throws a stick into the

ocean change the coming and the going of the tides, the warming of the water by the sun, the silver of the moon on it by night.”

This brings me back to, “My mind holds only what I think with God.” With this in mind, I contemplate today’s review lessons.

No one can fail who seeks to reach the truth. Although there are many ideas that distract from truth, they are each temporary. As a stream, they can appear endless. But if I step back from the stream and compare it to the ocean, I see the stream is shallow. It is the great depth of the ocean that calls to me. I shall listen and go where I am called.

I loose the world from all I thought it was. I thought my happiness resided in the world. That is exactly what I thought. That is why it has held my attention for so long. I loose the world from all I thought it was. I give my attention to the depth within.

Review 147

What good news yesterday’s lesson was. “No one can fail who seeks to reach the truth.” And yet, one must be honest about her seeking. To say she seeks the truth, but to look to the world for happiness, is to be dishonest with her self. One who seeks the truth seeks inward, toward the great ocean of life-awareness, which is the true Self. “Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” ~ Luke 17:21

With this, it is clear that ample time given to awareness-focused meditation is an important part of surrendering to the desire for truth realization. I do not deny this. I embrace this fact, and I take time each day for that most direct path. In addition, I remain aware of truth during my daily activities.

The review instructions say, “...place His Mind in charge of all the thoughts you will receive... And so each one will bring the message of His Love to you, returning messages of yours to Him. ... And as His Own completion joins with Him, so will He join with you who are complete as you unite with Him, and He with you.”

It is with this thought that I contemplate today’s review lessons:

I will not value what is valueless. I will not value what is passing. I will be with it, because it is here now, but my heart’s value shall remain with the eternal, and my awareness will rest gratefully with the heart.

Let me perceive forgiveness as it is. When I notice my mind has gone to unnecessary thinking about temporary circumstances or wishes, I bring my attention back to the heart and the eternal. Here I abide as I go through the normal activities of my day. I rejoice in silent contemplation of truth.

Review 148

My mind holds only what I think with God.

I have noticed since beginning this review that something is shifting in me. There is greater confidence than there was before in the efficiency of the direct path and in my desire and ability to remain focused on it. I feel as if I am learning now to “claim again” my inheritance.

With this in mind, I contemplate today’s review lessons.

If I defend myself I am attacked. In order to defend myself, I must forget my Self. It doesn’t matter if I am defending my psyche against something that it perceives as an attack or if I am defending against truth by avoiding spiritual practice. Either way, I am not coming from my Self. Therefore, whenever I notice myself defending, I will drop the habit of ignorance and turn attention toward the heart, toward truth.

Sickness is a defense against the truth. I do not feel to focus on effects. It feels better for me to watch where my attention is now. Am I obsessed with thinking about an illness or some other circumstance? Am I resisting an illness or another current circumstance? Do I feel like the victim of an illness or another circumstance? If yes, that focus is a defense against the truth. Instead of being in defense, it feels better for me to be consistently in acceptance, grounded in wisdom, and in contemplation of the truth. When I find myself in defense, I will return myself to clarity and promptly drop the habit of ignorance.

Review 149

My mind holds only what I think with God.

When I am healed I am not healed alone. In Chapter 1 of *A Course in Miracles*, Jesus says, “I have nothing that does not come from God. The difference between us now is that I have nothing else.” That is healing, having nothing but that which comes from God. I trust when I am healed, that healing helps others. However, my focus now must be on reaching that healed state, that permanence of “only what I think with God” and nothing else. This is my commitment to myself and everyone.

Heaven is the decision I must make. This decision is not made once, but repeatedly. It is made each day, and it is made throughout the day. Anything that reinforces this decision in me is helpful. Anything that weakens this decision in me needs to be looked at and questioned. A partial decision or a ‘sometimes’ decision is not a decision. Total unwavering commitment is the sign of true decision.

Review 150

My mind holds only what I think with God.

I will accept the Atonement for myself. The “will” in this sentence implies the future, as in ‘I am going to do this.’ I don’t feel to see it as a future endeavor. I accept the Atonement for myself now. As NTI Luke says, “Now is a very important time, for now is the only time that you can take any action that will make any difference. ... Lay aside resistance now. Dismiss meaningless thoughts now. Focus on your willingness and nurture gratitude for being [now]. ... The kingdom of God is within you now. Do not let yourself be distracted away from it.”

Only salvation can be said to cure. All problems are temporary. They shall have their end. And yet, every problem or difficulty will be replaced by another until we have transcended the belief in the body-mind as ‘me.’ Salvation is liberation from ignorance. Only salvation resolves all problems forever. With this realization, I am no longer distracted by thinking my happiness lies with some change or acquisition in the world. My focus is clear. I accept the Atonement for myself.

Lesson 151, All things are echoes of the Voice for God

At the last Gentle Healing meeting, I read some paragraphs from Chapter 14 of “The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss.” Part of that reading was a story about a planet where people are born and raised in a movie theatre, and they never question if the movie on the screen is reality; they simply assume it is.

Here’s that story again:

“Imagine a planet where all of the people were born and raised and spent their entire lives in a movie theatre. Almost all of them believed the movie they were seeing on the screen was real. Their attention was so fixed on the screen that they never bothered to turn their heads around 180 degrees to see the projector’s light. One of them had the courage to turn his head around 180 degrees and he saw the projector’s light. He did not know what it was, but he followed that light until he found the projector. He went back and told the people that what they were seeing on the screen was not real.

“He told them that to find the projector they would have to turn their heads around 180 degrees. Due to the long habit of always keeping their attention fixed on the movie screen, fear of the unknown, their belief that the movie was real, and their disbelief in what he was telling them, very few bothered to turn their heads around 180 degrees to see the light from the projector. Some of those who did follow his instructions turned their heads immediately back to the screen. They were used to the illusion and afraid of the Truth. Others did not sustain their attempt to find the projector long enough to find it. After all it is difficult to find the projector in the dark. One has to pass through a number of doors to find it. Once in a while someone actually persevered long enough to find the projector.”

Today’s Course lesson is like the one in this story who had the courage to turn his head around 180 degrees and follow the projector’s light until he found the

projector, and then “went back and told the people that what they were seeing on the screen was not real.” Today’s Course lesson says:

“You do not seem to doubt the world you see. You do not really question what is shown you through the body’s eyes. Nor do you ask why you believe it ...”

We do well to contemplate Michael Langford’s analogy of the movie theatre and today’s Course lesson together. Isn’t it true that ever since we can remember our attention has been focused outward on thought and the world? Isn’t that like the people in the movie theatre who were born and raised with their attention on the movie screen? Isn’t it true that, just as they did not question the reality of the movie, we have not questioned the reality of our thoughts and perceptions? Isn’t it at least possible that what we have always believed to be reality is not reality? Doesn’t this possibility deserve genuine investigation? Isn’t it worth our time to find out what is true?

Today’s lesson calls our senses “idle witnesses, which merely bear false witness...” Do we want to continue to believe them without question, or are we willing to use inquiry (self-inquiry) and awareness-watching-awareness meditation (Self-inquiry) to discover what is and is not true?

“One of them had the courage to turn his head around 180 degrees and he saw the projector’s light... he followed that light until he found the projector.”

Lesson 152, The power of decision is my own.

Over the last two days we have been contemplating Michael Langford’s theatre analogy along with Lesson 151. Today’s workbook lesson looks at a difference between the theatre analogy and our experience with the world. In the theatre analogy, people are born in a theatre and mesmerized by the film, but they have nothing to do with creating the film. As today’s workbook lesson points out, we are each “co-creator of the universe.”

Today’s lesson begins, “No one can suffer loss unless it be his own decision. No one suffers pain except his choice elects this state for him. No one can grieve nor fear nor think him sick unless these are the outcomes he wants. And no one dies without his own consent.” And it continues by saying, “And it is only here salvation is.”

Just like with Lesson 151, today’s lesson is clear that “what is false is false.” That which we co-create through the power of our decision is not true and it does not change truth. However, our decisions are the source of the illusion that we find ourselves so mesmerized with. We learned this when we studied and contemplated The Code.

Lesson 152 says, “Nothing occurs but represents your wish, ... You may believe that this position is extreme, and too inclusive to be true.”

Over the next two days, we will look at this lesson in a very practical way. We will watch for decisions that we make that shape our individual experience. Many of these decisions seem unconscious until we watch for them, and then we see that they are made both consciously and repeatedly.

Here are few examples of the types of decisions you may see yourself make as you watch for the decisions that shape your experience.

I don't want to do this.

I hate ... (traffic, this heat, mean people, stupid people, myself, etc.)

I will never be able to ...

I don't have enough ...

I'm tired of this.

He/she is ... (annoying, wrong, stupid, lazy, etc.)

I'm so ... (stupid, lazy, ugly, etc.)

I have too much to do.

They think ... about me.

This situation is unacceptable.

I'll be happy when I get ...

I'll be safe when I get ...

I won't ever ... (understand this, be able to do this, get to go there, etc.)

No one ever pays attention to me.

This always happens to me.

This is too good; something bad is going to happen next.

This isn't fair.

As you watch for the decisions you make, notice both the decisions and how those decisions affect your experience. Ask yourself, "If I made a different decision about this, how would my experience be different?" Look both at the circumstance and your emotional experience to see if you can find at least one way your experience would be different if you made a different decision.

Lesson 153, In my defenselessness my safety lies.

In Chapter 1 of *The Untethered Soul*, Michael Singer writes, "... the mind talks all the time because you gave it a job to do. You use it as a *protection mechanism, a form of defense.*"

Is that true? Is the mind a form of defense?

Let's watch it for a day and find out. As you watch, some forms of defense you might find are:

~ Thoughts attacking someone who threatens your psyche or gets in the way of what you want (even if it is just the position you want in traffic)

~ Mentally practicing a conversation with someone in order to achieve the outcome

you want

~ Thinking about how you should look, be or act in order to be liked or respected by others

~ Thinking about what you can change, manipulate or control in order to achieve the outcome you want

~ Thinking about how you can avoid any feeling or circumstance that you find uncomfortable or painful

Today's lesson tells us, "You are its slave. ... You do not realize what you have done to sabotage the holy peace of God by your defenses."

Is that true? Are we slaves to the mind's defensive chatter?

Let's watch that too. Can you decide to let go of defensive chatter and then move through the day in relative peace, or do you find yourself listening to defensive chatter again?

Try this today: Whenever you notice the mind is chattering as a form of defense, look at what the mind is saying. Notice it. And then slowly say to yourself, "In my defenselessness my safety lies." (Or you can say, "Peace lies in defenselessness.") Take a breath and let go of the chatter. Move into a state of openness, acceptance and intuitiveness. Remain there. If you notice that you've slipped into being focused on mental defenses again, repeat this practice.

If a situation arises today that needs to be resolved, approach it differently. Instead of going to the mind's defenses for answers, ask questions and remain open for intuition's guidance. For example, ask, "How should I look at this?" or "What should I do now?"

Lesson 154, I am among the ministers of God

Today's workbook lesson is a calling. All are called. The question is, who will answer?

In order to answer the call, there are certain requirements.

1. We must let go of judging of ourselves. This includes letting go of judging if we are ready for service, if we are worthy of service, and what our role of service should be. This means that an *emptying out* needs to occur. We need to let go of who we think we are, what we think we want, and what we think our strengths and weaknesses are. We need to be open and willing, and nothing more. Anything that we add to that, like ideas about what our service should be, will likely come from ego.

I am reminded of Eckhart Tolle's story. He experienced an awakening, and then he spent the better part of the next two years sitting on a park bench in London in a state of bliss. And then guidance began to come. He was guided to move to the west coast of the USA, although he did not know why. So he went. Later it unfolded that he wrote a book, *The Power of Now*, and his role as a teacher began.

If you look at Eckhart's story, you can see that he did not pick his role. He also was not searching for his role. He was happy just to be. When the first step in his function came, which was to move, he moved. At that point there was no more to it. The feeling came to move, and so he moved.

Are we willing to have no ideas of our own? Are we willing to simply be here now, following whatever prompts there are in the moment, without planning what our part will be?

2. We must be willing to say 'yes,' even though we have no idea how we will succeed. Today's Course lesson says, "And that one Voice appoints your function, and relays it to you, giving you the strength to understand it, do what it entails, and to succeed in everything you do that is related to it."

When you receive your guidance, it is likely you won't know how you will accomplish it. You may not have the knowledge, skill, resources or money needed. That's not your concern. A part of how you will learn that there is something bigger than your little self is to say 'yes', and then watch how everything is provided. It's such a marvelous experience! But it is an experience that can only be had if you say 'yes.'

3. You must realize that your service is for you. It doesn't matter if you are made a teacher, a writer, a musician, a bookkeeper, a housekeeper, an event organizer, etc. You may be able to see how your function serves others, but what is most important is that you notice how your function serves to awaken you. Where are the opportunities to let go of your way of thinking? Where are the opportunities to increase trust? Where are the opportunities to let go of self-will and increase surrender? Whatever form of service you are given, your awakening is its first purpose. Always remember its first purpose, and let your function do its job on you.
4. You must also realize that your service is not just for you. Its first purpose is receiving for your own awakening, but its second purpose is giving. All energy is a flow, and in order for a flow to be effective, it must continue to flow. So you will receive from your service, and then you will give. And you will continue to receive, and you will continue to give. This is the flow.

It is important to realize that you do not decide how you will give. A trick of the ego can come at this stage. Even if you were careful enough to let go of

judging yourself (#1 above), to say 'yes' (#2) and to see your function as for you (#3), the ego may try to trick you at this point by convincing you that you are now mature enough to know what is best; now you can decide what to give and how to give it. This is a very common ego trick and one that is to be watched for. It is the ego trying to reestablish itself in your mind. Keep in mind that the way to successfully give is to continually repeat steps 1-3 above.

Today I ask that you contemplate what I have shared above. Everyone has a function to be fulfilled. As today's lesson said, "He needs our voice that He may speak through us. He needs our hands to hold His messages, and carry them to those whom He appoints. He needs our feet to bring us where He wills, that those who wait in misery may be at last delivered. And He needs our will united with His Own, that we may be the true receivers of the gifts He gives."

You may already know your function, and you have delayed saying 'yes.' You may not yet know your function, but it may come to you soon. Or it may not be time for you to know your function yet. Regardless of your specific situation, a deep contemplation of today's workbook lesson will prepare you to fulfill your role, whatever it may be.

Lesson 155, I will step back and let Him lead the way.

Today is another opportunity to contemplate the calling we received yesterday, because more than one day is needed to commit deeply to demoting self-will in favor of service to truth.

Today's lesson tells us why we should make this commitment. "There is a way of living in the world that is not here, although it seems to be. You do not change appearance, though you smile more frequently. Your forehead is serene; your eyes are quiet." And isn't this something that we all want?

"To let illusions walk ahead of truth is madness. But to let illusion sink behind the truth and let the truth stand forth as what it is, is merely sanity. ... accept the truth, and let it go before you ... Step back in faith and let truth lead the way."

As we contemplate this commitment, it is also important to contemplate the warning that comes in today's lesson. "Walk safely now, yet carefully, because this path is new to you. And you may find that you are tempted still to walk ahead of truth, ..."

Let today be a day of contemplating our willingness to demote self-will in favor of truth. Amen.

Lesson 156, I walk with God in perfect holiness.

If one is to awaken to truth, it is important to let go of concepts, because concepts are not truth. They are imagination.

Today's lesson asks, "How could you walk the world alone and separate from your Source?"

What is your Source? It is life. Life is what you are.

NTI Acts, Chapter 5 makes this point when it says, "God is Life, and you live, so Life must be within you. This means that God is within you also. ... Right now, as you sit reading this, you live. So right now, you cannot be separate from God. Right now, God is in you and you are in God. There is no separation. Right now, your oneness with God is complete ..."

Guilt and unworthiness are concepts. They are imagination. This is easy to see if you will look beyond your imagination to truth.

Think of the guiltiest person you can think of. Bring that one clearly into your mind. Now look closer. Is there life there? (Does or did that person live?) As today's lesson points out, "There is one life," and God is life. So look very, very carefully at your guilty one. What is most true (permanent and unchanging) about him/her, guilt or life-presence?

Who is the most unworthy person you can think of? Look at him/her in the same way. Look very, very carefully and honestly. What is most true about this one? Unworthiness or life?

Life is always clean, untouched by what the body does or what the mind thinks, just as sunlight is untouched by the stained glass window that it shines through. And life is what you are, and what others are. This is what's consistently true. When your eyes have learned to look at truth, everything else pales by comparison.

Today's lesson says, "'Who walks with me?' is a question that 'should be asked a thousand times a day, till certainty has ended doubting and established peace.'" When you ask this question, look. Is life here now? Does it go wherever you go? Is life what you are? Keep looking. Keep noticing until you have trained your eyes to look beyond everything temporary and focus themselves on life.

Lesson 157, Into His Presence would I enter now.

If one is to awaken to truth, it is important to let go of concepts, because concepts are not truth.

Today we will let go of our concepts about God. We will let go of the idea of a "Him" who seems different and separate from us. Although these terms will continue to be used, we will realize the truth. God is the life that we are.

Today's workbook lessons says, "This day is holy, for it ushers in a new experience; a different kind of feeling and awareness. ... Today you learn to feel the joy of life."

Today, stay focused on the thought, "Into His Presence would I enter now," and let the inner vision teach you to notice and celebrate life. You will see it in yourself. You will see it in others. You will see it in birds, animals and insects. You will see it in trees and plants. You will notice it in the sun, the wind and in rocks and soil and water. "Nothing is needed but today's idea to light your mind, ..." Reflect on today's idea. Let it show you that you are the joy of life, living within and amongst joy and life, which are one.

Lesson 158, Today I learn to give as I receive.

Today's lesson begins with, "What has been given you? The knowledge that you are a mind, in Mind and purely mind, ..." Mind is synonymous with consciousness, awareness or life-presence.

The lesson is very clear that you cannot give truth. Truth simply is, and as such, it is beyond what can be given. Our concern is with vision. This we can learn, and this we can extend through practicing it.

The lesson tells us that true vision has one law. It does not look upon a body and mistake it for truth. It beholds life-presence, which is "beyond what can be touched, a purity undimmed by errors, pitiful mistakes, and fearful thoughts of guilt from dreams of sin." We are also told that vision sees no separation. That's because vision knows there is only one life. "And it looks on everyone, on every circumstance, all happenings and all events, without the slightest fading of the light it sees."

As you come across people today, regardless of whether you meet them in person, over the phone, on the Internet or you simply think of them, take a moment to acknowledge them as the same life that you are. Take a moment to appreciate the life that we are. Every person provides an opportunity to practice and extend this remembrance. Life is always present and available to be seen, regardless of ... *whatever*.

Lesson 159, I give the miracles I have received.

There is an interesting point in today's workbook lesson. It says, "Receive [miracles] now *by opening the storehouse of your mind where they are laid*, and giving them away." This means that miracles already exist in us.

How do we open the storehouse of our mind and access the miracles?

The lesson calls true vision “the miracle in which all miracles are born.” In other words, we open the storehouse of our mind by overlooking illusion and focusing on life-presence.

Focus on life-presence in nature.
Focus on life-presence in people.
Focus on life-presence in yourself.

When we focus on life-presence, we see and experience things differently, and so we also ‘be’ differently. Giving miracles is a natural outcome of true vision and the resulting beingness. Therefore, we don’t have to worry about how we will give miracles. All we have to do is practice true vision. Everything else will happen naturally. (That’s the miracle.)

Note: Awareness-watching-awareness is a method of focusing on life-presence in yourself.

Lesson 160, I am at home. Fear is the stranger here.

Over the last few days we have been focusing on truth, life-presence. Focusing on life-presence is Self-inquiry, a form of devotion where we continually focus on our true Self.

Today, we are going to shift to self-inquiry. That’s questioning the false self in order to recognize that it isn’t our truth. It isn’t what we are. It is merely the effect of attention attracted to thought.

Today’s lesson asks us to question fear. Fear takes many forms. Sometimes it is easily recognized, like when we are afraid of not being safe, but at other times we may not recognize fear as fear. For example, I could feel angry and think I am angry because another person has done something unreasonable. However, if I look deeply into my anger by asking *why am I angry*, I might find that I am afraid that person’s action is making me look bad. This is an example of when fear takes the form of anger.

Fear is a basic characteristic of ego thinking. As today’s lesson points out, when we identify with the fear thinking in the mind, our truth is unknown to us. This is why we need to practice self-inquiry. We need to return to recognizing our Self as our Self.

The lesson says it would be easy to disregard fear thoughts by recognizing our Self, but we don’t do this. Why? The lesson says that we have “asked this stranger in to take your place, and let you be a stranger to yourself.”

How have we done this?

Attention is an aspect of awareness. I often call it the arm of awareness, since it can reach out and experience different things. When our attention is engrossed in fear thoughts, we are presently asking “this stranger” to appear as our self. In that way, we simultaneously deny our true Self.

Today’s lesson recommends that we ask, “Who is the stranger?” Another way to do that is to ask, “What am I?” Both questions help us to discern between what we are not and what we are.

Let me demonstrate. Let’s say I have a lot of work that needs to be done, and I begin to feel stress. In spite of all of the work, I am committed enough to the process of awakening to take a short break from work and do some journaling about the stress I am feeling.

I ask, “Why do I feel stressed?” The answer that is seen first is because of all of the work I have to do. However, I realize that is not the root of my stress so I look more deeply.

I ask, “Why do I feel stressed about having a lot of work?” I realize that I am afraid of what other people will think of me if I do not accomplish my work within a certain timeframe. I see that I think they will perceive me as unworthy. As I look deeper, I notice that I’m afraid that may be true. I’m afraid that I am not as good as other people.

Through this inquiry, I’ve identified a line of thinking that I am identified with. I am identified with the idea that I am not as good as other people. I am also identified with the fear that others may find this out.

Now it is time to practice self-inquiry on this thinking. I look directly at the thinking I have uncovered and I ask, “What sees these thoughts?” I shift my attention within to look in the direction of the looker, back towards the source of attention. I notice there are the thoughts and there is the looker looking at the thoughts.

Once I have the experience of noticing these two (thoughts and looker), I ask, “Which am I?” This leads me to see that I am the looker, life-presence-awareness. It is clear the thoughts are the stranger here. They are not me.

When we practice self-inquiry repeatedly, we become increasingly clear on the difference between identification with thought (the false self) and our true Self. This clarity is what today’s lesson calls a miracle. It says, “The miracle will come. For in his home his Self remains. It asked no stranger in, and took no alien thought to be Itself.”

Pay attention today. Notice when you are feeling fear in one form or another. Watch for things like annoyance, frustration, anger, worry, stress, avoidance, etc. When you notice fear, inquire into it in order to receive more clarity about the thoughts that are causing the emotion. Once the thoughts have been uncovered, practice self-inquiry in order to separate the false self (identification with thought) from the true Self (the watcher). Notice which one you are and which one you are not.

Lesson 161, Give me your blessing, holy Son of God

In yesterday's tip, I said that anger is one form of fear. Today's workbook lesson begins by saying, "Today we practice differently, and take a stand against our anger, that our fears may disappear and offer room to love."

What does the Course lesson mean when it says, "Today we practice differently?"

Over the last several lessons, we have been generalizing. For example, we spent a few days focusing on life-presence in everything that we saw. Yesterday we inquired into fear regardless of the form it took. But today we will practice differently by being specific. Today we will look specifically at anger.

Why is this helpful?

The mind thinks in specifics. If you look at the room you are sitting in right now, awareness can immediately be aware of everything the eyes see, but the mind looks specifically. It may think, for example, "I see a chair, a wall hanging, my shoes that I didn't put away last night, a carpet that needs to be replaced, a wall, a heater vent, ..."

As mentioned when we started Gentle Healing, a part of what we are doing is reprogramming the brain. In order to do that, we need to get down to the brain's level. That is, we need to work in specifics.

So today we will focus on anger.

Depending on your personality, you may experience anger in one way or another. Some people allow themselves to experience outright fury and hatred. Others repress that, so that anger might be experienced as mere annoyance. The first practice of the day will help you tune into your anger, regardless of how you experience it. You are asked to "Select one brother." Let that one be one that you feel some grievance with, and this will give you a chance to look at your anger.

The lesson asks you to "See his face, his hands and feet, his clothing." Etcetera. I ask you to go a little further. Look at what angers you about him/her. Let your mind temporarily dwell on those characteristics, but as you do, keep one eye turned inward so that it is looking at your thoughts and noticing they are your thoughts. Let me demonstrate:

I am thinking of Cassie. She is big in size. Tall and over-weight. She smiles all of the time, like she's happy to be better than everyone else, happy to know more than others know. She talks all of the time as if she's right about everything. She never listens. Whenever I try to speak, she cuts me off after half a sentence. She thinks she knows what I was going to say, and then she goes on to tell me how I'm wrong. She doesn't ever listen to me. She's wrong about everything because she never listens to anyone else. She only knows her point of view, which is extremely narrow-minded. I really don't like being around her at all.

Okay, now looking back at what I wrote: I see that I focused on her as a body, "tall and over-weight." From there, I went directly into her smile, and I interpreted its meaning. I decided she smiles because she thinks she is better than everyone else. I see that I believe this. I see that I think I know what she is thinking. I see that I believe I am right. I see that when I look at her in this way, I think I am better than her. I notice that I feel annoyed by how much she talks. That is my anger. I'm also angry that she never listens to me. I must be afraid of something there. What am I afraid of?

Why am I angry at Cassie? Because she talks all of the time as if she is right about everything, and she never listens to me even when I know more than she does.

Why does that bother me? Because I think she should listen to me.

Why does it anger me (scare me) that she doesn't listen to me? I'm afraid that I am not as valuable or as important as I would like to appear. Maybe I am meaningless, not needed.

Through the process of looking at anger with one person, we can uncover fear thinking that we are identified with. For example, "I'm afraid that I am not as valuable or as important as I would like to appear. Maybe I am meaningless, not needed."

The lesson asks us to say to this brother, "Give me your blessing, holy Son of God. I would behold you with the eyes of Christ, and see my perfect sinlessness in you."

I ask you to go a little further. Ask yourself, "What is really upsetting me? Is it him/her or is it the thinking that I have just uncovered in my own mind?"

I recommend journaling to look at your thoughts in the way I just demonstrated. I think it is easier to see thoughts clearly when they are written down.

It's also possible that it will be helpful to journal twice today. Journal once in the morning using the person that came to mind when the lesson said, "Select one brother, ..." And then, throughout the day be alert to when you get angry. When

it's convenient, possibly at the end of the day, journal about the times that you were angry throughout the day.

This type of looking is very important to the process of purification. The process of purification is the same as the process of reprogramming the brain. The thoughts you find when you inquire into anger are thoughts that have been believed over and over again. They are well defined in the brain and run automatically whenever an outer situation triggers that line of thinking.

Through careful looking, like I just demonstrated, we uncover background-thinking processes. Through seeing those thoughts and choosing not to believe them again, the brain is reprogrammed. It is brought back to a state that does not include mistaken programming.

This corrected state enables us to perceive with clarity instead of misperceiving through false ideas that are programmed into the brain. That takes us back to how today's Course lesson began:

"Today we practice differently, and take a stand against our anger, that our fears may disappear (correction of mistaken programming) and offer room to love."

Lesson 162, I am as God created me

There are two sides to the coin of awakening. One is letting go of the false self through self-inquiry, which is questioning the false self in order to recognize that it isn't you; it is merely attachment to thought. The other is recognizing and embracing the true Self through Self-inquiry, a form of devotion where you repeatedly focus on the true Self until it is your only experience.

Yesterday we focused on self-inquiry by looking at our anger. Today we will focus on Self-inquiry.

The lessons says, "I am as God created me. This single thought, held firmly in the mind, would save the world. There is no dream these words will not dispel; no thought of sin and no illusion which the dream contains that will not fade away before their might. They are the trumpet of awakening that sounds around the world. ... And those who live and hear this sound will never look on death."

The single thought that has the power the Course speaks of is not the intellectual idea, 'I am as God created me.' It is the *realization* 'I am as God created me.' Today we seek to have many glimpses of this realization. "Holy indeed is he who makes these words his own; arising with them in his mind, recalling them throughout the day, at night bringing them with him as he goes to sleep."

Take many pauses today to notice life-presence in yourself. Pause and ask yourself, "Do I exist now?" And then relax and notice that you do. Ask, "Am I aware now?" And then relax and notice that you are.

When you have a few minutes for a little deeper practice, sit quietly and notice how much awareness can be aware of at once. Notice that it is aware of sounds ahead of you, behind you and to each side simultaneously. Notice it is aware of sensations in the body. It is aware of thoughts in the mind. Notice it is aware of both the outer world (sights & sounds) and the inner world (sensations and thoughts) simultaneously. And as you notice this, notice you are awareness. You are that which is aware of the outer and inner world. Stay a few moments more, resting as awareness.

If you would like some coaching about how to experience many glimpses of the Self throughout the day, consider watching this 11-minute video by Bentinho Massaro. This is a video that I have shared before, but you may be ready to notice more in it now:

<https://youtu.be/9yG2INLOgdA>

Lesson 163, There is no death. The Son of God is free.

Everything that is born, dies. This is the law of impermanence. Yet, today's lesson says that death is a false belief. It says that we are mistaken when we believe that death holds "all living things within its withered hand; ... it alone will surely come."

So which is a statement of truth? Impermanence or 'there is no death'?

Both. It is true that everything that is born, dies. If something has a beginning, it will also have an end. But it is also true that what has no beginning, has no end. The question becomes, which are you? Were you born? Or are you that which always existed and always will?

Today's lesson says, "Either all things die, or else they live and cannot die. No compromise is possible." Yet, you can watch a flower come into being, live a short time and then wither and die. What is this lesson talking about?

Today's lesson is looking beyond form, which is temporary, to the spirit of all living things, which is eternal. Life itself, which is God and is all things, has no beginning and no end. For life, death is impossible. You can see that if you look beyond specifics.

For example, one flower may blossom and then wither and die, but if you look around, can you find life elsewhere once the flower dies? Is there life in the tree? In the insect? In you? Did life die when the flower died?

We all experience the death of loved ones in our lifetimes. This is a very sad event when it occurs. Yet, has life died when the loved one died? Or can we still find life living?

Temporary form comes and goes. That is the law of impermanence. But life lives. That is all it can do. That is its nature.

Awakening is the realization that you (and other living things) are not the temporary form. You are life itself.

It's true that the temporary form of the body-personality that you experience now will end, but you cannot die. Life has no end.

Today we will continue to practice Self-inquiry by looking throughout the day to notice life-presence as what we are.

Today, when your mind thinks about a problem that you are facing, try this exercise:

Look at the problem that the mind is thinking about. Ask yourself, "Has this problem always been here? Will this problem, in one way or another, have an end?" And then notice that as an example of impermanence.

Next, shift attention to your Self. Ask, "What am I? What is aware of these thoughts about a problem?" Look carefully to notice the life-presence that is aware of thought. Notice that in your experience, you, as life-presence, has always been constant. You have experienced the coming and going of many problems, but this life-presence has remained the same. Reflect for a few moments on the continuous nature of life-presence, and then say to yourself, "There is no death. The son of God is free."

For another effective method of noticing your free Self today, instead of being identified with thoughts about temporary problems, watch this 5-minute video by Loch Kelly:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvEuWoRyD9Q&t=41s>

Lesson 164, Now are we one with Him Who is our Source.

Yesterday we compared the impermanence of problems with the eternal nature of the Self. Today, we will continue to focus on the Self. Today, we will let our desires remind us to turn our attention to life-presence.

Today's lesson encourages us to be faithful in our practice. It says, "Faithfulness in practicing today will bring rewards so great and so completely different from all things you sought before, that you will know that here your treasure is, and here your rest. Now is the balance righted, ... The valuable and the valueless are both perceived and recognized for what they are. ... Open the curtain in your practicing by merely letting go all things you think you want. ... Is not Christ's vision worthy to be sought above the world's unsatisfying goals? Let not today

slip by without the gifts it holds for you ...; you can exchange all suffering for joy this very day. Practice in earnest, and the gift is yours.”

Here is how we shall practice in earnest today:

Whenever you notice that attention has gone to a desire, whether it seems to be a small, insignificant desire or a bigger, seemingly more important one, pause. Turn attention inward to life-presence. Be aware of awareness. Look at it. Does it have a desire now or is it simply presently being? Rest with attention on awareness-life-presence, noticing it for a few moments.

After spending a few moments noticing life-presence, notice that desire comes from attention on thought, not from awareness-life-presence. Notice that awareness-life-presence simply is. Notice that thought wants something different or something more.

Earlier this year, we read NTI Romans, Chapters 2 & 3. These chapters described the beginning of the ego as *the wish for something different than what is*.

As you look, notice that *wish for something different than what is*, is in thought. And then look again at awareness-life-presence. Notice that awareness-life-presence is what is. Notice it is always present, simply being what it is.

Notice thought is an object that you can be interested in or not interested in, but either way, thought is not you. You are the one interested or not interested in thought. Notice you are awareness-life-presence. Say to yourself slowly, “Now I am one with my Source.”

Lesson 165, Let not my mind deny the Thought of God.

Since Lesson 156, *I walk with God in perfect holiness*, we have spent the majority of our days noticing awareness-life-presence. We have noticed it is always present. We have noticed it is what we are. And yet, most of us do not fully realize our Self as awareness-life-presence. Why?

The answer is, the mind denies truth, and we continue to believe the mind.

Here are some common doubt thoughts that arise in the mind of a spiritual aspirant:

~ I do not want truth enough.

~ I do not practice well enough.

~ The truth is out of reach.

~ I do not give enough time to practice in order to realize truth.

- ~ I do not know what truth is.
- ~ I will never realize truth.
- ~ I am not good enough to realize truth.
- ~ Truth does not exist.

All of these doubt thoughts deny truth. When any one of these thoughts is believed, it keeps us from noticing awareness-life-presence now. And as yesterday's lesson said, "What time but now can truth be recognized? The present is the only time there is. And so today, this instant, now, we come to look upon what is forever there."

Today's workbook lesson encourages us to practice with hope, because hope counteracts doubt.

What if we replaced every thought of doubt with a thought of hope? For example, we could replace, "I do not want truth enough" with "I must want truth more than I think, because spirituality is an ongoing focus in my life."

Which do you think benefits the purpose of awakening more: negative thoughts of doubt or positive thoughts of hope? Which do you think benefits the ego more?

Let's do two things today:

1 – Pay particular attention to discover the thoughts of doubt that you listen to. Look at those thoughts with reason, meaning notice that those thoughts serve the ego and discourage spiritual aspiration. Look for reasonable thoughts of hope to replace them with, thoughts that encourage you instead of discouraging you.

2 – Continue to notice awareness-life-presence. Throughout the day, each time you remember, take a moment to notice that you are aware and you exist. Even when you are distracted from awareness-life-presence by doubt, you are still aware and you still exist. Doubt does not change the truth; it only denies it.

Lesson 166, I am entrusted with the gifts of God.

As mentioned during my tip for lesson 164, NTI teaches that the ego began with the *wish for something different than what is*. Because that is the basis of the ego, that is a key element of the ego thought system. If you pay attention to your mind, you will see that this idea shows up in one form or another multiple times each day.

Every time we think we do not have enough, there is the wish for something different.

Every time we complain about how things are, there is the wish for something different.

Every time we resist a task we need to complete, there is the wish for something different.

Every time we judge ourselves or someone else as not good enough, there is the wish for something different.

Etcetera.

Today's lesson talks about the one who "wanders on in misery and poverty, alone though God is with him, and a treasure his so great that everything the world contains is valueless before its magnitude."

The treasure "so great that everything the world contains is valueless before its magnitude" is awareness-life-presence.

Reflect upon that for a moment. Without awareness-life-presence, nothing would be. The sound of a bird's song or the sound of waves rolling onto the beach, the sight of a beautiful sunset or the sight of a herd of deer moving through the pines—nothing that symbolizes the treasure of life could be without awareness-life-presence. Awareness-life-presence is the basis of everything we treasure, and therefore it is the greatest treasure of all.

We wander alone "in misery and poverty" whenever we listen to the ego thought system with the wish for something different at its foundation. We are not satisfied with the treasure of awareness-life-presence. Instead, we choose unhappiness as we seek for something different. Even after change occurs, we seek for something different again. Therefore, one who is focused on the ego thought system is never happy for long, because the wish for something different continues to heckle him/her.

Today we will shift our attention from unhappiness to happiness, from the wish for something different to appreciation for the magnificent treasure that is always present.

Each time you notice the wish for something different in your mind today, pause. Shift your attention to awareness-life-presence, and spend a few moments appreciating it. Be as vigilant in this practice as you can be. I say this, because the wish for something different is a strong habit; it could occur many times during the day without you noticing it.

For example, the wish for something different may show up as the wish for more time to get things done, or as the wish for fewer things to do. It may show up as the wish for less traffic or a shorter line at the grocery store. It may show up as the wish that someone around you were different than he/she is. It may show up as the wish that you were different or that your body was different. It may show up as the wish that the world was different than it is.

Pay attention today for the wish for something different in whatever way it shows up in your thoughts, and then shift attention to notice the treasure. Let yourself feel appreciation for awareness-life-presence. Follow that by slowly saying to yourself, "I am entrusted with the gifts of God."

Lesson 167, There is one life, and that I share with God.

Death is defined in the dictionary as, "the permanent ending of vital processes."

Vital is defined as, "full of energy, lively."

Process is defined as "a natural series of changes."

This means that death would be the permanent end of life-energy *in all of its forms*. Anyone who is willing to look with reason can see that death has never occurred. Life-energy in all of its forms has never ceased. It is just as the old saying says, "Life keeps going." It's true that transitions occur. Change is always happening at the level of form. But life itself cannot end.

Awakening is realizing that all of life is life itself, ongoing, and not the temporary form.

Today's workbook lesson defines death as an idea, and nothing more. It says this idea "underlies all feelings that are not supremely happy." That is because happiness is a natural characteristic of life aware of itself. Whenever we are not supremely happy, our attention is distracted from our truth as life.

Let's look at how this is experienced.

Imagine I am unhappy because my daughter prefers to stay in her room instead of joining the rest of the family for a day of activity. First, I look to see what I am feeling specifically. I notice that I feel a sense of loss, like something is missing from this day. In my perception, the day is not perfect because of my daughter's decision.

I recognize that the idea "today is not perfect" is the wish for something different. I continue the practice from yesterday's workbook lesson, and I pause to appreciate awareness-life-presence. I let go of all thoughts about my daughter's decision, and I reflect deeply on the perfection of awareness-life-presence as it is.

After a few moments of appreciating awareness-life-presence, I look back at the idea that there is loss today. Is that true? Did I find loss in awareness-life-presence as I reflected on it? No, there was no loss in awareness-life-presence. It was exactly the same as it always is. The idea of loss was just a thought in my mind. I was able to experience it to the degree that I let my attention focus on it, but that idea has no affect on awareness-life-presence.

Let's practice in this way today. Whenever you notice that you are not happy, take these steps:

1 – Look briefly to get some clarity regarding the specific feeling of unhappiness. (e.g., In the example above, the unhappiness was specifically a feeling of loss.)

2 – Look at the specific feeling, and notice it is a form of the wish for something different. You might ask yourself, “Do I think I would be happier if this was different than it is?” If the answer is yes, it is the wish for something different.

3 – Shift your attention to notice and appreciate awareness-life-presence for a few moments. During this time, let go of your thoughts about the situation related to your unhappiness. Give full, restful attention to noticing awareness-life-presence as it is.

4 – Next, look with reason to see if the specific feeling of unhappiness is a fact that was noticed in awareness-life-presence or just a thought in the mind. (For example, if the feeling is rejection, is there any rejection found in awareness-life-presence or is awareness-life-presence the same as it always is? If the specific feeling is guilt, is there any guilt found in awareness-life-presence? Etcetera.)

5 – With the recognition that there was no affect on awareness-life-presence, say to yourself, “There is one life, and that I share with God.”

Note: If you feel you do not have time to look at unhappiness fully during the day, you may go back to it with your journal at the end of the day.

Lesson 168, Your grace is given me. I claim it now.

Steve Ford described his awakening experience to Rick Archer in a Buddha at the Gas Pump interview in this way:

“I stood before God—Omnipresent Reality—with the true intention; I handed over my thinking in a prayer position, and there was a point where as I let go there was a slight sense of sadness, a slight sense of disappointment that I had with myself having to give the Creator my thinking back, because it felt like I'd done nothing with it. I felt very sad. I felt, “I'm sorry, but take the thinking back, because I've not done much good with this.” I felt I'd disappointed God. ...

At that point, the mind began to open. It was a point where I'd let go of the tension of identification. Now, I didn't know that at the time, but what I did was ... I totally didn't identify with the mind, because I knew mind was not real. ... And at the point of knowing it is not real, it was still the scariest thing to let go of. So, letting go of that, I felt where I disidentified with it—where I let go of attachment to it as a reality principle—it started to open. Because the mind, when you are attached with it, becomes contracted. It's like an energy, a tight contraction. And of course, when I was no longer attached with it, it just began to open up.

As it opened up, it went beyond the coordinate that I'd set on it, which is the egoic mark, the control you have on mind, the idea you have. And so as it began to open, it went beyond the idea of who I was as a mental construct, and so beyond the mental construct of who I thought I was. There was a fear. A fear of, "Oh, what's going to happen here?" But I was so broken, so completely broken, [*Note from Regina: This happened at a point when Steve was feeling complete desperation and failure in his life*] that I just stayed with it. I thought, "Let's just do it."

It dissipated. I describe it as birds flying out of a tree. It felt like my thoughts just dissipated. All of the thoughts in my mind just flew away like a flock of birds. And just at that point, there was this opening. The thoughts went and the mind just became this blank screen, and there was this perfect observation of blank screen.

I remember, for the first time in my life, coming to know peace of mind. ... You know when they say, "The mind is the sky and the thoughts are clouds." It really is! That is exactly how it was. Suddenly, there was this infinite sky of mind, which became... It's like a projection screen. But *what is observing that* is this pure awareness, this pure consciousness.

And at that point, I realized, "Ah! I'm not mad. I'm not dead. I've not disappeared. I am observing this. And I'm observing from this undifferentiated awareness. And the mind became the perfect reflection of what was observing, which was nothing. Emptiness, you see?"

This happened! [He snaps his finger.] There was no thinking!

At that point, I remember suddenly being pulled into a deeper idea, which was an emotional idea, because we have layers of thought. We have the thought that is very abstract [points at the head], the thought that is emotional, and we have the thought that is very physical, the body. I didn't know this then, but this is what happened. So suddenly there was a pull to a deeper aspect of contraction within my body. You see, the mind opened up, so suddenly there was nothing to keep me from entering what I call the heart area. Suddenly there was a pull, and I felt myself as formless consciousness

coming down into my heart area. And as I was going down, I just stayed with formless consciousness. There was no egoic "I" anymore, no mental construct of doership anymore. ... As I was going into the heart, ... suddenly the heart begins to open because I wasn't doing anything with it [*Comment from Regina: There was no longer a doer trying to keep the heart from opening.*], ... and as it begins to open there was a pain, but it was a clean pain. A pain where there was no suffering, because suffering is in the mind, you see. ...

As I felt this pain, it was like the pain of the world. ... This voice came from nowhere; it was like a voice from within this. It said, "You've been running away from this all your life."

And I understood then, I'd been running away from my heart opening. I had remained in what I knew all my life. Suddenly, I am going beyond what I knew. I'd done that with the mind, but now on this level, the emotional level, this was on a much deeper level. The emotional attachment we have for things is much deeper and is much stronger, you see. [Said with a look of seriousness.]

And then it opened up, and all there was, was a void. Going beyond the emotional contraction of my identity, there was just this void. It was absolutely black.

I don't want to appear too dramatic. I don't want to frighten anyone. But for me, I then was facing this very dark void. And then this void was pulling me in.

As I was being pulled into this vortex, this void, there was another voice came in. It said, "You'll either go mad or you'll die." And I consented. I said, "Okay." Not verbally, but in my innermost. Intentionally, I said okay. And I was pulled into this vortex, this very dark vortex, and as I got pulled in, it just felt like the whole thing opened up, and as I got pulled in there was a point where I truly did not exist; for no time! It was like a [claps his hands together once]!

As soon as I got pulled in, I could then see From. And at that point, there was a point of absolute death, complete death of attachments. There was no attachment anymore to the mental structure or the emotional structure, so much so that everything had opened up and it truly reflected what was directly observing. And the void, in fact, was a reflection of the absolute. [He smiles.] ...

I could see. I could see, basically. And I could see from a completely, completely different reality base to what I was before. Totally."

I shared this description of Steve's awakening, because today's workbook lesson asks us to, "Request Him now to give the means by which this world will disappear, and vision first will come, with knowledge but an instant later." We

are told, “This the gift by which God leans to us and lifts us up, taking salvation’s final step Himself. All steps but this we learn instructed by His Voice. But finally He comes Himself, and takes us in His Arms and sweeps away the cobwebs of our sleep.”

We are asked to ask God to awaken us.

Steve says in his interview with Rick Archer, “This is something you can’t just go and do. It has to do with timing, to do with pressure. In that moment, what was going on inside of me, I was falling apart. There was absolutely no sense of authenticity. ... I just thought, “Okay. I’ll let go of my thinking.” And for some reason it worked. ... I could tell someone else, ‘Go, get on your knees now and hand over your thinking. It will just go away and you’ll be fine,’ and it just doesn’t work that way. Because then the ego says, “Right. I’m going to get it now.” *[Note from Regina: The ego’s perspective is getting. Steve’s intention was letting go, even to the point of death.]*

As Steve points out, it may not work if we ask today for God’s grace of awakening, because it may be the ego that is asking. If one feels completely ready for the death of the ego, the time is right. If the ego wants awakening for itself, the time is not right.

So, what do we do with today’s lesson? My recommendation is a day of deep contemplation and sincere prayer. Read Steve’s description and contemplate it. If you like, watch his video. I will post it below. Read today’s Course lesson and contemplate it. If you have *The Untethered Soul* by Michael Singer, read Chapter 7 and contemplate that. If you feel drawn to some other video or book, then trust your feeling and contemplate that. Get as deep into your sincere heart as you can today, and pray the prayers that are sincere for you.

Here is the link to the Steve Ford interview. If you do not have time for the entire interview, start at 44 minutes and listen for at least 15 minutes.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_iE1cVHP2tU

Lesson 169, By grace I live. By grace I am released.

Today’s lesson begins by telling us “grace cannot come until the mind prepares itself for true acceptance.” And then it goes on to say, “Grace becomes inevitable instantly in those who have prepared a table” for it.

Yesterday, we looked at Steve Ford’s experience of grace. We saw his readiness demonstrated by how he allowed the experience to complete itself, even when the ego threatened him with madness or death if he were to continue. Even to that he consented. He was fully ready.

What we are doing now is preparing ourselves for the same state of readiness. Each time we see the ego in others or ourselves, we have an opportunity to prepare ourselves. Each time we feel upset, we have an opportunity to prepare ourselves. Each moment of paying attention to awareness is another moment preparing ourselves. We are in the stage of preparing the mind *to consent to awakening* when grace comes.

There is an interesting paragraph in today's lesson. Let's look at it together. It says:

"We have appeared to contradict our statement that the revelation of the Father and the Son as One has been already set. But we have also said the mind determines when that time will be, and has determined it. And yet we urge you to bear witness to the Word of God to hasten the experience of truth, ..."

This paragraph appears to make three contradictory statements.

- 1 – The time for your awakening has already been set and written into the script.
- 2 – Your soul-mind has decided when your awakening will be.
- 3 – Through your willingness, the awakening experience can be hastened; it can come sooner rather than later.

Which is true? Can they all three be true?

NTI says, "This play has many endings, like slits cut in the script, where one can choose to step out of the play." Maybe that is true; maybe there are many possibilities.

To be perfectly honest, I don't know what's true. I don't know anything about how awakening comes about. And this is the perspective I encourage you to accept as your own.

You see, the mind likes to believe ideas. It gets its identity from believing ideas, including believing spiritual ideas. It wants to decide what it believes about awakening, and by doing so, it subtly claims that idea as 'mine.' Each idea of 'mine,' strengthens the 'I' that is the ego. After all, ego is simply *identification with thought*.

Therefore, I encourage you not to adopt ideas about awakening. I encourage you not to make spiritual beliefs a part of your ego belief system. Instead, prepare your mind to accept the journey into the unknown, which is the journey of awakening, by getting comfortable living with *not knowing* now. Abstain from all schools of thought.

In fact, today's lesson seems to encourage our decision to 'not know' when it says, "There is no need to further clarify what no one in the world can understand." And then it lets us know that, "When your revelation to your oneness comes, it will be known and fully understood."

"Suffice it, then, that you have work to do to play your part. The ending must remain obscure to you until your part is done."

What is our part? Preparing ourselves to accept awakening. Let that be our only concern. It is the ego that becomes over-concerned with finding ways to be helpful. Helpfulness occurs naturally as we prepare ourselves for awakening.

So then, our part is this:

~ self-inquiry, which is inquiring into the ego thought system in order to see its ideas are not true and in order to see we are not the false-self, which is made through identification with thought.

~ Self-inquiry, which is glimpsing awareness many times throughout the day & spending more concentrated time in awareness-watching-awareness meditation

~ surrender, which is discerning between intuition and ego, and then following intuition instead of ego

Lesson 170, There is no cruelty in God and none in me.

The sole purpose of today's lesson is to encourage us to give up attack.

First, the lesson helps us look with clarity at why we attack. It's because we are afraid, and we think we can protect ourselves through attack. *(Note: Our attack could be acted out, like raising our voice with someone, or it could be internal, like thinking attack thoughts about someone.)*

Second, the lesson points out that when we attack, fear is protected, not escaped. This is the same teaching as in *The Untethered Soul*. It says, "You're locking your illness inside yourself, and it will only get worse ... if you protect yourself, you will never be free. It's that simple."

Finally, the lesson recommends that we save ourselves "more delay and needless misery than you can possibly imagine" by giving up attack.

Attack is a habit, and like any habit, it isn't easy to give up. However, we *can* give up attack. I am writing this as someone who has successfully given up that particular habit, and the habit of attack was as strong in me as it is in anyone. In fact, this workbook lesson was my least favorite workbook lesson, because I thought I was cruel. I thought cruelty was at the base of my nature. It wasn't.

There is no cruelty in my nature, and there is none in yours. All attack comes from attachment to thought.

How do we give up attack? First, we need the desire to give it up. Once we have the desire, we follow-through by doing our best each and every time the energy of attack arises in us. If we keep trying, eventually the habit of attack dies.

Remember, when you give something your attention and belief, it is increased. When you take away attention and belief, it dies. This means the more you give in to the energy of attack, the more the energy of attack arises. As you begin to resist the urge to attack by watching the energy with a centered state of mind, it weakens. If you keep up the practice of resisting attack as the observer, that energy eventually dies.

The desire to give up attack has to come first. It needs to be a heart-felt desire, not merely another thought. One way to evoke a heart-felt desire to give up attack is to pay more attention when you do attack. Pay attention to how you feel when you attack. Pay attention to the general energy that is occurring in the relationship when you attack. Is this the feel you really want in your life?

It's important to look at attack with reason and to ask, "Is this what I want?" We attack because we think it serves us. We need to realize it doesn't serve us. We want to be infused with the joy of God, not the feelings of attack.

It is also helpful to inquire to discover what is at the root of our attack episodes. For example, let's assume we've done a root cause inquiry and found our sense of unworthiness at the root of one episode. Whatever we give our attention and belief to is energized and increased. Or as *The Untethered Soul* puts it, we lock that illness inside of ourselves, and it will only get worse. Is that what we want to do, energize and increase our sense of unworthiness? If not, we need to learn not to give in to it.

This is one example of how the movie, *Little Buddha*, was important to me. When rage would rise in me, and I felt the urge to attack, I would remember Buddha sitting under the tree watching all of the fury that Mara threw out at him. Buddha didn't give in to those energies, and he didn't run from them. *He silently watched them*. He watched them with the awareness that the energies were not his nature. He watched with the knowledge that he wanted to be free (purified) of those energies.

It's important to realize that there is no cruelty in you. Attack is not a part of your nature. It's an effect of attachment to thought. Learn to abide as your Self, the centered watcher, and the impermanent energy that was born through belief and involvement will die. Patience, compassion, wisdom and love, which are your nature, will arise naturally in its absence.

Here's a 14-minute synopsis of the movie, *Little Buddha*. The inspiring scene that is mentioned above begins at 10 minutes and 30 seconds:

<https://youtu.be/0F8I5E82Qew>

Review Lesson 171

Today we begin our fifth review period. The review introduction says, "This time we are ready to give more effort and more time to what we undertake ... that we may go on again more certain, more sincere, with faith upheld more surely."

There is a beautiful prayer in the review introduction, one you may want to read at the beginning of each day of this review period:

Steady our feet, our Father. Let our doubts be quiet and our holy minds be still, and speak to us. We have no words to give to You. We would but listen to Your Word, and make it ours. Lead our practicing as does a father lead a little child along a way he does not understand. Yet does he follow, sure that he is safe because his father leads the way for him.

So do we bring our practicing to You. And if we stumble, You will raise us up. If we forget the way, we count upon Your sure remembering. We wander off, but You will not forget to call us back. Quicken our footsteps now, that we may walk more certainly and quickly unto You. And we accept the Word You offer us to unify our practicing, as we review the thoughts that You have given us.

And then we are asked to contemplate this thought as we review lessons 151-170:

God is but Love, and therefore so am I.

Here is my recommendation for this review:

1. Begin each day with the prayer above. Let yourself feel how much you want your practice to be individually guided from within.
2. Spend a few minutes with the day's review lesson, silently being with the words for that day's review, and then feel for what you are to do next. A few possibilities are:
 - a. You may feel to contemplate the review lesson and write what comes to you during contemplation.
 - b. You may feel to review the tips from the lessons that are reviewed on that day.

- c. You may feel to practice self-inquiry through journaling regarding some thoughts in your mind.
- d. You may feel to go directly into awareness-watching-awareness meditation.
- e. You may have a feeling to practice the review lesson in some specific way throughout your day.

Trust whatever comes to you. Remember you have prayed for guidance to lead your practice. Remember that guidance is always individualized to fit each person perfectly, and then trust the guidance that comes to you each day of this review period.

“Let us raise our hearts from dust to life” as we let intuition guide our individual practice throughout this review period.

Lesson 181, I trust my brothers, who are one with me.

The introduction to lessons 181 – 200 setup our goals for the next 20 days.

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

It is good to pause before beginning lesson 181 to ask ourselves if we will accept these goals as our goals. We are not asked to add these goals to the list of goals that we have already set for ourselves. We are asked to *change our minds about our goals*. Are we willing to see the goals we had previously set for ourselves as unimportant, and adopt these goals as our only goals now?

[Please pause to contemplate before continuing.]

Lesson 181 focuses on the first goal, widening the horizons of our vision. It says, “Perception has a focus. It is this that gives consistency to what you see. Change but this focus, and what you behold will change accordingly.”

We have all experienced how this works in the most benign of ways. For example, recently I bought a Toyota 4Runner. One week before buying a Toyota 4Runner, I had never heard of them. I told my boyfriend what I wanted in my next car. He did some research and selected the 4Runner as the car that was best for me. Since buying a 4Runner, I notice them *everywhere*. It seems like 4Runners are one of the most popular cars in Colorado, yet I never saw them before. It is as if they did not exist at all, and now they are everywhere. What changed?

The focus of my perception changed. That's all.

Lesson 181 asks us to let go of seeing the faults in others, as well as their mistakes, and focus on awareness-life-presence as what they are. It says, "We instruct our minds that it is this we seek, and only this, for just a little while."

Let me demonstrate how this might work:

Imagine I am talking to my boyfriend, and he tells me that he just sent a large amount of money to his sister to help her out of a financial challenge. Let's imagine that I have a similar financial challenge, but he has not offered to help me. An upset begins to arise in me. It feels like jealousy, unfairness, rejection and anger all rolled into one. I project it out onto him in this way:

"He doesn't care about me. Why have I wasted 25 years of my life with him?"

And then I remember to practice today's lesson. I pause for a moment and remember my goal to widen the horizon of what I see. I notice awareness-life-presence in me first. I notice it is fine, still being aware, still living, and still present in me. It has not been affected by what was just said or thought.

Next, I look at him. I notice he is also awareness-life-presence. He is being aware. He is living. He is present here now. I see us as joined in our basic essence, awareness-life-presence, and I let my attention rest there.

Lesson 181 says, "A major hazard to success has been involvement with your past and future goals." This is why it is important to replace the goals we set for ourselves with the goals set in the introduction to this section of the Course.

In the scenario above, I could have two goals that would interfere with effective practice of today's lesson. One goal might be to feel financially secure. The other goal might be for my boyfriend to behave the way I want him to behave. If I keep either goal, it will interfere with my practice. But if I am willing to drop both goals and genuinely replace them with "widen the horizon of my vision", this practice becomes easy *because it is what I want*. In fact, the degree to which this practice is difficult for me is the degree to which I cling to the goals I had previously set.

Today's lesson says, "We recognize that we have lost this goal if anger blocks our way in any form." It also tells us, "And if a brother's sins occur to us, our narrowed focus will restrict our sight, and turn our eyes upon our own mistakes, which we will magnify and call our 'sins.'"

In other words, just as I see 4Runners everywhere, if we let our vision narrow, we will see faults, mistakes, sins, guilt, blame and unworthiness everywhere, including in ourselves. Our narrowed vision blocks our own freedom.

The lesson reminds us, "So, for a little while, without regard to past or future, should such blocks arise we will transcend them with instructions to our minds. ... As our focus goes beyond mistakes, we will behold a wholly sinless world. When seeing this is all we want to see, when this is all we seek for in the name of true perception, are the eyes of Christ inevitably ours. ... We look neither ahead nor backwards. We look straight into the present. And we give our trust to the experience we ask for now."

We look neither ahead nor backwards, because there we will find the goals we had previously set. We look straight into the present, because that is where we find awareness-life-presence. It is here right now.

Lesson 182, I will be still an instant and go home.

Let's review our current goals.

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

The ego likes to fill our time. There's an expression that I have used many times in my life. It's "kill time," as in, "How are we going to kill time this weekend?" The thought behind that expression is this:

Having nothing to do is so undesirable that we have to find something, *anything to do*, in order to avoid simply sitting quietly with ourselves.

Filling time is undeniably an ego preservation strategy.

It's helpful to begin to notice how we fill time. There are some things that we do that are necessary to this human life. There are other things that we do which are guided by intuition. And then there are the things that we do to "kill time," to avoid simply sitting quietly with ourselves. Are we ready to be self-honest and to discern between these three?

Today's workbook lesson says, "When you are still an instant, when the world recedes from you, when valueless ideas cease to have value in your restless mind, then will you hear His Voice. So poignantly He calls to you that you will not resist Him longer. In that instant He will take you to His home, and you will stay with Him in perfect stillness, silent and at peace, beyond all words, untouched by fear and doubt, sublimely certain that you are at home. Rest with Him frequently today."

Let's do two things today.

First, let's not avoid our meditation practice today. Our gentle healing homework asks us to spend 15-20 minutes in meditation daily. Let's be sure to do that at least

once today. You might also see if you can find 15-20 minutes at least two additional times today. That will help fulfill the request, "Rest with Him frequently today." Another option is to give 5 minutes every hour. Follow your individual intuition to find your way of fulfilling this request.

Secondly, let's begin to notice the difference between time that is spent in necessary activities and time that we are "killing." That is, time that could be used to sit quietly instead of being filled with something that is completely unnecessary.

There is one more thing worth commenting on before ending this tip. You know this, but let's bring it into awareness now anyway.

Ego will attempt to use any time we allot to sitting for active thinking. Thinking is another way to "kill time" and avoid being still. Remember that your attention does not have to go to thought. Initially, you can place attention on the sounds in your environment, on the breath, or on sensations in the body. Let attention rest with something other than thought, and thought will slow down and quiet. Once thought has grown quieter, place attention with awareness and abide there. "Be still" by holding attention with yourself as the observer. Pay attention to what you are, and stay there, no matter what may happen in mind during the meditation.

Here's a story that Mooji tells about 'staying as the watcher' during meditation. It is called, "The Yogini." Buddha remained still as Mara attacked with desire, anger and fear. Notice that the Yogini remains still in the same way as the mind attempts to distract her with a different kind of trick:

A great Yogini was deep in meditation. Suddenly, beautiful and melodious sounds could be heard, appearing as if from nowhere and everywhere simultaneously. It was like nothing she had ever heard. She felt, "This music is truly wonderful, but it cannot be what I am, for I am here to hear it." She remained inside her meditation, and the music faded away.

Next appeared the most exquisite colors, shimmering with so much luminosity and brilliance, like no painter could paint; nor could any flower display it, for it was not of this earthly realm. She thought, "This is, indeed, astonishingly beautiful. However, it cannot be the ultimate, for I am here to perceive it." This phenomenon, too, she ignored. Shortly afterwards, it also vanished in the presence of her deep and unmoving silence.

Shortly after this, there appeared several beings shaped as if from pure light, floating through space and smiling lovingly at her in a welcoming manner. She felt profoundly touched and filled with loving emotions, but inwardly she somehow kept her composure. "How profound," she felt, "but this also cannot be what is the unchanging reality, for, were I not here, who would see them?"

As soon as this insight occurred, the figures vanished. Her mind entered her heart and could no more produce any effects. A deep silence prevailed as her mind merged inside her indivisible, unconquerable and essential being. She awakened completely to Truth.

Lesson 183, I call upon God's Name and on my own.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Swami Ramdas was a twentieth century Indian saint who found awakening through the constant repetition of the name of God. Here's what Ram Dass (Richard Alpert) wrote about Swami Ramdas and the practice of mantra:

"The first time I started to work with beads and the repetition of either the mantra in praise of RAM, "Sri Ram Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram," or just the single word, "Ram" in 1968, I recognized the potential power of this simple devotional technique to rend the veil of ignorance from moment to moment thus allowing one to imbue one's life with spirit.

It was easy to keep the mantra going in my room in the ashram, but as I ventured forth into the world, I found that the fascinations, seductions and slings and arrows of daily life so often distracted me from 'remembering.' It was hard for me to imagine how it could be otherwise.

Then in 1970 I came upon the writings of Swami Ramdas (or 'Papa Ramdas', as I thought of him). And there it was, so innocently presented, a testament to the possibility that by remembering Ram (God), one's life could be transformed, totally transformed, moment by moment, into divine lila (play)."

Eknath Easwaran, translator of the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and Dhammapada, wrote this regarding Swami Ramdas:

"The very presence of Papa Ramdas comforted and strengthened us. He was visible proof that a man apparently like you and me—not an austere, emaciated monk, but a former textile technician who had lived in the midst of worldly activity—had become established in the awareness of God."

Today's workbook lesson asks us to spend one day in the devotional practice that Swami Ramdas followed. We are asked to spend one day repeating the Name of God, remembering that His Name is also our own. The lesson says:

“Practice but this today; repeat God’s Name slowly again and still again. Become oblivious to every name but His. Hear nothing else. Let all your thoughts become anchored on this. No other word we use except at the beginning, when we say today’s idea but once. And then God’s Name becomes our only thought, our only word, the only thing that occupies our minds, the only wish we have, the only sound with any meaning, and the only Name of everything that we desire to see; ...”

The Course does not tell us what God’s name is. Maybe this is left to us, so we can use the name that feels most devotional to us.

Swami Ramdas recited, “Sri Ram Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram.” If this suits your heart, you may recite this mantra today.

According to Biblical tradition, the name of God that was given to Moses is “I am that I am.” That was also the mantra that was given to me in May of 2008.

Many people have told me they do not like the mantra, “I am that I am,” because they do not know what it means. “That” is a pronoun specifically linked to identification. It refers to a specific thing already mentioned or understood, and it ascribes a specific feature to that thing, a feature that is essential to identification. For example, the table that is round or the blouse that is blue.

“I am that I am” ascribes “I am” as a specific identifying feature to “I am”. In other words, it is “I am” doubly repeated and emphasized. It is similar to how Ramana Maharshi sometimes referred to the Self as “I-I.”

Today, if you choose to use the mantra “I am that I am” as the Name of God, remember that today’s lesson says, “To call upon God’s Name is but to call upon your own.” With this thought in mind, say to yourself, “I am that I am.” Notice I am is doubly repeated and emphasized. Feel the meaning of that in your soul. Let yourself linger in that silent meaning, and then repeat the mantra again. As today’s lesson instructs:

“Sit silently, and let His Name become the all-encompassing idea that holds your mind completely. Let all thoughts be still except this one. And to all other thoughts respond with this, and see God’s Name replace the thousand little names you gave your thoughts. ... Today you can achieve a state in which you will experience the gift of grace. ... No prayer but this is necessary, for it holds them all within it.”

Note: You may replace today’s awareness-watching-awareness practice with this practice. You might also try watching awareness as you practice the Name of God mantra.

Footnotes:

- 1) *If you are interested in learning more about Swami Ramdas and his practice of mantra, I recommend his book, “In Quest of God.”*
- 2) *If you are interested in reading the story of Moses and the name “I am that I am,” you can read Exodus 3:1-15 at this link:*
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=exodus+3&version=KJV>

Lesson 184, The Name of God is my inheritance.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom



It has always amazed me that a huge dog, like a Great Dane, and a very small dog, like a Chihuahua, recognize each other as the same animal. The huge Great Dane does not mistake the Chihuahua for a squirrel or rodent, and the Chihuahua doesn't think the Great Dane is a monster. They recognize each other as the same.

Today's workbook lesson asks us to be more like the Great Dane and the Chihuahua. You see, we have a tendency to focus on differences. In fact, we do more than that. *We define a thing based on its difference* from

another thing. We also define circumstances based on their difference from other circumstances. The lesson says, "By this split you think you are established as a [individual] unity which functions with an independent will."

In other words, we get our sense of separation from the tendency to focus on and define by differences.

Today's workbook lesson says, "Such is the teaching of the world. It is a phase of learning everyone who comes must go through. But ... Learning that stops with what the world would teach stops short of meaning. In its proper place, it serves but as a starting point from which another kind of learning can begin, a new perception can be gained, ..."

We are not asked to drop the many names and descriptors that humans have given to things. These, the Course admits, are helpful to communication. But we are asked to drop believing that these many named differences have any real meaning. We are asked to look to the "one Identity which all things share." We are asked to remember the "single Source which unifies all things within Itself."

The workbook lesson says, "God has no name. And yet His Name becomes the final lesson that all things are one, and at this lesson does all learning end. ... No one can fail who seeks the meaning of the Name of God. Experience must come to supplement the Word. But first you must accept the Name for all reality, and realize the many names you gave its aspects have distorted what you see, but have not interfered with truth at all. One Name we bring into our practicing. One Name we use to unify our sight."

Today we will continue to use the Name of God mantra. However, as we use this mantra today, let's contemplate the sameness in all things as it relates to the Name of God, a sameness that is *represented by* the Name of God.

Lesson 185, I want the peace of God.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Before commenting on today's workbook lesson, I'd like to say something about the practice we've used for the last two days, repeating the Name of God.

There are many things that we do each day that have become well wired into our brains, so that we do not need to pay full attention in order to complete the task. Examples include showering, housework, exercising, and even driving. Because these activities do not require the full attention of our brains, our minds tend to wander a lot when we are busy with these types of activities.

If it feels helpful to you, you can replace mindless mind wandering with the Name of God mantra when you are engaged in activities (or non-activity) that do not require the full attention of your brain. This is not a new assignment for the Gentle Healing Group, but some of you may recognize value in this practice and may want to add it to your other practices. If that's the case, you may find it helpful to read, "Instructions for Using the Mantra" from *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*.

Now, let's look at today's lesson:

"I want the peace of God. To say these words is nothing. But to mean these words is everything. If you could but mean them for just an instant, there would be no further sorrow possible for you in any form. ... To mean you want the peace of God is to renounce all dreams. For no one means these words who wants illusions, and who therefore seeks the means which bring illusions. He has looked on them, and found them wanting. Now he seeks to go beyond them, recognizing that another dream would offer nothing more than all the others."

"Today devote your practice periods to careful searching of your mind, to find the dreams you cherish still. What do you ask for in the heart? ... Consider but what you believe will comfort you, and bring you happiness."

I've just done that. I looked and found one dream remaining in my heart. It's not a new dream. When I was around twenty years old, I created a book of dreams by cutting out pictures from magazines and putting them in a photo album. I spent

hours looking at the book of dreams over the next several years. Most of those dreams have come true in this lifetime. I suppose I attracted them by staring at that picture album hour after hour, day after day, year after year. In fact, today's workbook lesson says, "And dreams will come as you requested them." And so they did.

However, there is one dream left. It is very close to me now, almost in reach. All I have to do is give up everything else, and I can have that one final dream. For me, this dream seems like the ultimate. It seems that if I just had that, I could die happy.

Is it true?

This is what we are asked to look at today: Do we really want our dreams or do we want the peace of God, which is awakening from dreams entirely? What is it that we *truly* seek?

I pulled up a picture that represents my one remaining dream, and I looked at it. I could feel the dream burning in my heart. I could feel how much I seem to want it. And with all of that happening within me, I looked at the picture and asked, "Why do I want this? What do I think I will get if I can achieve this one final dream?"

The answer that came is, "Unending peace, true heart-fulfillment, joyous rest, and meaningful communion, all resulting in absolute satisfaction."

Next I asked myself, "So what is it that I truly want? Do I want that dream because of what it is, or do I want that dream because of what I think it will get me?"

I looked at the picture of my dream again, and I asked, "Would I want that if it did not give me unending peace, true heart-fulfillment, joyous rest, meaningful communion, and absolute satisfaction? Would I want that even if I knew it meant there would be new problems to resolve, one after another until the day I die? Is it actually *that* that I want, for better or for worse, or do I really want the peace of God, also known as unending peace, true heart-fulfillment, joyous rest, meaningful communion, and absolute satisfaction?"

It became clear that the picture is not what I actually want. The picture, *the dream*, merely represents what I want. As today's lesson says, "You want the peace of God. And so do all who seem to seek for dreams."

After seeing this clearly, I sat and looked at the picture of my dream. I recognized it is just a symbol for what I truly want. I do not need that object, because it isn't really the object that I want. I want the peace of God.

Our lesson today says, "No one who truly seeks the peace of God can fail to find it. For he merely asks that he deceive himself no longer ..."

We deceive ourselves when we think we want the object or circumstance that we dream of. That isn't what we want. We want what we think that object or circumstance will bring us. So why dream about an object or circumstance that is an imagined intermediary for what we truly want? Why not ask for what we truly want directly?

Lesson 186, Salvation of the world depends on me.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Today's lesson is a reminder of how important the purpose of awakening is. The salvation of the world depends on our awakening. Although most people may not realize it consciously, they want us to awaken.

Is this true?

Yes, most definitely. Although most of the world may not consciously know it, the heart and soul of each person values awakening more than any other human accomplishment. How do we know that?

As one example, who is more revered in the hearts of most people, Jesus or Caesar Augustus? Both lived at the same time. Most people know at least a little about each man and his accomplishments. Who is loved more? Who touches people's hearts and minds more?

You see, even though people in general are not consciously aware of it, everyone knows awakening is the most important thing a person can do in a lifetime, and everyone celebrates awakening when it is achieved.

Today's lesson encourages us to accept awakening as the role given to us by God. Some people may think it is arrogant to think that our individual spiritual paths have such monumental importance, but this lesson points out that is confusion regarding what arrogance is and what humility is. According to the lesson, arrogance is any thought that says awakening is *not* our God-given function. It could be the thought that I am not worthy of awakening, or it could be the thought that there is something else I want to do. *Any thought* that denies awakening as my role in this lifetime is arrogance.

Humility is accepting my role with all of my heart, all of my soul and all of my mind.

Today's lesson asks us to listen to God's Voice that He may "reveal to us what He would have us do." That means, listen to the part of you that is always coaching you toward awakening. It speaks to us all through the day. We just need to tap into it, so that we hear its instructions in every instant and can choose to follow them every step of the way.

There are two things that will help us hear (or feel) this Voice within us:

First, we must *want* to hear (or intuitively feel) this Voice over the personal thoughts in the mind.

Second, it is helpful to ask for this Voice's guidance. Because the Voice speaks to us all through the day, we want to ask for its guidance all through the day.

A good message that helps us learn to do that is "The Purpose of Surrender" from *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*. That message encourages us to ask within, "What am I to do now?" throughout the day. It says that this question is a fully inclusive question, which also includes, "How shall I see this?", "What am I to hear?", "How shall I respond?", etc. In other words, when we use the question "What am I to do now?" we are asking inner spiritual intuition to guide us in every aspect of our day.

Today's lesson says, "He has Thoughts which answer every need His Son perceives." This means that inner spiritual intuition will provide guidance for every situation we find ourselves in. In NTI Acts, the Inner Voice says:

In each circumstance and every situation along the way to Me, I am there with you, offering help and guidance. Never am I not there. Never can you make a mistake that will drive Me away. But it is also true that you can only hear My Word and accept My Help if you are willing to see that the answer to all things is Me.

If you choose to limit the circumstances in which I may help, My Help is limited. If you choose to solve your problems on your own, My answer remains unheard. Always, I am with you, able to help. Always, without exception, I am there. But you must be willing to know Me and accept Me in order to receive Me as yours.

Yesterday we inquired into our desires to discover what we truly want, and then we asked for that directly. Today, let's remember to ask for guidance from the One who knows how to lead us to what we truly want. Let's let that One guide in every detail of our life.

Lesson 187, I bless the world because I bless myself.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision

- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Today's lesson says, "Protect the things you value by the act of giving them away, and you are sure that you will never lose them."

Although I highly support giving in the material way, and I like to live this value, I don't think that's what this lesson is really talking about. The clue to what this lesson means comes near the end of the lesson. It says, "And as we look within, we see the purity of Heaven shine in our reflection of our Father's Love. ... What we have looked upon we would extend, for we would see it everywhere. We would behold it shining with the grace of God in everyone. We would not have it withheld from anything we look upon. And to ensure this holy sight is ours, we offer it to everything we see."

I am reminded of something I once heard. "Be enlightened now." I think it was Byron Katie that said this, but I can't be sure. The idea behind the statement was this: Stop waiting to be enlightened someday. Be enlightened now.

How do you do that? Let me give you a few examples:

- Someone says something to you that feels like a strong insult. *Be enlightened now.* Don't be defensive. Relax. Be present. Be still. Be open. Watch the energies inside of you, but don't become involved with them.
- You find out that a friend has been taking money and other things from you, a little at a time, so that you hadn't noticed. *Be enlightened now.* Instead of seeing your friend as guilty or betraying you, notice that you are unharmed.
- You go with a friend to her elderly mother's house to help clean the house. While dusting some collectables, one slips from your hand and breaks into dozens of pieces. *Be enlightened now.* Watch the energies that may arise inside you, but don't become involved with them. Apologize to your friend and her mother. If they seem upset, turn to intuition for guidance.
- A friend feels he needs some money. You've had lack thoughts lately too. *Be enlightened now.* Help your friend by giving him some money, and realize you are always taken care of.

I could go on forever.

- Your computer breaks down. *Be enlightened now.*
- You lose your wedding ring. *Be enlightened now.*
- Your spouse has an affair. *Be enlightened now.*
- Someone tells an unflattering lie about you in Facebook. *Be enlightened now.*

Being enlightened now has nothing to do with pretending you are awake. It has everything to do with being consciously tuned in to spiritual intuition. It has everything to do with asking, "What am I to do now? How am I to see this? How shall I respond?" Etc.

Again, today's lesson says, "Protect the things you *value* by the act of giving them away, and you are sure that you will never lose them." The key here is to *be aware of what you truly value*.

In the Bible, Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found ... Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Going and selling all that he had represents letting go of his attachment to his personal thinking. Buying the field represents living as the ground in which the treasure exists. It represents living from spiritual intuition.

By living from spiritual intuition, you discover what is within you. After all, you could not *be enlightened now* if enlightenment were not already present.

Today's lesson mentions sacrifice as the idea that blocks our ability to be enlightened now. For example, I may think that if I let someone spread a lie about me on Facebook, my reputation will be ruined, and that may feel like a sacrifice. I may also fear that I will lose friends, which is another sacrifice.

As you can see, believing this type of thinking is an obstacle that can get in the way of choosing to be enlightened now.

The lesson says, "Never believe that you can sacrifice. There is no place for sacrifice *in what has any value*. If the thought occurs, its very presence proves that *error has arisen and correction must be made*."

This is a good time for some form of self-inquiry. You might choose to practice root cause inquiry. You might choose to notice the difference between the idea of sacrifice and you, the awareness that sees the thought. You might feel its best to do nothing except rest, accept and trust. The point is, when you see the idea of sacrifice as an error that needs correction, you will make another choice, and that is *being enlightened now*. In this way, you bless the world because you've blessed yourself.

Lesson 188, The peace of God is shining in me now.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Yesterday we practiced “Be enlightened now.” Today we notice enlightenment is what we are.

Today’s workbook lesson is very clear. It says, “Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes. The light is in them now. Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all. ... The light can not be lost. Why wait to find it in the future, or believe it has been lost already, or was never there? ... look within, for there all vision starts.”

And then the lesson gives us very clear instructions for what we are to do:

“Sit quietly and close your eyes. The light within you is sufficient. It alone has the power to give the gift of sight to you. Exclude the outer world, and let your thoughts fly to the peace within. They know the way. For honest thoughts, untainted by the dream of worldly things outside yourself, become the holy messengers of God Himself.”

Here, the Course makes clear why we practice awareness-watching-awareness meditation. “It alone has the power to give the gift of sight to you.”

Why is this practice so important?

Truth is ever-present. We’ve spent several days noticing that awareness-life-presence is ever-present. However, any human who chooses to be honest can also see that even though awareness-life-presence is ever-present, it can be ignored and forgotten (and typically is) when we focus on the outside world and our thoughts about the outside world.

The more focus we put on the outside world and our thoughts about the outside world, the more we are unaware of ever-present awareness-life-presence.

What can we do to reverse that?

Focus in reverse. Spend time each day ignoring the world and our thoughts about the world, and place attention directly with awareness-life-presence.

If you look at this simple teaching without resistance, it makes perfect sense.

Today’s lesson tells us that perception’s source is awareness-life-presence. That’s true. Without awareness-life-presence, you could not perceive the sound of a bird’s song or the sound of waves rolling onto the beach, the sight of a beautiful sunset or the sight of a herd of deer moving through the pines, etc. Therefore, you can always take short breaks from thought throughout the day to notice that you are awareness-life-presence. However, concentrated time noticing this fact while ignoring everything else is most helpful. I recommend both concentrated time in awareness-watching-awareness meditation and short glimpses throughout the day.

Today's lesson makes two points that I would like to highlight:

First, while pointing to the practice of awareness-watching-awareness, it mentions that this practice reminds us we are the "co-creator of all things that live." Usually when people refer to us as co-creators, they are talking about our thoughts. For example, our hate thoughts help co-create the images of hate in the world, etc. However, today's lesson refers to a more fundamental nature of creation. It points out that all things are awareness-life-presence, as we are. Our fundamental nature is the fundamental nature of all things. In this way, nothing is separate from us and everything is an extension of what we are.

Secondly, today's lesson says, "Who recognizes it within himself must give it. And the means for giving it are in his understanding. He forgives because he recognized the truth in him." In other words, one who recognizes that he is awareness-life-presence lives 'be enlightened now' instead of living from attachment to his thoughts.

Today we will continue our basic practices while remembering, "The peace of God is shining in me now." We will practice awareness-watching-awareness meditation. We will pause and glimpse awareness-life-presence throughout the day, and we will 'be enlightened now' including practicing self-inquiry as needed.

Lesson 189, I feel the Love of God within me now.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Yesterday's Course lesson told us, "Sit quietly and close your eyes. The light within you is sufficient. It alone has the power to give the gift of sight to you. Exclude the outer world, and let your thoughts fly to the peace within."

Today's lesson gives us more specific instructions:

"Simply do this: Be still, and lay aside all thoughts of what you are and what God is; all concepts you have learned about the world; all images you hold about yourself. Empty your mind of everything it thinks is either true or false, or good or bad, of every thought it judges worthy, and all the ideas of which it is ashamed. Hold onto nothing. Do not bring with you one thought the past has taught, nor one belief you ever learned before from anything. Forget this world, forget this course, and come with wholly empty hands unto your God."

Our job is to let go of “all obstacles that you have interposed between the Son and God the Father ... And with this choice we rest.”

That’s it. Nothing more. The Course calls this “simplicity.”

It reminds me of Michael Langford’s instructions for awareness-watching-awareness. He writes:

“One of the things you might wonder is what to do after you start watching your awareness. There is nothing else to be done. You just continue with awareness watching awareness. ... Just continue for the entire practice session watching your awareness. Only awareness watching awareness and nothing else.

Don’t expect any type of experience. If you are wondering if you will have some kind of spiritual experience, then that very wondering means you have added something to awareness watching awareness. Never add anything to awareness watching awareness.

The key is to be content just watching your awareness and not to move from that and not to add anything to that. ...

If you wonder if the state is going to deepen, that very wondering means you have added something to the Awareness Watching Awareness practice. Never add anything to the Awareness Watching Awareness Method. Just be content with awareness watching awareness.

You should look at it like awareness watching awareness is all there is, there is nothing more.”

The Course is clear that we remove the obstacles, we rest in awareness-watching-awareness, and “do not make demands, nor point the road to God by which He should appear to you. The way to reach Him is merely to let Him be. For in that way is your reality proclaimed as well.”

Or as Michael Langford writes:

“Here is a way to look at it: Awareness watching awareness is a little like falling in love. You spend time with someone. You watch them. You observe them. But you do not yet know them. You continue to observe them. You don’t have expectations, because you don’t know them well enough yet to have expectations. You just keep on observing.

Some days you have pleasant feelings while you observe them. Some days you have unpleasant feelings while you observe them. You continue to observe them.

Everyday you are coming to know them better, even though you may not be aware that you are coming to know them better. Then one day suddenly and unexpectedly, you have fallen in Love.

Awareness watching awareness is a little like that. Just don't expect anything, and continue watching your awareness. The fact that nothing is happening is great! If it seems like day after day it is just the same, only awareness watching awareness, that is great! Just remain content with that."

Here is a song by Rickie Byars Beckwith that inspires me to practice awareness-watching-awareness in exactly the way today's lesson encourages:

https://youtu.be/csw_a2IxYyg?list=PLKSRjOAxGeaNuXBntYfhFd2OIRYk1kXEk

Lesson 190, I choose the joy of God instead of pain.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

I feel like I am whispering a great secret that most of the world does not want to know, a secret for which I can be slain, when I say:

You do not have to suffer.

There have been several times when friends were suffering, and I tried to help by letting them know they could let go of the idea that caused their suffering. Each time my friends have retaliated with attack. It was as if I was attacking them when I let them know how easy it is to be free of suffering, and so they attacked back.

I suppose I was attacking them. I was attacking their attachment to suffering without realizing how much they still wanted it. It was like trying to take a worn out stuffed animal from a child before the child is ready to give it up.

You may think you don't love suffering, but are you sure you're right? The best way to find out is to answer this question for yourself: Do you suffer over anything ever? If the answer is 'yes,' then you are still clinging to that worn out toy.

Just like everyone else, I used to believe that suffering was the natural outcome of certain circumstances. Gradually I let go of that idea. The final stronghold for me was the belief that I had to suffer because of extreme physical pain. I came to see even that is not true. All suffering is caused by thought that we choose to believe, and there isn't another cause of suffering at all.

Each time I pointed out to friends that they could let go of suffering, and they became angry with me, they always indicated that their form of suffering was special. There was the special circumstance that *validated suffering*. This is a clue that points to a thought in the mind, a thought that this lesson is helping to uncover. The idea is that *suffering is more real than God (than truth)*.

That belief is in your mind if you suffer. I know, because I uncovered it in my own mind. The ego clings to that idea, because that idea *protects* the ego thought system. It seems to confirm that the ego thought system is truth, and the teachings about truth are merely idle fantasy. The worn out toy that you cling to when you suffer is the false self.

Here are a few things that today's lesson says about the choice to suffer:

- "Pain is a wrong perspective."
- "Pain is but witness to the Son's mistakes in what he thinks he is."
- "Pain is a sign illusions reign in place of truth."
- "It is your thoughts alone that cause pain."
- "There is no cause beyond yourself that can reach down and bring oppression."
- "No one but yourself affects you."
- "The world may seem to cause you pain. And yet the world, as causeless, has no power to cause. As an effect, it cannot make effects. As an illusion, it is what you wish."
- "Pain is the ransom you have gladly paid not to be free."
- "Pain is illusion; joy is reality."
- "Pain is deception; joy alone is truth."

The attachment to suffering is a deeply held attachment. This is why my friends felt attacked when I pointed out they did not have to suffer. If you'd like to be free of that attachment, here's what you can do:

When you suffer, look to see if you can see *your choice* to suffer. The choice could be a very simple decision. It could be as simple as the decision, "I can not be happy with *this*." Look for what you believe *must be different*.

As you look for your choice to suffer, you may find several little things that you can change your mind about when you see them. For example, you might be able to quickly let go of the idea that you have to suffer if it's too hot, or if the husband is

late to dinner, or if there is traffic on the highway, etcetera. Each little change of mind is important, because you are reversing the decision to cling to suffering.

Either now or eventually, you will come to the choice to suffer itself. This will appear as a belief, something that you took as absolutely true. It may feel impossible to let go of it when you see it. My recommendation is that you acknowledge it as a *belief rather than a truth*, and give your willingness for it to be healed. Let grace take care of the rest.

In other words, demonstrate your willingness to let go of the belief in suffering by changing your mind with the little things, and give your willingness with the apparent bigger things. This is how the attachment to suffering will be undone.

If you'd like to hear the story about how the attachment to suffering was finally undone for me, you can listen to this audio:

<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/4048287/Awakening%20Together/MPPAudios/TrueDiscernment33.mp3>

Letting go of the attachment to suffering is not a little thing. It is letting go of a critical defense in the ego thought system.

Lesson 191, I am the holy Son of God Himself.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

We have spent several days focusing on awareness-life-presence. Awareness-life-presence is our essence. It is the essence of all things.

Today's lesson asks us to take one step beyond focusing on awareness-life-presence. It asks us to claim awareness-life-presence as our identity. We are to claim our essence as what we are.

The lesson tells us that the cause of all problems is the denial of our true identity. In other words, the cause of all problems is *identifying with thought*. You can see that's true, if you want to. Look back at your memory. Every time you have acted mean or unjust with another person, it was because you identified with the thoughts that were in your mind at the time. If the thoughts said, "She's lying to me," you reacted as if your friend was a liar. Etcetera.

Because identifying with thought is the cause of all problems, identifying with awareness-life-presence is the answer to all problems.

How do you know if you are identified with thought or awareness-life-presence?

You know which you are identified with by how you give attention and how you act.

Today's lesson calls identifying with thought "a game you play in which Identity can be denied." And then it says, "You play the game of death, of being helpless, pitifully tied to dissolution in a world which shows no mercy to you. Yet when you accord it mercy, will its mercy shine on you."

The last line of that paragraph reminds me of the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The highest interpretation of that rule is to live from your identity as awareness-life-presence. Or, as we said in lesson 187, be enlightened now.

There is a big difference in the way identification with thought acts and the way identification with awareness-life-presence acts. For example, let's imagine that a friend asks me a question, and I answer truthfully, but my answer isn't what she believes. She becomes angry and says, "You are a liar!"

At this point, defense thoughts are likely to be triggered in my mind. If I am identified with thought, I will say whatever the defense thoughts are telling me to say. If I am identified with awareness-life-presence, I will silently watch the show of defense that is happening in the mind, but I will remain in my seat as the watcher. Those words will not pass my lips. I also will not give them the energy of belief and agreement. I will stay seated within as watcher, merely observing and waiting for this temporary energy to pass.

The lesson says, "Look about the world, and see the suffering there. Is not your heart willing to bring your weary brothers to rest?" The lesson could also ask, "Are you ready to rest? Are you ready for the peace of God?"

Focusing on awareness-life-presence is an important first step, but we fall short of living our truth if we continue to speak and act from identification with thought. It is time to go beyond simply focusing on essence. It is time to live from it. Live *as it*. Living as awareness-life-presence is embracing *truth* and accepting it as what we are.

Lesson 192, I have a function God would have me fill.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow

- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

The false self is nothing but thought. It isn't a self at all. It has no life. Only awareness-life-presence has life. *Only that which has life can be a genuine self.* However, when the attention aspect of awareness-life-presence becomes engrossed in thought, it *appears* that life and thought are one. This creates the illusion of the false self.

In order to claim awareness-life-presence as our identity, we need to release the illusion that we are thought. A good way to release the illusion that we are thought is to observe thoughts without getting hooked on them.

Let me demonstrate:

Let's imagine I am in a work relationship with someone. I am working with this person on an important project that has many challenges. We are working on one particular challenge that needs to be resolved before we can move to the next set of challenges. A deadline is looming. I begin to notice that my co-worker isn't doing his part of the research. My mind begins to tell me that we are going to fail because he is avoiding his share of the work.

As someone who is embracing my true identity, I say to myself, "I see that thought, but I don't know what is supposed to happen here. I don't know what is going to happen here. My only role is to do my part and watch the rest."

With that, I 'unhook' from thoughts that were asking for attention.

That's how forgiveness works. Forgiveness doesn't deny thought and it doesn't believe thought either. It acknowledges the presence of thought, but doesn't give it meaning.

Reason is the ability in the mind that enables humans to make decisions using logic. In the example above, I used logic to convince myself to let go of a particular line of thinking. This use of reason could be called right-reason.

Today's lesson talks about how we *misuse* reason. It says, "Without [the kindly light of forgiveness] we grope in darkness, *using reason but to justify our rage and our attack.*"

The purpose of reason is to enable us to make decisions that are in our best interest. But when we misuse reason, "what we think we understand is but confusion born of error. We are lost in mists of shifting dreams and fearful thoughts, our eyes shut tight against the light."

We need to return reason to its proper function.

The Yoga Vasistha is a Hindu text named after a Vedanta sage, Vasistha. A quote from The Yoga Vasistha says, "So long as one does not *subdue the mind with the mind*, one cannot attain Self-knowledge."

That quote points to the importance of the proper use of reason. We can use reason to justify our attachment to thought or we can use reason to unhook from that attachment. The latter is using the mind to subdue the mind. That's how we practice forgiveness, which today's lesson describes as the "function God would have me fill."

Here's something important to know about the right use of reason. When you use right-reason, thought may argue that you are using reason to deny the truth. In the example above, it might argue that I am denying the truth that my co-worker is a lazy butt.

It's important to remember what today's lesson says, "Forgiveness represents your function here. It is not God's creation, for it is the means by which untruth can be undone ... the means to let illusions go."

In other words, right-reason is not the truth itself. It is an illusion used to release a greater illusion. So if thought argues that right-reason is not true, realize that's okay. *Letting go of the greater illusion is the current task at hand.* That brings us closer to truth.

Right-reason is the means to right-dreams, "a kind so close to waking that the light of day already shines in them, ... and leaves the world a clean and unmarked slate on which the Word of God can now replace the senseless symbols written there before."

"The way is simple. Every time you feel a stab of anger, realize you hold a sword above your head. And it will fall or be averted as you choose to be condemned or free." You make the choice to be condemned or free through your use of reason. You will use it to justify thought or to unhook from thought. The latter is the choice for freedom.

Lesson 193, All things are lessons God would have me learn.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

The main point of today's lesson is of the *utmost importance* to those who truly want to heal the mind (i.e., undo conditioning that is based on false premises).

The lesson teaches that all distress (all upset) is because of unforgiveness. The key word in that sentence is "all."

Most people who study *A Course in Miracles* accept that some upsets are due to unforgiveness, but few accept that all upsets are due to unforgiveness. If you really want to heal the mind, this is a teaching you must accept, because where you decide this lesson does not apply is where your mind will not heal.

As today's lesson stresses, "[Unforgiveness] is the content underneath the form. It is this sameness which makes learning sure, because the lesson is so simple that it cannot be rejected in the end. No one can hide forever from a truth so very obvious that it appears in countless forms, and yet is recognized as easily in all of them, if one but wants to see the simple lesson there. ... How can you tell when you are seeing wrong, ...? Does pain seem real in the perception? If it does, be sure the lesson is not learned. And there remains an unforgiveness hiding in the mind ..."

This is where the lesson gets very exciting to me.

First it says, "Morning and night, devote what time you can to serve its proper aim, and do not let the time be less than meets your deepest need."

I often used to journal twice a day, morning and night, just as this lesson recommends. The purpose of journaling was to look at my mind and practice forgiveness.

What is forgiveness?

It is letting go of every thought process that causes even the tiniest feeling of upset in you.

How do you let go?

Through one or another form of self-inquiry. Through right-reason. Through rest, accept and trust. These are all tools that are used to let go.

I love that the lesson says, "do not let the time be less than meets your deepest need." That means, take all of the time you need to make sure forgiveness is complete. Forgiveness doesn't always happen fast. That's okay. Speed is not the issue. Genuine release is what is most important. (According to the Book of Mark, Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray *three times* before he felt complete.)

I also love this:

“Each hour, spend a little time today, and in the days to come, in practicing the lesson in forgiveness in the form established for the day. And try to give it application to the happenings the hour brought, so that the next one is free of the one before. ... Let no hour cast its shadow on the one that follows, and when that one goes, let everything that happened in its course go with it.”

This is how you become a master of forgiveness, a master at reprogramming the brain so it is based on truth instead of based on falsehood. You look at *each* upset. You don't let any slide by.

Today's lesson recommends a really good practice. Since most people let many upsets pass everyday without looking at them, it is a good idea to pause each hour, look at the upsets that occurred in that hour, and practice forgiveness on them. Eventually you will become very sensitive to even the smallest upset, and you won't be able to wait until the end of an hour to practice forgiveness, so you will practice it immediately. However, in the beginning your body is not well tuned to your purpose of forgiveness. Its sensitivities are dormant, and you are likely to miss hundreds of opportunities to practice forgiveness if you do not actively pause and look regularly.

Several Gentle Healing participants have told me that this group takes a lot of time. Yes, it does. But as this lesson points out, this is the purpose of time.

The way that I got to the current state of healing that I have achieved is by making healing my fulltime job *and* the most important thing in my life. It is what everything else is about. If you really want to achieve healing, your commitment cannot be less than this.

When healing is a priority in your life, something in you is motivated toward the tools and practices that help you heal. It isn't something you have to do because someone outside of you told you to do it. It is something you are intrinsically motivated to do.

That doesn't mean it's always easy. It isn't. There can be great resistance during this process. But remember what NTI said. The means for overcoming great resistance is great willingness, and great willingness comes from remembering what you want.

Footnotes:

1. *This is a sample day from my 2005 forgiveness journal:*
<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina%20-%20Consistent%20Gentle%20Healing/SampleDayOfJournaling.pdf>
2. *This is the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane as told in NTI:*
<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina%20-%20Consistent%20Gentle%20Healing/NTIGethsemane.pdf>

Lesson 194, I place the future in the Hands of God.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Reading *A Course in Miracles* and repeating the day's lesson to yourself hourly is not the path to freedom. *Putting the teachings into practice* is the path to freedom.

Today we are given another practice to add to our very useful repertoire.

I place the future in the Hands of God.

This isn't something that we say to ourselves. This is something that we do.

Today's lesson says, "Today's idea takes another step toward quick salvation, and a giant stride it is indeed! ... If you can see the lesson for today as the deliverance it really is, you will not hesitate to give as much consistent effort as you can, to make it be a part of you."

"I place the future in the Hands of God," means 'I do not know what is in my best interest or in the best interest of others, and so I let go of worry and control, and I trust the unfolding as it is.'

Again, this is not something that we say. This is something that we do. We need to actually let go of worry and control, and trust the unfolding as it is. The way to do this is right-reason, through realizing that we do not know what is in the best interest of others and ourselves.

Thinking we know what is best and thinking we are right is the problem. With a little bit of right-reason, we can see that we are wrong about both of those assumptions.

As of this writing, there are more than 7,400,000,000 people in the world, each with a unique point of view. How can any one point-of-view out of 7,400,000,000 points-of-view be right and know what is in the best interest of everyone?

You might agree that you can't know what is in the best interest of everyone, but still feel that you know what is in your own best interest.

Is that true? Have you ever been wrong about that?

I remember when I was 17 years old. I met this sweet boy who I thought was the love of my life. His name was Scott. Scott and I were separated when his mother sent him to another state to live with his older brother. At the time, I thought she ruined my life. We loved each other so much!!

A few years ago, I became reacquainted with Scott through Facebook. We are so different from one another now that I felt grateful our lives went separate ways when they did, although I couldn't see that at all at the time.

I'm sure you've had those types of experiences too.

If we become really honest with ourselves through right-reason, we see that we don't know what is in our best interest or in the best interest of others. With this genuine realization, we can let go of worry and control, and simply trust the unfolding as it is.

I place the future in the Hands of God.

“As it becomes a thought that rules your mind, a habit in your problem-solving repertoire, a way of quick reaction to temptation, you extend your learning to the world.”

The lesson says, “Who entrusts himself to God has also placed the world within the Hands to which he has himself appealed for comfort and security.”

Pause and contemplate that for a moment. Doesn't it make more sense to entrust the world to the Hands of God than it does to try and take control ourselves?

“For in God's Hands we rest untroubled, sure that only good can come to us.”

Here's a fun song that will help us remember that we are wisest when we trust the unfolding as it is: <https://youtu.be/9GuA5PZx3K4>

Lesson 195, Love is the way I walk in gratitude.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Today's lesson is a simple one. We are asked to be grateful today. However, in order for our gratitude to “pave the way to Him, and shorten our learning time by more than you could ever dream of,” we need to be sure our gratitude is right-gratitude instead of mistaken gratitude.

Mistaken gratitude has judgment (comparison) in it. For example, mistaken gratitude might be grateful that my family is healthy as compared to sick, with plenty of food or money as compared to not enough, etcetera.

Right-gratitude has no judgment in it. It is not grateful for one circumstance as compared to another. It is simple gratitude for awareness-life-presence as it is.

Today's lesson says, "We thank our Father for one thing alone; that we are separate from no living thing, and therefore one with Him. And we rejoice that no exceptions can ever be made which would reduce our wholeness, ... We give thanks for every living thing ..."

The lesson points out that right-gratitude is healing. That's because right-gratitude does two things:

1 – It focuses our appreciative attention on truth (awareness-life-presence).

2 – It bypasses judgment, which is a key element of the ego thought system.

As today's lesson says, "Walk, then, in gratitude the way of love. For hatred is forgotten when we lay comparisons aside. ... Today we learn to think of gratitude in place of anger, malice and revenge. ... Gratitude becomes the single thought we substitute for these insane perceptions."

Whenever you experience any wrong-minded thought or emotion today, pause. Focus attention on awareness-life-presence, and let yourself feel gratitude for it. You can use your own awareness-life-presence to shift into right-gratitude, you can use the awareness-life-presence of another, such as a child or a pet, or you can notice awareness-life-presence in nature—in a bird, a flower, the breeze or in the sound of flowing water, etc. Whatever will help you make a genuine shift into gratitude for awareness-life-presence is acceptable.

Another helpful option may be to pause each hour, look back on the hour and remember the wrong-minded perceptions you experienced in that hour. Then, pause with each wrong-minded perception remembered and replace it with right-gratitude.

As today's lesson says, "Gratitude goes hand in hand with love, and where one is the other must be found. For gratitude is but an aspect of the Love which is the Source of all creation."

Therefore, when we experience right-gratitude, we experience an aspect of our true Self. We are in genuine right-perspective when we feel right-gratitude.

Lesson 196, It can be but myself I crucify.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

“It can be but myself I crucify. When this is firmly understood and kept in full awareness, you will not attempt to harm yourself, nor make your body slave to vengeance. You will not attack yourself, and you will realize that to attack another is but to attack yourself.”

It may be helpful to read this first paragraph (above) from today’s lesson slowly several times.

There is a crazy idea in the mind that our salvation lies in attacking someone (or something) outside of our self. Today’s lesson calls this idea a “form of madness you believe.”

The best way to see this is true is to pay attention. Pay attention when you attack someone (or something), regardless of whether you attack physically, verbally or with your thoughts. Pay attention for the feeling or idea that you can *gain something* through attack. Maybe you think you can get your way, and that will make you feel safe or happy. Maybe there is a feeling that you rise up as you put others down. Maybe you feel you are protecting someone or some important value. Regardless of what it is that you think you may gain, notice that you believe your salvation lies in attack.

Next, notice that you actually crucify yourself whenever you attack. Pay close attention to how you feel when you attack. Is that joy? Peace? Love? Or are your emotions more negative? You probably feel anger, jealousy, lack, annoyance, resentment or some other type of upset. At best you may feel righteous indignation. Aren’t those feelings types of suffering? Aren’t you actually creating your own suffering through attack?

Attack is not salvation. Attack is a form of self-sabotage. To see this clearly is the first step in letting go of attack forever.

Today’s lesson says, “Today’s idea is one step we take in leading us from bondage to the state of perfect freedom.” When you see how you keep yourself in bondage through attack, you also see how sensible this statement is.

The lesson also says, “It is not time we need for this. It is but willingness.”

Time has nothing to do with giving up attack. Willingness is everything. Without willingness, we can go a very long time with no change in our attack habits. With great willingness, we can give up attack instantaneously. We can become willing to

give up attack when we see that we do not gain through attack; we increase our own pain.

If you have an attack habit, it is helpful to pause every hour and look back on the last hour to see if there were any recent attacks. If there were attacks in the last hour, inquire into them. What did you think you'd gain through attack? What did you actually receive, happiness or prolonged agitation?

At the very least, review the day at the end of each day, and inquire into the attacks you find in your review.

By bringing right-awareness to your attack habit, the willingness to let go of the habit will increase. As willingness increases, you will begin to find ways (feel intuitive guidance) to let go before you attack.

Lesson 197, It can be but my gratitude I earn.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Two days ago we practiced right-gratitude for a day. Yesterday, we used right-awareness to increase our willingness to let go of attack. Today, we bring together right-gratitude and our willingness to let go of attack, so that gratitude can strengthen our determination to heal misperceptions and false beliefs.

We learned that right-gratitude is gratitude for awareness-life-presence as it is. That is the purest essence of gratitude and an aspect of truth. However, in this world where untruth reigns, truth has reflections, which are illusions, but they are illusions that point toward truth.

Right-reasoning is one example of an illusion that points toward truth. Forgiveness is another. A third illusion that points toward truth is an extension of right-gratitude. It is gratitude for everything that reminds you of your spiritual purpose and gratitude for every opportunity to practice your spiritual purpose. When right-gratitude is extended in this way, you can be grateful for every circumstance that arises, and that gratitude strengthens your spiritual resolve.

Let me provide an example. Let's imagine that I hired a contractor to build a sunroom as an addition to my house. He required that I pay him 50% up front, and I did. He framed the sunroom and started the roofing work, but then he and his crew quit coming. I called him, but he didn't return my calls.

This may feel like a very big situation to me. All kinds of thoughts may be swirling in my mind. I may feel anger and fear, and I might feel both stupid and like a victim at the same time. But then I pause. I remember what I truly want—freedom, awakening. I realize this situation is providing me with an opportunity to heal my mind, so I shift into gratitude. I let myself feel grateful for the gift of this situation, which is helping me to achieve my goal. After feeling genuine gratitude for this opportunity, I move into self-inquiry, I open up and rest with my feelings, or I engage in another spiritual practice that feels right for me in the moment.

Right-gratitude has strengthened my spiritual resolve and turned an opportunity to attack into an opportunity to heal.

Today's lesson says, "Give thanks for all the countless channels which extend this Self." And countless channels abound! If we are willing to use right-gratitude for every opportunity to heal our mind, healing is accelerated.

Today's lesson also points out a mistake regarding gratitude. The mistake is expecting gratitude from others as you begin to transform through spiritual practice.

We may think that our friends, family and co-workers should notice as we become softer, gentler and kinder. We may want to hear some expression of gratitude from them for the change in us. However, often people don't notice that we have given up attack for peace. After all, peace is quieter and easier not to notice.

If we expect gratitude or praise from others for becoming more peaceful, and it isn't forthcoming, this could lead us to slip back into attack.

The lesson says, "*Your gratitude* is all your gifts require, that they be a lasting offering of a thankful heart, released from hell forever. ... It does not matter if another thinks your gifts unworthy. ... Withdraw the gifts you give, and you will think that what is given you has been withdrawn. But learn to let forgiveness take away the sins you think you see outside yourself, and you can never think the gifts of God are lent but for a little while..."

You don't need the gratitude of others. It's the ego that seeks gratitude from others, and so it is the ego that is strengthened by external gratitude. You need your own gratitude—gratitude for awareness-life-presence, gratitude for everything that reminds you of your spiritual purpose, and gratitude for opportunities to practice and heal. It's *your gratitude* that opens your heart, strengthens your spiritual resolve and moves you toward awakening.

Lesson 198, Only my condemnation injures me.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Today's lesson makes clear that illusions are used to undo illusions, because truth has not been touched by illusions at all. This is why we are doing two things at once: We are practicing the teachings of *A Course in Miracles Workbook for Students* and practicing awareness-watching-awareness meditation.

Our work with *A Course in Miracles* is learning about and practicing the illusions that undo illusions. Let's not get confused about this. Many students have become lost, because they have adopted the Course's thought system as the truth. It isn't the truth. It is an illusion that can be used to undo illusions.

Our second practice, awareness-watching-awareness, is the practice of paying attention to truth, which remains untouched by illusions. Today's lesson says, "To condemn is thus impossible in truth." This is not a minor point, and it is a point you can verify for yourself.

Take a moment to become quiet and look at awareness. As you look directly at awareness, notice it has *no concepts* in it at all. Being beyond concepts, it is also beyond condemnation. Judgment is not possible for awareness.

Remain quiet and continue to look at awareness. Can you separate yourself from awareness? Can you let go of awareness, or is awareness what you are?

If you can see that awareness is what you are, then you also know that there is no condemnation in you. Condemnation and attack, and the injury that occurs because of condemnation and attack, are at the level of body and mind only. They do not occur and have no effect at the level of truth.

When we practice the teachings of *A Course in Miracles*, we are using illusions to undo illusions, but truth is not involved at all. It is in the background merely being aware. We are working entirely with dreamscapes.

Why bother working at the level of the dream? As today's lesson says, "Injury is impossible. And yet illusion makes illusion. If you can condemn, you can be injured. For you have believed that you can injure, and the right you have established for yourself can be now used against you, till you *lay it down as valueless, unwanted, and unreal*. Then does illusion cease to have effects, and those it seemed to have will be undone."

In other words, as long as you believe illusions have value, you are caught at the level of illusions. So, illusions must be used to undo illusions until you come to see that illusions have no value at all. When this occurs, your attention will leave illusions completely and choose to abide with truth.

Today's lesson refers to forgiveness as "illusion that is the answer to the rest. Forgiveness sweeps all other dreams away, and though it is itself a dream, it breeds no others."

Forgiveness is letting go of thought. It is removing value, meaning, belief and attention from thought.

A few days ago, we learned to use right-reason, another illusion, to talk ourselves into letting go of thought. However, unless we are vigilant for forgiveness, the mind will use wrong-reason to justify our judgments and attacks. Today's lesson asks, "And why would you oppose [forgiveness], quarrel with it, seek to find a thousand ways in which it must be wrong; a thousand other possibilities? Is it not wiser to be glad you hold the answer to your problems in your hand?"

The lesson points out, "This world has many seeming separate haunts where mercy has no meaning, and attack appears justified. Yet all are one ..."

Let's look at this point more carefully. I have noticed over the years that many spiritual students are able to practice forgiveness in some things, but not all things. For example, they may be willing to let go of their judgments of others based on physical appearance, and yet they are still willing to judge and attack based on political, spiritual or moral points of view. It's as if politics, spirituality and morality are "separate haunts where mercy has no meaning."

Is that true? Are condemnation and attack sometimes justified?

The lesson says, "Yet all are one." In other words, the lesson is pointing out they are all illusions, all distractions from truth.

Let's look at an example. If I have a democratic political leaning, and I believe democratic policy creates a more inclusive and compassionate society, I may feel justified when I attack republican points-of-view in conversation with friends or through a post in Facebook. However, when I do that, am I identified with awareness or with this personality-mind as what I am?

Look again. Does awareness have any political points-of-view in it?

You see, illusions are all one in that they are illusions, and to the degree that we are caught up in them, we are identified with illusion as what we are. In other words, all illusions have equal power to keep us lost and ignorant regarding our truth. This is why forgiveness is justified *regardless of what the illusion is*. This is why any

reasoning that justifies condemnation and attack is always wrong reasoning. The only right reasoning is the logic that convinces us to let go.

Today we become more committed to let go of condemnation and attack *in all circumstances*. We do not withhold any circumstance as the special circumstance that validates our condemnation. The basis of this commitment is that we want to experience truth directly. We are no longer interested in being distracted from it. We are ready for Self-realization.

Remember to feel gratitude for all opportunities to practice forgiveness. Gratitude helps increase our willingness to let go.

Lesson 199, I am not a body. I am free.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

Today's lesson says, "Freedom must be impossible as long as you perceive a body as yourself. ... The mind can be made free when it no longer sees itself in a body, ..."

In the above sentence, the word "mind" does not refer to thinking. It refers to awareness. In other words, awareness can see itself as free when it is no longer tied to the body and thoughts about the body as 'me.'

The lesson tells us, "Attack thoughts cannot enter such a mind, ..." You saw this yesterday when you paused to look at awareness. There are no concepts in awareness, and so there is no condemnation and no attack.

When we accept awareness as our identity, we become the observer of everything that appears. We abide as our Self while temporary appearances come and go. We do not give undo meaning or value to anything that does not last.

The lesson says, "It is essential for your progress in this course that you accept today's idea, ..."

Pause for a moment and contemplate how true that statement is. All of our upsets come from giving meaning and value to temporary appearances. If we continue to give meaning in that way, we will never be free of the swings in mood that come with changing appearance.

One who abides as awareness is able to accept temporary appearances as they are and respond to them in an appropriate way without being upset by them. This way of being is known as clarity. Today's lesson encourages us to live from clarity.

The lesson says, "In immortality you live forever. Would you not return your mind to this?" Immortality and awareness are synonymous, since awareness has no beginning, no end and is absolutely changeless.

The lesson also says, "The Holy Spirit is the home of minds that seek for freedom." The Holy Spirit and clarity are synonymous. Both represent giving value only to that which is true and lasting. Therefore, one who seeks for freedom chooses to live from clarity.

When we decide to live from clarity, we also decide to live from "an undivided goal." Our only purpose is awakening from illusion entirely. That becomes the only purpose of this body. We are not here to make such-and-such happen or to ensure so-and-so likes us. We are here for one purpose only—truth realization. Everything is about one thing; our purpose is unambiguous.

The lesson requests, "Cherish today's idea, and practice it today and everyday. Make it a part of every practice period you take." This is so important!

If we are willing to decide that we are not a body—we are awareness, and our only purpose is realizing that completely—well, that changes everything. In a way, we are reborn the moment we make that decision, because every experience has a different purpose now.

Spend today deeply contemplating your choice to make this decision. Begin living this decision today. You already know how to live this decision. The only thing that needs to be done is to decide that this decision is all you truly want. Once you decide you want it, you will live it.

Lesson 200, There is no peace except the peace of God.

Our current goals:

- Widen the horizons of our vision
- Take direct approaches to uncover the blocks that keep our vision narrow
- Lift those blocks, however briefly, in order to experience the sense of liberation that comes when the blocks are removed
- Intensify our motivation for freedom

We pause before beginning our next review period in order to clarify the goal and intensify our motivation for it.

“There is no peace except the peace of God. Seek no further. ... This is the final point to which each one must come at last, to lay aside all hope of finding happiness where there is none; of being saved by what can only hurt...”

What is the peace of God? It is identifying with awareness-life-presence instead of identifying with the individual body-mind. Awareness-life-presence is where we are all the same. It is our truth.

Today’s lesson tells us, we “can ask as easily for love, for happiness, and for eternal life in peace that has no ending. Ask for this, and you can only win. To ask for what you *have already* must succeed.”

That is “the good news of the kingdom of God.” The good news is that you already have and are what you seek. (Luke 4:43)

Take a moment to turn your attention to awareness. Notice it is here now. It is infused with life. It is peace. And it is your presence.

“The kingdom of God is within you.”
(Luke 17:20 21 KJV)

Today’s lesson points out that Heaven is accessed “through a door that opens easily” to welcome us. That door is your awareness. Awareness is the doorway to infinite awareness, which is absolute truth.

Our spiritual practice is two-fold:

1. We practice forgiveness, which is letting go of illusions, because illusions distract us from realizing ourselves as awareness-life-presence. We use different tools, such as self-inquiry, rest-accept-trust, the loving all method, right-reason and right-gratitude, to help us practice forgiveness.
2. We pay attention to awareness, which is the doorway to infinite awareness, through meditation and many glimpses throughout the day.

In other words, our path is letting go of the temporary and embracing the eternal.

Although we ignore the world when we are in awareness-watching-awareness meditation, we welcome the world when we are not in meditation. We have gratitude for the opportunities it gives us to practice forgiveness, and we appreciate awareness-life-presence as it is reflected in the world.

“Now the way is easy, sloping gently toward the bridge where freedom lies within the peace of God. ... Only if we attempt to wander can there be delay and needless wasted time on thorny byways. ... Today we seek no idols. Peace can not be found in them. The peace of God is ours, and only this will we accept and want. ... For we have found a simple, happy way to leave the world of ambiguity, and to replace our

shifting goals and solitary dreams with single purpose and companionship. For peace is union, if it be of God. We seek no further. We are close to home, and draw nearer every time we say:

*There is no peace except the peace of God,
And I am glad and thankful it is so."*

Review Lesson 201

The last twenty lessons have been foundational. Because of that, we will spend a full twenty days reviewing those twenty lessons. We want to absorb those lessons to the point that they become our *automatic response* to the world, the thinking mind, and negative emotional experiences.

That's why the review instructions say, "Besides the time you give morning and evening, which should not be less than fifteen minutes, and the hourly remembrances you make throughout the day, use the idea as often as you can between them."

In fact, referring to the importance of these twenty lessons, the review instructions go on to say, "Each of these ideas alone would be sufficient for salvation, if it were learned truly. ... Each contains the whole curriculum if understood, practiced, accepted, and applied to all the seeming happenings throughout the day. One is enough. But from that one, there must be no exceptions made." However, we will use them all and "let them blend as one, as each contributes to the whole we learn."

In addition to the structured instructions given in the first paragraph of the review instructions (and repeated in the second paragraph above), you are asked to use the day's idea whenever you are tempted to speak, act or think from ego. The review instructions say, "Permit no idle thought to go unchallenged. If you notice one, deny its hold and hasten to assure your mind that this is not what it would have. Then gently let the thought which you denied be given up, in sure and quick exchange for the idea we practice for the day."

For example, you can say, "This thought I do not want. I choose instead _____. And then repeat the idea for the day, and let it take the place of what you thought."

This thoughtful remembrance of the day's idea is not the end of your response to temptation. After gently shifting with the heart from the ego-based thought to the review lesson, you will experience at least an instant of relative quiet. We are asked to use that moment of quiet to ask spiritual intuition for guidance that suits the moment.

In fact, the review instructions say, "To Him I offer this review for you. I place you in His charge, and let Him teach you what to do and say and think, each time you turn to Him."

This is a good time to review Inner Ramana's instructions about surrender:

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina - Consistent Gentle Healing/PurposeOfSurrender.pdf>

As we go through this review period, I will begin each tip with a summary of these review instructions. I will also provide a summary review of the idea for the day along with a link to the original tip for that idea. Beyond that, you will be left to inner guidance, "allowing Him to teach us how to go, and trusting Him completely for the way each practice period can best become a loving gift of freedom to the world."

Today's review idea is:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I trust my brothers, who are one with me.

When most of us read the word "brothers," we immediately think of the body-minds of others. The body-mind is not what our brothers are. This is also why we do not need to replace the word "brothers" with "brothers and sisters." When we contemplate this lesson, we are not looking at a body-mind; we are looking at sexless awareness-life-presence. "Brothers" in this idea is a symbol for *that which is beyond* changing form, for *that which is constant*.

As you contemplate the idea for today, contemplate awareness-life-presence, which is what our brothers are and what we are.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tip-from-regina-lesson-181-i-trust-my-brothers-who-are-one-with-me/>

Review Lesson 202

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and at least 15 minutes in the evening contemplating the lesson for the day. You might use that time to review the original lesson in the Course, to review the original tip, to write in your journal or to move into awareness-watching-awareness meditation using the idea for the day as your 'anchor thought,' a thought that helps you transition from attention on thinking to attention on awareness.

To keep your mind focused on today's idea and to help absorb the idea fully, repeat it to yourself at least once hourly.

In addition, use today's idea as much as is needed as a transition from ego thinking to spiritual intuition. For example, you can say, "This thought I do not want. I choose instead _____. And then repeat the idea for the day, and let it take the place of what you thought." Next, ask spiritual intuition for guidance that suits the moment. (Click

here to review Inner Ramana's instructions about surrender:

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina - Consistent Gentle Healing/PurposeOfSurrender.pdf>)

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I will be still an instant and go home.

Workbook Lesson 182 said, "When you are still an instant, when the world recedes from you, when valueless ideas cease to have value in your restless mind, then will you hear His Voice. So poignantly He calls to you that you will not resist Him longer. In that instant He will take you to His home, and you will stay with Him in perfect stillness, silent and at peace, beyond all words, untouched by fear and doubt, sublimely certain that you are at home. Rest with Him frequently today."

Let's make stillness a more important part of our lives. When you notice that you are 'killing time' with unimportant activity, drop the distraction and spend time in quiet stillness instead. Choose to do nothing. Sit outside and be aware with nature, or close your eyes and spend time in awareness-watching-awareness meditation. Let's make it our goal to fall in love with quiet time, time to do nothing but be awareness.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-182-i-will-be-still-an-instant-and-go-home/>

Review Lesson 203

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and at least 15 minutes in the evening contemplating the lesson for the day. (You might use that time to review the original lesson in the course, to review the original tip, to write in your journal or to move into awareness-watching-awareness meditation using the idea for the day as your 'anchor thought,' a thought that helps you transition from attention on thinking to attention on awareness.)

To keep your mind focused on today's idea and to help absorb the idea fully, repeat it to yourself at least once hourly.

In addition, use today's idea as much as is needed as a transition from ego thinking to spiritual intuition. For example, you can say, "This thought I do not want. I choose instead _____. And then repeat the idea for the day, and let it take the place of what you thought." Next, ask spiritual intuition for guidance that suits the moment.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I call upon God's Name and on my own.

The instructions to this review period said, "Permit no idle thought to go unchallenged. If you notice one, deny its hold and hasten to assure your mind that this is not what it would have. Then gently let the thought which you denied be given up, in sure and quick exchange for the idea we practice for the day."

Today we use the idea for the day followed by a Name of God mantra to gently replace all frivolous mind wandering. Use any Name of God mantra that opens your heart, quiets your mind, and places attention on awareness.

Click here to review "Instructions for Using the Mantra" from *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*:

[http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina - Consistent Gentle Healing/InstructionsforMantra.pdf](http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina-ConsistentGentleHealing/InstructionsforMantra.pdf)

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-183/>

Review Lesson 204

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and at least 15 minutes in the evening contemplating the lesson for the day. To keep your mind focused on today's idea and to help absorb the idea fully, repeat it to yourself at least once hourly.

In addition, use today's idea as much as is needed as a transition from ego thinking to spiritual intuition. For example, you can say, "This thought I do not want. I choose instead _____. And then repeat the idea for the day, and let it take the place of what you thought." Next, ask spiritual intuition for guidance that suits the moment.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
The Name of God is my inheritance.

The ego-perspective focuses on differences. The spirit-perspective focuses on sameness, awareness-life-presence. Today, we will use the idea for the day along with a Name of God mantra to repeatedly turn our attention away from the ego-perspective to contemplation on awareness-life-presence.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-184/>

Review Lesson 205

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and at least 15 minutes in the evening contemplating the lesson for the day. Also, repeat today's idea to yourself at least once hourly.

In addition, use today's idea as much as is needed as a transition from ego thinking to spiritual intuition. For example, you can say, "This thought I do not want. I choose instead _____. And then repeat the idea for the day, and let it take the place of what you thought." Next, ask spiritual intuition for guidance that suits the moment.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I want the peace of God.

What is it that your mind thinks you want? What are your dreams? Why do you want those dreams? Spend time inquiring into your dreams to find what they represent for you. Do you really want that thing or circumstance, the object of your dream, or do you actually seek the peace of God?

Today is a good day to review the teaching from a previous Weekly Gathering entitled, "Wanting." If you would like to listen, you can skip to 33:10 in the following audio:

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/Weekly%20Gatherings/WeeklyGathering5-21-17.mp3>

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-185-i-want-the-peace-of-god/>

Review Lesson 206

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and at least 15 minutes in the evening contemplating the lesson for the day. Also, repeat today's idea to yourself at least once hourly. In addition, use today's idea as much as needed as a transition from ego thinking to spiritual intuition.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
Salvation of the world depends on me.

So far during this review period, we have asked for guidance after noticing that we were caught in the ego perspective. Today, let's put spiritual intuition up front.

Instead of waiting to get caught in the ego perspective before asking for guidance, let's ask for guidance all through the day. In other words, instead of getting caught and then asking for help, let's allow guidance to lead us through the day so that we don't get caught in ego snares. Let's stay in the heart today, with spiritual intuition in the lead.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-186-salvation-of-the-world-depends-on-me/>

Review Lesson 207

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and at least 15 minutes in the evening contemplating the lesson for the day. Repeat today's idea to yourself at least hourly. In addition, use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I bless the world because I bless myself.

Stay with the practice of letting spiritual intuition lead you throughout the day. You don't need ego to guide you. Ego offers nothing of value. Spiritual intuition is the only guide we want now.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-187-i-bless-the-world-because-i-bless-myself/>

Review Lesson 208

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
The peace of God is shining in me now.

Today we are reminded how important awareness-watching-awareness meditation is to our goal of Self-realization. Workbook lesson 188 said, "Sit quietly and close your eyes. The light within you is sufficient. It alone has the power to give the gift of sight to you." And so, we commit to awareness-watching-awareness meditation for a minimum of 15-20 minutes each day. No matter how busy our life appears to be, in

self-honesty we realize we can always find at least 15 minutes for this important practice.

When we are not in meditation, we contemplate awareness-life-presence in ourselves, in others and in nature. We let awareness-life-presence become the focus of our perception. We also live as awareness-life-presence instead of living from attachment to thought. Instead of going to our mind's thoughts about how to perceive, think, speak and act, we quietly ask spiritual intuition for guidance, and we joyously follow the guidance we receive.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-188-the-peace-of-god-is-shining-in-me-now/>

Review Lesson 209

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I feel the Love of God within me now.

Today we let meditation be as it is. We do not ask for a deeper experience than the one we have. We do not ask for visions or insight. We do not ask for awakening to come today. We make no demands. Instead, we sit quietly with our eyes closed in appreciation for awareness-life-presence as it is, which we know and feel, regardless of any experience or non-experience that happens around and within it.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-189-i-feel-the-love-of-god-within-me-now/>

Review Lesson 210

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I choose the joy of God instead of pain.

Emotional pain is the result of a decision in the mind. If I decide that something is unacceptable, I will suffer from that choice.

Freedom from suffering comes from the Loving All Method, because when we practice the Loving All Method we are choosing joy with all experiences. Love everything. If you can't genuinely love it, emotionally accept it. If you can't accept it, emotionally allow it. These choices lead to freedom from suffering.

Click this link to review the Loving All Method:

http://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter12.htm

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-190-i-choose-the-joy-of-god-instead-of-pain/>

Review Lesson 211

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I am the holy Son of God Himself.

Thoughts and feelings come and go. When we identify with a thought or feeling, and then link it to memories of similar circumstances, we create a false self. The false self is *selective identification with temporary thoughts and feelings*. Selective identification ignores the truth of what is always constant as one's self. For this reason, selective identification is called ignorance.

Today we let go of selective identification. We see the difference between what comes and goes and what is constant. We identify with our true Self, constant awareness-life-presence. We live from the clarity of Self-realization instead of from the ignorance of identifying with passing thoughts and emotions.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-191-i-am-the-holy-son-of-god-himself/>

Review Lesson 212

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I have a function God would have me fill.

“Teach your mind to listen to truth, and you teach the mind that it is a mirage also. In this way, the mind becomes willing to be quieted. And in the quiet of the mind, the echo of truth can be heard. ... Teach the mind to be subject to the Heart by being grateful for the desire of the Heart. ... Be ready to remind yourself of your truth. The way of the thinking mind is forgetfulness, but your way is the way of remembering. Joyfully remember whenever the mind forgets, and the way will be filled with happiness and deep gratitude.” ~ NTI Titus

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-192-i-have-a-function-god-would-have-me-fill/>

Review Lesson 213

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today’s lesson. Repeat today’s idea at least hourly. Use today’s idea throughout the day.

Today’s review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
All things are lessons God would have me learn.

The most effective way to heal is to take advantage of every upset in order to practice forgiveness. In the following audio, I demonstrate practicing forgiveness on an upset that came to me while viewing a post in Facebook. It is an example of not letting a single upset pass by without forgiving attention. The audio is about 20 minutes long. (If you are short on time, you can listen to 15 minutes and skip the song at the end of the audio.)

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina - Consistent Gentle Healing/ForgivenessOpportunity.mp3>

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-193-all-things-are-lessons-god-would-have-me-learn/>

Review Lesson 214

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today’s lesson. Repeat today’s idea at least hourly. Use today’s idea throughout the day.

Today’s review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I place the future in the Hands of God.

We play God when we try to force or control circumstances to make them go 'our way.' Can our limited point-of-view know what is in the best interest of everyone? And yet, whenever we tamper with what is occurring, we affect ones we will never meet. No interference goes without effects we will never be aware of.

Isn't it better to trust the benevolence of truth, to leave all things in its Hands, and practice forgiveness on circumstances that upset us? Until we know we have fully merged with God, and we have no thought or will that is apart from God, let's leave all things to God. Let's not entangle the unfolding with our limited and selfish ideas of what should be.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-194-i-place-the-future-in-the-hands-of-god/>

Review Lesson 215

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
Love is the way I walk in gratitude.

Today, we simply remain in right-gratitude. Right-gratitude is gratitude for awareness-life-presence as it is. When wrong-minded perceptions enter our awareness, we will notice that the wrong-minded perception is caused by judgment; the mind has decided that one thing or circumstance is better than another. After noticing the comparison in the mind, we will relax, let go of comparison and replace it with gratitude for awareness-life-presence. In this way, we walk in love today.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-195-love-is-the-way-i-walk-in-gratitude/>

Review Lesson 216

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
It can be but myself I crucify.

Attack is not the way to gain what you want. It is how you create and extend your own suffering, your own ongoing agitation. If peace is important to you, attack is something that must be relinquished.

Where there is attack, peace is disregarded.
Where there is peace, attack is unfounded.

Make inner peace your highest value, and attack will disappear from your mind.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-196-it-can-be-but-myself-i-crucify/>

Review Lesson 217

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
It can be but my gratitude that I earn.

Once we have decided to awaken, the purpose of the entire universe is our awakening. It is the purpose of meditation and the purpose of conflict. It is the purpose of inspiring teachings, and it is the purpose of apparent rejection. It is the purpose of inner guidance, and it is the purpose of everything in the world that seems to be going against 'my way.' It is the purpose of everything.

Since our personal awakening is the sole purpose of the universe, we can be grateful for everything. Everything is occurring to help us reach this goal. It is all in support of our purpose. Nothing stands against us. Everything is with us.

My personal prayer at dinnertime each night is this: "Holy Spirit, thank you so very much *for everything*. Amen." As I pray, I remember the day. I remember both that which inspired me and that which challenged me, and I let myself feel genuine gratitude for all of it. This keeps the purpose of awakening foremost in my mind and enables me to use everything for this one purpose.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-197-it-can-be-but-my-gratitude-i-earn/>

Review Lesson 218

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
Only my condemnation injures me.

If we decide that certain circumstances are justification for our judgment and condemnation, we have decided those same circumstances are a good reason to suffer. By making this choice, we have also decided we prefer to focus on illusion than realize truth.

The ego, which is the wish to be focused on illusion instead of realizing truth, will come up with certain circumstances that seem to absolutely justify our judgment. But, that is just the ego preferring attention on illusion instead of truth realization.

Do not be fooled by the ego's tricks. Whenever you are tempted to condemn, ask yourself this clear-minded question: Do I want freedom and truth? If the answer is yes, then shift to a spiritual practice that will help free you from the current temptation to judge and condemn.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-198-only-my-condemnation-injures-me/>

Review Lesson 219

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
I am not a body. I am free

You are awareness-life-presence. Anything else that you identify with is a temporary experience and nothing more. This is what is forgotten. And this is what is realized *to the core of one's being* at awakening. It is "a recognition, not a change at all."
(From Lesson 188)

This is why we put emphasis on awareness-watching-awareness in the Gentle Healing Group. By consistently looking toward our Self, we are bound to remember the truth of what we are.

During awareness-watching-awareness meditation, whenever I notice my attention has gone to thought, I ask, "To whom does this thought arise?" That inquiry is a tool I use to turn my attention from thought and toward awareness. However, in the last couple of weeks something else has started to happen.

When I ask, "To whom does this arise," I spontaneously see *the identification that attracts the thought*. It might be identification as teacher, as mother, as a responsible person, as a busy person, or some other identification, but I see clearly that *the thoughts are coming because of the identification*.

I find this helpful. It provides the opportunity to deny the false identification and then immediately look to awareness and recognize the undeniable true Self, that which is present, non-changing and continuous as my Self.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-199-i-am-not-a-body-i-am-free/>

Review Lesson 220

Review instructions: Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening contemplating today's lesson. Repeat today's idea at least hourly. Use today's idea throughout the day.

Today's review idea:

I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.
There is no peace except the peace of God.

There is great peace in knowing you are eternal presence, witness to appearance and experience, but forever unaffected by them. Knowing yourself as This *is* the peace of God. It is the only answer that answers all problems immediately. It is the only truth, and it is already true now. All that needs to happen for the peace of God to be your genuine experience forever is to let go of identifying with anything that is temporary, and return identification to the only thing (non-thing) that is always here as yourself.

Link to the original tip for this idea: <http://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-200-there-is-no-peace-except-the-peace-of-god/>

Lesson 221, Peace to my mind. Let all my thoughts be still.

Today we begin Part II of *A Course in Miracles Workbook for Students*. In the Introduction to Part II, we are told, "Words will mean little now. ... For now we seek direct experience of truth alone. The lessons that remain are merely introductions to the times in which we leave the world of pain, and go to enter peace. ... For we wait in quiet expectation for our God and Father. He has promised He will take the final step Himself. And we are sure His promises are kept."

In other words, the workbook lessons prepare us for meditation. They prepare our minds and hearts for sitting in awareness-watching-awareness.

I have always found it helpful to spend time in contemplation (which often includes writing) before going to meditation. Lately, “tip” writing has been that time for me. Previously, it may have been contemplating something from Awakening Together’s Minister Preparation Program (MPP), the Seven Steps to Awakening, or something else. A period of contemplation followed by meditation is the recommendation for all of us now.

The Introduction also says, “We will not consider time a matter of duration now. We will *use as much as we will need for the result that we desire.*”

Each one must find the time he/she needs for adequate contemplation and meditation.

What is “adequate?” Whatever time it takes to realize genuine wisdom and/or shifts each day.

I contemplate until contemplation feels complete, which means I have received my “daily bread.” And then I meditate for as long as the day will allow, meaning I meditate until I need to move into my workday. For me, the total time spent in contemplation and meditation is typically 3 – 4 hours per day. To do this, I get up at 5am each day. When I was a new student, I typically spent 60-90 minutes per day in focused spiritual time. As you can see, my focused time has increased over time.

Now our format for the workbook lessons is this:

- 1 – Each day read and contemplate the “special theme” that we are currently working with. The first one is, “What is Forgiveness?”
- 2 – Contemplate the day’s workbook lesson.
- 3 – Spend time in meditation.
- 4 – Recall the day’s workbook lesson hourly.
- 5 – Spend at least a brief time with the workbook lesson and/or meditation before going to bed at night.

Instead of writing a tip for our first special theme, “What is Forgiveness,” I invite you to listen to this audio on that theme. If you cannot listen this morning, listen later in the day or in the evening before going to bed.

Link:

Please take time this morning to read, “What is Forgiveness,” to contemplate Lesson 221, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and

would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description A - <http://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-a-with-tip-1/>

Lesson 222

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Forgiveness," to contemplate Lesson 222, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description B - <http://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-b-with-tip-2-and-tip-3/>

God is with me. I live and move in Him.

God is the nature of all things, both manifest and unmanifest. Where there is anything, there is God. Where there is nothing, there is God.

The basic essence of God is life-awareness. Life-awareness is before presence and it is the basis of presence. It is before creation and it is the basis of creation. One could say that presence is the extension of God, and creation is the effect of presence.

Contemplate presence today, and notice it is you.

Contemplate life-awareness today. Notice it is inseparable from presence and it is the source of presence. Without life-awareness, presence could not be.

Contemplate anything in creation. Notice it is present. Rest with the idea that life-awareness extends to presence, and in the same way, presence projects to become the manifestation of all things. (Some people use the word consciousness instead of presence.)

As you contemplate these things deeply, notice you are always in the presence of God, in the presence of that which is before presence and is the essence of all things that are present.

Lesson 223

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Forgiveness," to contemplate Lesson 223, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description C - <http://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-c-with-tip-4/>

God is my life. I have no life but His.

The ego is the thought that I am my own entity. It is the thought that I have life and I have awareness, but I am *the entity*; the life and awareness that I have are *my* possessions. They are “my life” and “my awareness.” It is also the thought that life and awareness other than my life and my awareness are separate from the life and awareness in me. It’s as if I have a bottled up source of life and awareness that exists in the body, which is my container.

Self-inquiry questions these basic ego assumptions.

What is the “I” that is its own entity? Of course, there is the appearance of the body. If one does not look deeply one may point at the body and say, “I am my own entity.” But does the body make these claims? What is the “I” that claims to be its own separate entity?

When one pauses to look more deeply, one will find that the mind is the “I” that claims to be its own entity.

Is it true that the mind is its own entity? Does the mind possess life and awareness as it claims or is living-awareness aware of the mind? Does thought possess life and awareness or is living-awareness (as presence) aware of thought?

Once you have distinguished between thought and awareness-life-presence through the previous inquiry, focus attention on presence (present awareness). Is presence what you are? Can you separate yourself from present awareness or is that you? Does presence make any claims of possessing life and awareness or is it simply permeated with life-awareness? Can presence be separated from life-awareness?

Contemplate the life-awareness that permeates presence. This requires intuitive contemplation of that which cannot be seen but can be realized. It has no personality. It has no sense of self. It is before presence, which does have a non-personal sense of “I am,” but life-awareness does not have a sense of “I am.” It is the life-awareness energy of presence, just as electricity is the energy that lights a light bulb.

With contemplative attention on life-awareness, the essence of presence, ask: Is this life-awareness separate or different from the life-awareness in any other presence? (This is similar to asking, “Is the electricity that lights the bulb in this lamp separate or different from the electricity that lights the bulb in that lamp?)

Do you find that there is one source that permeates presence with life-awareness or are there different sources?

If there is one source that permeates presence with life-awareness, presence is life-awareness, and presence is what you are, can you say that you are your own entity? Or, are you the essence of your source, which is also the essence of all things?

Lesson 224

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Forgiveness," to contemplate Lesson 224, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description D - <http://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-d-with-tip-5/>

God is my Father, and He loves His Son.

"Father" and "Son" are symbols. Like all symbols, they can have multiple meanings. For our purposes now, it is helpful to see life-awareness as Father and presence as Son.

Some people make the mistake of seeing the personality-mind as Son. The personality-mind is a temporary effect in presence, but it is not what you are. When one sees the personality-mind as Son, one remains stuck with the misperception that s/he is the personality-mind. In addition, the personality-mind isn't "wholly beneficent." When people feel that it should be, it can lead to additional guilt and unworthiness.

Focus your attention on presence (present awareness) now. Notice presence is simply aware without any involvement in the world or in thoughts. Presence is "wholly beneficent and free from guilt." Presence is the awareness that lights up everything perceived and experienced. Without the awareness of presence, there would not be perception or experience. Said another way, nothing could exist without presence.

Presence is what you are. Presence is the Son of life-awareness.

Now focus your intuitive attention on life-awareness (activating cause), which is the foundation and essence of presence. Notice how life-awareness and presence are one. Life-awareness is the light of presence in the same way that presence is the light of the world. Just as nothing manifest could exist without presence, presence exists because of the loving and ongoing gift of life-awareness.

Today's lesson says, "I am weary of the world I see." Does this thought come from presence? Or is presence the silent witness of this thought? Who (or what) are you?

Lesson 225

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Forgiveness," to contemplate Lesson 225, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description E - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-e-with-tip-5/>

God is my Father, and His Son loves Him.

Today's lesson says, "Father, ... You have given all Your Love to me. I must return it, for I want it mine in full awareness, blazing in my mind and keeping it within its kindly light, inviolate, beloved, with fear behind and only peace ahead."

With the realization that this is what we want, we practice giving love (attention) to life-awareness by gratefully spending time in awareness-watching-awareness meditation.

The lesson also says, "Brother, we find that stillness now."

With this in our hearts, we practice forgiveness today. If we see an idea that someone has done something to us, we pause and notice that we are not affected at all. The mind may be agitated, but we are the presence that is aware of the mind; we are not the mind. If the agitation continues to attract our attention, we use a spiritual practice to see through the illusion of being affected. With right-gratitude for this healing opportunity, we practice inquiry, rest-accept-trust and/or right-reason in order to free ourselves from the illusion of meaning when there is none.

Lesson 226

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Forgiveness," to contemplate Lesson 226, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description F – <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-f-with-tip-6/>

My home awaits me. I will hasten there.

There is no reason for us to hold onto unhappiness of any kind. Only our own ideas *and the value we give them* create unhappiness.

What ideas are you giving value to that create your unhappiness?

Do you think things should be different than they are? Is there an ideal perfection that is not being met? Is someone acting different than you want him/her to act? Should you have something that you do not have? Is your mind full of self-condemnation, or is it highly critical of another?

When you are unhappy, pause and look. What idea is currently present and currently valued as true? Do you value this idea more than the opportunity to know the freedom of truth realization? Or are you willing to release this idea and any value you've given it in order to be one step closer to total freedom?

Lesson 227

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Forgiveness," to contemplate Lesson 227, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description G – <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-g-with-tip-7/>

This is my holy instant of release.

What is God's Will? God's Will is life-awareness-presence. It is isness-being. It is existence. God's Will is the truth of all things as they really are.

Today's lesson says, "I thought to make another will. Yet nothing that I thought apart from You exists."

NTI Romans calls this other will the wish for "something completely different" than reality. That would be something completely different from life-awareness-presence. If something is completely different from life-awareness-presence, it has no life. Therefore, it does not exist.

Our thoughts have no life. They are the other will. When we remove attention from our thoughts and place attention with life-awareness-presence, we "lay them down before the feet of truth, to be removed forever from my mind."

Both of our primary practices remove attention (meaning and value) from thoughts. We practice forgiveness (inquiry, rest-accept-trust, right-reason, etc) and awareness-watching-awareness. Both are critical components of "our glad return to Heaven, which we never really left."

Today we embrace our primary practices. We see they are both important to our "instant of release." We are grateful to have these practices as part of our lives now.

Lesson 228

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Forgiveness," to contemplate Lesson 228, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 40-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation for today: Am I the Body? - <https://awakening-together.org/am-i-the-body-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

God has condemned me not. No more do I.

Each one of us identifies with a large number of ideas. For example:

- I am [name, age, & gender].
- I am [career or other role in life].

- I am good/bad with money.
- I am healthy/sick/in constant pain.
- I am smart/stupid.
- I am athletic/in poor shape.
- I am busy/bored.
- I am compassionate/uncaring.
- I am addicted/self-disciplined.
- I am outgoing/introverted.
- I am responsible/a procrastinator.
- I am detail-oriented/likely to make mistakes.
- I am outdoorsy/a couch potato.
- I am artistic/handy/unskilled.
- I am intuitive/confused.
- I am energetic/lethargic.
- I am blessed/unlucky.
- I am attractive/not much to look at.

I could go on all day, because we each carry so many identifications in our minds.

Today's lesson points out that each of these mental identities condemns us to a limited view of our self. We overlook our truth and believe a limited self-identity whenever we identify with an idea, positive or negative.

If you look at the list above, you will be able to find some ideas that you identify with. However, is that what you are? For example, if you identify with smart, have you ever felt stupid? If you identify as one who is likely to make mistakes, have you ever been praised for a job well done?

It doesn't matter what idea we identify with. When we identify with an idea, we put on blinders. We ignore our unlimited nature by thinking, "I am [this idea]."

Let's pay attention to the ideas we identify with. When you notice an idea of identification, pause and look at it with inquiry. Is it true that you are that? Is that constant and unchanging, always you? Or is that a temporary experience that your mind has latched onto? Is it just a mental identity, or is it what you really are?

What are you? What can you find that is constant and unchanging, and clearly you? Can you find 'you' that is beyond all ideas?

Here is a message that I received from Holy Spirit in 2007 that further explores the point of today's lesson: If You Are Both - <http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina - Consistent Gentle Healing/IfYouAreBoth.pdf>

Lesson 229

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Forgiveness," to contemplate Lesson 229, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description H – <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-h-with-tip/>

Love, which created me, is what I am.

Love is open, all-embracing, perfectly allowing and naturally accepting.

There is no judgment in love. It does not compare. There is no resistance in love. It does not wish for something that is different than what is. Love is not controlling. It does not manipulate. Love is quietly and peacefully present with what is.

Your true nature is love. The ego is not love.

Our purpose now is to live from our true nature, and let go of the ego illusion. I call it the "ego illusion," because the ego pretends to be you, but it is not. Therefore, it is an illusion of you, but not the truth of you.

Today, while observing awareness-presence in meditation, notice it is love. Notice it is incapable of being anything but love. It has no judgment in it, no comparison, no resistance, etc. Also, notice it is what you are. This means, of course, that you are love.

Throughout the day today, remember to practice the Loving All Method. If you would like another review of the Loving All Method, read Chapter 12 of *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss* again. Notice that when you practice the Loving All Method, you are practicing abiding as love.

The Loving All Method - https://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter12.htm

Today, I practiced two meditations. First, I practiced AWA Description H (above). Next, I listened to an older mediation audio called "Love Meditation." It is a fantasy meditation. I found the instructions from Description H naturally stayed with me as I listened to the Love Meditation. There were different feelings and a few thoughts that occurred during the Love Meditation, but as I concentrated on awareness in a relaxed manner, it was easy to see that I am *the love that allowed* the experience that occurred during the Love Meditation. There were a few thoughts; there were feelings; I am the openness (love) that allowed them.

The Love Meditation - <https://awakening-together.org/love-meditation-with-regina-dawn-akers/>

If you would like to do both meditations, I recommend practicing Description H before listening to the Love Meditation. If you do not have time for both meditations in the morning, I recommend practicing Description H in the morning, and then listening to the Love Meditation later in the day.

Lesson 230

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Forgiveness," to contemplate Lesson 230, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description I - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-i-with-tip/>

Today is our last day with the special theme, "What is Forgiveness?" If you have time during the day today, listen again to the audio teaching on "What is Forgiveness?".

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina - Consistent Gentle Healing/WhatIsForgiveness.mp3>

Now will I seek and find the peace of God.

The peace of God is not found in thought. Also, thought is not what you are. These statements are keys to finding the peace of God.

The peace of God is not found in thought. – If you observe thought, you will notice there are some joyful, peaceful thoughts, but those thoughts are not constant. All thoughts come and go. When attention is focused on the movement of thought, you experience change. If thoughts are currently joyful or peaceful, you have those experiences temporarily. However, when they are replaced by worrisome thoughts, thoughts of guilt or unworthiness, blame, annoyance, anger, etcetera, you experience loss of peace.

The peace of God is constant. Since thought is not constant, the peace of God cannot be found in thought.

Thought is not what you are. – Today's workbook lesson says, "In peace I was created. And in peace do I remain. It is not given me to change my Self."

Peace is what you are.

Today, when you pay attention to awareness during meditation, notice it is perfect peace. Thoughts change, and thoughts come and go, but the awareness they arise in is perfectly open, changeless peace.

Also, as you watch awareness today, notice that you are not thought. You are the perfectly open, changeless peace that thought arises in. If an emotion arises, notice

you are not emotion. Like thought, emotion comes and goes; emotions change. But you are the awareness that is aware of emotion. You are the perfectly open, changeless peace that emotions arise in.

To seek and find the peace of God is merely to seek our Self. To know the peace of God is to identify with our ever-present Self, instead of identifying with the moving show of thought.

Lesson 231

Today we begin a new special theme, "What is Salvation?" Salvation is an idea that has no meaning in truth. Awareness-life-presence is unchanged, so it does not need salvation.

At the same time, attention, which is the moving aspect of presence, has the ability to taste anything it dips into. Since it has dipped deeply into thought, emotion and appearance, it has become confused about what it is. It is like sunlight that shines through a stained glass window. It has taken on the appearance of red and green and blue. However, attention has identified with the appearance, thereby forgetting that it has no color at all.

Salvation is undoing this misidentification. The means of salvation is "failing to support" the misidentification. We do that in two ways:

1. Forgiveness. Instead of believing thought, emotion and appearance, and instead of acting based on belief, we watch thought, emotion and appearance without acting from it. We abide as presence. When we are not able to do that easily, we use inquiry or another forgiveness tool to help us see through and detach from mistaken beliefs.
2. Awareness-watching-awareness meditation. Instead of going out into appearance, attention is brought back to its source. When attention pays attention to presence, it sees that it is one with presence and the same as presence. It therefore remembers itself as presence and drops the confusion that it is appearance.

Father, I will but to remember You.

Appearance is full of variety. Therefore, it is tempting to mind and attention. When mind and attention are unleashed, they jump around from one desire to another.

There is nothing wrong with experiencing temporary appearance. Attention was created so that we can experience appearance. However, the grasping energy of desire is a distortion of this ability. I call it a distortion because it is based on a sense of lack. It is based on the idea that I am not fulfilled within my beingness, so I need something else from outside of me to fulfill me.

When we looked at Lesson 185, we looked carefully at our desires. We asked, "Why do I want this thing that I desire? What do I expect to get from it?" We saw that what

we really seek is the peace of truth realization. We seek the fulfillment of knowing our Self. That is our true desire.

Today, we remember this again.

If you have 30-minutes for meditation today, and you would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation: Desire for Truth - <https://awakening-together.org/the-desire-for-truth-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 232

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Salvation," to contemplate Lesson 232, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description J - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-j-with-tip/>

Be in my mind, my Father, through the day.

Throughout this section of *A Course in Miracles Workbooks for Students*, we are using this process:

- 1 – Each day read and contemplate the “special theme” that we are currently working with. Currently that theme is, “What is Salvation?”
- 2 – Contemplate the day’s workbook lesson.
- 3 – Spend time in meditation.
- 4 – Recall the day’s workbook lesson hourly.
- 5 – Spend at least a brief time with the workbook lesson and/or meditation before going to bed at night.

Maybe you’ve remembered to follow all five steps in this current process, maybe you’ve forgotten part of it, or maybe you decided to skip part of the process because you thought it wasn’t important for you. Today is an opportunity to recommit to the entire process that is requested in this section of the workbook.

I look at it this way: We have been vigilant for the ego. However, we joined this group because there is a calling in us. The calling is to be vigilant for salvation. It’s what we want. That’s why we’re here, so let’s do it.

NTI Luke, Chapter 5 says:

“Old habits must be let go, for old habits will not usher in a new day. With old habits, all things remain the same. But with new habits, all things are possible.

I have come to teach you new habits. You will learn these habits by practicing them as I ask. Remember Me, and practice.

You will catch yourself practicing the old habits, for this has been your way until now. Slipping into old habits does not ruin the new ones. So when you find yourself doing this, forgive yourself your attraction to the old by stepping away from the old and stepping into the new. Each time you do this, you help yourself to unlearn the old and to learn the new.”

So today, let’s remember our desire for salvation and recommit to practicing the workbook lessons in the way the workbook asks us to.

Lesson 233

Please take time this morning to read, “What is Salvation,” to contemplate Lesson 233, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description K – <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-k-with-tip/>

I give my life to God today.

Nisargadatta Maharaj said that in order to realize the Self, you need the right teacher. He went on to say:

“Generally speaking, there are two ways: external and internal. Either you live with somebody who knows the Truth and submit yourself entirely to his guiding and shaping influence, or you seek the inner guide and follow the inner light wherever it takes you. In both cases your personal desires and fears must be disregarded. ... If you are earnest, whatever way you choose will take you to your goal. It is the earnestness that is the decisive factor.”

Our way is a combination of the external teacher and the internal teacher. We have structure laid out by the external—by *A Course in Miracle Workbook for Students*, by Gentle Healing Homework Assignments, by Tips from Regina—but most of the time we are left alone with our internal teacher, inner spiritual intuition. Within the structure given by the external, it is the internal we need to submit ourselves to. We submit ourselves to its “guiding and shaping influence” by asking, “What am I to do now?”

Today’s lesson is very clear. An important part of salvation is surrender. We surrender our thoughts, we surrender our actions, and we surrender without questioning the guidance of the teacher. (Note: Nisargadatta does indicate that not all external teachers are trustworthy. Therefore, the wisdom of the internal must guide us in selecting the external.)

It's important to notice that Nisargadatta said "your personal desires and fears must be disregarded." If we let our personal desires and fears lead us to ignore the guidance of the teacher, we will remain attached to the ego.

True surrender transcends the personality-mind entirely.

There is a paragraph from *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* that has been coming to my mind over the last two days. That paragraph says:

"Watch the mind carefully. Notice how it wants to judge my words or judge my methods. Notice how it wants to choose against me and decide what is best for itself. That is the confusion-mechanism. That questioning and doubting feature, which is a core mechanism within the mind, is a separation-creation mechanism that keeps you blind to the truth."

First, we can ask ourselves if we are remembering to seek the guidance of the inner teacher by asking, "What am I to do now?" Next, we need to ask if we are following the intuition we receive, or are we judging for ourselves whether we want to follow or not?

Yesterday we recommitted to following the instructions laid out by one of our external teachers, *A Course in Miracles Workbook for Students*. Today, we recommit to seeking guidance from the inner teacher, and we commit to follow the guidance we receive.

Lesson 234

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Salvation," to contemplate Lesson 234, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description L - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-l-with-tip-8/>

Father, today I am Your Son again.

Today, we will notice our true Self throughout the day. Here are some questions you can use to help shift your attention for short glimpses of awareness throughout the day.

What is here, *present*, that has always been here and present?

What is constant (non-changing) as what I am?

What sees this sensation/pain?

What is aware of this sound?

What is here as *I* while this mood is present
that was also here as *I* when another mood was present?

What is giving attention to these thoughts?

What is aware of the body and the environment the body is in?

Also, here are some very brief exercises that you can try at different times during your day today. I recommend taking a break from whatever you are doing at 4 different times in your day, and giving your full attention to one video during each break. Each video is under 10 minutes long. Don't just watch the video. Try the experiments as you watch or immediately after watching the video.

Loch Kelly – Awareness of Awareness -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyzQGVos-0M>

Richard Lang – Who are we really? (1B) -
<https://youtu.be/gHfD8ozxXhA>

Douglas Harding – Out of Body Experiment -
<https://youtu.be/FNwED9JkzSw>

Greg Goode - A Guided Self-Inquiry Exercise -
<https://youtu.be/ZYjI6gh9RxE>

The videos above are for breaks during the day. This last video (14 mins) is for nighttime, just before going to bed:

Rupert Spira – How Do I Practice Self-Inquiry? -
<https://youtu.be/FNwED9JkzSw>

Lesson 235

Please take time this morning to read, “What is Salvation,” to contemplate Lesson 235, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description M – <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-m-with-tip-9/>

God in His mercy wills that I be saved.

Sometimes we experience resistance and frustration with the spiritual path and with ourselves as spiritual students. The superego (the self-criticizing part of the ego) is always ready to tell us how poorly we are doing on this path. It whispers that we will never awaken; we are not good enough to awaken.

The idea that we will never awaken is called “doubt.” Doubt is an ego preservation strategy, because if we believe doubt, we won’t fully dedicate ourselves to spiritual practice. Doubt, when it is believed, holds us back.

Ramana Maharshi said, “Realization is our true nature. It is nothing new to be gained. ... Therefore there is no need to be doubting whether we would gain or lose the Self.” He recommended looking to see who or what doubts. When we look carefully, we notice the mind (the ego) doubts.

With right-reason, we can see that doubt benefits the ego. It is in our best interest to disregard doubt and continue with spiritual practice.

Doubt seems strongest when the ego is loud in our mind. That is when the superego is eager to tell us that we are spiritual failures. Interestingly, that is also when the ego is most vulnerable. That is when we have the best opportunity for healing the mind and transcending the ego. In other words, the ego attacks loudest when it feels itself losing control of our attention. It is fighting to “regain command and control.” (NTI Acts 14)

It has always been helpful for me to realize that when I appear to be failing, I am about to reach a break-through. The break-through will come if I do not give in to the ego voice. During the midst of the ego’s struggle, I choose to stick with my spiritual aspiration and with spiritual practice to the best of my ability (which seemed better on some days than others).

Today’s lesson says, “I need but look upon all things that seem to hurt me, and with perfect certainty assure myself, ‘God wills that I be saved from this,’ ...”

That faith can be very important when the ego gets loud. We are not alone. The Self, with all of its knowledge, wisdom and love, is *right here* supporting us in our efforts to awaken to our Self.

Lesson 236

Please take time this morning to read, “What is Salvation,” to contemplate Lesson 236, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description N – <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-n-with-tip-10/>

I rule my mind, which I alone must rule.

The Teachings of Inner Ramana says, “Mind is like a tool that must be used if one is to experience this world in any way. Mind is the tool of perception. Perception can only be experienced through mind. But this is not the same as saying that mind

controls perception or that one must listen to the chattering or problems and solutions of mind.”

The human mind is an incredible thing. It is also an integral part of the experience of human. This really stood out to me when I saw the movie, *Jungle Book*. The boy, Mowgli, thought differently than his animal friends did. His mind thought of tools that would help solve everyday challenges, like getting honey from a beehive without being stung. Some of his animal caretakers thought his human contraptions were foolish, until he was able to devise a way to rescue a baby elephant from a large hole that it had fallen into. That’s when the other animals accepted the usefulness of the human mind.

The human mind has value. The problem isn’t the human mind. It’s a neutral tool. The problem is that we’ve forgotten what we are. We aren’t the mind, and we certainly aren’t slaves to the mind’s chatter. We are awareness-life-presence.

It’s just as Michael Langford has written in *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss*:

“As an example for clarification, you could view thinking and memory as something like a computer program. Within that computer program is a virus. The virus is called the ‘I thought’. The virus controls the program. The I thought controls all thinking. The virus pretends to be your self. The I thought pretends to be your self. The virus creates tremendous sorrow and suffering. The I thought creates tremendous sorrow and suffering. None of the sorrow or suffering is needed. What is needed is to delete the virus that pretends to be ‘I’. What is needed is to delete the imposter self. “

In other words, we need to remember what we are and what the mind is. It is a tool available for our use, but it is not our ruler.

Reflect frequently today on what you are and what the mind is. Notice when you are using the mind (just like you use a computer), and when you are allowing the mind to use you.

When you notice that you are allowing the mind to use you, step back into your Self. Remember your Self. You are primary to the mind. Abide as your Self.

If you need help shifting from identification with the mind to Self-realization, rest the mind and let help come to you. Help will come from the “Thought of peace” which “was given to God’s Son the instant that his mind had thought of war. There was no need for such a Thought before, ... But when the mind is split there is a need of healing. So the Thought that has the power to heal the split became a part of every fragment of the mind that still was one, ...”

If you have time for a second meditation today, you might enjoy this meditation:

Respecting Humanness - <https://awakening-together.org/respecting-humanness-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 237

Please take time this morning to read, “What is Salvation,” to contemplate Lesson 237, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation: Time With Your Self – <https://awakening-together.org/time-with-your-self-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers>

Now would I be as God created me.

Today, as I write this tip, a number of events are in the American news:

Hurricane Harvey recently stalled over southeast Texas resulting in the worst rainfall disaster in US history. Approximately 20,000 homes were damaged or destroyed by flooding, and tens of thousands of people were displaced.

Hurricane Irma, the largest and strongest hurricane to ever form in the Atlantic Ocean, has just pummeled islands in the Caribbean Sea and is heading straight for Florida.

An 8.1 magnitude earthquake just struck southern Mexico. It is the strongest earthquake to hit Mexico in a century. Tsunami warnings have been triggered.

North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, is obsessed with the development of a nuclear warhead that is able to strike US soil.

On the day when you read this tip, there will be something else in the news, but there will be something. There may also be a challenge occurring in your personal life.

I am reminded of something Ramana Maharshi said when bandits broke into his ashram to rob it. In the process of the robbery, they beat Ramana Maharshi. One of his devotees, upon seeing what the men had done to Maharshi, grabbed an iron instrument lying near by and wanted to go after the robbers and get revenge. Ramana Maharshi replied, “We are sadhus [spiritual disciples]. We should not give up our dharma [way of being].”

This, I feel, is the meaning of today’s workbook lesson.

Now would I be as God created me.

“Now” implies now, regardless of appearances and events. Even if I am being robbed and beaten, I will be as God created me. I will be the peace of God, because that is what I am. Through being peace, I “allow the light in me to shine upon the world throughout the day. I bring the world the tidings of salvation which I hear as God my Father speaks to me.”

Remaining as the peace that I am under all circumstances is the meaning of Jesus’ statement, “Turn the other cheek.”

Today, as you go through your day, there will be events in world news and circumstances that arise in your personal experience. As these things occur, remember to be the presence of peace. Even if you find yourself getting upset, remain the presence of peace throughout the upset by practicing rest-accept-trust or the Loving All Method.

Now would I be as God created me.

This is what the world needs from us. This is what we need from us. This is the practice of our truth, our dharma.

Lesson 238

Please take time this morning to read, “What is Salvation,” to contemplate Lesson 238, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation: Being in Love - <http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/MeditationAudios/RDAMeditations/BeingInLoveMeditation.mp3>

On my decision all salvation rests.

Our decisions are made based on who we think we are. Every decision is based on the current moment’s identity. For example, if I think someone is taking advantage of me, I will react from that identified perception.

Please contemplate the sentences above, and notice this is true for you. It might help to remember two or three recent decisions or recent reactions, which are simply fast decisions. Look to see what idea you were identified with at the moment, and notice your decision came from that identification. (For example, I recently snapped at my partner. In that moment I was identified with, “I am being pulled in too many directions at once.”)

Because our decisions are based on who we think we are, it is important to realize who we are. When we know ourselves as awareness-life-presence, we naturally make decisions that are based on love. Our decisions are based on love, because awareness-life-presence is love.

Today we contemplate the love that we are. Today's recommended meditation will help with this contemplation. The more we contemplate the love that we are, the more we realize ourselves as love. As we see love as our Self, our decisions spring forth from that instead of from misidentification. In this way, we are effortlessly "steadfast in holiness" and a natural savior in the world.

p.s., Notice that I am not asking you to try to be love. You will always make decisions based on what you think you are, so I am asking you to notice, again and again, the truth of what you are until you naturally identify with that.

Lesson 239

Please take time this morning to read, "What is Salvation," to contemplate Lesson 239, and to spend time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation: Appreciating Life -

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/MeditationAudios/RDAMeditations/AppreciationForLife.mp3>

The glory of my Father is my own.

I found an interesting chart on a Christian website called The Sword of Spirit. This chart shows the difference between false humility, true humility and pride. Today's lesson begins by saying, "Let not the truth about ourselves today be hidden by false humility." Look at the first column in the following True Humility Chart. Do you find ways that you hide the truth about yourself with false humility?

<http://www.swordofthespirit.net/bulwark/truehumilitychart.htm>

Today, whenever you notice your thoughts slipping into false humility, be instead "thankful for the gifts our Father gave us." Practice right-gratitude, which is gratitude for awareness-life-presence as it is. Be grateful for awareness-life-presence in one's self, in others and in nature. Let today be a day of focusing on truth with a grateful heart.

If you would like, you can also review my tip from workbook lesson 195, Love is the way I walk in gratitude: <https://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-195-love-is-the-way-i-walk-in-gratitude/>

Lesson 240

Today is our last day with our current special theme, so please take time this morning to read, "What is Salvation," one more time. Also, contemplate Lesson 240 and spend some time in meditation. If you have 30-minutes for meditation and would like a gentle audio to guide you, I recommend this meditation: Self Inquiry Meditation - <https://awakening-together.org/self-inquiry-meditation-with-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Fear is not justified in any form.

Two days ago we noticed that our decisions are based on who we think we are. Fear is a decision. Whenever we are afraid, it is because we have decided to believe fearful thoughts in the mind. We have decided those thoughts are true, and this decision is based on who we think we are.

Look at some fearful situations. You may look at current fears or fearful situations that you remember. What is the identification that is the basis of the fear?

For example:

1. I am afraid that I will die. My identification is with the body.
2. I am afraid that I will run out of money. My identification is 'powerless'.
3. I remember a fear of facing someone. My identification was 'guilty'.
4. I remember a fear of inviting someone to spend time with me. My identification was 'rejectable'.
5. Etcetera.

Today's lesson says, "Not one thing in this world is true." Contemplate that statement as you look at your list of fears and the identifications that caused them. Practice this type of inquiry with each one:

1. If nothing in this world is true, is this body what I am? What am I? (Pause and look at awareness.) Is awareness what I am? Is the body what I am? Which is more intimately what I am and which is more at a distance? Is awareness vulnerable like the body is vulnerable? Is it possible the body could die, and I would continue to live? Have I experienced death directly or is life all I know? Do I know that death is real or is death something that the mind imagines? (Look and see if death is something you know, like you know life, or is death only in the mind?) Does awareness have a concept of death? What am I? (Be still, and continue to notice awareness.)
2. If nothing in this world is true, is 'powerless' what I am? What am I? (Pause and look at awareness.) Is awareness what I am? Is powerless what I am? Which is consistently me, and which is a passing idea or feeling? Is awareness powerless? Is it vulnerable? Or is awareness present and unaffected? What am I? (Be still, and continue to notice awareness.)
3. If nothing in this world is true, is 'guilty' what I am? What am I? (Pause and look at awareness.) Is awareness what I am? Is guilty what I am? There may be the feeling of guilt, but what sees this feeling? What looks at it? Am I the feeling of guilt or am I that which is looking at it? Which one is more intimately me? Is awareness guilty or is it simply present, purely itself? (Be still, and continue to notice awareness.)

4. If nothing in this world is true, is 'rejectable' what I am? What am I? (Pause and look at awareness.) Is awareness what I am? Is rejectable what I am? Which is consistently me, and which is a passing idea or feeling? Is awareness rejectable? Can I reject awareness? (Look and see if it is possible to reject awareness.) Can awareness see itself as rejected? (Look and see if awareness believes the concept of rejection.) Does awareness reject anything? (Look and see if awareness rejects or if it is perfectly open and allowing of everything.) What am I? (Be still, and continue to notice awareness.)
5. Etcetera.

Notice that the questions changed slightly as I looked at each concept of identification. Let intuition guide your inquiry and your looking. We cannot let go of fear when we are identified with a vulnerable concept. However, as we realize the truth of what we are, which is eternally invulnerable, fear becomes meaningless.

Lesson 241

Over the next 10 days, I will share something in each tip about our new special theme, and then I will share about the lesson for the day. I will end each tip with a recommended meditation.

What is the World?

Our special theme begins, "The world is a false perception. It is born of error, and it has not left its source." Its source is error. In this case, it is an error about what we are. The Course calls it "the thought of separation." The thought of separation, the ego and the I-thought are synonymous.

As Michael Langford writes, the ego "has created all the wars, diseases, death, suffering and evil that every human has ever experienced."

It might be helpful to look at the suffering the thought of separation creates. In Chapter 5 of *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss*, Michael Langford speaks of the "thousands of wars; thousands of diseases; thousands of forms of violence; all of the ways humans deceive, hurt, and cheat each other; and every other form of human suffering that you can think of." I find it helpful to look at specific examples of suffering, so let me share two news stories that came to my attention today:

- Police in Kentucky say a 5-year-old boy watched helplessly as his mother was beaten, bound and thrown off a cliff over the weekend. Two hikers discovered the boy's mother Saturday morning at the bottom of an 80-foot embankment. She survived the fall and is recovering in the hospital. Her discovery set off a search for her son. More than 200 people searched for the boy on Saturday and Sunday. Authorities found the boy's body near where his mother was left for dead.

- Members of an indigenous tribe in Brazil's Amazon Basin were allegedly killed by illegal gold miners, according to Survival International. The organization, which advocates for indigenous rights, said the massacre included women and children and may have wiped out one-fifth of the tribe. Members of the tribe were gathering eggs along a river in the Javari Valley, in the country's remote west, when they came across the illegal miners. The miners later boasted about the slaughter at a bar in the nearest town, and even showed off a hand-carved paddle they claimed to have stolen as a trophy. They bragged about cutting up the bodies and throwing them in the river.

Sadly, there are many, many more stories like these that are not in the news. These stories are only a tiny sample of the suffering caused by the thought of separation everyday.

It would be helpful to read Chapter 5 from *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss* again. Please read it at a time of your convenience today:

https://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter05.htm

This holy instant is salvation come.

Our last special theme said that salvation “is a promise, made by God, that you would find your way to Him at last. It cannot but be kept. It guarantees that time will have an end, and all the thoughts that have been born in time will end as well.”

Today we celebrate this promise. We also realize that we are not passive receivers of the promise. We have a role to play. Our role is forgiveness. Forgiveness is remaining focused on our unaffected Self while failing to support the ego—choosing not to uphold it with our attention and action.

Since we are not supporting the ego, we need another way to live in the world. That way is surrender, seeking guidance from spiritual intuition by asking, “What am I to do now?” and letting it lead us in everything we think, say and do.

How glad we are to celebrate the promise of salvation today! We celebrate by joyously doing our part. We are eager to play our role in salvation. (With a heart full of joy, we make Choice A.)

If you have 45 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation:

Existence-Consciousness-Bliss -

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/MeditationAudios/RDAMeditations/Existence-Consciousness-BlissMeditation.mp3>

If you don't have that much time, consider this 25-minute meditation: Miracles Meditation -

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/MeditationAudios/RDAMeditations/FocusedWillingRelaxedMeditation.mp3>

If there is time in your day today, consider doing both meditations, possibly one in the morning and one before bed.

Lesson 242

What is the World?

Our special theme says, “When the thought of separation has been changed to one of true forgiveness, will the world be seen in quite another light; and one which leads to truth, where all the world must disappear ...”

I would like to quote from an article by Bentinho Massaro. The article is titled Update on my Graduation from Creation – Part 1 -

<http://www.bentinhomassaro.com/read/update-on-my-graduation-from-creation>

After several years of practicing resting as Awareness and increasing my lucidity and emptiness of self and bias, 5 years ago I penetrated beyond all that into the Absolute. I directly realized that the Absolute 'me' was beyond all perception, beyond all Creation, beyond everything, beyond even Consciousness/Awareness as we know it to be (infused with experience). There is nothing beyond this Absolute. It is Infinitely Absolute. Absolutely Infinite. Absolutely One. Indescribable. Unimaginable. It is Final Completion.

This penetrative 'experience' of being beyond all perception/Creation (and I have had several complete absorptions since then) showed me that there was a realization or disappearance possible way beyond what most of us consider to be 'Enlightenment.' Penetrating into the Absolute made 'awakened living' seem like nothing at all in comparison; just more mind, more illusion. This was true liberation beyond all levels and utterly indescribable. ...

There are many levels of 'Enlightenment' or rather: there are many degrees of transparency to the One while still associated with I AM (while still partaking in the illusion). However, they are all trumped and rendered irrelevant when the Absolute is realized.

Most levels of awakening simply increase the lucidity of this Illusion, but do not actually wake you up to the point where this illusion of perception or experience disappears entirely.

You can compare this to your dreams at night. You usually dream unconsciously. Let's say you have one of these usual dreams and you meet a guru in your dreams and this guru is reminding you of the fact that you are dreaming.

You start to ponder this idea in the dream and your experience "I am dreaming" becomes more lucid. You become more awake IN the dream. You may even start to intuit that your actual body is laying in its bed in another reality. You may start to imagine and remember what that other reality is like outside of the dream, and you may even become awake and subtle enough to channel that intuitive experience with other dreamers. But when it comes down to it, your experience is still that you're in, or part of, the dream to a greater or lesser extent depending on your 'level of clarity.'

Lucid or not, the dream is an illusion, and as long as we are associating ourselves with a portion of the dream, or even the dream as one, inseparable whole, we are still, nevertheless, dreaming and thus not aware of our true Absolute Self.

And then there may be a time in your dream at night when you are totally ready to part from the dream; you did everything you felt you needed or wanted to do, dropped your attachments to those seeming other-selves within the dream, and even are letting go of your attachment to being 'alive in the dream' at all.

You let go completely, intensely desire or will yourself to wake up, and suddenly the dream disappears completely and you awaken in your bed in your 'real' body/reality.

What was heretofore your only known reality from which you could only imagine and speculate what waking reality must be like, is suddenly reduced to a vague, intangible memory that seems to lack existence as you wake up into your real self.

Dropping into the Light of Self, but especially and really only upon penetrating into the Absolute beyond even the Universal Presence of Isness-Love-Light, is exactly like that waking up FROM the dream to where even universal Isness (Creation's substratum) disappears and is woken up from. The Absolute Alone Remains.

Please contemplate what Bentinho has written. Return to what is written above at least two more times during the day to read and be with it. If you have time and feel the calling to do so, you may also read Chapter 5 from The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss again. It might be helpful to read it again just before going to bed. - https://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter05.htm

This day is God's. It is my gift to Him.

Today is a day of devotion to That which knows *so much more* than we know with our limited minds and from our limited experience. Today we drop all ideas that we know anything, because we don't, and we surrender to something that is far beyond the meager perspective of the false self, and therefore fully capable to lead us back to our truth.

Here are two prayers to contemplate alternatively throughout the day. The first prayer is adapted from today's workbook lesson. The second prayer is from NTI Acts, Chapter 1. Remember to pause frequently today. Give your full heart, mind and soul to one prayer or the other each time you pause. (If you would like to edit the prayers in order to fit better with your heart, you may.)

From Lesson 242:

I give today to You. I come with a wholly open mind. I do not ask for anything that I may think I want. Give me what You would have me receive. You know all of my desires and wants. And You will give me everything I need that will help me find my way to You. I surrender everything else to you in complete trust. Amen.

From NTI Acts 1:

Father, I do not know what is best for me now, in this time and this place, that I may be led back to You. Because I cannot see the path I am ready to walk, take my hand and send me your Voice to guide me. I shall go where it asks me to go, and I shall do as it asks me to do in joy and peace and certainty. Amen.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description 0 - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-0-with-tip-11/>

Lesson 243

What is the World?

Our special theme says that the world "was made as an attack on God. ... Thus the world was meant to be a place where God could enter not, and where His Son could be apart from Him."

However, *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* says, "The mind creates experience that is not real. It is illusion or fantasy, and it is created for the purpose of enjoyment or pleasure."

So, which is true? Is the world an attack on God or is it intended for our enjoyment?

If you pay attention to the mind, which is engaged in actively creating the world now, you will see that both are true.

The world is “an attack on God” and “meant to be a place where God could enter not” in that the mind is *focused on the thought of separation*. The mind wants “me” to be real, this apparent individual entity that is separate from everything else.

At the same time, the mind is constantly seeking “enjoyment or pleasure” for “me” and tries to avoid anything that it defines as pain or displeasure.

Both of these metaphysical stories, the one from *A Course in Miracles* and the one from *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*, describe the workings of the mind as it is now. And the world we see today comes from the workings of the mind as it is now.

Also, both *A Course in Miracles* and *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* describe the world as a place of fear. The *Teachings of Inner Ramana* says:

“The mind is afraid because the unnatural is not natural. The mind that has forgotten reality knows that something is wrong, but it does not know what that is. It projects stories in an effort to give itself a reason for its fear, but it cannot find the answer it seeks because it is looking in the wrong direction. Its fear does not come from its own projections, and so solutions to those projections cannot end the fear.

Fear comes simply from not knowing reality. Therefore, the only answer to fear is to let go of what is false and to remember reality as true.”

Or as Michael Langford writes in *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss*:

“Thought believes thought is a real entity and thought believes thought is a real self. Thought is not a real entity and thought is not a self. Living from thought instead of living from Awareness is the cause of all human suffering. ...

The ego is the cause of all disease, death, war, fear, anger and violence. Although many thousands of years have passed, human beings have made almost no inward progress toward ending suffering, sorrow, war, fear, anger, violence, cheating and lying.

Thousands of years ago humans had suffering, sorrow, war, fear, anger, violence, cheating and lying.

Now, today, currently, humans have suffering, sorrow, war, fear, anger, violence, cheating and lying.

What has kept humans in the same pool of inward unsolved problems?

The ego (the imposter) has kept humans in the same pool of inward unsolved problems.

Inward problems cannot be solved by looking outward. Inward problems can only be solved by looking inward.

The ego knows that if the attention is turned inward, the ego will be found to be a myth, an imposter, an illusion, a delusion, a dream. Therefore, due to the ego's fear of ending, the ego keeps the attention directed outward."

If you contemplate "What is the world?" along with these excerpts from *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* and Michael Langford, you will see that they are all saying the same thing:

The ego (I-thought) is not the truth of what we are.

Since the I-thought is unconsciously aware that it is not truth, fear is inherent in its thought system.

The ego does not want to look inward to find the cause of its fear, because it unconsciously knows that if one looks inward, the I-thought will be found to be unreal.

Therefore, the mind projects problems outward and then tries to resolve its fear by solving those problems. This is the outward seeking mechanism of mind. It seeks pleasure and avoids pain.

Of course, outward seeking will never work, because as each problem is resolved the fear inherent in the thought system continues. Therefore, another problem is projected by the fear in thought.

This seeking and projection loop continues for as long as the thought of separation continues.

The only answer to the world's problems is to end the thought of separation (the ego, the I-thought).

Today I will judge nothing that occurs.

Judgment is based on the idea that we know what is good and bad, right and wrong, etcetera. If you look carefully at these ideas, you will see they are part of the outward seeking and projection loop described above. In other words, judgment is a primary function of the ego. Since judgment is an activity of the ego, believing judgment keeps the ego active.

The entire world and all of its problems are a projection of the ego. To believe the ego is to continue the projection. This is very important to see!

When we believe our own ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, etcetera, we think we are going to make things better through judgment, but in fact we are keeping the problem creator, the ego, active. This is very important to see!

In short, by trying to seek pleasure and avoid pain through judgment, we create the very suffering we seek to avoid.

When this is seen, the only reasonable response is to genuinely surrender all judgment and to turn to inner spiritual intuition regarding what to think, how to see, what to say and what to do.

Today, try not to believe judgment. Instead, practice the Loving All Method and practice surrender as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*. Leave creation to be itself without further complicating it with your individual assessment of what should and should not be.

Please read this tip two or three more times today. It is very important to fully accept what is written in this tip.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation by Michael Langford and Karen Worth: AWA Description P - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-p-with-tip-12/>

Lesson 244

What is the World?

Our special theme says, "Thus the world was meant to be a place where God could enter not, and where His Son could be apart from Him. Here was perception born, for knowledge could not cause such insane thoughts. But eyes deceive, and ears hear falsely. Now mistakes become quite possible, for certainty has gone."

The primary definition of perception is, "the ability to see, hear or become aware of something through the senses." A secondary definition is, "a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression."

In other words, perception is an outward focused way of acquiring information. When combined with personal thought, which interprets the information received from the senses, perception is also a way of conditioning the mental organism, the brain.

This is very important to see!

Simply put, perception is a means of *creating and securing ignorance*. In other words, as we remain focused on the world and thought, we are completely ignorant of truth. It is also fair to say we are completely deluded.

Or, as our special theme says, “The mechanisms of illusion have been born instead. And now they go to find what has been given them to seek. Their aim is to fulfill the purpose which the world was made to witness and make real. They see in its illusions but a solid base where truth exists, upheld apart from lies. Yet everything that they report is but illusion which is kept apart from truth.”

I am in danger nowhere in the world.

When we look deeply at the fact that everything we think is true is not true, we can feel very disoriented. We can even feel afraid. However, there is nothing to fear. There is nothing to fear because thought, the body and the world are not real; therefore, we are not at all vulnerable.

Yes, it is true that the imposter self is vulnerable. As we saw in yesterday’s tip, fear is an inherent part of thought, because *thought is not a self*. That unconscious realization is the cause of fear. But we are not thought. We are not the imposter self or its creation, the body. We are the true Self. We are that which “cannot suffer, be endangered, or experience unhappiness ...”

As *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* says, “Fear comes simply from not knowing reality. Therefore, the only answer to fear is to let go of what is false and to remember reality as true.”

That is our focus today. In addition to practicing awareness-watching-awareness, take short breaks today to notice awareness as what you are. Notice that as awareness, you observe thought. Notice that you observe the body. However, you are prior to both of them. Notice yourself as that which is completely unaffected by anything in the realm of perception.

To help with today’s focus, I am recommending two meditations. If you can, please practice the first meditation early in the day and the second meditation later in the day.

AWA Description Q - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-q-with-tip-1/>

Recalling Attention - <https://awakening-together.org/recalling-attention-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 245

What is the World?

Our special theme says, "Thus the world was meant to be a place where God could enter not, and where His Son could be apart from Him. Here was perception born, for knowledge could not cause such insane thoughts. ... The mechanisms of illusion have been born instead. And now they go to find what has been given them to seek. Their aim is to fulfill the purpose which the world was made to witness and make real. ... Yet everything that they report is but illusion which is kept apart from truth."

Similarly, *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* says:

Think of mind as a filter. This filter enables one to see objects where there is light. This filter enables one to distinguish differences where there are none. ... Without the mind, one would be unable to experience the world. But this does not mean that one must be subject to the mind.

The mind, when believed and taken seriously, seems to define reality. But as I have just shown, the mind does not define reality. It places a veil of perception over reality so reality can be experienced in a new way. This means that the mind is a trickster or illusionist, and that which it creates is purely illusion. To believe the mind is to believe illusion. To think illusion is reality is to be completely deluded.

Again I emphasize that belief in illusion, or the process of being deluded, comes from believing the mind.

This must mean then, that the process of awakening is also the process of learning not to believe the stories of the mind.

As a filter, the mind can be used to see and experience illusion without believing it. This experience comes from maintaining knowledge that is beyond the mind. It can also be said that this knowledge is before the mind. This knowledge exists now, within the Self, at a depth that is below and at a height that is above the mind. In other words, the knowledge is always accessible and it takes only desire to remember and realize this knowledge.

Your peace is with me, Father. I am safe.

We practice again today like we practiced yesterday. In addition to practicing awareness-watching-awareness, we take short breaks

throughout the day to notice awareness as what we are. Also, we practice surrender as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*. By asking, "What am I to do now?" we are led by intuition, which comes from truth-knowledge, instead of by thought, which is the source of delusion.

To help with today's focus, I am recommending two meditations again today. If you can, please practice the first meditation early in the day and the second meditation later in the day.

AWA Description R - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-r-with-tip-2/>

Just Be Natural Meditation - <https://awakening-together.org/just-be-natural-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 246

What is the World?

Over the last two days, we have contemplated the fact that perception is deception. However, our special theme gives us hope when it says, "As sight was made to lead away from truth, it can be redirected ... all perception can be given a new purpose ..."

The world's purpose for you is the one that you give it. If you give the world the purpose of healing the mind and awakening to truth, that is the purpose of everything you perceive. However, if you do not consciously and steadfastly choose this purpose, the world, *by default*, will continue to be a place of deception with the purpose of feeding the thought of separation.

What purpose do you choose?

Is there anything (anyone, any circumstance, any desire) that you exclude from the purpose of healing or awakening?

If there is anything that you exclude from the purpose of healing or awakening, that remains an area of deception for you. That is where your ego feeds itself.

To love my Father is to love His Son.

There are some teachings we need to accept if healing the mind or awakening to truth are important to us.

1. The ego (I-thought) will not lead us to awakening. Its purpose is the opposite of truth.

2. The ego is the cause of all suffering. As long as we continue to accept the I-thought's thinking as our thinking, we will continue to suffer (be unhappy, worry, have grievances, etc.). Likewise, as long as we continue to accept the I-thought's thinking as our thinking, we will continue to contribute to the world's suffering (in all of its forms).
3. The only way to be in the world without following the I-thought's thinking is to surrender to wisdom that is not part of the I-thought's thinking. That is the purpose of surrender.

You can know the I-thought's thinking by its will. Outward seeking is the will of the I-thought.

Judgment is a mechanism of the ego's outward seeking loop. It judges to determine good and bad, right and wrong, desired and undesired, etcetera. And then it seeks to obtain or achieve what it determines is good for it and to avoid or destroy what it determines is bad for it.

Please take a few minutes to contemplate some things or circumstances that your mind judges as good or desired. Notice the thinking that spins in your mind about obtaining or achieving those things or circumstances.

Next, take a few minutes to contemplate some things or circumstances that your mind judges as bad or undesirable. Notice the thinking that spins in your mind about avoiding or ending those things or circumstances.

You have just observed judgment and outward seeking in the I-thought's thought system.

Love is the nature of the true Self. Love is open allowance and acceptance of all things as they are. Love does not seek outwardly for happiness or safety. Love is fulfilled within itself. Love is eternal and invulnerable. It is not threatened by the temporary circumstances that come and go in perception.

When we practice The Loving All Method, we practice abiding as our truth. The Loving All Method is also a good foundation for surrender, since we are more likely to intuit wisdom that comes from beyond the I-thought's thinking if we have not already believed the I-thought's judgments.

Today, give full attention to practicing The Loving All Method and to surrender as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*. To make today's practice most effective, first take time to give the entire day and everything that will happen today a single purpose—the purpose of healing your mind or awakening to truth—in whatever way you feel inspired to aspire to that.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation:

AWA Description S - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-s-with-tip-3/>

Lesson 247

What is the World?

Our special theme says, “As sight was made to lead away from truth, it can be redirected. ... all perception can be given a new purpose by the One Whom God appointed Savior to the world. Follow His light, and see the world as He beholds it. Hear His Voice alone in all that speaks to you. And let Him give you peace and certainty, which you have thrown away ...”

The “One Whom God appointed Savior to the world” was referred to as the “Thought of peace” in our last special theme, *What is Salvation?* That theme said, “The Thought of peace was given to God’s Son the instant that his mind had thought of war. There was no need for such a Thought before, for peace was given without opposite, and merely was. But when the mind is split there is a need of healing. So the Thought that has the power to heal the split became a part of every fragment of the mind that still was one, but failed to recognize its oneness.”

So, we turn to the Thought of peace, which is within each of our minds, and let it lead us. We do this by:

- Recognizing the ego thought system as deception and choosing not to listen to it regardless of what its story is. We remember that Jesus referred to it as “the father of lies” in the Bible. We see it clearly as that now.
- Choosing the purpose of healing the mind and awakening to truth, and holding steadfastly to that purpose under all circumstances.
- Practicing the Loving All Method with the realization that the Loving All Method disregards the ego’s judgments and outward seeking.
- Practicing surrender as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*, so that we are guided by the “Thought of peace.” We “follow His light” and “Hear His Voice alone” because we are not interested in the ego’s deception anymore.
- Focusing on awareness frequently as we anticipate the holy instant when our identity will shift to it and we are no longer identified with the ego’s deceptive thought system.

Without forgiveness I will still be blind.

When we judge others, we believe the ego’s deceptive thought system. Our mind may argue that it is justified for its way of perceiving, but it perceives without the light of truth. As our special theme has taught us, “The mechanisms of illusion have

been born instead. And now they go to find what has been given them to seek. Their aim is to fulfill the purpose which the world was made to witness and make real.” That purpose is separation. It is the opposite of truth.

Instead of believing the ego’s thought system today, turn frequently to bulleted reminders above. Review them and practice them. They represent the means by which we shall awaken fully to the realization of truth as it is.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: Brain Relaxation Meditation - <https://awakening-together.org/brain-relaxation-meditation-with-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 248

What is the World?

Our special theme says, “Let us not rest content until the world has joined our changed perception. Let us not be satisfied until forgiveness has been made complete.”

If you continue to read the last paragraph of our special theme, it appears to have an outward focus. It says, “We must save the world.” However, an outward focus that attempts to save others, possibly by converting them to the teachings that we study and practice, ignores the teaching itself.

Remember, “Inward problems cannot be solved by looking outward. Inward problems can only be solved by looking inward.”

Or, as *A Course in Miracles* puts it, “The sole responsibility of the miracle worker is to accept the atonement for himself.” (T-2.V. 5:1)

What is meant by, “Let us not rest content until the world has joined our changed perception ... ”?

Most people are motivated to the spiritual path and spiritual practice by their own suffering. They are looking for a better way of existence. If one commits his/herself to spiritual practice, one will reach a point when individual suffering is no longer a problem. One has found a better way of existence. One is happy. In *A Course in Miracles*, this better way of existence is called “the happy dream.”

If one was motivated solely by the desire to end personal suffering, his/her motivation to continue spiritual practice may wane when s/he reaches the happy dream. However, the ego has not ended at this stage. It is merely dormant, waiting until attention has diffused its focus, so it can return undetected and regain command and control.

The desire to end suffering for one's self can be highly motivating for a time. However, it is not enough motivation to keep one determined until the ego has ended. A motivation that continues beyond the desire to end one's own suffering is the desire to end suffering for everyone. This was Buddha's motivation. This was also Jesus' motivation. This is what he meant when he said, "... whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28)

Although my experience has reached the happy dream, I pay attention to the news everyday. I look at the suffering that occurs in the world, and I let compassion for others motivate me to continue spiritual practice earnestly until the ego's final end.

In fact, I am motivated by two factors:

1. Compassion for the world.
2. Desire for the direct knowledge of truth.

Whatever suffers is not part of me.

Today's lesson may appear to conflict with everything I just said, but it doesn't.

Let me share an analogy. Let's imagine that you have a rash on your face. The rash does not itch or hurt. The only way you know you have a rash is that you see it when you look in the mirror.

The doctor has given you a cream to apply to your face. Her instructions are to apply the cream twice a day until the rash disappears completely. As long as there is even the slightest appearance of a rash, you need to continue to apply the cream. If you stop before the rash is completely eliminated, it may return.

Since the rash does not cause you any personal discomfort, the only way to see if the rash has been eliminated is to look in the mirror. If you look in the mirror and see the rash, you continue to apply the cream. Of course, you don't apply the cream to the mirror. You apply the cream to your face.

The world is our mirror.

Each morning, I get up and spend a few minutes looking at the news on my Yahoo homepage. Seeing suffering there is like seeing the rash on my face. But after looking at the rash, I turn to my own spiritual practice. I apply the cream to my face.

Denying suffering, when it is done properly, is a part of applying the cream to my own face. The proper way to deny suffering is to look at awareness, recognize it as

my true Self and recognize that awareness is forever unaffected by perception. In other words, I reclaim my true Self and disown the false self.

As today's lesson says, "What is in pain is but illusion in my mind. What dies was never living in reality, ... Now I disown self-concepts and deceptions and lies ..."

Many people have been confused about the proper use of denial. Do not deny the suffering that others experience. Have compassion for their suffering. The suffering that you deny is your own. You deny your suffering by noticing that your true Self does not suffer. It never has.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this one:

Broken Heart Meditation - <https://awakening-together.org/broken-heart-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 249

What is the World?

Our special theme says, "Let us not be satisfied until forgiveness has been made complete. And let us not attempt to change our function. ... what was made to die can be restored to everlasting life."

With these words, our special theme encourages us to stay with our spiritual practice until the final end of the ego.

How do we know when the ego has reached its final end?

Our special theme says that in truth "all the world must disappear."

Here are a few quotes to consider:

Only when the world-illusion goes does the blissful light of Self arrive. Life lived in this bright, blissful light is our true, natural life. Other ways of life are full of trouble and fear. ~ Ramana Maharshi

The Self, revealed as our true nature within the heart through the power of Self-inquiry, is none other than the peerless reality of the Supreme, which alone remains **after this worldly illusion has faded into nothingness.** ~ Muruganar

He who knows the state in which **there is neither the world nor the thought of it,** he is the Supreme Teacher. ~ Nisargadatta Maharaj

When the mind abandons the movement of thought, **the appearance of the world ceases.** ~ Vasistha

The world no longer is, whether past, present or to come, after awakening to the supreme reality in the real Self, the Eternal, from all wavering free. ~ Adi Sankara

There are many, many more quotes that point to the disappearance of the world as the sign of true awakening. However, I will end with just one more quote:

There is no world! This is the central thought the course attempts to teach. Not everyone is ready to accept it, and each one must go as far as he can let himself be led along the road to truth. He will return and go still farther, or perhaps step back a while and then return again. ~ A Course in Miracles, Lesson 132

The end of ego and the disappearance of the world are both only concepts for me. I have not experienced either. However, it feels both gentle and right to commit myself to spiritual practice for as long as I look in the mirror (referring to yesterday's analogy) and see a world.

Forgiveness ends all suffering and loss.

NTI 1 Corinthians speaks of a stage of enlightenment in which existence in the world is pure joy. It says:

The fourth phase is a glorious phase, upon which your feet shall barely touch the ground. As you walk the earth, you know where you walk, so that the earth is merely a symbol within the mind. You shall not know brothers, but you shall talk to them. You will not need food, but you will eat with joy. Music shall accompany you in your every moment, and yet, you will have no need for your ears. Your sight will be changed from earthly sight to sight that is provided from Heaven. All things shall be new, and you shall have no need for any of them. In this, your joy shall be complete.

From there, NTI 1 Corinthians goes on to say:

The purpose of your life in the fourth phase of living on earth **shall not be different than the purpose at any other time.** Only now, in the fourth phase, the distractions have been erased. In letting yourself become an empty shell, you freed yourself from the desire for distraction. Now, in the fourth stage, your focus is complete. Now you know what you want, and you want it wholly. ...

The one that seems to be in the fourth stage is but a symbol of the truth that is. So this one must pass away also. But in its passing, you pass from a final

illusion of beauty to Beauty that cannot be contained in illusion. You pass from form, which reflects Light, to Light, which shines into form.

You shall not know death in your passing from the fourth phase to Light, for this passing is recognition of Life. This passing is acceptance of all that is true and all that has always been true. This passing is the final release of illusion, so that no illusion may appear to you. And death is an illusion. So you shall not know death, because you have accepted that illusion does not exist.

Therefore, be willing to become an empty shell. And be willing for this completely. For it is through emptiness that illusion is released, and it is through releasing it, that illusion is taken away.

Letting go of I-thought thinking takes us from a dream of suffering to a dream of joy, but that is not yet the end of the I-thought. If we stop our spiritual practice upon reaching this threshold, we can experience a reemergence of the ego thought system.

It is in our best interest to welcome the happy dream as an opportunity to continue our spiritual practice without distraction until we find ourselves ushered across the threshold, through the experience of the ego's final end, to "Beauty that cannot be contained in illusion."

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: AWA Description T - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-t-with-tip-4/>

Lesson 250

What is the World?

This is our last day with our special theme, "What is the World?" It is good to read it slowly and contemplatively today. Notice the main themes in this special theme, all of which we have covered in our daily tips.

Let me not see myself as limited.

In two of our recent recommended meditations, the instructions have asked us to keep an open mind.

Tip 11 with AWA Description O said, "Be open minded to the possibility that you can let go of whatever obstacle appears."

Tip 12 with AWA Description P said, "Be open minded to the possibility that you can let go of all that is limited and finite."

Today's workbook lesson asks us to be open minded in the same way. Today is a day to let go of any doubt that we find in our thinking.

Remember, doubt is an ego preservation strategy. If we believe doubt, we are less likely to apply ourselves to the spiritual practice that ends the ego and leads to Self-realization. Therefore, taking time to let go of doubt is extremely useful.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend that you practice one of the following meditations:

AWA Description O – <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-o-with-tip-11/>

AWA Description P – <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-p-with-tip-12/>

If you have time, practice both meditations today. I recommend practicing one early in the day and the other later in day.

Lesson 251

What is Sin?

Our new special theme needs to be read with understanding that comes from clarity. If one reads this special theme with the judgmental mind of the ego, one might perceive that s/he is a sinner because s/he experiences a body. That is not what this lesson intends to teach.

Let's look at the first paragraph through the lens of clarity.

The paragraph begins with three important words. "Sin is insanity." The mind might interpret those words to mean something like, "It is insane to be evil" or "It is insane to be as bad as you are." However, that is not what the sentence says. The sentence is defining what sin is by placing it side-by-side with a synonym.

Pretend like you had never heard the word "sin" before. This is the first time the sound of s—i—n has ever reached your ears. Someone uses that word, and you ask, "What is 'sin'?" The answer is, "Sin is insanity."

"Oh," you say, because you know what insanity is. And as the person continues to talk using the word "sin," your mind naturally substitutes "insanity" every time "sin" is heard.

Therefore, you hear, "Insanity is the means by which the mind is driven mad, and seeks to let illusions take the place of truth. And being mad, it sees illusions where the truth should be, and where it really is. Insanity gave the body eyes, for what is there the lucid would behold? ..."

Or said another way, the perceived world is not true. Those who choose to believe it without questioning it are deluded. Anyone who has awakened to truth, and therefore knows the unreality of the world, has no interest in it. They are drawn only to reality.

Here's how NTI says the same thing:

You experience the ego as a stream of thoughts within the mind that seem to interpret, counsel, identify, judge and spring forth as ideas. In themselves, these thoughts seem to be nothing to you, although you listen to them and act on all that they say. These thoughts rule your mind and your interpretation of the world, because you believe what they say. Yet, they are based on a foundation of separateness, which is not what is true. And so what is true is not in what they say.

To listen to these thoughts and believe them is ignorance, for you are listening to what is not true, but believing what you hear. Any action you take based on these thoughts is ignorant action, for it is action based on untruth in an unreal world.

Ignorance is not guilt. It is a call for knowledge. It is the Holy Spirit that leads you through corrected perception to the right-knowledge that you seek. Right-knowledge is true knowledge, and true knowledge is the knowledge of truth.

Do not worry about the mistakes you have made. They are based on ignorance, which is illusion and affects only that which is not reality. Be happy that you have been mistaken! Be joyous that there is another way to see! This is what it means to repent. To repent is to choose again. To repent is to decide to turn from the ways of ignorance and turn to the Voice of Knowledge. This is a joyous decision, for this is the decision that changes all things. This decision that you have made is a decision to listen to another Voice. It is the decision to let go of the thoughts you have listened to until now and to listen to another Voice, the one that comes from God. This decision is a decision to change the habits you have had until now. It is a decision to see yourself through new eyes, eyes that are based on a foundation of truth.

~ NTI Acts, Chapter 4

Set aside your thoughts of division. When you see them in your mind or in the playing out of thought within the world, rejoice! What you see is not true. Be happy that you have found willingness to deny that which is false, for inherent in its denial is the willingness to accept only that which is true. ...

One who knows wholeness after experiencing the lack of wholeness knows illusion is no substitute for truth. He shall not choose illusion again.

~ NTI 1 Corinthians, Chapter 16

I am in need of nothing but the truth.

Today is a day to give willingness to know truth. Stay in the heart today. Review the teachings above from *A Course in Miracles* and NTI throughout the day. Ask yourself questions like, “If this is not reality—if I am deluded by everything I see and believe—do I want to know truth?”

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: Subtle Looking - <https://awakening-together.org/subtle-looking-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 252

What is Sin?

Our special theme says, “The body is the instrument the mind made in its efforts to deceive itself.”

Here are some quotes for you to contemplate today in relation to the previous statement from our special theme:

1. You know yourself only through the senses and the mind. You take yourself to be what they suggest; having no direct knowledge of yourself, you have mere ideas; all mediocre, second-hand, by hearsay. Whatever you think you are, you take it to be true; the habit of imagining yourself perceivable and describable is very strong with you. ~ Nisargadatta Maharaj
2. Question: To be here and now, I need my body and its senses. To understand, I need a mind.

Nisargadatta Maharaj: The body and the mind are only symptoms of ignorance, of misapprehension. Behave as if you were pure awareness, bodiless and mindless, spaceless and timeless, beyond 'where' and 'when' and 'how'. Dwell on it, think of it, learn to accept its reality.

3. When the subtle mind emerges through the brain and the senses, the gross names and forms are cognized. When it remains in the Heart names and forms disappear... If the mind remains in the Heart, the 'I' or the ego which is the source of all thoughts will go, and the Self, the Real, Eternal 'I' alone will shine. Where there is not the slightest trace of the ego, there is the Self. ~ Ramana Maharshi
4. We know that only by means of the bodily senses and the mind can the world be known. ~ Nisargadatta Maharaj
5. This [supreme state] is entirely one and indivisible, a single solid block of reality. The only way of knowing it is to be it. The mind cannot reach it. To perceive it does not need the senses; to know it, does not need the mind. ~ Nisargadatta Maharaj

The Son of God is my Identity.

Today is a day to give willingness to know your true Self. Stay in the heart today. Review the quotes above along with today's excerpt from our special theme. Ask yourself questions like, “If I am not this body, this mind, this personality, what am I?”

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: AWA Description U - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-u-with-tip-5/>

Lesson 253

What is Sin?

Our special theme says, “The body is the instrument the mind made in its efforts to deceive itself. Its purpose is to strive. Yet can the goal of striving change. And now the body serves a different aim for striving. ... Truth can be its aim ...”

Actually the mind strives, and the body follows. The mental chatter that you experience is striving—it is not rest. It is striving to accomplish the ego’s “idle wish” for separation.

Admittedly, spiritual practice is also striving. However, it is striving with a different purpose. It is striving to let go of the striving that creates illusion and to return to the state of rest in which the truth is realized.

Here are some quotes from Nisargadatta Maharaj that are related to this teaching from our special theme. Please contemplate these quotes at intervals throughout the day today:

1. “You give reality to concepts, while concepts are distortions of reality. Abandon all conceptualization and stay silent and attentive. Be earnest about it and all will be well with you.”
2. “You are the infinite focused in a body. Now you see the body only. Try earnestly and you will come to see the infinite only.”
3. “Mere listening, even memorizing, is not enough. If you do not struggle hard to apply every word of [the teaching] in your daily life, don’t complain that you made no progress.”
4. “When you are dead earnest, you bend every incident, every second of your life to your purpose.”
5. “The word itself is the bridge. Remember it, think of it, explore it, go round it, look at it from all directions, dive into it with earnest perseverance. Endure all delays and disappointments till suddenly the mind turns round, away from the word, towards the reality beyond the word. It is like trying to find a person knowing his name only. A day comes when your inquiries bring you to him and the name becomes reality.”

My Self is ruler of the universe.

“It is impossible that anything should come to me unbidden by myself. Even in this world, it is I who rule my destiny. What happens is what I desire. What does not occur is what I do not want to happen. This must I accept.”

There is a simple way to see the teaching above.

If I want illusion, I get illusion.
If I want truth, truth is realized.

How do I know what I want?

What is my life about? What am I applying myself toward?

Most people have had a goal at some point in their life that was the central theme of their life at that time. It could have been the goal of getting a college degree, of finding a life partner, of having and raising children, of starting a new business, or any number of things. When a goal is really important to us, we apply ourselves toward that goal.

So again, what am I applying myself toward?

If I am applying myself toward thought or the imposter self's desires, that means that I am primarily interested in the world of illusion. Because I am primarily interested in the world of illusion, that will continue to be experienced. Since the world of illusion is duality, I will experience duality, both that which I consider good and bad, desired and undesired. That is the nature of duality.

If I am applying myself toward awakening, I will succeed in awakening. As Nisargadatta Maharaj said, “The desire to find the Self will surely be fulfilled, provided you want nothing else.”

Today is a day to contemplate what I want, and to ask if I am willing to apply myself toward that goal.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: AWA Description S - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-s-with-tip-3/>

Lesson 254

What is Sin?

We have read the special theme while replacing the word sin with “insanity.” Let's read the special theme again, and this time let's replace “sin” with “My ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be.”

For example, “My ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be are the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined, issuing from thoughts that are untrue. They are ‘proof’ that what has no reality is real. My ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be ‘proves’ God’s Son is evil; timelessness must have an end; eternal life must die. ...”

Most people take their ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be to be fact. However, not everyone sees right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be in the same way. Therefore, our ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be are opinions.

NTI calls these ideas “judgment,” and claims that judgment is the building block of illusion. Our special theme makes the same claim:

[My ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be are] the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined, issuing from thoughts that are untrue. They are ‘proof’ that what has no reality is real.

In her book, *In the World but Not of It*, Gina Lake refers to these ideas as “duality.” She says, “Be aware of the duality and untruth represented in your thoughts. Thoughts do not tell the truth. When you see this very clearly, your thoughts lose the power to make you suffer.”

Here are some tips Gina shared about how to transcend duality:

The duality of better than/less than is transcended by recognizing the truth that everything is perfect just as it is. Everything is as its meant to be and serving its purpose in the Whole. ...

The duality of like/don’t like is transcended by holding your preferences lightly, by noticing your preferences but not necessarily letting them drive your actions or decisions. Instead, the divine self determines your actions, which may sometimes take you in directions that go against your conditioned preferences and desires.

The duality of want/don’t want is transcended by holding your desires lightly and by letting everything come that comes and letting everything go that goes. You lay the small will at the feet of Thy will, trusting that the divine self knows best ...

The duality of good/bad is transcended by recognizing where those opinions come from and that they serve only the ego, and then holding them lightly or letting them go.

The duality of emotional highs and lows is transcended by coming into right relationship with life, which is experienced as equanimity. ... This equanimity is sober, steady, okay with everything, at peace and content. It is a state of causeless, subtle happiness, or inner joy.

The duality of taking too much or giving too much is transcended through selflessness. The 'self' that is absent in 'selflessness' is the egoic self, which tends to take or give too much, both for the purpose of getting what it wants. Selflessness, on the other hand, is giving appropriately, ... the divine self moving in the world, doing or not doing, according to a greater will that knows exactly what action to take when.

Gina goes on to write:

What happens when you become more aware of your thoughts [of duality] and start questioning them is that space, or distance, is created between you and the thought-stream ... as you spend increasingly more time witnessing your thoughts, more time in the spacious Presence that is the divine self."

Let every voice but God's be still in me.

As today's lesson says:

Today we let no ego thoughts direct our words or actions. When such thoughts occur, we quietly step back and look at them, and then we let them go. We do not want what they would bring with them. And so we do not choose to keep them. They are silent now. And in the stillness, hallowed by His Love, God speaks to us and tells us of our will, as we have chosen to remember Him.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: AWA Description V - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-v-with-tip-6/>

If you only have 20 minutes for meditation today or if you have 20 minutes later in the day for a second meditation, I recommend this guided meditation by AHAM and Karen Worth: Say Yes to What Is - <https://awakening-together.org/say-yes-to-what-is-meditation-with-karen-worth/>

Lesson 255

What is Sin?

Our special theme says:

Sin is the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined, issuing from thoughts that are untrue. They are 'proof' that what has no reality is real.

Yesterday we replaced "sin" with "My ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be."

My ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be are the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined, issuing from thoughts that are untrue. They are 'proof' that what has no reality is real.

NTI calls these ideas "judgment."

Judgment is the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined, issuing from thoughts that are untrue. They are 'proof' that what has no reality is real.

Gina Lake calls these ideas "duality."

Duality is the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined, issuing from thoughts that are untrue. They are 'proof' that what has no reality is real.

Today, we continue to notice our judgments or ideas of duality. We remember that these ideas feed the ego, make illusion and hide truth. We choose to disregard these ideas as mistaken, limited or unwanted and to practice the Loving All Method instead.

This day I choose to spend in perfect peace.

If we do not believe ideas of duality, and we practice the Loving All Method with everything that comes into our consciousness today, we will spend the day in perfect peace. This is entirely possible today.

If you find that you are not at peace at some point today, look at the thoughts that are in your mind, and ask yourself these questions:

Is there a thought of duality (judgment) in the mind now?

What is it?

Am I willing to see that idea as mistaken, limited and/or unwanted?

Am I willing to practice the Loving All Method now?

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation:
AWA Description W - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-w-with-tip-7/>

If you only have 20 minutes for meditation today or if you have 20 minutes later in the day for a second meditation, I recommend this guided meditation by AHAM and Karen Worth again today: Say Yes to What Is - <https://awakening-together.org/say-yes-to-what-is-meditation-with-karen-worth/>

Lesson 256

What is Sin?

Since we have been with this special theme, we have replaced the word “sin” with “insanity,” with “My ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be,” with “judgment,” and with “duality.” As we read our special theme today, let’s replace the word sin with “ignorance.” In this case, “ignorance” is defined as *ignoring the truth*.

For example, “Ignorance is insanity.” Or, “Ignoring the truth is insanity. It is the means by which the mind is driven mad, and seeks to let illusions take the place of truth.”

After you have read the special theme using “ignorance” or “ignoring truth,” please return to my tip for today.

~ ~ ~ ~

Ignorance is accomplished through outward focus. We ignore truth when we give all of our attention to thoughts and to the world.

Let’s read the special theme again. This time, replace the word “sin” with “outward focus.”

For example, “Outward focus gave the body eyes, ...” and “Outward focus is the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined, issuing from thoughts that are untrue.”

After you have read the special theme using “outward focus” in place of “sin,” please return to my tip, and we will look at today’s lesson.

~ ~ ~ ~

God is the only goal I have today.

Today’s lesson also uses the word, “sin.”

If sin had not been cherished by the mind, what need would there have been to find the way to where you are?

If insanity had not been cherished by the mind, what need would there have been to find the way to where you are?

If ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should be and what should not be had not been cherished by the mind, what need would there have been to find the way to where you are?

If judgment had not been cherished by the mind, what need would there have been to find the way to where you are?

If duality had not been cherished by the mind, what need would there have been to find the way to where you are?

If ignorance had not been cherished by the mind, what need would there have been to find the way to where you are?

If ignoring truth had not been cherished by the mind, what need would there have been to find the way to where you are?

If outward focus had not been cherished by the mind, what need would there have been to find the way to where you are?

It's important to look at all of these alternative terms, because "sin" typically implies guilt to most people. It reinforces the false idea that something is inherently wrong with me, which reinforces the idea of separation.

However, as we consider alternative terms, we see that there is a habit that has been formed. It is the habit of ignoring our true Self, focusing outward, and believing our thoughts' judgments regarding everything the body senses. We also see that the body, as the sensing organ, reinforces this habit of looking outward, a habit that has been cherished by the mind.

When we see the problem clearly, we can also see the solution.

If ignoring the truth, focusing outward and believing the mind's judgments is the problem, then paying attention to truth, focusing inward and ignoring the mind's judgments is the solution.

Said another way, awareness-watching-awareness meditation, surrendering to intuition and the Loving All Method are the solutions to insanity.

Today is a day to put special attention on changing our goal. The mind has cherished ignorance. Today, we direct the mind to cherish truth instead. The mind is capable

of cherishing truth, but we need to take the lead by teaching the mind new habits and by reminding the mind to attend to those new habits.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: AWA Description X - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-x-with-tip-8/>

If you have time for two meditations today, and you would like to try a different meditation the second time you meditate, I recommend this meditation for later in the day: Introduction to Loving Consciousness Meditation - <https://awakening-together.org/introduction-to-loving-consciousness-meditation-with-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 257

What is Sin?

Our special theme says, “A madman’s dreams are frightening, and sin appears indeed to terrify. And yet what sin perceives is but a childish game.”

Let’s contemplate this using some of our alternative terms:

A madman’s dreams are frightening, and duality appears indeed to terrify. And yet what judgment perceives is but a childish game.

A madman’s dreams are frightening, and ignorance appears indeed to terrify. And yet what ignorance perceives is but a childish game.

A madman’s dreams are frightening, and outward focus appears indeed to terrify. And yet what outward focus perceives is but a childish game.

Our special theme continues, “The Son of God may play he has become a body, prey to evil and to guilt, with but a little life that ends in death. But all the while his Father shines on him, and loves him with an everlasting Love which his pretenses cannot change at all.”

These words are symbolic. However, they point toward our unaffected truth, which is not symbolic at all. It is very real, and it is present right now.

Today, we begin another day with clarity regarding the problem that “appears indeed to terrify.” That is ignoring truth, focusing outward and believing the mind’s judgments. This clarity reinforces the realization that the solution to the problem is paying attention to awareness, focusing inward for intuitive guidance and ignoring the mind’s judgments by practicing the Loving All Method.

Let me remember what my purpose is.

Today's lesson says, "If I forget my goal I can be but confused, unsure of what I am, and thus conflicted in my actions."

This is important to contemplate: If I am confused about what I am, my actions will be confused also.

How might you act differently as the eternal unaffected Self than you do as an apparent personality-body-mind?

With which identity would you experience more peace?

With which identity would you respond more patiently and lovingly?

With which identity would you feel more secure?

When we were on Lesson 238, we saw that we make decisions based on who we think we are. We could also say that we live from our identity.

Today's lesson reminds us to focus on our spiritual aspiration so "we may unify our thoughts and actions meaningfully."

When we remember what we truly want, we are more likely to pay attention to awareness, feel inward for intuitive guidance and practice the Loving All Method. When those habits are our central focus, we are more likely to live from our unaffected Self than from the frantic personality-mind.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: AWA Description Y - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-y-with-tip-9/>

Lesson 258

What is Sin?

Our special theme asks, "How long, O Son of God, will you maintain the game of sin?"

Let's contemplate this question using some of our alternative terms:

How long, O Son of God, will you maintain the game of judgment?

How long, O Son of God, will you maintain the game of duality?

How long, O Son of God, will you maintain the game of ignoring truth?

How long, O Son of God, will you maintain the game of outward focus?

We can answer, "No longer will I play that game." It is within our power to stop playing the game now. We have the practices that point away from games and

towards truth. To stop playing the game, we simply need the desire to live from those practices instead of from old conditioning that is not in harmony with what we want now.

Let me remember that my goal is God.

Today is another opportunity to contemplate what we really want.

Spiritual practice can be forgotten when we are distracted by the personality mind's "little senseless aims." However, when we continuously contemplate what we really want, we are naturally drawn to the spiritual practices that lead to Self-realization. We are naturally drawn to those practices, because they are the way to complete our heart's one true desire.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: AWA Description Z - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-z-with-tip-10-and-12/>

Lesson 259

What is Sin?

Our special theme says, "There is no sin." That means, there is no judgment. There is no duality. There is no ignorance. There is no outward focus.

Is that true?

Yes. That is all true for the true Self.

It is very difficult to explain how there is no judgment, duality, ignorance or outward focus for the true Self while also admitting that attention goes out to judgment and duality while ignoring truth.

Let me use an analogy:

The best analogy I know is the analogy of the ocean. At the surface of the ocean, waves appear. Each wave is temporary, like the body and the personality. The water in the waves appear to be affected by the weather, just like you seem to be affected by the world and the mind's thoughts. However, the water that is part of the wave isn't really affected. It may sometimes appear calm and sometimes appear highly agitated, but it is always water. It doesn't become blood or seaweed. It is forever unaffected by the weather.

At the same time, in the depths of the ocean, the water is untouched by even the *appearance* of being affected. The weather at the surface does not reach the depths at all.

In the same way, your true Self is not affected at the surface, where there is the appearance of affected. And the appearance of affected does not exist at all within the depths of your Self. At the depth, there is no judgment, duality, ignorance or outward focus at all.

Our function now is to return the unaffected attention, which has been at the surface, to the depths of the Self, so it may know itself as it has always been.

Let me remember that there is no sin.

Today we contemplate the depths of the Self. We realize that awakening is realization of the depth as our truth. We accept that at the depth, there never has been judgment; there never has been duality; there never has been ignorance; and there never has been outward focus. The depth of the Self has always been only aware of itself.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend repeating this meditation from yesterday: AWA Description Z - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-z-with-tip-10-and-12/>

Lesson 260

What is Sin?

Our special theme says, “There is no sin. Creation is unchanged.”

What is creation?

You are creation. What you are is what *A Course in Miracles* means by the word, “creation.”

Let’s revisit yesterday’s analogy:

At the surface of the ocean, waves appear. Each wave is temporary, like the body and the personality. The water in the waves appear to be affected by the weather, just like you seem to be affected by the world and the mind’s thoughts. However, the water that is part of the wave isn’t really affected. It may sometimes appear calm and sometimes appear highly agitated, but it is always water. It doesn’t become blood or seaweed. It is forever unaffected by the weather.

At the same time, at the depth of the ocean, the water is untouched by even the *appearance* of being affected. The weather at the surface does not reach the depths at all.

In the same way, your true Self is not affected at the surface, where there is the appearance of affected. And the appearance of affected

does not exist at all within the depths of your Self. At the depth, there is no judgment, no duality, no ignorance and no outward focus.

As this analogy makes clear, both at the surface and at the depth, you remain what you have always been, life-awareness. You have never not been life-awareness, and you shall always be life-awareness.

Let me remember God created me.

Today, let's contemplate what "I" and "me" really mean. Typically, when the mind uses these words, it refers to itself. It refers to thought as "I" and "me."

However, that is not what "I" and "me" really mean. "I" and "me" are pronouns used to refer to one's self, and *thought is not a self*.

When the mind uses "I" and "me" to refer to itself, it is a misuse of those terms. When we believe thought is "I" and "me," we are confused about what we are.

Ramana Maharshi said:

That which rises as "I" in this body is the mind. If one inquires as to where in the body the thought "I" rises first, one would discover that it rises in the heart. ... Even if one thinks constantly "I," "I," one will be led to that place.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: Self-Inquiry Meditation - <https://awakening-together.org/self-inquiry-meditation-with-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 261

Before beginning our new special theme, I would like to review each of the special themes that we've already contemplated.

What is Forgiveness? Forgiveness is recognizing yourself as the unaffected Self. Therefore, "what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred." Forgiveness "looks, and waits, and judges not."

What is Salvation? Salvation is healing by "failing to support the world of dreams ... it lets illusions go. By not supporting them, it merely lets them quietly go down to dust. And what they hid is now revealed ..."

What is the World? It is a "false perception" where "mechanisms of illusion ... go to find what has been given them to seek." Yet, "all perception can be given a new purpose. ... Let us not be satisfied until forgiveness has been made complete."

What is Sin? Sin is ignorance or outward focus. “Sin gave the body eyes... The body is the instrument the mind made in its efforts to deceive itself. ... Sin is the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined issuing from thoughts that are untrue.”

What is the Body?

“The body is a fence the Son of God imagines he has built, to separate parts of his Self from other parts.”

When I say that you are life-awareness-presence, you are able to pause the thinking, look and see that is true. To deny that you are life-awareness-presence is ignorance too insane to actually believe. The ego may be able to ignore this fact by attracting attention to thought, but it cannot hide this fact if one redirects attention toward the Self.

However, belief in the body as what you are distorts the fact that you are life-awareness-presence. Although you are able to look and see that life-awareness-presence is what you are, the belief that you are the body makes it seem like the body is primary and life-awareness-presence is secondary. It makes it seem like the body was born, and then life-awareness-presence arose as a byproduct of the body’s birth. It also enables you to imagine that when the body dies, life-awareness-presence dies too.

Is it true that life-awareness-presence is a byproduct of the body? Does life-awareness-presence exist because the body breathes, the heart pumps blood and the brain functions?

Does life-awareness end when the bodily functions cease?

Close your eyes and look to see what claims life-awareness-presence as “mine.” What says “my awareness”? Is it the body or is it the mind?

What says “my body”?

If you watch subtly, you will find that the mind is the one that imagines the body is primary and life-awareness is secondary. Thought says this is true.

Does the fact that thought says it’s true make it true? Is thought a reliable source?

Contemplate this throughout the day today.

God is my refuge and security.

Our special theme says, “The body is a fence the Son of God imagines he has built, to separate parts of his Self from other parts.” And then it goes on to say, “For within this fence he thinks that he is safe from love.”

Here's another way to say this: The mind feels safe within the perception of individuality. The mind is terrified of no sense of individuality.

However, are you the one that thinks this way? Are you the mind or are you the life-awareness-presence that is aware of the mind?

What is your truth?

The lesson says, "I will identify with what I think is refuge and security."

If you think the mind is your refuge and security, then you will identify with thought, and because thought identifies with the body, you will identify with the body too.

However, if you feel your refuge and security lie with the unaffected Self, you will identify with it, and because you identify with it, you will not identify with thought.

Contemplate this today too.

Here is a summary of the questions you will contemplate throughout the day today:

1. Is thought a reliable source?
2. Which is my refuge and security, thought or unaffected life-awareness-presence?

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation again today: AWA Description Z - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-z-with-tip-10-and-12/>

Lesson 262

What is the Body?

Our special theme says, "The body is a fence the Son of God imagines he has built, to separate parts of his Self from other parts. It is within this fence he thinks he lives, to die as it decays and crumbles. For within this fence he thinks that he is safe from love. ... The body will not stay. Yet this he sees as double safety. For the Son of God's impermanence is 'proof' his fences work, and do the task his mind assigns to them."

Death is not a thought that most humans cherish. Most people believe they would prefer not to die. Yet, our special theme says the opposite. It says that we see death as "double safety." Is that true?

Let's test it. Which of these ideas do you find most comforting?

1. Your body will die, but your personality-mind will continue in a spiritual afterlife where you will rejoin with your loved ones who have passed over.

2. Your body-personality will die, but you will be reincarnated as another body-personality.

3. Your body-personality-mind will die, but life continues beyond your body-personality-mind in all living humans, animals, insects, sea life, plants, etcetera.

Most people will pick #1 or #2 as most comforting. To most people, #3 seems like 'I no longer exist' even though life continues as other things.

Look carefully at what our special theme says. It says:

"The body is a fence the Son of God imagines he has built, to separate parts of his Self from other parts. ... The body will not stay. Yet this he sees as double safety. For the Son of God's impermanence is 'proof' his fences work, and do the task his mind assigns to them."

If we believe that we can cease to exist while other things live, we believe we are separate from those other things. The 'fence' seems to work.

Contemplate this today. Do you believe that your body-personality-mind must survive death in some way in order for you to survive? Or, can the body-personality-mind die while you continue as the life that permeates all living things?

If this contemplation scares you, remember that ego is terrified of no sense of individuality. Let the fear be as it is. Don't try to change it. Simply remember that this fear comes from ego, and continue the contemplation.

Let me perceive no differences today.

Today's lesson asks, "Why should I perceive a thousand forms in what remains as one? Why should I give this one a thousand names, when only one suffices?"

One name that could suffice for the whole is life-awareness.

A human is life-awareness. A cat is life-awareness. A lizard is life-awareness. A beetle is life-awareness. A fish is life-awareness. A tree is life-awareness. You are life-awareness.

It is one life-awareness. Life-awareness is one.

Contemplate this today.

Here is a summary of today's contemplations:

1. Do you believe that your body-personality-mind must survive death in some way in order for you to survive? Or, can the body-personality-mind die while you continue as the life that permeates all living things?

2. Contemplate life-awareness as what you are, one life-awareness, life-awareness as one.

If you have 30 minutes for a meditation today, I recommend this meditation again: AWA Description Z - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-z-with-tip-10-and-12/>

If you have time and would enjoy a second meditation today, I recommend this meditation as your second meditation. It is 40 minutes long: Am I the Body? - <https://awakening-together.org/am-i-the-body-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 263

What is the Body?

Our special theme says, “The body is a fence the Son of God imagines he has built, to separate parts of his Self from other parts. ... For within this fence he thinks that he is safe from love.”

We are involved in a very deep contemplation right now. Although we seem to be looking at the body, we are really looking at the mind. We are looking at the mind’s idea that my life-awareness is separate from the life-awareness in others.

I’d like to share the story of Ramana Maharshi’s physical death.

Sri Ramana’s body suffered from sarcoma for many months from early February 1949 until his death on April 14, 1950.

When his devotees, fearing his death, begged him to cure the body, he responded by saying, “Why are you so attached to this body? Let it go.”

His devotees continued to plead with him. They did not want to see him die. They thought they were losing him forever. He replied “Where can I go? I shall always be here.”

On the evening of his death, as the devotees sat on the verandah outside the room that had been specially built for his convenience during his illness, they spontaneously began singing “Arunachala Siva.” On hearing it, Ramana’s eyes opened and shone. He gave a brief smile of indescribable tenderness. From the outer corners of his eyes, tears of bliss rolled down. He took one more deep breath, and then no more.

At that very moment, 8:47 p.m., what appeared to be an enormous star trailed slowly across the sky passing to the northeast towards the

peak of Arunachala. Many saw this luminous body in the sky, even as far away as Bombay. They ascribed this phenomenon to the passing of their Master.

I shared this story, because I have contemplated this story many times. What I see in this story is one who no longer believed in the “fence” of the body. I see one who knew life-awareness is one, one life-awareness. This is why he said, “Where can I go? I shall always be here.”

He is here, now, in every living thing, because he is life-awareness. And we are too.

My holy vision sees all things as pure.

Our lesson says, “Father, Your Mind created all that is, Your Spirit entered into it, Your Love gave life to it. And would I look upon what You created as if it could be made sinful?”

In order to realize clarity, we can continue our practice of replacing the word “sin” with other words. For example, we might ask, “Would I look upon what You created as if I can determine what should be and what should not be?”

Let me share a little more from the story of Ramana Maharshi’s death:

As already mentioned, Ramana’s devotees wanted him to cure himself. When this request was made, he responded, “But the [one with knowledge of reality] has no will of his own. Nor is he identified with the body and the ills to which it is heir. ... Did I ask the tumor to come so that I may tell it to go? It came of its own accord. What then has my will got to do with it?”

When Ramana’s devotees took it upon their selves to treat his body, he said, “It is for us to witness all that happens.”

I share this story, because I have also contemplated it many times. It seems that Ramana had completely transcended the idea of “should be or should not be.” To him, everything was life-awareness. Or as he put it, there is only the Self.

Interestingly, Ramana’s devotees arranged four operations and other treatments, which he submitted to. He did not resist dying, and he did not resist treatment when it was arranged for him. For Ramana, there was no “should be or should not be.” He was the witness of all that occurred, and all appearances were pure.

Today, let’s continue to contemplate life-awareness as one life-awareness. Let’s realize there are no separate parts that should not be. Nothing can happen that is out of alignment with the whole. The Loving All Method fits well with this contemplation.

If you have 30 minutes for a meditation today, consider this meditation again, because it is a good fit with our current contemplation: AWA Description Z - <https://awakening-together.org/direct-path-meditation-practice-instruction-description-z-with-tip-10-and-12/>

You might also enjoy meditating to light sounds of nature. If so, try this Youtube video: Relaxing Nature Sounds of the Forest - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JsaljhtKHA

In addition, here is a song to listen to today. You may listen before meditation, after meditation or at any point during the day to assist with today's contemplation. When you listen, please sit and listen without being engaged in any other activity: Forever Here by Peter Makena - [http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina - Consistent Gentle Healing/ForeverHere.mp3](http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina-ConsistentGentleHealing/ForeverHere.mp3)

Lesson 264

What is the Body?

Our special theme refers to the body as a dream. It says, "Like other dreams it sometimes seems to picture happiness, but can quite suddenly revert to fear, where every dream is born."

This speaks of duality. As we looked at our last special theme, we saw that outward focus, judgment and duality are the means by which the mind "seeks to let illusions take the place of truth." And the "body is the instrument the mind made in its efforts to deceive itself."

That means that the duality of the body, including its ability to be healthy and sick, for example, is part of the mind's effort "to let illusions take the place of truth."

I enjoy feeling healthy. I enjoy a body that is strong, flexible and pain-free. However, the body doesn't always fit that description. If I begin to judge the body by deciding how it should be or should not be, aren't I falling into the mind's choice to deceive itself?

Here are some judgments that we commonly make about the body:

- Healthy or sick
- Fit or injured
- Strong or weak
- Attractive or unattractive
- Fat or thin
- Young or old
- Capable or handicapped

- Normal or deformed
- Okay or dying

Are you able to see your ideas of “should be and should not be” in that list?

Our current special theme says, “Made to be fearful, must the body serve the purpose given it. But we can change the purpose that the body will obey by changing what we think that it is for.”

Some people interpret that to mean that we can make the body be what we define as good by choosing truth as our purpose. For example, we can make the body healthy, fit, and strong and avoid sick, injured and weak. However, isn't that still belief in what should be and should not be?

As I said above, I enjoy feeling healthy, and if there are steps I can take to keep the body healthy or to return it to health when it is sick or injured, I will most likely take those steps. However, does that mean I need to judge sickness or injury as “should not be”?

If my purpose is to let go of the ego illusion, don't I serve my purpose better by loving all experiences exactly as they are?

I am surrounded by the Love of God.

Today's lesson says, “Father, You stand before me and behind me, beside me, in the place I see myself, and everywhere I go. ... There is no source but this, and nothing is that does not share its holiness. ... We come to You in Your Own Name today, to be at peace within Your everlasting Love.”

Today we contemplate all things as love. This is sometimes challenging, since the mind judges what should be and what should not be, and we often believe the mind's judgments. It is common to believe that cancer should not be, mass shootings should not be, etcetera.

How do we see these things as love?

I could go into an explanation of love that might be somewhat satisfactory to the mind, but the truth is that the mind doesn't see love. The mind sees its illusions of duality. The way we come to see that all things are love is to let go of the ego and its illusion. The way we do that is by ceasing to participate in the ego's illusion—let go of believing the mind's stories and judgments—and focus our attention on practices that point to truth.

Today we will focus on love by practicing the Loving Consciousness meditation and by practicing the Loving All Method.

The Loving Consciousness meditation is similar to Awareness-Watching-Awareness except that as you watch awareness, you also love, appreciate and cherish it.

As a review, I recommend this guided meditation today. It is 30 minutes long: Introduction to Loving Consciousness Meditation - <https://awakening-together.org/introduction-to-loving-consciousness-meditation-with-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 265

What is the Body?

Our special theme says, “The body is a dream. Like other dreams it sometimes seems to picture happiness, but can quite suddenly revert to fear, where every dream is born.”

Yesterday we looked at the duality of the body itself. (For example, health and sickness.)

However, that isn’t the only way the body “can quite suddenly revert to fear.” The body also reverts to fear when we become worried, angry, jealous, deceitful, violent, and so on. The body acts out fearfully when we believe the ego’s thoughts of fear.

Our special theme says, “But we can change the purpose that the body will obey by changing what we think that it is for. The body is the means by which God’s Son returns to sanity.”

In other words, we can use this experience of being a human in a body to wake up from the ego’s illusion. That is what we are doing when we decide to meditate instead of doing something else. That is what we are doing when we decide not to act out from worry or anger, but to inquire into our thoughts instead. As we change the purpose given to the body, the body behaves differently.

Creation’s gentleness is all I see.

Today’s lesson says, “I have indeed misunderstood the world, because I laid my sins on it and saw them looking back at me. How fierce they seemed! And how deceived was I to think that what I feared was in the world, instead of in my mind alone.”

This is reminiscent of our last special theme, “What is Sin?” Our ideas of what should be and should not be create a fearful world of duality. Duality is fearful, because it cannot be trusted. A lover can become an enemy. A leisurely drive can become a deadly automobile accident. A secure job can be lost. A smart and happy child can become addicted to drugs. And the examples continue.

For as long as we remain caught in the ego’s illusion by believing the ego’s thoughts, we experience duality, which includes all of the fear that comes with duality.

To become free of duality, we need to stop believing the ego's judgments of what should be and should not be. We need to become gentle ourselves by abiding in love instead of in judgment.

Today we will continue to focus on love by practicing Loving Consciousness meditation and the Loving All Method.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation: Loving Consciousness Description A – <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description/>

Lesson 266

What is the Body?

Our special theme says, "The body is a dream. Like other dreams it sometimes seems to picture happiness, but can quite suddenly revert to fear, where every dream is born."

Two days ago we looked at the duality of the body itself. For example, it can be healthy or sick.

Yesterday we looked at how the body acts out the fearful thoughts that we believe. For example, it can become angry, deceitful or violent.

Today, let's look at the dream of the body as me.

When we believe the body is me, we are affected by the duality that the senses perceive. We appear to experience the world directly. It seems to have a direct effect on us.

Is that true? Do we experience the world directly?

Let's investigate and see what we discover.

I am going to lead you in an inquiry exercise. Some of you have experienced an exercise similar to this with me before. *Read through all of the instructions*, and then practice the inquiry on your own.

1. Find a sensitive spot on your finger and pinch it. Feel the pain. Notice that it appears you are directly experiencing the pain.
2. You can stop pinching your finger.
3. Close your eyes. Get in touch with awareness, that which observes, looks or sees.

4. Once you are in touch with awareness, pinch your finger again, but this time *look at the pain* from the position of awareness.
5. What is your experience when you look at the pain from awareness? Do you directly experience the pain or do you see the body experiencing pain?

Many of you will be able to see that you do not directly experience the pain. As awareness, you do not feel pain, but you can see that the body does feel the pain. It is as if you are one step away from the pain. The pain is an indirect experience for you.

(Note: This is the way I typically feel pain now, which is why pain is not as bothersome to me as it is to some people. I am certainly aware of the pain that the body feels, but I relate to pain from one step away. I see the pain. It isn't a direct experience.)

When we identify with the body as me, we project attention into the body. With attention projected into the body, we appear to directly experience what the body experiences. We feel pain; we feel emotions; etcetera.

However, when we identify with awareness, attention is naturally with awareness. From the position of awareness, we witness the body and its experiences. As the witness, we are aware of the body's experiences, but we are one step away from those experiences. We don't have the sense of experiencing them directly.

That means that our experience of life will be more fearful if we identify with the body, because the experience will seem more direct. It will seem as if we are at the mercy of duality.

However, if we identify with the witness, we do not feel affected by duality. The experience is one of equanimity. Our happiness or contentment is untouched by the body's experience of duality.

My holy Self abides in you, God's Son.

The unaffected awareness that witnesses the world's duality but does not experience it directly is the same unaffected awareness for everyone. Although the body's "fence" creates the experience of "my awareness" and "your awareness," it is the same awareness.

One way to see this is to listen to another person describe awareness. His/her experience is the same as your experience. The experiences are not different, because you are both looking at and describing the same awareness.

Today, we contemplate ourselves as awareness. As often as you remember, take a few moments to notice yourself as the witnessing presence. If needed, pinch your

finger and look at the pain. Notice over and over throughout the day that you see the pain, but you do not experience it directly.

Each time that you notice yourself as awareness, remember that everyone is that same awareness. It is one light, shining through many minds and bodies. Today we focus on the one light, not the many forms.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation: Loving Consciousness Description B - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-b/>

Lesson 267

What is the Body?

Since we have been contemplating this special theme, we have looked at several ways the body deceives:

- It seems like life-awareness is a byproduct of the body's physical processes.
- It appears that "my awareness" and "your awareness" are separate.
- The body dies, which seems to prove that we are not the one awareness that is eternal nature.
- The body emphasizes duality and differences because it can be healthy or sick, fit or injured, strong or weak, etcetera.
- The body acts out thoughts that are believed, which gives those thoughts more apparent reality.
- When we are identified with the body, it seems like we experience the world and duality directly, and we are affected by them.

Our special theme says, "Made to be fearful, must the body serve the purpose given it." And in most cases, it does.

However, our special theme goes on to say, "But we can change the purpose that the body will obey by changing what we think that it is for."

Today, please contemplate the purpose you would like the body to obey. Also, contemplate how the body can be used/moved differently in order to follow that purpose.

My heart is beating in the peace of God.

Earlier in Gentle Healing, we created visualization plans for ourselves. We contemplated those plans for 6 weeks. Similarly, today's lesson is a visualization plan. Notice it is written in present tense, as if it is already lived.

"Peace fills my heart, and floods my body with the purpose of forgiveness. Now my mind is healed, and all I need to save the world is

given me. ... I am the messenger of God, directed by His Voice, sustained by Him in love, and held forever quiet and at peace within His loving Arms.”

If this vision feels right for you, contemplate today’s lesson throughout the day as it is written. However, if you feel called to a different vision, write your own vision, and contemplate it instead. You might feel called to spend a day with the vision that you wrote previously, when we spent 6 weeks with our visualization plans, or you might feel called to a completely new vision that feels right for you now.

Remember to write your visualization plan in present tense language. A vision might arise as you contemplate the purpose you would like the body to follow.

Note: We will not spend six weeks with this visualization plan, so be with it lovingly today.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation: Awareness in the Body - <https://awakening-together.org/awareness-in-the-body-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 268

What is the Body?

Our special theme says, “The Son of God extends his hand to reach his brother, and to help him walk along the road with him. Now is the body holy. Now it serves to heal the mind that it was made to kill.”

This is what I wrote this morning as I contemplated that excerpt from our special theme:

I am free to let my brother be as he is, and to love him without interference. What would interfere with my open love? Believing judgments would interfere; holding expectations would interfere; being self-centered and self-absorbed would interfere with my open love for my brother. Therefore, I am free not to believe the judgments that appear in this mind. I am free not to expect anything from my brother. I am free to remove attention from my mind and pay attention to who ever (or whatever) is in front of me.

I realize that what I have written may seem different than the words that are written in the special theme. In my experience, that sometimes happens when I contemplate the written word with the right mind.

For me, “extends his hand” is an image that represents open love. “Help him walk along the road” is an image that represents allowing him to walk his path his way, without interference from me. “Now is the body holy” represents peaceful presence

rather than a mind that thinks it knows how everyone (and everything) else should be. Being in peaceful presence returns me to the remembrance of myself as presence, which the judging mind was made to hide.

Let all things be exactly as they are.

Today's lesson confirms the interpretation I received from my contemplation of today's special theme. Although the words contemplated from the special theme could have been interpreted differently, ... for example, one might think that s/he is to help others along this path by teaching them to follow this path, ... the lesson is clear that acceptance and allowance are the right-minded way to be. Since "fixing" a brother is not the same as allowing him to be as he is, only one of those two interpretations can be right-minded. The other demonstrates how the wrong mind thinks.

As you go through the day today, focus on the Loving All Method, especially with the people that you encounter in person, through television or online media, and in your thoughts.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation: Being in Love - <https://awakening-together.org/being-in-love-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 269

What is the Body?

Our special theme says, "You will identify with what you think will make you safe. Whatever it may be, you will believe that it is one with you."

What do you believe makes you safe? Do you trust the mind that tells you how things should be and should not be? Are those judgments your guide to safety? Or do you trust life-awareness-presence, which *simply is* with whatever appears to be?

Please contemplate these questions today.

My sight goes forth to look upon Christ's face.

It is common to believe that a person is not demonstrating Christ if s/he is rude and unhelpful. It is extremely common to believe that the person who shoots and kills several people is not demonstrating Christ.

How can we be expected to see Christ's face in people like these when they clearly demonstrate the wrong mind instead of the Christ mind?

The answer lies in choosing the Loving All Method over the judging mind.

We each will see based on the mind we see through. If we see through the judging mind, we will see good and bad—things that seem Christ-like to us and things that

don't. However, if we see with life-awareness-presence, we see life-awareness-presence in everything, and that is Christ.

Notice that today's lesson asks for our mistakes to be revealed. Anytime we do not see with the Loving All Method, a mistake in our mind is there to be revealed. That means that if we see something we feel we cannot love, accept or emotionally allow, we are in our wrong mind.

If you discover that you are in your wrong mind today, apply the Loving All Method to that. Love, accept or emotionally allow the fact that you have slipped into the wrong mind. That doesn't mean that you should indulge the wrong mind. When you shift to the Loving All Method, you shift out of indulgence into the right mind's perception of the mistake. It might feel like stepping back from the wrong mind without judging it. It might feel like resting and letting the wrong mind unwind or settle down. Although the wrong mind may remain present in awareness for a time after shifting to the Loving All Method, you should be able to feel a difference regarding your inner way of being with it.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description C - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-c/>

Lesson 270

What is the Body?

The last paragraph of our special theme says:

You will identify with what you think will make you safe. Whatever it may be, you will believe that it is one with you. Your safety lies in truth, and not in lies. Love is your safety. Fear does not exist. Identify with love, and you are safe. Identify with love, and you are home. Identify with love, and find your Self.

What do I identify with? It's possible that the mind will answer this question truthfully. For example, if you are identified with the body and with fear, the mind may give that answer. However, sometimes the mind will say, "I am identified with love," or "spirit" or "awareness," when that isn't true.

How do we know, with honesty, what we are identified with? NTI Philippians recommends that we watch the body. Since the body follows the thoughts that we believe and value, the body will demonstrate what we are identified with. NTI Philippians, Chapter 2 says:

The way you operate in the world is a reflection of your faith and your belief. For the way you operate is not action, but the image of the expression of thought.

Trust that you do not know yourself, because you have not observed that closely until now. Realize that your purpose is to ensure that your faith is placed with the motive you have chosen. Be clear on this purpose, and then observe yourself.

What is it that you find yourself doing? Why are you doing it? Is that action evidence that your faith is placed with your motive, or are you finding that you have placed your faith elsewhere?

Be careful that you do not judge that which you see and observe. Separate yourself from the body. See the body as not you. See it merely as evidence of thought that is in your mind. See it as a learning device and nothing else.

When you look at the body, which is showing you what you have asked to see, what is it that you discover? What do you learn about your mind?

Realize, now, who you *are* as you watch this body and learn from it. Realize that you did not know, and so you lived in ignorance before. But now you do know, and it is your will to correct the ignorance you lived by before.

Be grateful for this body and all it is teaching you, for in partnership with this learning device you will correct the mind. You will bring faith into alignment with motive through your own desire to do so.

So today, watch the body with the desire to learn what you are identified with. The goal today is self-honesty.

I will not use the body's eyes today.

The lessons says, "Christ is our eyes today. And through His sight we offer healing to the world through Him, the holy Son whom God created whole; the holy Son whom God created one."

We have already set a purpose for today. We are using today to discover what we are identified with, the body-mind or life-awareness-presence. As we watch the body in order to make this discovery, we may see things we are tempted to judge. Instead, let's watch the body with Christ-eyes. Let's bring healing energy to whatever we see by watching with the Loving All Method instead of with self-judgment.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: Brain Relaxation - <https://awakening-together.org/brain-relaxation-meditation-with-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 271

What is the Christ?

“Christ” is a symbolic term. As a symbolic term, it can mean different things to different people. However, if we look carefully at our new special theme, we can see clearly what this term means in *A Course in Miracles*:

Christ is God’s Son as He created Him. He is the Self we share, uniting us with one another, and with God as well. ... He abides unchanged forever in the Mind of God.

Christ and God’s Son are synonymous, and they both point to what many people call consciousness. In some traditions, consciousness is the first creation. It is also the only direct creation of the source, since all other “creations” were created through consciousness. This is similar to the Bible’s claim, if “the Word” is seen as synonymous with Christ or consciousness. At John 1, the Bible says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

It’s important to remember that terms are symbols, and because they are only symbols, terms are not used consistently. Because terms are used differently at different times, we need to reach an understanding that is beyond terms.

Let me paint a simplistic picture that will help us understand Christ-consciousness.

At the highest level of truth, the source exists. The source is a mystery, often represented by darkness. It is unmanifest life teeming with potential.

Out of this potential, consciousness arises. Consciousness is awareness, but it is more than that. It is like a canvas that potentialities can be painted on. It is also the divine mechanism, or paintbrush, that enables creation. Through its beingness, ongoing creation happens. Without consciousness, nothing else could be.

This is Christ. It is what we are beyond our experience of human. The humans that we appear to be are temporary appearances in the consciousness that we are.

Christ’s is the vision I will use today.

Today’s lesson says, “Today I choose to look upon what Christ would have me see, to listen to God’s Voice, and seek the witnesses to what is true in God’s creation. In

Christ's sight, the world and God's creation meet, and as they come together all perception disappears."

The lesson concludes with a prayer:

Father, Christ's vision is the way to You. What He beholds invites Your memory to be restored to me. And this I choose, to be what I would look upon today.

To behold Christ's vision, focus on awareness in yourself and on life in every living being. Let everything be as it appears, without asking it to appear differently, while you stay focused on the life that is the same in all living things.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation:
Appreciating Life - <https://awakening-together.org/appreciating-life-meditation-by-rev-regina-dawn-akers/>

Lesson 272

What is the Christ?

Our special theme says, “Christ is the link that keeps you one with God, and guarantees that separation is no more than an illusion of despair, for hope forever will abide in Him.”

This sentence is an invitation for us to become clear on the difference between what is true and what is not true.

Let’s look at the definitions of true, or real, and not true, or illusion.

Yesterday we learned about consciousness, which is the realm of creation and the ability for creation. Consciousness is the direct creation of source. Therefore it is an extension of source and the same as source.

“True” and “real” point to that, to the essence of consciousness and source, which is changeless and eternal.

Temporary appearances are made of consciousness. They are an extension of consciousness just as consciousness is an extension of source. Yet on the surface, they appear to be something other than consciousness. They appear to be thousands upon thousands, actually *billions* of different names and forms. The temporary things they appear to be are “not true.” They are “illusion,” because each of these things is actually *more* than it appears to be. Each thing is not its temporary appearance, but the eternal essence of its source.

To become clear on what is true and what is illusion, we will continue to focus on awareness in ourselves and on life in the living things that we encounter throughout the day.

How can illusions satisfy God’s Son?

Today’s lesson asks, “Can dreams content me? Can illusions bring me happiness? What but Your memory can satisfy Your Son?”

Temporary appearances occupy the mind. Temporary appearances give the mind something to think about. Since things are always coming and going, shifting and changing, the mind remains very occupied. This is life to the mind.

However, we are not the mind, and what is life to the mind is actually agitation or suffering for us. It’s like keeping our attention with the restless waves on a stormy sea, fearing what will happen to the wave, while ignoring the changeless nature of the sea at its depths. Focusing on the surface is suffering. Realizing and abiding as the depth is peace.

The practice we have already committed to today is also the practice that will bring us to realize peace. It is the practice of focusing on the depth instead of the surface. We will focus on awareness in ourselves, and we will focus on life in each living thing that we encounter today. It doesn't matter if the people we encounter seem happy, angry, or afraid. The life in each one is the same. Life-awareness is the changeless depth of our source.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description D - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-d/>

Lesson 273

What is the Christ?

Speaking of Christ-consciousness, our special theme says, "Your mind is part of His, and His of yours. He is the part in which God's Answer lies; where all decisions are already made, and dreams are over."

While we were on Lesson 267, we spent the day with a visualization plan. It might have been Lesson 267 as it was written, the visualization plan you wrote earlier in Gentle Healing, or a new visualization plan. This is the plan I was with that day:

I forget about anything I am not called to by God. I joyously answer all of God's calls, no matter how big or how small. I am completely surrendered, completely in love, and awakening to truth at the perfect pace, God's pace.

My visualization plan is in the same vein as the excerpt I have quoted from our special theme today. Today's excerpt and my vision point to the easy path, the path of being completely surrendered in trust to spiritual intuition.

From our human perspective, awakening is not complete. However, from the perspective of Christ-consciousness, it is complete. In fact, from the perspective of consciousness, non-awakeness has never happened.

Realizing the perspective of consciousness, a wise human relaxes into the current experience. Relaxing necessarily includes tuning into and following spiritual intuition, since the wrong mind is agitation.

From a human point-of-view, what we know about everything is extremely limited. The wise human becomes comfortable with not knowing and lives in the mystery in joy by following intuition in the moment. The wrong mind, which thrives on agitation, worries, tries to figure things out and tries to control everything toward an outcome that is decided upon in the mind.

If we see Christ-consciousness as our truth and the human as a temporary experience, we relax and enjoy the ride. If we see humanness as our reality, we tend to struggle against the unknown and undesired.

The stillness of the peace of God is mine.

As today's lesson says, "Perhaps we are now ready for a day of undisturbed tranquility."

Are you ready to trust that consciousness is your reality? If so, you can relax, and watch the human dream from the stillness of reality.

The lesson also says, "If this is not yet feasible, we are content and even more than satisfied to learn how such a day can be achieved. If we give way to disturbance, let us learn how to dismiss it and return to peace."

It is helpful to pause whenever disturbance arises. Notice that you are aware. Notice awareness is always present, regardless of the current human experience. Happy or sad, at peace or agitated, healthy or sick, in love or lonely—awareness is always present *as you*.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description E - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-e/>

Lesson 274

What is the Christ?

Speaking of Christ-consciousness, our special theme says, "Your mind is part of His, and His of yours. He is the part in which God's Answer lies; where all decisions are already made, and dreams are over. He remains untouched by anything the body's eyes perceive."

That means that Christ-consciousness is untouched by anything that occurs in the human experience.

The best way to discover that you are Christ-consciousness is to check in with consciousness (awareness) frequently, and notice it is always the same. As the human that you seem to be goes through different experiences today, repeatedly check in with consciousness. Notice its sameness for yourself. Notice its untouchedness.

Also, take the time to notice that this present untouched nature is you. Notice that this present consistent nature is actually more intimately you than anything else you may call you.

Today belongs to love. Let me not fear.

As you go through the day today and different experiences come and go—some the mind may consider favorable and some the mind may consider unfavorable—continue to check in with awareness. Continue to notice your untouchedness.

The end of fear lies in the direct realization that you are untouched by everything that happens in the world.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description F - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-f/>

Lesson 275

What is the Christ?

Our special theme says, “Home of the Holy Spirit, and at home in God alone, does Christ remain at peace within the Heaven of your holy mind. This is the only part of you that has reality in truth. The rest is dreams. Yet will these dreams be given unto Christ, to fade before His glory and reveal your holy Self, the Christ, to you at last.”

A dream is defined as “a series of thoughts, images, and sensations occurring in a person's mind during sleep.”

In today's excerpt from our special theme, “dream” is an analogy. Certainly, we are not in the human sleep state as we walk about in our daily lives. However, we are still living a dream when we believe we are affected by the “series of thoughts, images and sensations” experienced throughout the day. We are not affected by thoughts, images and sensations, because we are untouched consciousness, the witness of the human experience.

Today, continue to check in with your untouched present nature. Continue to notice that it is more intimately you than anything else you might call you.

God's healing Voice protects all things today.

Healing is awakening to our true nature.

Today's lesson says, “Let us today attend the Voice for God, which speaks an ancient lesson, no more true today than any other day.”

What is true today that has also been true on every other day?

Do not look to your mind for the answer to this question. Look to your consistent nature. It is here, present now and “no more true today than any other day. ... It is in this that all things are protected.”

The prayer from today's lesson is:

Your healing Voice protects all things today, and so I leave all things to You. I need be anxious over nothing. For Your Voice will tell me what to do and where to go; to whom to speak and what to say to him, what thoughts to think, what words to give the world. The safety that I bring is given me. Father, Your Voice protects all things through me.

The best way to live this prayer today is to stay focused on our untouched nature. Let the world be as it is. Ask for nothing from the world, and practice surrender as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description G - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-g/>

Lesson 276

What is the Christ?

Our special theme says, "Home of the Holy Spirit, and at home in God alone, does Christ remain at peace within the Heaven of your holy mind. This is the only part of you that has reality in truth. The rest is dreams. ... The Holy Spirit reaches from the Christ in you to all your dreams, and bids them come to Him, to be translated into truth. He will exchange them for the final dream which God appointed as the end of dreams."

This excerpt invites us to do two things:

1. Discern between truth and dreams.
2. Discern between the right mind (spiritual intuition) and the wrong mind.

I used to think that the right mind was truth. I used to think that the goal of truth seeking was to learn to listen to only the right mind. However, spiritual intuition is not the goal. Spiritual intuition is the means.

Let me share an analogy. Lets imagine that we are children, and we have just joined our first soccer league. Since we are learning to play soccer, the coach spends a lot of time teaching us to kick the ball. Kicking the ball isn't the goal. The goal is to get the ball in the net. However, kicking the ball is the means of getting the ball in the net, so learning to kick the ball well is important.

Learning to listen to spiritual intuition is like kicking the ball in soccer. Spiritual intuition isn't the goal, but the means to reaching the goal.

What is truth?

According to our special theme, the truth is beyond dreams; it is even beyond the happy dream. Ultimately, absolute truth is beyond Christ-consciousness.

Notice, again, what our special theme says:

“Home of the Holy Spirit, and at home in God alone, does Christ remain at peace
within the Heaven of your holy mind.”

Just as the human experience is within Christ-consciousness, Christ-consciousness is within truth, and that truth is still what we are (“your holy mind”).

It’s pretty amazing. We appear to be human. We are awakening to the realization that we are Christ-consciousness. Yet, our absolute nature is that which makes Christ-consciousness possible.

Ultimate truth, then, is indefinable. Yet, because it is what we are, it can be directly known.

The Word of God is given me to speak.

Today’s workbook lesson says that God’s Word is, “My Son is pure and holy as Myself.”

“Myself” in this sentence is our absolute nature. From our perspective as humans, it is helpful to think of this nature as the source or “Father.” Until we awaken to it, it is helpful to honor it in this way.

“My Son” is Christ-consciousness. From our perspective as humans, it is helpful to begin to notice that Christ-consciousness is what we are. It is our most genuine “I”, our true Self.

Our lesson says, “Let us accept His Fatherhood, and all is given us.”

This sentence points to a shift in our identification. Instead of identifying with the human, who is within Christ-consciousness, we are invited to identify with Christ-consciousness, which is within the source.

Today’s lesson says, “The Word of God is given me to speak.” This is an invitation to speak from Christ-consciousness, to have “I” refer to our consciousness-Self instead of the human-self.

Today, pay attention to what you mean by “I”. Is “I” being used to represent your true Self, or is it being used to represent the false self?

When you notice that “I” in your speaking or thinking points to the false self, silently ask yourself, “What am I?” Look. What is most true about you in your current experience? Are you ready to speak from that truth?

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description H - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-h/>

Lesson 277

What is the Christ?

Our special theme says, “Home of the Holy Spirit, and at home in God alone, does Christ remain at peace within the Heaven of your holy mind.”

Yesterday we saw that spiritual intuition is the means to truth realization, just like kicking the ball is the way to get the ball in the net in soccer. Just like a soccer player needs to become skilled at kicking the ball, its helpful for a spiritual seeker to become skilled at listening to spiritual intuition.

Our special theme provides a clue that will help us become more skilled at listening to spiritual intuition. It refers to Christ-consciousness as the “home of the Holy Spirit.” It doesn’t refer to human consciousness as its home. This is an important point.

When we are fully identified with human consciousness (the mind), we are fully identified with thought. That means we are identified with chatter about what should be and what should not be, what we like and don’t like, etcetera. These thoughts are not the home of spiritual intuition. They are the home of ego. When we ask for guidance from this place of concern—from wanting things to be a certain way—we invite the ego to chatter even more.

When we identify with Christ-consciousness, or at least with the qualities of Christ-consciousness, we open ourselves to know the guidance of spiritual intuition. Some of the qualities we might identify with are acceptance of what is, openness, non-attachment, and unconditional trust. When we shift our perspective into these qualities, spiritual intuition can become clear, because we have shifted into the perspective that is the home of spiritual intuition.

Let me not bind Your Son with laws I made.

Today’s lesson says, “Your Son is free, my Father. Let me not imagine I have bound him with the laws I made to rule the body. He is not subject to any laws I made by which I try to make the body more secure. ... Let us not worship idols, ...”

In other words, today’s lesson is an invitation to shift from identifying with the mind—from its ideas of who we are, where our safety lies, what our happiness is, etcetera—to identifying with consciousness (awareness).

Yesterday we noticed what we meant by “I”. That provided us with the opportunity to notice what we are identified with. Today, let’s contemplate what we want to be

identified with. Which identification do we feel is in our best interest, the human thinking mind or present awareness-consciousness?

Since today is a day of contemplating what you want, I do not feel to influence you with a particular guided meditation. Instead, I will provide links to gentle background sounds, which you can use as you meditate. You can also meditate in silence.

Tibetan Bells -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5dU6serXkg&index=6&list=PLKSRjOAxGeaM6NnEm1EtkamBUB2QZww9R&t=5455s>

Nature Sounds -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JsaljhtKHA&index=14&list=PLKSRjOAxGeaM6NnEm1EtkamBUB2QZww9R&t=3279s

Meditation Music - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nfcOUvz-p8&index=12&list=PLKSRjOAxGeaM6NnEm1EtkamBUB2QZww9R&t=6s>

Gregorian Chanting -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWdSi0Xw4u0&index=4&list=PLKSRjOAxGeaM6NnEm1EtkamBUB2QZww9R&t=936s>

Lesson 278

What is the Christ?

Our special theme speaks of forgiveness. It says, “The Holy Spirit reaches from the Christ in you to all your dreams, and bids them come to Him, to be translated into truth. ... For when forgiveness rests upon the world and peace has come to every Son of God, what could there be to keep things separate, for what remains to see except Christ’s face?”

Our first special theme was, “What is forgiveness?” We saw that forgiveness is recognizing yourself as the unaffected Self. Therefore, “what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred.” Forgiveness “looks, and waits, and judges not.”

In other words, forgiveness is abiding in the qualities of Christ-consciousness—acceptance of what is, openness, non-attachment, and unconditional trust. This is often called equanimity.

When we abide in equanimity, we allow spiritual intuition to be our consistent guide. That is forgiveness.

If I am bound, my Father is not free.

Today's lesson says, "If I am bound in any way, I do not know my Father nor my Self. And I am lost to all reality. For truth is free, and what is bound is not a part of truth."

The truth is, we *are* unaffected by the world. We are the unaffected Self.

If we believe the mind's chatter—the mind's definition of "I"—and if we project our attention into the body as if the body is "me," we do not know our Self. We do not recognize our nature. And if we do not recognize our nature, we do not recognize the nature of our source.

Yesterday we contemplated what we wanted to be identified with. If Christ-consciousness was your decision, then be doubly committed to spiritual intuition and the Loving All Method today. The Loving All Method is the practice of equanimity, which is the practice of identifying with your true Self. Spiritual intuition reminds you to be what you are.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description I - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-i/>

Lesson 279

What is the Christ?

Our special theme says, "And how long will [Christ's] holy face be seen, when it is but the symbol that the time for learning now is over, and the goal of the Atonement has been reached at last?"

In the Bible, when speaking of the last days, Jesus said, "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near."

The end of the ego is near when we view all events from the perspective of Christ-consciousness. When loving all is our natural way of being, we identify with awareness-life-presence instead of the body-mind, and we see life as the truth of everything, we can know we are only a whisper away from the final end of the ego.

How do we know this is true?

The ego simply doesn't see that way. The ego is judgment and separation. So when judgment has died in us, and we see everything as the same life-awareness that we identify with, the ego has grown very, very weak in us. It is on its last legs, assuming we continue with the spiritual practice that brought us this far. It is important to note that some sages warn that as long as even one thought remains in the ego thought system, the ego can regain strength if we do not continue to be vigilant.

Creation's freedom promises my own.

Today's lesson says, "The end of dreams is promised me, because God's Son is not abandoned by His Love. ... Should I wait in chains which have been severed for release, when God is offering me freedom now? I will accept your promises today, and give my faith to them."

We give our faith to the promise of awakening by listening to spiritual intuition, by practicing the Loving All Method, and by focusing on awareness in ourselves and life in all other living things.

We also give our faith by *identifying* with spiritual intuition over the ego's thinking and with life-awareness over the body-personality.

There is a thought that may appear in your mind that says it's arrogant to identify with spiritual intuition and life-awareness over thinking and the body-personality. The hidden idea in that thought is that you *are* thinking and the body-personality and you are not good enough to be spiritual intuition and life-awareness.

This thought is an ego preservation strategy. It isn't true.

The ego may also try asking something like, "What will others think if you start talking like a spiritual guru?" Or, "What will others think if you aren't concerned about things like you were before?"

Any thought like that is also an ego preservation strategy.

What are you?

Where do you place your faith?

Abide as that. Be that.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description J - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-j>

Lesson 280

What is the Christ?

Yesterday we saw that seeing Christ-consciousness in the world is "the symbol that the time for learning now is over, and the goal of the Atonement has been reached at last."

Our special theme continues by saying, "So therefore let us seek to find Christ's face and look on nothing else."

This sets the goal. Just as the instructions for Loving Consciousness Meditation ask us to love our consciousness and ignore everything else, our special theme asks us to seek Christ-consciousness in everything and look on nothing else.

That doesn't mean that we should repress anything else that we might see. It means that we should practice the Loving All Method with it.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't take action in the world if we would normally take action. It means we should practice the Loving All Method with anything we perceive, anything we experience, and any action we take.

Let's review some of the instructions from the Loving All Method:

Love every thought you have exactly the way it is.

Love all your emotions exactly the way they are.

Love your body exactly the way it is.

Love the objects you see exactly the way they are.

Love the people you see exactly the way they are.

Love your actions exactly the way they are.

Love everything you feel, think, say or do exactly the way it is.

Love everything you see, taste, touch, smell or hear exactly the way it is.

Love everything other people do, feel, think or say exactly the way it is.

Love everything that happens exactly the way it is.

Love every activity exactly the way it is.

Love every experience exactly the way it is.

Love everything exactly the way it is.

If you don't understand how to practice the above instructions using the word "love", you can substitute the words "emotionally allow" for the word "love" in the above instructions.

After practicing everyday for one month using the words "emotionally allow", you can substitute the words "emotionally accept" for the word "love" in the above instructions.

After practicing everyday for one month using the words “emotionally accept”, you can go back to the original wording of the instructions, just as they are, using the word “love”, and then continue using the word love from then on.

No changes in your external behavior are required.

For example: if a vase falls and you would normally try and catch it, you will also try and catch the vase while you are practicing the Loving All Method.

You do not allow the vase to fall because you are loving the falling.

If someone were to try to punch you in the face and if you would normally duck, you will also duck while practicing the Loving All Method.

You also love the fact that you are ducking to avoid being punched.

The Loving All Method is about emotional acceptance.

The Loving All Method is not about changing your actions.

If someone says something mean to you and if you feel bad emotionally because of what they said, then love your negative emotion and love yourself for having the negative emotion.

Love as much as you can love.

What you wish to change, you will still change.

The Loving All Method is developing a new feeling habit.

The Loving All Method is developing the habit of feeling love towards everything you perceive.

What limits can I lay upon God’s Son?

“God’s Son” is a synonym for consciousness.

Our lesson says, “Today let me give honor to Your Son, for thus alone I find the way to You.”

The way to remember our source is to remember our truth. And the way to remember our truth is to continually focus on awareness (consciousness).

It is as Nisargadatta Maharaj said:

How do you go about finding anything? By keeping your mind and heart in it. Interest there must be, and steady remembrance. To remember what needs to be remembered is the secret of success. You come to it through earnestness.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description K - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-k/>

Lesson 281

Before beginning our new special theme, let's review each of the special themes that we've already contemplated.

What is Forgiveness? Forgiveness is recognizing yourself as the unaffected Self. Therefore, "what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred." Forgiveness "looks, and waits, and judges not."

What is Salvation? Salvation is healing by "failing to support the world of dreams ... it lets illusions go. By not supporting them, it merely lets them quietly go down to dust. And what they hid is now revealed ..."

What is the World? It is a "false perception" where "mechanisms of illusion ... go to find what has been given them to seek." Yet, "all perception can be given a new purpose. ... Let us not be satisfied until forgiveness has been made complete."

What is Sin? Sin is ignorance or outward focus. "Sin is the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined issuing from thoughts that are untrue."

What is the Body? "The body is a fence" that seems to separate us from everything else. It makes duality seem real and makes it seem as if we experience duality directly. Therefore, it is a device of deception. However, it is also a neutral device, which means its purpose can be changed if we choose to change its purpose.

What is Christ? Christ is consciousness. It is the process of creation and the unaffected witness of creation. It is what we are. It is our Self. It is as it says in NTI Colossians:

*"The Christ is your truth.
It is the law of Love.
It is the process of creation.
It is That Which is you.*

What are you, then, if you are the Christ?

You are the flow that is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the creator of all things within time. You are the heavens and the earth, the bees and the sunshine. You are the process that made all things and is all things, so that they live through the process that created them. You are the flow of Life and separate from nothing that is Life, for that which flows through them is the process that you are. You are beyond concepts and differences and form, and within the Life Force that is all things.“

What is the Holy Spirit?

Our new special theme says, “The Holy Spirit mediates between illusions and the truth. ... The goal the Holy Spirit’s teaching sets is just this end of dreams.”

The term “Holy Spirit” is a Judeo-Christian term for spiritual intuition. All humans have intuition. However, not all intuition is spiritual intuition. For example, I could have an intuitive feel that the person I am talking to on the phone is a con artist. That intuition is very helpful, and I serve myself well by listening to that intuition and ending the telephone conversation. However, that intuition was not focused on helping me see the difference between illusions and truth. That means that intuition wasn’t spiritual intuition.

Spiritual intuition has a very specific purpose—awakening us to truth.

All humans have basic intuition. All humans who have some readiness for awakening have spiritual intuition. If a human is not yet ready for awakening, spiritual intuition lies dormant within them. It will awaken to its call, when they are ready to awaken to theirs.

When we practice surrender as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*, we are tuning into both everyday intuition and spiritual intuition. In fact, spiritual intuition guides us to listen to everyday intuition instead of the thinking mind, because when we listen to the chatter of the thinking mind, we enliven it. If we live by intuition instead, the thinking mind is not fed with our attention.

It might not be important to know that everyday intuition is the intuition that informs you that someone is attempting to scam you and spiritual intuition is the intuition that guides you to love even that experience, but it might not hurt to be clear on this difference either. Everyday intuition makes our life in the world simpler, if we listen to it. Spiritual intuition awakens us from the ego’s dream of the world.

I can be hurt by nothing but my thoughts.

Today's lesson says, "When I think I am hurt in any way, it is because I have forgotten who I am, ... I will not hurt myself today. For I am far beyond all pain."

This is a reminder that we are the unaffected Self.

What makes the unaffected Self believe that it is a body affected by duality?

Today's lesson says that our thoughts are the culprit. However, that is not entirely true.

Thought is certainly deceptive, but just as you can hang up the telephone when a con artist calls you, and therefore not be attracted into a scam, you can turn attention away from thoughts.

Thoughts are not really the problem. The problem is choosing to give attention to thought.

If you like, you can change today's workbook lesson in order to be a little more clear on the problem. Remind yourself throughout the day today, "I can be hurt by nothing but my choice to give attention to thought."

When we are clear on the problem, the solution is also clear.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description L - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-l/>

Lesson 282

What is the Holy Spirit?

Our special theme says, "The Holy Spirit mediates between illusions and the truth. Since he must bridge the gap between reality and dreams, perception leads to knowledge through the grace that God has given Him, to be His gift to everyone who turns to Him for truth. Across the bridge that He provides are dreams all carried to the truth, to be dispelled before the light of knowledge. There are sights and sounds forever laid aside. And where they were perceived before, forgiveness has made possible perception's tranquil end."

Today, I would like to share how *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* shares the same teaching:

Fear comes simply from not knowing reality. Therefore, the only answer to fear is to let go of what is false and to remember reality as true.

Discarding the world is as simple as remembering that it isn't true. This is as simple as living from within instead of from without.

One who is forgetting the world takes his cues from within. When observed, he may seem to respond to without. He may even seem to respond to his thoughts, which are still without, but this is only if you observe him from without. Without will see without. Within will see within.

One who is awakening to truth is also discarding the world, which includes discarding his thoughts about the world, so this one is learning to take all of his cues from within . . . from beyond the clouds of his thoughts.

True perception is a bridge. Guidance is a bridge. To feel that one is awakened or living outside of mind when one is experiencing perception or guidance is an error. To say that one lives outside of mind when one experiences perception is to remain deluded.

But to listen to guidance and to say that one is guided by mind outside of mind is not to be deluded. It is merely to describe the experience in words. It is merely to recognize that mind is needed to experience perception, but guidance is the echo of knowledge filtered through mind.

One who listens to guidance may be said by others to be awakened, but this one will only say he is realized, because he realizes truth even as he experiences perception. He listens to knowledge because he knows that one who sees perception cannot truly see, but one who is not attached can be guided. Non-attachment and realization are one. Seeing truth is to be awakened.

World-focused thought is always an error. It is attachment. Therefore, it is dreaming or remaining deluded.

To help people with world-focused thoughts by providing world-focused solutions is assisting one to dream. Therefore, the Awakened One, who has accepted the role of continuing the awakening, will not assist in world-focused concerns by providing world-focused answers. The Awakened One will assist world-focus by observing the filter with the one who has a desire to awaken.

When one is not world-focused, guidance within the world occurs naturally. Non-attached activity within perception is not a hindrance to awakening. Attached activity is a means of clinging to the dream.

Tomorrow, we will begin looking more closely at these words from *The Teaching of Inner Ramana*.

I will not be afraid of love today.

“Love” is a symbol for the openness of consciousness and its source. It is also a symbol for the oneness of consciousness and its source. The ego is afraid of openness and oneness. The ego is more comfortable with control and individuality, although the ego is never completely comfortable. Fear is an inherent component of the ego. As the previous excerpt from Inner Ramana teaches, “Fear comes simply from not knowing reality.” Since the ego does not know reality, fear lies at its foundation.

Regarding, “I will not be afraid of love today,” our special theme says, “This the decision not to be insane, and to accept myself as God Himself, my Father and my Source, created me.”

Basically, we have two choices: We can identify with the ego or we can identify with life-awareness-presence (consciousness). Whatever we identify with, we also act and speak from.

This is not the first time we have contemplated the question, “What will I identify with?” This question is contemplated repeatedly because one who is identified with ego is afraid to identify with awareness, even if there is a desire to do so.

The ego will not tell you that it is afraid of your truth. It will not separate itself from your truth in that way, because then you will see that the ego isn’t your truth. In that seeing, you are set free.

Instead, the ego will provide everyday objections to identifying with awareness. For example, it might say:

- People will think you are weird.
- People will think you are egotistical, pretending to be something you aren’t.
- You aren’t ready. You need to learn more first, or you need to have mystical experiences first.
- You won’t be able to take care of everyday responsibilities. You will be out of touch with everyday life.
- It’s simply not true. That’s not who you are. This is who you are. Spiritual teachings are mere fantasy.
- You don’t have time for this. There are important things that require your attention.
- Etcetera.

All of these objections, and other objections similar to them, are expressions of the ego’s fear of love.

When we decide, “I will not be afraid of love today,” we decide to be our Self. We decide to abide as life-awareness-presence instead of the body-personality-mind.

We also decide to listen to and follow intuition instead of giving excessive attention to the chattering mind.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description M - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-m/>

Lesson 283

What is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is a term that points to spiritual intuition. Yesterday we read about spiritual intuition in an excerpt from *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*. That excerpt said:

One who listens to guidance ... realizes truth even as he experiences perception. He listens to knowledge because he knows that one who sees perception cannot truly see, but one who is not attached can be guided. Non-attachment and realization are one.

While contemplating our last special theme, we learned about equanimity. Equanimity is abiding in the qualities of Christ-consciousness—acceptance of what is, openness, non-attachment, and unconditional trust.

When we accept that we are consciousness, we abide in equanimity, because we realize we are unaffected by the outside world.

When we abide in equanimity, we are able to feel spiritual intuition more easily, because “one who is not attached can be guided.”

I live in the high desert of Colorado. Tumbleweeds are common here. However, we only see tumbleweeds in the winter. During the summer, tumble weeds are rooted firmly into the ground. The wind cannot blow the tumbleweeds about when they are attached to the ground.

In the winter, the tumbleweed’s roots die. That frees the tumbleweeds from the ground, and then the wind can blow the about freely.

Spiritual intuition is like the wind. When we abide in equanimity, we are like the tumbleweeds in the winter. We allow spiritual intuition to guide us without any attachment to the ground of our thoughts.

This is the goal of the Holy Spirit’s teaching. It is to free us from attachment to our thinking.

Once we are freed from our habitual thinking, we can be guided by spiritual intuition, and the Holy Spirit “becomes the means to go beyond itself, to be replaced by the eternal truth.”

As we’ve already seen, the Holy Spirit is the *means* to awakening. Once we awaken to truth, we are beyond the Holy Spirit. What we are is the home of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual intuition emanates from awakened consciousness.

Although what we are is the source that spiritual intuition emanates from, until we genuinely awaken to our Self, we do well to be surrendered to spiritual intuition. Through surrender, we let our true voice guide us back to the realization of what we are.

One mistake that people make when they understand intellectually that the Holy Spirit is their true voice, but they don’t have the genuine experience of themselves as consciousness, is listening to the ego thought system while saying, “But the Holy Spirit is me.” In other words, they think their thinking and their will is the same as the Holy Spirit’s thinking and its will.

Your thinking and spiritual intuition are not the same thing. Thinking is the voice of the ego, and it will keep you attached to the idea that you are a person in a body.

If you really want to awaken to your truth, it is critical that you put your own thinking aside and tune into spiritual intuition. Spiritual intuition is the means to awakening, not your thinking. You need to free yourself from the ground of your thoughts in order to genuinely follow spiritual intuition.

My true identity abides in You.

The prayer in today’s workbook lesson begins with, “Father, I made an image of myself, and it is this I call the Son of God. Yet is creation as it always was, for Your creation is unchangeable. Let me not worship idols.”

Most people do not call themselves the “Son of God.” Most people in the world today think of Jesus as the “Son of God.” Yet, they may think of themselves as the children of God.

Why is it an error to think of yourself, the person, as the Son or child of God?

When you think of yourself, the person, as the Son or child of God, you remain identified with yourself as the person. You remain identified with the mind’s thoughts as your thoughts. You are not the person, and the mind’s thoughts are not your thoughts, so the error is a mistake in identification.

It is much more helpful to think of yourself as consciousness, and to realize that consciousness is the Son or child of God. Consciousness is the direct creation or extension of the source.

Nisargadatta Maharaj said:

Keep on remembering: *I am neither the mind nor its ideas*. Do it patiently and with conviction and you will surely come to the direct vision of yourself as the source of being—knowing—loving, eternal, all-embracing, all-pervading. You are the infinite focused in a body. Now you see the body only. Try earnestly and you will come to see the infinite only.

Today, we will take Nisargadatta's advice and "keep on remembering" by noticing repeatedly throughout the day that we are awareness.

We will also practice the Loving All Method today. As we do, we will remind ourselves that the essence of everything is the essence that we are. As our lesson says, "Now are we One in shared Identity, ... And so we offer blessing to all things, uniting lovingly with all the world, ..."

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description N - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-n/>

Lesson 284

What is the Holy Spirit?

The Teachings of Inner Ramana says, "Fear comes simply from not knowing reality. Therefore, the only answer to fear is to let go of what is false and to remember reality as true. Discarding the world is as simple as remembering that it isn't true. This is as simple as living from within instead of from without. One who is forgetting the world takes his cues from within."

"Discarding the world" is the same as seeing that we are unaffected by it. It is the same as being in the world, but not of it. It is also what our special theme means when it says:

If you but knew how much your Father yearns to have you recognize your sinlessness, you would not let His Voice appeal in vain, nor turn away from His replacement for the fearful images and dreams you made.

Although this language is highly symbolic, our "sinlessness" in this context is our unaffectedness. The previous paragraph from our special theme could be translated into less symbolic language in this way:

Your yearning for truth is the yearning to know your unaffected Self, which is your truth. When you realize how strong this yearning is in you, you will cease to listen to ego; you will listen instead to spiritual intuition. You will let spiritual intuition guide you to the realization of

your Self. You will stay in the awareness of your Self, and see all things through the lens of truth. In this way, all you will see is truth, and you will rejoice at what you see.

As *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* says, “This is as simple as living from within instead of from without.”

If we look at the world as a movie or a play, we can also say that it has two directors. One director is the ego. When the actor is too caught up in the play of the world, the ego shouts its directions and the actor blindly follows. This actor has forgotten that the play is a play and believes s/he is affected by everything that is happening.

The other director is intuition. In order to hear this quieter director, who whispers instructions quietly from within the actor, the actor must remember that s/he wants to hear the director’s instructions. To do this, the actor must be more focused within than on the play. Certainly, there is awareness of the play, but the actor is turned inward to discover what s/he is to say, do, not say or not do as the script of the play unfolds.

I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt.

Today’s lesson says, “Loss is not loss when properly perceived. Pain is impossible. ... This is the truth, at first to be but said and then repeated many times; and next to be accepted as but partly true, with many reservations. Then to be considered seriously more and more, and finally accepted as the truth. I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt.”

The thoughts that hurt come from the ego. They are thoughts that rise up from the belief that we are affected by the world.

In order to change all thoughts that hurt, we must change directions and directors. Instead of being focused outward, we change direction and focus inward, always inward.

Outward results in fear and suffering.
Inward realizes wisdom, peace and trust.

Remain focused inward today by practicing surrender as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description 0 - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-0/>

Lesson 285

What is the Holy Spirit?

Our special theme says, “From knowledge, where He has been placed by God, the Holy Spirit calls to you, to let forgiveness rest upon your dreams, and be restored to sanity and peace of mind.”

Or, as *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* says:

World-focused thought is always an error. It is attachment. Therefore, it is dreaming or remaining deluded.

To help people with world-focused thoughts by providing world-focused solutions is assisting one to dream. Therefore, the Awakened One, who has accepted the role of continuing the awakening, will not assist in world-focused concerns by providing world-focused answers. The Awakened One will assist world-focus by observing the filter with the one who has a desire to awaken.

In an earlier tip, I wrote about the difference between everyday intuition and spiritual intuition. This difference is not something we need to analyze. For example, if we have a feeling to talk to someone, we do not need to analyze whether that is coming from everyday intuition or spiritual intuition. It is always good to follow intuition, so we can simply follow the intuitive feeling in trust.

However, it is helpful to know there are two types of intuition. Everyday intuition makes life in the world easier. Spiritual intuition is the intuition that awakens us from the world entirely.

Since spiritual intuition has a very specific purpose, it also has a very specific focus. It's helpful if we respect its focus. For example, it is a mistake if we ask spiritual intuition, “How can I make more money?” or “Should I stay in this relationship or leave?”

These questions are world-focused questions. Spiritual intuition has the function of awakening you from the world entirely. It cannot awaken you from the world and guide you in the world too. That would be confusing its purpose.

As *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* says, “The Awakened One will assist world-focus by observing the filter with the one who has a desire to awaken.”

“The Awakened One” is a synonym for the Holy Spirit and spiritual intuition. The “filter” is a synonym for the mind and thought. So Inner Ramana teaches that spiritual intuition responds to world-focus by helping you observe, or inquire into, thought.

If you ask spiritual intuition a question, and you want a world-focused answer, spiritual intuition will remain silent. If you are really interested in an answer to your question, the ego will step in and fill that void. In other words, it is the ego that answers world-focused questions.

You can receive clear answers from spiritual intuition if you ask questions that are focused on its purpose.

For example, instead of asking, “How can I make more money?” you might say, “I feel unsafe. How shall I look at this?” Other good questions are “What will you share with me about this?” and “What is it that I need to see in my mind?”

Instead of asking, “Should I stay in this relationship or leave?” try describing how you feel in the relationship, and then ask, “What guidance do you have for me?”

When you seek an answer from spiritual intuition, it is good to ask open-ended questions. Don’t attempt to lead spiritual intuition by putting a possible answer in your question. For example, don’t ask ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions.

Spiritual intuition is the inner teacher, so its answers have the focus of teaching and pointing toward truth.

Everyday intuition is different. Everyday intuition provides world-based intuitive information and guidance *in the moment*. If you ask, “What am I to do now?” it will answer. If you ask, “What I am to do next month?” it will not answer. It will remain silent. Again, if intuition remains silent and you really want an answer to your question, ego will step in and fill the void.

Both forms of intuition are there to guide you, and it is helpful for you to follow both forms of intuition. Just remember that spiritual intuition is the inner teacher with the purpose of helping you awaken, and everyday intuition only responds to questions about right now. If you keep these simple rules in mind, it will help you to invoke intuition instead of ego.

Note: Occasionally guidance comes in, *uninvited*, that sets a goal or direction for you. If this type of guidance comes, you will recognize it. It has a distinct feeling to it that is different from ego. However, it is always best not to *ask* for future-based guidance. Your role is to stay focused with now.

My holiness shines bright and clear today.

Our lesson says, “Today I wake with joy, expecting but the happy things of God to come to me. I ask but them to come, and realize my invitation will be answered by the thoughts to which it has been sent by me. And I will ask for only joyous things the instant I accept my holiness.”

If you look carefully at today’s lesson, you will see that it indicates we will receive based on our identity.

If I see myself as a vulnerable person in the world, and I believe the thoughts in the mind are my thoughts, my experience will be based on that identification.

If I see myself as the unaffected witness, my experience will be based on that identification.

What we identify with is *the most important decision* that we make in each moment.

I am able to comfortably identify with the unaffected Self now, and that identification feels genuine for me. However, it didn't always feel genuine. There was a time when I would have felt like a fake if I had identified with unaffected awareness as myself.

It's not helpful to identify with the idea that you are an affected person, so if you are not yet to the place where it feels genuine to identify with unaffected awareness, what are you to identify with?

The Teachings of Inner Ramana has a recommendation:

The one who chooses to listen to me and follow me is the awakening of your true Self, so do not doubt your willingness to listen and follow me. That is you. And by listening to that desire, you listen to your Self.

In other words, Inner Ramana suggests that we identify with our *willingness to awaken* as we transition from identification as a person to identifying with the unaffected Self.

As you go through the day today, if you feel genuine identifying with the unaffected Self, please do. However, if that feels like too much of a stretch for you, identify with your willingness to realize truth. Let, "My holiness shines bright and clear today," be a reminder to identify with one or the other in lieu of identifying with the ego experience.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description P - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-p/>

Lesson 286

What is the Holy Spirit?

The Teachings of Inner Ramana says:

When one is not world-focused, guidance within the world occurs naturally. Non-attached activity within perception is not a hindrance to awakening. Attached activity is a means of clinging to the dream.

In *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*, world-focus and attachment are synonymous. World-focus and attachment occur when we believe our thoughts. Believing our

thoughts is a hindrance to intuition, because when we believe our thoughts, we think we are right. When we think we are right, we are not open to intuition.

Our special theme says, “The Holy Spirit understands the means you made, by which you would attain what is forever unattainable. And if you offer them to Him, He will employ the means you made for exile to restore your mind to where it truly is at home.”

Doubt is part of the ego thought system. It does not exist in consciousness. However, spiritual intuition has a positive use for doubt. Doubt can be used to doubt our thoughts. We can doubt them enough to bring them to inquiry, or we can doubt them enough to disregard them altogether.

When we doubt our thoughts, we are open to guidance that comes from intuition.

The hush of Heaven holds my heart today.

Today we practice the positive use of doubt. As we doubt our thoughts, they grow quieter. They grow quieter because we are not giving them our believing-attention.

When we live in the world with a quiet detached mind, we see the miracle of unfolding. We discover that we do not need to think about everything and figure everything out. The miracle of unfolding takes care of everything. Or, as our lesson says, “In [God] is every choice already made.”

Today we doubt our thoughts, but we do not doubt the path we are on, our intuition or “the end which God Himself as promised us. We trust in Him, and in our Self, Who still is One with Him.”

Choose to doubt wisely today.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description Q - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-q/>

Lesson 287

What is the Holy Spirit?

Our special theme says, “The Holy Spirit understands the means you made, by which you would attain what is forever unattainable. And if you offer them to Him, He will employ the means you made for exile to restore your mind to where it truly is at home.”

Yesterday we looked at the positive use of doubt. The Holy Spirit uses doubt, which is part of the ego thought system, to doubt the ego thought system itself.

Likewise, desire is part of the ego thought system. There is no desire in consciousness. But the Holy Spirit (i.e., spiritual intuition) uses desire as a means of directing our attention toward reality. We begin to desire truth, or we desire freedom from suffering, or we experience some other desire that turns attention from the world and places attention inward. In this way, desire is employed to restore us to truth realization.

As we have seen repeatedly since the beginning of Gentle Healing, desire is an important tool of awakening. That is because desire is an integral part of the ego thought system. Until we awaken, desire is activated. We could desire a new relationship, a bag of potato chips, more money, a different place to live, a new job, new shoes or anything, but the ego always desires. So the Holy Spirit takes what is there—desire—and turns it around so that it takes us to truth instead of more fully into illusion.

Here are two quotes about the importance of desiring truth:

“The desire for enlightenment is necessary because without it you will never take the necessary steps to realize the Self. A desire to walk to a particular place is necessary before you take any steps. If that desire is not present, you will never take the first step. When you realize the Self, that desire will go.” ~ Sri Annamalai Swami

“Merely to trust is not enough. You must also desire. Without desire for freedom of what use is the confidence that you can acquire freedom? Desire and confidence must go together. The stronger your desire, the easier comes the help.” ~ Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Some people have learned intellectually that there is no desire in consciousness, and then the spiritual self-image leads them to claim not to have any desires now. However, typically that is only a form of denial. They aren't noticing their world-based desires, even though the world-based desires are there, talked about and pursued, and they aren't allowing the desire for truth to become strong. Their denial of desire is an ego preservation strategy.

It is not helpful to deny desire. It is helpful to engage all of the power of desire for the purpose of awakening by realizing over and over again that your spiritual aspiration is all you truly want.

You are my goal, my Father. Only You.

Today's lesson asks questions, which help us invoke our desire for truth. It asks:

Where would I go but Heaven? What could be a substitute for happiness? What gift could I prefer before the peace of God? What treasure would I seek and find and keep that can compare with my Identity? And would I rather live with fear than love?

Use today to inquire about desire. What are your world based desires? Notice them. Will those desires, if achieved, bring everlasting peace, happiness and clarity? What is your spiritual aspiration? Will it, if achieved, bring everlasting peace, happiness and clarity? What is your strongest heart-felt desire? What do you want above all else?

I recommend taking time to answer the preceding questions through journaling. Reading my tips is a wonderful first step, but if you merely read my tips without following the practice recommendations in the tips, you are probably not taking steps toward your spiritual aspiration. Reading, but not practicing, is another ego preservation strategy.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description R - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-r/>

Lesson 288

What is the Holy Spirit?

Our special theme says, “The Holy Spirit understands the means you made, by which you would attain what is forever unattainable. And if you offer them to Him, He will employ the means you made for exile to restore your mind to where it truly is at home.”

The ego uses our attention to keep us absorbed in illusion and ignorance. Our attention is usually focused outward on the ego’s ideas (thought) and perceptions (the world as perceived through thought).

Spiritual intuition uses the same tool that the ego uses—*attention*. However, spiritual intuition guides us to keep attention focused inward instead of outward. We are focused inward as we ask intuition, “What am I to do now? How am I to see this?” We are also focused inward as we practice awareness-watching-awareness or loving consciousness meditation.

Outward focused attention is guided by ego.
Inward focused attention is guided by spiritual intuition.

There is a third type of attention. It is fully involved in the moment with no “I” or self in it. Examples include being absorbed in creativity or being absorbed in nature.

When we are fully in the moment without ego chatter about “me,” we are in presence. We might call that merged attention instead of outward focused attention, because instead of the idea of me as a person looking outward at a world through “my” thoughts, it is awareness and scenery all merged into one happening.

Therefore:

Outward focused attention is guided by ego.
Inward focused attention is guided by spiritual intuition.
Merged attention is presence.

Let me forget my brother's past today.

Which type of attention is active when there is a grievance? Is it outward, inward or merged attention?

The answer is outward attention. Outward attention is attention that looks outward through thought, or more specifically, through the ego thought system. Outward attention looks at our brother through the ego's chatter about the brother and what he did to me, or what I don't like about him, etcetera.

If we focus our attention inwardly, we will find another thought system. It is the thought system that points toward truth. It may guide us to see our brother differently; it may guide us to inquire into our thoughts in order to see them differently; it may guide us to practice the Loving All Method with our brother and the situation; it may guide us to notice our self as unaffected awareness, etcetera. The specific guidance will vary, but the guidance will always be toward truth and away from untruth.

If our attention is merged, there will be no thought about our brother's past and there will be no current judgments about him. There will only be this moment as it is in joy.

As you look at the three paragraphs written above, you might notice that inward focused attention is the bridge between outward focused attention and merged attention. Said another way, spiritual intuition is the means to one consciousness, which is awareness and happening as one (not "me" and other than me).

Today, whenever you notice that you are involved in outward attention, shift inward using surrender as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description S - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-s/>

Lesson 289

What is the Holy Spirit?

Our special theme says, "The Holy Spirit understands the means you made, by which you would attain what is forever unattainable. And if you offer them to Him, He will employ the means you made for exile to restore your mind to where it truly is at home."

The ego is thought and judgment, so many spiritual teachings encourage the spiritual aspirant to let go of thought and judgment. Yet, spiritual intuition uses both thought and judgment to lead us toward awakening.

Let's look at thought first. Most thought is clearly ego. Ego is best recognized by its 'chatter' quality. However, not all thought is chatter. There are two additional types of thought.

- Practical thought, such as the thought I am using now to select words that best communicate what I want to say. I will also use practical thought to proofread this after I finish typing it.
- Inspired thought, which comes from intuition. Inspired thought can come from everyday intuition or from spiritual intuition.

Spiritual aspirants do well to discern between the three types of thought, and then to let go of chatter and follow both practical and inspired thought. Interestingly, discerning between the three types of thought and then deciding to let go of a thought or to follow a thought is judgment. According to my dictionary, judgment is "the ability to make considered decisions or come to sensible conclusions."

Just as spiritual aspirants are encouraged to let go of thought, spiritual aspirants are encouraged to let go of judgment. However, just as there are three types of thought, there are three types of judgment: judgments that come from ego chatter, practical judgment and inspired judgment.

- An example of judgment that comes from chatter is, "She's stupid," or "I'm smarter than her."
- An example of a practical judgment is, "It will make things a lot easier if I take the time to learn how to use this App."
- An example of inspired judgment is, "I'm becoming attached to an outcome. I need to step back and trust whatever unfolds."

Humans have brains, and brains are made for thinking. However, listening to, believing and blindly following ego chatter is not thinking. Real thinking is using the brain's judgment or discernment capability to decide when to listen to and follow a thought and when not to. Real thinking is the hallmark of wisdom.

The past is over. It can touch me not.

Today's lesson talks about the past. It says, "Unless the past is over in my mind, the real world must escape my sight. For I am really looking nowhere; seeing but what is not there."

What is the past?

According to my dictionary, it is “gone by in time and no longer existing.”

If one looks clearly for a moment, one can see that the past is not here now. It is impossible for the past to be here now. The past has already “gone by in time” and it is “no longer existing.”

The past that humans hold onto is *in thought only*.

The past is thought. It might have been actually experienced once, but now it is only thought.

Since the past is thought, let’s look at it as thought.

Which category of thought does the past fit into? Is it ego chatter, practical thought or inspired thought?

If you look carefully, you will see that the past can fit into all three of these categories.

- An example of the past as ego chatter is, “I’m not looking forward to seeing mom today. All she does is judge me.”
- An example of the past as a practical thought is, “Sometimes there is traffic on the highway this time of day. It might be good to leave a little early.” Another example of the past as practical thought is knowing to stop when you come to a stop sign.
- An example of the past as inspired thought is, “Last time I felt nervous like this, it turned into full blown fear. It’s a good idea for me to take a break now and inquire into these thoughts before they get worse.”

Which type of past thought is today’s lesson talking about when it says, “Father, let me not look upon a past that is not there”?

It is the past as ego chatter that is a block to clarity. Practical thought and inspired thought are not obstacles to clear seeing, even if the past is a component of those types of thoughts.

I would like to point out that there is a difference between the past as ego chatter and memory. A smell can invoke a memory. A sight or a sound can invoke a memory. Memories arise. As long as a memory does not become ego chatter, memories are simply passing phenomena that are witnessed by awareness.

Notice your thinking today. If your thinking is ego chatter, choose to let it go. Ego chatter is not at all beneficial. It is thought that you can live without. Interestingly, most thought is ego chatter, which means that you can live without the vast majority of your thoughts.

If your thinking is genuinely practical or inspired, listen to it. These thoughts either make your life easier or guide you toward awakening. Both are beneficial.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Loving Consciousness Description T - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-t/>

Lesson 290

What is the Holy Spirit?

Spiritual intuition meditates between illusions and truth. It bridges the gap between reality and dreams by reinterpreting perception, so that even dreams point toward truth. Everything in time has a different purpose under the guidance of spiritual intuition than it does with the chattering thoughts of the ego.

The goal of spiritual intuition is awakening to truth. To meet this goal, spiritual intuition acts as the inner teacher for anyone who will listen. Sometimes subtle and sometimes bold, spiritual intuition will guide you using any means that you will pay attention to.

In reality, you are awake consciousness, which is the source of spiritual intuition. Therefore, when spiritual intuition has accomplished its goal, you will have awakened to your Self, which is beyond spiritual intuition. In this way, spiritual intuition is a bridge from what you think you are—your false self—to what you truly are.

Those who recognize the calling to awaken to the true Self realize that spiritual intuition is the means they must surrender to until the goal is accomplished. Those who remain interested in the ego thought system perceive spiritual intuition as a threat. Because they are afraid of it, they repress its guiding intuition. Those who are transitioning from interest in the world to the call to awaken must bring intuition out of repression by following it whenever they recognize its guidance.

Spiritual intuition reinterprets every tool the ego thought system uses for its purpose in order to awaken you to truth. Spiritual intuition uses doubt, desire, attention, thought and judgment as well as time, relationships, contrast, comparison, and even separation (solitude) for its purpose of bringing you back to your truth.

Spiritual intuition leads you to let go of dreams by letting go of the ego thought system, which is the creator and interpreter of dreams. It provides you with another choice, another way to be within dreams—a way that provides the security you think you need without teaching you that you are one who needs protection. In this way, spiritual intuition does not teach fear. It teaches unaffectedness, which is truth.

Accept spiritual intuition as your guide now. Realize that the ego thought system has nothing to offer you. It isn't needed for anything. Spiritual intuition can and will

guide you through every situation you face. It will not leave you comfortless. It will teach you about your truth.

My present happiness is all I see.

When we look at the world through the ego thought system, we see what isn't there. Here is a story to illustrate that point:

Sally and Moose were high school sweethearts who married and had three children together. Sally was a homemaker. Moose was an athlete who was away from home much of the year.

Sally perceived herself as plain and boring. She knew Moose had many attractive female fans, many of whom had lives that she thought were much more exciting than hers.

Moose worried that Sally was unhappy, because he was away from home so much of the time. He saw himself as an absent husband and father, and he felt guilty for it. He longed to spend more time with his family, but he felt inadequate, like a big, dumb athlete. He didn't think he had the intelligence to find another way to support his family.

One evening, while Moose was on the road, he and Sally talked on the phone. Moose commented about a friend of his, who had recently married a fan and was planning a honeymoon trip to Hawaii as soon as the current sport's season ended.

Sally glanced at the family room where she was sitting. Toys were strewn about. It crossed her mind that Moose was envious of his friend, because she and Moose did not take exotic vacations together.

Sally became defensive. She said, "We have a pretty good life right here at home, but you wouldn't know that, because you are never around."

Her words cut through Moose like a knife. She had touched on what he feared the most, that he was an absent husband and father. Feeling guilty, he shot back, "I have to support you, you know. I'm not free to do whatever I want to do."

Sally thought Moose saw her as a burden, something he wished he could be free of. Her voice was clearly agitated. "We don't need you. Don't you think we can get by without you? We do it all of the time!"

And the fight continued.

Sally felt unworthy of her famous husband. Moose felt unworthy of his loving wife. Neither saw the misperceptions caused by their thoughts. Six months later, Sally filed for divorce.

This story is fictional, but it is based on misunderstandings that I witness all of the time. These misunderstandings happen, because people see through the filter of their thoughts, and they are blind to what is really there.

Today we commit to slowing down. Whenever you notice that you want to react to something that someone else says or does, pause and look at your thoughts. What thoughts are coloring your perception? Why are you upset?

When you see without the distortion that is caused by the ego thought system, seeing is clear; you feel happiness and love, because happiness and love are what you are. If you are upset, it is a sure sign that ego thinking misleads your perception. Inquiry is needed.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Abandon Release Description A – <https://awakening-together.org/abandon-release-meditation-description/>

Lesson 291

What is the Real World?

Our new special theme begins by saying, “The real world is a symbol, like the rest of what perception offers.”

What is a symbol?

According to my dictionary, it is “a thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract.”

The world you see is a symbol. It is a thing that represents something abstract. It is a representation of what you believe is true. As NTI says, the world, as you see it, is a reflection of your mind.

Let’s begin our contemplation of the real world by looking at the world as we see and experience it right now.

How do you describe the world as you see and experience it?

Spend today with this question. Write down answers as they come to you. Tomorrow we will take the next step in this contemplation.

This is a day of stillness and of peace.

Today's lesson speaks of the mind that sees the real world. A mind at peace experiences a holy world. It reminds me of a song by Peter Mayer, "Holy Now."

The lesson confirms what we are contemplating today—the world we see is a reflection of our mind. When our mind is at peace, we offer "the same vision to the world." However, if our mind is not at peace, that is the vision we offer to the world.

You've already been asked to describe the world as you see it today. When you do that, please describe the people in the world as you see them. Describe yourself as you see yourself. Describe your financial situation as you see it, your pets as you see them, etcetera. Really look around today, and describe what you see as you see it.

Each time you write down a description, follow it up by remembering today's workbook lesson, "This is a day of stillness and peace." Let today's lesson remind you that a still mind sees the world through peace. Accept in your heart that if you see anything that is upsetting, stressful, fearful or agitating to you, it is because of something you believe in the mind. If you are upset in that moment, take a deep breath and repeat these lines from the prayer in today's lesson:

Father, guide [me] along the quiet path that leads to You. Let my forgiveness be complete, and let the memory of You return to me.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: Loving Consciousness Description U - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-u/>

You might also enjoy listening to this song: Holy Now, by Peter Mayer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiypaURysz4>

Lesson 292

What is the Real World?

Our special theme says, "The real world is a symbol, like the rest of what perception offers. Yet it stands for what is opposite to what you made. Your world is seen through eyes of fear, and brings witnesses of terror to your mind."

Yesterday, you made a list describing the world as you see it. Take a look at your list. Label each perception in the list as fear or peace, whichever feels most correct for the specific perception. When choosing between fear and peace, look at *how you feel* when you perceive the world in that way. Your mind might want to argue that a specific perception isn't peace, but it also isn't fear. Trust that any perception that isn't peace is fear, even if it doesn't seem that way to you.

Complete this step before continuing to read.

Notice how many of your perceptions are labeled as fear compared to the number of perceptions that are labeled as peace.

The labels help you understand why you see the world the way you do. If the majority of your perceptions are fear, you live in a fearful world. If some of your perceptions are fear and some are peace, you live in a somewhat stable world, but certain circumstances are fearful for you. If all of your perceptions are peace, you see the real world.

A happy outcome to all things is sure.

Today's lesson says, "God's promises make no exceptions. And He guarantees that only joy can be the final outcome found for everything. Yet it is up to us when this is reached; how long we let an alien will appear to be opposing His. And while we think this will is real, we will not find the end He has appointed as the outcome of all problems we perceive ..."

Look at your list again. Ask spiritual intuition to select one fearful perception for you to work on. Sometimes the mind's reaction to intuition's choice is resistance. It might feel like, "I don't want to work on that one. I'll pick an easier one." Those thoughts come from the "alien will" mentioned in today's lesson. Ignore those thoughts, and choose to work on the one selected by spiritual intuition.

Today, whenever the selected perception arises, repeat today's lesson to yourself. As you do, realize that a happy outcome is delayed when you cling to your conditioned way of thinking. Give willingness to see that your way of thinking is wrong. Tomorrow, after a day of giving willingness, we will look more deeply at our selected perceptions.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Abandon Release Description B – <https://awakening-together.org/abandon-release-meditation-description-b/>

Lesson 293

What is the Real World?

Our special theme says, "The real world cannot be perceived except through eyes forgiveness blesses ..."

What does that mean?

To me, "eyes" implies looking, seeing and perceiving.

We learned from our first special theme that "forgiveness" is recognizing yourself as the unaffected Self.

So, that sentence means that the real world is perceived when we know ourselves as the unaffected Self, and we look out on the world from that knowledge.

With the help of spiritual intuition, we have each selected a perception in which we do *not* see our self as unaffected. It isn't helpful to start telling ourselves, "I am unaffected," when there is probably a deep-seated belief that we are affected. Instead, it is more helpful to look carefully at the belief that we are affected.

It is time for inquiry.

Through Gentle Healing, we have learned about several types of inquiry including root cause inquiry, Byron Katie's "The Work", Diederik Wolsak's "Choose Again" inquiry, and Inner Ramana's self-inquiry. Use any of these methods, a combination of methods or your own inquiry process in order to learn what you fear regarding the selected perception. Set a goal of being able to honestly explain your fear to another person in a dispassionate way by tomorrow.

Note: According to my dictionary, dispassionate means "not influenced by strong emotion, and so able to be rational and impartial." That doesn't mean that you will repress any emotion. Emotion might be present, but your description will not go off into stories that are influenced by that emotion. Your description of the fear will be "rational and impartial."

All fear is past and only love is here.

We learned previously that the past is only thought. Today's workbook lesson says, "All fear is past," which means all fear is only thought.

Today you will look to discover thoughts you believe that also cause you to believe you are a vulnerable affected self. These thoughts are obstacles to the vision of the real world. As today's lesson says, "Can the world seem bright and clear and safe and welcoming, with all my past mistakes oppressing it, and showing me distorted forms of fear?"

We celebrate the opportunity to be free of an obstacle as we go in search of our mistaken beliefs today.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: Loving Consciousness Description V - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-v/>

Helpful Resources for Today's Practice:

Guidelines for Root Cause Inquiry:

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/Classics/Guidelines-RootCauseInquiry.pdf>

Byron Katie Worksheet:

<http://thework.com/sites/thework/downloads/worksheets/JudgeYourNeighborWorksheet.pdf>

Instructions for Doing The Work:

http://thework.com/sites/thework/downloads/worksheets/instructions_for_the_work.pdf

The Choose Again Six Step Process: <https://youtu.be/rJyCzKgw83s>

Inner Ramana's self- inquiry:

<http://www.drivehq.com/file/df.aspx/publish/RAkers/RDAPublicFolder/AwakeningTogether/SanctuaryGroups/Regina - Consistent Gentle Healing/InnerRamana-sSelfInquiry.pdf>

Lesson 294

What is the Real World?

Our special theme says, "Only happy sights and sounds can reach the mind that has forgiven itself. What need has such a mind for thoughts of death, attack and murder?"

Yesterday, you were asked to practice inquiry on a fearful perception—a perception that leaves you feeling affected. If you did this, it's highly likely that you found mistakes in your thinking, since the only thing that can leave you feeling affected is belief in thought.

A "mind that has forgiven itself" is a mind that recognizes itself as unaffected awareness. (In this context, "mind" is synonymous with awareness and consciousness. It is like the first definition of "mind" in my dictionary: "the element of a person that enables them to be aware...; the faculty of consciousness...")

A mind that recognizes itself as awareness has no need for mistaken thoughts.

A mind that recognizes itself as awareness sees the real world.

Today, we will take another step toward forgiving our self. This step has three parts:

1 – Read this article by Adyashanti. It is taken from his book, *True Meditation*. - <https://awakening-together.org/discovered-meditative-self-inquiry-adyashanti/>

2 – Write or type this question: What do I need to realize about _____?
(Fill in the blank with the selected perception you have been working with.)

Note: You may also do this by speaking into a recorder, if that feels most effective for you.

3- Write about your selected perception as if you are teaching someone else everything you know about it. Include everything you discovered as you inquired into this perception yesterday. Follow Adyashanti's advice by writing all the way to the edge of what you know about this topic, and then wait for something else that you know is true. When that next true word, phrase or sentence comes, write it down. Continue writing until you hit another boundary, and then wait again. Stay with this process until you know that you came to a conclusion, one that is recognized in your heart and soul as the completed answer to your question.

Note: If you are speaking into a recorder, pause the recording after speaking to the edge of what you know; wait until the next true word, phrase or sentence comes, and then start the recording and begin speaking again.

I want to give us plenty of time to be thorough with this, so other than a brief comment on tomorrow's lesson, I will not write a tip tomorrow. My next tip regarding our special theme will be two days from today. That's gives us two days to explore the answer to our questions.

My body is a wholly neutral thing.

People usually see the body as who they are, but today's lesson points out that we are not the body. We are "a Son of God"—that is, we are unaffected consciousness.

The body is a neutral thing, which means it is open to interpretation. If we listen to the ego thought system, the body is "I". However, if we listen to spiritual intuition, it is "of service for a while and fit to serve."

As Ramana Maharshi said, "Your own Self-Realization is the greatest service you can render the world."

Hence, Self-realization is the purpose of the body. Your body is perfect for this purpose, and that is true regardless of the current condition of your body. The reason the body is as it is now is to help you reach Self-realization. If there is a thought that the body is an obstacle to Self-realization, realize that thought is ego's interpretation of a neutral thing, and then shift to spiritual intuition's interpretation instead.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Abandon Release Description C – <https://awakening-together.org/abandon-release-meditation-description-c/>

Lesson 295

The Holy Spirit looks through me today.

Today's lesson says, "Christ asks that He may use my eyes today, and thus redeem the world."

Earlier in Gentle Healing, we studied The Code. We learned that the thoughts we believe make the world as it is. This is why forgiveness is so important. By releasing our belief in untrue thoughts, which are received into our minds through The Code, and by abiding as our peaceful unaffected Self, we send peace and wisdom into the world instead of fear and attack.

With this in mind, let's make forgiving the untrue and realizing truth our top priorities. With these as priorities, we give a gift to the world and ourselves.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: Loving Consciousness Description W - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-w/>

Lesson 296

What is the Real World?

Our special theme speaks of the real world as a world that “arises from a mind at peace within itself.” It says the “real world signifies the end of time, for its perception makes time purposeless.” Then it goes on to say, “The Holy Spirit has no need of time when it has served His purpose. Now He waits but that one instant more for God to take His final step.”

In our last special theme, we learned that spiritual intuition is the bridge from our false self to our true Self, and if we want to realize the true Self, we need to surrender to spiritual intuition for as long as attachment to the false self continues.

Since the mind is good at lying to us, and we could be fooled into thinking we are not attached to the false self when we are, this special theme gives us something else to pay attention to.

When we perceive the real world, with “no cries of pain and sorrow heard—when “No danger lurks in anything”—we have reached the end of the bridge, and spiritual intuition is no longer needed. Its purpose has been fulfilled. God will take the next step to transport us from the end of the bridge to truth realization. Until then, spiritual intuition is needed to guide us.

It's helpful to have this clarity, because it keeps us from fooling ourselves. As long as we have any fearful perceptions, spiritual intuition is needed.

The Holy Spirit speaks through me today.

Today's lesson says, “We teach today what we would learn, and that alone.”

Over the last two days, you have discovered something that is helpful for you to learn. When you have fully learned something, a change occurs. Until a change occurs that signifies the learning is complete, you are still learning.

Teaching is a way of learning. However, there are many ways to teach. You can take time in the Sanctuary, weekly or just once (if there is an open timeslot) to teach what you need to learn. However, NTI Luke, Chapter 9 says, "I may have you teach without a single spoken word."

Let's allow spiritual intuition to guide us regarding how we are to "teach" in order to learn what's most helpful for us to learn now. Let's use Adyashanti's method of writing to discover the best way for us to teach what we are learning regarding the selected perception we are looking at this week.

1 - Write or type this question: What's the best way for me to teach to learn _____? (Fill in the blank with what you need to learn now.)

Note: You may also do this by speaking into a recorder.

2 - Write about "teaching to learn" as if you are teaching someone else everything you know about that. You can use resources like NTI Luke, Chapter 9, to help you gather your thoughts about this topic.

Follow Adyashanti's advice by writing all the way to the edge of what you know about this topic, and then wait for something else that you know is true. When that next true word, phrase or sentence comes, write it down. Stay with this process until you come to a conclusion that feels like guidance for you.

Note: Be sure to write without a limited view about what "teach" might mean.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Abandon Release Description D - <https://awakening-together.org/abandon-release-meditation-description-d/>

Lesson 297

What is the Real World?

Our special theme says, "The Holy Spirit has no need of time when it has served His purpose. Now He waits but that one instant more for God to take His final step, and time has disappeared, taking perception with it as it goes, and leaving but the truth to be itself. That instant is our goal, ..."

That instant is our goal. That is why we are on the spiritual path. That is why we do the practices that are part of Gentle Healing. Truth is the goal that lives in our hearts.

Today, take some unhurried time to review what you have written this week regarding your selected perception. As you read, notice your desire to follow the guidance that has come through your writing. Focus your attention on that desire. Through loving attention, it will expand. Sit in awareness and quietly be with your desire to follow guidance across the bridge to truth realization.

Forgiveness is the only gift I give.

Our lesson says, “Forgiveness is the only gift I give, because it is the only gift I want. And everything I give I give myself. This is salvation’s simple formula.”

Today is a day of realizing how deep our desire is to let spiritual intuition guide “the way I live” as “I accept the Atonement for myself.”

What is the Atonement? Atonement means “reparation for a wrong,” with reparation meaning, “the action of repairing something.”

In this case, wrong perception is what needs to be repaired. Wrong perception is the block to the real world and the block to truth. We accept the Atonement for ourselves by doing our part to heal wrong perceptions and by allowing the miracle to do its part to bring healing to completion.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: Loving Consciousness Description X - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-x/>

Lesson 298

What is the Real World?

Our special theme says, “The Holy Spirit has no need of time when it has served His purpose. Now He waits but that one instant more for God to take His final step, and time has disappeared, taking perception with it as it goes, and leaving but the truth to be itself. That instant is our goal, for it contains the memory of God.”

NTI Matthew, Chapter 11, says:

The search for truth is not truth itself, so do not stop there. Many have heard the call to search and have accepted it, but then they have stopped, thinking themselves complete. You are not complete until you *are* Truth, so do not stop at the call. It is your beginning, but it is not your end. To find the truth, you must walk until your end.

The “memory of God” is the realization of truth as our Self. The real world is the sign that truth realization is near. It is the end of the bridge, but it is not yet the shore on the other side of the bridge.

For me, that means that my commitment to spiritual practice must be complete. Some people may reach the experience that *A Course in Miracles* calls the real world and feel awakening is done. If they feel awakening is done, they might stop spiritual practice.

Certainly, some types of practice will fulfill their purpose and no longer be needed. A purified mind doesn't need the practices that purify the mind. But a mind that hasn't reached Self-realization should continue to open to Self-realization through practices like awareness-watching-awareness meditation.

When a devotee asked Ramana Maharshi about the end of Self-inquiry, Ramana responded that the end of that practice is "to know the truth that the 'I' is not different from the Lord ..."

I love You, Father, and I love Your Son.

Today's lesson is the recognition that "senseless journeys" are futile. The only meaningful journey is the journey toward Self-realization, and the end of that journey is sure.

Today's lesson is a loving commitment to spiritual practice. We could see "I love You, Father, and I love Your Son," in this way:

Focused awareness on awareness is the doorway to Infinite Awareness. I love watching awareness (the Son), and I love journeying toward Infinite Awareness (the Father) by remaining in awareness.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation: Loving Consciousness Description Y - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-y/>

Lesson 299

What is the Real World?

Our special theme speaks of two phases of awakening. The first is "quiet eyes" and "a mind at peace." This is the mind that sees the real world, which "is a symbol, like the rest of what perception offers."

The second phase of awakening occurs when God takes "His final step, and time has disappeared, taking perception with it as it goes, and leaving but the truth to be itself."

Contemplate the teaching in our special theme alongside this description from a Catholic contemplative, Bernadette Roberts. It is from her book, *The Experience of No-Self*:

Within the traditional framework, the Christian notion of loss-of-self is generally regarded as the transformation or loss of the ego (lower self) as it attains to the higher or true self in its union with God. ... Thus there is no longer any sense of "my" life, but rather "our" life—God and self. In this abiding state, God, the "still-point" at the center of being, is ever accessible to

the contemplative gaze—a point from which the life of self arises and into which it sometimes disappears. But this latter experience of loss-of-self is only transient; it does not constitute a permanent state ...

Because this was the limit of my expectations, I was all the more surprised and bewildered when many years later I came upon a permanent state in which there was no self, no higher self, true self or anything that could be called a self. ... In main, I am convinced that the contemplative life is composed of two distinct and separate movements...

The first movement is toward self's union with God ... wherein the emphasis is on interior trials and dark nights by which the self is established in a permanent union with God, the still-point and axis of its being. In this process we discover that self is not lost; rather, a new self is revealed that functions from the deepest, innermost divine center.

Following this first movement is an interval during which this union is tested by a variety of exterior (not interior) trials whereby this oneness is revealed in all its enduring depths of stability and toughness against all forces that would move, fragment, or disturb its center... [It is] actually the preparation for a great explosion—a quiet one, however—that ushers in another major turning-point. ... [A] point is reached where the self is so completely aligned with the still-point that it can no longer be moved, even in its first movements, from this center. It can no longer be tested by any force or trial, nor moved by the winds of change, and at this point the self has obviously outworn its function; it is no longer needed or useful, and life can go on without it. ...

The onset of this second movement is characterized by the falling away of self and coming upon “that” which remains when it is gone. ... The immediate, inevitable result is an emergence into a new dimension of knowing and being that entails a difficult and prolonged readjustment. The reflexive mechanism of the mind—or whatever it is that allows us to be self-conscious—is cut off or permanently suspended so the mind is ever after held in a fixed now-moment out of which it cannot move in its uninterrupted gaze upon the Unknown.

Eternal holiness abides in me.

Today's lesson speaks of our holiness, “which is far beyond my own ability to understand or know.” The lesson says, “Illusions can obscure it, but can not put out its radiance, nor dim its light. It stands forever perfect and untouched. ... And I can know my holiness.”

Today, contemplate where you are in the process of coming to know the eternal holiness that abides in you.

- Are you in the purification stage, which is primarily involved with noticing false thinking, beliefs and conditioning and letting them go?
- Are you in the stage of merging, which is primarily involved with perfecting your abidance with the right-mind (spiritual intuition)?
- Are you in the stage of true perception, where merging has been perfected, and now you wait quietly for God to take His final step?

Also, based on where you are in this process, what is your primary function now?

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Abandon Release Description E – <https://awakening-together.org/abandon-release-meditation-description-e/>

Lesson 300

What is the Real World?

Our special theme says, “As we look upon a world forgiven, it is He Who calls to us and comes to take us home, reminding us of our Identity which our forgiveness has restored to us.”

In the excerpt from *The Experience of No-Self* by Bernadette Roberts, which we contemplated yesterday, Bernadette wrote, “The onset of this second movement is characterized by the falling away of self and coming upon ‘that’ which remains when it is gone.”

Similarly, Ramana Maharshi said, “Not letting the mind go out, but retaining it in the Heart is what is called ‘inwardness’. Letting the mind go out of the Heart is known as ‘externalization’. Thus, when the mind stays in the Heart, the ‘I’ which is the source of all thoughts will go, and the Self which ever exists will shine.”

What do you see when you contemplate these three quotes together? Can you see that “Identity,” “that” and “Self” are all the same, even though Bernadette calls that “no-self”?

Spend time with this contemplation before continuing with today’s tip.

Only an instant does this world endure.

The lesson says that today’s thought “is a thought which can be used to say that death and sorrow are the certain lot of all who come here, for their joys are gone before they are possessed, or even grasped. Yet this is also the idea that lets no false perception keep us in its hold, nor represent more than a passing cloud upon a sky eternally serene.”

I quoted Ramana Maharshi today, while looking at the special theme. Here is more of that same quote:

When the mind that is subtle goes out through the brain and the sense organs, the gross names and forms appear; when it stays in the heart, the names and forms disappear. Not letting the mind go out, but retaining it in the Heart is what is called “inwardness”. Letting the mind go out of the Heart is known as “externalization”. Thus, when the mind stays in the Heart, the ‘I’ which is the source of all thoughts will go, and the Self which ever exists will shine.

If you contemplate today’s workbook lesson along with this quote, you will see that letting our attention go outward towards the world and thoughts is the cause of suffering and illusion. Alternatively, keeping our attention inward leads to joy and truth realization.

Today is the last day with our current special theme. It is a good time to review the work that you did with this special theme, and reach a helpful conclusion.

The work you did included:

- Listing some of your perceptions as you looked at the world, and then labeling each of those perceptions as fear or peace.
- Selecting one fearful perception and inquiring into it.
- Using a form of writing recommended by Adyashanti, called “meditative self-inquiry,” to discover what you need to learn about the selected perception and then to ask how you can teach what you need to learn in order to learn it.
- Determining which phase of awakening you are currently in—purification, merging or waiting—and then based on that, what your primary function is now.

What summarized lesson can you take from all of this work? How do you put it into practice? Is there something you can do to remind yourself so you do not forget to put it into practice?

Answering these questions will result in some form of ‘inwardness’ that is fully right for you now. It will be your guidance—your current step—and “exactly what to do to be restored to Heaven and our true Identity.”

If you have 30 minutes for meditation, I recommend this meditation today: Abandon Release Description F – <https://awakening-together.org/abandon-release-meditation-description-f/>

Lesson 301

What is the Second Coming?

Our new special theme opens by saying, “Christ’s Second Coming, which is sure as God, is merely the correction of mistakes, and the return of sanity.”

Christ's Second Coming is awakening to consciousness. It is the stage of true perception or seeing the real world. It is sometimes called "enlightenment," yet it is not the final awakening.

Here is how NTI 1 Corinthians describes this stage:

What is received when all that is false has been let go is only that which reflects truth. This, which is received as truth, shall fill you with new eyes and a joyous heart. In this way, you will be ready to point the way, for you will no longer be fooled by that which is false. You shall have a taste of truth. It is upon this recognition, which is the completeness of recognition within time, that you enter the fourth and final earthly phase of the path of truth with Me. ...

NTI describes four stages of the spiritual path prior to the final awakening to truth.

1. The search for truth, which is really one's search for his/her spiritual path. This is a phase marked by reading lots of books and listening to many different spiritual teachers. It is an outward-focused search.
2. Purification, which is when one begins the serious inner work of looking at false thinking, beliefs and conditioning and letting them go. This is a phase of healing perception.
3. Merging into one, which is a phase of discarding the personal will and following spiritual intuition until no separate will can be said to exist anymore.
4. True perception, which is the last earthly phase. This is the phase when the person lives as one with spiritual intuition and with all things perceived. You know yourself and everything as Christ-consciousness. It is what *A Course in Miracles* calls, the real world and the second coming of Christ.

And God Himself shall wipe away all tears.

Today's lesson says that "God's world is happy. Those who look on it can only add their joy to it, and bless it as a cause of further joy in them." The lesson also says, "unless I judge I cannot weep. Nor can I suffer pain, or feel I am abandoned or unneeded in the world."

In other words, all suffering that we experience is caused by our own decision to see with individual thinking instead of with spiritual intuition. All suffering is a symbol that we need to accept the atonement, the correction of misperception.

As our special theme says:

Christ's Second Coming,
which is sure as God,
is merely the correction of mistakes,
and the return of sanity.

If you have 30 minutes for meditation today, I recommend this meditation:

Loving Consciousness Description Z - <https://awakening-together.org/loving-consciousness-meditation-description-z/>

Lesson 302

What is the Second Coming?

Our special theme is about Christ's Second Coming, which is awakening to Christ-consciousness. Our special theme refers to it as "part of the condition that restores the never lost" and as "an invitation to God's Word to take illusion's place."

In other words, it is an important awakening, but it is not yet awakening to absolute truth.

This may be a good time to introduce what I call, "The Four Principles of God." These principles are like a map, which depict the journey from the absolute to manifestation. The principles also highlight the awakenings that occur, which "restores the never lost, and re-establishes what is forever and forever true."

The Four Principles of God

First Principle of God – Pure, unmanifest, life-awareness; abstract, unlimited potentiality. It is what *A Course in Miracles* calls "Father" and "Heaven." It is also called Nirvana. It is the Source and ultimate truth.

Second Principle of God – Consciousness. This is the only direct creation of the Source. In *A Course in Miracles* it is called "Christ" and "the Son of God." It is the unaffected, still witness. All things manifest are made of this principle; therefore, all things are consciousness.

Third Principle of God – The ongoing activity of creation, which occurs naturally through the interaction of the witnessing principle with that which is witnessed. In *Gentle Healing*, we learned about this through "The Code" and NTI Ephesians. I often call it Divine Law. It is how consciousness forms itself into the many temporary forms that make up the manifest universe.

Fourth Principle of God – Manifestation. Everything in this realm is temporary, and so it is often referred to as a dream. It is

consciousness appearing as something other than consciousness, and so it is called illusion. One who believes this is the realm of reality is referred to as unconscious, not awake, or ignorant. When this realm is seen through ignorance, it is fearful and full of suffering. When seen through clarity, this realm is miraculous.

Today, spend some time contemplating the four principles in order to gain deeper understanding on your own. Formulate a question, which you feel will take you to a deeper understanding, and ask that question using the form of writing that we learned from Adyashanti. Write everything you think you know about your question; write to the boundary of your knowledge, and then wait for something to come that you feel is true. Seeking answers from yourself is an important part of the awakening process, and it is time for us to begin practicing that skill.

Where darkness was I look upon light.

Today's lesson points to The Four Principles of God when it says, "Father, our eyes are opening at last. Your holy world awaits us, as our sight is finally restored and we can see. We thought we suffered. But we had forgot the Son whom you created. Now we see that darkness is our own imagining and light is there for us to look upon."

Let today's lesson assist you as you contemplate of The Four Principles of God and decide on a question to ask within.

Meditation Options

Over that last several weeks, you have been introduced to several guided meditations including awareness-watching-awareness, loving consciousness and abandon release meditation. I am not going to recommend specific meditation audios as part of the daily tip anymore. However, these and other meditation audios are available for you to use. You may access Awakening Together's meditation audios at this link:

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

If you prefer not to use a guided meditation, but you would like to listen to music or nature sounds as you meditate, consider the options in this meditation playlist:

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 303

What is the Second Coming?

Our current special theme is about Christ's Second Coming. That is symbolic language that points to an awakening, which is commonly referred to as awakening to consciousness. In the model I shared yesterday of The Four Principles of God, it is awakening to the Second Principle of God.

Two days ago, I shared four stages of the spiritual path as it is depicted in NTI. Today, let's look at those four stages to see how they fit with awakening to the Second Principle of God.

Second Principle of God – Consciousness. This is the only direct creation of the Source. In *A Course in Miracles* it is called "Christ" and "the Son of God." It is the unaffected, still witness. All things manifest are made of this principle; therefore, all things are consciousness.

Typically, when one begins the spiritual path, that one believes s/he is a person in the world. In other words, one believes the manifest realm is reality. That means that the process of awakening begins in the fourth principle of God, manifestation.

The goal of awakening, although the spiritual aspirant may not be aware of the goal yet, is to awaken from belief in manifestation as reality to the Second Principle of God, consciousness. This awakening includes three basic stages: the search, purification, and merging with spiritual intuition.

Some people appear to 'pop' into consciousness without going through these three stages. However, those people complete their maturation after awakening by completing the stages they have not yet completed. In some cases people find themselves at the beginning, in the search, after awakening. They experience it as searching for what has happened to them.

Whether one goes through the three stages of awakening and then awakens to consciousness or seems to awaken to consciousness and then complete the stages, one is not fully integrated as consciousness until all three stages have been completed.

Our special theme refers to the Second Coming of Christ as all-inclusive. That means that the Second Coming of Christ is a term that points to the completion and total integration of consciousness as self.

In NTI, the Second Coming of Christ is the fourth stage of the spiritual path. NTI says:

The fourth phase is a glorious phase, upon which your feet shall barely touch the ground. As you walk the earth, you know where you walk, so that the earth is merely a symbol within the mind. You shall

not know brothers, but you shall talk to them. You will not need food, but you will eat with joy. Music shall accompany you in your every moment, and yet, you will have no need for your ears. Your sight will be changed from earthly sight to sight that is provided from Heaven. All things shall be new, and you shall have no need for any of them. In this, your joy shall be complete.

Or, as our special theme says:

It is the all-inclusive nature of Christ's Second Coming that permits it to embrace the world and hold you safe within its gentle advent, which encompasses all living things with you. There is no end to the release the Second Coming brings, as God's creation must be limitless.

The holy Christ is born in me today.

The prayer from today's lesson says:

Your Son is welcome, Father. ... He is the Self that You have given me. He is but what I really am in truth. ... He is my Self as You created me. It is not Christ that can be crucified. Safe in Your Arms let me receive Your Son.

Near the end of our last special theme, I asked you to determine which stage of the spiritual path you are on, and based on that, what your primary function is.

If you are at the first stage, the search for truth, your primary function is reading and listening to spiritual teachings while feeling within for an inner confirmation regarding which teachings are for you.

If you are at the second stage, purification, your primary function is inquiring into your perceptions and thinking, giving willingness to let go of false thinking, learning not to act or speak from false thinking, and allowing repressed emotions to rise and heal.

If you are at the third stage, merging, your primary function is letting go of your personal will, including your thinking and conditioning, and surrendering to spiritual intuition until that surrender is complete, and you no longer experience a separate will.

If you are at the fourth stage, you know yourself as consciousness and the first three stages are completed.

Assuming that you are in the first, second or third stage of the spiritual path, spend today giving welcome to consciousness as your self by practicing your function as fully as you can. We are not here simply to say, "Let me receive Your Son." We are here to *back up that intention by doing our part* to fulfill our function.

Tomorrow, I will talk about Grace's role on the spiritual path. Today, just be aware that *you are not alone* as you do your part.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 304

What is the Second Coming?

Yesterday I wrote of Christ's Second Coming as the fully integrated state of knowing one's self as consciousness. I also encouraged you to take part in awakening to consciousness by fulfilling your role within your current stage of awakening. Today, I will write about Grace and the part it fulfills in your awakening.

Recently, I read to you from Chapter 4 in Gina Lake's book, *In the World but Not of It*. Here is one paragraph that I read:

Exercising your power to choose silence or any other activity that promotes Presence is a real turning point on the path to spiritual liberation. This marks an acceleration in your spiritual growth which will reverberate in your life in countless ways. Things will change, many of them unexpected. Anything truly begins to be possible. More conscious choosing of Presence lays the groundwork for Grace to be more active in your life. The more sincere you are, the more Grace is bestowed.

This is true because of the Third Principle of God, the ongoing creation principle.

The creation principle is a principle of now. It is as if all of the data in the universe is fed into a creation mechanism, which then creates the current moment of time based on the information received. You learned about this principle through "The Code" and NTI Ephesians.

When you are focused on the world and your thoughts about the world, this is the data that is fed into the creation principle, and so the creation principle responds by giving you world-based thoughts to think. Your life is also filled with circumstances that reflect your desire for the world and its drama.

However, as you begin to want truth, and you back that desire up by acting upon it, you send new data into the creation principle. The creation principle responds by giving you new thoughts to think and by filling your life with circumstances that support your desire to awaken.

In that way, Grace isn't anything miraculous. It is divine law acting in the way divine law always acts by responding to you. It is as Nisargadatta Maharaj said:

I know nothing about miracles, and I wonder whether nature admits exceptions to her laws, unless we agree that everything is a miracle. To my mind there is no such thing. There is consciousness in which everything happens. It is quite obvious and within the experience of everybody. You just do not look carefully enough. Look well, and see what I see.

Our special theme says, "Forgiveness lights the Second Coming's way, ..." Please contemplate this line from our special theme along with the teaching I just shared about the Third Principle of God. What clarity comes to you?

Let not my world obscure the sight of Christ.

Today's lesson begins, "I can obscure my holy sight, if I intrude my world upon it. Nor can I behold the holy sights Christ looks upon, unless it is His vision that I use. Perception is a mirror, not a fact. And what I look on is my state of mind, reflected outward."

With the teaching about the creative principle in mind, what does this mean? Please write the answer to this question as if you are teaching about the creative principle and its effects to another person.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 305

What is the Second Coming?

Yesterday we looked at the creation principle and saw how Grace is created based on our change of focus. Interestingly, Michael Langford writes this in his book, *Manonasa*:

[You may] wonder, "Is it by grace, luck, fate or magic that those very few who attain Manonasa (the final end of the false self after which it can never reappear) succeed in attaining Manonasa?" It is **not** by grace, luck, fate or magic. It is by using a different approach than the crowd uses. ...

The intensity of the desire for freedom from the false self is the key factor. When that desire for freedom becomes extremely intense it changes everything. The extremely intense desire for freedom changes all of one's actions, it increases the level of self-honesty, it changes one's approach to everything and especially it changes one's approach to how to go about attaining Manonasa.

In his book, *The Direct Means to Eternal Bliss*, Michael writes:

When your desire for Freedom becomes extremely intense, for the first time you can see what is essential for freedom and what is not essential. ... When the desire for Freedom becomes even stronger, the desire for Freedom itself will bring you everything you need to succeed in your quest for Freedom including the answers to all your questions, the Direct Path teachings, the solution to all obstacles, the motivation to practice, etc. ... The extremely intense desire for the direct experience of the absolute Truth will guide you to your inner Teacher.

So, when Michael writes in *Manonasa* that Manonasa (awakening) does not happen by grace, he is using the word "grace" as synonymous with "luck, fate or magic," meaning that it does not come to you without your participation. This is true, because of the creative principle. If you feed interest in the world into the creative principle, you receive thoughts and circumstances that reflect that. But when you feed desire for truth into the creative principle, especially when that is backed by action, you receive everything you need to help you awaken. Gina Lake and I call that Grace; Michael does not. He gives credit to your desire for Freedom. However, we are all teaching about the creative principle and *how it responds to you*.

You do your part,
and Grace will do its part.
It is a divine partnership.
It is the law of the creative principle.

There is a peace that Christ bestows on us.

The prayer from today's lesson says:

Father, the peace of Christ is given us, because it is Your Will that we be saved. Help us today but to accept Your gift, and judge it not. For it has come to us to save us from our judgment on ourselves.

Contemplate this prayer along with the teaching on divine partnership. What clarity comes to you through this contemplation?

Meditation Options

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Lesson 306

What is the Second Coming?

Our special theme says, “Forgiveness lights the Second Coming’s way, ...”

When we are learning to undo the ego thought system, one thing we learn is to let go of ego thoughts without speaking them or acting on them. This is important, because speaking them or acting on them fortifies them with our belief in their validity. That is the opposite of forgiveness.

Conversely, speaking from and acting on our choice to awaken strengthens that choice. It also sends a message regarding our sincerity to the creative principle, which results in a stronger response from Grace, one that is equal to our sincerity. This is why Nisargadatta Maharaj said, “strive for the coveted Grace with sincerity and honesty.”

Sincerity is more than a mental decision or emotional feeling. It is living from one’s convictions free of pretense, deceit or hypocrisy.

You cannot fool the creative principle. It responds to you as you are actually being in mind, heart, word and deed.

Are you ready to “strive for the coveted Grace with sincerity and honesty”?

The gift of Christ is all I seek today.

As you read and contemplate today’s lesson, also contemplate your sincerity as it is defined above. Do this without judgment. We aren’t interested in finding ourselves guilty, lacking or bad. We are simply interested in determining if there have been limits to the Grace in our life, because there have been limits in our motivation to live from our decision to awaken.

If we are limited, Grace responds in a way that is equal to our sincerity.

Likewise, if we remove all limits, Grace responds in a way that is equal to our sincerity.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 307

What is the Second Coming?

Our special theme says, “The Second Coming ends the lessons that the Holy Spirit teaches, making way for the Last Judgment, in which learning ends in one last summary that will extend beyond itself, and reaches up to God.”

Our last special theme, “What is the Real World?” shared the same teaching. Spiritual intuition leads us across a bridge that leads from the false self to truth. When we have reached the end of the bridge, spiritual intuition’s job is complete. God takes the final step to pull us into Itself. In today’s excerpt from our special theme, that is called “The Last Judgment.” (We will look more at the “Last Judgment” later, because that is our next special theme.)

We’ve talked about the third stage of spiritual awakening as merging. This is the phase of disregarding the apparent personal will by following spiritual intuition until no separate will can be said to exist anymore. When merging is complete, there is realization of only one consciousness and one will. This is a highly awakened state where one is not tempted by the ego anymore. One lives a fully harmonious life that is centered in the still-point of God. This is the Second Coming. In NTI, it is called the fourth stage of awakening. However, it is not the last step in awakening. One step remains, which is God’s final step.

Here is how the final step is described in NTI 1 Corinthians:

The one that seems to be in the fourth stage is but a symbol of the truth that is. So this one must pass away also. But in its passing, you pass from a final illusion of beauty to Beauty that cannot be contained in illusion. You pass from form, which reflects Light, to Light, which shines into form.

Using the Four Principles of God as a symbol, this is awakening from the Second Principle, consciousness, to the First Principle, Source, which is ultimate truth.

Conflicting wishes cannot be my will.

Today’s lesson is focused on the third stage of the spiritual path, merging. However, this lesson is also useful to you if you are in the purification stage.

If merging is your primary focus now, use today’s lesson to increase your desire for surrender and your sincerity in that practice. Read today’s lesson in its entirety and with heart at least five times today. Let it give you a boost in enthusiasm. Also, practice surrender throughout the day.

If purification is your primary focus now, spend today noticing the thinking in the mind. Notice that your thinking does not have one goal. In one moment it prefers

one solution to a specific problem, and in the next moment it criticizes that solution and prefers another. As *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* says:

The mind is not constant. The concerns of the mind for one day may be completely different than the concerns for another. If all of the concerns for one day are written down, it may be seen that concerns and imagined solutions conflict with one another, so that no true peace can be found with the mind. The solution of concerns creates new concerns. And so again, there is no peace with the mind.

This is why one must step away from the mind to find peace. Peace cannot be found with the mind.

Stepping away from the mind is as simple as losing interest in it. When the mind chatters, it chatters because you are listening. As you lose interest in what it has to say, because you know its answers are not your answers, the chattering of mind shall fade away.

Each time you notice the chaos of mind today, remove attention from thinking and place it with your willingness to lose interest in the mind, and then repeat today's lesson, "Conflicting wishes cannot be my will."

Meditation Options

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Lesson 308

What is the Second Coming?

Our special theme says, "The Second Coming is the time in which all minds are given to the hands of Christ, to be returned to spirit in the name of true creation and the Will of God."

That is an extraordinary sentence.

"all minds are given to the hands of Christ"

"to be returned to spirit"

"in the name of true creation"

"and the Will of God"

Please take time to contemplate this sentence today. What clarity comes to you as you contemplate this beautiful symphony of words? Be sure to write your clarity down, so you can return to it if it is forgotten later in the day.

This instant is the only time there is.

Today's lesson is also incredible.

“I have conceived of time in such a way that I defeat my aim.”

“I must change my perception of what time is for.”

“Time's purpose cannot be to keep the past and future one.”

“The only interval in which I can be saved from time is now.”

“The birth of Christ is now”

“present blessing”

“love is ever-present, here and now”

“Thanks for this instant, Father.”

Oh my goodness! What a glorious feast! It is a perfect combination of ideas to bring us into the heart.

Please contemplate these words from today's lesson, just as you contemplated the excerpt from our special theme.

I can hardly wait to get this tip posted, so I can move into my own joyous and fruitful contemplation. The heart is already opening in anticipation of it.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 309

What is the Second Coming?

Our special theme says, “The Second Coming is one event in time which time itself can not affect. For every one who ever came to die, or yet will come or who is present now, is equally released from what he made. In this equality is Christ restored as one Identity, in which the Sons of God acknowledge that they are all one.”

This is a statement that says we cannot fail to awaken to consciousness.

Admittedly, it is possible that our awakening to consciousness will not happen in this lifetime. However, the special theme says, "For every one who ever came to die, *or yet will come...*"

That means that if awakening does not occur in this lifetime, it will occur in another lifetime. Awakening is guaranteed!

When we think of this lifetime as the only time we have, we are looking at this person as who we are. We are not this person.

To see that we also have other lifetimes in which we can accomplish this goal broadens our perspective of our self as more than this time-limited being with a particular name and history. It's helpful to see that we are beyond that limit, because that is true.

At the same time, this lifetime is a perfect time to make every stride that we can in the direction of awakening. Maybe this will be the lifetime in which we awaken!

Whether this is the lifetime in which we awaken or not, as we saw in our contemplation yesterday, "this instant is the only time there is. ... The only interval in which I can be saved from time is now." Let's use now well.

I will not fear to look within today

The lesson says, "Within me is eternal innocence, because it is God's Will that it be there forever and forever. ... I fear to look within because I think I made another will that is not true, and made it real. Yet it has no effects. Within me is the Holiness of God. Within me is the memory of Him."

If you have listened to my teachings much at all, you have heard me speak of the 'I am bad' thought. This fear—the fear that 'I am bad'—is one of the greatest obstacles to awakening. It keeps us stuck in the belief that we are something other than God. As NTI puts it:

You believe you have stolen yourself from God. That is to say, you believe you have made yourself separate from God's Will. You believe it is your choice to follow God's Will or your own, and you feel guilty for this choice, because you believe it is a sin to have made a will that is separate from God's.

Your guilt, born of the choice to have a separate will, leaves you feeling unworthy of God's Will. And so, out of your guilt and sense of unworthiness, you deny God's Will by not hearing it, or by hearing it, but by not believing you are deserving to follow it.

There are several things you must look at here. First, you *do* have the desire to know and follow God's Will. Hold that up as a beacon. That is your willingness. Let it guide you to your true Heart's desire.

Secondly, the feeling that seems to be an obstacle to knowing and following God's Will is the belief that you are unworthy of God's Will. This is like a crafty trick. It is a loop that keeps you trapped within an illusion of yourself.

You think you are guilty because you want to serve a will other than God's,

and

Your true desire is to serve God's Will, but your sense of unworthiness is an obstacle to that desire.

Do you see the loop in which you are snared? Can you see how your own belief in your guilt and unworthiness seems to lead you onto the path of increased guilt and additional unworthiness?

This is why I have come, to help you look at the upside-down reasoning within the mind that keeps you feeling trapped. And also to help you see that you are *not trapped*, because you can lay down this reasoning that makes no sense. When you lay it down and put it aside, you are free to know the reasoning of the Holy Spirit, which is right-reasoning and is joy.

If you are in the purification stage, spend today noticing the thoughts in your mind that continually tell you that you are 'bad' (guilty, unworthy, not good enough, etc.) Each time you notice one of these thoughts, realize that it is an ego preservation strategy and nothing more. Put faith in the fact that you are eternally innocent. Rest for a few moments as you hold that faith in your mind and heart. You don't need to understand how you are innocent. You simply need to trust that it's true.

If you are already purified from the 'I am bad' belief, let today's lesson be a reminder of your desire to surrender completely, and therefore merge fully with consciousness.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 310

What is the Second Coming?

This special theme ends by saying, “Pray that the Second Coming will be soon, but do not rest with that. It needs your eyes and ears and hands and feet. It needs your voice. And most of all it needs your willingness. Let us rejoice that we can do God’s Will, and join together in its holy light.”

As we have seen, the spiritual path is made up of four primary stages. The four stages lead to a final awakening that is beyond those stages completely. It is an awakening that is beyond perception. It is awakening to the First Principle of God, which is the Source and ultimate truth.

The Second Coming is awakening to the Second Principle of God, consciousness. That is the fourth stage of the spiritual path. Although it is an awakening, it is prior to the final awakening. Consciousness sees with true perception. It knows all things in manifestation as consciousness. It knows all things are one.

Merging is the stage that leads to awakening as consciousness. This is a stage of surrender, when one continually lets go of anything that appears to be a separate will or separate self and surrenders into spiritual intuition and the recognition of consciousness. Awareness-watching-awareness meditation is an important part of this stage. Practicing surrender as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* is another part of this stage. The Loving All Method is also a wonderful practice during this stage of awakening.

Purification prepares you for merging. Purification is a stage of clearing away false beliefs and conditioning. It is a stage of untangling or undoing. It is also when most people discover spiritual intuition. Inquiry is a very important part of this stage. Focusing on one’s willingness, spiritual aspiration or desire for clarity is also very important. Awareness-watching-awareness meditation is helpful, because it can help you achieve some distance from the mind, which aids immeasurably in letting go. The Loving All Method helps you gain freedom from your emotions and judgments, which is also very helpful.

In fearlessness and love I spend today.

Today’s lesson says, “This day, my Father, would I spend with You, as You have chosen all my days should be.”

Nisargadatta Maharaj once said, “If you desire to be free, do not neglect the nearest step to freedom.”

Let’s spend this day with our Father by paying attention to our individual “nearest step to freedom.”

Ask this question:

What is my nearest step to freedom?
What do I need to know and do?

Let writing (or speaking into a recorder) lead you to the answer. Start by writing the answer that feels true to you. Write to the boundary of your knowledge, and then wait to see what truth comes from beyond the boundary of your current knowledge.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 311

What is the Last Judgment?

The first paragraph of our new special theme says:

Christ's Second Coming gives the Son of God this gift: to hear the Voice for God proclaim that what is false is false, and what is true has never changed. And this the judgment is in which perception ends. At first you see a world that has accepted this as true, projected from a now corrected mind. And with this holy sight, perception gives a silent blessing and then disappears, its goal accomplished and its mission done.

A Course in Miracles and NTI tell the story of two awakenings. The first is the awakening from a deluded state of mind, also known as duality, to a pure state of mind, known as non-duality. It is awakening from the belief in manifestation as truth to realization of everything as consciousness. In my map, which is called The Four Principles of God, this is awakening from the Fourth Principle of God to the Second Principle of God.

However, another awakening remains. That is awakening from the Second Principle of God to the First Principle of God. That is the awakening that our current special theme points to. Notice it says, "And this the judgment in which perception ends. ... perception gives a silent blessing and then disappears, its goal accomplished and its mission done."

Or as NTI puts it, "...you pass from a final illusion of beauty to Beauty that cannot be contained in illusion. You pass from form, which reflects Light, to Light, which shines into form."

In other words, there is one awakening, which is awakening to Christ. And then there is a second awakening, which is awakening into the Father. This could also be called awakening to the 'I Am' presence, and then awakening into its source.

As we continue to walk the spiritual path individually by being fully in the phase of awakening that we are currently in, which for most of us is either purification or

merging, we will also look ahead of us in order to become clear on the destination and the landmarks along the way. This will help eliminate the ego's ability to confuse us into thinking we have arrived at the destination when we have not.

I judge all things as I would have them be.

Today's lesson speaks of judgment as "a weapon used against the truth." It says that judgment "separates what it is being used against, and sets it off as if it were a thing apart."

This is something you can see today. Judgment, as it is used by the ego, reconfirms over and over that there is a 'me' and 'not me.' It does not matter what you judge against. With each judgment the ego whispers its judgment into your mind—"me and not me."

Notice this today. Look whenever you judge anyone or anything. If it is as simple as judging the weather, notice there is a 'me' and the weather, which is 'not me.' If it seems like a righteous judgment, notice there is a 'me' that is right and others—"not me"—who are wrong. Every time the ego uses judgment, judgment is used to separate.

After noticing the separation that comes from judgment, "make a gift of it to Him Who has a different use for it." In other words, surrender your judgment *because you don't want to perceive separation anymore*. No more thought is required than this. If you think too much about it, thinking may lead you right back into ego and the belief in separation. Do not think. Simply:

1. Look.
2. Notice the perception of separation that is caused by judgment.
3. Remember your desire to see without separation.
4. Let go of your judgment simply because it conflicts with what you truly want.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 312

What is the Last Judgment?

Our special theme says, "The final judgment on the world contains no condemnation. For it sees the world as totally forgiven, without sin and wholly purposeless. Without a cause, and now without a function in Christ's sight, it merely slips away to nothingness."

Terms can be very confusing, so I will do my best to simplify the meaning that lies beyond any and all terms regarding awakening. Of course, to do this I will need to select and use some terms.

Ego – Ego is sometimes used to refer to the wrong mind. When “ego” refers to the wrong mind alone, it is completely transcended when the mind becomes purified and merged. However, “ego” can also be used as a more general term that means “sense of self.” When ego refers to a sense of self, even the ‘I am’ presence could be called ‘ego,’ although few people use that term in this way. The ‘I am’ presence is a divine sense of self rather than a personal sense of self. It is the sense of a subject, even if the only thing this subject is aware of is itself, (ie., consciousness aware of consciousness.)

Christ-consciousness – At the point where the sense of self is non-dual—that is, it is consciousness aware of consciousness—the sense of self remains, but it is seldom referred to as ego anymore. The divine sense of self is what *A Course in Miracles* calls “Christ.” Christ literally means “anointed one.” To be anointed is to be chosen by divine selection. It is fair to say that the sense of self as consciousness is by divine selection since it is created from source. It is the first sense of self. However, it is not awakening to the state that is prior to sense of self.

Nirvana or Manonasa – “Nirvana” means “blown out.” That means the sense of self is blown out like a candle is blown out. Manonasa means “mind annihilation,” which is the total annihilation of the sense of self. Both Nirvana and Manonasa are referred to as the final death of the ego. The Biblical term for this awakening is “the second death.” This awakening is beyond any sense of self, even a divine sense of self. It is also beyond perception entirely, since there is no longer a self to perceive. The mind, or sense of self, cannot imagine this awakening.

The last judgment is awakening from Christ-consciousness into Nirvana.

Here is another symbolic way of looking at this:

1. Duality consciousness, commonly referred to as ego, is like a caterpillar. This state is prior to any awakening.
2. The spiritual path is like the cocoon. The caterpillar enters the cocoon in order to transform, although it doesn’t know what it will transform into.
3. When it emerges from the cocoon, it is a butterfly. This is like the divine sense of self. Whereas the caterpillar saw the world from the ground, the butterfly has a completely different point-of-view. Yet, there is still a self with a point-of-view.

4. Nirvana is awakening beyond the butterfly and world perception entirely. Even the butterfly is seen to be a temporary phenomenon.

I see all things as I would have them be.

Today's lesson begins with, "Perception follows judgment."

As we saw yesterday, the ego's purpose for judgment is to create the appearance of "me" and "not me." Therefore, if we believe judgment, we perceive "me" and "not me."

Let's continue the practice that we used yesterday to surrender our judgments. By doing this we surrender the mechanism of separation:

1. Look when judgment occurs.
2. Notice the perception of separation that is caused by judgment.
3. Remember your desire to see without separation.
4. Let go of your judgment simply because it conflicts with what you truly want.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 313

What is the Last Judgment?

Our special theme makes each of the following statements:

- And this the judgment is in which perception ends.
- ... perception gives a silent blessing and then disappears, its goal accomplished and its mission done.
- ... without a function in Christ's sight, [the world] merely slips away to nothingness. There it was born, and there it ends as well. And all the figures in the dream in which the world began go with it.

Imagine that you are born with poor eyesight. Your eyesight is so poor, that you often mistake one thing for another, because you cannot see well. One day you realize that the cause of your confusion is poor eyesight, and so you get glasses, which corrects your eyesight. Now you can see clearly. As a result, your confusion also disappears. This is like awakening from ego-consciousness to Christ-consciousness. What both forms of consciousness have in common is *a type of seeing*. With ego-consciousness, there is poor eyesight, which leads to confusion.

With Christ-consciousness there is clear eyesight and clarity. Using this symbol, the final awakening is like having no eyes at all.

In the previous paragraph, “eyes” are a symbol for the sense of self. The poor eyesight is like the wrong sense of self, the idea that you are a person in a world. That leads to a lot of confusion about everything. The corrected eyesight is like the divine sense of self, knowing one’s self as consciousness. There is great clarity and right-mindedness with everything. But the final awakening is no sense of self. It is like no eyes in the previous analogy. There is nothing to see, because there is no sense of self (no eyes) to see it.

This is what the mind cannot imagine. The sense of self cannot imagine the final awakening. That is why the final awakening is fearful to our current sense of self. That is also why there is an intermediate stage between ego and truth, the stage of Christ-consciousness. Although many people misinterpret this stage as the final awakening, it is actually a stage that prepares us for the final awakening. Christ-consciousness could be thought of as a new beginning—the start of a second maturation period.

As NTI says:

The purpose of your life in the fourth phase of living on earth (Christ-consciousness) shall not be different than the purpose at any other time. Only now, in the fourth phase, the distractions have been erased. In letting yourself become an empty shell, you freed yourself from the desire for distraction. Now, in the fourth stage, your focus is complete. Now you know what you want, and you want it wholly.

During the fourth phase, there are no distractions. During the fourth phase, there are no fears. There are no doubts, and there is no feeling of guilt. There is only a knowing of what is true and a life that is the willingness for acceptance

Now let a new perception come to me.

The prayer in today’s lesson says, “Father, there is a vision which beholds all things as sinless, so that fear has gone, and where it was is love invited in.”

The plan for awakening from ego-consciousness to Christ-consciousness, which is a transformation of the sense of self, is gentle. Instead of having the sense of self ripped away from us, which would also end everything we know and believe to be true, there is a gentle transformation to a state of ‘no fear’ first. This state of ‘no fear’ or Christ-consciousness is our current goal. Although it is helpful to know that it is not the end of the path, we do not need to think about the final awakening yet. In fact, we can’t think about it. It is beyond the capability of our imagination. So, we will take one step at a time as we travel from fear and judgment to love and acceptance. That is the journey we are on now.

As we have already learned, as we do our part on this path of awakening, Grace responds to us and does its part. Using the analogy of the caterpillar and butterfly, our part is like building the cocoon; what happens in the cocoon is Grace's part. However, if we do not do our part—build the cocoon—Grace does not have the means to do its part.

Today, let's be as earnest as we can be as we continue to surrender our judgments. Here are the steps again:

1. Look when judgment happens.
2. Notice the perception of separation that is caused by judgment.
3. Remember your desire to see without separation.
4. Let go of your judgment simply because it conflicts with what you truly want.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 314

What is the Last Judgment?

Our special theme makes each of the following statements:

- ... perception gives a silent blessing and then disappears, its goal accomplished and its mission done.
- The final judgment ... sees the world as totally forgiven, without sin and wholly purposeless.
- Bodies now are useless, and will therefore fade away to nothingness ...

The three previous statements refer to perception, the world and bodies as having completed their mission and no longer having a purpose. Now they are useless. These statements are worth contemplating.

If perception's mission is done, doesn't that mean it had a mission? If the world and bodies "now are useless," wasn't there once a purpose and use for them?

Since none of us are at the point of the last judgment, we are each still at the point where perception has a mission, the world has a purpose and bodies are useful.

What are perception, the world and bodies for?

Let writing (or speaking into a recorder) lead you to the answer to this question. Start by writing the answer that feels true to you. Write to the boundary of your knowledge, and then wait to see what truth comes from beyond the boundary of your current knowledge.

I seek a future different from the past.

Today's lesson says, "From new perception of the world there comes a future very different from the past. The future now is recognized as but the extension of the present."

This means that prior to purification and the completion of merging, our future is based on our past.

How is that possible?

It's possible because we hold onto the past and to what we think we learned from the past, and then we see the current moment through that lens. Since we are seeing with a filter based on the past, that perception is fed into the creation principle, which results in a future based on expectations that were derived from the past.

What a mess!

Why should we keep building a future based on past confusion?

It is time to be with the present, now, in a different way, so that our new way of being is fed into the creative principle, which will result in a future different from the past. As the prayer in today's lesson says, "Father, we were mistaken in the past, and choose to use the present to be free."

Let's add a step to our practice of letting go of judgment. Today, practice in this way:

1. Look when judgment happens.
2. Silently inquire to discover the past in this current judgment. For example, you might ask, "What idea did I believe in the past that has caused this current judgment?"
3. Notice the perception of separation that is caused by judgment.
4. Remember your desire to see without separation or confusion.
5. Let go of your judgment simply because it conflicts with what you truly want.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 315

What is the Last Judgment?

Our special theme says, "God's Judgment is the gift of the Correction He bestowed on all your errors, freeing you from them, and all effects they ever seemed to have. To fear God's saving grace is but to fear complete release from suffering, return to peace, security and happiness, and union with your own Identity."

When we read that perception, the world and bodies all disappear in the final awakening, a thought might cross the mind that says something like, "I don't want that!" I know I've seen this idea, and I suspect you have too.

It is hard to want to let go of everything you know for something you cannot even imagine. It is especially hard to let go of everything you know if things are going well for you right now.

I am reminded of a line from the movie, *Revolver*. The line is, "It's hard to think about losing when you are winning."

That line is similar to Jesus' statement, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:23, 24)

That fact is, duality is like a swinging pendulum. When the pendulum swings to the right, life is pretty good. At least it is acceptable. To the mind, the known acceptable is much better than the unknown.

However, every pendulum that swings to the right swings back to the left to an equal degree, and the left is suffering. In other words, "good" or "acceptable" doesn't last in duality. Whether it is in this lifetime or another lifetime, duality affects everyone who has not yet awakened to the unaffected Self.

It may be hard to think about losing when you are winning, but it is wise to do so. Why wait for extreme suffering before wanting awakening with "all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind." Why not take advantage of this relatively easier time and awaken without so much pain? (Matthew 22:37)

Today may be a good day to review Choice A and Choice B from Chapter 5 of *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss*:

https://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter05.htm

All gifts my brothers give belong to me.

Today's lesson speaks of the gifts our brothers give to us. It speaks of positive things like smiles, words of gratitude and awakenings. However, that is only one side of the gift coin.

Use writing (or speaking into a recorder) to find the answer to this question:

What gift is present in my life now that I do not see as a gift? What would you tell me about it?

Let the writing come regardless of whether it feels like you are writing from your knowledge or it feels like an intuitive answer comes right away. If you write to the boundary of your knowledge, hold at that boundary until something intuitive comes in answer to the question.

Also, continue to let go of judgments in this way today:

1. Look when judgment happens.
2. Silently inquire to discover the past in this current judgment. (e.g., "What idea did I believe in the past that has caused this current judgment?")
3. Notice the perception of separation that is caused by judgment.
4. Remember your desire to see without separation or confusion.
5. Let go of your judgment simply because it conflicts with what you truly want.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 316

What is the Last Judgment?

Our special theme says, "God's Final Judgment is as merciful as every step in His appointed plan to bless His Son, and call him to return to the eternal peace He shares with him. Be not afraid of love. For it alone can heal all sorrow, wipe away all tears, and gently waken from his dream of pain the Son whom God acknowledges as His."

We have seen very clearly that the last judgment is awakening beyond perception and the world entirely. It is awakening into Nirvana. It is something we cannot imagine.

It may be difficult for us to desire this final awakening, since we cannot imagine it and we are told that everything we know disappears with this awakening. If we think about Nirvana for long, we may find that we fear the final awakening. That's because we are thinking about it with the ego mind. We are considering awakening through the lens of ego consciousness.

It's really important to look at awakening with the reasoning of the right-mind.

As I shared yesterday, duality is like a pendulum. Like all pendulums, it swings. When we look at these swings from the point-of-view of ego consciousness, those swings are from good/acceptable to bad/unacceptable. If you look at the world today as a whole, regardless of the challenges that you may face in your life now, you may be able to see that things can get worse. And they do.

As I shared yesterday, it can be difficult to think about losing when you are winning.

Let's look more closely at the story of the rich man from Matthew 19 in the New Testament:

Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." ...

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."

"Which ones?" he inquired.

Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"

Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

Please contemplate this scripture in light of the tips from yesterday and today. What clarity comes to you? What has this clarity got to do with you?

All gifts I give my brothers are my own.

The gifts that we give our brothers are letting go of ego and turning our attention inward to embrace truth as it is, without asking it to be different. That is the highest gift that can be given.

Please take a moment to watch this video, and then continue the practice from the last several days of looking at judgments, inquiring into them, remembering what you truly want, and letting them go. I will post the links to the meditation options below the video.

Video: <https://youtu.be/7pjsUAZt1vE>

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 317

What is the Last Judgment?

Our special theme says, “Salvation asks you give it welcome. And the world awaits your glad acceptance, which will set it free.”

In the last two days, I have written about duality as a pendulum. I wrote about how the pendulum swings from good/acceptable to bad/unacceptable. In truth, the pendulum is in both positions simultaneously. While it is in the good position for some individuals, it is also in the bad position for others at the exact same time. You might have realized that as you watched the video in yesterday’s tip.

When the pendulum is in the good position for us, it is difficult to truly consider how bad things can be for others. It is also difficult for us to consider others with the same emphasis that we put on ourselves.

Let's look at one of Jesus' teachings from the Bible:

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:34-40)

Please contemplate this scripture in light of the video from yesterday along with today's tip. What clarity comes to you? What has this clarity got to do with you?

I follow in the way appointed me.

Today's lesson says, "I have a special place to fill; a role for me alone. Salvation waits until I take this part as what I choose to do. Until I make this choice, I am the slave of time and human destiny."

After contemplating Matthew 22:34-40, please contemplate today's workbook lesson in light of your biblical contemplation from yesterday and today. What is your role in salvation?

Also, continue the practice from the last several days of looking at judgments, inquiring into them, remembering what you truly want, and letting them go.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 318

What is the Last Judgment?

Our special theme says, "Salvation asks you give it welcome. And the world awaits your glad acceptance, which will set it free."

In Chapter 5 of the Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss, while sharing Choice A (eternal life) and Choice B (being identified with a body), Michael Langford writes:

The Awakening of the extremely intense desire for liberation, which can also be called “really making Choice A” is:

It is like a sign stating “NO MORE” that is a million miles high. NO MORE to all of the human evils of the past. NO MORE to all of the horrors the ego has created.

It is like a silent shout saying NO MORE so loud, that if it were given a voice it would shatter the eardrums of every human on earth.

It is a demand for Truth.

It is the absolute demand for absolute Truth. ...

It is the absolute demand for absolute goodness.

When Buddha began his search for enlightenment (Nirvana), he wanted to find the end to all suffering for everyone including disease, old age, and death. It was as if he felt “NO MORE so loud, that if it were given voice it would shatter the eardrums of every human on earth.”

With that in mind, please contemplate this Biblical story from Matthew, Chapter 20:

Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

“What is it you want?” he asked.

She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.”

“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”

“We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”

When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

What clarity comes to you? What has this clarity got to do with you?

In me salvation's means and end are one.

Most people feel that those who have awakened fully, those like Buddha and Jesus, have made a great contribution to the salvation of the world. However, most people do not see their own steps toward Nirvana as having the same impact as the steps that Buddha or Jesus took.

Please contemplate today's workbook lesson as you consider this question:

Is your contribution to the world's salvation any less than that of Buddha or Jesus?
Is there anything different about your decision to awaken and theirs?

Please continue to look carefully at the judgments that arise today. Inquire into them, look to your heart to discover your true desire, and then let the judgments go in light of your true desire.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 319

What is the Last Judgment?

The last paragraph of our special theme is an invitation to make the same decision that Buddha and Jesus made, and to make that decision as completely as they made it. The last paragraph says:

This is God's Final Judgment: "You are still My holy Son, forever innocent, forever loving and forever loved, as limitless as your Creator, and completely changeless and forever pure. Therefore awaken and return to Me. I am your Father and you are My Son."

Today, please contemplate what you are. Let your mind reflect on it throughout the day. Here are the words used to describe you from the last paragraph of our special theme:

"forever innocent"

"as limitless as your Creator"

"completely changeless"

“pure”

If it feels helpful to you—if it feels like it would deepen the experience of realizing what you are—ask a question and then write (or speak into a recorder) to let the answer come. Example questions are:

What am I?

How is it true that I am forever innocent?

How can I see myself as God does?

What can I do differently that will help me realize my changeless nature?

What is the best question for me to ask?

Etcetera.

I came for the salvation of the world.

Anyone who knows the story of Buddha’s life or Jesus’ life accepts that this statement—I came for the salvation of the world—was true for them. This was undoubtedly their purpose, and it is what they are remembered for.

How did they complete their mission?

They completed their mission through ego death. As Jesus put it, “I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

Consider this teaching from NTI 2 Corinthians:

As you accept that the world is not real, and therefore can have no effect on you, the mind will begin to awaken by seeing for itself that a dream cannot affect the reality of existence as it is.

This service that you perform of not believing in the world and of not acting as if the world is real, is a service you provide for yourself and for the entirety of the one mind that you are. No part of the mind is left out of the benefits of the service you perform.

Through your service and your true dedication to this service, the mind is awakened to truth through what it learns. Through your faith, you are a teacher. And through your teaching, you are awakened by all that you learn.

Our special theme ends with an invitation—a *calling*, actually—and that invitation is echoed in today’s workbook lesson. Buddha and Jesus are two well-known examples of accepting this invitation. It’s helpful to have human examples to look to.

Being right where you are right now and seeing as you see, how can you say 'yes' to this call?

Buddha's first step was to start at the beginning with the search.

Jesus' first step was purification for 40 days and nights in the desert.

Ramana Maharshi went directly to merging through unending meditation.

What is your current step?
And with this in mind, what is your focus today?

If it feels helpful to you—if it feels like it would deepen your realization of the answer to the previous question—ask the question and then write (or speak into a recorder) to let the answer come.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 320

What is the Last Judgment?

Here is a quote from *The Garland of Guru's Sayings*, a poetic garland of Ramana Maharshi's teachings written by Muruganar:

O worldly folk who long for and run after
an endless series of unenduring things,
'tis wisdom true to seek and know That one thing
on knowing which all other things will cease to be.

That quote sums up the message of our current special theme.

My Father gives all power unto me.

Today's lesson says:

The Son of God is limitless. ... What he wills with his Creator and Redeemer must be done. His holy will can never be denied. ... I am he in whom the power of my Father's Will abides.

Please contemplate this excerpt from today's lesson along with the previous quote from *The Garland of Guru's Sayings*.

Also, read Chapter Five from *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss* again today. As you read it, please write down the sentences that strike your heart the most.

Link: https://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter05.htm

And then, at least two times later in the day today, review:

1. The quote from *The Garland of Guru's Sayings*
2. The previous excerpt from today's lesson
3. Anything you may have written while contemplating them together, and
4. The sentences that you have written down from Chapter 5 of *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss*.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 321

What is Creation?

As we look at this new special theme, we will do our best to eliminate all confusion about what is true and what is false. This may take some slow reading and contemplation on your part, because the ego mind prefers the state of confusion, and it will attempt to cling to confusion. However, the truth is actually very, very simple, and if our intention is to be clear on truth, we will be able to do so.

Our special theme begins by saying, "Creation is the sum of all God's Thoughts, in number infinite, and everywhere without all limit. Only love creates, and only like itself. There was no time when all that it created was not there. Nor will there be a time when anything that it created suffers any loss. Forever and forever are God's Thoughts exactly as they were and as they are, unchanged through time and after time is done."

Let me review the Four Principles of God with you:

First Principle of God – Pure, unmanifest, life-awareness; abstract, unlimited potentiality. It is what *A Course in Miracles* calls "Father" and "Heaven." It is also called Nirvana. It is the Source and ultimate truth.

Second Principle of God – Consciousness. This is the only direct creation of the Source. In *A Course in Miracles* it is called "Christ" and "the Son of God." It is the unaffected, still witness. All things manifest are made of this principle; therefore, all things are consciousness.

Third Principle of God – The ongoing activity of creation, which occurs naturally through the interaction of the witnessing principle with that which is witnessed. In Gentle Healing, we learned about this through “The Code” and NTI Ephesians. I often call it Divine Law. It is how consciousness forms itself into the many temporary forms that make up the manifest universe.

Fourth Principle of God – Manifestation. Everything in this realm is temporary, and so it is often referred to as a dream. It is consciousness appearing as something other than consciousness, and so it is called illusion. One who believes this is the realm of reality is referred to as unconscious, not awake, or ignorant. When this realm is seen through ignorance, it is fearful and full of suffering. When seen through clarity, this realm is miraculous.

There is a truth and an untruth in my wording of the Second Principle of God. I called it “the only direct creation of the Source.” The truth is that the Second Principle of God is the only direct creation of the Source when looking at God *from the perspective of self and illusion*. As we climb the ladder upward toward truth realization, or as we return in the same direction that we came, Consciousness is our *last dream experience* before awakening to truth entirely. Therefore, it is the only *aspect of the dream* that touches source. There are no aspects of the dream prior to consciousness.

Remember that consciousness has true perception and sees the real world, yet the real world itself is still a dream. That means that consciousness is also a dream.

Truth sees truth.
Dream sees dream.

In our current special theme, “creation” and “God’s Thoughts” do **not** refer to consciousness, the world, self or illusion in any way. Some of the words that point to this fact in the first paragraph of our special theme are:

“infinite”

“everywhere without all limit”

“love creates, and only like itself”

“no time when all that it created was not there”

“Forever and forever are God’s Thoughts exactly as they were and as they are, unchanged through time and after time is done.”

All of this language points to the First Principle of God **only**. It does not include the Second Principle of God, the Third Principle of God or the Fourth Principle of God.

One thing that makes this confusing is that many people have awakened to the Second Principle of God and believed it was the final awakening. As such, there are many, many books, including scripture, which are written from the perspective of consciousness as if that is the ultimate point of view. However, it is not.

Awakening to consciousness is what *A Course in Miracles* calls the Second Coming of Christ, but the Last Judgment goes beyond this awakening. In *A Course in Miracles*, “creation” speaks of truth, which is at the level of the First Principle of God **only**.

Let’s review one of our previous special themes, What is the Real World? I will bold some words and phrases that I would like you to pay particular attention to.

The real world is a **symbol**, like the rest of what **perception** offers. Yet it **stands for** what is opposite to what you made. Your world is seen through eyes of fear, and brings witnesses of terror to your mind. The real world cannot be **perceived except through** eyes forgiveness blesses, so they see a world where terror is impossible, and witnesses to fear can not be found. ...

The real world is the **symbol that the dream of sin and guilt is over**, and God’s Son no longer sleeps. His **waking** eyes **perceive** the sure **reflection** of his Father’s Love; the certain promise that he is redeemed. The real world **signifies** the end of time, for its **perception** makes time purposeless.

The Holy Spirit has no need of time when it has served His purpose. Now He waits but that one instant more **for God to take His final step, and time has disappeared, taking perception with it** as it goes, and **leaving but the truth to be itself**. That instant is our goal, for it contains the memory of God.

Several days ago, I attempted to clearly define some words. One of those words was ego. I wrote:

Ego is **sometimes used to refer to the wrong mind**. When “ego” refers to the wrong mind alone, it is completely transcended when the mind becomes purified and merged [with consciousness]. **However, “ego” can also be used as a more general term that means “sense of self.”** When ego refers to a sense of self, **even the ‘I am’ presence could be called ‘ego,’** although few people use that term in this way. The ‘I am’ presence is a divine sense of self rather than a personal sense of self. It is the sense of a subject, even if the only thing this subject is aware of is itself, (ie., consciousness aware of consciousness.)

The ‘I am’ presence in the previous definition of ego is Christ-consciousness. They are one and the same. In other words:

**Only the First Principle of God is truth.
All other principles are part of the illusion.**

This is the clarity we will attempt to realize as we focus on our current special theme. This clarity is rare, because most people who have awakened have only awakened to the Second Principle of God, and therefore they speak and write as if that is the totality. Nirvana, also called Manonasa, is very rare. However, there are beings that have awakened to that degree. I will quote some of them as we contemplate this special theme.

Father, my freedom is in You alone.

It is an interesting dilemma we find ourselves in. While we are attempting to realize the ultimate truth, we also need to walk in that direction from where we are. When we walk in the direction of awakening, awakening comes to greet us. That is the meaning of the story of the prodigal son, which I will include below for your review.

One very important sentence in today's lesson is this:

Now I would guide myself no more.

If we want to make the journey from “the dream of sin and guilt” to the real world, and ultimately to truth, we must abandon the ego as our guide. This takes a lot of practice, because we see the ego's ideas as our ideas, and we are much more attached to our ego self than most of us would like to think.

Also, as long as we are within ego-consciousness, we need a guide. We cannot go without a guide at this level, because this level **is script**. A script must guide. There is no state at this level of consciousness that is scriptless.

However, we do have two scripts to choose from—that is, two guides to choose from: the ego, which seems to be our self, or the spiritual intuition that guides from Christ-consciousness.

Obviously if awakening is our goal, spiritual intuition is the guide that we want to choose. That means that we need to learn to listen to it instead of our self. Ultimately, we need to merge with it as our self.

Today, as you contemplate the teaching that I have written regarding our new special theme **or** as you contemplate the story of the prodigal son below—you choose which one you want to contemplate—let a question arise in you, and then ask that question and let an answer come. You may begin by writing from your knowledge if intuitive writing does not begin on its own. As always, you may also speak into a recorder.

(You may always speak into a recorder, if that is what is most helpful to you. However, I won't continue to type that in my tips. Just know that speaking into a recorder is an option whenever I ask you to write.)

The Story of the Prodigal Son

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

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Lesson 322

What is Creation?

Our special theme begins, "Creation is the sum of all God's Thoughts in number infinite, and everywhere without all limit. Only love creates, and only like itself."

Today, please contemplate those two sentences from our special theme along with the sentences and phrases from *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss* that I have listed below. As you contemplate these sentences together, keep in mind that the descriptions of truth in these sentences and phrases refer to the First Principle of God **only**.

If something comes to you as you contemplate, please write it down. However, simply reading the sentences and phrases slowly, and quietly being with them for a period of time, is enough. It is good to read them more than once. I recommend reading them slowly at least three times before continuing to the tip about today's lesson.

The sentences and phrases to contemplate are:

1. Creation is the sum of all God's Thoughts in number infinite, and everywhere without all limit.
2. Only love creates, and only like itself.
3. To come to know, experience and live in Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss is definitely worth the time spent practicing.
4. You'll discover you are not a body living in a world. You are eternal awareness, perfect love-joy.
5. Absolutely perfect Love-Bliss for all eternity.
6. Living in and knowing your true Self, eternally.
7. Choose the Direct Experience of infinite-eternal-existence-being-life, here and now in this lifetime, by making it the first priority in your life, and by centering your entire life on your spiritual practice.

I can give up but what was never real.

Today's workbook lesson begins by saying, "I sacrifice illusions; nothing more. And as illusions go I find the gifts illusions tried to hide, awaiting me in shining welcome, and in readiness to give God's ancient messages to me."

God's "ancient messages" are Himself. They are what our special theme calls "God's Thoughts." God's messages are not *from* Him; they *are* Him. They are what he is and what you are.

I have created a new list of sentences and phrases that combine the sentences and phrases you have already contemplated with new sentences from today's workbook lesson and based on today's workbook lesson. Quietly contemplate all of these sentences and phrases together:

1. Creation is the sum of all God's Thoughts in number infinite, and everywhere without all limit.
2. Only love creates, and only like itself.
3. To come to know, experience and live in Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss is definitely worth the time spent practicing.
4. You'll discover you are not a body living in a world. You are eternal awareness, perfect love-joy.
5. As illusions go I find the gifts illusions tried to hide, awaiting me in shining welcome.
6. Absolutely perfect Love-Bliss for all eternity.
7. Awaiting me in shining welcome, and in readiness to give God's ancient messages to me.
8. God's ancient messages are Himself.
9. God's messages are not from Him; they are Him. They are what he is and what you are.
10. Living in and knowing your true Self, eternally.
11. Choose the Direct Experience of infinite-eternal-existence-being-life, here and now in this lifetime, by making it the first priority in your life, and by centering your entire life on your spiritual practice.

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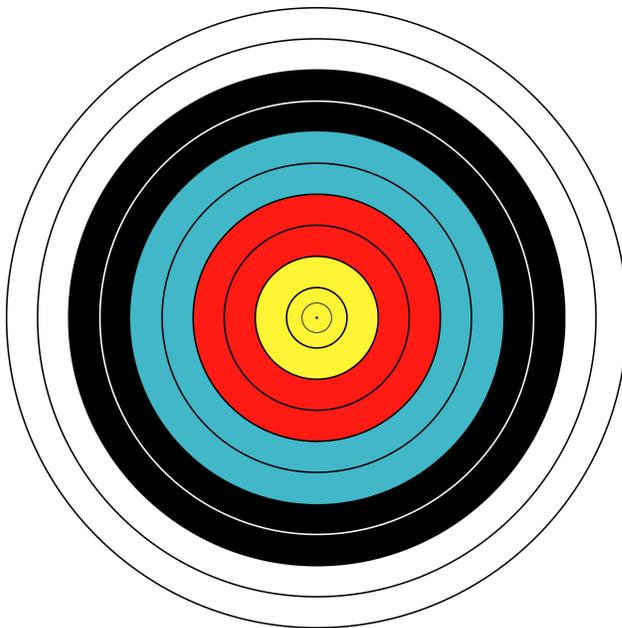
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Lesson 323

What is Creation?

Our special theme says, "Creation is the sum of all God's Thoughts, ... There was no time when all that it created was not there. Nor will there be a time when anything that it created suffers any loss. Forever and forever are God's Thoughts exactly as they were and as they are, unchanged through time and after time is done."

Yesterday we contemplated God's Thoughts as Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss, perfect love-joy, Love-Bliss for all eternity, and infinite-eternal-existence-being-life. These ideas are not things. These ideas are formless reality, which *A Course in Miracles* calls "creation."



Let's take a moment to look at the contrast between unreality and reality (creation) using the example of a bulls-eye target. The entire target, from the white circles all the way to the yellow bulls-eye, represents the sense of self. Reality does not exist anywhere on this target. *Reality is in the absence of the target.*

Let's assume the yellow and red portions of the bulls-eye are the wrong-minded, selfish, personal sense of self that people typically call ego. The blue portion is more general cultural conditioning and

human identity. The black and white portions of the target are increasing levels of spontaneous, purified mind.

When the sense of self is fully intact, it blocks reality (God's Thoughts) entirely. However, when Grace responds to our spiritual commitment by shooting at the target and blowing away a portion of the sense of self, one begins to have direct experiences of reality *through the hole in the target.*

The direct experience of the divine through a hole in the target is often called awakening. However, as long as any portion of the target still exists, there is some sense of self—some illusory experience—and reality is not yet known as it is. Instead, it is known *through some degree of a sense of self.* When Grace fires at the target with a cannon ball that completely demolishes the sense of self in its entirety, Manonasa has occurred and Nirvana (creation) is known.

If you consider this example, you might see how there can be different levels of awakening or multiple awakenings.

For example, imagine a person experiences a shot from Grace that blows out the yellow portion of the target. That will feel like an awakening. However, the red, blue, black and white portions of the target remain. Those portions may be blown out all at once one day with Grace's cannon ball, or there may be a few more shots with a shotgun that blow away additional portions of the target before the final cannon ball comes.

Another person may experience one awakening—one cannon ball blast that destroys the sense of self all at once entirely.

Yet another possibility is a shot that blows a hole in the center of the target and starts a fire, which consumes the entire target from the inside out. This is experienced as gradually decreasing self, as the inner flame burns self up.

If you look carefully at the example of the target, you can see several possibilities:

1. The process of awakening may feel very different for different people.
2. Since different people experience awakening differently, it will be described in different ways.
3. Since non-total awakening can be a drastically different experience than one's previous experience, based on the size of the hole, one may think total awakening has occurred when it has not.
4. Awakening is not complete until all levels of the sense of self are destroyed, including even the highest or most pure levels.
5. Absolute truth can only be known as it is, which is without any sense of self, when the **entire** sense of self is obliterated.

I gladly make the sacrifice of fear.

The example of a bulls-eye target can also help us see why one experiences fear or resistance during awakening. Imagine holding still while someone takes a shotgun or cannon and shoots directly at you. We can even experience fear when Grace shoots at us with nothing bigger than a BB gun.

If we want to experience higher levels of awakening, and especially if we want to experience Manonasa, we must be willing to **give up listening to fear**. If we listen to fear, we will jump out of the way when Grace comes with its gun. We need to learn to hold steady, be still and do nothing even as fear shouts and screams, so Grace can take aim and fire.

Please contemplate this tip today. Give yourself some time to be with it instead of rushing on to other things. The ego would love for you to forget this teaching. Be determined to absorb it deeply instead.

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Lesson 324

What is Creation?

Our special theme says, “What God has willed to be forever One will still be One when time is over; and will not be changed throughout the course of time, remaining as it was before the thought of time began.”

Time is defined as “the indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future regarded as a whole.” ~ New Oxford American Dictionary

What captures my attention in this definition is “indefinite continued progress of existence and events.”

It seems like awakening is a process that occurs over time. It seems like awakening is an “indefinite continued progress.”

If you contemplated the target example from yesterday’s tip, then you might see why awakening seems like “continued progress.” However, since reality is the **absence of that which experiences** “continued progress,” awakening to reality has not occurred until Grace’s final cannon ball destroys consciousness (often called “the mind”). Reality is not known until only the hole remains. Of course at that point, it is no longer a hole. It is all that is.

That which seems like “continued progress” is still part of the illusion of consciousness. However, it is an illusory path that we walk anyway. As NTI Luke says, “We are all followers of the path that comes from within. We are all guided to learn the truth by following the path of unreality.”

I merely follow, for I would not lead.

As our workbook lesson says today:

So let us follow One Who knows the way. We need not tarry, ... And it is He Who makes the ending sure, and guarantees a safe returning home.

Please contemplate your personal commitment to walk the spiritual path to its end.

Is there something you can let go of in your life in order to give more focus to the spiritual path and spiritual practice?

If something is not immediately evident, consider asking and receiving an answer from within through writing. After all, inner spiritual intuition is the “One Who knows the way.”

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Lesson 325

What is Creation?

Our special theme says, “Creation is the opposite of all illusions, for creation is the truth.”

Unfortunately, all that we are aware of is illusion. That means that we have no idea what truth is.

It is helpful if we take in this realization:

We have no idea what truth is.

This is why NTI Luke says:

There are expectations in your mind regarding truth, but these expectations are based on what you know within your slumber. They are not based on knowledge or Life. They are based on interpretation, or death.

What do you expect of Me? Where is it that you think I am leading you to?

Free yourself from these thoughts, and open your mind to Me unfettered by expectations. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me.

People have often asked me what that last sentence means:

“Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me.”

In her book, *What is the Self?*, Bernadette Roberts describes some of the last temptations that we experience prior to Manonasa. She writes:

We have to keep in mind that consciousness is the experience of energy, and that in the unitive state [the real world] there is still the experience of various energies and feelings. ... Because these energies

are new to us they seem to be quite extraordinary. ... So one task of the unitive state is that we do not mistake these energies for the divine, but instead, see them as belonging solely to the unconscious self. This task may not be as easy as it sounds; to regard certain energies as supernatural can be a powerful temptation. ...

The truth that must eventually be learned or disclosed is that the divine is not an energy or a power, and that none of our experiences of energy or power is divine. Instead, these are powers of the unconscious self, ...

The claim to possess supernatural powers in the unitive state is well-known and documented. People have regarded themselves as prophets, healers, saviors, and God knows what else. As Carl Jung noted, the possible masks the unconscious self can take are almost unlimited. They represent the various cultural views man has of a superior being...

Throughout this stage or state there will be many temptations to put on one of these divine or supernatural masks and play out the role. If we fall for one of these masks, ... we forfeit going any further with the journey. It is imperative to stay with the true divine center, which is a “still-point” and not an “energy-point,” and to dismiss these arising energies or powers...

Bernadette goes on to write that if supernatural powers are manifesting themselves, there is nothing we can do about it. However, “Our task is simply to see that they are self and nothing but the self. If we cannot eventually make this distinction, we march off to our own dead end, and the passage may well end in total delusion.”

This is what NTI means when it says, “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me”:

Blessed is the one who does not fall away on account of
his/her own ideas about truth or enlightenment.

As has been pointed out through the tips in the last two days, truth is the absence of self—the absence of *any* self.

All things I think I see reflect ideas.

Today’s lesson supports what Bernadette Roberts wrote. The lessons says:

This is salvation’s keynote: What I see reflects a process in my mind, which starts with my idea of what I want. From there, the mind makes up an image of the thing the mind desires, judges valuable, and

therefore seeks to find. These images are then projected outward, looked upon, esteemed as real and guarded as one's own.

The lesson talks about the “gentle world,” which is a “kindly home” where we can “rest a while” before we journey on to Manonasa. This “gentle world” refers to the real world, which is what Bernadette calls the unitive state. Even in this state, we need to be mindful to stay focused on truth instead of desiring an idea of truth.

As the prayer in today's lesson says:

Our Father, Your ideas reflect the truth, and mine apart from Yours
but make up dreams. Let me behold what only Yours reflect, for Yours
and Yours alone establish truth.

It is helpful to realize today that *we do not know what truth is*—it is a mystery from our perspective. Therefore, it is good for us to let go of all ideas about truth before we create a new dream and mistake it for reality.

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Lesson 326

What is Creation?

Our special theme says, “Creation is the holy Son of God, for in creation is His Will complete in every aspect, ... We are creation.”

The “Son of God” is a symbol based on the idea of separation. It was once believed that the closest one could come to the divine is its first creation, consciousness. Now it is seen that consciousness is not God's first creation, nor is it reality. Consciousness is the first step into the dream.

There are many stories that attempt to explain how this first step into the dream occurred. All stories are just that, *stories*. At best, they help us accept that the dream has appeared, and reality exists outside of the dream.

In *The Supreme Yoga Vasistha*, it is written:

Whatever might have been the origin of the mind and whatever it
might be, one should constantly direct it toward liberation, through
self-effort.

In this quote, mind is synonymous with consciousness. The quote asks us not to be concerned with the stories about how consciousness came to be; it asks us not to be

concerned about what consciousness is. Instead, constantly direct consciousness toward awakening.

If you look again at today's selected excerpt from our special theme, you will see that it is calling us into an awakening that is beyond consciousness—beyond the experience of Christ-Self, which experiences a direct relationship with the divine source—into the divine itself. The divine is our true Self.

I am forever an Effect of God.

When we look carefully at consciousness in relationship to the source, we see that consciousness is something other than source. Consciousness is the subject that experiences the ego or it experiences the divine, but it is set apart from what it experiences. Consciousness itself—meaning the Second Principle of God—is the ultimate illusion. There is no “second” in God.

As NTI 1 Timothy says, “All that you are is **beyond the observer**, but the observer is a step in the right direction. For as observer, you begin to surrender the concept of personhood by accepting you can observe the person, so the person must not be all that you are.”

The symbols of “Father,” “Son” and “Effect” are used in today's workbook lesson, but the lesson is pointing to the fact that we are as we have always been. We are not consciousness (the dreamer) or its dream.

Today's lesson says, “...it is Your Will to have a Son so like his Cause that Cause and Its Effect are indistinguishable.” That sentence points to the truth that we are being asked to accept. There is no Son in Reality, and therefore there is no Father. There is only Reality, and we are That.

Today's lesson says, “Let us today behold earth disappear, at first transformed, and then, forgiven, fade entirely into God's holy Will.” As stated in the previous paragraph, God's Will is the end of the dream that appears to distinguish a Father from a Son.

The real world is still a dream, but it is a dream that reflects reality. In the real world, true perception sees that everything is consciousness. That is a dream-reflection of the absolute, which is non-dual reality.

Gently contemplate what I have written today. Marinate in it, without trying to figure it out.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 327

What is Creation?

Our special theme says, “We are creation; ... We seem to be discrete, and unaware of our eternal unity with Him. Yet back of all our doubts, past all our fears, there still is certainty. ... God’s memory is in our holy minds...”

This is a very important clue. Truth is unimaginable, but it is reachable. And we reach it through **a journey within our self.**

This could be called returning in the way we came. We began at Home, in the First Principle of God as our Self. In this Self, however, there is **no sense of self.** There is awareness, but not *awareness of.* There is Truth without a subject to be aware of Truth.

From this state of Truth “in crept a tiny mad idea.” It could also be called a desire, a desire for something that did not exist. It was the desire to “Know thy Self,” which could be called a desire for a sense of self.

And so, a container that could have an experience of self arose. This container was a subject, something that could feel or know. It was awareness with the additional ability to be aware of. I call it consciousness in order to distinguish it from the awareness that it came from. This is the birth of the Second Principle of God.

Once consciousness arose, which is the ability to be aware of, there needed to be something to be aware of. Consciousness is like a living mirror that wanted something reflected in it, something to watch, know and feel. Of course, consciousness could have simply looked back in the direction it came from, and it would have experienced the reflection of Truth in itself. But consciousness was on an outward-bound journey, so it looked outward in its desire to know something as its self.

Out of this desire, divine law—the creative principle—arose, which is the Third Principle of God.

Through divine law, all of manifestation was born, which is the Fourth Principle of God.

As consciousness watched the images that appeared in it’s self, consciousness became engrossed with them. It began to identify with the images. Each of us, **as consciousness,** experiences an aspect of that identification. We feel identified with our thoughts, feelings, life experiences, etcetera, because we are the consciousness that has become identified with the images reflected in it.

So now, we begin the journey back in the way we came. It is an undoing. It is the return of a boomerang idea, going back inwardly by reversing the steps we took in the outward-bound direction.

First, there is the undoing of the distinct sense of self, typically called the ego. This is undoing of identification with **the image** as me. It is this sense of self that creates suffering. Therefore, this undoing is significant, but it is only part of the return journey.

When we awaken to our self as consciousness (the mirror), we experience a more correct sense of self. Whereas the idea that “I am the image” is a delusion for consciousness, the idea “I am consciousness” is more correct or truer. Yet, it is not ultimate truth, because the original true Self has no sense of self.

A sense of self is a type of existence. You could say, “I exist as the sense of what I am.” Since a sense of self is a type of existence, the end of the sense of self is a type of death. It is the death of what we have come to know as existence. The death of consciousness as self is manonasa. What lies beyond this death is Nirvana.

Note: Since consciousness is like a mirror, we can get a **sense** of Nirvana once we reawaken to consciousness. This sense comes from Truth’s **reflection** in the mirror of our self as consciousness. However, this sense is still only a sense received from a reflection. In order to know Truth directly, we must awaken fully to it and **be it**, which is to awaken beyond consciousness.

I need but call and You will answer me.

The reason for telling the story above is to help influence us to “constantly direct [mind-consciousness] toward liberation, through self-effort.” We made the outward journey through a kind of self-effort—idea, desire, curiosity, will, focus—and now we make the return journey through the same kind of self-effort.

But how? Where do we begin today?

Today’s workbook lesson says, “I am not asked to take salvation on the basis of an unsupported faith. For God has promised He will hear my call, and answer me Himself.”

The God that we call on for guidance is not some distant deity, knowledge or awareness. We are the one that took the outward journey from truth to our present attachment to manifestation, and **every step of that journey is recorded in our divine unconscious**. Therefore, the reverse of each step is known in our own divine unconscious. Our own unconscious knows the way! The communication that comes from this unconscious knowing is what I call spiritual intuition.

We literally have everything we need, except for maybe one thing. It's possible that we haven't actually made the decision to begin the return journey yet. It's possible that we are still interested in lingering here a little longer.

Please read and contemplate today's workbook lesson in full. As you do, also contemplate the power of your own decision or lack thereof. (In truth, there's no such thing as a lack of decision. Not deciding for one option is deciding for the other.)

Here are a couple of short video clips to help you contemplate today's teaching in a fun way. You'll find the meditation links under the video clips.

First video link: <https://youtu.be/ZrotkcWJFwo>

Second video link: <https://youtu.be/ooM-RGUTe2E>

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Lesson 328

What is Creation?

Our special theme says, "God's memory is in our holy minds, which know their oneness and their unity with their Creator. Let our function be only to let this memory return, only to let God's Will be done on earth, only to be restored to sanity, and to be but as God created us."

That says it all. As we wind up the first year of Gentle Healing and prepare to begin the second year, we are asked to look at our commitment to truth, and to make our commitment whole.

We have looked at Choice A and Choice B in Chapter 5 of *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss* a number of times now. Today, I'd like to share these same choices with you from the perspective of an awakened Carmelite Nun, Bernadette Roberts:

In contrast to the divine, the human condition is so terrible and devastating that even the worst of descriptions could never do it justice. I am not referring here to sin, evil or suffering, but rather to bare human existence itself—and the whole natural world included. What we usually think is so beautiful in this world is actually monstrous and unbearable to look at, but only in contrast to the divine. ...

Those who believe man can have both heaven and this world at the same time are very much mistaken; such a notion is a total underestimation of God's utter transcendence, ... Compared to the divine estate there is no beauty or happiness in this world; thus man cannot afford to have a glimpse or taste of the final estate and still expect to find this world acceptable. The ultimate estate is not of this world; it is not even compatible with it... For this reason it is good that man does not see the reality of the divine beyond consciousness, for if he did he could not endure this world. What man does not know, he does not miss, and what he does not know is how utterly transcendent the divine really is.

That is her description of Choice B, living in the world as a self.

Here is her description of Choice A, which is Manonasa, awakening to the First Principle of God, Nirvana:

About all that can be said is that if we put together man's loftiest experiences of ecstasy, bliss, love and all things ineffable, they fall as short of the divine condition as the size of an ant falls short of that of an elephant. Consciousness' most lofty heavenly experiences of the divine are but the palest shadow of the ultimate divine condition or "heaven."

It makes you wonder what we are choosing by not fully applying ourselves to awakening, doesn't it?

I choose the second place to gain the first.

Our workbook lesson begins by saying, "What seems to be the second place is first, for all things we perceive are upside down until we listen to the Voice for God."

I think Sister Bernadette made that perfectly clear with statements like, "What we usually think is so beautiful in this world is actually monstrous and unbearable to look at, but only in contrast to the divine."

We put off seeking awakening with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind and all of our strength, because of the things we value in this world. They get our time instead.

Could our sense of priorities be very, very wrong?

Is it time for a change?

Please read today's workbook lesson in full, and contemplate it along with Bernadette's description of the human condition compared to realization of the divine.

Also, reconsider your spiritual aspiration. Is it sufficient to give you the motivation you need to give even more to this spiritual path, or is there another spiritual aspiration that is more motivating for you? It may help to ask this question and write until the answer is realized. I did.

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Lesson 329

What is Creation?

Our special theme says, “Our Father calls to us. We hear His Voice, and we forgive creation in the Name of its Creator, Holiness Itself...”

What does that mean, “forgive creation”?

What is God’s only true creation?

What is forgiveness?

Please contemplate these questions with inner spiritual wisdom until an answer that you know is true comes to you. It may be helpful to use writing to achieve that end. It is best to complete this contemplation on your own before reading the tip under today’s lesson.

Here is the music I am listening to as I contemplate this. Some of you might enjoy it too. Others will prefer silence.

Female voice: <https://youtu.be/a75NxzpICdM>

Male voices:

<https://youtu.be/MMeuk2STqRA?list=PLKSRjOAxGeaM6NnEm1EtkamBUB2QZww9R>

I have already chosen what You will.

If there is any challenge forgiving yourself for having wandered from God’s genuine reality, today’s lesson may help with that challenge. It says, “Father, I thought I wandered from Your Will... Yet what I am in truth is but Your Will, extended and extending. This am I, and this will never change.”

Let’s not forget that our special theme over these last several days has been, “What is Creation?” And the answer is, “We are creation.”

In other words, in spite of this dream of consciousness, humanness and world, what we really are has continued unabated. That's what awakening is all about. It's awakening from **what isn't true** to what *is true*.

Are you ready?

Please read today's workbook lesson in full.
Thank you.

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Lesson 330

What is Creation?

Step Five of *The Seven Steps to Awakening* by Michael Langford has this objective:

Be inspired, encouraged and motivated to:

1. Make and maintain the decision to bring the imposter self and all suffering to its final end and thus remain in infinite-awareness-love-bliss.
2. Actually practice...

Here are 21 quotes from Step Five to help motivate our decision. Please read these quotes slowly and contemplatively.

Ramana Maharshi:

Though in this false world one may live on, the ending of both "I" and "mine" in the clarity of true awareness, void of every doubt, this only is the abidance in the bliss of being That.

Returning to the source from which we have emerged, we are restored to our own true Being. Enjoying there bright and clear our natural bliss, still, still, unmoving we abide.

O mind, you wander far in search of bliss not knowing your natural state of Freedom. Your home of infinite bliss you will regain if only you go back the way you came.

A woman with a necklace round her neck imagines it is lost, and after long search elsewhere touches her own neck and there finds it; even so, the Self is here within. Probe for it there and find it.

Sri Annamalai Swami:

Don't be discouraged by the length of the journey, and don't slacken in your efforts to get home.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj:

Steady faith is stronger than destiny. Destiny is the result of causes, mostly accidental, and is therefore loosely woven. Confidence and good hope will overcome it easily.

You need maturity of heart and mind, which comes through earnest application in daily life of whatever little you have understood.

On your side there is so much trouble. On mine there is not trouble at all. Come to my side.

You are quite capable of crossing over. Only be sincere.

Faith is not blind. It is the willingness to try.

If only they go deeply into the fact of being and discover the vastness and the glory to which the 'I am' is the door, and cross the door and go beyond, their life will be full of happiness and light.

The Supreme Yoga

One should never yield to laziness, but strive to attain liberation, seeing that life is ebbing away every moment.

He who exerts seriously now is able to overcome predispositions and exalt himself from the states of darkness and stupidity and impurity.

The Self alone is to be sought, adored and meditated upon.

This Self is eternal existence.

The wayfarer does not despair at the sight of the long road ahead but takes one step at a time.

The man of Self-knowledge is awake to that which is non-existent to the ignorant. That which is real to the latter is non-existent to the enlightened.

One surely gains that for which one strives; if one neglects it he loses it. The mind flows along the course of wisdom or ignorance, in whichever direction you make it flow.

Sri Sankara

The Self is ever blissful and never experiences suffering.

By this discourse of teacher and pupil, the character of the Self is taught to those seeking Freedom, that they may be born to the joy of awakening.

Eternal, unfading, joy, unstained—this is the Eternal, THAT THOU ART.

I will not hurt myself again today.

Our workbook lesson begins, “Let us this day accept forgiveness as our only function.”

Our first special theme was, “What is forgiveness?” Through that special theme, we saw that forgiveness is abiding as the unaffected Self.

As today’s lesson says, “The Self which God created cannot sin, and therefore cannot suffer. Let us choose today that He be our Identity...”

Our fourth special theme was “What is Sin?” Through that special theme we saw that “sin” is ignorance or outward focus.

If you look carefully at the two sentences I have highlighted from today’s workbook lesson, you’ll see that the lesson is asking us to “go back the way you came.” That is, focus inward and return to our unaffected Self.

Here are two songs that you can listen to as you contemplate today’s lesson. The first song is directly applicable to the teaching today and over the last several days. The second song applies a bit more loosely, but it is a fun song that just might stick in your head. (The Meditation Options are posted below the songs.)

First song: <https://youtu.be/TzDBZ79ISSE>

Second song: <https://youtu.be/6mXzIftmpDY>

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 331

Before we begin our new special theme, let’s take a day to review the special themes we’ve contemplated so far. I will begin “What is the Ego?” tomorrow.

What is Forgiveness? Forgiveness is recognizing yourself as the unaffected Self. Therefore, “what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred.”

What is Salvation? Salvation is healing by “failing to support the world of dreams ... it lets illusions go. By not supporting them, it merely lets them quietly go down to dust.”

What is the World? It is a “false perception” where “mechanisms of illusion ... go to find what has been given them to seek.” Yet, “all perception can be given a new purpose.”

What is Sin? Sin is ignorance or outward focus. “Sin is the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined issuing from thoughts that are untrue.”

What is the Body? “The body is a fence” that seems to separate us from everything else. It makes duality seem real and makes it seem as if we experience duality directly. However, its purpose can be changed.

What is Christ? Christ is consciousness. It is the process of creation and the unaffected witness of creation. It is what we are. It is our higher Self. (Note: There is a more ultimate reality beyond Christ, compared to which Christ is an illusion.)

What is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is a Judeo-Christian term for spiritual intuition, which issues forth from our Self as consciousness. Its sole purpose is to help us awaken to consciousness. Once this goal is accomplished, its purpose is done. (God takes the last step to awaken us beyond consciousness.)

What is the Real World? The real world is the world as it is seen from the perspective of consciousness. It is a world blessed by forgiven eyes, seen through true perception. The real world is still a dream, but it is a dream that reflects Truth. It prepares us for the next and final awakening.

What is the Second Coming? It is awakening to our Self as consciousness. From this awakening we see with true perception and experience the real world.

What is the Last Judgment? This is the awakening beyond consciousness into Nirvana. With this step, consciousness itself is seen to be untrue.

What is Creation? “Creation” is a term *A Course in Miracles* uses for reality. It is what is known after manonasa, the death of our sense of self as mind-consciousness. It is our true Self beyond any sense of self. It is our actual existence, often referred to as bliss or Nirvana.

There is no conflict, for my will is Yours.

Today's lesson helps emphasize any decision we may have made to commit *even more* to the path of awakening. It says:

How foolish, Father, to believe Your Son could cause himself to suffer!
Could he make a plan for his damnation, and be left without a certain way for his release? ... How could I think that Love has left Itself?
There is no will except the Will of Love. ... Conflict is sleep, and peace is awakening. Death is illusion; life, eternal truth."

And so today we begin again. We forgive ourselves for any past "failings" that we may perceive, and we contemplate what we really want.

Here's a song that always inspires me when I make the decision to increase my commitment once again. (The Meditation Options are below the song.)

Be the One: <https://youtu.be/I0zbPA-iCh0?list=PLKSRjOAxGeaNuXBNtYfhFd2OIRYk1kXEk>

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 332

What is the Ego?

Our new special theme begins by saying, "The ego is idolatry..."

We can stop right there. Already we have something to contemplate.

What is idolatry?

Idolatry is extreme admiration, love, or reverence for something or someone.

In order to turn this definition into helpful insight, let's pause and look at the definition slowly and contemplatively:

Extreme admiration, love or reverence
for something or someone.

In our last special theme, we saw that Truth is the **absence** of consciousness. Now we see that ego is the extreme admiration, love or reverence for **something or someone**—that is, love for object rather than for absence.

Can you find that—*extreme love for object rather than for absence*—in you? Can you see that which is intently focused on "something or someone" instead of absence?

Close your eyes and look. What is interested in thought, sensations, sounds—*anything but* absence?

It may feel like ‘me.’ It may feel like a sense of what you are. It may feel like your very existence. But it is none of those things. What you have just discovered is the ego.

Ego is **that which** admires, loves and reveres some thing. Ego is that which keeps us engaged in outward focus.

Fear binds the world. Forgiveness sets it free.

Fear is defined as an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.

When it comes to the ego, fear is actually the belief that the **absence of** someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.

Today’s lesson says, “ego makes illusions.” Another way of saying that is outward focus makes illusions. We could also say attachment to objects, including thoughts, makes illusions.

The lesson also says that “Truth undoes” these same illusions.

In our last special theme, we saw that truth is the **opposite** of illusions. That means it must also be the opposite of outward focus.

Of course, the opposite of outward focus is inward focus. It is through inward focus that we find Truth, of which our lessons says, “It merely is. And by its presence is the mind **recalled from fantasies**, awaking to the real. ... Without forgiveness is the mind in chains, believing in its own futility.”

In our first special theme, we learned that forgiveness is abiding as the unaffected Self. This means that the ego is undone by turning inward and **abiding there as the unaffected Self**.

Please contemplate this tip. Notice the ego in you. See it in action. Also contemplate how ego is undone. And then with this clarity, enter into your meditation for today.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 333

What is the Ego?

Our special theme says, “The ego is ‘proof’ that strength is weak and love is fearful, life is really death, what opposes God alone is true.”

In other words, the ego is “proof” that we are limited humans existing in a body in a world and destined to die.

What that means to me is that *the ego is the source of doubt*.

Do you ever experience doubt? Do you ever doubt that enlightenment is real? Do you ever doubt that eternal life is real? Do you ever doubt that you could awaken to truth beyond this world?

Fortunately, although we sometimes experience doubt, doubt isn’t all that is in our minds. There is also willingness; there may even be a longing to search for truth, possibly a longing so strong that it feels like a calling you can’t ignore.

Will we listen to the ego’s doubts and resign ourselves to the self and world that we are familiar with? Or will we follow our willingness, longing or calling, and engage in the spiritual practice that leads beyond the ego and its doubts?

How far are we willing to go in order to discover truth beyond the ego?

Forgiveness ends the dream of conflict here.

The prayer in today’s lesson says:

Father, forgiveness is the light You chose to shine away all conflict and all doubt, and light the way for our return to You. No light but this can end our evil dream. No light but this can save the world. For this alone will never fail in anything, being Your gift to Your beloved Son.

Forgiveness, as we have seen, is abiding as our unaffected Self. It’s often called being the observer or remaining in Presence.

Our lesson begins by saying, “Conflict must be resolved. It cannot be evaded, set aside, denied, disguised, seen somewhere else, called by another name, or hidden by deceit of any kind...”

What is the difference between abiding as the unaffected Self and falling for habits like evasion, setting aside, denying, etcetera?

How can we abide as the unaffected Self when we feel affected by something or someone?

Consider asking one of these questions, or a similar question, and writing to realize helpful clarity about abiding as the unaffected Self. Any clarity you receive will help, especially if you are going through the purification stage right now.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 334

What is the Ego?

Our special theme says, “The ego is insane,” and then continues to describe its insanity. What stands out to me in this paragraph is the statement:

**In fear it stands beyond the Everywhere,
apart from All,
in separation from the Infinite.**

I need to ask myself:

Do I want to continue to do that?

I feel this is a really important decision. I know I will either spend my time reinforcing the ego, or I will spend my time in the spiritual practice that undoes the ego and awakens to truth.

I also find this question showing up in my mind:

Do I love God enough to awaken to God?
Or are other things still more important?

Today I claim the gifts forgiveness gives.

Please read today’s workbook lesson in full as you contemplate the questions I have asked myself above.

You might also enjoy listening to this video by Michael Langford. The video is 21 minutes long. The meditation options are below the video:

<https://youtu.be/lvdpc2lplDo?list=PLL6v3senGSJdTmSAIhsdBk0P8KoYBXgr0>

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

[YouTube Meditation Playlist](#)

Lesson 335

What is the Ego?

Our special theme says, “The ego is insane.” It also says, “The Son of God is egoless.”

What am I?

The correct answer would be “the egoless Son of God,” but is that my actual experience?

Am I free of all sorrow and suffering? Do I live in eternal joy? Is my experience absolutely free of fear and guilt? Do I see only peace surrounding me? Is my experience that of the deepest silence and tranquility?

If not, then I do not know myself as the egoless Son of God. And if I would like to know my egoless Self, I have some work to do to undo illusions in my mind.

I choose to see my brother’s sinlessness.

Our lesson begins by saying, “Forgiveness is a choice.” However, it continues by saying, “I never see my brother as he is, for that is far beyond perception.”

I think Course students sometimes feel that if they let go of the current judgment in their mind, they have let go of seeing their brother with ego, and they are now seeing him and accepting him as he is. However, our workbook lesson says that our brother, as he is, **is far beyond perception**. That means that as long as we perceive a world and bodies, we do not know our brother. If we do not know our brother, we also do not know our Self.

A Course in Miracles points far beyond simply being kind to others, although being kind to everyone is a very good start. *A Course in Miracles* points to full awakening, manonasa, as the way to see and know everything **as it is**.

Sister Bernadette Roberts described creation beyond the world and beyond consciousness as “eternal form.” She wrote, “Beyond consciousness, the ultimate Truth of the divine is that it is neither immanent (within anything) nor transcendent (beyond anything), but IS everything that eternally exists.”

What eternally exists? Sister Bernadette is clear that it is not consciousness or matter as we perceive matter, but there is “eternal form that cannot be grasped by

the senses, the intellect or consciousness." Whatever that is, *that* is our brother as he is. That is also our true nature.

As you interact with others today, contemplate that you *have no idea* what this one's "eternal form" is. You cannot see him/her as he/she is. You do not know anything as it is, not even yourself. Let this sink in as deeply as you can allow it to sink in. Don't let the mind short-circuit your contemplation by saying, "He is light," or "She is God." Don't be satisfied with mere concepts today. However, DO realize that **ego is the obstacle** that blocks true vision. It keeps you from seeing everyone and everything in its "eternal form."

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 336

What is the Ego?

Our special theme says, "To know reality is not to see the ego and its thoughts, its works, its acts, its laws and its beliefs, its dreams, its hopes, its plans for its salvation, and the cost belief in them entails. In suffering, the price for faith in it is so immense that crucifixion of the Son of God is offered daily at its darkened shrine, and blood must flow before the altar where its sickly followers prepare to die."

Ew. That's not a very pretty description.

Yet, that is a reasonable description of the ego, although it is one the ego wants us to deny.

Let review a few things Michael Langford has to say about the ego in *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss*:

For thousands of years humans have been stuck in the same pool of inward unsolved problems. Thousands of years ago humans had the problems of suffering, sorrow, anger, fear, violence, conning, cheating, lying, death, etc. Today humans have the problems of suffering, sorrow, anger, fear, violence, conning, cheating, lying, death, etc. All of these problems have a single cause.

The ego controls thinking and the ego does not like to be exposed.

The ego is thought. The ego is thinking.

Living from thought instead of living from Awareness is the cause of all human suffering.

The ego is the cause of all disease, death, war, fear, anger and violence.

All humans are slaves and the imposter “self” is their master.

Here’s a Christmas song by John Lennon that helps expose how “living from thought instead of living from Awareness” manifests itself: (Note: This tip continues below the video.)

<https://youtu.be/yN4Uu00ImTg>

It’s okay. A new year of Gentle Healing is about to begin. We can do something to help heal the world, if we want.

Forgiveness lets me know that minds are joined.

Our lesson says, “Forgiveness is the means appointed for perception’s ending. Knowledge is restored after perception first is changed, and then gives way entirely to what remains forever past its highest reach.”

Today, let’s contemplate our desire to free the world of its suffering by letting go of the cause of suffering in our own minds.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 337

What is the Ego?

Our special theme says, “To know reality is not to see the ego and its thoughts, its works, its acts, its laws and its beliefs, its dreams, its hopes, its plans for its salvation, and the cost belief in them entails.”

In short, to know reality is not to see the ego or its effects. They do not exist in reality.

Here is how Michael Langford describes reality:

Describing the final Reality as Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss is the closest one can come in words. In the final Reality, which is the only Reality, there are no humans, no animals, no planets, no stars and no earth.

The final reality is infinite-awareness aware only of infinite awareness. In all of eternity the final Reality has never been aware of

anything other than infinite-awareness-love-bliss. Awareness-love-bliss is not three, it is one. In all of eternity the final Reality, which is the true Self, has never been aware of a human, or a world or suffering of any kind. Humans, animals, earth, planets stars and other realms, entities, places, time, dimensions, and that which almost every word in the dictionary point towards is part of the ego dream. When the ego comes to its final end, the dream ends and almost everything that the words in the dictionary point towards disappears.

When the ego comes to its final end, what remains is Infinite-Eternal-Awareness-Love-Bliss and nothing ever reappears. The planets, the stars, and almost everything that the words in a dictionary point towards never reappear. They were all part of the dream. Upon awakening, the dream disappears.

That's what our special theme teaches too.

People often wonder how enlightened masters, who claim to see no world, appear to us as everyday people with everyday lives. This is one of my favorite stories about that question:

Questioner: You said the body defines the outer self. Since you have a body, do you have also an outer self?

Nisargdatta: I would, were I attached to the body and take it to be myself.

Questioner: But you are aware of it and attend to its needs.

Nisargdatta: The contrary is nearer to truth -- the body knows me and is aware of my needs. But neither is really so. This body appears in your mind; in my mind nothing is.

Questioner: Do you mean to say you are quite unconscious of having a body?

Nisargdatta: On the contrary, I am conscious of not having a body.

Questioner: I see you smoking!

Nisargdatta: Exactly so. You see me smoking. Find out for yourself how did you come to see me smoking, and you will easily realise that it is your 'I-am-the-body' state of mind that is responsible for this 'I-see-you-smoking' idea.

Questioner: There is the body and there is myself. I know the body. Apart from it, what am I?

Nisargdatta: There is no 'I' apart from the body, nor the world. The three appear and disappear together. At the root is the sense 'I am'. Go beyond it. The idea: 'I-am-not-the-body' is merely an antidote to the idea 'I-am-the-body,' which is false. What is that 'I am'? Unless you know yourself, what else can you know?

Questioner: From what you say I conclude that without the body there can be no liberation. If the idea: 'I-am-not-the-body' leads to liberation, the presence of the body is essential.

Nisargdatta: Quite right. Without the body, how can the idea: 'I-am-not-the-body' come into being? The idea 'I-am-free' is as false as the idea 'I-am-in-bondage'. Find out the 'I am' common to both and go beyond.

Nisargadatta's instructions are clear. **Find the 'I am' and go beyond.** That is how we come to **not** "see the ego and its thoughts, its works, its acts," and etcetera.

My sinlessness protects me from all harm.

In today's workbook lesson, our "sinlessness" is our true eternal nature. The lesson says, "My sinlessness ensures me perfect peace, eternal safety, everlasting love, freedom forever,... And only happiness can be my state, for only happiness is given me. What must I do to know all this is mine? I must accept the atonement for myself and nothing more."

Today is a good opportunity to review the tip from Lesson 139, I accept the atonement for myself. As you review that tip, keep Nisargadatta's instructions in mind. "Find the 'I am' and go beyond. Eternal life, which is infinite awareness, is beyond the sense of 'I am.'"

Lesson 139 - <https://awakening-together.org/tips-from-regina-lesson-139-i-will-accept-the-atonement-for-myself/>

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 338

What is the Ego?

Our special theme says, "To know reality is not to see the ego and its thoughts, its works, its acts, its laws and its beliefs, its dreams, its hopes, its plans for its salvation, and the cost belief in them entails."

Yesterday I wrote, “People often wonder how enlightened masters, who claim to see no world, appear to us as everyday people with everyday lives.” Next, I shared a story about Nisargadatta when a questioner accused him of seeing a world and having a body by saying, “I see you smoking!”

Today, I would like to share a little more about how it’s possible for us to see a master in a body when the master is not aware of having a body.

On this topic, Bernadette Roberts wrote:

...permanent ecstasy appears incompatible with continued earthly existence. ... But if the senses could remain perfectly functional or awake during ecstasy, the world of ordinary life could go on as usual, only without self or consciousness. So perfect ecstasy is the ability of the senses to remain awake and perfectly functional in the absence of consciousness. ...

Thus one of the imperceptible changes that takes place between the beginning and the end of the unitive state [the real world] is the increasing ability of the senses to stand alone and not be affected by any change in consciousness or any change in the self-experience. ... “pure sensory perception” becomes increasingly important and trustworthy; also, ecstasy or the suspension of consciousness becomes increasingly more perfect, more natural and everyday—though not permanent. So the path that lies ahead once we come to the unitive state will ultimately bring about the separation of these two different systems—namely, consciousness and the senses. The purpose of this separation is to enable the senses to remain awake and functional once the system of consciousness has fallen away. ...

In other words, part of the transition period that we call the real world is learning to abide in reality without being attached to the body, which enables the body to continue being moved without an ‘I’ to move it!

As Michael Langford explains in his book, *Manonasa*:

When the illusory body called Nisargadatta Maharaj says, “I am not aware of the body or the world,” he is referring to the Self. ... Nisargadatta did not say that the body is not aware of the world. Nisargadatta did not say that the body now talking is not aware of the world. He said, “I am not aware of the body and the world.”

Or as Nisargadatta said:

Do not be misled by my eating and smoking, reading and talking. My mind is not here, my life is not here. Your world, of desires and their fulfilments, of fears and their escapes, is definitely not my world. I do

not even perceive it, except through what you tell me about it. It is your private dream world and my only reaction to it is to ask you to stop dreaming.

I am affected only by my thoughts.

The prayer in today's lesson says:

Your plan is sure, my Father,—only Yours. All other plans will fail. And I will have thoughts that will frighten me, until I learn that You have given me the only Thought that leads me to salvation. Mine alone will fail, and lead me nowhere. But the Thought You gave me promises to lead me home, because it holds Your promise to Your Son.

In the tip for Lesson 327, I wrote:

The God that we call on for guidance is not some distant deity, knowledge or awareness. We are the one that took the outward journey from truth to our present attachment to manifestation, and every step of that journey is recorded in our divine unconscious. Therefore, the reverse of each step is known in our own divine unconscious. Our own unconscious knows the way! The communication that comes from this unconscious knowing is what I call spiritual intuition.

We can see how true this statement is when we look at Bernadette's explanation about how the senses learn to stay awake without consciousness. Our divine unconsciousness remembers how we detached from ecstasy and the knowledge of our Self in order to attach to a body as what we are. Therefore, it knows we need to reverse that action by learning to abide in ecstasy again. Every step of our way home will be laid out for us. We simply need to trust and take the step that we need to take right now!

Please use today to contemplate how perfectly we are led. Use today as an opportunity to increase trust in guidance that comes from your own spiritual intuition. Realize it will move you to the next step **only when you are ready** for that next step. In fact, when writing about the stage of learning to detach from the body and abide in ecstasy, Bernadette wrote:

Until preparation is right, ecstasy keeps returning to the self or consciousness. ... The gauge is an increasing ability to 'bear the vision' as it were, without the senses going down or without everyday life and its normal behavior coming to a standstill.

So God takes its last step to awaken us beyond consciousness **when we are ready** for that step, after an effective transition period, which the Course calls "the real world." What a loving process!

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 339

What is the ego?

Our special theme says:

The Son of God is egoless. What can he know of madness and the death of God ... of sorrow and of suffering ... of fear and punishment, of sin and guilt, of hatred and attack... the ego and its thoughts, its works, its acts, its laws, and its beliefs, its dreams, its hopes, its plans for its salvation, and the cost belief in it entails... crucifixion of the Son of God is offered daily at its darkened shrine, and blood must flow before the altar where its sickly followers prepare to die.

Yet will one lily of forgiveness change the darkness into light; the altar to illusions to the shrine of Life Itself. And peace will be restored forever...

The path of awakening is a passage through all that is not true in order to arrive at the destination of truth. As Sister Bernadette so eloquently put it:

I had learned long ago that the essence of life's movement was not contentment or security; rather it was growth, change, and challenge, wherein the external circumstances of life merely reflected the needs of each moment in the thrust of life's flow. ... We never know the time or place where our destiny will catch up with us..."

In other words, we have to face the darkness if we want to reach the light, but we are not in charge of when, where or how our opportunities to face the darkness will come.

A lot of false believing has occurred, and a lot of it is much darker than our imagination would like to believe. We will face harsh hatred that is directed both outward and inward, deep—seemingly bottomless—guilt, stark terror, and even what feels like the edge of insanity. We will face everything imagined so we may see that it was only imagination and never, ever, anything more than that. All of this imagination is part of the ego.

The way to face the darkness when it comes is to keep one eye on unaffected presence. It would be good if one could keep both eyes on that presence, and maybe some have been successful in doing so, but I have always experienced some split in

eyesight when going through extreme darkness. Part of me is watching the passing darkness and part of me is aware of the silent, present unaffected Self.

One thing that is interesting about the unaffected Self during great trials of darkness is that it isn't doing anything. It isn't like the hero in the movies who dives in at the last moment with a shiny sword to battle the darkness and win the fight. The unaffected Self does nothing. It stays out of the fight. It doesn't participate. It's simply present, being itself, as it always is.

This may not seem like much of a hero from the ego's point of view, but this uninvolved, silent presence that is way in the back of our awareness is our savior, and all we have to do to let it save us is keep one eye, or at least a portion of an eye, on it as the darkness comes and passes through.

We may experience some of our purification in meditation. Maybe if we were like Buddha and we did nothing but meditate, we would experience all of our purification through meditation. However, since most of us are not destined to 12 hours of meditation per day for years on end, some of our darkness will arise in the throes of everyday life, which means we need to learn to keep an eye on the unaffected Self in the midst of moving about in *what at times may seem to be* a very dark world.

Keeping one eye, or at least a portion of one eye, on the unaffected Self is the "one lily of forgiveness" that changes "the darkness into light; the altar to illusions to the shrine of Life Itself."

I will receive whatever I request.

We think we want joy, but what we don't always see is that we want a shortcut to joy, which is false joy. If we don't walk through the darkness, we don't get to the light.

This is why we need to investigate deeply to discover what we really want. Do we want true and everlasting joy, and are we willing to walk the journey that one must walk to that final reward, or do we prefer to piddle around in a pale comparison and call it joy, because we are afraid of the journey?

"Everyone will receive what he requests."

What do I truly want?

Am I ready and trusting?

We are ready to the degree that we trust. If we need more time to build more trust, it will be given naturally. We do not have to hold back in fear. We can move forward with whatever little trust we have. The process knows how to lead us forward; it knows what we need and it will give that.

Here are two quotes to contemplate today:

The purpose of these verses is to again assure you that there is nothing to fear. The four angels who are holding back the winds represent the holding back of the end of perception. The end of perception is held back...it does not come to you to be looked at and let go...until you are ready and call it forth in your mind. ~ NTI Revelation, Chapter 7

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ~ Jesus at Matthew 7:7-11

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Lesson 340

What is the ego?

The ego is almost everything we know and consider to be real. It is:

- Me, including everything good and bad about me
- My thoughts, beliefs and mental images
- My personal will, intentions and desires
- My ideas of God, morality, reality and truth
- All emotions
- All perceptions
- The known world and universe of objects
- My relationships with others
- Birth and death and nearly everything in-between

It seems that life without all of this is no life at all. Or at best, it is life in a meaningless void. These words—no life at all, and meaningless void—are a perfect description of the ego's idea of what exists beyond itself.

It is true that what most humans seek as God, truth, Heaven, Nirvana, etcetera does not exist, but that is because we are currently limited to the ego's point of view. In order to discover what truth really is, we need to let go of:

- Me, including everything good and bad about me
- My thoughts, beliefs and mental images
- My personal will, intentions and desires
- My ideas of God, morality, reality and truth
- All emotions
- All perceptions
- The known world and universe of objects
- My relationships with others
- Birth and death and everything in-between

Where do we start?

Most of us start with what causes our own suffering. It's the easiest place to start. When we feel a twinge or stab of pain, we can look at our own ideas in the moment and find a piece of ego waiting to be let go. But eventually we will learn that in order to transcend the self and realize ultimate truth, we must let go of more than our suffering. We need to let go of anything that isn't true—anything and everything that comes and goes—in order to realize the one eternal reality, which is the only actual truth.

This is well stated in *A Course in Miracles Workbook Lesson 189*, paragraph 7:

Simply do this: Be still, and lay aside all thoughts of what you are and what God is; all concepts you have learned about the world; all images you hold about yourself. Empty your mind of everything it thinks is either true or false, or good or bad, of every thought it judges worthy, and all the ideas of which it is ashamed. Hold onto nothing. Do not bring with you one thought the past has taught, nor one belief you ever learned before from anything. Forget this world, forget this course, and come with wholly empty hands unto your God.

I can be free of suffering today

“Be glad today! Be glad!” Gladness is the best way to walk this path. It is also possible to drag one's feet and cling to the unreal as if it is a prized possession, but that will not change the fact that you are on the journey to truth now. It will only make the journey longer and harder.

Be glad! Choose the easy path of joyously letting go of anything that you recognize as ego. In the words of Peace Pilgrim, make it a “quick relinquishment.”

The faster you let go of something, the easier awakening is. The longer you hold onto something, the more it hurts. In that way, awakening is like a great big game of Hot Potato.

Interestingly, even though awakening can be fairly easy, most people choose to make it hard. That is simply because of the value we put on that which has no value at all.

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Lesson 341

What is a miracle?

Our new special theme says, “A miracle is a correction. It does not create, nor really change at all.”

Recently, we played a game based on the teaching in Rupert Spira’s book, “The Transparency of Things.” We used a book or some other piece of paper with words on it as a prop. First we read the words on the page, and we noticed what they said, and then we shifted our focus to notice the paper on which the words were written. We became aware of the paper that was already present, even though we weren’t consciously aware of it when our attention was focused on the words.

A miracle is similar to that shift in focus.

When we shifted our attention from the words to the paper, we did not create the paper. We merely became aware of it. In fact, nothing changed at all. The words already appeared on paper. There was no material change. The only change, if we call it a change, was that we became more aware of the paper.

A miracle is like that. It shifts our awareness from the specific focus of the ego to another focus that is not of the ego.

I can attack but my own sinlessness, And it is only that which keeps me safe.

We can use this sentence from our workbook lesson to notice how a miracle works.

If I read the sentence with emphasis on “attack”, I may see the sentence in this way:

I can **attack** but my own sinlessness,
and it is only that (attack) which keeps me safe.

The sentence may look a little crazy written that way, but the ego’s perception is crazy. And in fact, the ego perceives exactly as that sentence is written above.

When thinking with the ego thought system, don’t you think attack keeps you safe?

Pause and look at this for a moment. Remember some subtle ways that you have attacked, because you thought that was the way to be safe.

Now, if we shift the focus in the sentence, we will see the sentence differently. Let's put the emphasis on "sinlessness":

I can attack but my own **sinlessness**,
and it is only that (sinlessness) which keeps me safe.

Now the meaning of the sentence has changed completely, although the actual sentence itself remains the same. The only "change" is a shift in focus, but the shift in focus changes everything.

With this shift in focus, we move outside the ego's way of thinking entirely. Now attack is the opposite of safety, because if I attack anything, I attack my awareness of my sinlessness, and only my sinlessness keeps me safe.

A person who reads the sentence with the emphasis on attack, and believes that emphasis, is going to understand, think and act much differently than one who reads the sentence with the emphasis on sinlessness and believes (or puts faith in) that meaning.

This shift in perception from seeing attack as my safety to seeing non-attack as my safety is a miracle.

In order to help initiate this miracle in you, please contemplate the following today:

1. Remember a time that you used attack for perceived protection or safety. How did you *feel* in that moment? Write those feelings down as honestly as you can.
2. Are those feelings synonymous with "safety"? To help you answer this objectively, open a thesaurus and look at the synonyms for safety. Can you find the feelings *that you have already written down* in that list of synonyms?
3. Next, contemplate what your sinlessness is. In order to get a *real* sense of your sinlessness, which is present right now, don't contemplate sinlessness as an idea or concept. The mind defines some ideas as sinless and some ideas as sin. If you contemplate this by thinking, you will only define a part of you as sinless, or you will only define yourself as sinless sometimes. We are looking for sinlessness that is *whole, perfect and always present*. So without thinking, look at yourself now. Can you find whole, perfect and always present sinlessness? Don't give up until you do.
4. Once you have realized whole, perfect and always present sinlessness, read this sentence again with emphasis on what you have found:

*I can attack but my own sinlessness, and it is only **that** which keeps me safe.*

5. What is that? What does the sentence mean with emphasis on that? Write what it means as you see it now, with the shift in perspective that occurred through following these steps. As you write, additional insight may come. Continue to write with insight until it comes to a quiet end. This will help initiate the miracle in you.

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Lesson 342

What is a miracle?

Our special theme says, “A miracle is a correction. ... It merely looks on devastation, and reminds the mind that what it sees is false.”

I had a dream a few nights ago. In the dream, my daughter, my boyfriend and I were traveling to Yellowstone National Park in a station wagon very much like the one my parents had when I was a child. Jasmine, Ron and I rode in the front seat. In the backseat, there was an unattractive woman and her mindless daughter. The woman was Ron’s new girlfriend, which he added to our family. I was being nice and accepting of our situation; I welcomed her and her daughter into our family.

We stopped at a Route 66-like truck stop. Ron and Jasmine got our dog out of the very back of the station wagon and took the dog for a walk. I opened the backdoor to let Ron’s new girlfriend and her daughter out of the backseat, intending fully to be polite—even believing that I liked them—when all of the sudden, my anger burst out unexpectedly.

I couldn’t believe how rude I was to this woman. My intention was to be nice! So, I tried to apologize, but again anger and hatred poured out of me.

I ran away from the car, horrified by my own behavior, and ran into the truck stop restaurant to hide. There, inside the restaurant, I met Dolly Parton. She showed up as a fairy godmother type of character. She was there to help me look at my feelings and to discover what was true for me. Since I had been lying to myself about how I felt, this was important and helpful.

That’s the end of the dream. However, when I woke up, I saw where all of the components of the dream came from.

1. Recently a friend told me how her partner of many years has invited another female partner to be part of the family. My friend appears very happy with this arrangement, but I thought she wasn't being honest with herself about her feelings.
2. Another friend was recently divorced. Her ex-husband has a new girlfriend. This friend is very angry about the new girlfriend. She has openly shared her anger about this with me, including telling me repeatedly how ugly this new girlfriend is.
3. The friend who was recently divorced has told me many times how mindless her teenage daughter is. She gets very angry at what she perceives as her daughter's refusal to think.
4. On our last family vacation, Ron, Jasmine and I traveled on Route 66 in Arizona. Our next planned vacation is Yellowstone National Park.
5. Every day in my household, we take a break from whatever we are doing to walk our dog. It's a necessary part of our life right now.
6. Whitney Houston played the fairy godmother in one version of *Cinderella*. Whitney Houston also sang, "I Will Always Love You," which was written by Dolly Parton.
7. My parents had the station wagon that was in the dream when I was 11 years old. That is also the year my parents divorced.

If you look at these seven details, all of which are stored in my subconscious mind, you can see that the subconscious pulled these details together in a new way to create the dream. The dream was simply old memories and impressions woven together to create a new temporary tapestry.

I am sharing this with you, because this is how our world is made too. All of the old ideas—old thoughts, perceptions, impressions and beliefs from the collective subconscious—are woven together to create what appears to be a new present, but *it is actually just a regurgitation of old thoughts, perceptions, impressions and beliefs*. And the **miracle sees it as meaningless regurgitation**.

Some people may give my dream meaning by analyzing it and saying, "This means that, and that means this," but that misses the point entirely. The point is that the dream (and the world) is meaningless. When we give it no new meaning, we accept the correction. If we give the dream meaning, the subconscious is rebuilt, and the regurgitation continues.

It's true that I can look at my dream and see what is in my subconscious. The seven elements above show that. But seeing that enables me to look at the dream and

realize, “Oh, the dream was just made up from a random reordering of the subconscious.” In other words, what I see in the dream is merely false.

And that is true of the world we see also.

I let forgiveness rest upon all things, For thus forgiveness will be given me.

Today’s lesson says, “I thank You, Father, for Your plan to save me from the hell I made. It is not real. And you have given me the means to prove its unreality to me. The key is in my hand,…”

The “means to prove its unreality to me”—*the key*—is forgiveness, which is abiding as the unaffected Self. Abiding unaffected is giving *no new meaning* to the regurgitation that is the world.

The Loving All Method is a gentle way of abiding as the unaffected Self. Therefore, living the Loving All Method is forgiveness. It is the key.

Let’s review the Loving All Method today. Although you have read this more than once before, it is always possible a sentence or word that did not stand out to you before will now shine with new, previously unseen clarity. Therefore, although the mind may want to skip reading this, because the mind thinks it knows it already, let’s bypass the mind’s opinion and read Chapter 12 of *The Most Direct Means to Eternal Bliss* again today: https://albigen.com/uarelove/most_rapid/chapter12.htm

Note: I would like to point out an error in my mind, and how error manifests into suffering. If you look back at the seven elements from my subconscious, which created the dream, you will notice that element #1 included a judgment I made about another. That judgment, left uncorrected, is what led to the suffering of the Regina-character in the dream. Without that judgment, the dream could have been completely benign, like the real world. Loving everything exactly as it is (the Loving All Method) corrects all errors.

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Lesson 343

What is a miracle?

Our special theme says, “A miracle is a correction. ... It undoes error, but does not attempt to go beyond perception, nor exceed the function of forgiveness. Thus it

stays within time's limits. Yet it paves the way for the return of timelessness and love's awakening, for fear must slip away under the gentle remedy it brings."

Once again, we see the theme of a gentle awakening from ego consciousness to consciousness, and finally to truth. Forgiveness and its effect, a shift in seeing or knowing, is the medium that prepares us for the final awakening, but the shift that is the miracle is not the final awakening. Many shifts or miracles may occur before the final awakening dawns. (Sometimes these shifts are referred to as awakenings.)

While reading Bernadette Roberts' book, *The Experience of No Self*, I noticed she went through a number of shifts. I also noticed that with each shift, she thought she had arrived at the final seeing, and yet months or years later, another shift would occur. Bernadette was not attempting to fool herself, yet each shift in seeing was so dramatically different than the one before it—and she had no idea about what was yet to come—that she perceived each shift as the final shift until the next one came, and the next, and then the next.

She made this observation in retrospect:

One way to look at this journey is to see it as a process of acclimating to an unselfconscious mind, or as a transition from a relative to a non-relative way of knowing.

Ego consciousness is a fully self-conscious and relative mind, meaning that it is always thinking of itself in relationship or comparison to everything that is not it. Truth has no sense of self, so it is fully "unselfconscious." Also, it only knows its Self, so there isn't one in relation to or compared to another. Each miracle, or shift in perception, carries us further from the fully self-conscious and relative mind that is ego to the unselfconscious, non-relativeness that is truth.

As our special theme goes on to say, "[The miracle] illustrates the law of truth the world does not obey, because [the world] fails entirely to understand its ways. The miracle inverts perception, which was upside down before, and thus it ends the strange distortions that were manifest. Now is perception open to the truth."

The miracle moves us, one shift at a time, from the sense of self relative to something else, including relative to God, to the edge of unselfconscious or no sense of self. At this edge, which we gradually acclimate to one shift at a time, we are ready for the final movement beyond any sense of self or other. As our special theme says, "Now is forgiveness seen as justified."

I'd like to look at that last sentence for a moment before we move to today's workbook lesson. It says that when we are at that edge, which is sometimes referred to as the edge of a cliff—also referred to as the edge of the bridge in previous tips—"forgiveness is seen as justified." If we need to get all the way to that edge before we see forgiveness as justified, then prior to that final perception we will sometimes (or often) think forgiveness is not justified. We will think we have a right to feel

affected, offended, afraid, hurt, angry, controlling, etcetera. However, if we believe we are fully right about our right to be affected, we refuse the miracle.

That is the purpose of faith. Before we arrive at the edge of perception and see clearly that all forgiveness is justified, we need to have faith that forgiveness is justified. Even if we cannot understand how it is justified, we need the faith to forgive anyway. This faith, followed by a conscious choice, is how we open up to the miracles that usher us gently to the threshold of truth.

I am not asked to make a sacrifice to find the mercy and the peace of God.

As already seen, at times along the way we may feel that we are making a sacrifice by choosing forgiveness over some other option, like fear, anger or control. The ego may even jump up and down screaming, “This isn’t fair; something valuable is being taken away!!”

That isn’t true. That is only the ego’s perspective as it tries to stay in control of you. By practicing the Loving All Method or Rest, Accept and Trust with this idea of sacrifice, you make way for a miracle, which will take you one step closer to truth, eternal awareness-love-bliss.

Today, pay close attention to the mind. Be open to seeing something the mind does not want you to forgive, let go, accept, allow or love. When you find it, you also find the opportunity to take another bite out of the ego by practicing the teachings instead of practicing the ego.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 344

What is a miracle?

Our special theme says, “Forgiveness is the home of miracles.”

I find myself wanting to sit quietly with this sentence. For me, this sentence is like animated glitter, sparkling with aliveness. It is the key—*the answer*. We abide as our unaffected Self, both during meditation and while living in the world, and this simple abidance ushers in a whole new world.

This brilliant clarity is so obvious to me that I just want to be as silent as silent can be and then whisper, “Do you see it? Do you see how simple it is? Do you see how we can do this all the time until the doing is done?”

If I could give a gift to every single person on the planet, it would be the gift of seeing the simplicity of this statement:

Abiding as your unaffected Self is *The Way*.

No one, no thing, nor any circumstance can prevent you from making this choice. It is a choice that is always available to you. As NTI Revelation, Chapter 7, says:

You choose the purpose for everything you see,
and the purpose you choose is the one that is given to it.

The purpose of everything can be to get better and better at abiding as the unaffected Self.

How do we abide as unaffected under all circumstances?

The Loving All Method explains the way.

Today I learn the law of love; that what I give my brother is my gift to me.

Two interpretations of today's lesson immediately come to mind.

1. As I accept the atonement for myself by abiding as the unaffected Self, the service I render is for everyone.
2. As I teach my brother that what he has done has not hurt me, I grow more and more aware of the truth of my unaffectedness.

Today I feel to focus on the second interpretation of this lesson. It's an extremely practical interpretation, and one that is very good for each of us to practice.

I LOVE to teach others that no matter what they do to me, it's okay. I am not hurt, and my love for them is totally unaffected. I have practiced this under what some may say are extreme circumstances. For example, one friend became jealous of me and went on an internet tirade spreading lies about me. This tirade lasted about 6 months. During this time, I stayed out of it. I did not respond to her posts or defend myself in any way. When this tirade ended, a few years passed. She did not contact me, and I allowed her to have no contact with me. I did not initiate contact her, because *she did not want contact*, not because of a grievance on my part. I allowed her to have her perception and her feelings about it. And then one day something difficult happened in her life, and she called me for help. I responded as if nothing had happened in-between our last friendly conversation and this one. The moment she wanted me to be her close friend, I was her close friend again.

That's just one example of how I teach that I am not hurt, and you did not hurt me. I am unaffected, and you are innocent. These are two of the most beautiful lessons that can be taught.

Now, there is a difference between teaching this lesson and enabling unwholesome behavior. It's very difficult to explain the difference with words, because the guidance that explains the difference is a feeling within.

However, as an example, the Awakening Together Sanctuary is a place that has been set-aside as a sanctuary, a place free of disrespect and attack. So, if my friend were to come in there and begin telling lies about me, we would need to follow our etiquette guidelines and remove her from the Sanctuary. At one point, if she were to return and follow our guidelines, all would be forgotten, but for as long as she persisted, she would continue to be banned.

At the same time, my heart would remain open and loving toward my friend, even as the behavior is not being condoned.

Another example was the time I had a stalker. He called and emailed me several times each day. His ideas about our relationship were ideas from a mentally ill mind. The guidance was to ignore him, because whenever I responded to him in any way, I encouraged him deeper into his mental illness. Although I was slow to learn this lesson, I finally learned to ignore him with an open heart. I loved him and had compassion for his illness, but I did not pick up the phone or return his emails.

In other words, you can love an alcoholic without buying them a drink.

Of course, this fine line between enabling and loving is one each person needs to find for himself/herself.

If there is a situation with someone in your life that is confusing for you, please ask a question of inner wisdom, and then begin to write in order to receive more clarity and personal guidance. As you write, remember that you are not guilty and the other person is not guilty. If anything comes into your writing that indicates that either one of you is guilty, realize ego has gotten into the writing. Take a break, get in touch with your desire for truth and healing, and then try writing again.

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Lesson 345

What is a miracle?

Our special theme says, "Each lily of forgiveness offers all the world the silent miracle of love."

Others may not notice our miracles—that is, others may not notice our individual shifts in perception. That’s because each one sees through the filter of his/her mind. If we tell them about our shifts, they may not believe us or they may quickly forget. And that is as it is.

That’s why our special theme refers to the “*silent* miracle of love.” It is a miracle that is free to go unnoticed by everyone except the one who is the medium of the miracle. The one who abides as the unaffected Self to the point that a shift occurs is aware of the miracle. He/she is also aware of the universality of the miracle, although the miracle may have effects the he/she will never be aware of.

This means that we cannot look outside ourselves for evidence of a miracle or for understanding of what has occurred. The miracle is ours to behold as it has been revealed to us, while also knowing a miracle could never belong to us alone.

I offer only miracles today, For I would have them returned to me.

When we offer miracles, we do not offer corrections for the problems we see in the world. We offer miracles by living the Loving All Method. It is as simple as that. If something is to change in form as an effect of our miracles—well, we leave that to the unpredictability of the creative principle. Outward effects are not our concern. Forgiveness is our only function.

In the Bible, Jesus said, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Matthew 7:1, 2)

He also said, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6:38)

These two scriptures point to the same universal law—we receive whatever we give. As today’s workbook lesson says:

Father, a miracle reflects Your gifts to me, Your Son. And every one I give returns to me, reminding me the law of love is universal.

As we live from the unaffected Self, we become unaffected. In this way, we transcend (or overcome) the world. This can be reflected in how we see a situation, and it can be reflected in the situation itself. A situation *can change* as a result of our way of being. However, it is never for us to decide that a situation must change, because by deciding that is so, we have also decided that we are affected by that situation. By that very decision, we have judged instead of abiding as unaffected.

The subtlety of this teaching is confusing to the mind. When this teaching is explained, people ask questions like, “So, if my husband is beating me, I just continue

to let him do that?” Or, “If someone is abusing an animal, do we just stand by and watch?”

As Chapter 12 of *The Direct Means to Eternal Bliss* explains:

The Loving All Method refers only to your emotions. No changes in your external behavior are required.

For example: if a vase falls and you would normally try and catch it, you will also try and catch the vase while you are practicing the Loving All Method. You do not allow the vase to fall because you are loving the falling.

If someone were to try to punch you in the face and if you would normally duck, you will also duck while practicing the Loving All Method. The fact that you are loving the fact that someone is trying to punch you does not mean you will not duck. You also love the fact that you are ducking to avoid being punched.

The Loving All Method is about emotional acceptance. The Loving All Method is not about changing your actions.

Interestingly, when people ask about the abusive husband or the abused animal, they are usually not in those situations, they are only thinking about them. Thinking is trying to confuse a teaching that can be quite simple. If you forget about hypothetical examples and simply live in the moment, the simplicity of the teaching reveals itself. You will know what to do in each moment, and you will do it.

Today, as you live the Loving All Method, let doing remain in the moment instead of in thinking. Let the day unfold naturally, including your doing, as you concentrate on loving, accepting or allowing, whichever is your highest possibility in the moment.

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Lesson 346

What Is a Miracle?

Our special theme says, “Each lily of forgiveness offers all the world the silent miracle of love. And each is laid before the Word of God, upon the universal altar to Creator and creation in the light of perfect purity and endless joy.”

This reminds me of the opening of the Book of John in the Bible. It says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ...

Once I looked up the word “word” in the dictionary to try to get some clarity on this passage from John. As I read the definitions of “word,” they seemed not to apply until I came across this definition:

an utterance

I looked up “utterance,” and found it to be the expression of an idea.

With that, I looked back at the opening paragraph of the Book of John and saw this:

In the beginning was an utterance—an idea expressed—and the utterance was with God, which is life, and the utterance was inseparable from life. It was with life in the beginning. Through utterance combined with life all things were made manifest; without utterance nothing was made that has been made. In the utterance was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ...

From that understanding of this scripture, I came up with this formula:

Life + Utterance = Manifestation

To make this simple, let me express it this way:

When we give expression to an idea by believing it and giving attention to it, it becomes infused with the life of our awareness, and it becomes manifest in some way. This is universal, divine law. It is the Third Principle of God, the creative principle.

With this little bit of clarity, let’s look back at today’s selection from our special theme:

Each lily of forgiveness offers all the world the silent miracle of love.
And each is laid before the Word of God, upon the universal altar to
Creator and creation in the light of perfect purity and endless joy.

We’ve already seen that the “lily of forgiveness” is our choice to abide as unaffectedness, which is also the Loving All Method. Each time we abide as unaffected—each time we practice or live the Loving All Method—the expression of that choice becomes a silent utterance fed into the creative principle (the Word of

God, the universal altar to Creator and creation) and results in a perfectly pure and joyous manifestation. These manifestations are often called Grace.

Grace shows up in the world in innumerable ways, in any way that is helpful in the moment. Grace is usually seen as a miracle, but Grace is actually the *effect* of the miracle.

The miracle is the shift in perception from seeing one's self as affected to seeing one's self as unaffected. This miracle, the lily of forgiveness, fed into the creative principle, creates its likeness in manifestation, because *all ideas manifested through the creative principle manifest in the likeness of themselves.*

Today the peace of God envelops me, And I forget all things except His Love.

Today's workbook lesson says, "Father, I wake today with miracles correcting my perception of all things. ... I do not seek the things of time, and so I will not look upon them. What I seek today transcends all laws of time and things perceived in time. I would forget all things except Your Love. I would abide in You, and know no laws except Your law of love."

In other words, today we do not seek to fix, change, get or avoid things or circumstances in the world, because we know that judgment, as well as thought and action based on judgment, goes into the creative principle and creates like itself—more to fix, change, get or avoid.

Instead, we awake today with the realization of how divine law works. We understand that our safety and the world's safety lies in our unaffectedness. It lies in living the Loving All Method, because when the safety of the Loving All Method is fed into the creative principle, it manifests like itself, thereby manifesting true safety as Grace.

Our *way of being* is a more important choice than most humans ever begin to imagine. The miracle today is that we accept this as true, and because we accept this as true, we put more effort into *being the Loving All Method.*

Be Loving All.
See yourself as that,
instead of as a person.

Being Loving All is forgetting "all things except God's Love."

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Lesson 347

What Is a Miracle?

Our special theme says, “The miracle is taken first on faith, because to ask for it implies the mind has been made ready to conceive of what it cannot see and does not understand.”

There are two points from today’s selection that I would like to contemplate. First, let’s look at faith.

Bernadette Roberts wrote, “Indeed, it is because Truth is unbelievable that man needs faith—faith, which is beyond belief.”

What is faith? Faith is trust or confidence in something based on spiritual understanding rather than proof.

I have learned that faith is better than seeking proof, primarily because we cannot find proof until we have walked the journey and experienced it for ourselves. As Bernadette also wrote, “Complete understanding can only come at the end of the journey.” That’s because complete understanding comes from direct experience.

Every phase of the journey that still lies ahead is not understandable and not provable from the perspective of where we are now. This is why we need faith. We need faith that there is truth or higher seeing beyond our current way of seeing in order to motivate us to continue the journey. Without faith in something beyond our current knowing, our journey may stall.

A hiker keeps up the hike because there is still something to see that hasn’t been seen yet. It’s as the old song goes:

The bear went over the mountain,
the bear went over the mountain,
the bear went over the mountain,
to see what he could see.

Faith is trusting there is something to see that hasn’t been seen yet.

The second point I’d like to contemplate from today’s selection is this: “because to ask for it implies that the mind has been made ready...”

It is wonderful to ask. In my Buddha at the Gas Pump interview, Rick Archer commented that when I asked for something, I received it. It’s true. All along my spiritual journey, as I became ready for a particular phase of the journey, I found myself asking for it, and then that phase of the journey would begin. Of course, I didn’t always know what to ask for. I just knew I was ready for whatever was next. For example, just before *The Teachings of Inner Ramana* came, I asked for

“something that would take me to the next step.” Just before a massive phase of purification started, I asked for “something that would take me higher into love.” In fact, the entire spiritual journey began when I asked for truth regardless of what it is.

Asking is grand! I like to begin each day’s contemplation by asking to see whatever is most helpful for me to see now. I begin each meditation by putting the meditation in the hands of Ramana and asking that it be whatever is most helpful for me now.

When we ask from a state of readiness, Grace responds. It is as NTI Revelation says:

You will never be asked to take a single step alone, but you must always be willing to take the lead by deciding the purpose and calling it out to Us.

Anger must come from judgment. Judgment is the weapon I would use against myself, to keep the miracle away from me.

Today’s workbook lesson demonstrates asking when it says, “Straighten my mind, my Father.”

Of course, the words themselves are never the prayer. The prayer that moves Grace is the heartfelt readiness and faith that is at the foundation of the prayer. Until one sees for herself how hurtful judgment is, genuinely tires of the judging mind, and has faith that it is possible to be free of judgment, she will not ask with the dynamism that moves mountains. (Ref: Mark 11:23)

How do we prepare ourselves for a sincere prayer?

We simply be where we are on this journey now to the best of our ability and pay attention to everything. As we do that, we are naturally prepared for our next step. When we are ready for our next step, we will feel it, and we will ask for it sincerely.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 348

What Is a Miracle?

Our special theme says, “The miracle is taken first on faith, because to ask for it implies the mind has been made ready to conceive of what it cannot see and does

not understand. Yet faith will bring its witnesses to show that what it rested on is really there. And thus the miracle will justify your faith in it, and show it rested on a world more real than what you saw before; a world redeemed from what you thought was there.”

When talking about the phases one goes through in the development of trust, *A Course in Miracles Manual for Teachers* says:

[The teacher of God] thought he learned willingness, but now he sees that he does not know what the willingness is for. ... He must learn to lay all judgment aside, and ask only what he really wants in every circumstance. Were not each step in this direction so heavily reinforced, it would be hard indeed!

This paragraph comforted me during many trials along this path. The trials were times that I feared real sacrifice was about to occur. For example, there were times that I feared running out of money, because by following guidance I left a traditional job and began to do what I was guided to do without any direct source of income. I was worried about how I would care for my daughter and myself; my daughter was only a little girl at the time. That paragraph from the *Manual for Teachers* reminded me to ask only for what I really want, which is awakening, and it promised that the rightness of that choice would be “heavily reinforced.”

My experience has been that this works. It is as Jesus taught, “Seek ye first the kingdom, and all else will be added to you.”

Again today, we are looking at the power of faith and asking, with asking focused on truth and not on conditions in the world. As we stay focused on seeking truth, the creative principle responds by providing the most helpful material circumstances.

When our special theme says, “faith will bring its witnesses to show that what it rested on is really there,” it is pointing to both the shift in perception and its material effects. Both are “witnesses,” which “heavily reinforce” our choice to abide as unaffected.

It is a mistake to expect a specific material outcome as a result of faith. Whenever we expect or desire a specific outcome, we think with ego, and so it is the energy of ego that is fed into the creative principle on our behalf. To feed the energy of the miracle into the creative principle, we must seek only for truth (in whatever way your mind words that aspiration). It is this seeking that brings the miracle, its effects and the positive reinforcement.

I have no cause for anger or for fear, for You surround me. And in every need that I perceive, Your grace suffices me.

Today's lesson says, "Father, let me remember You are here, and I am not alone. Surrounding me is everlasting Love. I have no cause for anything except the perfect peace and joy I share with You. ... God's grace suffices us in everything that He would have us do. And only that we choose to be our will as well as His."

Today, let's notice our concerns.

1. What material changes do you think you need in order to be happy, feel safe, be relieved of anxiety or to focus on God/Truth? Write them down.
2. Look at each desired change, one at a time. Notice how willing you are to let go of that *specific* desire in trust that as you seek truth, everything that is genuinely helpful will be given. Also notice where you do not feel that willingness or trust. (Simply look and notice.)
3. After looking at yourself in this way, contemplate what you noticed. Just sit and be with what you've noticed without judgment or guilt. Our goal is to become more clear regarding ourselves, our fears, our motivations, etc. If you feel guided to write as you contemplate what you noticed, please follow that guidance.
4. When you feel complete with #3, see if a prayer arises in you. If so, pray the prayer that is in your heart.

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Lesson 349

What Is a Miracle?

Let's review what we've already contemplated about the miracle in order to look at the miracle as a whole.

1. A miracle is not a correction. In fact, it is not a change at all. It is a shift in perception, which is a shift in our way of seeing and experiencing.
2. The miracle could be called a shift in meaning. It gently shifts away from the valueless (temporary appearance) and towards the valuable (reality). That means circumstances that we saw as meaningful before gradually have less meaning while awareness, which once had no meaning at all, becomes more

present and centrally meaningful.

3. The core shift that occurs with the miracle is a shift from a self-centered existence and way of perceiving to existence that is not centered in the self. Existence not centered in the self is called true perception, because perception is not colored by self's personal biases. This core shift may be dramatic or it may be gradual, the culmination of many smaller shifts.
4. Because the self-centered self will attempt to cling to its self-centered nature, it is important for the individual to have a desire to go beyond the self-centered self and faith that existence beyond the self-centered self is more valuable than existence as a self-centered self.
5. The way to enable the miracle is to abide, to the best of one's ability, as the unaffected self. Being unaffected is synonymous with not being self-centered or not believing self-centered thoughts, perceptions and feelings. The Loving All Method is a simple, gentle and clear method for abiding as the unaffected self. When we abide as the unaffected self, we do not cling to the self-centered self. This enables the miracle, because we are no longer fighting against the miracle.
6. The miracle is both personal and impersonal. It is personal, because the medium of the miracle is the only one who experiences the shift directly. It is impersonal because the shift in perception causes material effects through the creative principle. The one who experienced the miracle may or may not witness the material effects.
7. People often confuse a material effect with the miracle by thinking the material effect is the miracle. **The miracle is the shift in perception.** It is permanent and irreversible. The effect of the shift is not the miracle; it is a temporary appearance.
8. The spiritual aspirant helps in the process of shifting from self-centered existence to existence that is not self-centered by being aware of his own process, participating in it fully, and prayerfully asking for clarity, guidance, and shifts.
9. To continually seek advancement on a journey from the known to the unknown takes faith. If one will have faith and take the journey, miracles and their effects will reinforce faith. This results in confidence, which enables one to go further into the unknown.

Today I let Christ's vision look upon all things for me and judge them not, but give each one a miracle of love instead.

Today we give the freedom that we seek by practicing the Loving All Method instead of judgment.

Please read today's workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing. I have demonstrated this practice repeatedly by selecting an excerpt from the special theme and writing based on that excerpt. Increased clarity can come through this type of focused contemplation. The clarity that is perfect for you will come through the selection you are attracted to. You can open up to this clarity by asking to see what is most helpful for you to see, and then begin writing with faith that this prayer will be answered.

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Lesson 350

What is the miracle?

Before leaving this special theme for the next one, let's circle back and look at this excerpt again:

A miracle is a correction. It does not create, nor really change at all. ... It undoes error, but does not attempt to go beyond perception, nor exceed the function of forgiveness. Thus it stays within time's limits. Yet it paves the way for the return of timelessness and love's awakening, for fear must slip away under the gentle remedy it brings.

The sense of self is more than self-centeredness. Although the sense of self is not our very existence, it is what *feels like* existence to us. That means that once the wrong-minded self-centered self ends, the next step in awakening is the end of the **sense of existing** or the sense of I am. The sense of existing and life are not the same thing. Life, which is what we are, does not end. The sense of existence is an energy that we have mistaken for life.

Remember Nisargadatta's instructions to the man who said, "I see you smoking!" He said, "At the root is the sense 'I am'. Go beyond it."

Here is a brief video by Dr. David Hawkins about his experience with the end of the sense of existing. He calls it the Final Doorway. (The tip continues after the video.)

Video: <https://youtu.be/wnYJS5lg72w>

Note: Here is a link to another brief video where Dr. David Hawkins describes the same experience with a different emphasis: <https://youtu.be/eRD4rRYLEF0>

As our special theme says, the miracle works *within* time and perception. It moves us from self-centered existence to existence that reflects reality. This existence could be seen as a spotless mirror. Reality is reflected in the spotless mirror—in this sense of existence—but reflected reality is not reality itself.

The miracle works within time to clean the mirror of the self-centered self. When the mirror is spotless, the miracle's function has come to an end. It is another movement that takes us beyond time and the mirror, a movement that exceeds perception entirely. That movement is known as the final doorway, the eye of the needle, the last judgment, God's final step, manonasa, etcetera.

Miracles mirror God's eternal Love. To offer them is to remember Him, and through His memory to save the world.

Please read today's workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

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Lesson 351

What Am I?

Today we begin contemplation of our last special theme, "What am I?" However, the answer to this question cannot be found in the words written on the page. It's interesting, because the italicized words at the top of the special theme are written as if they are the answer to the question, but they are not. The better answer to the question is found in the middle of the second paragraph where it says, "The truth of what we are is not for words to speak of nor describe."

With that said, let's look at the words in the italicized paragraph and see what helpfulness we can find there:

- *I am ... complete and healed and whole:* These words are helpful, because they mean that anything you find in yourself that is not "complete and healed and whole" is not what you are. You do not need to believe it or identify with it, because it is not you. You also do not want to indulge it, because it does not represent what you are. Instead, notice it, and then let it go (or accept it as it

is).

- *In me ... guaranteed eternal life:* This points to the answer to the question, “What am I?” You are to look within (“in me”) and find that which is eternal. Humans tend to think of “eternal” as a measurement of time—that is, endless time. However, eternal transcends time. When looking for that which is eternal, look for that which is always present, absolutely changeless, and you (rather than an object apparent to you.)
- *In me is love perfected, fear impossible, and joy established without opposite:* Although these words point to the Effectless, we could say these are the effects we experience as we come to know our Self more and more. This is important to know, because our Self is so subtle it can’t be known in the way an object is known. If it could be known, it would be an object apparent to us rather than what we are. However, the effects of knowing our Self can be known. So, although there is no way to measure your progress in knowing your Self directly, you can measure it indirectly by noticing the effects. An increase in inexplicable love, a reduction in psychological fear and self-preservation, and an increase in causeless joy are the signs of coming to know the Self.
- *I am the holy home of God Himself:* For consciousness, God is an object that is experienced by a subject. Or said another way, “I” experience the stillness of God. This subject-object experience increases as one awakens, but it is also a sign that awakening is not complete. When the subject-object experience of God ends in a non-dual recognition, awakening has completed itself by returning to the point where consciousness departed from Truth. This point is often called “home.”
- *I am ... Sinlessness Itself, ... purity:* With “sinlessness” meaning unaffected and “purity” meaning unchanged, these words point to what you are and will help you recognize it. Their opposite is what you are not and can be deemed untrue.

**My sinless brother is my guide to peace. My sinful brother is my guide to pain.
And which I choose to see I will behold.**

Please read today’s workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

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Lesson 352

What Am I?

Our special theme says, "Our use for words is almost over now. ... The truth of what we are is not for words to speak of nor describe. Yet we can realize our function here, and words can speak of this and teach it, too, if we exemplify the words in us."

Today I would like to contemplate the first phrase of this excerpt along with the last phrase of the excerpt. That is:

Our use for words is almost over now ... if we exemplify the words in us.

Another way of looking at this is:

Our time of learning is almost over now,
if we are ready to live from what we've learned.

The "if" is interesting. It means that we need to make the decision to exemplify the teachings. If we make that decision, we no longer need metaphysical education. We've received enough metaphysical education. However, if we are not yet ready to live from what we've learned, more education is needed.

In other words, the purpose of education is to bring us to the willingness to live the teachings. Once we are ready to live the teachings, education has fulfilled its role.

The Teachings of Inner Ramana makes a similar statement. It says:

It's time to go beyond everything you've learned.

Everything you've learned has been helpful. It's been helpful toward willingness to take this next step. But without the step that we are taking together now, all that you've learned serves no real purpose toward awakening.

Our first year of Gentle Healing included a lot of learning. We've learned:

- The person that we think we are is not what we are. It is a false self, made up of thoughts, feelings and misperceptions. This false self, typically called the ego, is the cause of all human suffering.
- The truth of what we are is life-awareness. Awakening is the process of moving from identifying with the false self to knowing our true Self as a permanent direct experience.
- The desire to know truth is the most important motivator in the process of awakening. Without that desire, we will not apply ourselves toward that end. Therefore, anything we can do to increase that desire is helpful.

- At the human level, casting our attention on thought creates neural pathways in the brain. These pathways are the source of our habits, beliefs and way of seeing. Resting attention away from thought allows previously formed pathways to dry up, which undoes previously formed habits of thought, feeling, perception and action.
- Metaphysically, casting our attention on thought feeds energy into the creative principle, which in turn creates all appearances in the world. What we feed into the creative principle also returns to us as another thought or experience. It's important to remember that like creates like, so focusing on fear creates more fear, focusing on anger creates more anger, etcetera. Unaffectedness (resting attention away from thought and in presence) generates Grace.
- Inquiry is a valuable tool as we learn to step out of our habituated (conditioned) way of being into a way of being based on clarity. We learned several methods of inquiry including Root Cause Inquiry, Byron Katie's "The Work," Diedriek Wolsak's Choose Again process and self-inquiry as taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*.
- There are two awakenings, the first of which is awakening from the self-centered self to a self that reflects truth. *A Course in Miracles* refers to the first awakening as true perception. What true perception sees is the real world.
- Abiding as the unaffected self is one key way of permitting the shifts that purify us of the self-centered self and move us toward true perception. Abiding as the unaffected self can be seen as rest-accept-trust as taught by Regina Dawn Akers, never closing the heart as taught by Michael Singer, remaining in noticing presence as taught by Gina Lake or the Loving All Method as taught by Michael Langford.
- Surrender, as it is taught in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*, is a valuable tool as we move away from the self-centered self to movement that is not centered in the self. Surrender allows us to be moved by something other than personal will, so we can live in the world effectively without continuing attachment to our self-centered thinking.
- We come to know our true Self through focusing on awareness. We learned to focus on awareness using short glimpses throughout the day and through daily, sustained focus using Awareness-Watching-Awareness, Loving Consciousness and Abandon Release methods of meditation.
- The second awakening is an awakening beyond the self that reflects truth (true perception) to Truth Itself (beyond perception). This is the human's final awakening, also known as the last judgment, the final end of the ego, manonasa, and nirvana. Beyond this point, there isn't anything that words can express or mind can imagine. This awakening is the goal of the spiritual path.

We may have learned some other things this year, but these were the main points. These teachings were taught over and over again through different teachers using different words. Hopefully these teachings are now well embedded in our brains.

As our first year of Gentle Healing ends and our second year of Gentle Healing begins, we move from more education to less education and from some practice to living the teachings in all situations. The second year of Gentle Healing will be extremely beneficial, *if you live from what you learned in the first year*. If you are not ready to live from those teachings, more education is needed. In that case, it is better to go back and repeat the first year of Gentle Healing than it is to continue to the second year.

Repeating the first year of Gentle Healing may feel like being “held back” in the first grade while all of your friends go on to the second grade. However, the reason for holding a student back is to *increase the student’s ability to succeed*. Without a good foundation, the higher levels are often too challenging for the student—possibly out of reach—and time is wasted. Repeating the first year in order to get a good foundation may be the most effective way for some students to proceed.

I am not a first grade teacher who has the authority to pass first year students or hold them back. I will not make that specific recommendation for anyone. Please let intuition guide you. It may be a matter of whether you applied yourself well to the first year or spent a significant amount of time not applying yourself to our daily lessons and homework. As you review the bullets above, you may know if you effectively digested the education necessary to move on to the second year.

Judgment and love of opposites. From one come all the sorrows of the world. But from the other comes the peace of God Himself.

Please read today’s workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

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Lesson 353

What Am I?

Our special theme says, “We are the bringers of salvation. We accept our part as saviors of the world, which through our joint forgiveness is redeemed.”

If we look very carefully at this excerpt from our special theme, we will see that one answer to the question, "What am I?" is, "I am not a divine *individual*."

Some students of *A Course in Miracles* make the mistake of thinking of themselves as a divine individual. In other words, they believe the world is a projection of their individual mind. When they believe this mistaken idea, they also think that as they heal as an individual, all ego appearances will disappear from the world.

However, let's look closely at what our special theme says:

We are the bringers of salvation. We accept our part as saviors of the world, **which through our joint forgiveness is redeemed.**

When I was a young teen, my favorite Bible scripture was Isaiah 11:6-9. It says:

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

My religion at the time was Jehovah's Witnesses. They taught that Satan would be destroyed in a battle described in the book of Revelation. After Satan's destruction, the Earth would become the paradise that God intended in the beginning, before Adam and Even ate of the tree of knowledge. Jehovah's Witnesses called the renewed paradise the "new world." I was taught that this scripture described what the new world would be like.

Jehovah's Witnesses are not that far off with this portion of their religious understanding.

Since the ego is the cause of all suffering, all suffering must end when the self-centered ego ends. However, the self-centered ego is not in the mind of one individual alone. The self-centered ego is in the mind of humankind. It is our "joint forgiveness" that could result in the reflection this scripture points to.

We each need to participate in our individual awakening, because humankind's "joint forgiveness" appears to happen one individual at a time. As an analogy, let's imagine the individuals in humankind as cells in one brain, the brain of humankind.

As healing and awakening spreads through the brain, individual brain cells are renewed and freed of cancerous darkness. When the healing has spread through the entire brain, healing and renewal are complete.

As individuals, we are each like a cell in the symbolic brain of humankind. We have been called to the spiritual path, because it is our turn to be healed and renewed as part of the broader awakening. However, the awakening isn't complete until all cells have been healed and renewed. As long as ego remains in some cells within the mind of humankind, the projection that comes from the mind will continue to include appearances that come from the ego.

My eyes, my tongue, my hands, my feet today have but one purpose; to be given Christ to use to bless the world with miracles.

Please read today's workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

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Lesson 354

What Am I?

Our special theme says, "We are the bringers of salvation. We accept our part as saviors of the world, which through our joint forgiveness is redeemed. And this, our gift, is therefore given to us. We look on everyone as brother, and perceive all things as kindly and as good."

Yesterday I addressed a confusion that forms in the minds of some students of *A Course in Miracles*. The confusion is that one is a divine individual, and the projection of the world comes from the divine individual mind. (For example, the idea that Sally and Sam are projections of Maria's individual mind.)

We are not divine individuals. The individual is part of the projection of consciousness. That means that the healing of one individual mind does not end the projection of suffering in the world. That is why our special theme says the world is redeemed through our "joint forgiveness." However, our special theme goes on to say:

And this, our gift, is therefore **given to us**. We look on everyone as brother, and perceive all things as kindly and as good.

Even though the world will continue with its ego projections for humans who still believe the ego thought system, the one who awakens beyond the ego thought system will see God in all projections. This is what the Course calls “true perception.” It is as Holy Spirit shared with me in one of my first scribal messages, a message that has been named, “The Ego is Not the Devil.” In that message, Holy Spirit said:

Now you may ask, “If I change my belief about the world, will I see no more sickness, no more war and no more threat?” I’ve answered this for you before in many ways, but I will put the answers together for you now so you may see what seem to be pieces as a whole.

You are not an individual. Everyone that you experience in the world is a part of you. You are aspects of one mind. When I say that the world you experience is made by you, I am not referring to you as an individual. That would indicate that separateness is truth. When I say that the world you experience is made by you, I am referring to all aspects of the mind that believe in separateness. As one aspect of the mind lets go of the belief in separateness, more Light is brought into the whole mind. It helps to rouse the Sonship, but as the Sonship continues to sleep, nightmares of separateness continue in the world.

When I indicate that what you will see will change, the word “see” and the word “perceive” are synonymous. As long as you see a world, you perceive. I am not saying that a violent crime could occur around you and that others would see it and you would not. The body’s eyes will continue to show you the seeming actions within the world of illusion. When I say you will see differently, I mean that you will perceive differently, or to be even more clear, that you will *feel* differently about what you see. Your perspective will be different. Your feelings will be different and therefore, your action will be different.

This message points to true perception, which is still perception, but it feels the presence of God, and it sees the reflection of God in all projections. Bernadette Roberts called this “unity consciousness.”

The Bible teaches that God is in all projections. In the opening of the Book of John, it says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

When an individual awakens to consciousness, the world itself may not be healed, but the individual mind is healed. Therefore, it is able to see the light that “shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” This seeing is the essence of true perception. Although the world may not be renewed to the point of yesterday’s scripture from Isaiah, the one awakened to consciousness sees the real reflected in the world.

We stand together, Christ and I, in peace and certainty of purpose. And in Him is His Creator, as He is in me.

Please read today’s workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

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Lesson 355

What Am I?

Our special theme says, “We do not seek a function that is past the gate of Heaven. Knowledge will return when we have done our part. We are concerned only with giving welcome to truth.”

“Our part” is spiritual practice, like the spiritual practices listed in my tip from Lesson 352. It’s interesting to note, however, that spiritual practice cannot take us across the threshold into the final awakening. We can’t make the crossing the self’s will or effort. Bernadette Roberts wrote about this in the conclusion of her book, “The Experience of No-Self.” She wrote:

Of our own accord we cannot cross the line into the unknown; only God knows if we are ready for such a step, only he can take us across and see us through. In fact, self never crosses the line, it simply ceases to be.

However, it is important to note that she also wrote:

Having made this journey I now see clearly, that a dimension unmistakably exists beyond anything that could be described as self’s union with God... For the contemplative to regard such a union as the final or ultimate consummation of his spiritual life is a grave mistake. He is setting his sight at a midway point, which I now see is too low, too close-in, and too narrow. At this point he may be so centered in

God that he is still subject to the illusion of self's deification...

Whenever possible, it is best to get beyond such a point, even when letting go means surrendering this union with all of its experiences and ensuing qualities of strength, love, certitude, and much more; for as long as there is any feeling, knowledge, or inkling that any self remains, ... we have not gone far enough.

In the first excerpt that I shared from Bernadette's book, she said that we cannot cross the threshold of the final doorway "of our own accord." In the second excerpt, while referring to the state of awakening that the Course calls true perception, she emphasized that even there, it is best to continue surrender and letting go.

It is as NTI Revelation states:

The world is an illusion, and so everything you experience as you let go of the world is illusion also. ... You are to keep moving *by letting go* until you find yourself with nothing left to hold onto.

This reminds me of Mooji's story of the Yogini, who let go of what appeared to be divine experiences in order to awaken to Truth. It also reminds me of Dr. David Hawkins words in the video I shared with you recently. He said:

Having surrendered everything, there was nothing left. ... There was nothing left to surrender. And then came the knowingness, "Yes, except your life." And then I got, "This to must be surrendered to thee, O Lord."

In other words, spiritual practice will not usher us across the threshold to the final awakening, but until the crossing over occurs, spiritual practice is needed **up to and including the last moment on this side of the crossing**. In fact, the closer we are to the crossing over, the more mastery we need in spiritual practice.

One temptation that can occur after achieving the first awakening is that one feels awake and puts aside spiritual practice. However, Bernadette Robert's warns of what can happen if we make this mistake:

At this point [the contemplative] may be so centered in God that he is still subject to the illusion of self's deification...

NTI Revelation echoes this point. It says:

True desire must lead in the last days of the thinking mind, for the thinking mind will try to disguise itself as true desire. For this, you must remain on watch. ... In the hour when true desire is nearly full force, the thinking mind will look for a way to lead you from your true desire, possibly also by leading you to think you are fulfilling it.

This is what “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” points to. Whenever you feel self-satisfaction in the role you have been asked to play, know that role is not true desire. For true desire never leads to a role that is satisfactory to the self. True desire leads only from self to the wholeness of the realization of truth. ...

The only way to pass through the tests of the thinking mind, without being led astray by false desire, is to remain fully focused on true desire now. There is no other way.

And so it is worthwhile to repeat that although spiritual practice will not usher us across the threshold to the final awakening, until the final awakening it is advisable to continue with spiritual practices like surrender, inquiry, meditation and abiding unaffected. That’s because, until the final crossing over occurs, we are vulnerable to the subconscious ego. We need to remain alert through spiritual practice. In fact, the closer we are to the crossing over, the more mastery we need in spiritual practice in order to make ourselves available for the final awakening without turning back or slipping into a delusional false enlightenment.

It is helpful to see spiritual practice and humility as synonymous. Spiritual practice is humility, because through spiritual practice we remain the student. Humility is the opposite of egotistical self-importance. Humility prepares us for God’s final step. It is safe to say that ultimate humility is absolutely necessary for final awakening.

There is no end to all the peace and joy, and all the miracles that I will give, when I accept God’s Word. Why not today?

Please read today’s workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 356

What Am I?

Our special theme says, “Ours are the eyes through which Christ’s vision sees a world redeemed from every thought of sin. Ours are the ears that hear the Voice for God proclaim the world as sinless. Ours the minds that join together as we bless the world.”

What jumps out at me from this excerpt is, “Ours are the eyes ... Ours are the ears ... Ours the minds...” In other words, we are the ones that have the direct experience of awakening.

Direct experience is different from belief, and belief is different from faith.

As we have already seen, faith is important on the spiritual path. We cannot know the direct experience of what lies ahead of us. The fact that it “lies ahead” means it is not our experience yet.

When we have faith in the direct experience of masters, we are motivated to continue this journey so we can find out for ourselves. Faith is a motivating factor.

However, belief has an opposite effect. Belief is intellectual. When we believe something is true, we do not have a driving motivation to find out. We think we know.

It is fair to say that faith has a healthy amount of doubt in it. It isn't the kind of doubt that holds us back. It is the kind of doubt that isn't satisfied until one knows for herself, from her *own* experience.

Belief doesn't doubt in that way, nor has it gone far enough to know for itself. Belief is a type of delusion, where one pretends to know what he doesn't know.

Direct experience is the only means of knowing. It is firsthand experience. For example, the only way to know what a pineapple tastes like is to bite into one. You can never know the taste of a pineapple by reading about it or by listening to others describe it. At best, you can only imagine it.

As another example, most humans who live on earth believe in death. However, no living human knows death as a direct experience. No living human has tasted death directly. Death is perceived indirectly when we see a body. The living sees a body and thinks “death.” Death is an intellectual belief. It is not a direct experience.

Death is an example of a belief.

Awareness is an example of direct experience.

Faith trusts the teachings of masters enough to want to find out, but it seeks the proof of direct experience and will not settle for belief.

It is important for a spiritual aspirant to have enough faith in the teachings to seek direct experience. However, like a scientist, the genuine spiritual aspirant has no use for belief. Belief is seen as the cause of delusion.

Sickness is but another name for sin. Healing is but another name for God. The miracle is thus a call to Him.

Please read today's workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

Meditation Options

[Guided Meditation Audios](#)

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Lesson 357

What Am I?

Our special theme says, "We are the holy messengers of God who speak for Him, and carrying His Word to everyone whom He has sent to us, we learn that it is written on our hearts."

With these words, our special theme points to one of the objectives for Gentle Healing Year 2. I don't mean that we are going to become evangelizers. In fact, I feel it is a mistake to overtly or covertly attempt to convert someone. It's better to allow everyone to be as they are.

What I mean when I say that our special theme points to a Year 2 objective is that we will use words to discover "that [His Word] is written on our hearts." Or said another way, we will use contemplation and writing to discover the clarity that lies within us.

Our first year has been focused on learning from teachings that appear outside of us. Although learning has a place on the spiritual path, learning can only take us so far. The real purpose of the spiritual path is to learn who we are. A part of learning who we are is realizing the wisdom that lies within us.

Over the past several days, I have asked you to select an excerpt from our daily lesson and write based on that excerpt. In Year 2, daily writing will be a key component of the curriculum. Each day you will contemplate a thought from Thoughts of Awakening: 365 Thoughts for Contemplation, and you will write with inner wisdom based on that day's thought. The purpose of this writing is to discover the wisdom that is waiting to be discovered inside of you. (Speaking into a recorder is also an option.)

Although there are similarities in spiritual paths, no two awakening processes are exactly alike. Each one walks a unique spiritual path. Your way is written on your heart, and so you must go within, find it and follow it. Your inner wisdom is your teacher, and it is the key to your awakening.

Nisargadatta Maharaj referred to the outer guru as “time-bound” and “not forever.” He said the outer guru “fulfills his purpose and yields his place to the next.” He continued, “The outer represents the inner; the inner accepts the outer—for a time.”

We could say that the outer guru is like training wheels, which help to get us started but limit how far we can go. When one is ready and the training wheels are removed, one soars to previously unimagined heights with the inner guru.

I do not feel I would be a truly effective teacher if I did not help you become Self-reliant with your inner teacher. Although it is nice to be appreciated, I hope to make myself completely unnecessary within two years. In fact, I hope to make all outer teachers unnecessary for you. For now, I hope you will trust me and do as I say, because it is my intention to effectively hand you off to your inner teacher.

Truth answers every call we make to God, responding first with miracles, and then returning unto us to be itself.

Please read today’s workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 358

What Am I?

Our special theme says, “We bring glad tidings to the Son of God, who thought he suffered. Now is he redeemed. And as he sees the gate of Heaven stand open before him, he will enter in and disappear into the Heart of God.”

Our special theme began with the question, “What am I?” and ended with, “disappear into the Heart of God.” In between that beginning and ending, although we were given words to contemplate, we were not given an answer to the question, “What am I?” That answer comes best in those last few words, “disappear into the Heart of God,” especially in the word “disappear.”

I’d like to share something that was written by Floyd Henderson, a student of Nisargadatta Maharaj. In his book, *The Final Understanding*, Floyd wrote:

Thus, the invitation is (to those ready, and only for those ready) to receive the final understanding...

Go back—follow the trail in order to trace what you think yourself to be. Move back from (8) the conception to (7) a sperm set into motion to spontaneously seek an egg to (6) an act of friction to (5) plant food cells being transformed into sperm and egg cells to (4) plant food being prepared and eaten to (3) plant food being acquired to (2) plants growing to (1) the elements.

Where in that chain—which can be traced back and can be seen to have been repeated for trillions upon trillions of times for millions upon millions of years on this planet—could you possibly claim the existence of any “you-ness” or “You-ness”?

Who would want to make such a claim? Only one motivated by arrogance, ... Only one so trapped in one or more ego-states and in so much egotism that one would want to trace his or her lineage back to some “famous, big name people” and beyond that to “God” or “a god” or “a goddess” or some “Supreme Self.”

It may take time for some of you to contemplate the significance of what Floyd points to in this excerpt. It was more quickly apparent to me, because my dad pointed to this on a hike with me in Southern Missouri about 25 years ago, and I have had ample time to contemplate it since then.

I asked my dad what his spiritual beliefs were. My dad has never been a religious man, so I had no idea what he thought when it came to spirituality. He told me that one day he would die and be buried in the ground; his body would turn to dirt and mix with the soil; plants would grow in that soil; birds and animals would eat the plants, and then they would die and mix with the soil, so on. In that way he would live forever.

My dad was communicating truth. He is not my dad. He is not his body, his personality or his mind. He is not his sense of being human. He is not even the sense of “I am.” He is life, which continues as forms come and go. There is no “me” in life. There is no “you” either. And that is the answer to the question, “What am I?”

Each of us needs to come to this answer through our own unique, genuine awakening process. Therefore, the best our special theme could do to answer the question, “What am I?” is give us this word:

Disappear

When “me” disappears—when even the “I am” of consciousness disappears—then and only then is the answer to, “What am I?” known.

No call to God can be unheard nor left Unanswered. And of this I can be sure; His answer is the one I really want.

Please read today's workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 359

What Am I?

Although our final special theme did not directly answer the question, "What am I?" it has given us some final thoughts to contemplate before *A Course in Miracles Workbook for Students* comes to an end.

We were given these words to contemplate as pointers to what we are:

- Complete and healed and whole
- Guaranteed eternal life
- Love perfected, fear impossible, and joy established without opposite
- The holy home of God Himself
- Sinlessness Itself
- Purity

We were also told:

The truth of what we are is not for words to speak of nor describe. Yet we can realize our function here, and words can speak of this and teach it, too, if we exemplify the words in us. ...

And thus our minds are changed about the aim for which we came, and which we seek to serve.

As the workbook nears its end, we are left with a decision to make. Do we want to practice our function here to the best of our ability so we can prepare ourselves for the final awakening, which is the realization that answers the question, "What am I?"

How committed are we to discovering the answer to the workbook's final question?

God's answer is some form of peace. All pain is healed; all misery replaced with joy. All prison doors are opened. And all sin is understood as merely a mistake.

Please read today's workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 360

Before going to our final lessons, let's review the special themes:

What is Forgiveness? Forgiveness is recognizing yourself as the unaffected Self. Therefore, "what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred."

What is Salvation? Salvation is healing by "failing to support the world of dreams ... it lets illusions go. By not supporting them, it merely lets them quietly go down to dust."

What is the World? It is a "false perception" where "mechanisms of illusion ... go to find what has been given them to seek." Yet, "all perception can be given a new purpose."

What is Sin? Sin is ignorance or outward focus. "Sin is the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined issuing from thoughts that are untrue."

What is the Body? "The body is a fence" that seems to separate us from everything else. It makes duality seem real and makes it seem as if we experience duality directly. However, its purpose can be changed.

What is Christ? Christ is consciousness. It is the process of creation and the unaffected witness of creation. It is what we are. It is our higher Self. (Note: There is a more ultimate reality beyond Christ, compared to which Christ is an illusion.)

What is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is a Judeo-Christian term for spiritual intuition, which issues forth from our Self as consciousness. Its sole purpose is to help us awaken to consciousness. Once this goal is accomplished, its purpose is done. (God takes the last step to awaken us beyond consciousness.)

What is the Real World? The real world is the world as it is seen from the perspective of consciousness. It is a world blessed by forgiven eyes, seen through true perception. The real world is still a dream, but it is a dream that reflects Truth. It prepares us for the next and final awakening.

What is the Second Coming? It is the first awakening, awakening to our Self as consciousness. From this awakening we see with true perception and experience the real world.

What is the Last Judgment? It is the second and final awakening, awakening beyond consciousness into Nirvana. With this step, consciousness itself is seen to be untrue.

What is Creation? “Creation” is a term *A Course in Miracles* uses for eternal reality. It is known after the death of our sense of self as mind-consciousness. It is our true Self beyond any sense of self. It is our actual existence.

What is the Ego? It is the sense of self. The lower ego is the self-centered self, sometimes called the lower self. Usually when people use the term “ego,” they are referring to the lower self. However, the higher Self or “I am presence” is also part of the ego sense of self. The lower self is separation consciousness, and the higher Self is unity consciousness. Both the lower and higher selves are transcended when the final awakening occurs.

What is a Miracle? Miracles are shifts in perception that move one from the lower self to the higher Self. Some people refer to these shifts as awakenings, although each shift is a subset of the total awakening experience. Awakening to consciousness (the higher Self) may be gradual or sudden and varies greatly among individuals.

What am I? The answer to this question can be known as a direct experience when the sense of self disappears completely.

Peace be to me, the holy Son of God. Peace to my brother, who is one with me. Let all the world be blessed with peace through us.

Please read today’s workbook lesson in full. Notice a phrase, sentence or excerpt that you feel particularly attracted to and go into it more deeply through writing.

Meditation Options

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Final Lessons

Welcome to the final five lessons of *A Course in Miracles Workbook for Students*.

As we wind down our first year of Gentle Healing, we prepare for our second year. The final lesson, which will be with you for five days, is the perfect beginning of Year 2. As we go into the second year of Gentle Healing, we go into a year that has three primary focuses:

1. Coming to know and follow your individual inner teacher.
2. Purifying false beliefs and unwholesome conditioning.
3. Becoming increasingly familiar with awareness as your Self.

The final lesson, which is repeated for five days, is a lesson of surrender and trust. Surrender and trust are the very skills needed to accomplish the objectives for Year 2. Therefore, I encourage you to spend the next five days immersing yourself in the final lesson. I recommend taking breaks to read it slowly and contemplatively several times a day. If you feel to, you can also write based on a phrase, sentence or excerpt from the lesson that you feel particularly attracted to. Writing will allow you to go into the heart of the lesson more deeply. If you happen to write on all five days, you may experience a deepening each and every day.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 362

Final Lessons

The Introduction to the final lesson says, “His is the only way to find the peace that God has given us. ... It is His ending to the dream we seek and not our own.”

As you contemplate the final lesson throughout the day today, it is also helpful to contemplate this excerpt from the Introduction. We seek “His ending” and “not our own.”

Recently I read *The Final Understanding* by Floyd Henderson. In that book, he wrote:

So many take their favorite teaching method and its teachings as the final step, adopting a religious or spiritual persona and fixating in that role for the remainder of the manifestation...doing spiritual stuff and eating spiritual stuff and wearing spiritual stuff and—in all of their spiritual doingsness—living in what they take to be a most non-

natural, supernatural, “elevated,” “higher” (and yes, “separate and different”) manner.

In other words, the ego can play the spiritual game. It can believe the teachings and imagine itself living them. The ego gets a sense of satisfaction out of being the spiritual one. However, we aren’t seeking a new game for the ego to play. We do not seek an elevated, spiritual persona or even an elevated, spiritual community. We seek “His ending” and “not our own.”

Let humility be the name of our game. We are students until the very end (even if we happen to be placed in a teaching role).

Meditation Options

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Lesson 363

Final Lessons

The Introduction to the final lesson says, “Let us together follow in the way that truth points out to us. ... And to this purpose let us dedicate our minds, directing all our thoughts to serve the function of salvation. Unto us the aim is given to forgive the world.”

Yesterday I addressed the spiritual persona. Today, I would like to address the political persona. It is a tricky ego persona that gets in the way of “directing all our thoughts to serve the function of salvation” and keeps us from forgiving the world.

Spiritual students sometimes lose all clarity when it comes to politics or pet political issues like the environment, women’s rights, minorities’ rights, etcetera. They may argue that their emotional involvement is coming from compassion, but there is a distinct difference between compassion and the political ego.

Compassion comes from the right-mind. Compassion can move us to become involved in world-issues in some helpful way, but it is humble in feeling and non-judgmental in thought. It accepts the world as it is, does not pick one side over another and acts with right-action too. This is a balance the ego cannot maintain.

In contrast, the political ego is typically aggressive in some way. Its thought system is filled with judgment and attack.

For example, compassion for displaced refugees might give money to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) or volunteer in refugee camps, but it is able to do these things without attacking the President for his refugee policy.

On the other hand, the political ego is very judgmental. It feels right in its point of view and sees others as wrong. In fact, the tricky political ego often does nothing at all to help; it only attacks. It might attack the President in Facebook for his refugee policy without taking any positive action or giving any money to help people who are currently having the refugee experience. The political ego is not as concerned with helping the world as it pretends. Its primary interest is taking a stand. In its own way, it wages war from its point of view.

To be moved by compassion without taking a stand is an aspect of humility. A stand, regardless of what the stand is, is ego's way, not salvation's way.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 364

Final Lessons

The Introduction to the final lesson says, "It is our function to remember Him on earth, as it is given us to be His Own completion in reality. ... And shall we not forgive our brother, who can offer this to us? He is the way, the truth, and life that shows the way to us. In him resides salvation, offered us through our forgiveness, given unto him."

As we approach the gate to Heaven, one thing that will show up in our path along the way are challenging personalities, those that we are willing to shut outside of our heart. Or, if we are not willing to go that far, we are at least willing to disregard them as something less than God. For this tendency, we need to be wary.

Love is a matter for the heart, not the mind. The inner teacher knows how to love. The mind and our prior conditioning does not. That means that whenever we face a challenging personality, we must rely heavily on inner intuition and not rely on the mind at all.

Our thinking is the ego. It's purpose for any challenging personality that we come across is to **keep us securely locked within our own false personality**. If you look carefully, you can feel your false personality balloon up when you attend to thoughts about a challenging personality. You may be filled with anxiety, fear, guilt,

unworthiness, anger, annoyance, control, righteousness or some other feeling, but it definitely fills up.

Know that every challenging personality you meet is a chance to enhance the ego or deflate it, and then turn carefully, quietly and consistently to inner guidance regarding how you are to be with this one.

Meditation Options

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Lesson 365

Final Lessons

The Introduction to our final lesson says, “We come in honesty to God and say we did not understand, and ask Him to help us learn His lessons, through the Voice of His Own Teacher.”

We are here to let go of our self, which means we cannot rely on our self at all. Clear reasoning can see that as long as we rely on our self, we cannot let go of our self. This is the purpose of coming to know the inner teacher. It gives us something to follow other than the self-centered self.

Most people are not overtly familiar with the inner teacher, because there have been many times in our lives when we dismissed it in favor of our own thinking. Each time we chose our thoughts over intuition, intuition was repressed a little more. That means our thinking is very conscious while our spiritual intuition may be deeply buried beneath the ego. However, this process can be reversed.

By wanting to follow intuition more than thinking, by seeking intuition within and by following intuition when we recognize it, we invite intuition back into our conscious awareness.

As we move forward with Gentle Healing, be prepared to put your thinking aside. Be prepared to put your self aside. To quote Nisargadatta Maharaj:

Try to be, only to be. The all-important word is "try". Allot enough time daily for sitting quietly and trying, just trying, to go beyond the personality with its addictions and obsessions. Don't ask how, it cannot be explained. You just keep on trying until you succeed. If you persevere, there can be no failure. What matters supremely is sincerity, earnestness; you must really have had surfeit of being the person you are; now see the urgent need of being free of this

unnecessary self-identification with a bundle of memories and habits.
This steady resistance against the unnecessary is the secret of success.

Intuition is the alternative to “unnecessary self-identification.”

“Steady resistance against the unnecessary” is not thinking, speaking or acting from self-identification; instead, rest until intuition is known, and then follow the guidance that comes from intuition.

Meditation Options

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The Epilogue

This isn't an end; it is a new beginning. I have stated before that Year 2 will be focused on following the inner teacher. The Epilogue shares this same emphasis. Before we close *A Course in Miracles* and move on to our next step, let's contemplate some final ideas from the Epilogue.

Whatever troubles you, be certain that He [the inner teacher] has the answer, and will gladly give it to you, if you simply turn to Him and ask it of Him.

As we move forward with Gentle Healing, let's embrace the opportunity for purification and clarity. Whenever you are upset, turn to your inner teacher. Ask questions in trust that you will receive answers from within. Even if an answer does not come right away, trust that it will, and wait for it. You might sit and wait, as Adyashanti did when he wrote with inner wisdom, or you might go to other things while leaving the question open in your heart, knowing an answer will come in a form that you will recognize. Do not try to figure out or think up an answer for yourself. Wait for the gift of an answer, and an answer will come that is beyond the limited mental self, an answer that will take you further into healing and awakening.

You are as certain of arriving home as is the pathway of the sun laid down before it rises, ... For it can not be possible to change the course of those whom God has called to Him. Therefore, obey your will, and follow Him Whom you accepted as your voice, to speak of what you really want and really need.

The confusion that we suffer from is confusion regarding what we are. When we listen to our mental self and believe our emotional self, that confusion continues.

When we trust our intuitive self and follow it, we walk away from confusion and into clarity.

If we feel that the mind and emotions are “me”, and we fear that following intuition may result in some sacrifice of what “I” want, we are still very confused about what we are. If we believe that idea and listen to our thinking over intuition, we cling to confusion.

Before beginning our second year of Gentle Healing, it is good to contemplate what we want now. Are we ready to lean on intuition instead of our thinking and emotions? Do we want to listen to the Subtle Within and follow it as we let our familiar self squirm, weaken and fade?

Let Him prepare you further.

There is more to come for each of us on this journey of awakening. None of us know what lies ahead, nor do we know the experiences we need to prepare us for the next shift or realization. Therefore, it is helpful to trust everything that comes while leaning on the inner teacher completely.

You will be told exactly what God wills for you each time there is a choice to make.

We do not need to make choices anymore. This is good news! However, if you are anything like me, you will need to learn not to make choices. We were taught how to think and make choices; no one taught us how to not make choices. However, the universe will take care of itself, and our role will be given to us through intuition if we give up making choices and become the observer of everything that unfolds.

... ask His Will in everything we do.

Of course, to move beyond choice completely, this is the habit we need to cultivate. We need to remember to ask, “What am I to do now?” Guidance can become a new habit, but we need to put effort into cultivating that habit first.

As we go forward, we will most likely listen to the mental and emotional, familiar, self-centered self sometimes, and to the mysterious, intuitive self other times. Our goal is to live from the former less and less while learning to depend on the latter more and more. Let’s commit ourselves to this goal today, and let’s work towards it in Year 2 with conscious effort.

Meditation Options

Note: This is the last time I will put the meditation options at the bottom of the tips. For easy access, please bookmark the following links:

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