

NOTE: This sample includes the first 30 ACIM lessons from A COURSE IN MIRACLES WORKBOOK FOR DUMMIES in “dummies formatting and notes to each lesson.”

A Course In Miracles Workbook For Dummies

By Thomas Wakechild

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Forward by Jon Mundy: Why Study the Workbook of A Course in Miracles?

One of the things that makes A Course in Miracles unique among spiritual disciplines is its Workbook with its 365 lessons, or exercises. If the Course consisted of only the Text, it would not have become as important as it has. It would still be an interesting book. We could discuss the depth, and the height of the ideas, but we would be missing out on the practical application.

“Do you believe that guilt is hell? If you did, you would see at once how direct and simple the text is, and you would not need a workbook at all. No one needs practice to gain what is already his.”W-39.2:4-6

On three separate occasions the Course says, “Guilt is hell.” Being separated from God is hell. The ego tries to convince us that we are not a part of God and this leads us to sorrow and sadness. The purpose of A Course in Miracles is to help us remember what we are. Spirit, our true identity, need not be taught because it is changeless and eternal. Our “real thoughts” are the thoughts we think with God.

The ego thought system, however, having been learned must now be “unlearned,” in order for us to find our way Home. We have been taught that we are mortal bodies trapped in an ego ridden mind. In truth, you are not an ego and you are not a body. No one is. How could a fantasy be true? The “work” of the Course involves our unlearning what we are not so that we might remember, or better “re-cognize,” the truth of who we already are.

In the first chapter of the Course, it says that it is “a course in mind training.” All real learning necessarily involves attention and study and we have a number of “lessons” we need to learn. The more the Course is studied and the principles applied, the more “miracles” happen and things work out naturally, for the good, “the way they are supposed to.”

“Miracles are natural, when they don’t happen something has gone wrong.” T-1.I.6

Helen Schucman, the scribe of the Course, was an academician; thus, the Course includes a Textbook, a Workbook, a Teacher’s Manual, and two pamphlets. If we read the Text over and again, we will gain a lot of very helpful information. However, in order to really learn and absorb the content of the Course, we must do what it asks us to do. We need to “work” the Workbook in order for the Holy Spirit to find a way to work with and through us, helping us awaken to the memory of who we already are. When Helen complained: “this Course isn’t working.” Jesus said, “Why don’t you do what I’m asking you to do so you can hear my voice even better?”

The Workbook lessons start off with a bang. It pulls no punches. Right away we are thrown into the river of Truth, and we must learn to swim — learn to see things differently.

Look at the first two lessons:

1. Nothing I see means anything.
2. I have given everything I see, all the meaning that it has for me.

Initially, the first lesson in and of itself doesn’t seem to make sense. However, by the second lesson, we already understand that whatever we see is total our responsibility. The reason “nothing I see means anything” is because whatever meaning I perceive, is the meaning I have chosen to give it. The Lessons begin by helping us to let go of the old ways of seeing thus helping us to purify and clear the mind of ego thoughts. The ego-mind is projective, lazy, irresponsible, captious and faultfinding. We need, therefore, to do these Workbook “exercises”

as we have to “undoing” the ego’s lies, in order to make room for the Truth. As soon as the lies are gone, the truth floods in to take its place.

Principle No. 7 of the 50 Miracles Principles says, “Miracles are everyone’s right but purification is necessary first.” First, we have to clean house: “If you are feeling depressed, start cleaning.” There is something about setting our world in order that helps to bring the mind in order. We start in the simplest way then by “undoing” or “unwinding” the mind from its tangle of fear-based misperceptions.

Ultimately, the whole purpose of a miracle is the undoing of fear. Fear drives us into fragmentation and separation from each other and ever deeper into insanity which, in terms of the Course, can be understood as separation from God. Thus, the Workbook lessons are designed to help us undo fear, by learning how to forgive and how to listen more consistently to the Holy Spirit — the Voice for God.

Loving Unconditionally

A student came to one of my ongoing classes looking for something more than he was able to find in traditional Christianity. He was finding some of his relationship disturbing to his peace of mind. His best friends, he said, were two dogs that he knew loved him unconditionally. He kept asking about forgiveness. “Yes,” he would say, “but how do you do it?” I told him that if he really wanted to learn the Course, he would have to do the Workbook lessons. The Text he enjoyed, but the Workbook looked too much like “work.” Finally, he quit the class saying that the Course was not working for him. As we begin to do this work, we will encounter strong resistance. Once we’ve misidentified with the ego—thinking it’s who we are—it takes a lot of willingness to let it go.

There is only one rule in the whole Course. “Do not undertake to do more than one set of exercises a day.” (W-in.2:6) You can spend more than one day on one lesson. You can go slower than one lesson per day, just don’t try to do it faster. The ego has been eons in the making, and it will not come undone in a day. We need to be patient with ourselves. The body is “a learning device.” Time is a “learning device,” and we are here in these bodies, in time, in order to learn a lesson — to heal the illusion of separation. So it is that we must work things out in the mind and then also thought these bodies, in our relationship, in this world, and in time. The good news is that the Course is steadily leading us to the memory of God and thus to Heaven.

Re-learning

One of Freud’s greatest discoveries was the amazing depth of the unconscious mind and the tremendous fear and anxieties we keep hidden. The ego’s game is all about repression, denial, and projection. “Whatever you do, don’t look within,” or so says the ego. The Course, on the other hand, it is about looking past the ego to the real truth buried deep within. Five-hundred and thirty-eight times the Course asks us to “look.” Look at our projections; look beyond the obvious; look upon the world as a means of healing the separation; and look with Love upon all things.

We are literally retraining our minds to see differently – to come to a more peaceful and accepting point of view. In order to do so, we not only need to exercise, we also need to exorcise all the false beliefs we hold about ourselves so that we are able to remember the Truth. We need the help of the Holy Spirit, who shines the light that exposes the ego’s hidden, fear-based error.

We have a great deal of work to do to undo illusion, and we must explore the depth of our illusion before we can let illusion go.

“You want salvation. You want to be happy. You want peace. You do not have them now, because your mind is totally undisciplined, and you cannot distinguish between joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, love and fear. You are now learning how to tell them apart. And great indeed will be your reward.” W-20.2:5-8

Discipline and the Mind

The word “discipline” comes from the word disciple. A disciple is a follower of a teacher or a teaching. The teacher, be it a book or a person, brings a teaching. The unhealed mind is totally undisciplined. Being undisciplined, we have work to do, which requires time and effort, before we can be healed and whole. We have to purify our perception to remove fear. Einstein said that a wastebasket was a scientist most important tool. In a similar way a lots of illusory thoughts have to be tossed away before we get to the one truth that endures forever.

How much time do we give to compulsions or hungers of the body we “seem” unable to control? And, who is the “we” who cannot control them? When we compulsively follow the ego thought system, we dissociate (separate from Truth) and get caught in a projection of our misperceptions. Or, we become side-tracked by some habituated activity, and we do not even attempt to try to control our minds. An addict does not attempt to control a craving. The addiction has won.

We’ve all heard the truism about how to get to Carnegie Hall — practice, practice, practice. In order for any serious spiritual discipline to work, it must be practiced. In the practice is the learning. Learning the Course is like learning how to play a musical instrument or learning how to speak a foreign language. There is a lot to learn. Developing fluency or learning how to play an instrument well is oh so rewarding. Keep it up and one might even become a maestro. It may look tough, but doing this work is ultimately “oh, so rewarding.” Once the “seeming” battle with the ego is over, we get to go Home.

Practical Suggestions

The Workbook provides “practical instruction” and every-day advice for an entire year. Begin and end the day with the Workbook. You might want to get an extra copy and place it on the nightstand by your bed or in your bathroom. Of course, now you always can find a copy on your I Pad or your phone.

In Lesson 94, we are asked to remind ourselves hourly: “I am as God created me. I am His Son eternally.” When the lesson is this intense, it’s helpful to have some “device” to help you remember. The daily lesson could work like a mantra. Do the lesson first thing in the morning. Some folks keep the Course in the bathroom next to the toilet where they begin the day in contemplation. See if you can remember the lesson while you are in the shower, see if you can remember the lesson while driving to work.

In order not to lose it, write the lesson for the day on a post-it note and paste it on the side of your computer screen, put it in your wallet or on the dashboard of your car or on the mirror in your bathroom. You can also listen to the daily lesson on the computer, perhaps while doing your yoga. Or, you can listen to the lesson on your headphones while taking a walk.

As a single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we walk again and again. To make a deep

mental path, we must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives. – American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

Doing It Again

After you've finished the Workbook once, there is nothing that says you have to go back and do it again, but folks who do it again find it ever more deeply helpful. Things they had missed the first time now become clearer. It is inevitable, if you do it a second or third time through, it will take you deeper. One day, one of my students said, "I'm just beginning to realize how incredible deep this is." And I said, "Oh yes, incredibly deep. It just keeps getting deeper and clearer. It is after all going all the way Home."

We are all going to the same Home, and we need mental discipline to get back to the Truth which paradoxically, we never left. We are going to Heaven, and the way to get there is to do what Jesus did, to have the clarity of vision to see what He and Buddha and all the other enlightened ones have seen. Our goal is enlightenment and our real home is Heaven. It is not a place. Heaven is merely an awareness of perfect oneness (T-18.VI.1:5-6). In Lesson 49, God's Voice speaks to me all through the day we read.

"You do not live here. We are trying to reach your real home. We are trying to reach the place where you are truly welcome. We are trying to reach God." W-49.4:508

As we do the lessons in the Workbook, they become more and more gentle and trusting. As we come to know and understand what we are doing, we move ever deeper into the Knowledge of who we already are. The final lesson ends with,

"This holy instant would I give to You. Be You in charge. For I would follow You, certain that Your direction brings me peace." W-365

Lovingly,

Jon Mundy of www.miraclesmagazine.org

Preface

Would you like to end blame, shame, guilt and fear from controlling your life?
If your spirituality cannot bring you peace, joy and happiness today, what good is it?
Must your happiness await some future fantasy land that never comes?
These are questions that demand an immediate answer.

You deserve better. At least I think so and so does Jesus as he states in A Course in Miracles. Your spirituality should teach you how to respond appropriately to circumstances in your life without compromising your spiritual values or losing your inner peace.

This book will be the practical guide that helps you live a happy self-fulfilled life today. Often, ACIM's promise of inner peace and joy remains an unfulfilled promise. Why? Because most people never take the time to complete the Workbook Lessons. Instead, their ego traps them into trying to decipher the complex ACIM Text. The ACIM Workbook Lessons are designed to bypass the egoic mind and open your heart to the truth. Yet, most either ignore, struggle or fail to grasp the true meaning and value of these lessons but you can now change that.

This book will help you achieve the inner peace, joy and happiness that you seek and deserve. All of the 365 lessons are covered in this book. Each lesson utilizes the "Dummies format" that replaces unclear references and pronouns with their proper antecedents. Any substitutions are clearly shown in **bold print** for easy reference to the original workbook.

Each lesson is then followed by an explanatory note to aid in your understanding and implementation of the exercise. In this modified format, these lessons become the vehicle for ending the blame, shame and guilt games that once dominated your life. The richness of these lessons now becomes apparent, understandable but more importantly, practical. You now have the tools you need to be the agent for change in your life. You no longer have any excuse not to complete these exercises and gain the insight that they provide.

This book's focus is on you. Therefore, it provides the numerous tools you need to help uncover the blocks that are preventing the flow of love into your daily life. By completing the workbook lessons, your heart will be open through an experiential learning process. This knowing will allow you to automatically begin implementing the principles of ACIM into your daily life.

ACIM states that we are all going to make it. But aren't you sick and tired of being sick and tired? You deserve better. To live in fear is not to live. This is not God's Will for you. Change is only one choice away. This is your time to choose again. To reawaken to the truth of who you really are. The <Now> is the only time in which a different choice is possible. The past is over and the future a mere fantasy. Only in the present can you make a different choice.

Let us go on this journey of reawakening together. This material can help you just like it has helped many others to take control of their own lives. This world can become your playschool. It can become the place that you visited to learn, grow and have fun. Life does not have to be a life-and-death struggle. So, as you use this book to reawaken to the truth, let's have some fun discovering who you really are.

Introduction to ACIM's Workbook for Students

Introduction

W-in.1. A theoretical foundation such as the **ACIM** text provides is necessary as a framework to make the exercises in this workbook meaningful. 2 Yet it is doing the exercises that will make the goal of the course possible. 3 An untrained mind can accomplish nothing. 4 It is the purpose of this workbook to train your mind to think along the lines the **ACIM** text sets forth.

W-in.2. The exercises are very simple. 2 **The exercises** do not require a great deal of time, and it does not matter where you do **the exercises**. 3 **The exercises** need no preparation. 4 The training period is one year. 5 The exercises are numbered from 1 to 365. 6 Do not undertake to do more than one set of exercises a day.

W-in.3. The workbook is divided into two main sections, the first **part** dealing with the undoing of the way you see now, and the second **part deals** with the acquisition of true perception. 2 With the exception of the review periods, each day's exercises are planned around one central idea, which is stated first. 3 This is followed by a description of the specific procedures by which the idea for the day is to be applied.

W-in.4. The purpose of the workbook is to train your mind in a systematic way to a different perception of everyone and everything in the world. 2 The exercises are planned to help you generalize the lessons, so that you will understand that each of **the lessons are** equally applicable to everyone and everything you see.

W-in.5. Transfer of training in true perception does not proceed as does transfer of the training of the world. 2 If true perception has been achieved in connection with any person, situation or event, total transfer to everyone and everything is certain. 3 On the other hand, one exception held apart from true perception makes **the accomplishments of true perception** anywhere impossible.

W-in.6. The only general rules to be observed throughout, then, are: First, that the exercises be practiced with great specificity, as will be indicated. 2 This **specificity** will help you to generalize the ideas involved to every situation in which you find yourself, and to everyone and everything in **that situation**. 3 Second, be sure that you do not decide for yourself that there are some people, situations or things to which the ideas are inapplicable. 4 This **claim that there are exceptions to the general application** will interfere with transfer of training. 5 The very nature of true perception is that **true perception** has no limits **and thus, has no exceptions**. 6 **True perception** is the opposite of the way you see now.

W-in.7. The overall aim of the exercises is to increase your ability to extend the ideas you will be practicing to include everything. 2 This **ability to extend the ideas to include everything** will require no effort on your part. 3 The exercises themselves meet the conditions necessary for this kind of transfer.

W-in.8. Some of the ideas the workbook presents you will find hard to believe, and others **ideas** may seem to be quite startling. 2 This does not matter. 3 You are merely asked to apply the ideas as you are directed to do. 4 You are not asked to judge **the ideas** at all. 5 You are asked only to use **the ideas**. 6 It is their use **of the ideas** that will give **the ideas** meaning to you, and will show you that **these ideas** are true.

W-in.9. Remember only **to apply the ideas**; you need not believe the ideas, you need not accept them, and you need not even welcome **the ideas**. 2 Some of **the ideas** you may actively resist. 3 None of this will matter, or decrease **the ideas'** efficacy. 4 But do not allow yourself to make exceptions in applying the ideas the workbook contains, and whatever your reactions to the ideas may be, use **the ideas**. 5 Nothing more than using **these ideas** is required.

Notes to the Introduction to ACIM's Workbook for Students

For students that have never completed the entire 365 days of ACIM's workbook lessons, your goal should be to get through the lessons rather than linger on one lesson in hopes of doing that lesson perfectly. You do not need to achieve some specific result from a prior lesson before you can proceed to the next lesson. These lessons are designed to bypass the head and enter your heart. They provide an experiential learning process. You can only gain that experience by doing the lessons. Often the question that puzzled you now will be answered by completing a future lesson.

Once you have accomplished getting through the entire workbook, you can always go back and spend as much time as you feel you need on any particular lesson. The only original stipulation is that you do not attempt to complete more than one lesson per day since each is designed to provide an experience that will form the foundation for future lessons. Experiences require time to be assimilated into your consciousness.

An exception to this rule of only one lesson per day might be if you are trying to keep up with a class or group. If you missed a day, I would suggest you just read all prior missed lessons and get back on track with your group. If you are doing these lessons on your own and you miss a few days, I would suggest that you simply reread the last completed lesson and then proceed to do the next new lesson on that same day. This will get you moving forward again.

Do not backtrack or start from the beginning even if there is a large gap between your prior lessons. The objective is to complete the entire workbook once. You can always go back at a later date. Many students, including myself, will repeat these lessons on an annual basis. Once again, perfection is not required. Do not allow missing a day, month or even a year be the excuse for not resuming where you left off.

Although you may wish to read the entire book without doing the actual lessons, this practice will circumvent the experiential learning process that the exercises were designed to teach. Although your intellectual understanding will be enhanced, your learning will be incomplete. To know and not to be, is not to know. If you choose to read the entire contents of this book in full first, do not shortchange yourself by not actually taking the time to do these lessons on a daily basis.

With that said, let us begin.

LESSON 1.

Nothing I see in this room [on this street, from this window, in this place] means anything.

W-1.1. Now look slowly around you, and practice applying this idea **that nothing I see means anything** very specifically to whatever you see:

- 2 This table does not mean anything.
- 3 This chair does not mean anything.
- 4 This hand does not mean anything.
- 5 This foot does not mean anything.
- 6 This pen does not mean anything.

W-1.2. Then look farther away from your immediate area, and apply the idea to a wider range:

- 2 That door does not mean anything.
- 3 That body does not mean anything.
- 4 That lamp does not mean anything.
- 5 That sign does not mean anything.
- 6 That shadow does not mean anything

W-1.3. Notice that these statements, **nothing I see means anything**, are not arranged in any order, and **that these statements** make no allowance for differences in the kinds of things to which they are applied. 2 That is the purpose of the exercise. 3 The statement, **nothing I see means anything**, should merely be applied to anything you see. 4 As you practice the idea for the day, use **this idea that nothing I see means anything** totally indiscriminately. 5 Do not attempt to apply **the statement that nothing I see means anything** to everything you see, for these exercises should not become ritualistic. 6 Only be sure that nothing you see is specifically excluded. 7 One thing is like another as far as the application of the idea is concerned.

W-1.4. Each of the first three lessons should not be done more than twice a day each, preferably morning and evening. 2 Nor should **the first three lessons** be attempted for more than a minute or so, unless that entails a sense of hurry. 3 A comfortable sense of leisure is essential.

Notes to Lesson # 1

Nothing I see in this room [on this street, from this window, in this place] means anything.

Do this exercise and notice your reaction to this idea.

Did certain items invoke different reactions?

Was it easy or did some objects create a state of tension or disbelief?

Just note your response and move on to the next item.

Have fun with the experience and stop judging whether you are doing it right and getting the “right” answer. It is being and having the experience that we are after.

Some students may find the notion that nothing you see means anything to be very upsetting. You see a picture of a loved one and emotions well up. How can that picture be meaningless?

Yet, if someone else observed that same picture, they would have an entirely different reaction. The picture is the same, so why the different reaction?

Why, because each observer has a different interrelationship with that picture in question. It is the observer's own mind that gives the meaning to the picture, not the item itself.

The world you observe is a world of perception, not one of physical reality.

Perception requires the belief in separation. Perception implies both an observer and something to observe. This duality and separation is an underlying assumption with all things you see. If there was nothing outside yourself to observe, what would there be to see?

When we realize this, we should recognize the fact that an item by itself means nothing unless you are there to observe it. Without your awareness of the item at hand, it would not appear on your radar screen. It is your mind that empowers the object with any meaning you give it.

This is similar to the question, "If a tree falls and there is nothing to hear it, does not make a sound?" The answer is no. You need the interaction of the vibrating air current with an eardrum to make a sound.

It is your interaction with your perceived world that gives an item meaning to you. A rock can have existed for millions of years but until you choose to place your conscious attention upon it and observe it, the million year old rock means nothing to you. It only becomes meaningful to you when you have developed some relationship with it.

Question: Who is really in control over the meaning of what is observed?

Question: In this world of private individual perception, is it the object or the observer that gives the object the meaning that the observer holds to be true?

Question: Must both the object and the observer agree with whatever meaning each perceives to be true or can they differ?

LESSON 2

I have given everything I see in this room [on this street, from this window, in this place] all the meaning that it has for me.

W-2.1. The exercises with this idea, **I have given everything I see all the meaning that it has for me**, are the same as those for the first one, which was **nothing I see means anything**. 2 Begin with the things that are near you, and apply the idea to whatever your glance rests on. 3 Then increase the range outward. 4 Turn your head so that you include whatever is on either side. 5 If possible, turn around and apply the idea, **I have given everything I see all the meaning that it has for me**, to what was behind you. 6 Remain as indiscriminate as possible in selecting subjects for the idea, **I have given everything I see all the meaning that it has for me, in this application**. Do not concentrate on anything in particular, and do not attempt to include everything you see in a given area, or you will introduce strain.

W-2.2. Merely glance easily and fairly quickly around you, trying to avoid selection by size, brightness, color, material, or relative importance to you. 2 Take the subjects simply as you see them. 3 Try to apply the exercise with equal ease to a body or a button, a fly or a floor, an arm or an apple. 4 The sole criterion for applying the idea **that I have given everything I see all the meaning that it has for me** to anything you see is merely that your eyes have lighted on **that object**. 5 Make no attempt to include anything particular, but be sure that nothing is specifically excluded.

Notes to Lesson # 2

Lesson # 2: I have given what I see all the meaning it has for me.

As stated in the previous exercise, the world that we claim to physically observe is actually a world of individual perception. In this case, the perception always comes from the unique viewpoint of the observer. This means that the observer has the ability to color or interpret what the eyes physically see. Your mind determines the meaning that you place on everything you see. It is your own mind that places value to what you perceive. Normally, these perceptions are drawn from past relationships that the perceiver has had with the object. Physiologists tell us that physical sight is not like a camera lens. A camera lens takes in the entire area within the range of its lens. Unlike an objective camera, our mind actually has to make a subjective choice upon what it chooses to focus. It is this subjective choice that brings the object into our awareness. Because of this, individual perception differs based on each party's past interrelationships and beliefs that they have had with the object in question. The notion of good or bad are relative concepts and not fixed since each perceiver will color their own world based on their past relationships and viewpoints.

In doing this exercise, perhaps you focused on something that was unfamiliar to you. For example, while I was doing this exercise my eyes focused upon something that was hanging from a lamp. It was what I would call a trinket. It is a decorative item that my wife places on various objects for aesthetic purposes. These trinkets have no real purpose other than perhaps to bring beauty or add a decorative element to the object it adorns. When I spotted this trinket it really had little or no meaning for me since I really lacked any relationship with it. As such, it was of questionable value or purpose. I was unable to name the object in question, and therefore it had little or no meaning to me

When you name something, you define it. When you define it, you limit it. You have now assigned a specific purpose or function and from that moment on, that is how you will generally perceive it. You have pigeonholed the object's function and purpose by the name that you assign. Due to the limitation placed on the object through your naming it, you can no longer see that it could have multiple functions and purposes.

Question: Have you ever come across some object that you had no past relationship with?

Question: When confronted with some object that you are unfamiliar with, do you approach that unknown object with caution, curiosity, avoidance or fear?

Question: How do you approach people that you are unfamiliar with?

LESSON 3

I do not understand anything I see in this room [on this street, from this window, in this place].

W-3.1. Apply this idea, **I do not understand anything I see**, in the same way as the previous ones, without making distinctions of any kind. **The previous idea from lesson #1 was: Nothing I see in _____ means anything and from Lesson #2: I have given everything I see all the meaning that it has for me.** 2 Whatever you see becomes a proper subject for applying the idea. 3 Be sure that you do not question the suitability of anything for application of the idea, **which is I do not understand anything I see.** 4 These are not exercises in judgment. 5 Anything is suitable if you see it. 6 Some of the things you see may have emotionally charged meaning for you. 7 **If the item has an emotionally charged meaning for you**, try to lay such feelings aside, and merely use these things exactly as you would anything else.

W-3.2. The point of the exercises is to help you clear your mind of all past associations, to see things exactly as they appear to you now, and to realize how little you really understand about **the item in question.** 2 It is therefore essential that you keep a perfectly open mind, unhampered by judgment, in selecting the things to which the idea for the day, **I do not understand anything I see**, is to be applied. 3 For this purpose one thing is like another; equally suitable and therefore equally useful.

Notes to Lesson #3

I do not understand anything I see.

Question: Have you ever not been able to see the forest through the trees?

Physiologists tell us that our physical seeing is not similar to what is observed through a camera lens. Physical eyesight is a rather complicated process that only takes in a very small percentage of what we normally would call our full field of vision. What we actually observe are small portions of the total field that is observable with large gaps in the full field left unaccounted. Our mind then filters that limited visual stimulus and fills in the gaps with what the mind believes should be out there based on prior experiences. Both physiologists and psychologists tell us that what we claim we objectively see tends to be a predetermined thought confirmation process that confirms our mind's preconceived notions and beliefs. Eyesight is not the objective reality that we claim it to be. This is why criminologists tell us eyewitness testimony is highly inaccurate. This inaccuracy is due to the mind's prejudicial beliefs and the physical senses inability to accurately report historical data. This is why criminologists discount subjective eyewitness reports and instead look for objective non-human evidence.

The physical senses actually have a very limited range and focus. The focus is determined by what the mind has chosen to place its awareness upon. Although we like to believe that our mind has the ability to multitask, this capability is highly overrated.

Example: In clinical research, when a test subject was given an assignment to observe a particular activity that was taking place in a room, over 60% failed to observe the entrance and exit of a man dressed in a gorilla suit walking through that same room. The observer's mind was laser focused on the assigned tasks and failed to observe the obvious gorilla in the room. The test

subjects were unaware of the big picture and, therefore, they were not privy to what was actually happening in the entire room.

Because of our limited focus, we do not truly understand the multiple faceted interrelationships or big picture that is actually unfolding before us. This lack of big picture perspective limits our understanding of what is actually taking place

Note: It is important to note that when A Course in Miracles uses the term seeing, it is different than the term vision. In everyday usage, the terms seeing and vision would be interchangeable, but this is not the case for A Course in Miracles' purpose. When ACIM uses the term seeing, it is referencing the subjective physical sight process with all the subjective filtering that has occurred through the perceiver's egoic mind. Because of this filtering, what we refer to as seeing is actually a process in which the egoic mind has predetermined what it expects to observe outside itself. The egoic mind then assigns to the physical senses the task of looking outside itself to find something that will confirm that its predetermined beliefs are correct. Thus, the physical senses ignore any contradictory evidence and only report back information that supports its preconceived belief. The physical senses are not objective but rather they are thought confirmation devices.

The term vision, unlike seeing, involves the objective verification of reality. In this case, it would be more like a camera lens that captures the entire picture without preconceived notions or limitations. It does not go through the filtering process of the egoic mind. No subjective, made up, egoic story colors the observation.

For our purposes, I have used the term egoic mind so let me explain what I mean by that. The egoic mind comes from the belief that separation is both a physical, mental and spiritual reality. It is predicated on the belief that you are the body and the body is you. It claims that you are a limited ego body in competition with other limited ego bodies struggling for the limited resources that each need to survive. This limited belief of who you are is the root cause of fear-based thinking.

Question: Have you ever judged something incorrectly because you failed to have the big picture?

Question: Can you correctly judge based on only one person's side of the story?

Note: Although the physiology behind physical sight is beyond the scope of this class, a more detailed explanation of the mental process involved with physical seeing is detailed in my Uncovering Your Default Beliefs class.

LESSON 4

These thoughts do not mean anything. They are like the things I see in this room [on this street, from this window, in this place].

W-4.1. Unlike the preceding **Lessons # 1-3**, these exercises do not begin with the idea for the day. 2 In these practice periods **for Lesson #4**, begin with noting the thoughts that are crossing your mind for about a minute. 3 Then apply the idea **that these thoughts do not mean anything to those same thoughts that were previously crossing your mind**. 4 If you are already aware of unhappy thoughts, use **those unhappy thoughts** as subjects for the idea **that these thoughts do not mean anything**. 5 Do not, however, select only the thoughts you think are "bad." 6 You will find, if you train yourself to look at your thoughts, that **your thoughts** represent such a mixture that, in a sense, none of **your thoughts** can be called "good" or "bad." 7 This is why your **thoughts** do not mean anything.

W-4.2. In selecting the subjects for the application of today's idea, the usual specificity is required. 2 Do not be afraid to use "good" thoughts as well as "bad" **thoughts**. 3 None of **your thoughts that are crossing your mind** represents your real thoughts. **Your real thoughts** are being covered up by the **thoughts that are crossing your mind**. 4 The "good" **thoughts** are but shadows of what lies beyond, and shadows make sight difficult. 5 The "bad" **thoughts** are blocks to sight, and make seeing impossible. 6 You do not want either **the thoughts that you have judged as either good or bad**.

W-4.3. **Lesson #4, these thoughts do not mean anything and that these thoughts are like the things I see**, is a major exercise, and will be repeated from time to time in somewhat different form. 2 The aim here is to train you in the first steps toward the goal of separating the meaningless from the meaningful. 3 **Lesson #4** is a first attempt in the long-range purpose of learning to see the meaningless as outside you, and the meaningful within you. 4 **Lesson #4** is also the beginning of training your mind to recognize what is the same and what is different.

W-4.4. In using your thoughts for application of **today's idea, these thoughts do not mean anything and that these thoughts are like the things I see**, identify each thought by the central figure or event **that thought** contains; for example:

2 This thought about ___ does not mean anything.

3 It is like the things I see in this room [on this street, and so on].

W-4.5. You can also use the idea for a particular thought that you recognize as harmful. 2 This practice **of focusing on a particular thought that you recognize as harmful** is useful, but is not a substitute for the more random procedures to be followed for the exercises. 3 Do not, however, examine your mind for more than a minute or so. 4 You are too inexperienced as yet to avoid a tendency to become pointlessly preoccupied.

W-4.6. Further, since these exercises are the first of their kind, you may find the suspension of judgment in connection with thoughts particularly difficult. 2 Do not repeat these exercises more than three or four times during the day. 3 We will return **to these exercises** later.

Notes to Lesson # 4

These thoughts do not mean anything. They are like the things I see in this room [on this street, from this window, in this place].

Thoughts by themselves do not mean anything. They have no ability to change the truth of what is really there. They are like passing clouds that come and go. These clouds can appear to block the true vision of the sun beaming down in the sky, but they have no ability to stop the sun from shining. Thoughts have no true power to change reality. Yet, in your world of private individual perception, thoughts raised to the level of beliefs do have the ability to temporarily impact the viewpoint of the thinker. Perception is impacted by the beliefs that are held by the observer. Yet, a passing thought that has not been judged as either good or bad has not been raised to the level of the belief and, therefore, has no impact on the mind of the perceiver. A passing thought may distract the person from observing or being aware of what is happening, but it does not modify the event itself. When you place your attention on a passing thought, it is merely a distraction, a loss or change in focus.

Contrast an idle thought that has not been judged as either good or bad, with a thought that has been previously determined to have either a negative or positive impact. Note that we only perceive something as good or bad when we believe that it has some ability to change our world. When something has been judged, it has been raised to the level of belief within the egoic mind. When a thought has been elevated to the level of a belief, it takes on a power of its own. To the perceiver, this belief is the truth about how his world operates. Psychologists now tell us that the belief will have the ability to impact how the observer chooses to interpret their world. Physiologists tell us that the process of seeing will now be adjusted within the mind of the perceiver to fit his new preconceived reality. This is why, when you did the exercise, you may have found it difficult to accept the idea that your thoughts did not mean anything when you actually believed that a thought was either good or bad. It was no longer just a thought. Instead, due to your ego's judgment, this passing thought had been transformed into a belief and that was what made the exercise difficult to accept.

Passing thoughts are mere fantasies and any resemblance to the truth is accidental at best. Thoughts lack certainty because they lack all the facts. As new facts come to light, new thoughts arise which demonstrate the plasticity of thoughts. Yet, the egoic mind is quick to judge a thought based on incomplete evidence. It is your egoic mind's judgment that transforms an idle thought to the level of a belief. Since the belief is held to be true within your mind, your belief will have the ability to affect your individual perception. When you change your judgment, your perception must realign to fit your new perceived reality. Obviously, it would be beneficial to be able to rely on someone or something that was privy to all the facts and knew the real truth before your egoic mind's rush to judgment. False judgments lead to false perceptions which generate false realities. Perception masquerades as your own private reality. Perception is pliable and is easily manipulated.

Example:

First Look at your useful helpful hand.

Next: Look at your old lifeless hand.

Question: Was the observation the same or did your hand transform based on the adjectives used to describe it?

This little example demonstrates how your physical senses are easily manipulated to focus on different aspects of the same thing. It is your mind that told your physical senses what it was supposed to find outside itself. Now the task of the physical senses is merely to confirm what

your mind has predetermined is correct. This process cannot be truly considered objective sight since the goal is simply subjective thought confirmation.

Question: What would happen if you consciously decided to change or reframe how you interpreted some past negative event and instead freely chose to view the event as a valuable learning experience that you needed for your own personal growth?

LESSON 5

I am never upset for the reason I think

W-5.1. This idea, **I am never upset for the reason I think**, like the preceding one, **these thoughts do not mean anything as these thoughts are like the things I see**, can be used with any person, situation or event you think is causing you pain. 2 Apply **this idea that I am never upset for the reason I think**, specifically to whatever you believe is the cause of your upset, using the description of the feeling in whatever term seems accurate to you. 3 The upset may seem to be fear, worry, depression, anxiety, anger, hatred, jealousy or any number of forms, all of which will be perceived as different. 4 This is not **true that these upsets which you perceived as different do not have a common cause. The form that the upset takes may differ but the true cause is the same.** 5 However, until you learn that form does not matter, each form becomes a proper subject for the exercises for the day, **which is I am never upset for the reason I think.** 6 Applying the same idea to each of **the various upsets** separately is the first step in ultimately recognizing **that all forms of upsets** are all the same.

W-5.2. When using the idea for today for a specific perceived cause of an upset in any form, use both the name of the form in which you see the upset, and the cause which you ascribe to **the upset.** 2 For example:

3 I am not angry at ___ for the reason I think. 4 I am not afraid of ___ for the reason I think.

W-5.3. But again, this should not be substituted for practice periods in which you first search your mind for "sources" of upset in which you believe, and forms of upset which you think result.

W-5.4. In these exercises, more than in the preceding ones, you may find it hard to be indiscriminate, and to avoid giving greater weight to some subjects than to others. 2 It might help to precede the exercises with the statement:

3 There are no small upsets. 4 **All upset are** equally disturbing to my peace of mind.

W-5.5. Then examine your mind for whatever is distressing you, regardless of how much or how little **distress** you think **the item is causing or is doing to your mind.**

W-5.6. You may also find yourself less willing to apply today's idea to some perceived sources of upset than to other **sources of upset.** 2 If this occurs, think first of this:

3 I cannot keep this form of upset and let the others go. 4 For the purposes of these exercises **including Exercise #4, I am never upset for the reason I think**, I will regard **all forms of upset** as the same.

W-5.7. Then search your mind for no more than a minute or so, and try to identify a number of different forms of upset that are disturbing you, regardless of the relative importance you may give **the upset.** 2 Apply the idea for today **that I am never upset for the reason I think**, to each of **these upsets**, using the name of both the source of the upset as you perceive it, and of the feeling as you experience it. 3 Further examples are:

4 I am not worried about ___ for the reason I think. 5 I am not depressed about ___ for the reason I think.

6 Three or four times during the day is enough.

Notes to Lesson # 5

I am never upset for the reason I think.

The world we live in is a world of individual perception colored by our beliefs. Our physical senses are not objective but rather are thought confirmation devices that are processed through our egoic belief filters. We already acknowledged that it is difficult, if not impossible, to judge correctly when we are not privy to all the facts. Exercise #5 follows that reasoning to its logical conclusion. If you lack all the facts about a given situation, if you fail to understand the big picture, there is a high probability that you might judge your situation incorrectly. When you judge incorrectly, your conclusions are very likely to be flawed and your plan to resolve the problem is likely to be wrong.

If you fail to accurately assess the cause of the problem, resolving the problem will be highly unlikely. Eventually, you might get lucky and stumble upon the solution. But it will only be through a process of trial and error, luck and great effort on your part. Only if you are able to identify the true source of the problem, can you focus your energy and full resources on eliminating the root cause. When you solve the problem at its true source, all the negative effects that manifested from the root cause must also disappear.

Occasionally, I still do private coaching and mentoring for people who are either serious about their personal growth or in a great deal of pain. Most have been struggling for years trying to resolve chronic problems with little success. Yet, when we work together, they quickly have quantum breakthroughs. Why? Because we find the real root cause for their issues.

It is amazing to see how quickly long-term problems are resolved when you can focus on the real problem. When you do not know the true cause of the problem, you can only try to minimize, manage and control the effects of the problem. The root cause was never addressed and so the problem persisted. You resolved one form of the problem only to have the problem reappear in another form. The form of the problem may change, but the root cause continues to grow and fester.

When the ACIM speaks of the form that the upset takes, you need to realize that it is really talking about the physical manifestation that is an effect of some underlying root cause. The form can manifest in various shapes and sizes, but all the effects are the result of some underlying cause. Often, we tend to focus on the effect of the problem because that is what is easiest to identify. We manage effects and fail to correct the source.

Example: If I am in an abusive situation. I may believe that my boyfriend Johnny, who has anger management issues, is the problem. Believing that the problem is Johnny, I decide to get rid of Johnny and start a new relationship with Joe. Unfortunately, a few months later, I find myself being physically abused because Joe also has those same anger management issues. On the surface, I think my boyfriend is the problem. Yet, perhaps the problem is that I am choosing to date people with anger management issues. This would be a helpful insight. But, what if the true root cause of the problem was my own low self-esteem? I did not believe I deserved better.

Would that change my focus and lead to a major breakthrough? You bet it would! Great changes are possible only when you identify the true source of the problem. Until that discovery, you can only attempt to control the damage, which is the effect, not the cause, of the problem. When you are wrong about the true source of the upset, you can never resolve the true cause of the problem. You will constantly look for the answer where it can never be found.

LESSON 6

I am upset because I see something that is not there.

W-6.1. This exercise #6 with its idea **that you are upset because you see something that is not there** are very similar to the preceding ones, **Exercises #1-5**. 2 Again, it is necessary to name both the form of upset (anger, fear, worry, depression and so on) and the perceived source very specifically for any application of the idea. 3 For example:

4 I am angry at ___ because I see something that is not there.

5 I am worried about ___ because I see something that is not there.

W-6.2. Today's idea **that you are upset because you see something that is not there** is useful for application to anything that seems to upset you, and can profitably be used throughout the day for that purpose. 2 However, the three or four practice periods which are required should be preceded by a minute or so of mind searching, as before, and the application of the idea to each upsetting thought uncovered in the search.

W-6.3. Again, if you resist applying the idea to some upsetting thoughts more than to others, remind yourself of the two cautions stated in the previous lesson: **These two cautions were #1** 2 There are no small upsets. 3 **All upsets** are all equally disturbing to my peace of mind.

4 And **caution #2**:

5 I cannot keep this form of upset and let **the other forms of upset** go. 6 For the purposes of these exercises, then, I will regard **all forms of upsets** as the same.

Notes to Lesson # 6

I am upset because I see something that is not there.

Question: Have you ever perceived yourself to be mistreated while others who witnessed that same event seem oblivious to the injustice and your pain?

Have you ever asked how could this be?

The answer is simple. We live in a world of perception and perception is based on the viewpoint of each individual perceiver. As such, it is not the objective reality that we claim it to be. It is our own individual subjective reality. Thus, each individual perceiver colors the same events differently based on their own viewpoint, focus and past perspective. This transformation of objective events into subjective interpretation is then mistaken for a common shared reality that all should agree upon. Yet, each has their own unique viewpoint and, therefore, experiences that same event differently. Each start arguing for the rightness of their interpretation of the event in question. Each privately experienced reality is a natural outcome of perception and becomes each person's own world of private individuated perception.

It is private because it is only held within the mind of each individual perceiver. This means that each person's interpretation of the events will not necessarily be exactly the same or even similar to another observer's retelling of the tale. It is individuated because it has been created within the mind of each individual. Each is the creator of their own personal reality. It is perception because it does not necessarily represent the facts, but rather is someone's story or interpretation of what happened. This means that the story cannot be safely relied upon to represent objective reality.

The story has become what I would refer to as that person's provisional reality. It is provisional because it is subject to change. As a person's interpretation or recall of the story changes, the

actual events themselves seem to become metamorphic. The events transform with each embellishment to better conform to each revision of the storyline. Yet, within the person's mind, the story is now viewed as their actual reality. This is because when you believe your own story, your mind reframes and re-creates the events so that the story will confirm what you currently believe. Thus, within your mind, it is your true reality until you make a conscious decision to modify your story. When you do so, however, you have consciously chosen to create a new provisional reality from which your mind will operate in the future. Your mind will now be able to utilize this new viewpoint to interpret past, current and future events. When you consciously choose to reinterpret past events differently, you give your mind the permission and opportunity to rewrite your past history and change current and future events to support your new provisional reality.

When we say, "I am upset because I see something that is not there," we need to realize that although we need to minimize any damage that the event might currently be causing, we ultimately need to discover the true cause of the problem. All too often, we hope to change the results, without addressing the cause of the problem. When you fail to eliminate the cause of the problem, you should not be surprised when that same problem reappears in your future. When you become caught up in the drama of your own story, you become fixated on its effect. You lose your ability to move past the story's injustice and address the cause of the problem. You get stuck in your past story. You start arguing for the rightness of your story as opposed to how you can take future action to prevent it from reoccurring in the future. You remain trapped in victim consciousness. This arguing for your rightness disempowers you since you remain focused on some past event that cannot be changed. When you focus on your past stories, you are unable to place your attention on the current moment. Yet, it is only in the current moment that you have any power to act. Your past story is no longer part of this current moment unless you choose to drag it with you into the present.

Question: When you are in victim consciousness, is your focus on the past, the present or the future?

Question: In what time frame, past, present or future, does action take place?

Question: In what time frame, past, present or future, does change take place?

A Course in Miracles is black and white. It is impossible to be a little pregnant. You either are pregnant or you are not. For ACIM purposes, you are either at peace or you are not at peace. You cannot find true, lasting inner peace if there is one small war still raging within you. This is why there are no small upsets. They are all equally disturbing to your inner peace. The ultimate goal is to achieve the lasting, permanent inner peace that you seek. Since ACIM's workbook lessons are designed to be practical, their goal is to meet you where you are. Only then can ACIM take you where you need to go.

For all practical purposes, in our world of private individuated perception, the concept of gray or sometimes does appear to exist. Your world of perception is a sometimes world. Sometimes you are happy. Sometimes you are sad. Your morning may be peaceful. Yet at dinnertime, you may become upset. Do not be too hard on yourself. This is a learning process and often learning involves trial and error. The important thing is that you learn from your experiences so that you can make more appropriate choices in the future. Over this next year, you will be involved in transforming how you perceive yourself. This is a process and change often requires time and nurturing. Often it is necessary to baby step your way forward towards your new goals. You need

to learn to crawl before you can walk. You need to walk before you can run. Enjoy the process and realize that the prize you seek is obtainable to you when you trust the process and complete the lessons.

So, don't be too hard on yourself. Be open to a new way of thinking. Enjoy the process of reawakening by giving yourself permission to create the new you that you desire and deserve.

Question: Have you ever wasted a lot of time trying to solve a particular problem only to discover that you had failed to take the time to first identify and then properly address the true source of the problem?

Let us learn to be more like firemen. When a fire breaks out, the firemen first rush to the scene to minimize the damage the fire would cause if left unchecked. Next, they go to great lengths to find out the true source of the fire. Once the true cause has been discovered, they try to educate themselves and others so that the source of the problem is eliminated. By following this process, they help minimize the likelihood that a similar fire will reappear somewhere else.

LESSON 7

I see only the past.

W-7.1. This idea **that you see only the past** is particularly difficult to believe at first. 2 Yet **this idea that you see only the past** is the rationale for all of the preceding **six exercises**.

3 **The idea that you see only the past** is the reason why nothing that you see means anything.

4 **The idea that you see only the past** is the reason why you have given everything you see all the meaning that **what you see** has for you.

5 **The idea that you see only the past** is the reason why you do not understand anything you see.

6 **The idea that you see only the past** is the reason why your thoughts do not mean anything, and why **your thoughts** are like the things you see.

7 **The idea that you see only the past** is the reason why you are never upset for the reason you think.

8 **The idea that you see only the past** is the reason why you are upset because you see something that is not there **because you are still carrying your past beliefs into the present**.

W-7.2. Old ideas about time are very difficult to change, because everything you believe is rooted in time, and depends on your not learning these new ideas about **time**. 2 Yet that is precisely why you need new ideas about time. 3 This first time idea **that you see only the past** is not really **as** strange as it may sound at first.

W-7.3. Look at a cup, for example. 2 Do you see a cup, or are you merely reviewing your past experiences of picking up a cup, being thirsty, drinking from a cup, feeling the rim of a cup against your lips, having breakfast and so on? 3 Are not your aesthetic reactions to the cup, too, based on past experiences? 4 How else would you know whether or not this kind of cup will break if you drop **this cup**? 5 What do you know about this cup except what you learned **about cups** in the past? 6 You would have no idea what this cup is, except for your past learning. 7 Do you, then, really see **this item as it is** or **do you see this item colored by your past beliefs or a story about what a cup should be based upon your perceptions**?

W-7.4. Look about you. 2 **The idea that you see only the past** is equally true of whatever you look at. **All that you see is colored by your past beliefs, perceptions or stories**. 3

Acknowledge **that all you see is colored by your past beliefs, perceptions or stories** by applying the idea for today indiscriminately to whatever catches your eye. 4 For example:

5 I see only the past in this pencil.

6 I see only the past in this shoe.

7 I see only the past in this hand.

8 I see only the past in that body.

9 I see only the past in that face.

W-7.5. Do not linger over any one thing in particular, but remember to omit nothing specifically. 2 Glance briefly at each subject, and then move on to the next. 3 Three or four practice periods, each to last a minute or so, will be enough.

Notes to Lesson # 7

I see only the past.

This idea, I see only the past, is the logical consequence that your experience reflects your perception and not necessarily reality. Rarely will anyone enter into an entirely new experience without some preconceived notions of what the experience will entail. Of course, most of what is happening in our lives is not new, but rather a reoccurrence or continuation of events that are based on our past. They often are not viewed as something new, but merely as a continuation of a long series of interrelated events that are built upon the past. Yet, from where do these preconceived notions of how a current event should play out come?

Obviously, they come from judgments we have made about our past. These past experiences and judgments may be direct or indirect. They are direct when you were personally involved in the experience. They are indirect when you were told about the event by another party. It is interesting that most court systems would view these indirect reports as hearsay and, therefore, inadmissible in a court of law. Still other beliefs about an experience come indirectly through our observation of a similar event. This too is secondhand information. Often these preconceived beliefs about an event come from your upbringing, parents, society, educational system or peers. Beliefs, whether directly arrived at or received through indoctrination from third-party sources, are powerful filters placed around your current experiences. Your current experiences do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, you relate your current and future experiences based upon your past. This was demonstrated in this lesson by the example of a cup.

Your egoic mind uses its past beliefs and experiences to create the expectations for your current experience. All too often, you blindly follow your old patterns and your past becomes your current provisional reality. Rather than see each moment as a new opportunity for achieving something bold and new, you choose to bring your past prejudices forward and limit your current possibilities. Your present becomes a replay of your past.

When you view your current situation as merely a continuation of some previous event, you limit your mind's ability to make new exciting quantum breakthroughs. Because you have artificially coupled the present to some past story, your mind must now limit what it believes is possible. This results in your mind's belief that you can only baby step your way to change. Instead of making a clean break from these old stories of dubious origins, your mind sees limitations where possibilities actually exist. These judgmental stories prevent your mind from making a clean break from your past and fast forwarding to the radically different future that you desire and deserve.

When you argue for your limitations, you get to keep them. Change now becomes a struggle and a long drawn out process. Don't you want a better plan?

Question: Do you often find yourself having the same negative experiences with the same person?

If so, have you come to expect that is the experience you will have again?

Question: Do you often find yourself in the same or similar negative experience with many different people?

If so, what is the common element that all those experiences share?

LESSON 8

My mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.

W-8.1. This idea, **my egoic mind is preoccupied with past thoughts** is, of course, the reason why you see only the past. 2 No one really sees anything. 3 He sees only his thoughts projected outward. 4 The **egoic** mind's preoccupation with the past is the cause of the misconception about time from which your seeing suffers. 5 **Because of your egoic mind's preoccupation with the past**, your **egoic** mind cannot grasp the present, which is the only time there is. 6 **Your egoic mind** therefore cannot understand time, and **your egoic mind** cannot, in fact, understand anything.

W-8.2. The one wholly true thought one can hold about the past is that **the past** is not here. 2 To think about **the past** at all is therefore to think about illusions. 3 Very few **people** have realized what is actually entailed in picturing the past or in anticipating the future. 4 The **egoic** mind is actually blank when **the egoic mind is thinking of the past**, because **the egoic mind** is not really thinking about anything.

W-8.3. The purpose of the exercises for today is to begin to train your **egoic** mind to recognize when **your egoic mind is** not really thinking at all. 2 While thoughtless ideas preoccupy your **egoic** mind, the truth is blocked. 3 Recognizing that your **egoic** mind has been merely blank, rather than believing that **your egoic mind** is filled with real ideas, is the first step to opening the way to vision.

W-8.4. The exercises for today should be done with eyes closed. 2 This is because you actually cannot see anything **as it truly is with your physical eyes because your physical senses are filtered through your egoic mind**, and it is easier to recognize that no matter how vividly you may picture a thought **with your physical eyes since these thoughts are then filtered by your egoic mind**, you are not seeing anything. 3 With as little investment as possible, search your **egoic** mind for the usual minute or so, merely noting the thoughts you find there. 4 Name each one by the central figure or theme **that thought** contains, and pass on to the next **thought**. 5 Introduce the practice period by saying:
6 **My egoic mind** seems to be thinking about ____.

W-8.5. Then name each of your thoughts specifically, for example:

2 **My egoic mind** seems to be thinking about [name of a person], about [name of an object], about [name of an emotion],

and so on, concluding at the end of the mind-searching period with:

3 But my **egoic** mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.

W-8.6. This can be done four or five times during the day, unless you find it irritates you. 2 If you find it trying, three or four times is sufficient. 3 You might find it helpful, however, to include your irritation, or any emotion that the idea for today may induce, in the mind searching itself.

Notes to Lesson # 8

My mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.

Lesson 8 continues the idea that what you perceive as your current reality is based on your past. It also introduces the idea that how we perceive time may also be incorrect.

Both physiologists and psychologists tell us that our physical senses are not the objective cameras to the world that we have been led to believe. Instead, your five senses are subjective thought confirmation devices. Your senses are designed to prove that what your mind originally holds to be true is verified by your senses and continues to remain your own individuated private provisional reality.

Lesson 8 states that no one really sees anything. Instead, you only see your own thoughts that you have projected outward. Psychologists will call this phenomenon projection. Projection relates to your mind's ability to project its own thoughts, fears and guilt outside its own personage and see those same items reflected in your external world. Each person's past is utilized to judge their own current experiences. Rather than objectively observing what is happening in the present moment, your mind is filtering all activities based on its prior preconceived beliefs and judgments. This preoccupation with your egoic past is impacting how the current situation is perceived. Instead of being in a state of objective openness, you are in a constant state of egoic judgment.

The egoic mind is one perpetual judging machine. These judgments that you carry from your past beliefs then color your current experiences so that the current events are interpreted to reconfirm the original judgment's correctness. Your egoic mind is determined to be right. As strange as it sounds, your ego would prefer to be right than happy. Because of this phenomenon, your present experiences tend to be replays of the past and any favorable modification tends to occur in small baby steps because our egoic mind is incapable of accepting the fact that its prior beliefs may be totally wrong. We will be discussing the psychological concept of projection in greater depth as we proceed in these workbook lessons.

This workbook lesson makes the bold statement that our mind cannot grasp the present, which it then claims is the only time there is. It also claims that our egoic mind cannot understand time and because of that fact, our egoic mind is incapable of understand anything. It states that the only true thought we could hold about the past is that it is not here.

The past is not here because by definition it is something that is over. It can only be brought forward into what we might call the present awareness by your own desire to do so. The past cannot be happening in the present or it would not be your past. Yet, when your egoic mind is preoccupied with the past, your mind chooses to bring its past beliefs into the present moment.

As an analogy, suppose you had only 100 energy circuits available to access anything that your mind wished to place its attention upon. In this analogy each energy circuit is only capable of handling one small item at any given moment. Let us also assume it requires all 100 circuits to be able to completely and correctly observe your current environment.

When these energy circuits are preoccupied by past beliefs and judgments, you no longer have the full complement of 100 circuits available to observe your current environment. If 40 of these circuits are dedicated to preserving or bringing your past egoic beliefs into your current consciousness, that leaves only 60 available for current observation. In this simple analogy, your current environment becomes a combination of 40% past beliefs and 60% current events. If this is the case, how much of your present environment would you physically observe objectively and what percentage would be filled in by your past?

In order to be in what I will call the <now>, you need all 100 circuits to be focused on your current environment without any preconceived beliefs brought forward to color your physical

reality. These 40 energy circuits that are focused on the past, distort, embellish and misrepresent what is actually taking place in the <now>. The <now> instead becomes what we commonly refer to as the present. What you refer to as the present merely represents a combination or blend of current and past beliefs and experiences.

Time has many definitions. One of the definitions of time that I would like you to consider is the idea that time is the measure of change. As you experience more rapidity of change in your life, time appears to speed up. When there is little or no change taking place, time appears to be slowing down or totally stagnant. The notion that time is a measure of change helps move our understanding away from time being a constantly paced linear progression in one direction from past, present to future. We will be discussing time and its various meanings and definitions as we proceed in these lessons.

Question: What would happen if 90% of all your current available energy circuits were dedicated to preserving the rightness of your past egoic judgments and beliefs ?

Question: If 90% of your energy circuits were dedicated to maintaining your past egoic beliefs, how would that impact your ability to be objectively aware of what is taking place in the present moment?

Question: Assuming this 90/10 split, how likely would it be that you could be objective or in the <now>?

LESSON 9

I see nothing as it is now.

W-9.1. This idea, **I see nothing as it is now**, obviously follows from the two preceding ones. **Lesson #7 was I see only the past and Lesson #8 was my mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.** 2 But while you may be able to accept **this idea that I see nothing as it is now** intellectually, it is unlikely that **this idea that I see nothing as it is now** will mean anything to you as yet. 3 However, understanding is not necessary at this point **in these workbook lessons.** 4 In fact, the recognition that you do not understand is a prerequisite for undoing your false ideas. 5 These exercises are concerned with practice, not with understanding. 6 You do not need to practice what you already understand. 7 It would indeed be circular to aim at understanding, and assume that you have **understood** it already.

W-9.2. It is difficult for the untrained **egoic** mind to believe that what **the untrained egoic mind** seems to picture is not there. 2 This idea **that what the untrained egoic mind seems to picture is not there** can be quite disturbing, and may meet with active resistance in any number of forms. 3 Yet that does not preclude applying **this idea that what the untrained egoic mind seems to picture is not there.** 4 No more than applying **the idea that what the untrained egoic mind seems to picture is not there** is required for these or any other exercises. **Your faith or belief in the idea is not required** 5 Each small step will clear a little of the darkness away, and understanding will finally come to lighten every corner of the **egoic** mind that has been cleared of the debris that darkens it.

W-9.3. These exercises, for which three or four practice periods are sufficient, involve looking about you and applying the idea for the day to whatever you see, remembering the need for **each idea's** indiscriminate application, and the essential rule of excluding nothing. 2 For example:
3 **My egoic mind** does not see this typewriter as it is now.
4 **My egoic mind** does not see this telephone as it is now.
5 **My egoic mind** does not see this arm as it is now.

W-9.4 Begin with things that are nearest you, and then extend the range outward:
2 **My egoic mind** does not see that coat rack as it is now.
3 **My egoic mind** does not see that door as it is now.
4 **My egoic mind** does not see that face as it is now.

W-9.5. It is emphasized again that while complete inclusion should not be attempted, specific exclusion must be avoided. 2 Be sure you are honest with yourself in making this distinction. 3 **Your egoic mind** may be tempted to obscure **this distinction and thus, specifically excluded some items.**

Notes to Lesson # 9

I see nothing as it is now.

The idea that you see nothing as it is now is the logical consequence of the previous two lessons. Lesson 7 stated that you only see the past and Lesson 8 expanded and reconfirmed this idea by stating that your mind is preoccupied with past thoughts. No further explanation will be offered at this time. Just remember that your world is a world of perception. It is not a world of objective physical reality that we were led to believe.

The focus of the lesson's narrative is on the idea that although you may not agree with or understand these statements, your belief in the validity of these statements is not required in order for you to benefit from these exercises. You gain the benefits simply by doing these exercises indiscriminately without excluding anything. These exercises are the start of retraining your mind.

Your mind has been indoctrinated into a fear-based thought system that it now assumed to be correct. Because of this assumption, your present thought system and beliefs are never seriously questioned or challenged. You never asked yourself if your present thought system is serving you or is holding you back from achieving your goals. Is your life better or worse because of the current thought system that you are operating under? Do your beliefs support or hinder happiness?

By doing these exercises, you are beginning the process of opening your mind to a new way of thinking. These exercises will challenge your present thought system. They will provide different experiences that will justify your questioning the validity of your present thought system.

New thinking can lead to new possibilities. When you remain open to change, time speeds up. Your new thinking will challenge your egoic mind's preoccupation with your past and call forth new experience to support those new ideas. When you are open to questioning the validity of your past beliefs, you increase the probability for change to occur.

Question: If you refuse to question your current beliefs, how likely will those beliefs change?

Question: Has your current belief system made you happy or is it dominated by blame, shame, guilt and fear?

Question: Do you believe you can be really happy without changing your current belief system?

LESSON 10

My thoughts do not mean anything.

W-10.1. This idea, **my thoughts do not mean anything**, applies to all the thoughts of which you are aware, or become aware in the practice periods. 2 The reason the idea, **my thoughts do not mean anything**, is applicable to all of **your thoughts** is that **your thoughts** are not your real thoughts. **These thoughts are thoughts of your egoic mind that does not understand all the fact or have the big picture.** 3 We have made this distinction before that **these thoughts are thoughts of your egoic mind that does not understand all the fact or have the big picture**, and we will do so again. 4 You have no basis for comparison as yet **between your egoic thought and your real thoughts.** 5 When you do, you will have no doubt that what you once believed were your thoughts did not mean anything. **Your real thoughts are based upon all the facts. They come from knowledge, not perception. Your real thoughts are based upon the big picture and therefore represent the truth. Your egoic thoughts do not represent the truth and lack knowledge of the big picture. Therefore, your egoic mind filters all information based on wrong assumptions and therefore, must distort true reality.**

W-10.2. This is the second time we have used this kind of idea **that thoughts do not mean anything. It was originally introduced in exercise #4 which was, these thoughts do not mean anything.** 2 The form is only slightly different. 3 This time the idea is introduced with "My thoughts" instead of "These thoughts," and no link is made overtly with the things around you. 4 The emphasis is now on the lack of reality of what you think you think. **Your egoic mind does not understand all the facts or know the big picture. Therefore, your egoic mind's thoughts are meaningless because they distort reality and are incorrect perceptions.**

W-10.3. This aspect of the correction process began with the idea that the **egoic** thoughts of which you are aware are meaningless, outside rather than within; and then **the egoic mind's filtering process** stresses their past rather than their present status. 2 Now we are emphasizing that the presence of these **distorted past focused** "thoughts" means that you are not thinking. 3 This is merely another way of repeating our earlier statement that your mind is really a blank. 4 To recognize **that your mind is really blank** is to recognize nothingness when you think you see **your distorted perception of reality.** 5 As such, **realizing your egoic mind distorts the truth and replaces the truth with false perception** is the prerequisite for vision.

W-10.4. Close your eyes for these exercises, and introduce **this exercise** by repeating the idea, for today, **my egoic thoughts do not mean anything**, quite slowly to yourself. 2 Then add:
3 This idea **that my egoic thoughts do not mean anything** will help to release me from all that I now believe.
4 The exercises consist, as before, in searching your mind for all the thoughts that are available to you, without selection or judgment. 5 Try to avoid classification of any kind. 6 In fact, if you find it helpful to do so, you might imagine that you are watching an oddly assorted procession going by, which has little if any personal meaning to you. 7 As each one crosses your mind, say:
8 My **egoic** thought about ___ does not mean anything.
9 My **egoic** thought about ___ does not mean anything.

W-10.5. Today's thought can obviously serve for any thought that distresses you at any time. 2 In addition, five practice periods are recommended, each involving no more than a minute or so of mind searching. 3 It is not recommended that this time period be extended, and **this time period** should be reduced to half a minute or less if you experience discomfort. 4 Remember, however,

to repeat the idea **that my egoic thoughts do not mean anything** slowly before applying it specifically, and also to add:

5 This idea **that my egoic thoughts do not mean anything** will help to release me from all that I now believe.

Notes to Lesson # 10

My thoughts do not mean anything.

The reason that your thoughts do not mean anything is that your thoughts are from your egoic mind. Your ego is preoccupied with past beliefs. These beliefs do not represent the truth of what is truly out there. What you think you see outside is merely a reflection of your mind's limiting beliefs about what it expects your world to be. Your ego is not objective. Your ego is a big judging machine that argues for its rightness at the cost of your happiness.

Real thoughts would have to be based upon all the facts and represent the truth. Real thoughts come from knowledge, not perception. Your egoic mind filters all information based on its wrong assumptions and therefore, must distort true reality.

It is important to realize that a thought that is incorrect has no ability to change the ultimate reality of truth. Egoic thoughts do, however, have the ability to distort what someone believes is the truth, but this distortion cannot change the truth. This is an important distinction. If your thoughts have no ability to change the truth of reality, do they really mean anything?

If something that you believe is a causative has no ability to affect anything, is it really a cause?

A cause is not a cause if it has no effect on reality. Your erroneous belief that something does affect reality does not change the fact that it is truly impotent. Truth just is. When ACIM uses the word truth, it is talking about the changeless. Truth does not require you to believe it is true.

Yet, in our world of perception, beliefs do have the ability to impact the provisional reality of the holder of the belief. This is why we are focused on the idea that your world is a world of perception, not one based on fact. Real facts must support the real truth. Just because the general population believes something to be true, does not make it true. At one time, the general population believed that the earth was flat. This was believed to be common knowledge and so the population operated as if the world was truly flat. But that common belief did not change the physical shape of the earth. What was called common knowledge eventually was proven to be common misperception.

When ACIM says, my thoughts do not mean anything, we need to remember that even common misperception has no ability to change the truth. If your egoic thoughts do not align with the truth, they have no ability to actually change the truth. If a thought has no ability to change the truth of reality, does it really mean anything? In regard to truth, the thought really is irrelevant and meaningless. Yet, this thought does have the ability to impact your beliefs about what you perceive to be the truth. In your world of perception, it is your beliefs, not the truth, which will determine how you interact with your world. This is why it is important to realize that your egoic thoughts are ultimately meaningless. Not only do they not represent truth due to your lack of knowledge, but your thoughts are also meaningless because they lack the ability to change the truth. Truth does not need you to agree with it.

By the same token, if your egoic thoughts did accidentally align with the truth, does your agreement with truth change the truth or makes it truer than it was before you agreed it was correct? Truth just is. Your thoughts are meaningless because they have no ability to change the reality of truth. Your meaningless thoughts only have power within the mind that believes the thought to be true. In your world of perception, only when your meaningless thoughts are raised to the level of a belief, do they appear to take on the power to affect your world of perception.

This one idea, if properly understood and implemented, has the power to totally change how you view your world.

Question: If someone believed they were a dog, would their belief change their true reality and transform them into a dog?

Question: If someone believed they were a dog, would that belief impact how they interacted with their world?

LESSON 11

My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world.

W-11.1. **My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world** is the first idea we have had that is related to a major phase of the correction process; the reversal of the **egoic** thinking of the world. 2 It seems as if the world determines what you perceive. 3 Today's idea introduces the concept that your thoughts determine the world you see. 4 Be glad indeed to practice the idea **that my meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world** in its initial form, for in this idea is your release made sure. 5 The key to forgiveness lies in **the idea that my meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world**.

W-11.2. The practice periods for today's idea are to be undertaken somewhat differently from the previous ones. 2 Begin with your eyes closed, and repeat the idea **that my meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world** slowly to yourself. 3 Then open your eyes and look about, near and far, up and down,—anywhere. 4 During the minute or so to be spent in using the idea **that my meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world** merely repeat it to yourself, being sure to do so without haste, and with no sense of urgency or effort.

W-11.3. To do these exercises for maximum benefit, the eyes should move from one thing to another fairly rapidly, since **the eyes** should not linger on anything in particular. 2 The words **that my meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world**, however, should be used in an unhurried, even leisurely fashion. 3 The introduction to this idea **that my meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world** in particular, should be practiced as casually as possible. 4 **This idea that my meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world** contains the foundation for the peace, relaxation and freedom from worry that we are trying to achieve. 5 On concluding the exercises, close your eyes and repeat the idea **that my meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world** once more slowly to yourself.

W-11.4. Three practice periods today will probably be sufficient. 2 However, if there is little or no uneasiness and an inclination to do more, as many as five may be undertaken. 3 More than **five** is not recommended.

Notes to Lesson # 11

My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world.

Lesson 11, **my meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world**, is a continuation of the previous ideas and a logical progression from the previous lessons. If our thoughts do not mean anything, they have no power to change the truth. Having no effect on the truth, they are meaningless. If they are meaningless, anything that your meaningless thoughts appear to envision must also be meaningless. If like begets like, meaning cannot arise from your meaningless thoughts.

What is more important, however, is the introduction of the idea that that your thoughts determine what you see. Although we have previously discussed this idea based on physiological and psychological research on perception, this is the first clear reference to that idea in these ACIM workbook lessons.

We have been raised under a thought system that assumes your experiences are the direct result of outside forces that are beyond your control. This thought system assumes that these outside

forces generate your present experiences. This fear-based thought system claims that we are not the true cause of our experiences but mere victims that must react to circumstances that are generated outside of ourselves and beyond our control. Our mind then draws logical conclusions based on these experiences as to how we should react to our outside world. Because of the belief that there are outside forces that determine our experiences, we have limited options as to how we can respond to this outside world. We are not causative, but rather reactive agents in our world. We are not the driving force that controls our world. The best we can hope for is to manage these outside powers so that we minimize their negative effects and maximize any positive results. Under this thought system, you will always lack the creative power to handle a given situation since your fate is ultimately controlled by arbitrary and capricious outside forces that are beyond your direct control.

But what if this teaching is actually wrong? What if we actually did have some causative power to impact what we experience in our world?

We already know that psychologists tell us that although you may not be in total control of your circumstances, you are in control of how you choose to interpret your circumstances. Based on that interpretation, your mind will then determine what it perceives is possible. This, in turn, limits the response options that you perceive are available to choose from.

This is just an introduction to the idea that your thoughts may have some causative power to affect what you perceive. You are not asked or required to believe this idea is true. You are merely asked to continue to do the exercises as prescribed.

Question: How much power do you have to control the events in your life?

Question: What area in your life do you feel you have the most control over?

Question: What area of your life do you feel you have the least control over?

LESSON 12

I am upset because I see a meaningless world.

W-12.1. The importance of this idea **that I am upset because I see a meaningless world** lies in the fact that it contains a correction for a major perceptual distortion. 2 You think that what upsets you is a frightening world, or a sad world, or a violent world, or an insane world. 3 All these attributes are given **to the world** by you. 4 **Without these egoic judgments**, the world is meaningless in itself.

W-12.2. These exercises are done with eyes open. 2 Look around you, this time quite slowly. 3 Try to pace yourself so that the slow shifting of your glance from one thing to another involves a fairly constant time interval. 4 Do not allow the time of the shift to become markedly longer or shorter, but try, instead, to keep a measured, even tempo throughout. 5 What you see does not matter. 6 You teach yourself this as you give whatever your glance rests on equal attention and equal time. 7 This is a beginning step in learning to give **whatever your glance rests on** all equal value.

W-12.3. As you look about you, say to yourself:

2 I think I see a fearful world, a dangerous world, a hostile world, a sad world, a wicked world, a crazy world,

and so on, using whatever descriptive terms happen to occur to you. 3 If terms which seem positive rather than negative occur to you, include them. 4 For example, you might think of "a good world," or "a satisfying world." 5 If such **"good"** terms occur to you, use them along with the rest. 6 You may not yet understand why these "nice" adjectives belong in these exercises but remember that a "good world" implies a "bad" one, and a "satisfying world" implies an "unsatisfying" one. 7 All terms which cross your mind are suitable subjects for today's exercises. 8 Their seeming quality **of either good or bad** does not matter.

W-12.4. Be sure that you do not alter the time intervals between applying today's idea **that I am upset because I see a meaningless world** to what you think is pleasant and what you think is unpleasant. 2 For the purposes of these exercises, there is no difference between **what you think is pleasant verses unpleasant**. 3 At the end of the practice period, add:
4 But I am upset because I see a meaningless world.

W-12.5. What is meaningless is neither good nor bad. 2 Why, then, should a meaningless world upset you? 3 If you could accept the world as meaningless **and therefore as neither good nor bad**, and let the truth be written upon **a meaningless world** for you, **the truth** would make you indescribably happy. 4 But because **the world** is meaningless, **your egoic mind** is impelled to write upon **the meaningless world** what you would have **your world** be. 5 **What your egoic mind would have your world be** is **what you see in this meaningless world**. 6 It is **this false perception that your egoic mind perceives** that is meaningless in truth. 7 Beneath your words is written the Word of God. 8 The truth upsets you now, but when your **egoic** words have been erased, you will see **God's Word**. 9 That is the ultimate purpose of these exercises.

W-12.6. Three or four times is enough for practicing the idea for today. 2 Nor should the practice periods exceed a minute. 3 You may find even this too long. 4 Terminate the exercises whenever you experience a sense of strain.

Notes to Lesson 12

I am upset because I see a meaningless world.

Lesson 11 stated that it is your meaningless thoughts that are showing you a meaningless world. Lesson 12 states that you are upset because you see a meaningless world. Yet, if both are true, your thoughts are the true cause of what is upsetting you, not what you see.

This idea aligns with what psychologists tell us about how your egoic mind works. Your mind places the interpretation or judgment on all events that you see. In your world of perception, your egoic mind judges something as either good or bad. This judgment that you place on the event either upsets or pleases you. You also know from personal experience that when you see something as bad, often another party will see that same event as helpful to their side. Since the event is the same, how can this be?

This is because each person is looking at the event from their perspective and judging that event based on its impact on what they choose to value. If the same event can be experienced as either joyful or frightening, does the event itself have some inherent good or bad attributes?

<OR>

Is it your own interpretation that generates the emotions that you feel that color a neutral event as either good or bad?

This lesson, I am upset because I see a meaningless world, corrects a major perceptual distortion. Lesson 12 states that all the attributes you give to any event come from your own judgmental mind. Without those judgments, the event itself would be meaningless or neutral.

Previously, we said that something is meaningless when it has no ability in and of itself to impact or change something else. In our language, we would say that something is neutral when it has no ability in and of itself to impact or change something else. Meaningless and neutral are synonymous in that neither has the ability to change something else. In both Lesson 11 and 12 we are told that it is our egoic thoughts or judgments that place meaning on something that is actually meaningless. When we substitute the word neutral for meaningless, we more clearly recognize the fact that something that is neutral is neither good nor bad.

All agree that you cannot judge properly if you do not have all the facts or understand the big picture. If this is the case, why would you let your egoic mind that lacks this information judge what is either good or bad? Doesn't it make more sense whenever possible to seek the guidance of someone who has the big picture and all the facts to guide and help you with that decision?

If you are incapable of judging correctly, perhaps you should not be so adamant in arguing for the correctness of what you judged to be either good or bad. When you understand that your erroneous judgments are upsetting, you will be more willing to relinquish those past judgments and be more receptive to the guidance of someone who is more knowledgeable on the subject.

Lesson 12 also makes the point that what is meaningless or neutral is neither good nor bad. In your egoic judgmental world, you have a tendency to perceive something as either good or bad based on some predetermined result. You seek the good and try to avoid the bad. Yet, it is your judgment that gives the event itself the good or bad qualities that you have attributed to it. ACIM points out that when you see something as either good or bad that item takes on a fearful quality within your mind. You believe that there is something outside yourself that you need to make you happy. Since the source of your happiness is perceived to be outside of you, even when that item is obtained, it still remains a source for fear. Since the power of good or bad is attributed to

something outside your mind, you do not control it and therefore, it could be lost. If something can be lost, it will be perceived as a source of fear. If it is your own mind's thinking that endows the object with the attributes you claim it possesses, this means your mind is the true source of the object's power. You are the one in control.

What are your judgments based on?

Judgments are based on what you value and why.

Most people value this world because they believe the world is either

- 1) a place to get their needs met
- 2) a place to earn love
- 3) or a place to earn the good life or some preferred afterlife.

When you value something because you believe it has some inherent ability to make you either happy or sad, you become very judgmental. Since your focus is on the predetermined results, you cannot enjoy the current moment within that journey. When your focus is on earning some particular result, the journey or process becomes an actual source of fear. When your focus is on learning, the process becomes an exciting adventure. Earning is always perceived as a struggle while learning can be a fun puzzle

Question: What do you value in this world and why?

Question: Do you view your life as an earning or a learning process?

LESSON 13

A meaningless world engenders fear.

W-13.1. Today's idea, **a meaningless world engenders fear**, is really another form of the preceding one which was **I am upset because I see a meaningless world**, except that it is more specific as to the emotion aroused **which is fear**. 2 Actually, a meaningless world is impossible. 3 Nothing without meaning exists. 4 However, it does not follow that **your egoic mind** will not think you perceive something that has no meaning. 5 On the contrary, **your egoic mind** will be particularly likely to think you do perceive **a meaningless world that your egoic mind has now given meaning to**.

W-13.2. Recognition of meaninglessness arouses intense anxiety in all the separated ones, **which are represented by the egoic mind**. 2 **Meaninglessness** represents a situation in which God and the ego "challenge" each other as to whose meaning is to be written in the empty space that meaninglessness provides. 3 The ego rushes in frantically to establish its own **egoic ideas on the meaninglessness**, fearful that the void may otherwise be used to demonstrate **the egoic mind's** own impotence and unreality. 4 And on this alone, **the egoic mind's own impotence and unreality**, is **the egoic mind** correct.

W-13.3. It is essential, therefore, that you learn to recognize the meaningless, and accept **the meaningless** without fear. 2 If you are fearful, it is certain that you will endow the world with attributes that **the world** does not possess, and crowd **the world** with images that do not exist. 3 To the ego illusions are safety devices, as illusions must also be to you who equate yourself with the ego.

W-13.4. The exercises for today, which should be done about three or four times for not more than a minute or so at most each time, are to be practiced in a somewhat different way from the preceding ones. 2 With eyes closed, repeat today's idea to yourself. 3 Then open your eyes, and look about you slowly, saying:

4 I am looking at a meaningless world.

5 Repeat this statement to yourself as you look about. 6 Then close your eyes, and conclude with:

7 A meaningless world engenders fear because I think I am in competition with God.

W-13.5. You may find it difficult to avoid resistance, in one form or another, to this concluding statement **that a meaningless world engenders fear because I think I am in competition with God**. 2 Whatever form such resistance may take, remind yourself that you are really afraid of such a thought because of the "vengeance" of the "enemy." 3 You are not expected to believe the statement **that a meaningless world engenders fear because I think I am in competition with God** at this point, and will probably dismiss **this statement** as preposterous. 4 Note carefully, however, any signs of overt or covert fear which **this statement that a meaningless world engenders fear because I think I am in competition with God** may arouse.

W-13.6. This is our first attempt at stating an explicit cause and effect relationship of a kind which you are very inexperienced in recognizing. 2 Do not dwell on the concluding statement, and try not even to think of **the concluding statement** except during the practice periods. 3 That will suffice at present.

Notes to Lesson 13

A meaningless world engenders fear.

Lesson 13 begins with three interesting ideas. The first is the idea that a meaningless world engenders fear. This is the actual title of this lesson. This is the first time that the ACIM workbook lesson is attempting to state an explicit cause and effect relationship. It is stating that a meaningless world causes fear. Yet, the next statement says that a meaningless world is impossible. This is followed up with the statement that nothing without meaning exists.

How can all these three statements be reconciled?

If a meaningless world engenders fear but a meaningless world is impossible, how can fear result or even exist? But you have to agree that fear dominates this world.

If nothing without meaning exists, then a meaningless world cannot exist but then what are we standing on?

If lack of meaning causes fear, yet nothing is meaningless, what are we frightened about?

If lack of meaning has no ability to change reality, why should something that has no ability to change what you are, frighten you? Yet, most people live in fear.

Whenever you are studying [A Course in Miracles](#) and you read statements that appear to be contradictory statements, bells and whistles should go off. This is a warning that there is a divergence with language, perception and reality. What you perceive to be common understanding is actually common misperception. What you are assuming to be reality is actually some false understanding of what is really out there. We must realize that the world of private individuated perception is not the same as the real world which is represented by truth with a capital T.

Your world of private individuated perception, which represents your personal provisional reality, is not the same as the truth that is represented by the reality of the real world. When what you believe does not coincide with the truth, your egoic mind still operates under these false assumptions. What the ego believes becomes its provisional reality or false illusory world that it perceives to be real. The ego then argues for its rightness. Because the ego believes its artificial world has some power to change reality, the ego must judge what it perceives to be separate as either good, bad or indifferent. Yet, what you claim is true has no ability to make truth with a capital T either more true or less true. What your ego perceives to be the truth is irrelevant since your opinion has no ability to change the reality of what the real truth is. Truth just is. Truth does not require your personal confirmation to make it true. Since your ego believes that its misperceptions are true reality, it continuously argues for the correctness of its own erroneous beliefs. The egoic mind sees itself separate and distinct from all. Believing it is in competition with its outside world, the ego argues for the correctness of its own misperception. The ego sees itself in competition with others to determine what is the "correct" truth. The ego understands that there can only be one truth and therefore, it argues for its own exclusive version of the truth.

Truth has no competition since it is fixed and changeless. Misperceptions cannot change it. Truth does not fear the false. Truth remains unchangeable and invulnerable to false misperceptions. Truth does not need or seek revenge for someone's error in thinking. Truth just remains the truth. Truth knows that your mind's misperceptions are meaningless since the false has no ability to change the truth.

Although we have made no attempt to define the term God, one of the attributes of God must be truth with a capital T. Since your egoic mind perceives itself to be separate from God, it argues for the correctness of its own meaningless thoughts. Your ego judges the world incorrectly and then argues for its rightness even at the cost of your happiness.

Because the ego thinks that its powerless thoughts are not meaningless, the ego creates its own meaningless world of provisional reality. This false world exists only in the mind of the thinker. The ego then gives meaning to that private world of individuated perception. It is this false private world of individuated perception that engenders fear. Because the ego believes its false beliefs to be true, these misperception become the false private world you see and relate to. It is this **meaningless world that your ego creates within your own mind that engenders all the fear you feel.**

Question: What do you fear the most in your world?

Question: Why do you find that item or items so fearful?

LESSON 14

God did not create a meaningless world.

W-14.1. The idea for today **that God did not create a meaningless world** is, of course, the reason why a meaningless world is impossible. 2 What God did not create does not exist. 3 And everything that does exist exists as **God** created it. 4 The world you see has nothing to do with reality. 5 It is of your own **egoic mind's** making, and **therefore, the world you egoically think you see is false perception and** does not exist.

W-14.2. The exercises for today are to be practiced with eyes closed throughout. 2 The mind-searching period should be short, a minute at most. 3 Do not have more than three practice periods with today's idea unless you find **the practice periods** comfortable. 4 If you do **find the practice periods comfortable**, it will be because you really understand what they are for.

W-14.3. The idea for today is another step in learning to let go the **egoic** thoughts that you have written on the world, and see the Word of God in place **of your egoic thoughts**. 2 This exchange **of seeing the Word of God in place of your egoic thoughts** can truly be called salvation. The **early steps** in this exchange **of seeing the Word of God in place of your egoic thoughts** can be quite difficult and even quite painful. 3 Some of the early steps will lead you directly into fear. 4 You will not be left there **in your fear**. 5 You will go far beyond **your fear**. 6 Our direction **that you will be moving** toward is perfect safety and perfect peace.

W-14.4. With eyes closed, think of all the horrors in the world that cross your mind. 2 Name each one **of these horrors** as it occurs to you, and then deny **the reality of these horrors**. 3 God did not create **these horrors**, and so **these horrors** are not real. 4 Say, for example:
5 God did not create that war, and so **that war** is not real.
6 God did not create that airplane crash, and so **that airplane crash** is not real.
7 God did not create that disaster [specify], and so **that disaster [specify]**, is not real.

W-14.5. Suitable subjects for the application of today's idea also include anything you are afraid might happen to you, or to anyone about whom you are concerned. 2 In each case, name the "disaster" quite specifically. 3 Do not use general terms. 4 For example, do not say, "God did not create illness," but, "God did not create cancer," or heart attacks, or whatever may arouse fear in you.

W-14.6. This is your personal repertory of horrors at which you are looking. 2 These things are part of the world you see. 3 Some **of your personal repertory of horrors** are shared illusions, and others are part of your personal hell. 4 It does not matter **if they are shared with others or are private**. 5 What God did not create can only be in your own **egoic** mind apart from **God's**. 6 Therefore, it has no meaning. 7 In recognition of this fact, conclude the practice periods by repeating today's idea:
8 God did not create a meaningless world.

W-14.7. The idea for today can, of course, be applied to anything that disturbs you during the day, aside from the practice periods. 2 Be very specific in applying **today's idea that God did not create a meaningless world**. 3 Say:
4 God did not create a meaningless world. 5 **God** did not create [specify the situation which is disturbing you], and so **[specify the situation which is disturbing you]** is not real.

Notes to Lesson 14

God did not create a meaningless world.

Lesson 14 is a logical conclusion that arises from an idea in Lesson 13 that nothing without meaning exists. If the world you perceive is meaningless, God could not have created it since nothing without meaning exists. Instead, the world that you claim to see has nothing to do with reality since it only appears real within your own egoic mind. It is your own private world of provisional reality and is shared with no one.

From the beginning of these lessons, I have tried to emphasize the idea that perception is not the same as reality. Our world is a world of perception that we judge to be either good or bad. It is our own private hell with some illusions being shared with others on a collective basis. Because we have been indoctrinated into a similar fear-based thought system, our seemingly separate minds often reach the same conclusions about this world that we call planet earth. On planet earth, we are taught that we live and share one common world. Yet, when we examine how each person views his world, we see a great divergence of opinion. Each person is viewing this supposedly same shared world differently.

You and I do not live in the same world. Instead, each person actually lives in their own private world of individuated perception. It is a world created in the mind of the beholder. To the degree that each person's belief systems and experiences are similar, there will appear to be some common overlap. The more common your beliefs, experiences and thought systems are with another person, the more similar each person's provisional reality will appear to be. People raised in the same households will have a greater likelihood to view a world that appears to hold many similar attributes. Similarly, two people who have been raised in different societies with different values, different cultural experiences and different class and health issues will perceive their worlds with less overlap.

This lesson states that the only thing that is truly real is what God created, as God created it. What is real is changeless truth. If we lack the big picture or all the facts, we will choose to misperceive what God created. Yet, our erroneous judgments have no ability to alter the truth. Only within one's own delusional mind does their misrepresentation appear to exist. Someone's delusional state has no ability to change what God created, as God created it. Our delusion is impotent and meaningless since it has no effect on anything outside the mind that made up the story in the first place.

We will revisit and expand this idea that God did not create a meaningless world in future lessons because it is an important concept to understand if you are to eliminate fear-based thinking. Today, I would rather address a common misperception that arises from this idea.

Often, I hear ACIM teachers and students state that this world is not real and therefore, we need not be concerned with how we relate to this illusionary world. Although on a theoretical level that may be a correct, it fails to help someone on a practical level. I said that if your spiritual practice does not help you live a fuller, richer, happier life today what good is it? I contend it is no good. There must be a better way. Your spiritual practice should provide practical guidance that helps you live in this world today. It should not be only for some future fantasy land. You are a spiritual being that has chosen to have an earthly experience. To deny the learning lessons that this dimension of time and space provides is to ignore why you chose to come here in the first place.

Let me assure you that if you continue with this class, before the year is over, you will understand that A Course in Miracles has a practical plan that provides step-by-step guidance to help you live a fuller, richer, joyful human life today. You can drop the blame, shame and guilt that are associated with being in this fear-based world. Fear does not have to dominate your life and I will not leave you with the simplistic, yet impractical idea that since this world is an illusion or not real, that it should be ignored or looked upon with disdain.

So keep doing these workbook lessons even though your egoic mind would like to dismiss, ignore and or ridicule these ideas as impractical, illogical or useless. The ego does not know who you really are. Why listen to a voice that has failed to bring the happiness, love, joy and peace that you seek and that it has promised to deliver. Your ego's plan does not work! It hasn't worked in the past. Why should you believe your ego's plan will work in the future? Isn't that the definition of insanity?

365 days is a small commitment for the long-term benefits that this course will provide. Your ego will tell you these classes are too hard or too long.

Don't you listen to your ego and don't you give up! Ask yourself how much long-term happiness and inner peace has come from following your current belief system. It is a bankrupt system that will never take you to the Promised Land.

There has never been anything wrong with you but there has been something wrong with your plan. You need a new plan. Together, we will get that new plan. It will be a plan that is both practical and delivers results.

Question: What are the odds of escaping blame, shame, guilt and fear within a thought system that was designed to generate and perpetuate the blame, shame, guilt and fear that you are trying to avoid?

Question: If you seek change in your life, doesn't it make sense to try a new plan?

LESSON 15

My thoughts are images that I have made.

W-15.1. It is because the thoughts you think you think appear as images that you do not recognize **these images** as nothing. 2 You think you think **the thoughts you imagine** and so you think you see **the thoughts you think as images**. 3 This is how your "seeing" was made. 4 This **seeing the thoughts you think as images** is the function you have given your body's eyes. 5 **Seeing the thoughts you think as images** is not seeing. 6 **Seeing the thoughts you think as images** is image making. 7 **Seeing the thoughts you think as images** takes the place of seeing, replacing vision with illusions.

W-15.2. This introductory idea to the process of image making that you call seeing will not have much meaning for you. 2 You will begin to understand **the process of image making** when you have seen little edges of light around the same familiar objects which you see now. 3 **Seeing little edges of light around familiar objects** is the beginning of real vision. 4 You can be certain that real vision will come quickly when **after seeing little edges of light around the same familiar objects** has occurred.

W-15.3. As we go along, you may have many "light episodes." 2 **These "light episodes"** may take many different forms, some of **these "light episodes"** **are** quite unexpected. 3 Do not be afraid of **these "light episodes."** 4 **These episodes** are signs that you are opening your eyes at last. 5 **These "light episodes"** will not persist, because **the light** merely symbolize true perception, and **these "light episodes"** are not related to knowledge. 6 These exercises will not reveal knowledge to you. 7 But **these exercises** will prepare the way to **these "light episodes."**

W-15.4. In practicing the idea for today, repeat **the idea, my thoughts are images that I have made**, first to yourself, and then apply **the idea** to whatever you see around you, using the name of **whatever you see** and letting your eyes rest on **the subject** as you say:

2 This ___ is an image that I have made.

3 That ___ is an image that I have made.

4 It is not necessary to include a large number of specific subjects for the application of today's idea. 5 It is necessary, however, to continue to look at each subject while you repeat the idea to yourself. 6 The idea should be repeated quite slowly each time.

W-15.5. Although you will obviously not be able to apply the idea, **my thoughts are images that I have made** to very many things during the minute or so of practice that is recommended, try to make the selection as random as possible. 2 Less than a minute will do for the practice periods, if you begin to feel uneasy. 3 Do not have more than three application periods for today's idea unless you feel completely comfortable with **this exercise** and do not exceed four. 4 However, the idea, **my thoughts are images that I have made**, can be applied as needed throughout the day.

Notes to Lesson # 15

My mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.

Lesson 15 states that my thoughts are images that I have made. This lesson describes why this is the case. When you think something, you imagine its appearance within your own mind. Because your thought has been converted into an image within your own mind, you believe that these

images must really exist outside your mind. This image within your own mind is what your physical senses are designed to report upon. Paragraph #1 of Lesson 15 concludes that what we call seeing is really a process of observing the thoughts you think as images within your mind and making those same images appear to be outside your mind. Physical seeing is actually image making. This is why I said earlier that your physical senses are actually thought confirmation devices. They are not like a camera lens. The senses are not the objective, observing mechanisms that we have been taught.

This idea that seeing is actually image making is the logical conclusion of two ideas that we previously discussed. These ideas are the concept of projection and that of seeing. For A Course in Miracles' purposes, the term seeing is understood to be quite different than the common understanding of that term. In the note for Lesson 3, we stated that it was important to realize that when A Course in Miracles uses the term seeing, it is different from the term vision.

In everyday usage, the terms seeing and vision would be interchangeable, but this is not the case for the purpose of A Course in Miracles. When ACIM uses the term seeing, it is referencing the subjective physical sight process with all the subjective filtering that has occurred through the perceiver's egoic mind. Because of this filtering, what we refer to as seeing is actually a process in which the egoic mind has predetermined what it expects to observe outside itself. The egoic mind then assigns to the physical senses the task of looking outside itself to find something that will confirm that its predetermined beliefs are correct. Thus, the physical senses ignore any contradictory evidence and only report back information that supports its preconceived belief. The physical senses are not objective but rather they are thought confirmation devices.

The term vision, unlike seeing, involves the objective verification of reality. In this case, it would be more like a camera lens that captures the entire picture without preconceived notions or limitations. It does not go through the filtering process of the egoic mind. No subjective, made up, egoic story colors the observation.

For our purposes, I have used the term egoic mind so let me explain again what I mean by that. The egoic mind comes from the belief that separation is both a physical, mental and spiritual reality. It is predicated on the belief that you are the body and the body is you. It claims that you are a limited ego body in competition with other limited ego bodies struggling for the limited resources that each need to survive. This limited belief of who you are is the root cause of fear-based thinking.

In the note for Lesson 8, projection and the meaning of that psychological term was discussed. We stated that no one really sees anything. Instead, you only see your own thoughts which you have projected outward. Psychologists will call this phenomenon projection. Projection relates to your mind's ability to project its own thoughts, fears and guilt outside its own personage and see those same items reflected in your external world. Each person's past is utilized to judge their own current experiences. Rather than objectively observing what is happening in the present moment, your mind is filtering all activities based on its prior preconceived beliefs and judgments. This preoccupation with your egoic past is impacting how each current situation is perceived. Instead of being in a state of objective openness, you are in a constant state of egoic judgment.

The egoic mind is one perpetual judging machine. These judgments that you carry from your past beliefs then color your current experiences so that the current events are interpreted to reconfirm the original judgment's correctness. Your egoic mind is determined to be right. As

strange as it sounds, your ego would prefer to be right than happy. Because of this phenomenon, your present experiences tend to be replays of the past and any favorable modification tends to occur in small baby steps because our egoic mind is incapable of accepting the fact that its prior beliefs may be totally wrong. We will continue to discuss the psychological concept of projection in greater depth as we proceed in these workbook lessons.

The final item that I'd like to discuss from this lesson is the idea of "light episodes." In our language, light episodes might also be called the parapsychological phenomena of seeing an aura. The aura is considered to be an energy field emanating from the object being observed. Often this energy field is observed as light emanating from the body itself. The typical assumption, however, is that the source of the energy field is the physical body that is being observed. But what if this assumption was wrong?

Most are probably familiar with the full eclipse of the sun. This galactic phenomenon occurs when the moon passes between the earth and the sun. When this event occurs, the moon blocks the full sun itself and we are able to observe the sun's solar flares. We realize that it is the sun, not the moon that is the source for these solar flares. Yet, if you were only given a photograph of a full solar eclipse, you would draw the conclusion that it was the moon that was the source of the solar flares. This would be a logical conclusion but a wrong misperception of reality. You would be wrong because you lacked the big picture of what was really taking place. What really occurred was that the moon blocked the sun from your field of vision. It was the sun you could not see, not the moon that you saw, that was the true source. Because of this temporary blockage, you observe the effects of the sun's true power.

When you have these light episodes, do not assume that the source of the light is an actually physical body. Instead, consider the idea that the body is actually blocking the true source of the light.

Question: If the physical body was actually blocking the source of the aura, what could the true source be?

Question: Would you like to have the blockages removed from your vision so that you could recognize what is behind the blockage?

LESSON 16

I have no neutral thoughts.

W-16.1. The idea for today, **I have no neutral thoughts**, is a beginning step in dispelling the belief that your thoughts have no effect. 2 Everything you see is the result of your thoughts. 3 There is no exception to this **fact that everything you see is the result of your thoughts.** 4 Thoughts are not big or little; powerful or weak. 5 **Thoughts** are merely true or false. 6 Those **thoughts** that are true create their own likeness. 7 Those **thoughts** that are false make **in their own likeness**.

W-16.2. There is no more self-contradictory concept than that of "idle thoughts." 2 **Thoughts are** what gives rise to the perception of a whole world can hardly be called idle. 3 Every thought you have contributes to truth or to illusion; either **your thought** extends the truth or **your thought** multiplies illusions. 4 You can indeed multiply nothing, but you will not extend **anything** by doing so.

W-16.3. Besides your recognizing that thoughts are never idle, salvation requires that you also recognize that every thought you have brings either peace or war; either love or fear. 2 A neutral result is impossible because a neutral thought is impossible. 3 There is such a temptation to dismiss fear thoughts as unimportant, trivial and not worth bothering about that it is essential you recognize **fear thoughts** all as equally destructive, but equally unreal. 4 We will practice this idea **that you have no neutral thoughts** in many forms before you really understand it.

W-16.4. In applying the idea for today **that you have no neutral thoughts** search your mind for a minute or so with eyes closed, and actively seek not to overlook any "little" thought that may tend to elude the search. 2 This is quite difficult until you get used to **not overlooking any "little" thought**. 3 You will find that it is still hard for you not to make artificial distinctions. 4 Every thought that occurs to you, regardless of the qualities that you assign to **that thought** is a suitable subject for applying today's idea **that you have no neutral thoughts**.

W-16.5. In the practice periods, first repeat the idea **that you have no neutral thoughts** to yourself, and then as each **thought** crosses your mind hold **that thought** in **your** awareness while you tell yourself:

2 This thought about ___ is not a neutral thought.

3 That thought about ___ is not a neutral thought.

4 As usual, use today's idea **that you have no neutral thoughts** whenever you are aware of a particular thought that arouses uneasiness. 5 The following form is suggested for this purpose:

6 This thought about ___ is not a neutral thought, because I have no neutral thoughts.

W-16.6. Four or five practice periods are recommended, if you find **the practice periods** relatively effortless. 2 If strain is experienced, three will be enough. 3 The length of the exercise period should also be reduced if there is discomfort.

Notes to Lesson # 16

I have no neutral thoughts.

Lesson 16 states that you have no neutral thoughts. The idea that you have no neutral thoughts is the first step in correcting the erroneous belief that your thoughts have no effect on what you experience. In truth, your thoughts become your experiences. This is what the world of

perception is all about. There are no idle thoughts since your thoughts become your provisional reality.

In Lesson 15, my thoughts are the image that I have made, we stated that what we call seeing is actually image making. The thoughts you are thinking appear first as images within your mind. Your mind then directs your physical senses to confirm the reality of those images outside your mind which had originally created them. Your mind, not some outside force, is the true source of these perceived images. Therefore, your thoughts create everything you see. Each thought has its own effect. All thoughts are equally powerful although you may not be consciously aware of this fact.

This lesson points out that your thoughts have the power to generate a myriad of experiences that range from peace or war, love or fear.

Although thoughts all possess equal power to generate new experiences, there are only two types of thoughts. A thought is either true or it is false. Each thought will create or bear witness for either a correct representation of the truth or it will bear witness to a false image of reality.

A false thought has no ability to change the truth of reality. Although you can choose to believe something that is not true, this belief has no ability to change the truth. In regard to the big picture which is represented by truth with a capital the T, a false thought is meaningless since it cannot change the Truth.

Since your world is a world of perception, not fact, your thoughts are experienced as your private world of provisional reality. It is important to realize that any fear-based thoughts, whether large or small, will be equally powerful in its ability to destroy your inner peace.

Previously, I stated that thoughts have no ability to impact you and that they were like the passing clouds. So why is Lesson 16 saying that you have no neutral thoughts? Certainly, if something is not neutral, that does mean it has the ability to impact you. Are these two ideas contradictory?

You wake up in the morning. You look out your window and you see a wisp of a cirrus cloud. You think nothing of it and go about your day. Contrast this to seeing a huge thunderhead approaching your area. You instantly think you better move your picnic inside your house.

What I actually said was that thoughts have no ability to impact you. This is true. Yet, thoughts raised to the level of beliefs do have that ability to impact how you relate to your world. The real crux of the issue is whether or not you actually have some thought that is not actually based on a belief. Lesson 7 stated that you see only your past. From your past, you judge and filter your current thoughts. Because you view your thoughts from the prison of your past beliefs, your current thoughts actually represent your beliefs. They are not the innocent thoughts you claim them to be.

The example of the cirrus cloud that seemed to mean nothing to you was actually based on your prior beliefs that such a cloud was not threatening to your day's activities. Yet, the thunderhead was perceived as a source for rain. Your egoic mind is always thinking based on your past beliefs.

Your egoic mind is one big judging machine. Its judgments are based on its past beliefs. Because this is how perception works, you have no idle thoughts. All your thoughts have already been

transformed into some representation of your beliefs. Although your false beliefs have no ability to change the truth, they will affect how you interact with your world of perception.

Question: On a believability scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being absolutely true, please rate the following statements,

- A) My thoughts become my experiences.
- B) My experiences become my thoughts.

Question: If you believed that your thoughts became your future reality, would you be more leery of your idle thoughts?

LESSON 17

I see no neutral things.

W-17.1. This idea **that I see no neutral things** is another step in the direction of identifying cause and effect as **cause and effect** really operates in the world. 2 You see no neutral things because you have no neutral thoughts. 3 It is always the thought that comes first, despite the temptation to believe that it is the other way around. **Common belief is that there is something outside of you that is first observed and that this observation causes you to have thoughts about the subject. This is not truly the case.** 4 This **understanding that thought comes first** is not the way the world thinks, but you must learn that it is the **actual** way you think. **ACIM is saying that your thoughts always come before you perceive anything.** 5 If it were not so **that your thought comes first**, perception would have no cause, and, **perception** would itself be the cause of reality. 6 In view of **perception's** highly variable nature, this is hardly likely **that perception would have no cause.**

W-17.2. In applying today's idea **that I see no neutral things** say to yourself, with eyes open:
2 I see no neutral things because I have no neutral thoughts.
3 Then look about you, resting your glance on each thing you note long enough to say:
4 I do not see a neutral ____, because my thoughts about ____ are not neutral.
5 For example, you might say:
6 I do not see a neutral wall, because my thoughts about walls are not neutral.
7 I do not see a neutral body, because my thoughts about bodies are not neutral.

W-17.3. As usual, it is essential to make no distinctions between what you believe to be animate or inanimate; pleasant or unpleasant. 2 Regardless of what you may believe, you do not see anything that is really alive or really joyous. 3 **You do not see anything that is really alive or really joyous** because you are unaware as yet of any thought that is really true, and therefore really happy.

W-17.4. Three or four specific practice periods are recommended, and no less than three are required for maximum benefit, even if you experience resistance. 2 However, if you do **experience resistance**, the length of the practice period may be reduced to less than the minute or so that is otherwise recommended.

Notes to Lesson # 17

I see no neutral things.

Lesson 17 is a logical consequence of the previous lesson. If everything is the result of your thoughts and you have no neutral thoughts, then obviously there can be no neutral things. Once again, it is important to remember that you live in a world of perception, not one, based on actual fact. ACIM points out that in your world of provisional reality, thoughts always come first, despite the typical world view that experiences are the source or cause of your thoughts.

Based on physiological and psychological research, our physical senses operate out of your prior beliefs system. Physiologists tell us that the physical senses are incapable of observing the whole and therefore, large gaps exist in our power of observation. These gaps are then filled in by our mind's past beliefs. The mind is always coloring your present perception and therefore, distorting objective reality by what it expects to observe based on its past beliefs. It is always your thought that generate your perception. Thoughts must be present and are causative since without thoughts, perception would not exist. Perception, by definition, always comes from the viewpoint of the perceiver. Perception never comes from the viewpoint of the item being observed.

Lesson 16 was I have no neutral thoughts. The note points out that all your current thoughts are filtered based on your past beliefs. This filtering process actually transforms any potential thought into a representation of a prior existing belief. Thoughts raised to the level of a belief are empowered by your mind to impact your perceived reality. Your mind's beliefs determine how you will interact with your outside world.

At this time, it is not necessary for you to believe with 100% certainty that your thoughts are the precursors of your tomorrow. The idea that thoughts are the cause of all your experiences seems counterintuitive and is not the general consensus within our society. Our society teaches that there are outside forces beyond our control. Society, then claims that your job is to manage, mitigate and manipulate these outside forces as best you can. You are relegated to the management of effects, instead of causing those effects. Such a belief system supports a worldview of disempowerment and victimization. It is difficult to escape fear-based thinking when you are indoctrinated into the belief that outside forces are in control of your destiny.

Whether you believe your experiences or thoughts come first, all must agree that at this point in your life you have had both experiences and thoughts. The bird is already out of its cage and therefore, arguing over how it originally escaped will not return the bird to its cage.

You currently find yourself in the middle of what I call the creation cycle. This self-supporting creation cycle revolves around both beliefs and experiences. Your experiences confirm your beliefs and your beliefs are reconfirmed by your experiences. Both support and reinforce each other in an endless cycle. Without any change in your beliefs or your experiences, your future will continue to be a replay of your past. Since each one of us already has a past, arguing about which came first, the belief or the experience does not change the fact that you are already in the middle of that self-fulfilling cycle.

We will discuss both the creation cycle and the causative power of your beliefs in greater depth in future lessons. Right now, I only ask you to consider the possibility that your thoughts, or more accurately stated your beliefs, impact how you relate to your private world of individuated perception.

Yesterday I asked you to rate the credibility of the following statements on the following believability scale.

Question from Lesson 16: On a believability scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being absolutely true, please rate the following statements,

A) My thoughts become my experiences.

B) My experiences become my thoughts

How did you do?

For most people, the answer to these statements would not be a 10 or a 0. It would be somewhere in between. Most people do not feel they are totally powerless or in total control of their world.

Question: How much control do you believe you have in changing planet earth?

Question: How much control do you believe you have in changing your perception about how you view planet earth?

LESSON 18

I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing.

W-18.1. The idea for today that I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing is another step in learning that the thoughts which give rise to what you see are never neutral or unimportant. 2 This idea that I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing also emphasizes the idea that minds are joined, which will be given increasing stress later on.

W-18.2. Today's idea that I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing does not refer to what you see as much as to how you see it, which is a part of perception. 2 Therefore, the exercises for today emphasize how you really observe something which is an aspect of your perception. 3 The three or four practice periods which are recommended should be done as follows:

W-18.3. Look about you, selecting subjects for the application of today's idea that I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing as randomly as possible, and keeping your eyes on each one long enough to say:

2 I am not alone in experiencing the effects of how I see ____.

3 Conclude each practice period by repeating the more general statement:

4 I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing.

5 A minute or so, or even less, will be sufficient for each practice period.

Notes to Lesson # 18

I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing.

Today's idea that I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my seeing reinforces the idea that you have no neutral or unimportant thoughts or beliefs. It also introduces the idea that at some level, minds are joined or interrelated. We will discuss in more detail this joining or interaction between minds in later lessons.

Today's idea is not referring so much as to what you see but how you see it. We have stressed the idea that your thoughts are not innocent but rather quite judgmental. The egoic mind comes from the viewpoint of separation. The ego believes that it is in competition with others for the limited resources that it needs for its survival. Your egoic mind has to determine whether something that it perceives outside itself is either helpful or harmful to its long-term survival.

Based on its prejudicial prior judgments, your mind will then determine how it chooses to interact with the object at hand. The interaction will not be based on the objective circumstances of the moment, but rather on the subjective opinions of the egoic mind. Thus, your mind is constantly bringing forward its past beliefs into the present.

This distorted viewpoint limits what you perceive to be available options for your present experiences. This subjectivity on your part, of course, effects the possible reactions available to the other player in the relationship game. In essence, each player feeds off the limiting beliefs of the other party.

We will be discussing this interaction between the various players of any shared common experience in greater depth. When you understand this simple interaction, you will be able to greatly improve your interpersonal relationships.

Question: When you anticipate that you will have a future negative experience, do you enter that experience with an open mind or rather with a sense of dread?

Question: Do you believe this prior anticipation will have some impact on how you choose to enter into and relate to that future anticipated event?

Question: Will your preconceived notion of this event limit what is possible for you to experience from that future event?

LESSON 19

I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts.

W-19.1. The idea for today **which is I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts**, is obviously the reason why your seeing does not affect you alone. 2 You will notice that at times the ideas related to thinking precede those related to perceiving, while at other times the order is reversed **so that the ideas related to perceiving come before the ideas related to thinking**. 3 The reason is that the order does not matter. 4 Thinking and **thinking's** results, **which is perceiving**, are really simultaneous, for cause and effect are never separate.

W-19.2. Today we are again emphasizing the fact that minds are joined. 2 **The fact that minds are joined** is rarely a wholly welcome idea at first, since **the fact that minds are joined** seems to carry with it an enormous sense of responsibility, and may even be regarded as an "invasion of privacy." 3 Yet it is a fact that **minds are joined and that there are no private thoughts**. 4 Despite your initial resistance to this idea **that minds are joined and that there are no private thoughts**, you will yet understand that **this joining** must be true if salvation is possible at all. 5 And salvation must be possible because **salvation** is the Will of God.

W-19.3. The minute or so of mind searching which today's exercises require is to be undertaken with eyes closed. 2 The idea for today **that I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts** is to be repeated first, and then the mind should be carefully searched for the thoughts **the mind** contains at that time. 3 As you consider each **thought**, name **the thought** in terms of the central person or theme **the thought** contains, and holding **the thought** in your mind as you do so, say:

4 I am not alone in experiencing the effects of this thought about ____.

W-19.4. The requirement of as much indiscriminateness as possible in selecting subjects for the practice periods should be quite familiar to you by now, and will no longer be repeated each day, although **the mention of random selection** will occasionally be included as a reminder. 2 Do not forget, however, that random selection of subjects for all practice periods remains essential throughout. 3 Lack of order in this connection will ultimately make the recognition of lack of order in miracles meaningful to you.

W-19.5. Apart from the "as needed" application of today's idea **that I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts**, at least three practice periods are required, shortening the length of time involved, if necessary. 2 Do not attempt more than four.

Notes to Lesson # 19

I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts.

Lesson 18 and 19 are very similar. Lesson 18 focused on the effects of your seeing while this lesson says you are not alone in experiencing the effects of your thoughts. The interrelationship with thoughts, beliefs and seeing have already been discussed. This lesson points out that thinking and its results really are simultaneous and that cause and effect are never separate.

In regard to perception, we can easily understand that both observer and something to observe is needed. Also, the idea that a cause must have an effect or it is not a cause is obvious. Both cause and effect give rise to the existence of the other half. Without both, you would have neither. Cause and effect are two sides of one inseparable coin. In our world of perception, however, we

view each part of the one continuous coin to be separate. There is no line of demarcation that separates a cause from its effect.

Earlier, I said that time was the measure of change. Time is also the belief that there is a gap between cause and effect. ACIM states that thinking and thinking's results are actually simultaneous. Yet, in our world of time and space, we believe that there is a gap between thinking and the results of thinking.

If the anticipated change in our beliefs is great, we believe a long time interval will be required before our mind will allow the effect of our new thinking to manifest on the experiential level. Often, our mind will require that we baby step our way slowly towards that change. The time interval that is required before we allow change to physically take place is contingent on our beliefs and the strength in which they are held. As the believability in a new belief increases the rapidity of experiences that support that new belief will also increase.

The idea that you are not alone in experiencing the effects of your thoughts or your seeing implies that there is an interconnection between seemingly separate minds. Whether you believe that minds are interconnected or not, we all realize in a world of perception, no man is an island, separate and distinct. Instead, the object and the observer are interconnected. Each is dependent on the other for their seemingly private existence. Neither operates in a vacuum. Although we each live in your own private world of individuated perception, both object and perceiver share some common overlap in each other's world. This shared overlapping is the beginning of a larger collective consciousness within the group itself. The more uniform the beliefs and experiences within a given group, the more stable and similar is that group's provisional reality.

This idea that minds are connected, may depress some since they may feel that this places a tremendous burden upon their shoulders. They may believe that they alone are responsible for all events that take place on this planet called earth. If this were true, this would be a tremendous burden to place on anyone. Let me assure you that as the workbook lessons unfold this false sense of burden will be lifted. You are not responsible for everything that takes place on planet earth. But you are responsible for your own world of perception. You can live in your own peaceful world and yet, reside on a warring planet.

Question: Do you live in a peaceful world.

ACIM says if you want peace, be peace. If you want love, be love.

Or as Gandhi said," Be the Change you wish to see in the world!"

LESSON 20

I am determined to see.

W-20.1. We have been quite casual about our practice periods thus far. 2 There has been virtually no attempt to direct the time for undertaking **your practice periods**, minimal effort has been required, and not even active cooperation and interest have been asked **for during your practice periods**. 3 This approach of **lack of restrictive directions** has been intentional, and very carefully planned. 4 We have not lost sight of the crucial importance of the reversal of your thinking. 5 The salvation of the world depends on **the reversal of your thinking**. 6 Yet you will not see **and reverse your thinking** if you regard yourself as being coerced, and if you give in to resentment and opposition.

W-20.2. This is our first attempt to introduce structure. 2 Do not misconstrue **the introduction of structure** as an effort to exert force or pressure. 3 You want salvation. 4 You want to be happy. 5 You want peace. 6 You do not have **salvation, happiness or peace** now, because your mind is totally undisciplined, and you cannot distinguish between joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, love and fear. 7 You are now learning how to tell **joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, love and fear** apart. 8 And great indeed will be your reward.

W-20.3. Your decision to see is all that vision requires. 2 What you want is yours. 3 Do not mistake the little effort that is asked of you for an indication that our goal is of little worth. 4 Can the salvation of the world be a trivial purpose? 5 And can the world be saved if you are not **saved**? 6 God has one Son, and he, **God's one Son**, is the resurrection and the life. 7 **Your** will is done because all power is given **God's one Son** in Heaven and on earth. 8 In your determination to see is vision given you.

W-20.4. The exercises for today consist in reminding yourself throughout the day that you want to see. 2 Today's idea **that I am determined to see** also tacitly implies the recognition that you do not see now. 3 Therefore, as you repeat the idea **that you are determined to see**, you are stating that you are determined to change your present state for a better one, and **the one state** you really want.

W-20.5. Repeat today's idea slowly and positively at least twice an hour today, attempting to do so every half hour. 2 Do not be distressed if you forget to do so, but make a real effort to remember. 3 The extra repetitions **that you are determined to see** should be applied to any situation, person or event that upsets you. 4 You can see **any situation** differently, and you will. 5 What you desire you will see. 6 Such is the real law of cause and effect as it operates in the world.

Important: Please read carefully: The real Law of Cause and Effect as it operates in your world of individuate perception, which is your provisional reality, is that what you desire you will see.

Notes to Lesson # 20

I am determined to see.

Lesson 20 reveals the true goal of these workbook lessons.

These workbook lessons are really designed to train your undisciplined mind to a new way of viewing your world. The ego does not know who you are and yet you rely on your ego to advise

you on how you should live your life. This is the classic example of the blind leading the blind. However, in your case, you are not truly blind. Instead, you are refusing to utilize and trust your inner guidance system that represents your Higher Self and knows the truth about who you really are. Would you rather listen to someone who argues for your limitations or someone that encourages you to fulfill your destiny and embrace your true magnificence?

I am determined to see implies that what your ego currently believes to be your only provisional reality may not be the only option available.

Instead, your ego's plan may be the source for distortion of the truth that leads to a life dominated by fear, struggle and pain. There must be another plan.

A Course in Miracles realizes that it has to meet you where you are. In these early lessons, ACIM did not attempt to impose any strict structure realizing that an undisciplined mind would oppose such an approach. Instead, ACIM only asked your willingness to be open and to do the exercises. As you proceed with these exercises, your mind is becoming more disciplined and it is opening up to new possibilities. Continue with these lessons without being overly critical if you fail to meet the suggested time intervals. Simply resume the schedule as best you can.

In this lesson, it is suggested that you repeat today's idea that you are determined to see at least twice an hour. Some people actually set their clock to beep as a reminder. In my case, I preferred to write down the lesson and place it in my pocket or someplace where I would come across it during the day. Use any aid that may help you in remembering the schedule. Do not allow failure to comply with each appointed time as an excuse to become discouraged and discontinue the lessons. Our goal this year is to get through the lessons. Perfection is not required or demanded. Don't be too hard on yourself.

As a final note, Lesson 20 casually mentions the idea that "What you want is yours." It also states that "What you desire you will see. Such is the real law of cause and effect as it operates in the world." This Law of Cause and Effect operates currently and continuously in your world of perception. Although hard to believe, it rules your world of provisional reality. This is an important concept that we will be discussing in great depth in the near future.

Question: If someone does not know the truth about themselves, will they know what is in their own best interest?

Question: Have you ever desired something, only to realize when you achieve it that item failed to make you happy?

Question: Have you ever failed to get what you wanted, only to realize that if you had gotten what you wanted, it would have brought you pain and sorrow?

LESSON 21

I am determined to see things differently.

W-21.1. The idea for today **that I am determined to see things differently** is obviously a continuation and extension of the preceding one, **which was I am determined to see**. 2 This time, however, specific mind-searching periods are necessary, in addition to applying the idea **that you are determined to see things differently** to particular situations as **these situations** may arise. 3 Five practice periods are urged, allowing a full minute for each.

W-21.2. In the practice periods, begin by repeating the idea today **that I am determined to see things differently** to yourself. 2 Then close your eyes and search your mind carefully for situations past, present or anticipated that arouse anger in you. 3 The anger may take the form of any reaction ranging from mild irritation to rage. 4 The degree of the emotion you experience does not matter. 5 You will become increasingly aware that a slight twinge of annoyance is nothing but a veil drawn over intense fury.

W-21.3. Try, therefore, not to let the "little" thoughts of anger escape you in the practice periods. 2 Remember that you do not really recognize what arouses anger in you, and nothing that you believe **about what arouses anger** in this connection means anything. 3 You will probably be tempted to dwell more on some situations or persons than on others, on the fallacious grounds that **these situations** are more "obvious." 4 This is not so. **"Little" thoughts of anger as well as more obvious ones all result in the loss of your inner peace.** 5 It is merely an example of the belief that some forms of attack are more justified than others.

W-21.4. As you search your mind for all the forms in which attack thoughts present themselves, hold each **attack thought** in mind while you tell yourself:

2 I am determined to see ___ [name of person] differently.

3 I am determined to see ___ [specify the situation] differently.

W-21.5. Try to be as specific as possible. 2 You may, for example, focus your anger on a particular attribute of a particular person, believing that the anger is limited to this **one particular** aspect. 3 If your perception is suffering from this form of distortion **involving one specific attribute of a particular person** say:

4 I am determined to see ___ [specify the attribute] in ___ [name of person] differently.

Example: I am determined to see the lack of punctuality in Mary differently.

Notes to Lesson # 21

I am determined to see things differently.

Lesson 21 is both a continuation and an extension of the previous idea. Rather than just be determined to see, it asks that you be determined to see things differently. Seeing and vision, as we have indicated before, are not synonymous for ACIM purposes. Your real goal is not to see, but instead, to perceive things correctly.

Perception revolves around beliefs. As long as your beliefs are misaligned with the truth, you will not be able to achieve real vision. What you seek is not merely a different false story that becomes your provisional reality. Instead, you want to utilize correct vision while you are interacting with your perceived world. Correct vision would align and bear witness to the truth.

This is Truth with a capital T. It is not another egoic story built around limitation and fear-based thinking.

The ego does not know the big picture and therefore, is unable to properly advise you. Lacking knowledge of who you really are, your egoic mind fails to realize what will truly make you happy. Your egoic mind has been indoctrinated into a fear-based thought system. It believes you are the physical body and that the body is you. Believing itself to be separate, the ego sees itself in competition for the limited resources that it needs to survive. Identifying itself with the body, the ego must assume the limitations that come with a physical body that it claims as its home. The ego fails to understand that your consciousness and spiritual essence is not limited by this physical dimension.

I would suggest that if you are determined to see things differently, you should consider major, not minor shifts, in your thinking. You can baby step your way towards a new vision or you can decide to be open and explore a thought system based on a new paradigm. Aren't you really after a big shift? Quantum breakthroughs occur when you are willing to change course, move out of your comfort zone and onto a different direction.

You have been indoctrinated into a fear-based thought system. You can never find the joy, happiness and inner peace that you seek and deserve within that same fear-based thought system. It is impossible! Joy, happiness and inner peace are incompatible with fear. You need a new vision. You need a new plan.

In order to entertain a different vision, you need to first know what your current vision **is**.

Question How do you currently see yourself?

What are your 3 greatest strengths?

What are your 3 greatest weaknesses?

List 3 single word character traits that describe your personality.

These traits could be considered positive or negative or both.

For example, your 3 traits could be unreliable, sympathetic and tenacious.

Question: Are you satisfied with your current vision?

If not, write down a different vision of who you would like to become.

List three single word character traits that such a person would have to possess.

Note: I would strongly suggest you write down your answers

If you desire to make quantum leaps, you need to honestly assess both where you currently are and where you want to go.

LESSON 22

What I see is a form of vengeance.

W-22.1. Today's idea **that what I see is a form of vengeance** accurately describes the way anyone who holds attack thoughts in his mind must see the world. 2 Having projected his anger onto the world, he sees vengeance about to strike at him. 3 His own attack is thus perceived as self defense. 4 **This cycle of holding thoughts of attack and counter-attack and projecting them upon the world that he sees** becomes an increasingly vicious circle until he is willing to change how he sees **his world**. 5 Otherwise, thoughts of attack and counter-attack will preoccupy him and people his entire world. 6 What peace of mind is possible to **him when this cycle of holding thoughts of attack and counter-attack preoccupy his mind?**

W-22.2. It is from this savage fantasy **which is this vicious cycle of holding thoughts of attack and counter-attack** that you want to escape. **This vicious cycle of projecting your angry thoughts upon the world you see is why you perceive a vengeful world.** 2 Is it not joyous news to hear that **the world you see as a form of vengeance** is not real? 3 Is it not a happy discovery to find that you can escape **your vengeful world that you perceive you see?** 4 **By this cycle of holding thoughts of attack and counter-attack,** you made what you would destroy. **By this cycle of holding attack and counter-attack thoughts, you made** everything that you hate and would attack and kill. 5 All that you fear does not exist **because it was from your own egoic mind that you projected your attack thoughts upon the world you perceived you saw.**

W-22.3 .Look at the world about you at least five times today, for at least a minute each time. 2 As your eyes move slowly from one object to another, from one body to another, say to yourself:
3 I see only the perishable.
4 I see nothing that will last.
5 What I see is not real.
6 What I see is a form of vengeance.
7 At the end of each practice period, ask yourself:
8 Is this the world I really want to see?
9 The answer is surely obvious.

Notes to Lesson # 22

What I see is a form of vengeance

Lesson 22 is what I see is a form of vengeance. This is a logical consequence of two previously discussed factors. The first is how perception works and the second is based on your ego's limiting beliefs about yourself and your world.

The law of perception basically states that you will see what you believe. This is what psychological and physiological research shows us. Our physical senses are not objective but rather thought confirmation devices. Your senses are designed to confirm what your mind expects your outside world should be. You project your own beliefs outside your mind and your senses then confirm these predetermined beliefs to be true. Believe you will be attacked, and your physical senses will find some experience to confirm that preexisting belief.

The second factor is based on your thought system's beliefs. To your ego, you are your body and the body is you. Your ego believes that you are a limited ego body in competition with other ego bodies for the limited resources that both need for their survival. Believing itself to be separate, the ego must see outside forces operating in its world that can impact the ego's very survival. The ego sets out to manipulate its perceived outside world in order to ensure its survival needs are met. The ego develops a plan to do this manipulation. Any deviation from the ego's plan is seen as a direct attack coming from the offending party.

If I believe that I need a parking spot close to the door of the grocery store, I will see other drivers entering the same parking lot as competition for my needed spot. I may attempt to race through the lot so that I can arrive at my predesignated parking spot before another driver arrives. In this simple example, my ego would prejudge the other driver as competition. The driver's actions would be seen as an attack against my needs. My ego would claim any anger or resentment that I might feel from this encounter would be justified. My action of racing through the parking lot to claim my spot would be viewed as a justified act of self-defense, not an attack on the other party. To my ego, the best defense is a good offense. My ego calls my actions a preemptive strike while the other party sees themselves as an innocent victim and me as an aggressive foe.

On a more subtle level, if my survival plan requires that Jim give me his paycheck at the end of the week, Jim's failure to do so will be perceived as an attack on my very survival. In order to insure Jim's future compliance with my ego's plan, I may agree to make Jim dinner and wash his clothes. Rather than my actions of cooking and cleaning for Jim being performed out of love, these actions are part of my ego's self-defense plan to manipulate outside forces to provide the limited resources that I perceive I need for my survival. If I do not receive my expected payback, which is Jim's paycheck at the end of the week, my ego will believe I have been attack. My ego may also view myself as a failure for not procuring its needs.

Question: How do you react when people fail to meet your expectations?

Do you adjust and go with the flow or do you blame the other party, become angry, hurt, or lose your inner peace?

Question: What are some of your favorite self-defense mechanism to manipulate others to comply with your ego's plan of action?

LESSON 23.

I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts.

W-23.1. The idea for today **that I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts** contains the only way out of fear that will ever succeed. 2 **Since** nothing else will work, everything else is meaningless. 3 But this way **that I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts** cannot fail. 4 Every thought you have makes up some segment of the world you see. 5 It is with your thoughts, then, that we must work, if your perception of the world is to be changed.

W-23.2. If the cause of the world you see is **your** attack thoughts, you must learn that it is these thoughts which you do not want. 2 There is no point in lamenting the world **that you perceive**. 3 There is no point in trying to change the world **that you perceive**. 4 **The world that you perceive** is incapable of change because **the world that you perceive** is merely an effect of **your attack thoughts**. 5 But there is indeed a point in changing your **attack** thoughts about the world. 6 Here you are changing the cause **of the world that you perceive which is your attack thoughts**. 7 The effect, **which is your vengeful world that you perceive**, will change automatically.

W-23.3. The world you see is a vengeful world, and everything in it is a symbol of vengeance. 2 Each of your perceptions of "external reality" is a pictorial representation of your own attack thoughts. 3 One can well ask if this **perception of "external reality "which is the result of your mind's own pictorial representation of your own attack thoughts** can be called seeing. 4 Is not fantasy a better word for such a process **of projecting your own attack thoughts outside your mind**, and hallucination a more appropriate term for the result **of a vengeful world that you perceive you see?**

W-23.4. You see the world that you have made, but you do not see yourself as the image maker. 2 You cannot be saved from the world **you perceive**, but you can escape from **your perceived world's cause which is your egoic mind's attack thoughts. Your mind's attack thoughts are the real image maker**. 3 This is what salvation means, for where is the world you see when its cause, **which is your attack thoughts**, is gone? 4 Vision already holds a replacement for everything you think you see now. 5 Loveliness can light your images, and so transform **your images** that you will love them, even though **your images** were made of hate. 6 For you will not be making **your images** alone.

W-23.5. The idea for today **that I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts** introduces the thought that you are not trapped in the world you see, **because your perceived world's cause** can be changed. 2 This change requires, first, that the cause, **which is your attack thoughts**, be identified and **then the second step is** to let go, so that **your attack thoughts** can be replaced. 3 The first two steps in this process, **(identifying the cause and then letting it go)**, require your cooperation. 4 The final one, **which is the images you perceive**, does not. 5 Your images **you perceive** have already been replaced. 6 By taking the first two steps, you will see that this is so and **that the images you had perceived have already been replaced**.

W-23.6. Besides using **the idea that I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts** throughout the day as the need arises, five **separate** practice periods are required in applying today's idea. 2 As you look about you, repeat the idea **that I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts** slowly to yourself first, and then close your eyes and

devote about a minute to searching your mind for as many attack thoughts as occur to you. 3 As each **attack thought** crosses your mind say:

4 I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts about ____.

5 Hold each attack thought in mind as you say this, and then dismiss that **attack** thought and go on to the next.

W-23.7. In the practice periods, be sure to include both your thoughts of attacking and of being attacked. 2 Their effects are exactly the same because **your thoughts of attacking and of being attacked** are exactly the same. 3 You do not recognize this **similarity** as yet, and you are asked at this time only to treat **your thoughts of attacking and of being attacked** as the same in today's practice periods. 4 We are still at the stage of identifying the cause of the world you see. 5 When you finally learn that thoughts of attack and of being attacked are not different, you will be ready to let the cause go.

Notes to Lesson # 23

I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts.

Lesson 23 is a very important lesson. It contains many rich concepts that lie at the foundation of A Course in Miracles. It states that the world you see is an effect of your thoughts. Your thoughts spring forth from the thought system upon which you place your allegiance. The ego believes that you are a limited separate ego-body that is struggling to get its needs met. This belief lays the foundation of a fear-based thought system that generates the fearful world you perceive as your provisional reality.

ACIM states that you will never be able to escape the source of fear within a thought system that is based upon fear. Your current thought system was designed to protect, support and bear witness for your ego's belief in limitation and separation. In order to eliminate fear from dominating your life, you need to move out of this fear-based thought system. You need a new plan based on a new paradigm of thinking. As we proceed in these ACIM Workbook Lessons a new plan that will work will be provided.

There are only two plans or thought systems available from which to choose. One is based on the truth, with a capital T. The other is based on the false. Although there appears to be many variations of other plans, all these false plans arise from fear-based thinking. Your egoic mind does not know who you really are and therefore, has allied itself with one of the myriads of false fear-based plans. This is why all egoic plans for your salvation are incapable of bringing true happiness and lasting peace.

Because these egoic plans all arise from fear-based thinking, they are doomed to fail. These false plans cannot change the truth of who you really are. Yet, your fear-based thought system does create within its own egoic mind images that support its erroneous beliefs of separation and limitation. Your ego's own fear-based thinking supports and generates the images you perceive to be your own private world of provisional reality. These images are meaningless. A fantasy, no matter how strongly you cling to it, cannot change the truth. These false images have no ability to change the true reality of what God created. Although fantasies cannot change the truth, they can affect the actions of the believer and terrorize any delusional mind that holds those fantasies to be real. Only a thought system that supports and bears witness to truth with a capital T will work. Only the Truth can bring you the lasting happiness joy and peace that you seek.

The world you see is a world of perception. As such, it is an effect of your thoughts. The only way to change your perception of your world is to change the way you think about it. Your thoughts are the cause of your world, not the other way around. Coming from a fear-based thought system, your ego's plan, as pointed out in Lesson 22, is a perpetual cycle of attack and counterattack. Such a thought system only protects and perpetuates your belief in a fearful world.

Lesson 23 also provides a three-step process to escape from the cause of a revengeful world, which are your own fear-based attack thoughts.

The first step in this plan is to identify the true cause of the problem, which, of course, is your own egoic thinking. The second step is to let go or change your thinking, which is the true source of your perception.

The third step occurs automatically and is the effect of completing steps one and two. By changing your thinking, the cause of what you perceive dissolves and a new vision that aligns with the truth reappears. The first two steps in this process remove the blocks your egoic mind has placed to obscure true vision. Once these blocks have been dissolved, thoughts that align with the truth come into your awareness.

These first two steps require your cooperation because your egoic mind is the source of the fear that you perceive in your world in the first place. The third step, however, is an automatic result or effect of the prior two. It requires no conscious effort on your part. This is why A Course in Miracles says, do not try and change your world. Rather change how you view your world. When you do, the world that you perceive must automatically realign to support your new viewpoint. This new alignment will produce new experiences that support and confirm the correctness of that new belief. By changing your viewpoint, your life will automatically change directions. Quantum changes will occur.

This lesson also provides a definition of salvation. Salvation means that you cannot be saved from the world, but you can escape from its cause. This is an interesting definition because it does not agree with how most people would define salvation. It states that you cannot be saved from the world. How can you be saved from a world that arises from the beliefs of your own mind? Only by eliminating the cause, does its effect disappear. It is your mind's fear-based thought system, not the world that you perceive, that is the cause of all your misery and suffering. Salvation does however offer you the ability to escape from the fear-based thought system that produces the world that you fear. Salvation states that you are not trapped in the world as you perceive it, because its cause, which is your mind, can be changed. Your mind is under your control.

This lesson also states that the images that you see can be transformed to support a new way of viewing your world. Yet, your viewpoint will not necessarily transform the collective consciousness of planet earth. Although you control your own private world of perception, the world as a whole is not made by you alone. Every thought you have makes up some segment of the world. Yet, so do the thoughts of others contribute to this dimension of time and space. It is the composite of our group thinking that provides the mass collective consciousness for the overlapping world each see as their own provisional reality.

In time and space, you do not operate in a vacuum for minds are joined at some level. Although you cannot control all the circumstances that generate your experiences, you are in control of the

interpretation that you place on those circumstances. You are in charge of how you choose to respond. Will you respond with fear or love?

Salvation means that you take responsibility for your own attack thoughts and change them. You cannot save the world since it is an effect of the mass collective consciousness of a fear-based thought system. But you can escape from the cause of the revengeful world you perceive by changing your thoughts about your world of provisional reality.

Salvation offers an alternative to the fear-based thought system that created this fearful world. Fear cannot and will not work to change what it alone created. Only salvation's plan, which leads to the truth, will work.

Question: If you have a religious background, how does your religion define salvation?

Question: How does ACIM definition of salvation differ?

Question: What is your understanding of salvation?

LESSON 24.

I do not perceive my own best interests.

W-24.1. In no situation that arises do you realize the outcome that would make you happy. 2 Therefore, **since you do not realize the outcome that would make you happy**, you have no guide to appropriate action, and no way of judging the result. 3 What you do is determined by your perception of the situation, and that perception is wrong. 4 **Since your perception is wrong**, it is inevitable, then, that you will not serve your own best interests. 5 Yet **your own best interests** are your only goal in any situation which is correctly perceived. 6 Otherwise, **since you do not perceive your own best interests and your perception is wrong**, you will not recognize what **your own best interests** are.

W-24.2. If you realized that you do not perceive your own best interests, you could be taught what **your own best interests** are. 2 But in the presence of your conviction that you do know what **your own best interests** are, you cannot learn **what they really are**. 3 The idea for today **that I do not perceive my own best interests** is a step toward opening your mind so that learning can begin.

W-24.3. The exercises for today require much more honesty than you are accustomed to using. 2 A few subjects, honestly and carefully considered in each of the five practice periods which should be undertaken today, will be more helpful than a more cursory examination of a large number. 3 Two minutes are suggested for each of the mind-searching periods which the exercises involve.

W-24.4. The practice periods should begin with repeating today's idea **that I do not perceive my own best interests**, followed by searching the mind, with closed eyes, for unresolved situations about which you are currently concerned. 2 The emphasis should be on uncovering the outcome you want. 3 You will quickly realize that you have a number of goals in mind as part of the desired outcome, and also that these goals are on different levels and often conflict.

W-24.5. In applying the idea for today **that I do not perceive my own best interests**, name each situation that occurs to you, and then enumerate carefully as many goals as possible that you would like to be met in its resolution. 2 The form of each application should be roughly as follows:

3 In the situation involving ____, I would like ____ to happen, and ____ to happen, and so on. 4 Try to cover as many different kinds of outcomes as may honestly occur to you, even if some of **different kinds of outcomes** do not appear to be directly related to the situation, or even to be inherent in **the situation** at all.

W-24.6. If these exercises are done properly, you will quickly recognize that you are making a large number of demands of the situation which have nothing to do with **the situation**. 2 You will also recognize that many of your goals are contradictory, that you have no unified outcome in mind **for your goals**, and that you must experience disappointment in connection with some of your goals, however the situation turns out.

W-24.7. After covering the list of as many hoped-for goals as possible, for each unresolved situation that crosses your mind say to yourself:

2 I do not perceive my own best interests in this situation,
and go on to the next **situation**.

Notes to Lesson # 24

I do not perceive my own best interests.

If you believed you were a dog instead of a human being, would you handle a given situation differently?

What you do is determined by your perception of the situation. If you believe you are a dog, you will react to any given situation in a dog-like manner. If you do not know who you are, you will fail to realize the full range of possible options available to you. You will react based on your fundamental erroneous beliefs. You will limit yourself and what you believe is possible for your world.

We have already stated that beliefs determine how you perceive your world. If you have no idea of all the facts or how each experience relates to the big picture, you will be unable to judge correctly what is in your best interests.

Your ego does not know who you are, therefore, how could it know what is in your best interest?

Without this basic knowledge of who you are, your ego is incapable of providing the proper guidance you need to appropriately respond to any given situation. Since your ego's actions are based on its underlying belief in separation, limitation and lack, your ego is incapable of correctly assessing any given situation and determining what will be in your best interest. Not knowing who you are, your ego does not know what actions are required to make you happy.

If someone is offering you advice and you realize that they did not know what was in your best interest, would you agree to follow their advice? You would dismiss their advice as irrelevant to your situation and seek a better guide.

The information provided by the fool is indeed foolish. Yet, if you failed to realize the incompetence of your teacher, instead, mistaking him for a wise sage, you might follow that person's advice blindly. You would fail to realize that this trusted advisor was clueless and incapable of developing a plan that would insure your long-term happiness. Yet, this is precisely the situation you are in when you do not question your ego's guidance.

When you do this workbook exercise, you will recognize that you are making a large number of demands on each particular situation that has nothing to do with the situation.

Also, you will find that many of your goals surrounding the situation are contradictory. You want to buy a new computer, but you do not want to spend any money. You have conflicting goals because you do not have one overriding unified outcome that you wish to achieve. To buy, you must be willing to spend.

Often, you have different and conflicting long-term and short-term goals. You want to complete your college degree, but you want to relax and watch televisions today. This lesson points out that that when you lack that one common overriding unified outcome, your various egoic goals will conflict and you will be disappointed with your results. You need to actually know where your true happiness resides in order to chart the right path to achieve it.

Having a single unifying goal or criteria helps you decide what course of action you should take in any given situation. For example, in my case as a young child, I was very clear as to what my one goal or purpose was. I did not want to ever have to return to this hellish world again. This single mindedness reduces internal conflict and stress while increasing clarity.

Question: Do you have one common purpose or unifying goal for your life that you wish to achieve?

Question: If so, has that unifying goal remained constant or has it changed over this lifetime.

Question: What is the one unifying goal that would bring you lasting joy, peace and happiness?

LESSON 25.

I do not know what anything is for.

W-25.1. Purpose is meaning. 2 Today's idea **that I do not know what anything is for** explains why nothing you see means anything. 3 You do not know what **anything you see** is for. 4 Therefore, **anything you see** is meaningless to you. 5 Everything is for your own best interests. 6 **Your own best interest** is what **everything** is for; that is **what everything's purpose is**; that is what **everything** means. 7 It is in recognizing **everything is for your own best interests** that your goals become unified. 8 It is in recognizing **everything is for your own best interests** that what you see is given meaning.

W-25.2. You perceive the world and everything **in your perceived world** as meaningful in terms of ego goals. 2 These **ego** goals have nothing to do with your own best interests, because the ego is not you. 3 This false identification **that the ego is you** makes you incapable of understanding what anything is for. 4 As a result, you are bound to misuse **this false identification that the ego is you**. 5 When you believe **that the ego is not you**, you will try to withdraw the **ego's** goals you have assigned to the world, instead of attempting to reinforce **the ego's goals that you have assigned to the world**.

W-25.3. Another way of describing the goals you now perceive is to say that **the goals you now perceive** are all concerned with "personal" **ego** interests. 2 Since you have no **real personal ego** interests, your **egoic** goals are really concerned with nothing. 3 In cherishing **your egoic goals**, therefore, you have no goals at all. 4 And thus **since you cherish your egoic goals**, you do not know what anything is for.

W-25.4. Before you can make any sense out of the exercises for today, one more thought is necessary. 2 At the most superficial levels, you do recognize "**personal**" **egoic** purpose. 3 Yet purpose cannot be understood at these **egoic** levels. 4 For example, you do understand that a telephone is for the purpose of talking to someone who is not physically in your immediate vicinity. 5 What you do not understand is what you want to reach him for. 6 And **what you want to reach him for** is **what** makes your contact with him meaningful or not.

W-25.5. It is crucial to your learning to be willing to give up the **egoic** goals you have established for everything. 2 The recognition that **the egoic goals you have established for everything** are meaningless, rather than "good" or "bad," is the only way to accomplish this. 3 The idea for today **that I do not know what anything is for** is a step in this direction.

W-25.6. Six practice periods, each of two-minutes duration, are required. 2 Each practice period should begin with a slow repetition of the idea for today **that I do not know what anything is for** followed by looking about you and letting your glance rest on whatever happens to catch your eye, near or far, "important" or "unimportant," "human" or "nonhuman." 3 With your eyes resting on each subject you so select, say, for example:

4 I do not know what this chair is for.

5 I do not know what this pencil is for.

6 I do not know what this hand is for.

7 Say **that I do not know what anything is for** quite slowly, without shifting your eyes from the subject until you have completed the statement about **that subject**. 8 Then move on to the next subject, and apply today's idea **that I do not know what anything is for** as before.

Notes to Lesson # 25

I do not know what anything is for.

You do not understand what anything is for because you do not understand an item's true purpose. Your purpose gives something the meaning you assign to it. The true meaning of an item is different from a definition or name that you have assigned to that given object. When you name something, you define and limit it. Your definition of any object must come from your current belief system. We have been brought up in a fear-based thought system that believes you are a separate ego-body. It believes in limitation and lack. Because of your ego's basic misunderstanding of whom and what you are, its fear-based thought system has failed to understand your true purpose.

Your ego represents your current false beliefs about whom and what you really are. Your ego is how you define yourself. Your ego becomes your thought system which is based upon your belief in limitation, lack and separation. It is the embodiment of your fears. From this erroneous thought system, you attempt to give meaning to your perceived world of provisional reality. Since the ego perceives itself to be the body, it imagines a world whose purpose is to support and provide evidence that separation, limitation, and lack really exists in your world. The ego argues for its rightness, not your happiness.

Your false identification with your ego's goals leads to the misalignment of your world with the real purpose of the world. Your world is your own playschool for you to learn, grow, enjoy and be. It is a place where you can be what you are or pretend to be something you are not. In this dimension, you get to demonstrate and experience who you really believe you currently are. Time is the place in which beliefs can be tested and changed. This fascinates the learning process. Your egoic belief system, however, has turned your world into a place where it believes you must struggle for the limited resources that it needs to survive. Your ego believes that you must earn whatever it needs or your ego will die with the body that it perceives to be its home.

It is on the physical or bodily level, that your ego understands and defines your world of perception. Your ego identifies its very existence with your body and therefore, its viewpoint is focused on the body's needs. The ego accepts the body's limitations as its own. It defines everything as a separate physical autonomous entity. It adopts a fear-based worldview that if it is to survive, you must earn the ego's share of the limited resources that it needs. Your ego's world becomes a place of struggle and conflict, in which you must earn the limited resources that your ego believes it needs for its survival. To your ego, your worth is determined by your ability to obtain what the ego needs to survive. If you fail to provide for your ego's needs, your ego will try to blame, shame and guilt trip you into doing its bidding.

Believing itself to be separate, your ego believes that your world is a place to prove you too are separate. It is your decision to accept this belief in separation and limitation that prevents you from realizing that you alone are the creator of the world you perceive. When you accept your ego's belief in limitation and separateness, the source of your world is now perceived to be external and no longer internally powered by your own mind. Therefore, you must now earn your worth to access the limited resources that you now also perceive you need to survive. Your world view now is that you too must earn your keep. It is from this perspective of lack, limitation and separation that your egoic mind assigned all purpose or meaning to its world

But what if you made a conscious decision to change the purpose of this world from earning, to learning? When you change the purpose of something, you also change the very meaning, or the why, of its existence. It is this why, or purpose, that gives meaning to your world.

When you believe you are the body and the body is you, the world becomes a place of conflict where you must struggle to earn the limited resources that you need to survive. If you were to change your world view from one of earning to learning, your world would become a place where you would get to learn, grow and have fun while you discover who and what you really are.

Earning is results oriented. Learning is process oriented.

When earning is your purpose, you need to get a specific result. When your focus is on some future result, a great deal of internal pressure, fear and stress is engendered. Your happiness must be deferred since it is to be determined based on some future event. Your happiness is contingent on external factors. You are in a constant state of judgment. Each step is determined to be either good or bad with fearful consequence administered for any failure during this process. When you have an earning mindset, is it any wonder why you would approach an experience with fear and dread?

When you view this world as a place of learning, each experience becomes part of the process. It no longer is a required destination. You can enjoy the journey knowing that each part is a needed and beneficial step. When your focus is on learning, instead of earning, each moment becomes the perfect time and place that is needed for your continued forward progression towards your learning goals. Mistakes now become a feedback mechanism allowing you to make a mid-course correction so that you can get back on track. Learning becomes a process or journey that can be enjoyed.

Earning is a struggle while learning can be a fun puzzle.

When you make that conscious decision to change your purpose from earning to learning, it is easy to understand that everything is always in your best interest. What the ego calls a punishable mistake, is now seen as a simple error that requires a mid-course correction. Rather than some bad or negative experience, a “mistake” is just another forward step in the learning process.

When your world is seen as place for earning, you become goal oriented with an external focus geared toward a result. Results can be either external or internal. Earning is typically associated with obtaining a specific reward only upon successful completion of the entire task. Being perceived as something outside of you, the reward must be fully earned. A reward is a destination, not a process.

Typically learning is associated with a skill that is acquired over time and becomes part of your being. Learning goals are typically character traits. Character traits are part of your beingness. You are a helpful person or a loving person. A character trait is something that you demonstrate by being that trait. It becomes a part of you. As such, once learned, the trait cannot be lost. You can choose not to access that skill, but that skill remains part of your knowledge base. It remains part of who you are.

Rather than earn an external reward that can be lost, make your goals character traits that are learned and become part of your very being. Rather than seeking results that are perceived to be

external from you, choose inner goals that support your long-term growth. Go within and develop an internal focus rather than an exterior one.

The purpose of everything is to aid in your reawakening to the truth of who you are. Who you are is at the very core of your beingness. Each moment is the perfect time and place for your own personal journey of reawakening.

When you make a conscious decision to exchange earning for learning, your world becomes your playschool for your growth. Instead of fearing each outcome, you can sit back and enjoy the journey.

Your ego believes that you are a separate limited ego body in competition with other ego bodies for the limited resources that you both need for your survival. It is predicated on the idea that life is a zero-sum game. If I am to win, someone else must lose. Winners are rewarded and losers are punished. Your worth as a person is determined based on your latest results. Since your beliefs determined your perception, the purpose of your egoic world is to prove the correctness of your ego's belief in lack, limitation and separation.

Would you expect such a thought system to create the type of world that would support the joy, happiness and inner peace that you seek? If not, you need a new plan.

Question: If you change the purpose of your world from earning an external reward to learning who you really are, how would your relationship with your world change?

Question: This lesson states that everything is always for your own best interest. If this is truly the case, how would this fact change your story about how you are a victim of your world?

Question: Can you still be a victim if everything has always been for your own best interest?

LESSON 26.

My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability.

W-26.1. It is surely obvious that if you can be attacked you are not invulnerable. 2 You see attack as a real threat. 3 **You see attack as a real threat** because you believe that you can really attack. 4 And what would have effects through you, **your belief you can attack others**, must also have effects on you **that you can be attacked**. 5 It is this law that **what would have effects through you must also have effects on you** that will ultimately save you, but you are misusing **this law** now. 6 You must therefore learn how **this law that what would have effects through you must also have effects on you** can be used for your own best interests, rather than against **your own best interests**.

W-26.2. Because your attack thoughts will be projected, you will fear attack. 2 And if you fear attack, you must believe that you are not invulnerable. 3 Attack thoughts therefore make you vulnerable in your own mind, which is where the attack thoughts are. 4 Attack thoughts and invulnerability cannot be accepted together. 5 **Attack thoughts and invulnerability** contradict each other.

W-26.3. The idea for today **that my attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability** introduces the thought that you always attack yourself first. 2 If attack thoughts must entail the belief that you are vulnerable, **those same attack thought's** effect is to weaken you in your own eyes. 3 Thus **those same attack thoughts** have attacked your perception of yourself. 4 And because you believe **in your attack thoughts' ability to attack another**, you can no longer believe in your own **invulnerability**. 5 A false image of your **egoic** self has come to take the place of what you are, **which is really invulnerable spirit**.

W-26.4. Practice with today's idea **that my attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability** will help you to understand that vulnerability or invulnerability is the result of your own thoughts. 2 Nothing except your thoughts can attack you. 3 Nothing except your thoughts can make you think you are vulnerable. 4 And nothing except your thoughts can prove to you this **perceived vulnerability** is not so.

W-26.5. Six practice periods are required in applying today's idea **that my attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability**. 2 A full two minutes should be attempted for each of **the practice periods**, although the time may be reduced to a minute if the discomfort is too great. 3 Do not reduce **these practice periods** further.

W-26.6. The practice period should begin with repeating the idea for today **that my attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability**, then closing your eyes and reviewing the unresolved questions whose outcomes are causing you concern. 2 The concern may take the form of depression, worry, anger, a sense of imposition, fear, foreboding or preoccupation. 3 Any problem as yet unsettled that tends to recur in your thoughts during the day is a suitable subject. 4 You will not be able to use very many **concerns** for any one practice period, because a longer time than usual should be spent with each **concern**. 5 Today's idea **that my attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability** should be applied as follows:

W-26.7. First, name the situation:

2 I am concerned about ____.

3 Then go over every possible outcome that has occurred to you in that connection and which

has caused you concern, referring to each one quite specifically, saying:
4 I am afraid ___ will happen.

W-26.8. If you are doing the exercises properly, you should have some five or six distressing possibilities available for each situation you use, and quite possibly more. 2 It is much more helpful to cover a few situations thoroughly than to touch on a larger number. 3 As the list of anticipated outcomes for each situation continues, you will probably find some of **the anticipated outcomes**, especially those that occur to you toward the end, less acceptable to you. 4 Try, however, to treat all **of the anticipated outcomes** alike to whatever extent you can.

W-26.9. After you have named each outcome of which you are afraid, tell yourself:
2 That thought is an attack upon myself.
3 Conclude each practice period by repeating today's idea **that my attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability** to yourself once more.

Notes to Lesson # 26

My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability.

Lesson 26, my attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability, is an important lesson. It is actually a statement of the obvious yet something that we do not think about. The only reason you would attack another is because you must believe that they have the ability to affect you in some way. If you did not believe that they possess this ability, why would you be concerned about them at all? Only if you felt their actions could have some positive or negative consequences on your world, would you feel compelled to attempt to control their actions. If you were invulnerable, their actions would be of no consequence to you.

Invulnerability means no outside force could change you against your will.

You believe that you must change, fix or control another's actions because you need to ensure their proper compliance with your ego's worldview and plan. When you believe that you could affect them, you must believe that by your actions you can impact their behavior. This belief that your actions can impact another person's behavior has made the belief of individual vulnerability real within your own mind.

As previously stated, perception always is colored by your beliefs. Thoughts always precede your actions. Your senses confirm your beliefs that you have projected into your world from your own mind. When you believe another is vulnerable, it must mean that your mind has first accepted the idea of your own vulnerability. To attack another, therefore, means you must first attack yourself.

The idea that you can change another confirms your belief that they can change you. Your belief that you are vulnerable to outside forces is the source of your fearful world. Yet, this belief in your vulnerability comes from your own mind. Nothing except your thoughts can attack you. Therefore, by the same token, nothing except your own thoughts can prove that you are actually invulnerable.

The law of perception tells us that what you believe would have effects through you must also have effects upon you. This is why there are no powerless or meaningless thoughts. Because, your ego is one big judging machine, any thoughts of limitation that you would attempt to impose upon another must always attack your own invulnerability first. You fail to recognize the

true power of your own beliefs. Therefore, you fail to realize that what has effects through you must also have effects upon you.

When you properly understand how perception works, you will realize that what you give you must also receive. To believe another is not perfect, whole and complete is to believe that you are not perfect, whole and complete. When you argue for another's limitations, you are actually arguing for your own. It is this belief that binds you to your fearful world of provisional reality.

Failing to recognize the true power of your beliefs, you misuse this law about perception. You think you can attack another and that your attack actually protects you. Once this law is properly understood, you will realize that when you attack another, you are attacking yourself. With this newfound knowledge you can utilize that same law for our own best interest.

Question: The law of perception tells us that what you believe would have effects through you must also have effects upon you. How could you use this law so that it would help you achieve your own goals?

Question: Based on this law what would happen if you decided to believe that everyone was perfect, whole and complete?

LESSON 27

Above all else I want to see.

W-27.1. Today's idea **that above all else I want to see** expresses something stronger than mere determination. 2 **The idea that above all else I want to see** gives vision priority among your desires. 3 You may feel hesitant about using the idea **that above all else I want to see**, on the grounds that you are not sure you really mean **that you really want to replace egoic seeing with true vision**. 4 This does not matter **that you are unsure**. 5 The purpose of today's exercises is to bring the time when the idea **that you really want to replace egoic seeing with true vision** will be wholly true a little nearer.

W-27.2. There may be a great temptation to believe that some sort of sacrifice is being asked of you when you say you want to see above all else. 2 If you become uneasy about the lack of reservation involved, add:

3 Vision has no cost to anyone.

4 If fear of loss still persists, add further:

5 **Vision** can only bless.

W-27.3. The idea for today **that above all else I want to see** needs many repetitions for maximum benefit. 2 **The idea for today that above all else I want to see** should be used at least every half hour, and more if possible. 3 You might try for every fifteen or twenty minutes. 4 It is recommended that you set a definite time interval for using the idea when you wake or shortly afterwards, and attempt to adhere **to that definite time interval** throughout the day. 5 It will not be difficult to **adhere to that definite time interval**, even if you are engaged in conversation, or otherwise occupied at the time. 6 You can still repeat one short sentence **that above all else I want to see** to yourself without disturbing anything.

W-27.4. The real question is, how often will you remember **to repeat this sentence that above all else I want to see to yourself during your day**? 2 How much do you want today's idea **that above all else I want to see** to be true? 3 Answer one of these questions, and you have answered the other. 4 You will probably miss several applications, and perhaps quite a number. 5 Do not be disturbed by this **missing of several applications**, but do try to keep on your schedule from then on. 6 If only once during the day you feel that you were perfectly sincere while you were repeating today's idea **that above all else I want to see**, you can be sure that you have saved yourself many years of effort.

Notes to Lesson # 27

Above all else I want to see.

Lesson 27, above all else I want to see, is fairly straightforward.

First, realize that what you want is vision that witnesses for the truth, not misperception that is based on your belief in separation, limitation and the belief that you are the body and the body is you. When ACIM uses the term seeing, it is actually referencing the image making process that produces the distorted world of private individuated perception. This type of seeing is merely designed to confirm your ego's beliefs about your world. This is why ACIM refers to seeing as image making. Seeing is a thought confirmation device that utilizes your physical senses to merely agree with what your ego believes already exists outside your mind.

The next idea of importance is that in order to obtain correct vision, you need to have that as a priority. In an earlier lesson, we spoke of the need to have one unifying common purpose or goal. When rediscovering the truth of who you really are becomes your number one priority, the means to obtaining that goal will be made available. Clarity of purpose needs to be obtained. Only when you know where you want to go, does the decision of which direction to take become important. Prior to that decision, any direction is as good as another.

The third interesting point is the idea that multiple repetitions of a new idea is helpful when you are attempting to establish a new direction. When you are first attempting to change a previous pattern or belief, your believability in the new idea will not be total. You will have questions. You will have doubts. Yet, by simply repeating an affirmation about that desired new belief, that repetition will be helpful in creating that change in your life. By doing this you are at least bringing it into your conscious awareness. You are telling your mind that this new thought is something you desire your mind to move towards. Total belief or full desire is not required to begin the process for change. Sometimes you need to fake it until you make it.

When it comes to affirmations, repeating the idea within your mind is helpful, saying it out loud is better, and writing it down while you repeat it out loud is best.

Research on goal setting clearly indicates that written goals are clearly superior to oral ones. When a goal is in writing, it becomes your commitment toward change and achievement. Your mind sits up and takes note. When a goal is only oral, it remains an idle wish.

Question: If above all else you want to see, what is it that you desire to see with true vision?

LESSON 28

Above all else I want to see things differently.

W-28.1. Today we are really giving specific application to the idea for yesterday **which was above all else I want to see**. 2 In these practice periods, you will be making a series of definite commitments. 3 The question of whether you will keep **these definite commitments** in the future is not our concern here. 4 If you are willing at least to make **these definite commitments** now, you have started on the way to keeping **these commitments**. 5 And we are still at the beginning.

W-28.2. You may wonder why it is important to say, for example, "Above all else I want to see this table differently." 2 In itself it is not important at all. 3 Yet what is by itself? 4 And what does "in itself" mean? 5 You see a lot of separate things about you, which really means you are not seeing at all. 6 You either see or not. **Egoic seeing is not the same as true vision**. 7 When you have seen one thing differently **with true vision**, you will see all things differently **with true vision**. 8 The light you will see in any one of them is the same light you will see in them all.

W-28.3. When you say, "Above all else I want to see this table differently," you are making a commitment to withdraw your preconceived ideas about the table, and open your mind to what **the table** is, and what **the table** is for. 2 You are not defining **the table** in past terms. 3 You are asking what **the table** is, rather than telling **the table** what it is. 4 You are not binding **the table's** meaning to your tiny experience of tables, nor are you limiting **the table's** purpose to your little personal thoughts.

W-28.4. You will not question what you have already defined. 2 And the purpose of these exercises is to ask questions and receive the answers. 3 In saying, "Above all else I want to see this table differently," you are committing yourself to **seeing with true vision**. 4 **This commitment that above all else I want to see differently** is not an exclusive commitment. 5 It is a commitment that applies to the table just as much as to anything else, neither more nor less.

W-28.5. You could, in fact, gain vision from just that table, if you would withdraw all your own ideas from **the table**, and look upon **the table** with a completely open mind. 2 **The table** has something to show you; something beautiful and clean and of infinite value, full of happiness and hope. 3 Hidden under all your ideas about **the table** is its real purpose, the purpose **the table** shares with all the universe.

W-28.6. In using the table as a subject for applying the idea for today, you are therefore really asking to see the purpose of the universe. 2 You will be making this same request of each subject that you use in the practice periods. 3 And you are making a commitment to each of them to let its **true** purpose be revealed to you, instead of placing your own judgment upon **the item**.

W-28.7. We will have six two-minute practice periods today, in which the idea for the day **that above all else I want to see things differently**, is stated first, and then applied to whatever you see about you. 2 Not only should the subjects be chosen randomly, but each **subject** should be accorded equal sincerity as today's idea **that above all else I want to see things differently**, is applied to **each subject**, in an attempt to acknowledge the equal value of **each subject** in their contribution to your seeing.

W-28.8. As usual, the applications should include the name of the subject your eyes happen to light on, and you should rest your eyes on it while saying:

2 Above all else I want to see this ___ differently.

3 Each application should be made quite slowly, and as thoughtfully as possible. 4 There is no hurry.

Notes to Lesson # 28

Above all else I want to see things differently.

In Lesson 28, you are asked to make a decision as to what you wish to see differently. Since your current perception is based on your past beliefs, in order for you to be able to see something differently, you must be willing to, at least temporarily, suspend those beliefs. If you failed to do this, your present perception of the new event will simply be a replay of your past beliefs about that subject.

When you say that you want to see things differently, you are committing to dropping your past preconceived ideas about the current event. With open-minded focus on what is presently occurring, you are allowing your mind to give new purpose and meaning to the event.

Lesson 24 stated that the purpose of everything is for your own best interest. When your current experience seems to be a replay from your past, this means that the previous experience had some learning lesson that you refused to acknowledge and absorb. You are allowing your old beliefs to cloud your vision and dictate the current event's purpose. Because of your insistence on maintaining your past belief about the old experience, you are unable and unwilling to absorb the learning lesson that the experience was designed to teach. Until you are willing to see a similar situation in a new way, you will remain stuck arguing for the correctness of your ego's past interpretation for the event. Your ego's need to be right will always trump your desire to be happy. The pearls of wisdom that the event was designed to teach remains unseen.

ACIM states that we are all going to reawaken to the truth of who we really are. We always remain as God's created us. Your ego's current fantasy about who you are cannot change the Truth. This being the case, if someone decides to repeat the same learning lesson 1000 times before they fully comprehend that lesson, there is nothing wrong with their decision. Each of those supposedly 999 prior failures were actually needed for comprehending that lesson. Rather than judge those prior 999 experiences as failures, you need to develop the attitude of Thomas Edison.

It took Edison over 7000 attempts before he successfully invented the electric light bulb. When asked about what the world viewed as his many failures, Edison would state that he never failed. Edison viewed each unsuccessful attempt as simply one small baby step forward that moved him closer to finding the one way that would work. What was different about Edison, however, is that with each successful failure, he modified his approach and tried something different. He was willing to learn from his mistakes. He was constantly open-minded and saw each unsuccessful attempt as merely a warning sign that some mid-course correction was required. Edison failed his way to success. Yet, with that approach, Edison became the most prolific inventor the world had ever known.

If everything is for your best interest, this means that every moment is perfectly designed to provide the learning opportunity that you need for your growth and happiness. When you believe your purpose is earning, instead of learning, life becomes a struggle. Your current belief system is focused on earning some specific external result that will make you happy. The system has

never worked in the past. Why should you expect it to work in the future? Such a thought system will always leave you in fear while preventing your enjoyment of the present moment.

You need a new plan. You need to see things differently.

Question: When similar negative experiences keep occurring in your life, your universe or your Higher Self is trying to tell you that your current beliefs are no longer serving your best interest. How many times do you need to repeat the same negative experience over again until you are willing to try a different approach?

LESSON 29

God is in everything I see.

W-29.1. The idea for today **that God is in everything I see** explains why you can see all purpose in everything. 2 **This idea that God is in everything I see** explains why nothing is separate, by itself or in itself. 3 And **this idea that God is in everything I see** explains why nothing you see means anything. 4 In fact, **this idea that God is in everything I see** explains every idea we have used thus far, and all subsequent ones as well. 5 Today's idea **that God is in everything I see** is the whole basis for vision.

W-29.2. You will probably find this idea **that God is in everything I see** very difficult to grasp at this point. 2 You may find **this idea that God is in everything I see** silly, irreverent, senseless, funny and even objectionable. 3 Certainly God is not in a table, for example, as you see **the table**. 4 Yet we emphasized yesterday that a table shares the purpose of the universe. 5 And what shares the purpose of the universe shares the purpose of its Creator.

W-29.3. Try then, today, to begin to learn how to look on all things with love, appreciation and open-mindedness. 2 You do not see **all things with love, appreciation and open-mindedness** now. 3 Would you know what is in **all things**? 4 Nothing is as it appears to you. 5 **Everything's** holy purpose stands beyond your little range. 6 When vision has shown you the holiness that lights up the world, you will understand today's idea **that God is in everything I see** perfectly. 7 And you will not understand how you could ever have found **this idea that God is in everything I see** difficult.

W-29.4. Our six two-minute practice periods for today should follow a now familiar pattern: Begin with repeating the idea **that God is in everything I see** to yourself, and then apply it to randomly chosen subjects about you, naming each one specifically. 2 Try to avoid the tendency toward self-directed selection, which may be particularly tempting in connection with today's idea **that God is in everything I see** because **of the idea's** wholly alien nature. 3 Remember that any order you impose is equally alien to reality.

W-29.5. Your list of subjects should therefore be as free of self-selection as possible. 2 For example, a suitable list might include:

3 God is in this coat hanger.

4 God is in this magazine.

5 God is in this finger.

6 God is in this lamp.

7 God is in that body.

8 God is in that door.

9 God is in that waste basket.

10 In addition to the assigned practice periods, repeat the idea **that God is in everything I see** for today at least once an hour, looking slowly about you as you say the words unhurriedly to yourself. 11 At least once or twice, you should experience a sense of restfulness as you do this.

Notes to Lesson # 29

God is in everything I see.

The idea that God is in everything I see is a common idea yet, it is difficult to grasp on the concrete level of physical form. Most religions state that God is everywhere and in everything. Yet, due to our belief in separation, we find it difficult to apply that same concept to concrete objects that appear all around us. Certainly, this lesson is asking us to look beyond the world of physical form and search for a deeper meaning or essence.

This idea may also be a frightening one. If God is in everything I see and what I see is a warring planet, is it safe to assume that God must be a God of war and not a God of peace and love?

It also leads to the question that if God is in everything I see, why does evil appear to exist in our world?

The world that we experience and see with our physical eyes is not the real world as God created it. Instead it is a myriad of false images that bear witness to our erroneous fear-based belief system. If God is in everything I see and I am failing to see God in my world, this implies that my perception is in error. True reality is not what you perceive. It must lie beyond the physical form that you claim as your reality.

The world you perceive is based on your ego's beliefs in separation, limitation and lack. Your egoic mind filters everything that you perceive based on those beliefs. This viewpoint distorts and provides false images to support your ego's beliefs about its world. When you choose to follow a different belief system, you will see a different world.

Today you are asked to look at all things with love, appreciation and open-mindedness. This is a radically different mindset than your ego's beliefs system. You are asked to look beyond mere form, beyond the past stories and abandon your previous judgments about your world. You are asked to see a different purpose for your world.

Can you look upon your world with a single yet different purpose and realize that everything you survey is there for your own best interest?

Or, will you choose to perceive yourself in competition with your world?

Can you look upon all things with love and appreciation or will you see a world of struggle, conflict and fear? The choice is determined by the thought system that you choose to follow.

Mother Teresa was once asked how she was able to cope with the misery, sickness and poverty of the people of her world while still maintaining her good spirits. Her reply was a simple one. She was not administering to some unknown physical body, instead she was administering to her beloved Jesus. Mother Theresa saw the face of Christ in all. It was Jesus that peopled her world. Others saw the sick, helpless and infirmed while Mother Teresa choose to see God in everything.

Question: How easy or difficult is it for you to look past an object's physical form and see it in a larger context with appreciation and love?

Question: When you change the purpose of the object in question, is it easier to see that same object in a different mindset?

LESSON 30

God is in everything I see because God is in my mind.

W-30.1. The idea for today **that God is in everything I see because God is in my mind** is the springboard for vision. 2 From this idea **that God is in everything I see because God is in my mind** will the world open up before you, and you will look upon **the world** and see in **the world** what you have never seen before. 3 Nor will what you saw before be even faintly visible to you.

W-30.2. Today we are trying to use a new kind of "projection." 2 We are not attempting to get rid of what we do not like by seeing **what we do not like** outside **our mind**. 3 Instead, we are trying to see in the world what is in our minds, and what we want to recognize is there **in our mind**. 4 Thus, we are trying to join with what we see, rather than keeping **what we see** apart from us. 5 **Joining with what you see** is the fundamental difference between vision and the way you see.

W-30.3. Today's idea should be applied as often as possible throughout the day. 2 Whenever you have a moment or so, repeat **the idea that God is in everything I see because God is in my mind** to yourself slowly, looking about you, and trying to realize that the idea applies to everything you do see now, or could see now if **everything** were within the range of your sight.

W-30.4. Real vision is not limited to concepts such as "near" and "far." 2 To help you begin to get used to this idea **that God is in everything I see because God is in my mind** try to think of things beyond your present range as well as those you can actually see, as you apply today's idea.

W-30.5. Real vision is not only unlimited by space and distance, but **real vision** does not depend on the body's eyes at all. 2 The mind is **real vision's** only source. 3 To aid in helping you to become more accustomed to this idea **that God is in everything I see because God is in my mind also** devote several practice periods to applying today's idea with your eyes closed, using whatever subjects come to mind, and looking within rather than without. 4 Today's idea **that God is in everything I see because God is in my mind** applies equally to both **what you see and your thoughts within your own mind**.

Notes to Lesson # 30

God is in everything I see because God is in my mind.

This lesson clearly states the idea what we have mentioned in most of the previous lessons. Your mind is the power source for vision and the world that you perceive. What you perceive to be your outer world is actually a reflection of your mind's inner state. Real vision is not limited by space, distance or the body's eyes. The mind is the only source for true vision. This is why you are asked to devote several practice periods applying today's idea that God is in everything I see because God is in my mind with eyes closed. If God is everywhere, as stated in lesson 29, God must be within your mind.

We are all familiar with the idea of an inner guide. Some inner voice within you that tells you what is right or wrong. It is a voice that holds you to a higher, nobler standard and represents your better half. Some might call it your conscience, others intuition, inner guide, the Holy Spirit, your Higher Self, a guardian angel or the Voice for God. Regardless of what you call it, that inner voice always seems to represent and know your true best interest. This inner voice

guides, directs and moves you towards a higher and nobler vision of who you really are. Whether or not we follow that inner guidance, we have all felt its presence.

This inner voice represents a thought system that is based on a totally different belief system. It understands the big picture and knows the truth of who you really are. It recognizes that you are not a body but rather spirit. It knows and can relate current events to the big picture. It seeks to join, not separate you from another. It understands the interrelationship of all the parts to the whole and your role in that relationship.

In this dimension of time and space, your inner guide utilizes a big picture thought system that is based on love and forgiveness. It knows that you are a spiritual being having a human experience. Its mission is to help you live in this fear-based world without being a source for that fear-based world. Rather than argue for your ego's limitations, it calls for you to reclaim your spiritual magnificence.

The fundamental difference between seeing and vision is separation versus joining. Vision supports oneness and the interconnectedness of all. Seeing supports your ego's belief that it is a separate autonomous entity in competition for the limited resources that your ego believes it needs to survive. The ego looks upon a fearful unsupportive universe because it believes in a zero-sum game. If someone is to win, someone else must lose. Lack, struggle and competition are at the foundation of the ego's world that arises from its fear-based thought system.

This lesson also talks about a different type of projection. Psychologists often refer to our minds ability to transfer its own negative thoughts from our own mind and see those negative thoughts reflected in our outside world. This is a coping mechanism that we use in order to live with our "evil" side, so to speak. Instead of seeing a negative trait within ourselves, our mind now sees that same trait in another. Since the trait is recognized by your mind to be outside of you, you are no longer responsible for it. You do not have to deal with correcting your own mind. You get to blame another and claim that it is not your fault.

ACIM states that by projecting or transferring your negative fear-based thinking from your egoic mind, you create your own fear-based world. You get to claim that you are an innocent victim of the world you created.

Question: Typically, projection is used to transfer your negative fear-based thinking to your outside world. But what if you chose to transfer thoughts of love and appreciation from inside your mind and project them into your outer world? Would your world now reflect your new mindset and become a more peaceful and loving the world?