

# Pathwork™ Steps

## Grace, Faith, and Deficit

### The Meaning of Grace; Releasing Faith; Living on Deficit

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 250 Part 2 of 2

Full text of this plus all other lectures may be downloaded from [www.pathwork.org](http://www.pathwork.org)

*Part 1 for reference:*

*Week 1: The Meaning of Grace*

*Week 2: Awareness, Understanding, Knowing*

*Week 3: Connection Between Inner and Outer Abundance*

*Week 4: Spiral of Development*

#### **Part 2**

**Week 1: Exposing the Deficit**

**Week 2: Using Feedback in Decision Making**

**Week 3: Risking to Have Faith**

**Week 4: Surrendering to the Gift of Life**

**Week 1: Exposing the Deficit**

You build on deficit when...

- You attempt to build positive beliefs and life patterns on top of unconscious or semi-conscious negative beliefs.
  - You secretly believe you are a totally unlovable and unacceptable human being.
  - Your real and false guilts prevent you from turning yourself fully over to God.
  - You assume the universe to be hostile to you, and you protect yourself against this alleged hostility with destructive defenses (that you may or may not be conscious of, that you may rationalize and justify).
- PL 250

**Exercise 1a:** Recall occasions when you gave in or submitted because you didn't fully believe in your values, beliefs, or your own self-worth.

Allow yourself to see subtlety; in addition to words and actions, notice energetic impulses, or momentary bursts of emotion that you may not act upon.

Use [Daily Review](#) PL 28 to see where you fall into one or all of these 4 forms of deficit during the week.

#### **Inner Levels of Individual Deficit**

There is a tendency in human nature to build on deficit. This is of course intrinsically connected with the belief in an empty, poor, ungenerous universe.

This path is directly designed to create an inner order -- painful as this may be at first -- so that you can then begin to build on real assets, and never allow your inner "economics" to become fraudulent and unsound.

The tools I have given you to work on your path are clearly designed to bring your deficits to the surface of your consciousness, instead of denying that they exist, or glossing over them as if they were not important.

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## Beliefs about the forces governing the universe

You are bound to encounter human injustice in the course of your life, in childhood as well as in adulthood. Particularly if these injustices are perpetrated by people who stand for authority -- and are therefore unconsciously associated with God -- your unconscious belief in God's severe injustice is strengthened. All this forms an image which makes, if properly analyzed, a monster out of God. [\*The God Image\*](#) PL 52

**Exercise 1b:** Not believing in a benign, giving universe can be a way of justifying a negative view of self. That is, while beliefs don't make something true; they are often used to declare anything else as false. For instance: an argument for the non-existence of God might be: 1) If God exists, then non-belief does not occur. 2) Non-belief occurs. 3) Therefore, God does not exist. The assumption is that an individual's exercise of Free Will [*Ref PL 18*] to believe / not believe changes spiritual reality.

Explore your spiritual beliefs around what forces govern the universe.

## Building on Deficit

Building on deficit can apparently succeed for a while. That is the trouble. Again, what is false seems to work for a while and thus becomes temporarily convincing.

He who builds a house on unsafe, sandy ground may indeed erect a lovely looking structure that holds up for a while. When it begins to crumble, the builder may have shut off his awareness of having chosen to build on such a foundation and thus cannot see the connection.

The crumbling of the house may be ascribed to different causes, which only maintains the illusion of life and the patterns of building on deficit. PL 250

**Exercise 1c:** Recall personal or communal experiences of having built on deficit. How did your awareness about the deficit begin? What made you realize that that the 'ground' you had built upon was not what you thought it was? If the dynamics of different experiences felt similar in some way, explore what they have in common.

## Finding the Grain of Truth

Objectivity is another essential requisite for the free and harmonious human being.

The more unpurified and disharmonious you are, the more you will lack objectivity. Objectivity means truth; subjectivity means colored truth or half-truth at best, complete untruth in many cases. Subjectivity means unconscious or non-deliberate untruth, contrary to a conscious lie. All this is forthcoming from the emotional level of one's being.

By purifying the depths of your soul, you will first find where untruth exists within yourself; then you will be able to plant truth within yourself after the untruth is ousted. Needless to say, only this path of stringent self-search will make this discovery and ensuing change possible.

Try to find the little grain in yourself, instead of concentrating on the mountain of the other. For your own unhealthy seed robs your peace, and never the mountain of wrong of the other person! [\*Objectivity and Subjectivity – The Christmas Lecture\*](#) PL 42

## Week 2: Using Feedback in Decision Making

When you work with your helpers and peers, and bring all your guilts, all your lower self machinations to the fore, you stand there poor. You no longer cover up with a false veneer. You no longer try to avoid this poverty you have unwittingly created through false beliefs, by destructive means, that only increase the deficit. PL 250

### Exercise 2a: Steps towards attaining mutuality:

1. Acknowledge exactly and precisely what you wish.
2. Acknowledge exactly and precisely what you inwardly deny.
3. Acknowledge that you are unable to make your inner will budge.
4. Acknowledge your wish to make freed what is fixed.
5. Non-fulfillment, with all its suffering, appears preferable to the imagined dangers that lurk in an open, flowing attitude, so that negation and negativity, evil and destructiveness seem protective devices.
6. Whatever you must know to release negation or fixedness will come--patience---wait---
7. Commitment to wanting help is your half of the mutuality, and willingness to open, to receive Divine Help---the healing Life Force. [Mutuality](#) PL 85

### Masks and Illusions

The temporary pain of exposing your debts, your deficits, is entirely based on the false world picture that, by doing so, you are doomed to accept "the reality of poverty."

For you cannot trust that your unsound managing can be changed, that you can indeed create real riches based on a healthy policy. You are constantly running on deficit, always giving out in a distorted way, that has nothing to do with genuine giving. It is pretense giving, in more ways than one.

For example, you either project your mask self to the world while you inwardly despair about who you believe you really are (deficit). Or, you give out in order to accrue what you do not deserve, in a manipulating way. This lower self "giving" is another manifestation of building on deficit. These false ways of giving may again temporarily work on the surface, but inwardly your deficits increase, and the impoverishment thus created is usually covered up more in order to avoid the necessary bankruptcy that you have created. You grab outer, temporary, unsound means to coast along on pretense, in the illusion that you can go on indefinitely in this way. PL 250

### De-constructing Masks and Illusions

Thus you build a **mask illusion** (that this way of operating with yourself can go on forever) on a *lower self illusion* (that the world is mean and poor). To put it differently, you only believe in the illusory wealth acquired through scheming, pretense, and greed, and not in the real wealth of God's creation. Practically, this manifests in putting so much energy in your mask and lower self that you never want to dare exposing your deficits -- and the inner bankruptcy that often exists smoldering underground.

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**Exercise 2b:** Explore a past crisis in your life. How did your unwillingness to see reality, examine your contribution, or believe in a benign universe contribute to the crisis? Clearly name what you were afraid of seeing, finding, or losing, the illusion that made the cover-up feel life affirming. Then reflect on how you discovered there were discrepancies between your beliefs and reality. Notice the different kinds of feedback that helped you gain this new perspective.

### **Commitment – Cause and Effect**

Commitment exists in every imaginable undertaking. It does not only apply to a great and significant venture, such as man's spiritual path of self-evolution -- which is the most important undertaking in life; it also applies to any mundane little task of everyday living.

If you are committed to give your best and your all to whatever it may be, you will concentrate on all angles of the subject. You will not shy away from investing all your energies, all your attention. You will use your available faculties of thinking, of intuition, of meditation.

To the degree you are committed, what you do will be pleasurable, free from conflict, fruitful, and rewarding. It will be one-pointed in direction; it will have depth and meaning; it will be successful; and it will bear the stamp and feeling of blessedness.

[Commitment: Cause and Effect](#) PL 196

**Exercise 2c:** List some areas in your life where you feel that you are fully committed.

Awareness and admission are the keys to understanding further indispensable connections. However, awareness is not sufficient in itself -- if you fail to establish the link between cause and effect. It is quite possible to be aware of this negative intentionality, and still fail to establish the link in question. Use your physical energies, your mental capacities, your feelings, and your will to activate the as yet unmanifest dormant spiritual powers so as to make the venture constructive.

Disconnectedness between cause and effect regarding commitment creates the need to seek adjustment in the wrong manner. Whenever there is lack of commitment, there must always exist negative intentionality as well.

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*"I do not want to give my best of my feelings, or my effort, my attention, or my honesty (or whatever it may be). I will do it because it is expected of me, or because I want the result without paying the full price, or for some ulterior motive other than the thing itself."*

[Commitment: Cause and Effect](#) PL 196

**Exercise 2d:** Speak the words above (in italics) several times over the next few days. Notice if they ring true for any aspect of your life.

### **Week 3: Risking to Have Faith**

Your spiritual and emotional "finances" only too often also manifest on the material level. Hence it is often the case that people live above their means; they coast on debts; they cover one hole with another newly created hole. Although they live in a constant climate of anxiety, they refuse to create order because

- (1) they do not believe that order and abundance can exist for them, and
- (2) they are unwilling to give. Perhaps they do not want to give by paying the necessary price, which may be working, giving in their work, giving their best. Thus, they cannot make a decent livelihood, and they depend on others and accrue debts.

All personal crises, all breakdowns are nothing but the bankruptcy being exposed. PL 250

**Exercise 3a:** Re-examine a past spiritual or emotional crisis, reframing it as being a form of financial bankruptcy, where you were in denial about spiraling costs and debts owed, and may only have been thinking about your self-interest. What happened to your faith during that time?

#### **Developing Faith in Spiritual Abundance**

Fear and resistance to declare the bankruptcy that you have frantically covered up is finally overcome through faith. It is then that you can begin to create a sound new order of your inner wealth that has waited for this moment to manifest and enrich you.

Often this crisis is deliberately induced under controlled circumstances -- when you work with your helpers, in your groups. You go through the shame of showing your deficits, you finally desist building on them, you sail through the fear and pain of believing that this is your final reality. But soon you discover the real wealth "behind" the frantic efforts to hide the assumed, and finally self created, poverty by pretending a false wealth built on deficit.

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**Exercise 3b:** If you have a trusted friend or group to work with, explore the crisis from 3a, naming your deficits so that they are no longer shrouded in fear. This is similar to Step 5 in 12-Step work: *"Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."* Notice any change in feelings or attitude after sharing your process with others.

#### **Risking to Have Faith**

This step is possible only when totally going to / through / in / and with God. Risking to have faith can create faith, and the experience that it is justified to have faith.

It is therefore foolish to assume that a balanced, harmonious, abundant world order can be established in which justice and peace can exist without a direct communication with the divine world within and around you.

If you ignore its existence, you cannot perceive its presence; nor can you hear its guidance, advice, and loving inspirations; nor feel the courage you need in order to go through the temporary exposure of inner bankruptcy (often also outer in individuals and countries).

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## World Peace Requires World Faith

Why do you think God has put some resources in certain parts of the world only and others into other parts? The Creator disposes with the deepest of reasons and meanings. Never is anything just so because of accident. The reason is to help people to share and consider all other people which will enable them to also freely receive from them -- what they need and what others have. Right here you can see how a spiritual law works on the most practical of levels.

Giving and receiving can exist when countries share their resources rather than hoarding them and using them in order to gain more power and riches regardless of how many people will be deprived. PL 250

**Exercise 3c:** How have you understood scarcity? How was world scarcity explained to you as a child? Verbalize beliefs you have been holding about abundance that may feel challenged by this explanation. Notice any resistance to not being able to blame people or circumstances.

The shambles can be collected and rebuilt in a better way only when all participants are seriously filled with the purest of motives and directly ask God's eternal presence to help and inspire. This is the hope of the world in which you live.

All else, everything that is undertaken without God, no matter how intelligent and efficient it may seem at first, is bound to fail in the long run. Only through and with God can the courage and honesty exist to trust total openness, and rebuilding can then begin in earnest and in glory.

Only then will all governments run on assets. Only then can they function healthily with a constant balanced flow of giving and receiving, never exhausting the reserves because all is based on truth, justice, and fairness. One country will not deny the other its resources, so that mutual pressure and power plays will not have to corrupt the world that was created by God so that all can partake in everything, no matter where it exists. PL 250

**Exercise 3d:** Notice if you imagined that world peace would be possible all countries and cultures 'buying in' to some degree, as if it could be gifted to them (or worse, dictated to them by a global authority).

While it's useful to see a large perspective, most of us do not have a large sphere of influence. Spend some time contemplating the value of strengthening your personal beliefs around abundance / your faith that while world peace might take a while, we will achieve it.

## When Authorities Live in Deficit

If you look very closely at various governments in this world, with sufficient information, you will soon see where and how deficits are being created. It is important to see that finances, economics, collective governmental means follow the exact same patterns.

Whenever a country has gone through severe crisis -- revolution, war, collapse, financial crashes -- it was a result of waiting too long to establish voluntary, deliberate choices of working (in controlled circumstances) on cleanliness, order, truth, exposing the deficits, so that true abundance could then follow suit. This involuntary crisis can be likened to a breakdown of a person who individually refuses to expose the inner poverty, pretense, and deficit. PL 250

**Exercise 3e:** Explore the inner poverty, pretense, and deficit of your culture, community, or country that an authority structure is manifesting in an extreme manner. Cast this as a ‘detoxification’ opportunity, by which cultural negativities are allowed to act out their most dangerous forms – the same process that individuals undergo.

### **Deficit caused by insufficient faith**

When governments live predominantly on injustice, greed, power drive; when they scheme and lie to deceive the populace, they always create not only a spiritual deficit but inevitably also a material one. The thus established imbalances can be covered up only so long. Eventually it must all surface so that a new order can be established.

When countries go through such crises, they are often at first motivated by the best intentions. They create new laws and modalities, new collective measures and forms of governments. But when the inner meaning gets lost again, the same deficit, through different means, will arise. The forces of darkness could again distort the truth and tempt man away from the inner truth of God. Again his vision will be blurred, so that deficits accrue again.

So the solution never lies in what form of government you adopt, what outer measures to institute, although admittedly some measures are better than others at different times. Sometimes the direct, material deficits are obvious in a particular country's economics. It is clear that the government avoids the temporary exposure by frantically coasting along and covering one hole with another in pretense and never daring to trust that real wealth can be established. The crisis of admitting the imbalance and mismanagement is too frightening. Insufficient faith exists and the false world picture of a poor, untrustworthy, empty universe makes this step impossible.

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**Exercise 3f:** Explore how the consequences of living in deficit manifest in your family, culture or country. Notice the qualities and characteristics that you share with them.

Shared flaws may be unconsciously interpreted as a form of connection with others, a show of support, union, even love. The self-development of an individual may be seen as a threat to the unity (and therefore the safety) of the community. Have you experienced this?

### **Support your Inner Voice by developing Communication Skills**

When writing creatively, language discovers its own rules and conventions to give shape to the abstractions of emotion.

As the author Jeanette Winterson puts it in *Art Objects* (1995): ‘The bad writer believes that sincerity of feeling will be enough, and pins her faith on the power of experience. The true writer knows that feeling must give way to form.’

Only then can we name what we have experienced and find meaning in what we have named, but not as a sticking point. We might be drawn to writing to find meaning and identity, just as some of us are drawn to therapy, but it’s through critical distance and creating an aesthetic that we finally untether ourselves and become free.

Lila Dunn ©2026 AEON essay on [Trauma Creep](#)

**Exercise 3g:** Consider some form of creative writing to give repressed, rarely felt feelings a voice. Or, another version of [Daily Review PL 28](#): Go through the days in terms of the various moods that "overtook" you during this specific day. [Outer Events Reflect Self-Creation](#) PL 211

## Week 4: Surrendering to the Gift of Life

You neither lack grace nor faith. As all else, it already exists in you. If only you could begin to think of yourself in these terms, all would fall into place so much easier.

Becoming implies acquiring something that you do not already possess. But in reality you are already all that you could ever wish to be. You already possess the states of consciousness you aim to attain. It is simply that only a limited part of your total self functions on this reality level of the world into which you were born.

It is your task to gradually release those parts of you that fully exist on another level of reality, but need to be brought into this material level. PL 250

**Exercise 4a:** Spend some time simply observing your positive intentions. For now, allow that the negative ones have already gotten enough attention!

### Grace Emanates from Within

Man's entire bent of putting effect before cause creates such misperceptions and misinterpretations of life that this in itself prevents you from experiencing grace. The habit of automatically concluding this reversed way extends to a great deal and to many different issues and aspects of reality.

One example is the assumption that experiencing God's grace is something given you, or that feeling faith is something that comes from outside, as it were, something added on to you, while at the present time you lack it. PL 250

**Exercise 4b:** Spend some time gaining a sense grace, without judging it's 'size' or extent.

### The Lower Self is only a Mirror

The lower self exists precisely because of the limitation with which you manifest on this level of reality. Expansion, growth, development -- all these terms mean only one thing: to bring forth the perfection that you already are in essence.

If you could think of this process more in terms of releasing what is already there, rather than of becoming something that you are not, that is still foreign to you, you would aid your own process considerably. PL 250

### Releasing is the 'Superpower' of the Real Self

So you can release your intrinsic awareness of grace. You can release the faith that is already in you: that is, the knowledge that you live in a tender universe shaped out of personal love and caring, that there is nothing to fear. If you visualize in this way, you will release new awareness, new knowledge, new faith, new ways of reacting that will surprise you and fill you with wonder and joy. PL 250

**Exercise 4c:** What are the obstacles to releasing this faith, this knowledge, this awareness already existing within you? PL 250. Spend some time identifying obstacles you put in your own way.

## What stops you from saying YES to life's opportunities?

What are the obstacles to releasing this faith, this knowledge, this awareness already existing within you?: First of all, it is not knowing that you possess this awareness, this faith. The knowledge must be cultivated to begin in your outer brain and thinking material.

Just considering the possibility that there is nothing to fear, that you live in an utterly benign universe, that you are filled with the living God, will make you automatically challenge your fears, doubts, distrust, and negative beliefs.

This, in turn, will make it much easier for you to sufficiently trust life and its laws so that you will risk giving. And this is indeed an important lever that touches an inexorable law of life. For only as you give out from yourself, from and with your heart, can you truly receive. PL 250

You have heard this law discussed many times, in all religious scriptures that ever existed. It is such an important law. Yet it is usually misunderstood, or at least slightly, but sufficiently distorted so that it is put aside and not taken in by human beings. It is experienced as a sanctimonious edict, issued forth by an arbitrary authority that makes demands and then possibly rewards by giving in return, in a form of bargaining. Human dignity resists this concept, this attitude, and distrusts a universe that is pedagogic and treats the individual as if it were an unruly child. Although man's lower self often is indeed just that, as you well know, it is surely not the true personality, the real being. PL 250

Now, then, what does this law mean in reality? Every human being contains a built-in mechanism that makes receiving quite impossible when the soul holds in its innate capacity and yearning to give. Since in reality giving and receiving are one and the same flow, movement, and phenomenon; the one cannot exist without the other.

Where distrustful, fearful holding back makes it impossible for the soul to enter into the flow of universal life and movement, the total mechanism is stopped, so that the grace of God with all its manifestations cannot enter into the consciousness of the personality. It is as though all the riches are there, ready to be tasted and experienced, but the hand cannot reach for them; the senses cannot perceive them; the eyes cannot see them; the brain cannot even observe their stark reality. It is as though the whole personality were dulled with all its perceptions, so that a totally distorted vision of life comes into focus. The illusion grows that you live in a poor, empty universe, and along with that, that your inner universe is equally poor and empty, that you have nothing to give from within and nothing to receive from without. PL 250

**Exercise 4d:** Pause for a moment and consider the PL teachings about blessings, in terms of praying for world peace: see if you can fully GIVE the Pathwork Guide's blessing in this sense:

“Blessing really means the vigorous total wish for good, coming from the innermost self, from the divine inner being; the wish for the good of the unitive principle where there are no opposites and no conflicts.” [The Process and Significance of Growing](#) PL 144

Then notice if you can send blessings to others in the same spirit, without agenda or demand. Grant them the freedom to work through their distortions and self-interest in their own time frame.