



LESSON 105 God's peace and joy are mine.

Sarah's Commentary:

We know we have received the gifts of God when we give them. We can't know what we have and what we are until we give. This is a central thought in the Course. In fact, Jesus says that reversing our view of giving is a **"major learning goal this course has set."** (W.105.3.1) What is your idea of giving? So often it is about what we can get in return. In the world's perspective, to give is to lose, and when we give, we usually expect some kind of reciprocity. We generally expect to get something back in return for what we have given. If I am kind and generous to you, I might expect gratitude, kindness, or generosity in return. When we really understand that there is no need for reciprocity, because we only give to ourselves, then we can experience true giving where there are no expectations.

"God's peace and joy are yours. Today we will accept them, knowing they belong to us. And we will try to understand these gifts increase as we receive them." (W.105.1.1-3) How do we accept God's peace and joy? We recognize that they are in us now and belong to us. Now everyone must share in our peace and joy. These attributes are already in everyone because they have been given to all by God. We all share in the Oneness of God. The ego would have us believe that if we have peace and joy, we must have gained at someone's expense. It is the belief in 'one or the other'. If I am happy, I have won my happiness at someone's expense, and they have therefore lost what I have gained. This is why we feel guilty when we feel very happy, and why we believe happiness can't last. We feel that we don't deserve to be happy. We tell ourselves that there are people suffering in the world and that we should feel guilty if we are happy.

A friend recently gave me some items from her garage sale for which I paid what she asked. Later, I noticed there was a small item I had picked up that I had not paid for. I assumed it would perhaps be worth about three to five dollars. When I phoned her and told her I wanted to pay for this item, she told me I could pay for the lunch we had scheduled the following week. Lunch would be about twenty-five dollars. All of a sudden I felt as though I had lost in this transaction. The bargain was not in my favor. It was another opportunity to look at my idea of value and a sense of having lost. But to the spirit, nothing can be lost. We are only giving to ourselves all the time. The gifts we give truly, have no strings attached. **"The truly given gift entails no loss."** (W.105.1.6)

The thought that there are winners and losers originated in the mind with the belief that we stole our identity from God. Now we have our individual self at His expense because there can't be both God and me in Oneness. If I exist, then He cannot. It is a thought of "one or the other," meaning that if I win, someone must lose. It is how we function in the illusory world. But with this thought comes the belief that we have done something terribly wrong, so we feel guilty. It is not a conscious thought in us, but don't we all carry a vague feeling that we are wrong, although we are not sure why? When we hold onto this belief, then any happiness we feel is tinged with guilt, because we

feel someone must have lost if we have gained. For example, when I am happy in my relationship, it is because my needs have been met. My expectations have been met, and you have sacrificed on my behalf. Now I feel loved and supported by you. I have received what I want from you. Yet with such a bargain in a relationship, any happiness I experience is tinged with guilt. It is because, if we got what we wanted, then we feel that at some level we must have stolen it. It is a reflection of the belief that we stole God's gifts and hid them in the world to escape His wrath. So, it seems like peace and joy can't be ours without being accompanied by the feeling that we are not deserving. If we have peace and joy, there is a feeling that someone must be deprived.

This idea is really developed in Chapter 16 where Jesus talks about special relationships. These are what he calls the **"bargains made with guilt."** (W.105.1.5) They are bargains made with guilt because in our special relationships, we give our gifts in exchange for what we expect to receive from the other. Yet we want something better than what we give. Our special relationships are about trying to extract from the other gifts of greater value than the ones we gave. We each want to give as little as possible to get as much as possible. All the conflict we experience in our relationships is based on this premise. We are constantly trying to extract from the other what will best meet our needs. In the end, it is the basis for our misery and suffering because now we live in a state of guilt. Healing requires we look at our motivations and intentions with great honesty. Otherwise, we exempt ourselves from this process, seeing ourselves as innocent while others are the guilty ones, withholding from us what we want to extract from them.

"Each partner tries to sacrifice the self he does not want for one he thinks he would prefer. And he feels guilty for the 'sin' of taking, and of giving nothing of value in return. How much value can he place upon a self that he would give away to get a 'better' one?" (T.16.V.7.5-7) (ACIM OE T.16.VI.49) We can't stand to be happy for long because guilt says we don't deserve happiness. With each bargain we make in our special relationships, our guilt is reinforced because we are constantly making bargains to serve our needs at the expense of our brothers and exchanging our gifts of little worth for ones of greater value where we hope to gain with each exchange.

The belief that God has lost because I have taken His love and joy for myself is the basis for the thought system I hold. It is such a foundational belief in our lives and so deeply defended against, which makes it very challenging to see, yet it is the same for everyone. To recognize this pattern, we must remain vigilant about our motivations and intentions. We can't heal what we don't see. We need to look behind our defenses without judgment and with great honesty.

When we apply these Lessons in our daily lives and stay vigilant in watching our thoughts, we can make great progress in undoing the thought system of 'giving to get'. **"This strange distortion of what giving means pervades all levels of the world you see. It strips all meaning from the gifts you give, and leaves you nothing in the ones you take."** (W.105.2.3-4)

The ego constantly wants to prove that it is the source of love and life, not God. While we invest in its thought system, we feel guilty when we experience peace and joy, because these "gifts" come at someone's expense. Yet true giving entails no loss. **"God's gifts will never lessen when they are given away. They but increase thereby."** (W.105.3.4-5) This is an authentic kind of giving where we give, and know that in this giving, we can't lose. In this kind of giving there is no guilt, and we receive the gifts we give. We are undoing the idea of 'giving to get.' Jesus teaches that all we give is given to ourselves. Every time we bring our specialness to awareness and are willing to experience healing, we receive the miracle. Specialness is all about me.

"For giving has become a source of fear, and so you would avoid the only means by which you can receive. Accept God's peace and joy, and you will learn a different way of looking at a gift. God's gifts will never lessen when they are given away. They but increase thereby." (W.105.3.2-5) Ultimately, our fear is that we will be punished for what we have stolen from God and taken from our brothers in the self-serving bargains we try to make with everyone. Now we are called to bring guilt, specialness, hate, and fear in our minds for healing so we can experience the gifts of peace given us by God, Whose infinite love for us is boundless.

"As Heaven's peace and joy intensify when you accept them as God's gift to you, so does the joy of your Creator grow when you accept His joy and peace as yours." (W.105.4.1) Jesus is saying that God's completion depends on our acceptance of His gifts to us. This is not a statement to be taken literally, as God's joy is complete now. Nothing is lacking in Him. It is just an expression of how much we should take to heart the importance of accepting the fullness of God's love for us. With the acceptance of the truth of our Being comes gratitude for the joy we are and the joy we receive in giving with no expectations of anything in return.

Today, we are asked to choose someone we think of as an enemy to whom we have denied peace and joy. We have forgotten that we are all the same and **"under the equal laws of God."** (W.105.6.2) In seeing differences with our brothers, we have denied peace and joy. Now we can claim the peace and joy we have denied by seeing our brothers as innocent. **"And here you must return to claim them as your own."** (W.105.6.4) The peace and joy we give our brothers are what we receive for ourselves, as we are one with every brother. Any attack we make on another is an attack on ourselves. Now we learn that how we see our brothers is how we see ourselves. We are all the same in our divinity. This sameness is a reflection of the one Self we are. We all hold the same thought system that came with the separation and hold the same healing light of the Holy Spirit within our minds. There are no differences despite appearances in the world of form.

When we become willing to take responsibility for our guilt by seeing that it is only ourselves we attack, we can bring the guilt back to our own minds and give it over to Spirit. **"Now are you ready to accept the gift of peace and joy God has given you. Now are you ready to experience the joy and peace you have denied yourself."** (W.105.7.4-5) Only by silencing the ego's voice of specialness will we hear the Voice of the Holy Spirit. To hear His Voice, we need to look at all the ways we interfere. It is when we express impatience, irritation, think unkindly of others, gossip about them, get frustrated, are the myriad of ways we throw peace away. When a brother tempts you to throw away your peace and joy, it is because you actually want them to betray you so you can blame them for taking your joy. We have chosen to throw away our peace and project on them the choice we have made, making them responsible for our lack of peace. No one can take our peace unless we give them the power to do so. By choosing to take responsibility for everything that seems to happen to me, I increasingly come to recognize that I truly am not a victim of the world I see.

Today, we release our misperceptions and offer blessings instead, so we can receive blessings. Every brother deserves to receive this blessing with no exceptions. It is **"their right under the equal laws of God."** (W.105.6.2)

Today, we are called to look at where we withhold blessings and recognize when we do, we only withhold them from ourselves. By cutting someone off from my love, I am separating myself from Presence. When I open my heart to my so-called "enemies" by seeing their call for love and understanding, rather than focusing on their behavior, I am opening to the gift of peace and joy God is holding out for me. Thus, I am opening myself to receive these gifts. It is not something we

receive first and then give, but in fact, we give in order to know we have received. The gifts of peace and joy are already in us. We practice this Lesson, not just by affirming God's peace and joy are ours, but by letting go of the barriers we have against recognizing the gifts already in us.

Our "enemies" are not outside us but reflect our own inner self-hatred, which we project on our brothers. The self-hatred must be seen for what it is if we are to heal. To accept the gifts of God, we must take responsibility for the self-hatred in the mind. As we turn it over to the Holy Spirit, He reminds us that it is not the truth about ourselves, or our brothers. Our brothers are innocent, just as we are. We are all the same. When we see others as different, we are trying to get, bargain, and see ourselves as the special ones who deserve more than what others get. It is important to look at our motivations and be very honest in recognizing the guilt these relationships entail. We are worth the effort it takes to remain vigilant in watching our minds. What we don't see is kept from healing.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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