

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 117 Review III ~ Lesson 103 and Lesson 104

Sarah's Commentary:

Happiness is a reflection of God's love in the world. We are happiest when the love we are is extended through us because only then we know it is in us. This was so well illustrated in a movie I saw called *About a Boy* with Hugh Grant. The main character, Hugh Grant, spent most of his days in various distractions that he thought would make him happy. He measured each day in units of time—this many units for exercise, this many for eating out, this many for a favorite TV show, and so on. Time for him was about what some call "killing time" in pursuit of various activities.

Yet ultimately he recognized its meaninglessness even though at some level he thought it would give him the happy life he craved. It was not until he reached out to help a young boy that he felt true happiness. Just like in the movie, we must get beyond our own ideas of where our happiness lies. We too are asked to look beyond our self-serving thoughts of what would make us happy and seek the genuine condition which is given us in our creation. It means we need to be willing to connect with our true identity because we have been misguided. We will always be led astray when we look to ourselves for the answers. We are like the child who receives a toy but prefers the box it comes in and cries when it is taken away. We need help to distinguish what is valuable from what is valueless.

Getting a new car, new house, new computer, new job, new relationship, and whatever else we dream about, will only give us poor substitutes for the peace and love we hope to find in these things. After the initial rush when we receive what we think we want, we end up feeling empty. The peace and happiness we seek through these things escape us. Even though this is the case, to give up our ideas of what we still value for our happiness, is to suffer when we believe we are being deprived. Jim Carey wisely said, "I hope you get everything you think you want, so you can see none of it brought you happiness." We are not bad or guilty for seeking the things of this world. However, the sooner we see they are not the source of our happiness, the sooner we will look for happiness where it really is.

New age spirituality teaches the power of the mind to manifest whatever one desires. When the desire is for material things, special relationships, fame, or any substitute for God, they will not make us happy. In fact, they just bring more pain. Again, it does not make us wrong or guilty for pursuing these idols. We just need to understand that they are ultimately meaningless and will not satisfy our desire for happiness. We do not know our own best interests; we do not know who we are. What we look for in the world to be happy cannot satisfy our true Self. Like a child, we do not know what we really want. **"When you let your mind be drawn to bodily concerns, to things you buy, to eminence as valued by the world, you ask for sorrow, not for happiness."** (W.133.2.2)

There is no question that affirmations do work and can manifest what we think we want. The mind is powerful, and when we put our mind and intention to what we think we want, we can certainly realize it. There is nothing wrong with that. Jesus is not trying to make us feel guilty for pursuing any of it. We all came here to find something the world can't deliver. Until we realize this is so, we will pursue these things. However, Jesus shows us that our peace and happiness can only be found in the eternal and not in the ephemeral. While there is value in recognizing how powerful our minds are and that we can indeed manifest what we think we want in the world, we eventually learn that nothing here brings us anything of value. In fact, it brings us nothing at all.

What is truly valuable must meet these conditions: 1. what we choose will last forever; 2. it serves the purpose of awakening us from this dream; and 3. everyone benefits from our choice. This Lesson says that each choice we make will bring us everything or nothing.

The things of the world that we manifest through our affirmations will not bring us an experience of peace, love, or recognition of our innocence. Certainly, the Course also contains affirmations but the difference is that they affirm the truth. We remain as God created us. We are love, limitless, whole, and complete. We need do nothing to become what we already are in truth. **"When peace comes at last to those who wrestle with temptation and fight against the giving in to sin; when the light comes at last into the mind given to contemplation; or when the goal is finally achieved by anyone, it always comes with just one happy realization; 'I need do nothing'."** (T.18.VII.5.7) (ACIM OE T.18.VIII.67) In other words, we affirm what we already have and what we already are. We are not trying to manifest something that is not already ours.

Our goal in applying these Lessons is to ready our minds to accept the Atonement for ourselves. What is the Atonement? It is a Correction that leads us to the recognition of the truth about ourselves. We recognize that love is already in us when we extend it. We can't know it until we give it. In the movie, the character played by Hugh Grant, realizes this when he gives the young boy, who comes into his life, the gifts of his time and attention, expecting nothing in return. He is amazed by the infusion of true happiness and well-being he experiences as a result. **"To have give All to All."** (T.6.V.A) It is something he has never known. It is the power of giving and receiving that comes through extending. This is how we realize the love that is already in us. **"The ego uses the body for attack, for pleasure and for pride. The insanity of this perception makes it a fearful one indeed. The Holy Spirit sees the body only as a means of communication."** (T.6.V.A.5.3-5)

Love is happiness but not the way we define it in this world where we expect something in return. In other words, special love is about giving in order to get. It involves bargaining and reciprocity where we exchange as little as possible to get as much as possible. This is the ego's definition of love where we try to get something in return for something of equal or greater value for what we give.

Jesus says he is not special but that he is our brother and our equal. We share the same nature with him and with everyone else. Yes, our brothers will commit many errors, but forgiveness helps us see beyond their errors to the truth of who they are the same as ourselves. Forgiveness is to look beyond appearances because we can't forgive what we have made real. That is why Jesus says, forgive your brother for what he did not do. The reason he says this is because there are no real effects as a result of his behavior. He is our savior as he reveals to us what is in our own minds that needs healing. Through our brother we can see where we attack ourselves. By taking back the projections we put on our brothers and recognizing them as our own self-attacking thoughts, we can heal our unconscious guilt.

We call on the Holy Spirit to help us see the truth in our brothers so we can know it in ourselves. This requires that we look at our own mistakes that we project on our brothers. **"My function here is to forgive the world for all the errors I have made."** (W.115.(99).1.2) In other words, what I see in my brothers are only my misperceptions based on my projections of my own self-judgment.

If I am not happy today, **"At least I can decide I do not like what I feel now."** (T.30.I.8.2) (ACIM OE T.30.II.16) In the Section, **"Rules for Decision,"** we are given a process to help us recognize that perhaps our judgments about our brothers have been wrong and we admit there may be another way of looking. This thought leaves us open to being at least a little willing to choose another way of seeing. **"Perhaps there is another way to look at this. What can I lose by asking?"** (T.30.I.12.3-4) (ACIM OE 30.II.26) By questioning our way of seeing, we loosen the mind enough to open the way to another perspective. The "I know" mind is closed and is not willing to let go of its perceptions and its judgments. Jesus asks us for just this little willingness.

The Lesson today reminds us, **"Love is my heritage, and with it joy."** (W.117.(104).2.2) There is great happiness in opening our hearts to love and great pain in holding it back. When we experience this kind of pain, it is important to recognize that there is indeed another way to look at everything. Moving from stubborn resistance to willingness is a great start. Yes, when we feel great pain, it requires patience to move through it. We can't rush the process, as this will result in a spiritual bypass. Have the courage just to be with it and allow the feelings to be seen and felt so that they can be burnt in the "holy fire." This requires courage, but we don't go alone. Rest in the knowledge that you are supported every step of the way. Let the mind observe the process from above the battleground. Remind yourself that whatever you are feeling, you are still safe in the Arms of Love. Accept the process as part of the journey through the darkness to the light.

We make a choice for happiness by looking at all the thoughts and beliefs keeping us from being happy, none of which are true. Thus, we come to know that **"Love is my heritage and with it joy. These are the gifts my Father gave to me. I would accept all that is mine in truth."** (W.117.(104).2.2-4) This is so opposite the ego's message to us. Its message is that God wants us to suffer and atone for our sins. Forgiveness corrects this belief and constantly reminds us of the gifts awaiting us on the other side of our pain. Our heritage is a changeless state of love and joy.

We apply the Lesson to every concern, problem, situation, or relationship that comes up during the day. We try to remember the Lesson hourly with the morning spent on remembering, **"God, being Love, is also happiness,"** (W.117.(103).1.1) and the afternoon on remembering, **"I seek but what belongs to me in truth."** (W.117.(104).2.1)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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