

## ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



### LESSON 138 Heaven is the decision I must make.

#### Sarah's Commentary:

This Lesson is all about the desire of the heart reflected in what we choose in every moment. The choice we make is between hell and Heaven, attack and forgiveness, body and spirit, guilt and innocence, and, ultimately, between illusion and truth. In other words, in every moment, we make this choice, but if we don't understand the nature of this decision, we won't realize what the alternatives are. **"The choice cannot be made until alternatives are accurately seen and understood."** (W.138.9.2) Until we can see the insanity of the ego thought system with clarity and the purpose it serves as a defense against God's love, we won't know the alternatives available to us. The choice we make is within the mind and not in the world; yet the ego keeps our focus on the outer rather than the inner.

Prior to this teaching, we probably had no awareness of the way the ego had established its domain in our lives. Throughout the Course, Jesus lays out the ego's plan, which is to keep us mindless. He shows us the consequences of our choice when we give the ego domain over our lives. The ego's plan has resulted in pain and suffering, but we have not recognized it as the source. Instead, we blame circumstances outside ourselves. We keep looking for some hope of happiness but have no idea where to find it when we identify with the ego. We keep looking to some future time, always outside ourselves, for happiness where it can't be found. We won't give up hope of something better in our future until we come to see how deceived we have been by the ego.

The ego has no power, but we give it power when we align with it. When we recognize that all our pain and suffering come from our decision to side with the ego, we will be motivated to give it up and realize that only the decision to forgive brings joy. We think there are a thousand choices to be made that confront us daily and this creates a lot of doubt as to what the right thing is to do. Jesus assures us, **"You make but one. And when that one is made, you will perceive it was no choice at all."** (W.138.4.4-5) When the choice is made for God, the ego no longer has dominance. It is not really a choice because the ego brings us nothing of value. **"For truth is true, and nothing else is true. There is no opposite to choose instead. There is no contradiction to the truth."** (W.138.4.6-8)

Initially, the decision was made for separation and the ego thought system outside this dream. When that decision was made, we conveniently forgot that there was any other choice available. The ego provided a convincing case to the Son of God that He had killed God, Who was now in pursuit. This is the God we are afraid to wake up to. This is the God the ego made that we unconsciously fear. This is the God we defend against with our plans and our sickness. The idea of separation came about because we listened to the ego, made the universe, made the body, took on a separate identity, and made a will separate from God's Will. **"There is no world apart from what you wish, and herein lies your ultimate release. Change but your mind on what you want to see, and all the world must change accordingly."** (W.132.5.1-20)

With the decision for separation, made by the mind, came guilt and fear of punishment. All of this is buried in the mind. Until this Course came into our lives, we had no idea of the unconscious program running in the mind. The guilt in the mind feels overwhelming, but the ego has come up with a clever answer. It tells us, if we project the guilt in our minds, that came with the separation, and make others responsible for our problems, we will not have to take responsibility for our attack on God. Yet if our guilt is in others, we will fear their attacks; and now we think that we must defend against those attacks to protect ourselves from them. This makes us feel very vulnerable. It is quite a setup that the ego keeps hidden from us. Its agenda is for us to never make another choice, as there would then no longer be an ego if we were to withdraw our allegiance to it. Jesus helps us see the cost of following the ego's dictates so we can make the decision for Heaven, which is where our happiness lies.

We are dedicated to listening to the ego and addicted to this life of conflict, as there is an aspect of the struggle that we actually relish. It seems exciting to live on the edge in this drama of our lives where we apparently have a thousand choices every day. We can relive all the decisions we have made and weave stories of adventure, heroism, victimhood, and martyrdom. We tell stories, chapter by chapter, of who did what to whom. We give power to these events, live on fear, and gather guilt like a basketful of goodies. All this does is maintains the ego and maintains our suffering. We invest in the world and in activities that distract us from the only choice to be made—the choice for Heaven. **"Without decision, time is but a waste and effort dissipated."** (W.138.3.3) Yet the world and all our situations and special relationships can serve an important purpose where everything can be used for peace of mind. Every situation can be used by the Holy Spirit for our healing. If a special relationship attracts us, it is not a bad thing that we must avoid. It can simply be turned over to the Holy Spirit to be used for His purpose. Our lives here are to be enjoyed! We are called to be happy learners.

Things seem real to us in the world through their opposites: If there is life, there is death. If there is light, there is dark. If there is good, there is bad, and if there is forgiveness, there is sin. It is a dualistic thought system. Everything is conceived in terms of opposites, but Jesus tells us, **"Creation knows no opposite."** (W.138.2.1) Opposites cannot exist in Oneness even though opposites do seem very real to us. In reality, Heaven is not a choice, as there is nothing to choose between. There is only Oneness.

**"Truth cannot come where it could only be perceived with fear."** (W.138.2.6) In the presence of truth, our individual separate selves have no existence. We fear the undoing of the ego, which is why we defend against the truth and still cling to our specialness. **"Opposition makes the truth unwelcome, and it cannot come."** (W.138.2.8) If truth showed up in the world in its pure form, it would just be another option, which is not possible. **"Yet what is true in God's creation cannot enter here until it is reflected in some form the world can understand."** (W.138.2.5) The nonspecific love of God is translated in the world into specifics that can be understood.

In the world, contrasts are helpful for our learning and are used by the Holy Spirit to teach us the consequences of our decisions. We learn through discernment. We learn to see that when we choose with the ego, our experience is one of pain, suffering, and distress. When we choose a reflected form of God's love, which is forgiveness and healing, we experience the lifting of the burden of guilt and fear and we experience the peace that comes from forgiveness; the joy there is in releasing guilt; and the innocence we feel when we see it in our brothers. We feel the lightness of spirit when worry leaves us, and we walk in trust by following guidance. The nonspecific love of God is now reflected in the specifics of this world. We can experience it with every choice we

make for healing and forgiveness instead of holding onto thoughts of anxiety, attack, depression, fear, and specialness.

I recently listened to an account from a friend whose sister was murdered. After an initial experience of anger, resentment, and bitterness, the Course came into her life and she learned the value of forgiveness. In her account, she discussed the contrast, in her own mind, of holding the grief and bitterness against the release she felt when she saw the "murderer" in her mind and chose forgiveness. She was able to see herself and her "brother" (the murderer) as innocent and felt joy and peace replace the grievances and pain. Catastrophic events such as this, which show up in our lives, can be used to help us make the choice for Heaven or hell. The Holy Spirit uses anything we give Him for our healing. When we experience the results of forgiveness and contrast the "gifts" of the ego with those of the Holy Spirit, we become more and more motivated to choose forgiveness.

I spent about a year in Sedona in 2000, studying the Course. I remember a discussion about what a life of total peace would be like where there would be no stories to tell, no one to side against, and no conflict of any kind to intrude. Some viewed a peaceful life as boring and flat. This is precisely what the ego would have us believe by keeping us focused on the world instead of choosing against it. Our addiction to the dramas of our lives is our addiction to the ego. We actually like our stories and our thoughts and our opinions. As Byron Katie asks, "Who would you be without your stories?" We wonder the same thing. Yet anyone who has experience of deep peace affirms the powerful nature of that experience. It is anything but boring.

We made this insanity in which we seem to live. **"In this insanely complicated world, Heaven appears to take the form of choice, rather than merely being what it is."** (W.138.6.1) We think that we like this **"insanely complicated world"** (W.138.6.1) that we made as an alternative to Heaven. We seem to like this world of opposites. We see the good as a contrast to the bad, and we hold conflicting goals that create conflict and distress in our lives. Yet Jesus says that it gets us nothing. Why would we want to spend effort and time on what brings us nothing of value? We think of these things as accomplishments, but he says that we waste our time and dissipate our efforts when we choose the illusion. **"It is spent for nothing in return, and time goes by without results."** (W.138.3.4) There is no sense of gain, for nothing is accomplished and nothing is learned.

Jesus reminds us that we are the ones who made this hell, and we have the power within us to choose our release. We made a protective shield for the ego, but with Heaven's help, we can bring our defenses to awareness so we can become aware of the only choice to be made. But it requires vigilant mind-watching. When we are dedicated to healing, the world becomes a wonderful classroom, rather than a prison. Everything can be used for the undoing of the deceived mind that thinks it is a body and separate from every other body. When we use time in this way, everything takes on meaning. I find that everything in my day becomes helpful and valuable for undoing the ego. It is all about undoing the way I see things; how I interpret what is happening in my day; why certain events and situations show up; and how disturbances can provide the impetus I need to look within. It all has value; nothing is good or bad. It just is. It is not necessarily easy, but when we see that we have called everything into our lives for our healing there is an underlying optimism knowing that we hold the key to our own happiness. We now have found the way out of suffering. We need not worry if we choose not to learn the Lesson, as it will show up again. It is such a beautiful way to live life, which is not to judge what should or should not be happening but see that everything in this classroom is useful to the Holy Spirit.

**"Choosing depends on learning."** (W.138.5.1) Learning in the world is about correcting wrong perception so we can experience true perception, but it is still perception rather than the knowledge of Heaven. Jesus is teaching us what the goal is, how to reach it, and what it offers us. When we recognize and accept our deep need for this truth, our motivation increases to do this work. When we learn that when we hurt our brother, we are hurting ourselves, we will choose to stop doing that. Until we recognize this, we won't understand that there is another choice to make when a brother seemingly attacks us.

It is wonderful to be reminded just how simple this choice for truth really is, but it certainly is not the way it looks to us. With each seemingly complicated situation in the world, we still have a choice to make. Will I choose Heaven or hell in this situation? Will I choose to love or hate? Will I choose forgiveness or attack? Will I choose the Holy Spirit or the ego? Will I choose truth or illusion? Whatever the situation we seem to be faced with in what Jesus concedes is indeed **"an insanely complicated world,"** (W.138.6.1) there is just this one choice to be made for our happiness and healing. This is the only useful purpose for time. We made time for an unholy purpose, but now the Holy Spirit invites us to use it for a holy purpose by making the only choice—the choice for Heaven.

The ego's purpose for time is to demonstrate how all our hopes, ultimately, turn to despair and that life must end in death. In this life of opposites, we experience all kinds of conflict, and it does seem to us that **"In death alone are opposites resolved, for ending opposites is to die."** (W.138.7.3) To the ego, salvation from the conflict of our lives is death. Jesus tells us, **"These mad beliefs can gain unconscious hold of great intensity, and grip the mind with terror and anxiety so strong that it will not relinquish its ideas about its own protection."** (W.138.8.1) We see our protection and safety as anything that supports our individual existence but this keeps us from the love we are. We hold onto our defenses as a way to maintain our separate self because of our fear of love. These include specialness, judgments, anger, worries, depression, pain, pleasure, sickness, and our special relationships. This is the armor we believe protects us from the truth of who we really are. The truth is a threat to us, and so we feel we need to protect ourselves against it.

What does it mean when we choose Heaven, and exactly what are we choosing? Take a situation where we are very angry with someone. The ego urges us to stay with this anger, arguing that we are justified based on what this person has seemingly done to us. Yet to keep the anger is to deny Heaven; to keep the anger is to stay in hell. The choice for peace can easily be made, yet we often find stubborn resistance and a lack of willingness to make this choice. To the ego, anger is powerful, and choosing peace seems weak and appears to let the "other" off the hook. Yet the alternative is to keep ourselves bound in chains and suffer the consequences of such a choice.

Today, the Lesson is not about learning the truth but about undoing the interferences to it. Our job is to find the resistance in the mind to the truth and to bring our anger, pain, plans, and attacks to the truth by looking at them and being willing to be shown another way. His light is there to shine away the darkness in the mind if we let Him. We must be willing to bring what is buried in our minds into awareness. It takes great honesty and courage. We want to hate, judge, see differences, accuse, blame, react in anger, and fix external problems, all of which seems natural to us in the face of attack or when problems confront us. Instead, we are invited see what we are projecting and recognize that everything starts in our own minds. **"Projection makes perception."** (T.21.IN.1.1) (ACIM OE T.21.I.1) When we are willing to see the choice we have made and recognize that it brings us stress and pain we can choose again. Which will you choose today, grievances or forgiveness, hell or Heaven? We are called to be vigilant today in watching our thoughts so we can become aware of what we are choosing.

Remind yourself of the choice for Heaven with these words: **"Heaven is a decision I must make. I make it now, and will not change my mind, because it is the only thing I want."** (W.138.12.5-6) Start the morning with the reminder that this world is a classroom for undoing the thought system of the ego and approach the day with the joy of learning what is in store for you today. It won't matter if the experiences seem to bring pain, as you can be glad they are there to support your goal of awakening. It is all for this one purpose. Turn away from the ego and, instead, choose the Holy Spirit as your Teacher today. Forgiveness is the means to your goal.

You are also invited to turn over your sleep to the Holy Spirit. It comes up in this Lesson when he says, **"Before we close our eyes in sleep tonight, we reaffirm the choice that we have made each hour in between. And now we give the last five minutes of our waking day to the decision with which we awoke."** (W.138.12.1-2)

***"Heaven is the decision I must make. I make it now, and will not change my mind, because it is the only thing I want."*** (W.138.12.5-6)

Notice any despair you are feeling about your life, or any death temptation, in the belief that death will be an end to any conflict you experience. Notice how this belief keeps you from choosing Heaven. Ask for help of the Holy Spirit to stay on purpose with your choice for God. This is all about forgiveness of the thoughts of self-attack in the mind. If we are dedicated to making the choice for Heaven, we must use the means provided to us in the Course.

Love and blessings, Sarah  
[huemmert@shaw.ca](mailto:huemmert@shaw.ca)

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