

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 15

My thoughts are images which I have made.

Sarah's Commentary:

It is interesting to talk to those of you who are now going through the Lessons for the second, third, or fourth time and getting so much more out of them. These Lessons are so challenging to the ego that undoing our investment in it is indeed a moment-by-moment process, but this does not matter since we are merely using time for its intended purpose.

It is not helpful to set expectations of where we think we should be. In fact, we have no way to assess our progress. Only the ego mind has expectations and requirements that it puts on us to reinforce our guilt. We are exactly where we need to be, and the current situation and the people around us at this time are perfect for our learning. How can we know that? We know it because they are in our lives right now. There are no accidents in salvation. Everything is orchestrated perfectly in our classroom. All that is asked of us is to do the Lessons as well as we are able and not to worry about their efficacy, nor about whether we are doing them exactly as prescribed. Remember that strain is not helpful and neither is ritualizing this process. We still have a huge amount of resistance. Our eyes glaze over as we read this material. We think we need to understand it all. Perhaps we argue with it, we don't accept what we are reading, or we actively resist the ideas. Jesus says in the Introduction to the Lessons that none of this will matter. All that is required of us is not to make exceptions in applying the ideas contained in the Workbook. Any number of things distract us from the practice. These are all forms of resistance, but Jesus tells us not to fight ourselves. Just notice the resistance and take the time to do what is necessary to come back to willingness.

This Lesson, like all of them, challenges everything we have come to believe. In this case, we are told that the images we see with our eyes show us nothing but our own thoughts. Jesus tells us that our thoughts show up as images, and because they do, it is hard to think of these images as nothing. Our eyes are made to report back to us a real and solid world. They tell us what we see is really there and true. Yet they only reflect back to us our own thoughts and beliefs. Our thoughts, which show up as images, really do seem real to us because they seem to be objective and external to us. The body's eyes affirm that these images are independent of our thoughts, but we are not really seeing. We are only "**... replacing vision with illusions.**" (W.15.1.7)

We believe the images we make are really there, but what we are seeing are our judgments projected out from our own minds. Our eyes do not show us the truth. In Chapter 22 of the Text, we learn more about this phenomenon. Jesus tells us, "**The body's eyes see only form. They cannot see beyond what they were made to see. And they were made to look on error and not see past it.**" (T.22.III.5.3-5) (ACIM OE T.22.IV.33) All that is happening is that our thoughts are being projected out and now we see them as images. Real seeing has nothing to do with the eyes.

Real seeing is about vision. Anyone who has had an out-of-body experience has witnessed that the eyes do not see. When someone leaves the body and yet reports looking down on it, the eyeballs are still with the body, so what is doing the looking? Obviously, it is not the eyes. The images we see are all perceived by our minds.

"These eyes, made not to see, will never see. For the idea they represent left not its maker, and it is their maker that sees through them. What was its maker's goal but not to see? For this the body's eyes are perfect means, but not for seeing. See how the body's eyes rest on externals and cannot go beyond. Watch how they stop at nothingness, unable to go beyond the form to meaning. Nothing so blinding as perception of form. For sight of form means understanding has been obscured." (T.22.III.6.1-8) (ACIM OE T.22.IV.35)

In other words, our eyes were really made to keep us blind to the truth. They were made to keep us invested in the world of form. They were made to see only externals. Their maker is the "you" that chose the ego and with it came the thoughts of sin, guilt, and fear. This maker is the Son of God that decided to separate from God. Now the Son separated into billions of fragments with fragmented thoughts projected out onto the world and seen as images. We think we are seeing something real and solid rather than our own projected thoughts. We focus only on how we can manipulate these images and what they can give us. Our own body and identity are also images in this imaginary world. Everything comes from within the mind, which is the only place a real choice can be made. Between the thought systems of the wrong mind that identifies with the ego and the right mind where the Holy Spirit dwells is the decision maker that can choose which teacher it will follow in each moment---the ego or the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus says, **"You think you think them, and so you think you see them,"** (W.15.1.2) he is reminding us that our thoughts are nothing at all. Our mind is actually blank when we think we are thinking. Real thoughts are behind the thoughts we think we are thinking. They reflect our reality as the Christ Self we are. We are an eternal being of light and love. We are the Son of God. Instead, we have made an image of ourselves that seems to be separate and autonomous, thinking that it has its own thoughts and is a separate self. We see images of others on whom we project our judgments. We see them as sinful so that we can pretend we are the innocent ones.

When Jesus tells us, **"This introductory idea to the process of image making that you call seeing will not have much meaning for you,"** (W.15.2.1) he understands just how deeply rooted we are in the world and how attached we are to our individual identities. In other words, our image of ourselves is very important to us, and we defend it at all costs, even to death.

Jesus talks about vision as "light episodes," which has raised questions with Course students, as it is not something most people have ever experienced. Ken Wapnick has answered the question in this way:

"This passage has been troubling to many students. It seems to suggest that a mark of spiritual progress is seeing edges of light around objects, such as auras. If this were the literal meaning, it would go against everything else the Course teaches. Jesus, as we know, stresses that all perception is unreal. In the text, he says that however holy visions may be, they do not last because they are based on perception."

He is not talking about literally seeing edges of light, but seeing with vision, which is not of the eyes. To see with vision is to understand the content behind the form, which is the content of love.

There may be some experiences in which there are phenomena like this, but we always come back to what is important, which is the content. It can probably best be taken as a symbol of seeing with vision when it comes through forgiveness. It is thus a symbol of more light extended from our minds. **"They will not persist, because they merely symbolize true perception, and they are not related to knowledge. These exercises will not reveal knowledge to you. But they will prepare the way to it."** (W.15.3.5-7) In the Course, knowledge is equated with a revelatory experience and is not the goal of the Course. The goal is to experience a consistent state of peace.

For the practice today, we take a minute, or less if we feel uneasy, and practice three or four times, if comfortable. We repeat the idea and then look about and apply it randomly to whatever we see, while saying slowly, **"This _____ is an image that I have made. That _____ is an image that I have made."** (W.15.4.2-3) We let our eyes rest on the object, as we repeat the Lesson.

"It is not necessary to include a large number of specific subjects for the application of today's idea. It is necessary, however, to continue to look at each subject while you repeat the idea to yourself." (W.15.4.4-5)

"Although you will obviously not be able to apply the idea to very many things during the minute or so of practice that is recommended, try to make the selection as random as possible." (W.15.5.1) This is because everything we look at is the same. It is not that the thing we look at has any meaning, but the meaning is in the thought in our own minds that we project out.

Finally, you can repeat this Lesson whenever you are upset by some situation or event in your life by reminding yourself that your thoughts about the situation or event are images made by you. I am thinking today about visiting my mother who is in distress. My mind is making up images about her situation. I actually see it in pictures. I am the one making them up and then reacting to them as if they were real. It is a personal world of fantasies I have created out of my own mind. This is the world I live in until I choose to turn to the Holy Spirit and connect with the truth of the perfection of her script, chosen by her. Now I have peace until the next thought intrudes in my mind!

Love and blessings, Sarah
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