



LESSON 165

Let not my mind deny the Thought of God.

Sarah's Commentary:

All the mind chatter, our dramas, our stories, and our distractions in this world are for one purpose which is to keep us tuned into the ego and maintain our separate identities. It is to distract us from the present moment by drowning out awareness of God's Love and the experience of Oneness. We know this is what is happening if anything other than peace and joy is in our experience. What defenses do is maintain fear and keep God's Love away. His Love is analogous to the sun, shining constantly on us, inviting us to enjoy its warmth, while we hang out in the dark, complaining there is no light in our lives. **"What makes this world seem real except your own denial of the truth that lies beyond?"** (W.165.1.1) The truth is always there, but we push it out of awareness with our thoughts of misery and death. The responsibility is all ours, yet we don't like to take that much responsibility for our own condition, and so we blame others.

We don't want to accept that only God's plan for salvation will work. We think if something changed in our world, we would be happy. We look for our saviors outside ourselves, but we are the ones who have to save ourselves. We do this by watching our minds and giving up our judgments and grievances. We live in a state of self-attack, telling ourselves that we have been abandoned, are unworthy, helpless, lonely, sad, and unlovable. Why would we choose those experiences? When we attack ourselves, we project these beliefs on others. In other words, we make them responsible for how we feel.

We don't want to take full responsibility for our condition, so we blame others and make them responsible for taking our peace. We believe if it weren't for "them," we would be happy. If they did not say and do what upsets us, we would not have to suffer. Yet if peace is our natural state and already in us, and we don't experience it, we are the ones actively choosing to throw it away while blaming others for taking it from us. Fortunately, while we can deny the peace that is always within us, we can't change the fact that we are still a thought of perfect love in the Mind of God and have not left our Source.

We are asked to notice how we defend against God's Love, but not to judge ourselves for this. The defenses we set up against love are not a bad thing. The ego is neither good nor bad but is nothing at all. Rather than loving or hating it, we are called to recognize its nothingness. Expecting the ego not to distract and defend is like expecting a bear not to do what bears do, or kids not to do what kids do. Yet just as we learn patience with kids, we must be patient and gentle with ourselves as we come to the recognition of the Self. As we go through this process, there will be conflict because we hold two thought systems in our minds. We are constantly choosing between listening to the voice of the ego or turning to the quiet truth within that reminds us that any experience we see as disturbing, or any problem we seem to have, cannot be the truth.

We seem to be walking a path to a place we never left, bringing the mind back to the awareness of who we really are. This requires that we learn to live in the mystery of not knowing. It is the "I know" mind with which we are familiar. This mind encompasses all our beliefs, values, and opinions about everything. To accept that we don't know means we must learn to let go of preconceived notions of everything and be happily humbled. Ultimately, we must give up our attachment to this world that we think of as our home. We don't need to seek for what is true, but to undo the false. To surrender all that we think we know can be disorienting, which is why Jesus goes to great lengths to help us understand what we have done, how the ego has set all of this up, and what is to come in the process of healing.

What makes this world so real to us? **"This world is not the Will of God, and so it is not real."** (W.166.2.2) It seems real precisely because of our denial of the divine Self that we are. This denial is reflected in our choice for the ego. Why was this choice made? We believe we abandoned God, stole our life at His expense, and now He will come after us to extract what we took from Him. Because of our fear, we fled into the body and the world, which is our core defense against His Love. The ego has led us to believe that we are now guilty. It says what we have done is a sin, and we should fear the wrath of God and expect punishment. Think about God as described in the Bible and what is said about us as sinners. Can you see how this is the God made by the ego? We have projected onto Him the characteristics of the ego, and now we see him as considerably more powerful than ourselves, which explains the fear we hold in our minds about what God will do to us.

This is not the God Jesus teaches us about in the Course. Jesus tells us that we have done nothing wrong, and we are still innocent. We don't accept this while we still invest in the body, in our individual self, and in the world. It has all been set up as a defense against the truth of who we are. This world, which feels so real to us, is actually illusory. Think about what that means. It means nothing here will last. Bodies don't last. The earth won't last. Nothing here is real. The only thing we can truly count on is the eternal.

The physical world is a projection of the separated mind and thus it is not real. Jesus says that there is no world. It is a radical thought, but it is only a conceptual idea until we have the experience of our changeless reality beyond space and time. When we have an experience of the mystical, or even glimpses of it, where we see the world as the illusory dream it is, the truth of this teaching becomes more real to us. What we see in the world actually reflects what is going on in our minds. Thus, it is the effect of our thoughts—an outside picture of our inward condition.

We think that the world is the cause of what we experience. We believe we are victims of those experiences. Starting at our birth, we experienced dependency and loudly proclaimed we did not ask to be born. We see our parents and past circumstances as the cause of our current condition, but this is not so. Our circumstances simply witness to the guilt already in the mind; however, to establish continuity, we tell ourselves stories to try to explain why we feel as we do. We look to the world as the cause of our current situation. We take random events from the past and connect them to make sense in the mind for what we feel. None of it is the truth. Nothing happens to us without our choice and our decision. We are not victims of outside circumstances. We have chosen everything that is happening in our lives.

Because the world reflects our thoughts, it now becomes a valuable classroom for awakening. This reflection helps us see the state of our mind, as now we can see our self-attacking thoughts that we are projecting. When we are willing to take responsibility for our thoughts, recognizing all of our experiences are a product of those thoughts, we can make another choice. Instead of seeing ourselves as victims of external conditions, we increasingly recognize the power of our minds.

Through this power, we create the conditions of our lives. For example, today I experienced conflict in a meeting I attended. I disagreed with the perspectives being shared, and I judged the people who were taking opposing positions. I recognized my need to be right about the way I saw things, my need for control, and my investment in an outcome different from what was being decided. With time, in reflection, I was able to see that I was upset because I was seeing something that was not there. I was seeing the conflict in my own mind, as there is nothing outside the mind. In the end, everything is helpful as a classroom for undoing what does not serve me. My thoughts, values, and opinions are keeping me in hell.

Because we are in denial and don't recognize our unconscious guilt projected on the world, we need these opportunities to see where we attack ourselves. Our thoughts of misery and death obscure the perfect happiness that God has willed for us. The reason we don't experience perfect happiness is not that God is elusive or is hiding from us, but that we are hiding behind our denial. What God has given is not obscure. Jesus says that God can't be concealed except by our choice to deny the truth. It is our choice to listen to the chatter of the ego, which keeps us from peace. It is the chatter in my mind that upsets me and not the situation itself, which is neutral.

Jesus keeps reminding us, ***"I am responsible for what I see. I choose the feelings I experience, and I decide upon the goal I would achieve. And everything that seems to happen to me I ask for, and receive as I have asked."*** (T.21.II.2.3-5) (ACIM OE T.21.III.15) By releasing all that is false and of our own making, the thought system of the ego can be released. We are bringing awareness to it and giving it over to the Holy Spirit, Who will shine away our misperceptions. It takes deep inquiry to look at what we hide in our minds that keeps us from the love we are. The ego is cunning and deceptive.

Sometimes, I think I have released my fears and wonder why the fearful feelings continue. When I really look at my process, I see that I am still choosing to hold onto these feelings, while I am under the impression that I am giving them up. This is why we have to be so very honest with ourselves. Sometimes, we would rather not turn over our anger and despair while we still see the benefit in stubbornly holding onto these feelings. We justify why we simply can't let them go when, in fact, we are choosing not to. And we choose not to when there is a payoff that we still value to prove we are right.

The only way to have peace and happiness is to consistently bring our fearful thoughts to the Holy Spirit. Pursuing peace and happiness in the world is a misleading attempt to escape from the fear, the loneliness, and our feelings of isolation, by indulging the ego. It is an attempt to try to repress or block our unsettling thoughts and feelings by pursuing a variety of distractions. The ego needs experience. It hates boredom, and, while we say we want peace, we do everything to be rid of it; and we do this because the peace of God is threatening to the ego. (T.19.IV.A) (ACIM OE T.19.V.a)

The Thought of God has not left us nor could we ever be apart from it for an instant. It is our very life. ***"By it you live. It is your Source of life, holding you one with it, and everything is one with you because it left you not."*** (W.165.2.4-5) If we were to be unplugged from this Thought, we would no longer live, since we would no longer have a Source. It is this Thought that offers us everything. When we deny it, we deny our absolute safety, our protection, our soft resting place, our peace, our joy, our soft awakening, and our happiness. All of this, and more, is available to us in every moment. This is what Heaven is, and it is here NOW. It is ours today, even though we are not aware of it. ***"It is yours today, but for the asking."*** (W.165.4.2) We look for Heaven in this world through our special relationships and our idols, but it is not here. There is no happiness or peace to be found in this world. It is a world of fear, of attack and of injustice, but

none of it is real. It is all the same—all nothing. The only happiness to be found is within where it has always been.

To receive what we have denied, we just need to ask and it is given. We don't need to be utterly convinced or to have no doubt-thoughts. If conviction were required as a prerequisite to asking, God would indeed be unfair. Jesus says this is not the case. **"Yet God is fair,"** (W.165.4.7) he assures us, because we don't have to be certain to ask. We simply **"Ask with desire."** (W.165.5.1) He knows that we will have doubt, but **"What would induce you now to let it fade away from your ecstatic vision?"** (W.165.5.5) Our experience is that we do have doubt; and at times, we may even question whether this is the path for us. Along the way, we have lots of uncertainty. We waver. We leave the path at times. We question if God is really there because we don't see evidence of Him in the world and feel He is obscure and distant from us.

Jesus knows of our divided state of mind and of our distress at our lack of discipline and commitment. Thus, he assures us, **"Sureness is not required to receive what only your acceptance can bestow."** (W.165.4.8) In spite of all your doubts, simply ask and welcome the moments of respite as yours. As we bring the darkness to the light, space is made in our minds where our doubt thoughts are released and truth is welcomed in. Then **". . . when you have received, you will be sure you have the treasure that you have always sought."** (W.165.5.3) And with it comes certainty that this is all we would ever want. Now we are sure. This certainty is what our Father already holds about us. Since we are host to Him, certainty must be in us as well. **"This course removes all doubts which you have interposed between Him and your certainty of Him."** (W.165.7.6)

No matter how deprived we feel, and no matter how much we have denied the nourishment that can only come from God, we cannot remain in this state of seeming separation forever. It is our destiny to wake up. We cannot escape our destiny because God would never consent to us remaining forever starved by our own denial. His Love is already available and present in our minds and is unaffected by our lack of awareness. It is time to give up the fight, because no one escapes his destiny. Our stubborn resistance only prolongs our suffering. This is a Lesson in hopefulness, which is not a blind hope, but is fully justified.

It is our thoughts of misery that obscure our happiness. When we bring them to the light, they are dissipated, and we experience the miracle. We have been assured that there is no order of difficulty in miracles because our minds can be changed about any problem, no matter how big or small it appears to be. All that is required is to bring our misperceptions for His Correction. The world now reflects a new and healed perception. **"Nothing and everything cannot coexist. To believe in one is to deny the other. Fear is really nothing and love is everything. Whenever light enters darkness, the darkness is abolished. What you believe is true for you. In this sense the separation *has* occurred, and to deny it is merely to use denial inappropriately."** (T.2.VII.5.1-6) (ACIM OE T.2.V.99)

To deny there is a problem is not helpful. To be a Pollyanna and to cover over the darkness with efforts at positive thinking is not helpful. To look for distractions to keep us from our sense of separation is not helpful. Is it wrong? Of course not. We just need to understand that it will not help to heal the mind when we continually focus our energy on distractions. We need to see what we are denying and projecting. Whatever thoughts or feelings arise, whether upsets, depression, discomfort, anger, or fantasies, they need to be brought to awareness and then immediately turned over to the Holy Spirit, Who is the Healer in our right minds.

We can actually learn to circumvent many of these feelings by being vigilant in watching our thoughts. In other words, we can bring awareness to a thought of distress and bring it to the truth before it becomes a story of victimhood and disaster. Therefore, it is important to set a purpose every morning that brings us to a state of miracle-mindedness throughout the day. It is why setting the intention for the day is important, including what kind of feelings we want to experience. We can then keep our purpose in front of us throughout the day. In Chapter 30, Section I [ACIM OE II] "**Rules for Decision**," Jesus reminds us that to have a happy day, we must remember to hold our purpose in front of us throughout the day. It is much more difficult to regain peace than it is just to hold firm to our goal. We've all experienced how hard it is to get out of a difficult frame of mind once it has set in.

Today, we are asked to become aware of our doubts, our fears, our judgments, and our grievances, and to own and acknowledge them, but recognize they are meaningless. This requires honesty and courage. I prefer to see the problem in you, rather than to see it in my own mind. I defend my position, my perceptions, my choices, my expectations, and my demands as being right. I defend my version of the story as being correct. The ego is very subtle. We don't always see our motivations. For example, sometimes when I do something that I consider helpful and it is not seen that way, I need to question what may be hidden under the guise of helpfulness. When we do not defend against what comes up in our day, and do not take things personally, but use everything as a classroom for healing, everything that shows up is helpful.

When issues come up in our lives, they can be experienced as very painful. Yet if we are committed to healing, we need to allow what comes up to be what it is and allow others to be as they are. Anytime we justify our position and rationalize our perspectives, we can be sure that it is the voice of the ego. Simply to surrender, rather than to resist, is to allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in shining our dark thoughts away, but He needs our cooperation.

Thoughts of misery and death seem real, but they are not. They are hallucinations we have come to believe are real. They are like the bogeyman under the bed we feared as children. As long as we don't look there, they hold a lot of power. Yet when we turn on the light and look under the bed, we see there is nothing to fear. There is no bogeyman, as there is no ego. It is nothing when we allow ourselves to look and be willing to ask to see the truth with the desire to experience God's Love and protection, which we have hidden from ourselves. Thus, it is all about transparency, where there is nothing we want to hide. This is what awakening to the truth of who we are is all about. "**Let not my mind deny the Thought of God.**" (W.165) It is a day of hope, and hope is justified because all of our doubt thoughts are meaningless.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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