

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 185 I want the peace of God.

Sarah's Commentary:

This is another interesting Lesson that contrasts special and holy relationships. This Lesson is long, and so much could be said about each paragraph. Basically, in our special relationships, our interests are separate. Each one tries to benefit at the expense of the other. **"In dreams, no two can share the same intent."** (W.185.3.3) In the special relationship, what one gains the other loses. The happiness of each one takes primacy over the other. In other words, I want my needs met at your expense. The relationship reflects the ego's principle of 'one or the other.' **"To each, the hero of the dream is different; the outcome wanted not the same for both."** (W.185.3.4) In other words, if my needs are to be met, you will have to sacrifice something of yours.

Special relationships are based on bargaining and compromise. Thus, **"Loser and gainer merely shift about in changing patterns, as the ratio of gain to loss and loss to gain takes on a different aspect or another form."** (W.185.3.5) Such relationships may look quite perfect in form, but it is always about offering as little as possible to get as much as possible. It is always about self-interest. It is a relationship where **"This 'self' seeks the relationship to make itself complete. Yet when it finds the special relationship in which it thinks it can accomplish this it gives itself away, and tries to 'trade' itself for the self of another."** (T.16.V.7.2-3) (ACIM OE T.16.VI.49)

He goes on to say that each tries to sacrifice the self he does not want and trade it for something better or someone more special. We call this love in the world, where we are happy when we get what we want. It is a relationship where if my needs are being met, and if the other person's needs are met as well, we see the relationship as one made in heaven because we each take turns at winning. We each play our part perfectly in meeting each other's expectations, but there can never be equal gain for both. In the end, the relationship is one of compromise that has approval in the world of the ego.

My happiness depends on my partner being a certain way that I have determined is important. You become a means to my end and all is well. If he would only...then I would have peace. If the towels were folded a certain way, if the dishes were put away, if the toothpaste was not squeezed from the middle, if he didn't interrupt me, if the garbage was emptied, if he didn't flirt with everyone, and on and on it goes—then I would have peace. We set these foolish requirements and demands in order to address our specialness. This becomes more important than peace. Is it worth giving away peace for all this? It is all nonsense because it is all illusion. We throw peace away to meet a myriad of imagined needs and requirements. The first obstacle to peace is the desire to be rid of it. **"If you would make it homeless, how can it abide within the Son of God?"** (T.19.IV.A.1.5) (ACIM OE T.19.V.a.40) We make peace homeless by blaming others and making them responsible for taking it from us. If we do not have peace, it is because we do not want it. In the end, we can ask ourselves, in each situation, if this is more important than the peace of God?

In this world of illusion, we can never share the same intent. (W.185.3.3) We each put our focus on a different outcome, which is always about having our needs being met. Now the meaning of love is lost because we are in a state of need and engage in bargaining to have those needs met. We give as little as possible, in these bargains, to get as much as possible. The value of the relationship is now on form rather than on the content of love. **"Sometimes it takes the form of union, but only the form."** (W.185.4.2)

If we really want the peace of God, Jesus says we must mean these words even for just an instant and then, **"Heaven would be completely given back to full awareness, memory of God entirely restored, the resurrection of all creation fully recognized."** (W.185.1.4) In other words, peace prevails over specialness when we really want it. Joining with our brother takes precedence over having our needs met. This requires that **"To mean you want the peace of God is to renounce all dreams. For no one means these words who wants illusions, and who therefore seeks the means which bring illusions."** (W.185.5.1-2) In other words, if we are sincere in our desire to know God's Love and know who we are, we must bring illusions to the truth. We need to recognize that continuing to manipulate and strategize, using other people to meet our needs, will never bring true peace and joy and will continue to keep us in the illusion.

Our experience has shown us that our special relationships keep us in fear and in a state of lack and need. We sincerely ask for a better way to live in this world when we have reached a state of disillusionment, having done everything we could think of to make our relationships work. We are at a point where we begin to recognize **". . . that another dream would offer nothing more than all the others."** (W.185.5.4) In other words, we can find another relationship, but, increasingly, we see that we can never find what we truly want, which is the peace of God, until we heal our minds and make peace a priority. We will not find it in the next relationship, in the next house we buy, in the next job, or anything else in the world that we try to use to fulfill our belief in lack. In the end, all it brings is more despair. Fortunately, Jesus has the answer when we are ready to hear it.

"And when the wish for peace is genuine, the means for finding it is given, in a form each mind that seeks for it in honesty can understand." (W.185.6.2) Now our relationships have a different purpose. They are used for healing. Instead of focusing on how to get our needs met, we bring our needs, and the belief in lack, to the Holy Spirit. Instead of blaming others for our lack of happiness and peace, we take responsibility for the beliefs in the mind and recognize we are the ones responsible for how we feel. Instead of projecting guilt on others, making them responsible for our lack of peace, we bring awareness to our misperceptions. This means we look on our mistaken perceptions without judgment. We ask for help to forgive ourselves for using the other to keep us from the love we are. We see the other as simply a mirror, reflecting our own unhealed perceptions. In this way, they are our saviors, showing us where we need healing. We increasingly see that our relationships provide the perfect opportunity to learn the lessons of forgiveness, where the ego's insanity can be brought to the perfect Oneness of God's peace and love.

This Lesson challenges us to be really honest with ourselves by matching our words with our true intent. If we really meant it, when we say: **"I want the peace of God,"** (W.185) we would have it. So, there must still be other things we want more, and this is something we need to look at with great honesty. What is it that we are substituting for the peace of God? To say, **"I want the peace of God,"** (W.185) and to mean it is to have it. **"No one can mean these words and not be healed."** (W.185.2.1) This suggests, for the most part, we don't really mean it, for **"If you**

could but mean them for just an instant, there would be no further sorrow possible for you in any form; in any place or time. Heaven would be completely given back to full awareness, memory of God entirely restored, the resurrection of all creation fully recognized." (W.185.1.3-4) The mind is silenced in that moment. Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor speaks about her experience of having a stroke, where the mind went silent and all was still. The ego's thought system disappeared. In her book "A Stroke of Insight," she speaks eloquently of the beauty of release from the incessant chatter of the ego. She had a profound experience of the holy instant.

Yesterday, I put a chicken on the barbecue, and it came out black and charred because I did not attend to it early enough. We had a friend over for dinner. There was a time that such an event would have spoiled my whole evening. I would have crucified myself mercilessly. My self-esteem depended on doing everything perfectly. I could not allow myself peace if I did not do things perfectly, which ultimately meant I was not valued by God. Yet God values us, regardless. Only my own judgments and self-attacks keep me from peace. Peace does not depend on outside events or conditions. We must stay constantly aware of our investments in specialness.

There are many events that threaten our peace such as when we are stuck in traffic, burn the dinner, spill the milk, someone beats us to the parking spot, cuts us off in traffic, increases our rent, or challenges our integrity. But can any event do that unless we give it the power to do so? Everything is neutral. We give all events the meaning they have for us. Are we victims of these circumstances, or can we exercise choice? When these things happen and we are out of peace, do we crucify ourselves or simply recognize that we have generated these events for our healing and as part of the script of our lives?

When we defend against the pain of betrayal, we hide our emotions from ourselves. When this is the case, our lives and our relationships become dry, brittle, and dead. When the heart is not open we need excitement to generate a sense of aliveness. We escape from the boredom of our lives with the many games in which we engage in the world. But with willingness to look behind our defenses, to take responsibility for our pain, and go through our darkness, giving it over to the light, we experience a new birth. We are given many opportunities to heal in this classroom, where the events of our lives are perfectly orchestrated by our own soul. It invites us to go deeper into our hearts. The pain can bring a deeper opening, whether opening slowly like a flower or be cracked open. It does not matter which. What matters is the courage not to turn away from these opportunities and not to continue to defend against them through blame, judgment, and defensiveness.

We need to be very honest with ourselves. **"The Holy Spirit asks of you but this; bring to Him every secret you have locked away from Him. Open every door to Him, and bid Him enter the darkness and lighten it away. At your request He enters gladly. He brings the light to darkness if you make the darkness open to Him. But what you hide He cannot look upon."** (T.14.VII.6.1-5) (ACIM OE T.14.IV.30) When we uncover the darkness, it is important not to get upset or to judge ourselves when we see attack thoughts in the mind. The idea is to be willing to open the door to them and let the light in. Hiding our specialness, spiritualizing it, or justifying it is never helpful if we want to awaken from this dream. Carrie Triffet recently wrote, in her blog, how each of us has a tipping point that seems to take us into distress. She looked at her own tipping point with such open honesty and humor. Someone responded to her by noting: "I am so thankful for your writing. Too many people out there trying to come over all peaceful and enlightened. It gets really boring, fast. You are always fun. All the best teachers are." I share this perspective. A spiritualized ego is not attractive, although it may

seduce followers for a time. It is important to remember to laugh or if that is difficult to smile at the silliness of the ego.

What heals is when we are willing to open every dark corner of our minds to the Holy Spirit. Keeping secrets from the Holy Spirit creates barriers to joining with God's Will. Jesus encourages us, **"Let in the light, and you will look upon no obstacle to what He wills for you. Open your secrets to His kindly light, and see how bright this light still shines in you."** (W.99.8.3-4) What are these secrets that we hide from the Holy Spirit? Jesus invites us to search our minds to **"find the dreams you cherish still."** (W.185.8.1) These can be fantasies of what we think would make us happy, the needs we think we have, or those things that make us angry, ashamed, and hateful. Either way, we need to recognize and admit to the obstacles we put in the way of peace. If we truly desire peace, we will have it. It is not something to search for or to beseech God for because it is already in us.

Certainly, if the desires of our heart are for things in the illusion, we can manifest them as well because of the power of our minds. In coming to the recognition that those things will not bring us peace but only temporary pleasure, we become motivated to pursue true healing. When we learn that pleasure and pain are ultimately the same, our focus changes to one of healing. True happiness and peace cannot be found in the illusion. Yet even when we ask the Holy Spirit for something we think we want in this dream, it does not make us wrong or guilty. However our freedom comes only with release from the dream.

"And when the wish for peace is genuine, the means for finding it is given, in a form each mind that seeks for it in honesty can understand." (W.185.6.2) When Bill Thetford, co-scribe of the Course, said to Helen Schucman, scribe, that he wanted to find a better way of being in the world than the strife he and Helen were experiencing, she agreed to help him find it. In their joining together on this mission, in a united goal, the form given to them was this Course. Through it, the world has been changed. This is the power of minds, joining in one intent. **"Two minds with one intent become so strong that what they will becomes the Will of God."** (W.185.3.1)

Only in the agreement to join, for the purpose of healing a relationship, is it made holy. When we join in a purpose to heal any relationship, we are fully supported by the power of the Divine. The person with whom we join in mind, may not even be currently in our life. It is not about bodies joining but only minds. Joining with them does not mean they have to join with us. Joining is what happens in the mind. The ultimate goal is the recognition of Oneness.

It is challenging to be very honest in looking at our desires, but fortunately, we have the help of the Holy Spirit which is essential if we are to escape from the limitations of the matrix. We are told not to be dismayed by the lingering illusions that cling to us still. The dream of wanting to be a special Course student is still a dream and no different than a sexual fantasy or a dream of having a new car. Either way, we are dreaming. **"The necessary condition for the holy instant does not require that you have no thoughts that are not pure. But it does require that you have none that you would keep. Innocence is not of your making. It is given you the instant you would have it. Atonement would not be there if there were no need for it. You will not be able to accept perfect communication as long as you would hide it from yourself. For what you would hide is hidden from you. In your practice, then, try only to be vigilant against deception, and seek not to protect the thoughts you would keep to yourself. Let the Holy Spirit's purity shine them away, and bring all your awareness to the readiness for purity He offers you."** (T.15.IV.9.1-9) (ACIM OE T.15.V.43-44) This is all that healing requires, but it does mean constant mind watching.

Today, we make a strong affirmative statement: **"I want the peace of God."** (W.185) It is not only a statement but a request in statement form. All we must realize is we already have it. It is already ours, as given by God, and indeed it is something we cannot change about ourselves. We ask for what we have already but are blocking. (W.185.11.3) We block the truth by the thoughts, beliefs, and self-concepts we hold. With willingness to look with Jesus beside us as a symbol of love and non-judgment, all can be healed.

Ask yourself, "What am I asking for in my heart today?" (W.185.8.2) **"Today devote your practice periods to careful searching of your mind, to find the dreams you cherish still."** (W.185.8.1) **"Forget the words you use in making your requests. Consider but what you believe will comfort you, and bring you happiness. But be you not dismayed by lingering illusions, for their form is not what matters now. Let not some dreams be more acceptable, reserving shame and secrecy for others. They are one. And being one, one question should be asked of all of them, 'Is this what I would have, in place of Heaven and the peace of God?'"**(W.185.8.3-8) We do still hold onto dreams of specialness, but we are called not to judge ourselves for those dreams, nor feel guilty that we still have them. The only request Jesus makes of us is that we not keep those dreams away from him by trying to hide them, justify them, or make them spiritual. He can only help us if we are willing to be vulnerable and transparent.

"With Help like this beside us, can we fail today as we request the peace of God be given us?" (W.185.14.2) The Help is in us, right here and now, and if we don't feel it or experience it, it is only because we have chosen to separate ourselves from it. We have chosen to suffer and to blame something outside of us for separating us from His love. We are the ones that have actively chosen to throw peace away. When we become aware that this is so, we can choose to change our minds and give over our mistaken perceptions to the Holy Spirit.

Let us commit to bringing all our dreams, all our shame, all our guilt, and all our fears to the truth so they can be healed, and we can know the peace and joy that is our inheritance. If anything shows up to upset you today, be willing to see that you are holding onto the upset because of your fear of love. In other words, what we are doing, by holding onto upsets, is pushing the love we are away from ourselves and choosing to maintain our individuality. The cost to us is always to keep from us the awareness of the peace and joy within our right minds. Ask yourself honestly, "What do I want? What is the desire of my heart?"

Love and blessings, Sarah
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