

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 187

I bless the world because I bless myself.

Sarah's Commentary:

This whole Lesson is about giving and receiving. **"Never forget you give but to yourself."** (W.187.6.1) It is not hard to understand that we must first have something in order to give it. To give salvation (love, forgiveness, blessings,) we must first accept for ourselves what is already in us. Yet how do we know we have it unless we give it away? Only by giving a gift do I know I have it to give! This Lesson is not only about extending the love we are to the world, but it is also about giving of things in form that carry the content of love. The content behind the form is the only thing we really can give. The content is a thought. **"Yet we have learned that things but represent the thoughts that make them."** (W.187.2.3) What is really being given is a thought that is either ego-based, meaning it reflects guilt in the mind, or a right-minded thought. If it is a thought that carries guilt and fear, I will get for myself what I am giving, meaning more guilt and fear. Yet extending a thought of love strengthens it in my own mind, and thus I have gained. Behind the form, whether it is money or material things, what is given is either love or guilt. When it is guilt, we expect something in return, which becomes a bargain because now giving has strings attached.

This Lesson puts forth the startling thought that the only way to protect anything we value is to give it away. By giving it away, we have the assurance we will never lose it. (W.187.4.1) When we value peace and happiness, we can only keep them by giving them away. It is how we protect them and how we know they are in us. When peace and joy are extended through us we feel it. By continuing to give, we will continue to have. (W.187.6.1) **"Yet it must return to him who gives. Nor can the form it takes be less acceptable. It must be more."** (W.187.2.6-8)

If we are giving just to get something back, whether it is gratitude or something material, we are bargaining, rather than extending. We actually want more than we have given. This is the underlying dynamic behind the special relationship. It is about giving as little as possible to get more than what we have given. It is about giving with the idea of getting something better for what we give. Obviously, this is not what true giving entails. Instead, what this reflects is the ego thought system of giving to get. When we want something in return for what we are giving, it is not about giving at all, but it is about bargaining in order to get. Jesus says we would much rather just take what we want, but we recognize this would not get us very far, so we have learned the art of bargaining instead.

It is apparent that when we give love, encouragement, and blessings that are genuine and heartfelt, it gives us great joy. Anything shared is strengthened in our own minds. When I share ideas from the Course, I reinforce those ideas in my mind and gain from this experience. It is not just about the form, meaning the thoughts I share, but it is about the experience of joining with my brothers and sisters that I find so precious and affirming. I also get great pleasure from giving a material gift that I think is perfect for someone. I get joy from the experience. The joy is already

in me, but it becomes known to me through the expression of giving. When there are no expectations for anything in return, not even gratitude, it is true giving. In the giving, I have already received.

In fact, the gift can be given anonymously and there will be pure joy just in the giving. I can also see where there are expectations attached to my giving or where giving feels like a sacrifice. Here is reflected the principle of "one or the other". This is where one wins and the other loses. Thus, through giving and receiving, we are always teaching ourselves what it is we believe we are. We are reinforcing the beliefs we hold about ourselves, as beings of love and light or as needy, grasping egos. Thus, we are either affirming love or fear within. Either way, we are strengthening whatever beliefs we are holding at the time. If I project guilt on anyone I feel even more guilt. I receive what I give. **"Thoughts increase by being given away. The more who believe in them the stronger they become."** (T.5.I.2.2-3) (ACIM OE T.5.II.8)

"What you thought you did not have is thereby proven yours. Yet value not its form. For this will change and grow unrecognizable in time, however much you try to keep it safe. No form endures. It is the thought behind the form of things that lives unchangeable." (W.187.4.2-6) In our special relationships, we value form. We value our bodies, and we value the bodies of others. Jesus encourages us not to put our value onto form, **"For this will change and grow unrecognizable in time. . . "** (W.187.4.4) Form will not endure, but the content of love will endure forever. It is eternal and changeless. **"The special relationship is a ritual of form, aimed at raising the form to take the place of God at the expense of content."** (T.16.V.12.2) (ACIM OE T.16.VI.54) We see it in our world, where we celebrate long-term marriage as something wonderful in and of itself. In other words, the form is what we see as most important, regardless of the content.

Jesus says there is no point in valuing form, as it has no value. It is nothing. But, as long as we do value it, giving it away will feel like a sacrifice. We can readily see this when we think about the value we put on money or material possessions. Only when we see no value in form do we recognize what is real and truly has value, which is God's Love. We experience being more loving and more peaceful when we extend love and peace. Isn't that the goal we want for ourselves? We all want to be happy and have peace in our lives, but we have been misguided in where our happiness lies when we look for it in form.

Bring awareness to where in your life you are holding back on giving and where you feel like you are sacrificing when you give. Sacrifice takes many forms, including grief, poverty, pain, starvation, and death. Any time we experience pain and loss, we are in sacrifice. Nothing can be lost to us because we already have everything. As Jesus tells us, **"To Have, Give All to All."** (T.6.V.A) (ACIM OE T.6.V.a.) This is the only way we will know what we already have.

If someone we love has left through separation in form (death, desertion, divorce) and we feel we have lost the relationship, then according to this Lesson, we can laugh gently at the idea of sacrifice, when we come to recognize that nothing real has happened. We can only experience pain when we identify with the figures in the dream whom we see as forms we value. When we recognize we are the dreamer of this dream, rather than the dream figure, we can see there is nothing tragic in the situation. It is a neutral event we have given meaning. Holding this perspective allows us to smile gently at the dream and see there is no meaning in form. However, this is not an invitation to be unkind or dismissive of others, or ourselves, in the experience of pain of loss. When there is suffering, it is important to realize that what we see is not real, yet in this world, it does seem real and tragic, and so we are called to be kind.

"Accept not suffering, and you remove the thought of suffering. Your blessing lies on everyone who suffers, when you choose to see all suffering as what it is." (W.187.7.2-3) We bring sanity to the suffering by not joining with their dream of sickness. This is true empathy. When we look at the illusion and realize it is not real, it must disappear. If we don't get taken in by the world's dream of suffering and we stand outside of the dream, we won't experience suffering. **"Your blessing lies on everyone who suffers, when you choose to see all suffering as what it is."** (W.187.7.3) We do not minimize their experience; we simply do not identify with it. When we get distressed by someone's pain, we cannot be of any help. If we jump into the pit with our brother, we have tried to join with their pain and it is now incumbent on us to heal our upset by bringing it to the Holy Spirit. As Gerald Jampolsky said, "Physician heal thyself." Our misperceptions of our brother must now be healed in our own minds; otherwise, we cannot be truly helpful. When we have been mistaken in how we see another, it is because we have forgotten who we are. When we become a demonstration of the light within us and allow it to shine through us, we extend a blessing to our brother. What we give, we receive.

When we can see holiness, shining forth from our brothers, we recognize that **"The great illusion of the fear of God diminishes to nothingness before the purity that you will look on here."** (W.187.9.3) Our fear of God is based on our belief that He will punish us for our sin of separation. We project the guilt we feel for our own sin onto our brothers. When we use our relationships for the purpose of healing the guilt in our own minds by withdrawing our projections, we then see our brothers as guiltless. We accept our own innocence as well, and now our fear of punishment from God is gone. We only fear punishment when we feel guilty. When we know who we are, the separation is healed and our divine innocence is reclaimed.

When we accept the blessings that are always available to us, we are reminded that loss and sacrifice cannot be the truth. As we stand together as One Son of God, **". . . we stand in blessedness, and give as we receive. The Name of God is on our lips. And as we look within, we see the purity of Heaven shine in our reflection of our Father's Love."** (W.187.10.3-5) This is stunningly beautiful and suggests to me that we can only know our beautiful, sinless perfection by seeing it in our brothers. How quickly we judge instead! Today, we can truly focus on setting our intent to bless, bless, bless, everyone we encounter in order to know we are blessed and to know it is in us to give. This can only happen when our grievances, judgments, and expectations are seen for what they are and given over for forgiveness and healing. Then blessing is a natural response where we see our interests the same as our brother's. Thus, the relationship is transformed from specialness to holiness.

As we give, we receive. **"Now are we blessed, and now we bless the world."** (W.187.11.1) There is no separation, only Oneness. We are joined at the altar where our gifts of giving and receiving are held. We bring our storehouse of blessings to the world when we accept the Atonement for ourselves. When we accept the Correction in our own minds, blessings automatically extend through us. While our guilt attacks, our peace embraces everyone. Nothing is withheld, for we only give to our Self. We now see with vision, rather than with the limitations that come with identification with the false self.

In the world, we speak of being blessed when everything goes according to our wishes and desires, and we feel victimized when this is not the case. Yet accepting the Correction is to see our peace is not dependent on anything outside ourselves. The blessing is there all the time because we know it is in us. Anytime you are tempted to withhold anything from anyone, recognize that you are believing in sacrifice and loss. You can now ask for help in remembering that we all share the same interests, and in giving, we know we have.

Today, we look at where we have reluctance to give, and what beliefs we hold about lack and loss. We ask for help to forgive ourselves for using these situations to keep ourselves separate from the love we are. It is important to see there is no value in taking on more guilt when we notice our reluctance to give, or when we want to get something in return. Remember, this is a classroom for undoing the ego thought system. Noticing our blocks is what allows us to bring them to the light for healing. It is not helpful to judge ourselves. Celebrate the opportunities when you see your ego in action, for this is where the healing is. It is a mistake to try to spiritualize the form rather than to look at the content of your mind.

At the quiet center of our minds is where there is only the fullness of Being and the purity of our blessedness, where they have always been. When we get in touch with this purity, we bring the blessing of God's Love to embrace everything and everyone in our day, so it can be strengthened in us.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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