

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 199

I am not a body. I am free.

Sarah's Commentary:

As we come to the end of this block of twenty Lessons and starting the Review in a couple of days, we are reminded once again of our true reality as a limitless Self, abiding in the Love of God. Our minds are totally free and unencumbered. From outside of the dream, we come to the realization we are not our bodies. We see that the body is just a projection of the mind and no different than any other object we see in this world. The body is not who we are.

"The body is a limit." (W.199.1.2) Thus, freedom is impossible as long as we perceive the body as our reality. Freedom is only possible when we accept our reality as only mind. The ego has left us in a state of mindlessness. In this state, we can't know we have the power to change our minds from the decision we made for the body and the world as our reality. Now we are shown that we can indeed make another choice, and this is what the ego fears.

How do we currently see freedom? Currently, it is tied to freedom of the body. It is about being able to go where we please, do what we want, and move about freely as we choose. Yet Jesus says that the body can never offer freedom, and if we look to it for freedom, we look **"where it can not be found."** (W.199.1.3) In fact, later in the Lesson, he talks of the body as enslaving us, meaning we are a slave to its demands. This is not hard to see in our own lives. The body makes many demands on us: to feed it, wash it, clothe it, satisfy its cravings, keep it warm and comfortable, and offer it the pleasures it seeks.

The body has many baser urges, which we try either to resist or to fulfill. It requires food. It gets uncomfortable and restless. It demands that we give it attention and fill its needs and requirements. It keeps us cooped up in it and keeps us limited. We suffer pain, get sick, age, and then die. We get bent out of shape by events that seem to interfere with our expectations of how the body should look; how it should be treated; whether it has been well fed; whether it has had enough sleep; how it is functioning; whether it has been mistreated by anyone; whether it is hot or cold; whether it has the amenities it thinks it needs to satisfy it; its requirements for money; its needs to feel safe; and its sensory pleasures, including sex. We can see that we are clearly a slave to it and its many demands. As I write this, I feel drowsy, uncomfortable in my chair, and, having been at the computer for some time, I notice my neck and shoulders hurt. Shall I ignore its requirements and suffer, or take a moment and meet its seeming demands? Ultimately, Jesus asks us whose service are we in—the body or the Holy Spirit? Which one is our home?

Our bondage to the body is clearly very powerful. The healing work we do with these Lessons and through the Course is about loosening ourselves from our identity as a body so we can realize our true reality as Spirit. **"The mind that serves the Holy Spirit is unlimited forever, in all ways, beyond the laws of time and space, unbound by any preconceptions, and with**

strength and power to do whatever it is asked." (W.199.2.1) Clearly, that is not our experience when we identify ourselves as a body living in the world. But we get glimpses of our reality when we experience ourselves outside the dream, as the observer above the battleground. There is no fear there. There is no fear when love is present in our experience. Otherwise, we feel vulnerable and fragile, and fear is evident in our bodily state. When we have a glimpse of our reality from outside of this dream, there is **"strength and power to do whatever it is asked."** (W.199.2.1) This is freedom. Now, we are no longer restricted. The body becomes a tool to be used as needed and set aside when it is not required. It becomes a communication vehicle for the Holy Spirit.

"It is essential for your progress in this Course that you accept today's idea and hold it very dear." (W.199.3.1) The ego holds the body dear because it sees it as its home. The body is an illusion that shelters the ego, which is another illusion. Thus, the body seems to grant the ego some kind of reality and keeps it from being seen as illusory. **"The ego holds the body dear because it dwells in it, and lives united with the home that it has made. It is a part of the illusion that has sheltered it from being found illusory itself."** (W.199.3.3-4) The ego needs our allegiance to continue to be. Yet it is vital to our spiritual growth that we disconnect from our identity with the ego and the body and identify with the Self beyond this dream. As long as we identify with the body, we will think it is what we are. Its purpose is to keep us from recognizing that the ego is nothing but a thought that we have decided is the truth and now claims the body as its home.

Why would we not be happy to recognize our home is in the Holy Spirit when identifying with the body is such a fragile alliance, which only brings despair and, at the end, its own demise? It is indeed a hopeless picture and one Jesus assures us is not the truth of what we really are. We are unlimited mind—not a body with just a spark of divinity. We are a mind outside of the body. The body is a projection of the mind. In other words, the mind is not in the body at all. Once we understand our reality is the mind and not the body, the body can then be put to its holy purpose, which is to serve. **"Without the power to enslave, it is a worthy servant of the freedom which the mind within the Holy Spirit seeks."** (W.199.6.6) It becomes the means for fulfilling the plan of the Atonement, and thus it becomes a learning device for the Holy Spirit.

The body can now serve the Holy Spirit, **"And carry freedom as your gift to those who still believe they are enslaved within a body. Be you free, so that the Holy Spirit can make use of your escape from bondage, to set free the many who perceive themselves as bound and helpless and afraid."** (W.199.7.2-3) As we are set free, we exemplify this freedom with everyone we meet. Peace, joy, and hope is extended through our right minds, and thus it brings blessings to the world. We become a reminder to others that they can make the same choice we have made. I felt this through my friend Tomas Vieira, who had cancer. Despite the challenges of his experience, he exemplified deep peace throughout his sickness and continued in his function offering workshops. He thus became a shining reflection of God's Love, demonstrating that others could choose as he did, regardless of the circumstances confronting them. The condition of the body did not deter him from demonstrating the message of freedom, forgiveness, joy, and peace.

I am called today to be with a sister who is angry and defensive. I am asking for help to remember that this is all a call for love, and it is my own call since I am not seeing the truth in her. It is an opportunity for me to connect with the joy and peace within and not withdraw my gifts because they are seemingly not received. Jesus reminds us that a part of the mind of the other receives every gift we give. It is a beautiful opportunity to use the body to extend love and forgiveness.

Before I started the Course, I did not question my reality as a body. As far as I was concerned, not only was I a body, but in my religious training I was told that the body was my temple for God and needed lots of care and concern. I thought that through death the soul, which was part of me, would continue on, but I did not see it as the entirety of my Being. Through the holy instant, we get a brief experience of who we are without the body. Through these experiences, we increasingly recognize that our reality is only Spirit. Our minds are framed by the Holy Spirit, not by the body. The fear of death is dissipated as we increasingly recognize and accept that we cannot die. **"In immortality you live forever. Would you not return your mind to this?"** (W.199.8.2-3) The choice is between being imprisoned in the body or unlimited in the Holy Spirit, where the body is there only temporarily to serve the mind's divine purpose.

I was struck by the story a friend in Sedona shared when her body was not well and confined to a nursing home which was her worst nightmare. Her biggest fear was that she would die in the nursing home. While there, she became acquainted with the person in the bed next to hers. She felt called to extend her support and blessing and joined with this person. As she helped this woman make her transition, she herself became well and was discharged. She recognized that this was the purpose of her time there to extend support and in extending the love and support she received the perfect lesson for herself and released her fear of death. She learned that she was exactly where she needed to be. Her body was put in the service of the Holy Spirit in order to be of help where she was needed. Once she overcame her self-interest, her body and its health were no longer of concern to her, and her health returned. **"Once you accept His plan as the one function that you would fulfill, there will be nothing else the Holy Spirit will not arrange for you without your effort."** (T.20.IV.8.4) (ACIM OE T.20.V.35)

This Lesson reminds me of my years of struggle with the question of freedom of the body related to a feeling of being "stuck" in caregiving responsibilities for my mother, during her many years in long term care. During that time my desire was to have more freedom to go where and when I wanted to go. Both my sisters were living in other cities, so it was all up to me. While I could have left her more than I did my guilt and sense of responsibility did not allow me the freedom I craved. This continued until her death at age 102 so there were many years of caregiving and with each year the demands increased. However, lessons such as this one, were very helpful to me in recognizing that this relationship was all orchestrated for my healing. I was not a victim of this situation.

Jesus reminds us that we can have freedom of the body or freedom of the mind, but we cannot have both. **"Do you want freedom of the body or of the mind? For both you cannot have. Which do you value? Which is your goal?"** (T.22.VI.1.1-4) (ACIM OE T.22.VII.51) **"Where freedom of the body has been chosen, the mind is used as means whose value lies in its ability to contrive ways to achieve the body's freedom. Yet freedom of the body has no meaning, and so the mind is dedicated to serve illusions. This is a situation so contradictory and so impossible that anyone who chooses this has no idea of what is valuable. Yet even in this confusion, so profound it cannot be described, the Holy Spirit waits in gentle patience, as certain of the outcome as He is sure of His Creator's Love. He knows this mad decision was made by one as dear to His Creator as love is to itself."** (T.22.VI.2.-1-5) (ACIM OE T.22.VII.52) I had to learn

what was valuable to me and commit to recognizing that my function was to be in service and to heal the mind using this situation as a backdrop for that purpose.

The real freedom is what the ego resists because of its fear that we will choose against it and its allegiance to the body. I recognized that everything was perfectly given for healing the mind. While the ego did not like the situation it was a glorious opportunity to the Spirit. **"What could you not accept, if you but knew that everything that happens, all events, past, present and to come, are gently planned by One Whose only purpose is your good?"** (W.135.18.1) When we are clear about our goal, the way always shows up. I say I want joy, peace, and freedom, but if I determine how it should look, I am not giving the Holy Spirit the space to bring me the perfect conditions for the lesson I must learn. If I put my own plan into place, I push His plan away.

"You are God's Son. In immortality you live forever. Would you not return your mind to this?" (W.199.8.1-3) ***"I am not a body. I am free. I hear the Voice that God has given me, and it is only this my mind obeys."*** (W.199.8.7-9) In other words, we affirm that it is not the call of the body we choose to obey. We recognize it is an unworthy boss. Our joy comes from serving the Holy Spirit and using our body for His purposes. It does not mean we neglect the body, but we recognize its purpose. Thus, we keep the body in good condition so we can hang around in it long enough to do be of service to the Holy Spirit. Jesus reminds us that health is inner peace. With inner peace, the health of the body is assured.

When I perceive the body as myself, I make all kinds of plans for its well-being and protection, which then become my primary goal. What will make this body happy? What does this body need for its health and well-being? What should I give this body for its contentment? How can I protect this body? How can I keep it safe? How can I extend its "life"? Our entire lives can be devoted to this effort, basically to no avail because we can't keep the body forever. Is it not a more laudable goal to free ourselves from these limited ideas and accept the idea presented in this Lesson and hold it very dear? Jesus says, **"It is essential for your progress in this course that you accept today's idea and hold it very dear."** (W.199.3.1) It means everything that we have believed about ourselves is wrong and is all based on the belief in separation.

Today, Jesus urges, **"Then practice well the thought the Holy Spirit gives you for today. Your brothers stand released with you in it; the world is blessed along with you. God's Son will weep no more, and Heaven offers thanks for the increase of joy your practice brings even to it. And God Himself extends His Love and happiness each time you say:**

"I am not a body. I am free. I hear the Voice that God has given me, and it is only this my mind obeys." (W.199.8.4-9)

See yourself resting in God, unbounded by the body and thus immortal forever. See your brothers and the world blessed by the forgiveness that you offer. We do that by choosing to turn to the Holy Spirit in everything so we can experience the love and the peace we are.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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