

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 249

Forgiveness ends all suffering and loss.

Sarah's Commentary:

When I read this lesson, I think about Jesus and how those who witnessed the crucifixion experienced great suffering and loss. Yet Jesus did not see it that way. He saw it as an opportunity to teach forgiveness, as well as to demonstrate that he knew he was not a body in the same way as he teaches the body is not what we are. **"I said before that the message of the crucifixion was, 'Teach only love, for that is what you are'."** (T.6.III.2.4) (ACIM OE T.6.II.18) Through his demonstration, he offered us a symbol of a world where suffering is over and **"loss becomes impossible."** (W.249.1.1) He also showed us **"anger makes no sense."** (W249.1.1) When he was attacked, he showed nothing but love in return, which is why he asks us to take him as our model for learning. And the reason this was possible for him, according to what he taught, is that he could see the world from outside this dream, knowing his reality was not that of a figure in the dream, but an eternal being of light and love. The crucifixion was an extreme example for the world, and yet he says, **"You are not asked to be crucified, which was part of my own teaching contribution. You are merely asked to follow my example in the face of much less extreme temptations to misperceive, and not to accept them as false justifications for anger."** (T.6.I.6.6) (ACIM OE T.6.II.9)

The world we seem to live in is one where we see suffering and loss all around us, and in our own lives. We believe that anger and attack are a way to get what we think we want. It is a world defined by winners and losers. Attack and defense define our relationships in which we try to win at the expense of others. Because we recognize others want the same thing as we want, and are committed to the same strategy, we see ourselves being attacked, so we put up all kinds of defenses. It is a world of pain, where suffering abounds, but we can only experience it in this way when we see ourselves as figures in this dream that have no reality.

Forgiveness offers us the means to step outside of the illusion above the battleground and observe the unreality of the drama of this world. What we see in the world is all a projection of the attack thoughts in the mind. These attack thoughts originate in our attack on God, which resulted in having gained our separate selves. By gaining at God's expense, we now perceive attack can get us what we want, and thus we think it benefits us. Our attack thoughts are projected on the world in the belief they will continue to give us what we want. It appears now that ideas have left their source in the mind so that rather than seeing attack originating in our own minds, we see it in the world because of our projections. We prefer to see it this way, so we don't have to take responsibility for the attack and instead, claim victimhood and see ourselves unfairly treated by the world. Forgiveness shows us when we bring awareness to our thoughts of attack and become willing to be totally accountable for them, they are transformed by the Holy Spirit.

The attack thoughts we hold in the mind are the cause of suffering and loss, yet the ego deceives us by telling us to attack to get what we want and to defend ourselves to alleviate our suffering.

All that does is maintain suffering. Jesus tells us that all suffering is unforgiveness, even though we may attribute it to something else. It reflects the mind that is in need of healing.

When we hold grievances, it is because we want something in the world to be different than it is. When our rules for how life should be are broken, grievances arise and with them come thoughts of attack. To free ourselves from this cycle of attack and defense, we must bring every grievance, every thought of attack, every judgment, all conflict, and all blame to the Holy Spirit. It is important we take back our projections so we can know our own true power.

Our hate scares us so we deny and rationalize it, but Jesus talks about the importance of not denying our hateful thoughts because when we do, we can't bring them to the Holy Spirit to be released. Neither should we feel guilty about them. Rather, we should be grateful that they are showing up. When we look at them dispassionately, we see that they are meaningless thoughts that do not define us. We need to do the work of forgiveness, or we will continue to suffer and suffering blocks the joy and peace in the mind. Yes, we will probably experience pain as we go through the process of uncovering the darkness in the unconscious mind. However, Jesus says pain is unnecessary even though for us it is generally part of our experience of undoing. When we go through it with his presence next to us, we have the courage needed to look at our pain so it can be released.

I had a dream last night that I said something untrue to aggrandize myself. The lie was about to be revealed and I suffered immensely, wondering how I could manage to keep this lie under wraps as it was about to be exposed. Waking up, I realized, with relief, that it was all a dream. I thought how interesting it was that I had created my own suffering simply with my meaningless thoughts. Isn't this what we do all the time? It may not seem to us that forgiveness is the answer for all suffering, but we need to recognize that course-based forgiveness is different than what we think of as forgiveness in the world because we are not forgiving anything real.

Jesus keeps reminding us over and over that this world is a dream. It is all illusion. Nothing real has happened. Thus, our attacks have no real effects. Just like in my night-time dream, when we wake up, we see we dreamt the whole experience. We are just dream-figures, dreaming our experience here. This can be seen clearly when all our attack thoughts projected on the world are released. Now we can see that anger truly has no justification. Getting angry is not wrong, but we need to see that there is no reason for the anger.

If I continue to be angry at you for what you did to me, in my nighttime dream, you would have to think I am insane since nothing happened. In the same way, we learn to see what seemed to be done in this worldly dream as an attack on us does not justify our anger because again, nothing happened. Yes, you may have said something or done something intended to hurt me, but what does that really have to do with me? I don't have to see it as an attack. I don't have to take it personally. I can see it as your call for understanding and love. The fact is that you expressed your anger at me, but it is a neutral event. Only my interpretation of your expression can upset me. If I do get hurt or feel angry and want to retaliate, it is an opportunity for me to see my own projection of the attack thoughts in my own mind.

When we are unforgiving, we frighten ourselves. Our minds are now in the grip of bitterness, which really is self-torture. This is why we become motivated to ask for help in bringing peace to our minds. When we give up the stories that keep our minds in bitterness, then suffering is replaced with joy, loss with abundance, attack with charity, and lack with endless giving. With forgiveness, we release feelings of anger and hurt. We release the sense we have that we are not loveable. We release the past. It is only in the present we can grow, expand, and truly shine. It is through forgiveness we are born again because we remember ourselves as we were created.

It is not always simple and easy for the twisted mind. We may have to really go deep into our experience and feel the pain, and when we do experience suffering, then calling on the loving support of the Holy Spirit becomes essential. That support is always available, waiting for our willingness and readiness to open ourselves to it. With each release, **"The world becomes a place of joy, abundance, charity and endless giving."** (W249.1.5) It is not that the world actually becomes this, but we see in it a reflection of Heaven when our minds come to peace. And thus, we know ourselves as God created us—perfect and unlimited.

Forgiveness is ultimately about our own self-interest. When someone seems to have offended us, we think we need to defend ourselves, but as Byron Katie says, defense is the first statement of war. Instead, Jesus, our elder brother and teacher, has demonstrated that all attack is just a call for forgiveness because they know not what they do. He is not urging us to do something to please God. It is only for our own release that he urges us to follow his counsel, but it is entirely up to us. We are free to do as we choose.

Let us welcome the opportunities that show up in our day to find peace, happiness, abundance, and joy through forgiveness. Let us choose to free our minds from anger and attack by focusing on anyone that seems to cause us difficulties today and let us use it as an opportunity to see where healing is needed in our own minds. ***"Father we would return our minds to You. We have betrayed them, held them in a vise of bitterness, and frightened them with thoughts of violence and death. Now would we rest again in You, as You created us."*** (W.249.2.1-3) Pray the prayer with the desire to return your mind to the holiness within. It is all about giving up control and releasing our imprisoned will.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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