

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 26

My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability.

Sarah's Commentary:

We are again looking at the projection of our attack thoughts, which we fear will come back to attack us in return. **"And what would have effects through you must also have effects on you."** (W.26.1.4) Because of our fear of attack, we feel vulnerable so we stay very vigilant for our safety. **"It is this law that will ultimately save you, but you are misusing it now."** (W.26.1.5) This means that the same law works to our benefit when we extend love. As we do, we experience the love we extend, returning to us. As we give it, we receive it, and this is what will save us. In that state, all we see is love or calls for love from everyone.

I believe that I can hurt others with my attacks, and thus, I can be hurt in return by being attacked. Thus, I see it as a real threat. I feel I have to protect myself against criticism, against being ripped off, against viruses, against rejection, against being fired, against losing money, and against losing a relationship. All such events make me feel vulnerable. I am only invulnerable when I know I can't be attacked and that attack is not real. To be invulnerable is to be completely immune from an attack of any kind. It is to recognize our true nature as Christ, innocent, pure, loving, and beyond attack of any kind. When we know our reality as Spirit and not the body, nothing can hurt us. We are always, and in all ways, totally protected because we remain as God created us.

When we attack, we feel like we are not the perfect Son of God because now we feel vulnerable to attack. If we truly are One with everyone and everything, then who is there to attack us? It is only when we identify with the false self that we experience being hurt physically and psychologically; so now we feel vulnerable. Jesus helps us to understand the thought system of the ego that brings about these feelings of vulnerability. We have come to believe in our vulnerability and are convinced that we are right about the way we see, and thus, we are right about ourselves as separate beings. When we feel sad, hurt, betrayed, or upset, we are saying that this world is real, that we are vulnerable beings, and that everything Jesus tells us about who we really are is untrue.

Jesus reminds us that our whole identity is built on the idea that we have attacked God, and with that attack, we established our own unique, independent, separate self that now rules its own kingdom. We are trying to prove that we are right about ourselves by accepting our reality as a body and with it comes vulnerability. We believe we can be hurt, suffer, and die. If that is the case, then we are right and God must be wrong about us. Our seeming defeat of God has led us to be in constant fear that others will do to us what we believe we have done to God; but the attack we fear is only our own projection of our own attack thoughts. We think, if we see the attack outside, then it means it is not in us. Jesus tells us that projection makes perception. I perceive outside what I first made real in my own mind. Any fear, worry, or upset that I am experiencing starts with attack thoughts in my mind. I attack because I want to get rid of my guilt and see it outside of myself. That makes me feel innocent while others are guilty.

"And if you fear attack, you must believe that you are not invulnerable." (W.26.2.2) We fear attack and thus feel vulnerable. We defend ourselves physically and psychologically, believing that we are weak and vulnerable in the world. Yet when we accept that the mind is the cause of our vulnerability, we can start the genuine process of healing. As we do, we increasingly make space for the love that we are. **"Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God."** (T.IN.2.2-4) (ACIM OE T.IN.4)

What Jesus is teaching us is that it all starts with us. Our own minds are the cause of everything we see. Thus, it is our own attack thoughts that bounce back at us. It is our own guilt that we project out and find others to blame because the guilt is too much for us to take total responsibility for. We have to find places to put it. We find convenient receptacles for our anger, and we justify putting it there. If we didn't do that, we would see all events as neutral. It is the meaning we give these events and situations in our lives which brings the experience of fear, guilt, anger, depression, worry, foreboding, and imposition.

"Attack thoughts and invulnerability cannot be accepted together. They contradict each other." (W.26.2.4-5) Just like love and fear are mutually exclusive, so are attack and invulnerability. It is either one or the other that we experience. When I hold attack thoughts, I cannot know myself as God created me. If I choose not to know the love that I am, then I choose instead to hold thoughts of anger, fear, unworthiness, grievances, judgments, concerns, neediness, specialness, and ultimately self-interest. It is my way of saying that God is wrong about me.

Lesson 24 is, **"I do not perceive my own best interests."** If we did, we would not project attack thoughts because it is not in our self-interest to do so. Attack thoughts make us feel weak and vulnerable. **"If attack thoughts must entail the belief that you are vulnerable, their effect is to weaken you in your own eyes. Thus they have attacked your perception of yourself. And because you believe in them, you can no longer believe in yourself."** (W.26.3.2-4) The truth is that we *are* innocent. We are eternal beings of love and light. We have all of God's attributes. Do I believe this about myself? No, I don't. Why not? I don't believe it because I have made a self-image that I have come to believe is who I am. It is a concept of myself that is made to cover over the guilt in my mind. This cover looks like the "face of innocence," but underneath is the raging victim who is the attacker.

None of this is the truth. We will only be convinced that what we believe about ourselves is not true when we become willing to look at the thoughts we hold about ourselves that are not the truth. When we are willing to take responsibility for them and give them over to the Holy Spirit to reinterpret for us, we begin the healing process. It takes a great deal of courage and honesty to look at our egos because the ego tells us not to look but to keep invested in the world. That is why Jesus shows us how the ego set all this up as a trick to make us think that we are what we are not. We do the healing on behalf of our own peace and happiness.

When we bring our projections back to the mind and take responsibility for them, we recognize that the thoughts we hold are blocking the love we are. Thus, when we bring these thoughts to the Holy Spirit, space is made for the truth that is always there behind our attack thoughts. We need to be very honest with ourselves in this process. It takes courage and willingness to look at our attack thoughts whether they show up as depression, worry, anger, a sense of imposition, fear, foreboding, or preoccupation. **"Any problem as yet unsettled that tends to recur in your thoughts during the day is a suitable subject."** (W.26.6.3)

As I was focusing on this commentary, Don walked in three times to ask me something. I immediately felt this sense of imposition and impatience that this Lesson talks about. I had an opportunity right then to take a moment to realize that Jesus would not see an interruption as an imposition. It is my thought about this situation that hurts me. It is not what anyone else is doing but it is what I am doing to myself as a result of my interpretation of his behavior. It is the meaning that I am giving to this behavior, and it all starts in our own minds.

What we generally do when we feel vulnerable and fearful is that we build defenses. We try to find ways to protect ourselves, but the Lesson says there really are no behavioral solutions to our feelings of vulnerability. The answer is to look at our own attack thoughts and to be willing to give them up. We must be vigilant in looking at these thoughts. It is not helpful to do a spiritual bypass by denying responsibility for our attacks. If we want to have peace, we must face the darkness. It is not helpful to say that our fear is all illusion while we still feel fearful and it all seems very real to us.

If I feel wounded, you are not the cause. I am the cause. I need not blame myself, though. I only need to take responsibility for my thoughts and look at them calmly. Only I can do what is needed to remember the love that I am. That is the good news. We are not stuck in this world. We can be freed by looking at our attack thoughts and releasing them through forgiveness. Don't you love that!!? Yes, it is an empowering thought, but we resist it because we are still afraid of the love we are. Our fear is that God will annihilate us for what the ego says we have done, but this is a gentle process. We will not be hurled into reality. We will go as quickly, or as slowly, as our fear will allow.

This is a process of undoing the image of ourselves we hold that we are, flawed, unworthy, guilty, and unlovable. Jesus reminds us of how unhappy we have made ourselves and **"How beautiful it is to walk, clean and redeemed and happy, through a world in bitter need of the redemption that your innocence bestows upon it! What can you value more than this? For here is your salvation and your freedom. And it must be complete if you would recognize it."** (T.23.IN.6.5-8) (ACIM OE T.23.IN.6)

"Only love is strong because it is undivided. The strong do not attack because they see no need to do so. Before the idea of attack can enter your mind, you must have perceived yourself as weak. Because you attacked yourself and believed that the attack was effective, you behold yourself as weakened. No longer perceiving yourself and your brothers as equal, and regarding yourself as weaker, you attempt to 'equalize' the situation you made. You use attack to do so because you believe that attack was successful in weakening you." (T12.V.1-3) (ACIM OE T.11.VI.43)

In the practice period, we are asked to look at a situation that is a concern to us, something that has been on our minds. We are asked to look at what we are afraid might happen in this situation. It is our thoughts about the situation that make us feel vulnerable. Isn't that what happens when you worry about something? You put yourself into a state of deep concern and fear and thus, vulnerability. When I obsess about what might happen in a situation, I scare myself. I am actually telling myself that I am vulnerable over and over again. I do so each time I get concerned about whether the money will come in for the mortgage, or whether my son will arrive safely when traveling on icy roads, or what will happen as a result of my exposure to the flu that is going around, or whether I will lose all my investments in the market meltdown. It is all self-attack, isn't it? It is all about fear of what will happen.

You might find that writing your responses to some of these Lessons is helpful, as I often do. When you see all your attack thoughts, you can see why you feel scared and vulnerable. We may wonder why in the world we are doing this to ourselves. Why are we attacking ourselves? Yet after we have gone through a seemingly exhausting list, he says, **"As the list of anticipated outcomes for each situation continues, you will probably find some of them [anticipated outcomes for each situation], especially those that occur to you toward the end, less acceptable to you. Try, however, to treat them all alike to whatever extent you can."** (W.26.8.3-4) This is because, as we go deeper into our fear thoughts, we will get to those that seem quite ugly where our self-hatred, our unworthiness, and the rage in us become more apparent. It is what is hiding behind our more superficial thoughts that we push away from ourselves. **"You will increasingly recognize that a slight twinge of annoyance is nothing but a veil drawn over intense fury."** (W.21.2.5)

To do this practice, we are asked to take two minutes, six times today, or less if we get uncomfortable with it, to repeat the idea, close our eyes, and pick a situation that is of concern or any unsettled problem that recurs in our thoughts.

"First name the situation:

"I am concerned about _____."

"Then go over every possible outcome that has occurred to you in connection and which has caused you concern, referring to each one quite specifically, saying:

"I am afraid _____ will happen." (W.26.7.1-4)

Then tell yourself,

"That thought is an attack upon myself." (W.26.9.2)

"If you are doing the exercises properly, you should have some five or six distressing possibilities available for each situation you use, and quite possibly more. It is much more helpful to cover a few situations thoroughly than to touch on a large number." (W.26.8.1-2)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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