

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 334 Today I claim the gifts forgiveness gives.

Sarah's Commentary:

In an interview, Seinfeld said he had never thought he wanted to marry. Then he came to a place where he realized he had everything in the world that money could buy, which brought him to wonder, "What do I do now?" Since marriage wasn't on his agenda, there seemed nothing else in the world to have, and so life, although abundant in the material realm and in power and prestige, lost its luster. He had everything, yet he felt very alone and unfulfilled. Eventually he did marry and now has a wife and family and has expanded his interests to include others. A special relationship is not the answer to this feeling of emptiness, but it is a beginning in joining with another for healing if that is one's purpose. The thing is, as illustrated by Seinfeld, that when we get what we think we want in this world, the sense of lack and unfulfillment continues until we get on the path of awakening from this dream and claim the gifts forgiveness gives.

We think we would be happy if all our dreams were met and we got everything we wanted, but eventually disillusionment sets in. As we see in this lesson, **"Illusions are all vain, and dreams are gone even while they are woven out of thoughts that rest on false perceptions."** (W.334.1.2) Our false perceptions are based on what the ego tells us to pursue in the world. The ego is always about having more. There is never enough to fill the lack we feel within. The ego wants more, whether it is more power, prestige, attention, adventure, thrills, or even more distress, victimhood, or illness, hard as that is to believe. When we live in false perception, which is the world of illusion, we are never satisfied. There is a restlessness we feel, with no certainty of what might finally fulfill this sense of lack. Until we deeply desire to know the eternal Self we are, we will never be content. We will wonder what is wrong yet have no answer. The only answer that brings certainty and peace is to know our sinlessness. It is to know who we really are. **"Let me not accept such meager gifts today"** of the ego. (W.334.1.3)

There will always be an emptiness within when we identify with the body and personality. This emptiness needs to be filled with something. It may be food, drugs, sex, power, fame, prestige, attention, or any number of things that we pursue in the belief that they will fulfill us. The ego is a wanting machine. I recall reading in the book, *A Million Little Pieces*, about James Frey's recovery from drug use. He said how he could never put enough food into himself to fill the empty void. No matter how much he ate, and he ate a lot, there was still this empty place in him, yearning for fulfillment. This place cannot be filled by anything except God. We all have this yearning for spiritual fulfillment.

This Lesson says that the treasures being offered us by our Father are eternal. The goal of this Course is peace, and peace is available as we release our judgments and false perceptions. Imagine

how beautiful the gift of innocence is, where we feel totally clean of all negative thoughts, all grievances, all issues, all guilt, and all judgment. When we know we are on the right path and have chosen the right teacher, we no longer wonder about the future, our goals, and our direction in life. More and more we experience ease, spaciousness, and a feeling of being in the flow. We see that everything that shows up for us has a divine purpose. It can all be used for healing, so we can come to know deep abiding peace where nothing can disturb the tranquility of the mind.

Jesus teaches that we are incapable of wanting less than the eternal. Everything else is a poor substitute—an idol. When we realize that substitutes can never satisfy us, we naturally want the authentic, real, and substantial, which are the eternal. Once we realize we have the power to choose, we learn to discern what has eternal value and what is useless, valueless, and false and offers us the fleeting, meager "gifts" of the ego. When we see this contrast, we are motivated to respond more fully to the call within to **"choose to follow Him."** (W.334.1.4) How do we do that? Only by releasing expectations, issues, grievances, pride, and all thoughts that block awareness of who we are in truth. It takes surrender and humility where we yield our way. We need to admit we truly don't know what will make us happy because we have been wrong about ourselves so we can't know our own best interests. We are as God created us, not what we have made of ourselves. Forgiveness is the process of releasing all the false beliefs we hold based on the belief in separation. What gives them power is only our investment in the false as true. We have the power to choose to accept only truth as true.

As Lesson 231 says, **"What can I seek for, but Your Love?"** (W.231.1.1) What we truly want is to know our own will, which is one with God's. We must come to see we all share the same one Will. Seeing sameness reflects the Oneness we share. If we crucify our brother in any way today, we do so based on our belief in differences and separation. This is how we reinforce specialness and false innocence—by seeing ourselves as better than those we judge. It is how we express our individuality when we believe we can hurt our brother and maintain our innocence. All we do is accumulate more guilt.

We can't change what we are as God created us, no matter how much we avoid, distract, pursue our own goals, or hold onto our beliefs and perspectives. As Jesus says in Chapter 29, **"The changelessness of Heaven is in you, so deep within that nothing in this world but passes by, unnoticed and unseen. The still infinity of endless peace surrounds you gently in its soft embrace, so strong and quiet, tranquil in the might of its Creator, nothing can intrude upon the sacred Son of God within."** (T.29.V.2.3-4) (ACIM OE T.29.VI.32)

This is such a beautiful affirmation of the truth. As we open more and more to the truth, keep surrendering our way, and keep asking for help, the obsessive voice of the ego gets more and more irrelevant. In other words, we turn away from it, choosing not to give it power or attention. This voice can be very loud, raucous, obsessive, and persistent. All past conditioning has convinced us we are what we are not. We have become accustomed to this voice with its constant chatter that plays incessantly in the mind. It is like background noise yet when unnoticed it runs our lives. Unless we tune into it, we don't even hear it anymore. All the thoughts and beliefs of the unwatched mind get dumped into the unconscious mind and become like a virus determining how we feel. Thus, if we are not vigilant in watching our thoughts, our lives seem to be on autopilot where we react without even thinking. Truth comes to the silent mind which means we give no attention to the ego but listen within.

"The bridge that He would carry you across lifts you from time into eternity. Waken from time, and answer fearlessly the call of Him Who gave eternity to you in your creation. On this side of the bridge to timelessness you understand nothing. But as you step lightly across it, upheld by timelessness, you are directed straight to the Heart of God. At its center, and only there, you are safe forever, because you are complete forever. There is no veil the Love of God in us together cannot lift. The way to truth is open. Follow it with me." (T.16.IV.13.4-11) (ACIM OE T.16.V.42)

When we keep trying to find in the world of time what can only be found in the eternal, we stay in the endless loop of the ego; and what we find there are only substitutes for the real thing. Our special relationships hold us in time, but if we open to the holy instant, we begin to allow the Holy Spirit to use all relationships for healing. Through forgiveness, we come to see our brothers as innocent, and in turn, we see ourselves the same.

Today, I am looking at all the things that keep me from claiming my gifts. I value the way I see things. I value my point of view. I value my opinions, control, preferences—all keeping me from asking for His guidance. I want things to go the way I set them up for myself. I want things to go according to my plan in the world. I notice an unwillingness to give up my authority over the decisions in my life. I trust my own judgment. I believe my preferences are important. I hold onto concepts and ideas of how things should be. That is why today I affirm, **"I will not wait another day to find the treasures that my Father offers me."** (W.334.1.1) I increasingly recognize my way will never bring me the happiness I seek. Through forgiveness, the memory of my innocence is awakened. By undoing my perception of guilt in others, I can access my own eternal gifts.

It is important to start the day with a focus on what kind of day we want and to remind ourselves, **"If I make no decisions by myself, this is the day that will be given me."** (T.30.I.4.2) (ACIM OE T.30.II.8) Today can be a day in which we claim the eternal gifts of peace, innocence, and certainty. Is any argument, any disagreement, or any conflict worth giving up peace? Are judgments, grievances, or issues with anyone worth trading for His eternal gifts? Do I really want to hurt myself in this way? We recognize today that everything in our lives offers us the perfect opportunity for making new choices by being willing to replace grievances, judgments, neediness, and demands with the willingness to receive the miracle and thus perceive our brother as the same as ourselves. When we join in recognition of our Oneness, we claim the gifts forgiveness gives.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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