

## ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



### Lesson 34 I could see peace instead of this.

#### Sarah's Commentary:

I love how very gentle our teacher of peace is with us. He does not coerce us but simply offers his guidance on how we can change the way we think now. He is not telling us we should see peace only that we have the option to see peace instead of the pain and suffering we experience in the world. He offers us another way of seeing rather than inducing more guilt in us when we are not at peace.

This Lesson is effective, as are all the Lessons, when applied with sincerity and dedication. It is a Lesson that helps me see that it does not matter what the situation is, there is always another way I can choose to see it. This harkens back to the Lesson yesterday where we are told we can choose peace no matter what is happening around us. The fact is that peace is already in our minds and is not dependent on anything that seems to be happening. When I look at any situation or circumstance with the ego, I am giving outside events power to obscure the peace that is in me. Or I look to circumstances outside of me to satisfy my needs, so I can have peace. But Jesus says our peace has nothing to do with outside events. He says that the fact is that nothing outside of us can bring us peace or take it away, yet we often do experience loss of peace as a result of external circumstances. When we agree to turn away from the ego when we don't like how we feel, and turn instead to the Holy Spirit for his interpretation, He shows us another way to see any situation. He reminds us that peace is always available to us. If we don't experience it, it is because we are actually choosing to throw it away. Our part is to look at the choice we are making in the mind and turn to the miracle instead.

We are gently being guided and supported to open our minds to the power within us to choose again. Remember the comments made yesterday regarding our rigid way of seeing things now. Convincing anyone about anything, even using this teaching to do so, is a form of violence. It is attacking another's perspective. That is why the Course is big on *not* proselytizing. Our only responsibility is to accept the Atonement (the healing of our minds) for ourselves. We have no other responsibility!

This is a powerful Lesson in helping us to see that the choice for peace is always available for us. But we must do our part, which is to watch the thoughts that block the peace in the mind. It is to bring to mind ". . . **fear thoughts, anxiety-provoking situations, 'offending' personalities or events, or anything else about which we are harboring unloving thoughts.**" (W.34.3.2) If we deny our attacking, unloving thoughts, the Lesson has no value. We need to get in touch with these thoughts rather than deny they are there. We tend to cover up our unloving thoughts when we are in fear, and deny their presence and become highly defensive. We established defenses in the belief they keep us safe. **"You operate from the belief you must protect yourself from what is happening because it must contain what threatens you. A sense of threat is an acknowledgement of inherent weakness; a belief that**

**there is danger which has power to call on you to make appropriate defense."** (W.135.2.1-2) Yet what defenses do is to keep us from real peace. They maintain the fear in the mind. We work to protect the false self that is not real. So today we are being asked to search our minds for fear thoughts. **"Note them all casually, repeating the idea for the day slowly as you watch them arise in your mind, and let each one go, to be replaced by the next."** (W.34.3.3) It is important to look casually which means we look without judging ourselves for holding these thoughts. In other words we are looking with the Holy Spirit from above the battleground. This means we are willing to see the thoughts with some degree of detachment recognizing that they are not real, are meaningless, and have no real consequences.

**"It is from your peace of mind that a peaceful perception of the world arises."** (W.34.1.4) Everything we see in the world starts with our thoughts and beliefs. When our thoughts are not peaceful, we see them reflected back at us in a threatening way. But the reality is that nothing outside of us can hurt us, as there is nothing outside of us. Again, the cause of any distress is a projection of the thoughts in the mind. The world is an effect of those thoughts and mirrors back to me what is in my mind. If I get anxious about my experience in the world because someone seems to be "causing" me distress, I have an opportunity to go within and ask to see the situation differently. Jesus reminds us that peace is a choice we can make. Because the peace we are seeking is already within us all that is required is that we uncover how it is being blocked by our thoughts, beliefs, and concepts we are holding.

Our part is to bring awareness to the thoughts and beliefs, **"and let each one go, to be replaced by the next."** (W.34.3.3) Whenever we are not experiencing peace, love, and joy it is because our thoughts are blocking this experience from our awareness. We may be feeling rejected, vulnerable, not in control, manipulated, a failure, or even a success. All these experiences can generate fear in us.

Underneath all of our fears, there are beliefs we hold. For example, I am afraid I am a failure because I have a belief I should be perfect, and it is unacceptable to make mistakes. If I make a mistake, I believe I am bad. I consider striving for perfection important as I value my high standards. These beliefs and values I hold put me under a lot of stress. Jesus asks, would you rather be right (about your perceptions and beliefs) or happy? Clearly the high expectations I place on myself do not make me happy. When I do not meet my standards, the ego berates me, and the cycle continues until I am willing to see how I am keeping myself from peace. We are asked to expose our fears so they can be healed. A good place to start is to look at how we feel. Whenever we are not at peace it is an indication we are holding thoughts and beliefs that are not the truth.

If you experience difficulty in having thoughts come to mind and reach a blank spot in your mind, **"continue to repeat the idea [I could see peace instead of this] to yourself in an unhurried manner, without applying it to anything in particular."** (W.34.4.1) Whenever I wake up in the night and feel a strange sense of anxiety not necessarily tied to anything specific, I find this Lesson helpful. It may just be a vague generalized feeling that comes up of sadness, anxiety, worry, or expectations I am placing on myself. As I apply this Lesson, I feel a sense of relief. These words, (I can replace my feelings of depression, sadness or any form of distress with peace), repeated often, generally bring a sense of calm to my mind.

Identifying the feelings of distress is important because, as Jesus says, **"You may wonder why it is so crucial that you look upon your hatred and realize its full extent. You may also think that it would be easy enough for the Holy Spirit to show it to you, and dispel it without the need for you to raise it to awareness yourself."** (T.13.III.1.1-2) (ACIM OE T.12.III.10) The reason it is up to us is because we are the ones who made these

thoughts and therefore we are the ones that must be willing to give the over. Jesus urges us, **"Do not hide suffering from His sight, but bring it gladly to Him. Lay before His eternal sanity all your hurt, and let Him heal you. Do not leave any spot of pain hidden from His Light, and search your mind carefully for any thoughts you may fear to uncover."** (T.13.III.7.3-5) (ACIM OE T.12.III.17)

My experience with this practice is that I have become more aware of the thoughts in my mind that create the kind of experience I am having. In order to see what I am thinking and believing I have to stay very vigilant in watching my mind. This takes discipline, work and practice. It is easy to go through the day unconscious of what is going on in the mind. When our thoughts operate in the background without our awareness it is like a computer software program running the day.

We all have had experiences of how thoughts affect us. For example, when we awaken and feel content, the day seems to unfold easily and happily. If something distressing shows up, our happy mood simply accepts the distress easily and things seem to go well overall. The opposite is also true. When we are cranky, everything in the day seems to go wrong. That is why we have these Lessons to start the day happy to apply our lessons to every situation and recognize that everything in the day offers us a perfect opportunity for healing.

It is not up to us to make the correction for our wrong-minded thinking. Our part is to be willing to bring our misperceptions to the Holy Spirit Who makes the Correction. Peace is already in our minds. It is just obscured by our thoughts. We don't need to acquire peace. We just need to uncover the thoughts that obscure it and put them on the inner altar for healing. The hard part for us is that we tend to judge ourselves for the thoughts we uncover because we think they define us; but they are not what we are. By defending our image of who we think we are, we will not be willing to uncover thoughts we judge as hateful or even murderous. It is important to remember that we are not responsible for the error but only for bringing the error to the Truth for correction.

I often get into the trap of thinking that when difficult situations come up what I need to do is change things "out there" in order to be at peace. I am learning to respond to any difficult situation or difficult person by pausing, stepping back and bringing my mind to peace. When I do, if I need to take action, I can take it from a center of peace instead of fighting, overpowering, arguing, or making myself right which is like going to war in order to win peace. It can never work. Only by doing the inner work can we ever bring about peace. I can't always do this in the moment, but when I withdraw from these difficult situations and spend time in prayer, meditation, reflection and willingness to be wrong, I can inevitably, return my mind in the direction of peace.

Love and blessings, Sarah  
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