

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 357

Truth answers every call we make to God, Responding first with miracles, and then Returning unto us to be itself.

Sarah's Commentary:

Through the process of forgiveness, we escape the prison house we made. The truth is that we don't really live in the prison house of this world, although we think we are captive here. Through forgiveness, we are released from the prison of our own making. This requires that we question all concepts, values, and beliefs we hold. We have made an adjustment to this seeming prison through our conditioning. Undoing this conditioned mind, and recognizing how wrong we have been about everything we think, is what is necessary to escape our sense of imprisonment and belief we hold in lack and limitation.

As Alan Cohen writes:

"We consider it admirable to be well-adjusted, but the real question is 'Well adjusted to what?' If you are well-adjusted to pain, conflict, and poverty thinking, you are not well-adjusted at all. If, however, you are well-adjusted to listening to your inner voice and acting on it, you are well-adjusted, indeed.

We drift spiritually when we accept things that hurt us for so long that we lose our ability to feel pain. While pain is not our natural state or our destiny, and we are certainly not meant to live in pain, it is the signal that we must make a change. We cannot afford to lose the ability to hear that signal.

To avoid drift, begin to tell the truth about your experiences. If you let yourself feel your feelings, you will discover valuable messages that will guide you to be in your right place with the right people at the right time. Many people have told me they had a bad intuition about being in a relationship or entering into a business venture, but they overrode their gut feelings and regretted it later. Your body will speak to you. Your gut may say "Yes!" or "Not for me!" and it is up to you to hear and act on the voice of love and wisdom from within; it is your best friend."

Every doubt thought we hold about ourselves must be questioned. We need to ask ourselves often, "Is this belief I hold the truth? Is this doubt thought I hold true? Is this problem that I think I have really a problem? Is who I think I am really me?" When we question our thoughts, our doubts, our false beliefs, and all our self-concepts and bring them to the truth, the truth dawns on the mind. Our part is to look at our conditioned thoughts with honesty and sincerity and be willing to surrender them to the Holy Spirit. He does the rest.

In every situation, we have an opportunity to choose to hold onto our ideas or to give them over for His Correction. By our decision, we become a demonstration of the choice we have made. We demonstrate to our brothers that anyone can make the same choice we have made, and thus, we become an example of this choice.

"Your holy Son is pointed out to me, first in my brother; then in me." (W.357.1.2) Our doubts and fears are projected onto our brothers, which is the first place we will see them. I see sin in my brother, which is how I see my projections of my own self-condemnation. Yet if I take back what I project and recognize that it is my judgment of myself, I can choose to give it over. This may seem to be a painful process at first, and in fact, it may engender fear because instead of seeing sin and guilt in our brothers, we now see it in ourselves. When we allow our private, deeply hidden parts of our mind to surface and look at them without judgment, then the miracle shows us our divine innocence. We cannot take charge of that part. We leave Correction to the Holy Spirit. Our part is simply to bring our false thoughts to truth. We cannot correct ourselves or do the work of trying to fix and improve ourselves. The ego urges that we keep working on ourselves as it keeps our false self-identity safe. The ego wants to be in control of the process. True forgiveness puts the Holy Spirit in charge. It requires that we yield our way to Him, which is not easy for us, as it takes us into the unknown, which brings up fear.

We think our perceptions are the truth. We rationalize and justify the way we see things. We defend the objectivity of our perceptions because we want to be right. That is why letting go is so hard because essentially it is letting go of who we think we are. The prison house where we think we live has been constructed by false beliefs. Every time we choose to forgive, it is our call to God, and it is always answered. When we can **"Behold his [our brother's] sinlessness,"** (W.357.1.5) we behold our own innocence. With willingness, desire, and great humility, we come to experience healing that brings us to the gates of Heaven. Be as little children. **"Be humble before Him, and yet great in Him."** (T.15.IV.3.1) (ACIM OE T.15.V.37) We are guided every step of the way, and with His guidance, we learn to give as we receive.

The miracle undoes our misperceptions. The whole Course is about shifting our perception so we might see that nothing real can be threatened and nothing unreal exists. It results in a shift in how we perceive the world, ourselves, others, and every event and circumstance in our lives. It all starts with what is in front of us now and what we are believing about our experiences. Jesus clarifies how our false beliefs were made. We believe we are bodies, living in this world with others who hurt us, betray us, upset us, and victimize us. These beliefs are what we are being called to investigate. We are learning how to forgive, so we can see our brother, who seems to be responsible for our pain, as God's Son. We are not separate. The process of forgiveness, a reflection of God's Love in this world, allows a new perception to come forth, so we can see our brother as sinless. But first, we need to see how we are currently judging our brother and then be willing to ask for a new perception.

The Course is not about denying the way we see now. It is about taking those judgments and questioning them. We are called to not make the error real, meaning to not see our judgments about someone or something as true. If we want to know our innocence, we need help from the Holy Spirit to undo our misperceptions. All that is needed is desire and motivation to truly see who our brother is.

Our greatest opportunity to learn forgiveness is from those very people whom we would rather not see—those who we would rather avoid, ignore, dislike, dismiss, fear, hate, and condemn, as well as those with whom we make comparisons by seeing ourselves as superior and special. These are the people who offer us another opportunity to look at the judgments we are holding in the

mind and the pain of our self-condemnation. As Jesus reminds us, **"Only what you have not given can be lacking in any situation."** (T.17.VII.4.1) (ACIM OE T.17.VIII.67) All seemingly unhappy circumstances are there for our awakening. **"What is joyful to you is painful to the ego, and as long as you are in doubt about what you are, you will be confused about joy and pain."** (T.7.X.3.6) (ACIM OE T.7.XI.101) He has taught us that we can't tell our greatest advances from our biggest retreats on this journey of healing.

To see divinity in our brothers is to recognize the same divinity must be in us. If we attack our brother and demean him, if we are mean and spiteful, or if we are falsely empathetic and we identify with his weakness, then clearly, we see this capacity in ourselves; and we will decide that we can't possibly be God's Son. We thus deny ourselves our inherent innocence. When we extend forgiveness, love, and acceptance to our brothers, the path is cleared for that same love and acceptance for ourselves. We are constantly assessing our own behavior towards others, and on that basis, we judge ourselves. We simply cannot behave in a mean, spiteful, and attacking way and still see ourselves as innocent. It is not God's judgment on us, but our own that we then hold against ourselves. And whether we judge ourselves or our brother, it is the same. Healing requires that we see our mean and spiteful behavior and choose to turn our hateful thoughts to the Holy Spirit without judging ourselves. If anything, be glad to see what is in your mind, as this is the only way healing can be achieved.

"Your Voice instructs me patiently to hear Your Word, and give as I receive." (W.357.1.3) Jesus asks us to listen to the Voice for God, which is constantly instructing us to find our way back to Him by beholding our brother's sinlessness. The law of love affirms that what I see in my brother, I receive for myself. That is why we need our brothers as a projection screen on which we can see our guilt, as well as find our innocence. We won't find it in ourselves alone. We must see it in our brothers first, so we can then know it in ourselves. ***"And as I look upon Your Son today, I hear Your Voice instructing me to find the way to You, as You appointed that the way shall be: 'Behold his sinlessness, and be you healed.'"*** (W.357.1.4-5) It is not always possible in our current state to see our brother sinless, but it is possible to want to see him that way and that is what we can ask. ***"Ask only, 'Do I really wish to see him sinless?'"*** (T.20.VII. 9.2) (ACIM OE T.20.VIII.66)

This Course is ultimately very practical. Our brother shows us the way home. Our brother is our savior. Our process is not an abstract one, which focuses on a mystical experience of union with God. While that kind of experience is motivating and has value, our path is not solitary. We find God through forgiveness of those around us in our everyday, ordinary lives. Pursuing the spiritual experience without the focus on all our relationships and encounters will only delay our healing. In this season of Christmas, we learn that the Christ is born in the holy relationship. Where an ancient hatred has become a present love is truly holy ground where the Christ in us is born.

Love and blessings, Sarah
huemmert@shaw.ca

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