

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 54 ~ REVIEW I [Review Lessons 16-20]

Sarah's Commentary:

The theme of the Lessons we are reviewing today is about the power of our thoughts. It is a power that has made up a world separate from God. It is a world He does not know. If God knew of this world, it would have to mean it is real. Yet the only reality is God's Kingdom. Our belief in the tiny mad idea that we could be separate from God is what made the world we see. It is a shared illusion. **"Even the mad idea of separation had to be shared before it could form the basis of the world I see."** (W.54.3.3) This is why billions of people can agree about the nature of this world, but that does not make it true. It just means it is a collective hallucination. The world is illusory and does not exist except in the beliefs we hold about it, and those beliefs have power. It is impossible to have a neutral thought. **"Neutral thoughts are impossible because all thoughts have power."** (W.54.1.2) After all the mind must be powerful in order to make the world what it is. What is valuable about this power is that we can use it to undo all we have made real.

Every thought has an effect. The entire world is the effect of our incredibly powerful thoughts. As we change our minds, we change our world. Mind is the cause, and the world is the effect. Clearly, this is not how we experience the world. We see the world as the cause of our distress, and thus, we see ourselves as its effect. As such, we see ourselves as the victims of what the world seems to be delivering. When we turn to the Lessons, they shift our thinking and help us to recognize that everything starts in our minds. Our thoughts are what have made this world appear to be real and solid; but equally, our thoughts can lead us out of this world to the real world. It is through forgiveness that we come to see the false as false.

Forgiveness undoes all that is false. With the separation comes enormous guilt, which is overwhelming to the mind. Thus, the ego offers us a scheme to make it possible to live with all this guilt. Its answer is for us to project the guilt onto others. Now we find others to blame for our circumstances. We are under the illusion we have released the guilt in the mind by making others responsible, but this is precisely how we hang onto it. Yet when we take responsibility for our projections, without blaming ourselves for them, the Correction can be made and the plan of the ego to keep us invested in guilt is undone. While the ego is totally insane, it is nevertheless brilliant in creating this plan, making us think we have released the guilt.

Forgiveness can only be understood in the context that this world is not real and nothing has really happened. In the illusion, there are painful events and difficult situations. Forgiveness allows us to see them from outside the dream and recognize their unreality. What we are seeing are the projected images from our own fearful minds. When the projected images are **". . . cleansed and purified, and finally removed forever,"** (T.18.IX.14.2) (ACIM OE T.18.XI.98) and our false perceptions are forgiven, we will see **". . . the bright world of new and clean perception."** (T.18.IX.14.3) (ACIM OE T.18.XI.98) This is the real world we experience when forgiveness is

complete. The real world is a state of love, innocence, peace, and joy. **"And it is there that peace awaits you."** (T.18.IX.14.5) (ACIM OE T.18.XI.98)

There is no middle ground between the ego's guilt and fear and the peace and love we experience when we choose the miracle. Neutral thoughts are impossible because all thoughts have power. Every thought we have is either of love or fear, Heaven or hell. There is no middle ground. **"My thoughts cannot be neither true nor false. They must be one or the other. What I see shows me which they are."** (W.54.1.6-8) It is a mutually exclusive state of "one or the other," which is why we can't hold both love and hate in our minds at the same time. We know which thought we have chosen by its effects and by how we feel. The world is thus a representation of our own state of mind. If we want to know the state of our mind, we just need to look at how we are feeling. When we experience joy and peace, which are not dependent on external circumstances, we know we have chosen the Holy Spirit. What we perceive is never a fact but only an interpretation of our own making.

I used to become very upset when negative emotions would arise in me. I would crucify myself for making mistakes. I saw my mistakes as evidence of not being sufficiently spiritual. Now, as I am increasingly willing to look more at these disturbing thoughts and emotions, while I don't enjoy them, I welcome them so they can be brought for healing. I resist making judgments about myself for having these thoughts. By stepping back from them, I am able to see that these thoughts and emotions do not define me. Instead, they provide an opportunity to look at my unhealed mind and choose another way. This is the purpose of the world, our relationships, and circumstances. When judgments come up, be willing to see them as another opportunity for forgiveness and healing. The world has no other purpose than this. There is no value in delay. The time is now. Can further delay bring us anything but what it has always brought us which is more suffering, pain, and sickness? Now we are called to use time for its intended purpose, which is to undo all that keeps us in hell.

The process of watching our egoic reactions develops gradually over a period of time. It takes practice. One of the pitfalls we fall into is to judge ourselves for getting angry or for making judgments. We think that if we don't see everyone through the eyes of love, and if we don't see the Christ in everyone, we just need to try harder to be loving and to stop being judgmental. That is not going to help us in undoing the ego. It is simply the ego trying to fix itself up to look good. Instead, we need to observe our judgments and our need for specialness and be willing to let them go by turning them over to the gentle love of Jesus, who helps us to see the ego as completely meaningless. **"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. It is not necessary to seek for what is true, but it is necessary to seek for what is false."** (T.16.IV.6.1-2) (ACIM OE T.16.V.35)

Thus, to take responsibility for our thoughts requires a high level of honesty and courage. Our tendency is to defend, rationalize, explain, and justify by telling stories of why we feel the way we do. This won't help us in our healing. We can't expect this world of egos to always treat us lovingly. Problems will prevail. Despite our best efforts in extending love, the world can still treat us with unkindness, rudeness, and nastiness, but ultimately true inner peace does not depend on the behaviors of others. If we are triggered it is because we are believing that this is the truth about us. Certainly, it may not be in our best interest to stay in difficult relationships and difficult situations, but maintaining relationships in form is not what is important. What is important is the content of our minds. Leaving relationships can be a right-minded decision.

We can never know the entirety of someone's path of Atonement. The same healing opportunity is there for them, as it is for us. Whatever shows up in our lives is just another opportunity for healing, as it is for anyone who makes this choice. They have the same power, as we do, to choose forgiveness when they are sufficiently motivated to do so. Patience is one of the characteristics of the teacher of God, so we can afford to be patient because the outcome is certain for us all. The only important factor is not the forms of this world, but the content of our own minds. Thus, it really does not matter what anyone does, only how we interpret what is happening. Ultimately, when we let go of all our judgments and our need for specialness, we will perceive the Christ in everyone. It is not a matter of trying. It is only a matter of bringing our judgments and grievances to the Holy Spirit for them to be healed.

All the multiplicity of problems and complexities we experience in relationships, and all the confusion, anger, and stress that arises, is the result of our mistaken thoughts. There are no idle thoughts. Look around you and see what they have produced. They have produced this world we have come to believe is our reality. All thoughts have power. **"All thinking produces form at some level."** (T.2.VI.9.14) (ACIM OE T.2.V.92)

There are no private thoughts. All minds are joined. There is only one Mind, which is the Christ mind. **"Everything I think or say or do teaches all the universe."** (W.54.4.3) Therefore, if I change my mind, because all minds are joined I have the power to change every mind. Obviously, this is not a matter of trying to heal others, trying to get them to change their minds, or telling them how to think. It is simply what we call forth in them by being a symbol of right-mindedness. When I choose to let go of my grievances, I send a message to others that they too can engage in this process of awakening from the dream. When I hold onto grievances, I send a message of attack and further separation.

Everything we do reinforces separation or joining. My decision to judge you, get angry with you, worry about you, attack you, blame you, or be jealous of you is a decision for hell instead of Heaven. This reflects the insane promise we made **". . . to another to be hurt by him, and to attack him in return."** (T.28.VI.4.7) (ACIM OE T.28.VII.57) Why would we make such an agreement? It seems insane, and it is, but these secret vows were made to keep the separation going so we could keep our identity as a separate being. This is why attack and blame are so attractive to us. **"Whoever says, 'There is no gap between my mind and yours' has kept God's promise, not his tiny oath to be forever faithful unto death."** (T.28.VI.5.4) (ACIM OE T.28.VII.58) Thus, we have a choice with each decision we make, which is either to attack or to join with our brothers.

We can't change anyone's mind any more than Jesus can change our minds for us. We all need to make our own decisions, but we can use our power for good and truth by being the change we look for in the world. What I look on witnesses to the thought system I have chosen. I can look at the choices I am making by observing the witnesses to my choice. For example, I notice that when I am in conflict with a brother or experience a lot of stress, this often leads to the onset of a cold or some sort of illness. When I experience a great deal of stress and demand perfectionism of myself, my head hurts. It is an immediate indication of my choice for the ego. On the other hand, when I release a grievance, I feel light and happy. As we learn to pay attention to the witnesses to our state of mind, we can make a choice for healing; ultimately, all healing is of the mind.

Jesus demonstrated through his resurrection that our bodies are not who we are. We are eternal beings of light and love. We are an idea in the Mind of God, and nothing can hurt us. In order to experience our reality as love, we need to uncover our unconscious guilt that came with the tiny mad idea that we could be separate from love. We fear we will never find our way back and have

done something terribly evil. In this review, we are being reminded to watch our thoughts and look at what we are making real. Our part is to be a demonstration of His love in the world. In order to do that, we must continue to forgive our false perceptions so our minds can be healed of the guilt project on others.

Every other goal we hold in the world other than correction of our thoughts, has no value. It doesn't matter what our roles and responsibilities are in the world. Whether we are a teacher, stockbroker, mother, lawyer, service worker, or nurse, it is all just a backdrop for our real work in the world, which is to take responsibility for accepting the Atonement for ourselves.

The goal of this Course is peace. The only way we can know peace is through forgiveness. It doesn't mean we need to hang with anyone. It doesn't mean they have to be in our presence or still be in their bodies. The forgiveness work is to bring attention to the false beliefs we hold in the mind. We are healing our perceptions which are never a fact but an interpretation.

I am determined to see because I am realizing the true nature and power of my mind. We can choose to make more and more illusions, which witness to guilt and fear, or we can practice forgiveness which is the undoing of illusions and witness more peace, joy, and joining in our lives. In that choice, thoughts of love replace thoughts of fear. Thoughts of laughter replace thoughts of tears, and thoughts of abundance replace thoughts of loss. These are the choices available to us.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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