

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 7 I see only the past.

Sarah's Commentary:

This Lesson starts with a summary of the previous six Lessons, reminding us that the reason we don't understand anything is because of all our past associations. The idea was introduced in Lesson 3 where Jesus said he is helping us clear our minds of these past associations. This is the only way we can see things exactly as they are now, which is essentially all the same.

To think I see only the past is an absolute statement, which can make me think I must be senile, living in lost memories and seeing nothing as it is now. Actually, this is what Jesus is trying to get across to us. He uses an example of how we see a cup to make this point. Without our experiences with a cup, which all come from the past, we would not know what it is for.

When I look at a cup, it brings up all kinds of memories for me of what I have used it for. I know how to pick it up because of my past learning. I connect it to liquids that can quench my thirst. I know how it feels when I put it to my lips, and I know it will break if I drop it. These are all associations from the past. I recall the collection of all the beautiful china cups my mother treasured and even have a painful memory of breaking one. What would I know of a cup without all these past associations?

It is unsettling to start looking at everything and realize we don't really see anything except the past. We think our observations of everything in the world are real and true and objective, whatever that means. In fact, all we are seeing are the projections of our own past associations that we hold in memory. Things in the world have meaning to us because of our memories about them, without which nothing would mean anything at all. Without our memories and past associations, we would not understand anything. That seems daunting and unsettling. Jesus acknowledges that he knows it is difficult for us.

Yet if this idea is the rationale for all the preceding ones, it explains why nothing we see means anything. It is also the reason we don't understand anything we see, and indeed, why we are never upset for the reason we think because we see something that is not there. We see it all as the past or, in other words, as already passed by. It is all related to our concept of time. You may want to read Chapter 13 on Time to help you with this Lesson. Jesus tells us, **"The ego has a strange notion of time, and it is within this notion that your questioning might well begin. The ego invests heavily in the past, and in the end believes that the past is the only aspect of time that is meaningful. Remember that its emphasis on guilt enables it to ensure its continuity by making the future like the past, and thus avoiding the present."** (T.13.IV.4.1-3) (ACIM OE T.12.IV.26)

He goes on to say, **"'Now' has no meaning to the ego. The present merely reminds it of past hurts, and it reacts to the present as if it were the past. The ego cannot tolerate**

release from the past, and although the past is over, the ego tries to preserve its image by responding as if it were present." (T.13.IV.5.1-3) (ACIM OE T.12.IV.27) You can imagine how we respond to those we meet if we see only the past. Seeing only the past means that we are totally obscuring the present reality of anyone we meet. We truly don't see them. In fact, Jesus tells us that we only see shadow figures. **"You thus deny yourself the message of release that every brother offers you now."** (T.13.IV.5.7) (ACIM OE T.12.IV.27) Seeing shadow figures is to see only through the lens of the past. We thus associate everyone with someone from the past who reminds us of them.

In this Lesson, Jesus says, **"Old ideas about time are very difficult to change, because everything you believe is rooted in time, and depends on your not learning these new ideas about it. Yet that is precisely why you need new ideas about time."** (W.7.2.1-2) If we see only the past, we must conclude that we literally see nothing. I see someone on TV that reminds me of my issue with authority figures, and I make a judgment about that person. Now I feel angry. Whether my association is with a cup or with an authority figure, it is all the same. It is all the past.

Our view of linear time all started with the separation. We believe we separated from God/Love and the ego told us we had done a terrible thing and had committed a terrible sin. Now we feel guilty, and we carry this sense of having done something wrong into our worldly experience. With sin from the past, we feel guilt in the present state and now we fear future consequences. That is the basis for time. Sin (the past), guilt (the present), and fear (the future) are the basis for our belief in linear time. Why do we hold onto it all? Because it proves our individual existence as a separate self. Yes, the cost is sin, guilt, and fear, but we live with that and maintain the separation because we are invested in our existence as an individual. Our individual existence, which seems to define us, came because we walked away from Oneness with God and made up this special, individual self. Healing the guilt would mean giving up this self. If we see this world of duality as real, we can maintain our reality as well which is what we want.

Giving it up brings huge resistance, and so we hold onto the sin, guilt, and fear, even though we are assured it is all made up because we are still with God. We are still the eternal Beings that we have always been. This experience is all illusory, yet we fear losing our independent self and our separate will because it is familiar and it is what we know. Jesus assures us we need not worry that we will be hurled into Heaven as we only go as fast or as slow as our fear will allow. But as we apply these Lessons, we will experience more peace in our separated state.

Finally, Jesus affirms, **"Unless you learn that past pain is an illusion, you are choosing a future of illusions and losing the many opportunities you could find for release in the present."** (T.13.IV.6.5) (ACIM OE T.12.IV.28) Aren't we all on this path because we want the release from this terrible feeling of guilt and fear? What we don't realize is the resistance that comes with it. We resist because we are attached to what we have made. We seem to be in this bubble of time that we have made, and, for us, it is true. Because our beliefs are rooted in time, if we let go of our ideas of time, our whole belief system would collapse, and that brings up fear. Doing the mind training is important to our release. These lessons are designed to loosen our minds from our belief that we see things as they are. Clearly, we do not see anything as it is. We are only seeing the past. The present moment is before time was.

In doing this lesson, it is important to give everything we see the same weight and not linger on any one thing in particular.

Love and blessings, Sarah
huemmert@shaw.ca

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