

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 21

I am determined to see things differently.

Sarah's Commentary:

If we really want to heal the mind, we need to do the work required to see differently. The reason put forward here for our lack of vision is our anger. More importantly, it is how we think anger is generated by events, circumstances, and people outside of our own minds. In other words, we justify our anger by what others have done. We can't see differently if we think our justifications are correct. Have you ever tried to talk anyone out of their anger when they are determined to see that someone has caused it? When we believe we are right about the way we see now, there is no room to learn another way. We have it all wrong. Until our angry thoughts are seen for what they are as coming from our guilt, space is not made for vision.

What is particularly interesting about this Lesson is that it affirms that all anger is the same, whether it is a slight twinge of annoyance or full blown murderous anger. **"The degree of the emotion you experience does not matter. You will become increasingly aware that a slight twinge of annoyance is nothing but a veil drawn over intense fury."** (W.21.2.4-5) Of course, it does not seem that way to us. We may dismiss our "small" irritations as unimportant, but Jesus reminds us that there is no hierarchy of illusions. One is not bigger or smaller than another. Any emotion that blocks our peace is worthy of our attention, especially when we realize that under the slight twinge of annoyance lies intense fury.

Jesus challenges our beliefs about ourselves in regard to anger—beliefs such as: anger is justified in certain situations; anger is a natural impulse that arises on its own accord; we are only angry some of the time.; we love someone, but get angry only at certain attributes in them; anger is a sign of strength and protects our boundaries; anger is dissipated when it is expressed and is, therefore, healthy; when we don't act on our anger, we have refrained from attacking; and anger on behalf of others is a sign of caring.

Jesus shows us that anger causes loss of peace, whether it is mild irritation or overwhelming fury. It is all the same because it always points to something external. There is no order of severity in anger, as it all comes from the same source. What is the source of this anger? We think it comes from what others do and how we perceive events and circumstances in the world. However, earlier Lessons already laid the groundwork saying that the mind is the source, and we are responsible for what we see. If the mind is the cause of what we see, what is in us that has brought forth all this anger we seem to have?

In order to answer that question, we have to understand the metaphysics as Jesus outlines them in the Course. He says that anger comes from the decision to separate from God. When we chose to leave the state of Oneness and entered the state of separation, we came into an experience of chronic lack and loneliness. The guilt we experience as a result of the decision to separate from God is overwhelming. We seek relief from this guilt by projecting responsibility onto others for

our painful condition and blame them for our unhappiness. We are especially vulnerable to any perceived attack, and thus, we justify our anger towards those who we see as attacking us.

We carry deep anger at ourselves, and now need to find places to put this anger and hide from ourselves as the source of it all so we justify why we blame others. This Lesson begins the reversal process by asking us to look at our anger and recognize, no matter how big or small it seems to be, it all comes from within the mind and therefore is all the same. All anger points to the deep, self-hatred we carry and thus it is all anger at ourselves. Recognizing the various forms of anger is a way to start to uncover all of it as part of our healing journey.

Anger can take many forms, including irritation, impatience, annoyance, depression, jealousy, comparison, anxiety, worry, fear, and any kind of distress. We are being asked to get in touch with those places in the mind where we hold thoughts of anger. These thoughts block our vision. This is about our determination to see differently by being willing to see that we chose the ego's version of events, and the ego is always wrong. This Course is taking us through the darkness to the light. We can't just dismiss our anger with positive affirmations, and we can't see differently if we are invested in being right about the way we see now.

Anger keeps us from the truth of who we are. We don't need to do anything to create safety, abundance, love, and peace. They are already in us and already available. What we do when we hold onto our version of events is to keep ourselves unaware of our reality as the Son of God. These Lessons help us uncover how we actively keep ourselves away from the truth of who we are. Seeing ourselves as innocent victims of what others do keeps us in the story. We don't want to take responsibility for the separation, which is why we project the responsibility for the way we feel onto others. Now we see them as the ones to blame for whatever condition we see ourselves in. Ultimately, it is because we don't want to take responsibility for our lives. Thus, if we blame our brothers, we can put our guilt on them. We declare, "Someone else brought all this about. I am innocent!"

We justify our anger by telling ourselves that anyone would be angry in this situation, or we gather allies who support us and seemingly strengthen our version of the situation. Jesus tells us, anger is never justified, and even though we think we know why we are angry, we don't know. Just like Lesson 5 says, "**I am never upset for the reason I think.**" And in Lesson 6, "**I am upset [angry] because I see something that is not there.**" While anger is never justified, this does not mean that we won't feel angry. Jesus is not telling us we should not be angry. He is only asking us not to justify the anger. He only wants us to bring awareness to the anger we are feeling so it can be healed.

Today, we commit five minutes of the day, in total, for this exercise. He asks us to do this in five practice periods of one minute each, during which we search our minds for situations past, present, or anticipated that arouse anger in us.

"As you search your mind for all the forms in which attack thoughts present themselves, hold each one in mind while you tell yourself:

"I am determined to see _____ (name of person) differently. I am determined to see _____ (specify the situation) differently." (W.21.4.1-3)

If you are focusing on an attribute you don't like in someone, say:

"I am determined to see _____ (specify the attribute) in _____ (name the person) differently." (W.21.5.4)

When we look at an attribute we don't like in someone, we think we have confined our anger to that attribute. I love Don, but I get irritated when he interrupts me. I think I can safely attack that one thing in him, and therefore, I think my anger is limited. Jesus reminds us this is not the case. Remember that he said, even a small irritation covers intense fury. That is why we need to look at the seemingly small irritations as well as those that bring up rage in us. They are all the same.

Notice any resistance in doing this practice and do not strain to overcome it. Strain is of the ego, trying to overcome itself. It won't work. We have a big investment in the illusion and in our own thoughts. Our conditioned minds have sufficiently ordered the chaos of this world enough for us to feel that we can at least rule our little kingdom! We have established a monument to our independence, our uniqueness, and our specialness where we worship daily. Undoing the investment that we have in our little kingdom and in our limited self can only happen with our willingness to know ourselves as the Christ Self we are.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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