

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 288

Let me forget my brother's past today.

Sarah's Commentary:

Before commenting on this Lesson, I just want to say how perfect and timely every Lesson is that shows up in our day. Yesterday, we watched the movie, *The Words*, which was all about the belief we must somehow atone for past sins. The movie was helpful in looking at the belief in the mind that there are real consequences for what we have done. It is about making the error real, and payment for our sins is the result. The reality is we are innocent, and we need not atone for what has not happened in truth. This does not mean we may not want to make restitution but when we do, it comes from guidance and not from guilt.

There is an amazing scene in this movie that brought to my mind the importance of being led by inspiration in what we do in the world. The author of the manuscript had tried and tried to write, but when events in his life conspired to bring about a moment of inspiration, the words literally wrote themselves. When we do anything with the ego, it is such a grind, but following inspiration creates a beautiful flow. It does not matter what we are doing. Life simply moves through us, whether we feel inspired in the moment to clean the house or write a book. To be inspired is to follow the guidance of Spirit and when we do, everything is done with ease.

In this Lesson, I am reminded "***I cannot come to You without my brother.***" (W.288.1.2) We are coming to recognize Oneness with every brother which is reflected in sameness in the world. We have a shared identity and salvation lies in this recognition. If the problem is separation, the answer must be in joining. How can we know we are joined if we hold grievances, judgments, and comparisons and see ourselves different from our brothers? We are called to let go of the desire to benefit at their expense. Our sense of specialness makes demands of others. Specialness requires others to recognize and acknowledge our needs. Our needs take primacy over those of others. We see ourselves as the center of our universe and everyone must take note. Thus, we use our brothers for the purpose of supporting our fragile egos rather than for joining and seeing sameness and equality.

The way we join is through forgiveness of our perceived differences and mistaken perceptions. We forgive the projections of our self-attacking thoughts we put on our brothers. They become the depositories of our self-condemnation, which is why we do not want to be like them. We don't like what we see in them, but what do we see except our own projected sins that we have kept hidden. As our false beliefs are healed, our relationships are healed.

Another movie called, *Samsara*, is about a monk who believes he must make a choice between the wife and child he loves or his life in the monastery. From a Course perspective, we are not

called to sacrifice our relationships. On the contrary, the way given us in this Course is to do the healing through relationships. Such a choice, as presented in the movie, is not required. Our special relationships, when given over to the Holy Spirit for His use, are transformed to holy relationships and become our greatest opportunity for healing. Jesus tells us that the transformation process may initially be very conflicted and tumultuous when the goal for the relationship is changed, but we can trust that there is significant discomfort only during the time of transition, and it is only there as long as we stay in resistance.

The process is certainly uncomfortable for the ego but delightful to the spirit. I experienced such a situation in my "special" relationship quite a few years ago; and I can say unequivocally that when the goal was changed, I experienced tremendous turmoil, which required a lot of trust in the Holy Spirit that His promises would be kept. **"When you have made this joining as the Holy Spirit bids you, and have offered it to Him to use as He sees fit, His natural perception of your gift enables Him to understand it, and you to use His understanding on your behalf."** (T.16.II.4.4) (ACIM OE T.16.III.13) We don't need to understand it. We just need to rely on His understanding. What motivates awakening is the pain of our specialness which keeps us feeling alone and separate. When we ask for healing, the goal is shifted from specialness to holiness. Yet there will be some sense of disillusionment before we are ready to find a better way. When all our ego strategies fail, we become much more willing to undertake the healing. Those periods of disillusionment in our lives don't seem like gifts to us, but they can offer our greatest spiritual progress when we choose to turn to His understanding and not our own. Our part is to go forward, following guidance with sincerity and willingness.

To know God requires the undoing the self we think we are, and that is where the resistance comes in. We value our individuality, uniqueness, and specialness, which are all aspects of the false self we have made. Now we want to preserve this separate self, even though it hurts. The cost to us is that we no longer know who we truly are as the Christ Self. The dissolution of the ego through forgiveness, and with it the recognition of our true identity as Spirit, leads us out of separation, but it is a process in which we experience fear and thus there is resistance.

In the state of separation, we see minds as private, alone, and locked away in bodies—separate from each other. In this condition of separation, we believe we have attacked God. With the idea that attack accomplished something we wanted (our separation from God), we attack each other through our competitiveness and our judgments. We maintain distance from each other and project guilt onto those we blame for our condition so that others will be seen as guilty. What we are doing, which is kept hidden from our awareness, is projecting guilt on them so we can see ourselves innocent by comparison. It is a false innocence because when we project guilt on others it is how we keep it. We can never attain Heaven at someone's expense. We must go together with our brothers as equals. **"Each of us is the light of the world, and by joining our minds in this light we proclaim the Kingdom of God together and as one."** (T.6.II.13.5) (ACIM OE T.6.III.38)

Daily, we see crimes, acts of violence, and misbehaviors, but with healing, we increasingly see all such behaviors as deep calls for love and understanding. Until then, all we are called to do is take responsibility for the desire to see guilt in our brothers and recognize it is projected from our own minds because of our unconscious self-hatred. Each time we are willing to take responsibility for our projections and ask for healing, the separation is being undone, and there is increasing recognition of our sameness.

"And where, you wonder, does your strange uneasiness, your sense of being disconnected, and your haunting fear of lack of meaning in yourself arise?" (T.22.I.1.6) (ACIM OE T.22.II.5) As this Lesson reminds us, we need to do the healing work with our brothers so we can see there are no differences, and we are indeed One. When forgiveness is complete, we see that the disconnection we feel with everyone is a defense against the truth of what we are. When our defenses are released, we see **"My brother's is the hand that leads me on the way to You."** (W.288.1.4)

For years, I had a difficult relationship with my sister, who is eleven months younger than me. Our animosity continued for most of our lives. Jesus says it takes only one of us to heal a relationship since, in reality, there is only one of us. When I was in Sedona, I worked on releasing my grievances. One day at an Interfaith Service, we sang the words: "I cannot go without you, for you're a part of me. So take my hand, my sister. And go to God with me." As I sang these words, the tears flowed, and I knew the years of struggle between us were dissolved. I had let go of the past by turning over my grievances to the Holy Spirit. There was no longer a past. There was only this beautiful present moment of joining. There was only the power of *now*, as Eckhart Tolle would say. And in this present moment, through the holy instant, salvation was given. The past was gone! It truly was a miracle. I completely knew this to be true even though I was not engaged with her at that time but with the passing of time the healing was apparent and the relationship was totally transformed.

"A dream of judgment came into the mind that God created perfect as Himself. And in that dream was Heaven changed to hell, and God made enemy unto His Son. How can God's Son awaken from the dream? It is a dream of judgment. So must he judge not, and he will waken." (T.29.IX.2.1-5) (ACIM OE T.29.X.61) It was my addiction to judgment, based on my stories of the past, that kept this relationship stuck in separation. The ego was preserving the story of our relationship as a means of trapping me in time.

In Chapter 16, Jesus explains how we use every special relationship in our lives for the purpose of taking vengeance on the past. In fact, we use these relationships to try to restore our wounded self-esteem and make someone else atone for perceived past injustices we believe we have suffered. Today's Lesson reminds us that our healing requires we forget our brother's past and join in a holy instant. If we cherish the past, we will **"lose the way to walk to You."** (W.288.1.6)

"The past is the ego's chief learning device, for it is in the past that you learned to define your own needs and acquired methods for meeting them on your own terms." (T. 15.V.2.1) (ACIM OE T.15.VI.46) In the past, we decided that certain people could make us feel more special than others. Once we learned that some made us "happier" than others, we sought out those kinds of people. They remind us of past sources of love and are, as the Course calls them, "shadow figures" or fantasy images in our minds. They remind us of someone from the past who continues to live in our minds. In fact, we continue to have mental dialogues with them.

We project these shadow figures onto people who are currently in our lives and these people are required somehow to meet our needs that were not adequately met in the past. We also have special hate relationships that work the same way, except now we identify the people we struggle with, who are shadow figures, of difficult relationships. Of course, in the end, all special

relationships are substitutes that we have made for real love, and those substitutes serve as receptacles for guilt, whether they are special love relationships or special hate relationships. **"The special love relationship is not perceived as a value in itself, but as a place of safety from which hatred is split off and kept apart. The special love partner is acceptable only as long as he serves this purpose. Hatred can enter, and indeed is welcome in some aspects of the relationship, but it is still held together by the illusion of love."** (T.16.IV.3.4-6) (ACIM OE T.16.V.32)

We desperately want to heal the wounds of the past, but the past is gone and cannot be changed. Forgiveness is giving up the wish that the past should have been different than it was. Until we forgive the past, we continue to try to bring it into the present so we might re-enact it. This time, however, we hope to change the ending, which we imagine might be a happy one. We are the hero of our own play and try to work the script so that we will get the love and recognition denied us the first time around. The intent behind this play is that all injustices be rectified and all wrongs made right so we can be redeemed. We want to do this to demonstrate that the shadow figures were wrong about us! This is the process prevalent in all our special relationships, whether we are conscious of it or not. Of course, it cannot work. It is actually our way of trying to take vengeance on the past by strategizing how others can meet our unmet needs of the past in the present.

My brother is my savior because as I project my past pain and guilt on him, he helps me because he mirrors what is in my mind that cannot readily be seen without the reflection he offers me. As I release my projections that I placed upon him and take responsibility for them, I forgive myself and come to know my own and my brother's innocence. Anything I hold against him is what I am holding against myself. Any judgment I have against anyone is a judgment I have on myself. My brother is the mirror of the guilt and fear in my mind, which I can choose to let go with the help of the Holy Spirit. Yet he is also the reflection of the Christ in me and the reflection of my innocence, which shines forth when my projections are withdrawn and healed. **"Let me not attack the savior You have given me. But let me honor him who bears Your Name, and so remember that It is my own."** (W.288.1.8-9)

In God's eyes, we are the same. We are all innocent, and each brother, who is given us, offers us one more opportunity to forgive and remember our Oneness. Now we can see him with Christ's vision, totally innocent of all *our* sins that we laid upon him. I know it does not look this way to us. It looks like he is guilty of many sins and attacks on us, but he is simply playing out the role perfectly for our awakening, showing us what is unhealed in our own minds and where we are attacking ourselves.

Jesus asks for our forgiveness when he says, **"Forgive me, then, today. And you will know you have forgiven me if you behold your brother in the light of holiness. He cannot be less holy than can I, and you cannot be holier than he."** (W.288.2.2-3) If we hold a grievance against any brother, we are holding a grievance against Jesus. Our love for any brother is our love for Jesus as we are all One. We all share the same nature of innocence and holiness as Jesus himself, and in our Oneness, no one can be seen as guilty without seeing the whole Sonship as guilty. I find it valuable to try to think of everyone I meet as being Jesus in all his many disguises with no one holier than anyone else. We are all the same.

Today, let us remember that anything we perceive in a brother or sister, we are perceiving in ourselves. Any limitations we place on them, we are putting on ourselves. Any doubts we have

about their commitment, sincerity, and honesty are doubts we hold first about ourselves. We need to ask ourselves if we want to hurt ourselves in this way. Our goal is to translate all our special relationships into holy relationships. In fact, they already are that, even though, at a conscious level, we don't realize it.

Separate interests lead to competing goals. To transcend our separate egos and to join in Oneness, we must invest in recognizing our common purpose. **"Only a purpose unifies, and those who share a purpose have a mind as one."** (T.23.IV.7.4) (ACIM OT T.23.V.53) **"What shares a common purpose is the same. This is the law of purpose, which unites all those who share in it within itself."** (T.27.VI.1.5-6) (T.27.VII.54) Thus, when we commit to waking up, we share this purpose with everyone since there is just One Mind. The benefit of our healing will now be shared by the entire Sonship.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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