

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 134

Let me perceive forgiveness as it is.

Sarah's Commentary:

This is a very important Lesson, as forgiveness is at the core of the teaching, and we need to understand what it really means. It is not forgiveness as we typically think of it, where we perceive that someone has actually done something to us, and we justify judgment and attack. With this kind of forgiveness, we try to overlook their "sin" in the name of our own goodness and charity and "forgive" them for what they have done to us. This kind of forgiveness is actually an attack. Jesus explains why this is the case. He says that what we are seeing in another is our own sin. We project what we judge in ourselves on others. We see guilt in them because we find it is too horrific to acknowledge in ourselves, and thus, it is an attack on their inherent innocence.

We find sin and guilt in our own minds so horrific that we think by projecting our repressed, denied, buried, rejected parts of ourselves we will be rid of them. We judge ourselves for the belief that we separated from God and fear His punishment; yet if we find others guilty, we hope they will get the punishment we think we deserve. It is a way in which we try to purchase our innocence at their expense. In this scenario, forgiveness may be given or withheld for what the other has seemingly done, based on our elevated position. We assume a spiritual superiority over them. We see ourselves as the innocent ones, giving a reprieve to someone we clearly see as guilty. Thus, **"In such a view, forgiveness must be seen as mere eccentric folly, and this course appear to rest salvation on a whim."** (W.134.1.2)

When we accept that nothing real has been done, since there have been no real effects, forgiveness becomes easy and natural. The error is simply overlooked. No sin has been committed, and all the meaning we have given to the event is withdrawn. Our brother is innocent, just as are we. The transgression only seemed to happen in a dream we are dreaming. **"Truth is God's creation, and to pardon that is meaningless."** (W.134.2.4) **"How can you forgive the sinless and eternally benign?"** (W.134.2.7) When we withdraw the meaning we have given to the event, a space is cleared for God to show us His meaning. He sees us all as sinless and eternally benign with no exceptions.

When we understand the basis for true forgiveness, we will be very motivated to offer it because our own healing and happiness depend on it. The way the world defines forgiveness is by pointing out that the injustice actually happened. It did real harm. It was totally unfair and unjustified. It was done on purpose and was meant to hurt. If all this were true, we would have a right to our anger. When we try to forgive what we see as true, we do our best to let go of our resentment and try to feel love for the person. Jesus says we can't forgive what we have made real and thus we are in an impossible situation. The only way we can go from resentment to love is to see that we have given meaning to a meaningless event. True forgiveness requires that we heal the judgments in our own mind. By bringing our judgments to the holy altar in the mind where Atonement awaits us, the resentment we are holding in the mind is released.

When we perceive that the other person has done something sinful, particularly if it is something we consider a major assault, then to offer forgiveness, in the usual sense, feels like an **"unfair sacrifice"** (W.134.1.1) or a **"gift unjustified"** (W.134.1.1) or a **"vain attempt to look past what is there."** (W.134.3.2) We simply can't make ourselves see something as right, which to us is **"plainly wrong."** (W.134.4.6) We can't desperately try to see innocence where there is a perception of real damage. In **The Song of Prayer**, the world's version of forgiveness is called "forgiveness-to-destroy." It is an attack on our brother that is made to appear like love. In Chapter 30, Jesus calls this, **"false forgiveness which the world employs to keep the sense of sin alive."** (T.30.VI.4.1) (ACIM OE T.30.VII.73)

Forgiveness is not about overlooking the truth but only accepting that what we see is false. It is all a dream we are dreaming. **"This twisted view of what forgiveness means is easily corrected, when you can accept the fact that pardon is not asked for what is true."** (W.134.2.1)

So let's look at how this was all set up in the first place. We are deceived when we think that what we perceive in the world is the truth. When we separated from God and established our own kingdom, separate from everyone else, living our autonomous lives, doing things our way, God had to be destroyed because it is impossible He could exist as well as ourselves. It had to be one or the other, God or me. Although in truth, we could not separate, it appears as though we have. The ego has made it very convincing, giving us bodies and senses that report to us that the world is real and true. This makes it difficult for us to refute the seeming reality of the world. With separation comes guilt, anxiety, fear, and distress, because we hold the belief that we have destroyed love. This belief is not in our conscious minds, yet the effects are something we can all relate to. Our experience here is one of constant underlying fear and anxiety. We hardly ever experience a state of complete ease and a sense of being at home in ourselves. We carry a feeling that we have done something wrong and will be found out, yet we have no idea of the origin of this thought.

The guilt in our minds is so overwhelming that the ego gave us a solution, which is to project the guilt in the mind. Now, instead of seeing it in ourselves, we find it all around us. The world is our projection screen, which was made as a defense against our own guilt.

In truth, we are all **". . . sinless and eternally benign"** (W.134.2.7) never having changed ourselves as we were created. **"I am as God created me."** (W.94) No matter what the behavior is in the world of illusion, it is not real and has no real effects. Therefore, when we forgive all what we are doing is letting go of the illusion that a sin has actually been committed. **"For it is impossible to think of sin as true and not believe forgiveness is a lie."** (W.134.4.2) Because sin is unreal, in whatever form it takes, we can simply lay it gently at the feet of truth, and there it disappears. When we do not heed **". . . the self-accusing shrieks of sinners mad with guilt,"** (W.134.7.4) we make space for the truth.

Now we see everything as a call for love and understanding from our brothers. We can only see it this way when we are willing to look at our judgments and our own self-attacking thoughts and take responsibility for them. When we see how we are constantly looking for sin and guilt in others and recognize that it is all coming from our own minds we can forgive ourselves for our false perceptions. It is an opportunity to heal our own minds by taking responsibility for our projections. If everything is a projection of the guilt in our own minds, then what we see in the world shows us what is in our minds. When we are willing to look at our self-attacking thoughts and judgments and take responsibility for them, healing becomes available. It is not about denying our experience but recognizing it is all our interpretations of neutral events. When we

turn to the Holy Spirit for His interpretation, He reminds us what we are seeing is not the truth. Only truth is true. The truth is there is only Oneness. We are all innocent. Nothing real has happened. It is all a dream.

We may complain about the treatment we receive from others, but the fact is, we actually want people to behave in abusive, rejecting ways so we can make them responsible for victimizing us and give us a reason and justification for attack. We want them to be guilty so we can see ourselves as innocent. Our hope is that God will punish them instead of us. Thus, we have bought our innocence at their expense, which is why, at some level, we are happy to see them as the betrayers and the abusers and ourselves as the injured party. Still, at our core, we know we can't get away with this. We still believe in our own guilt and that we deserve punishment. While we try to escape from that punishment by projecting our sin, we hold the thought that we are bad. Nevertheless, our secret wish is for others to take the fall for our sins. If we "forgive" them for what they have done, we fool ourselves into believing they truly are miserable sinners and we, in turn, are saintly. From our superior position of forgiving them and maintaining our false innocence, we hope to feel better about ourselves. The problem is, this never heals the guilt in our own minds and continues the separation.

Jesus keeps telling us that we are not asked to ". . . **forgive the truth.**" (W.134.3.1) We are not asked to ". . . **look past what is there.**" (W.134.3.2) If we were, we would be ". . . **making an illusion true,**" (W.134.3.2) and if sin were true, forgiveness would have to be a lie. Can you see why we have so much difficulty with forgiveness? If forgiveness is overlooking the truth of something that really happened, then forgiveness itself is a sin because it is then a lie. "**It [forgiveness to destroy] says the truth is false, and smiles on the corrupt as if they were as blameless as the grass; as white as snow.**" (W.134.4.4) "**It would see as right the plainly wrong; the loathsome as the good.**" (W.134.4.6) It would be like trying to imagine an evil person as good. It just can't work. We are trying to see as right something that is plainly wrong. This is our real deception. Once we see that all the behavior we are trying to overlook takes place in a dream, has no real effect, causes no real injury, and causes no one to do anything real, then we are not pardoning anything true. "**How can you forgive the sinless and eternally benign.**" (W.134.2.7)

Jesus does not ask us to deny what our body's eyes see or what people do, but he does ask us to look at our interpretation of them as guilty sinners and thus bad people. It is not about denying our judgments. It is only about taking responsibility for the guilt in our minds that we project on others. There is only mind, looking back at itself. The world mirrors what is in the mind. Be willing to look at your guilt today without judging yourself for what you see. Our part is to bring the darkness in the mind to the light, recognizing that we are not guilty but only mistaken in our perceptions. We are called to take responsibility for the guilt while being gentle with ourselves in the process as this is important to our healing. Jesus will help us and go with us into the darkness at our request. But he says he can't take the fear from us because we are the ones who made it. For him to intervene would be to undermine the power of our own minds.

"Truth is God's creation, and to pardon that is meaningless. All truth belongs to Him, reflects His laws and radiates His Love." (W.134.2.4-5) No matter what it looks like in the illusion, the truth is that we are God's Son, and we share all His attributes. We deceive ourselves if we believe our dream is real. "**Forgiveness is the only thing that stands for truth in the illusions of the world. It sees their nothingness, and looks straight through the thousand forms in which they may appear. It looks on lies, but it is not deceived.**" (W.134.7.1-3) "**It [the miracle] looks on devastation and reminds the mind that what it sees is false.**" (W.P.II. What is a Miracle.Q.13.1.3) While we think we are guilty and sinful, Jesus tells us, "**My brother, what you think is not the truth.**" (W.134.7.5) We

are called to give up these thoughts because once we accept our own innocence, we will see it everywhere because **"Projection makes perception. The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that."** (T.21.I.1.1-2) (ACIM OE T.21.I.1) **"It is the witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition."** (T.21.I.1.5) (ACIM OE T.21.I.1) The world will witness the guilt in the mind or our innocence. It is a perfect mirror of what we are choosing in each moment.

Traditional pardon does nothing to remove the thoughts of sin and guilt from the mind. In fact, Jesus says it makes us twice condemned. **"Those who are forgiven from the view their sins are real are pitifully mocked and twice condemned; first, by themselves for what they think they did, and once again by those who pardon them."** (W.134.5.5) In other words, if you have done something to me, then you are already feeling guilty and will suffer because you think you did something real. This is how you are first mocked. Then, you are mocked again by your own mind because you hold the belief that you do not deserve to be forgiven. If I suffer as a result of your actions, I am letting you know that you don't really deserve my forgiveness. If, in my superior position, I deign to forgive you, you will feel twice mocked because you will feel the condescension of my superior position. True forgiveness says that there is no reason for guilt.

To apply this teaching is to free ourselves from the bondage of the ego. We all have people in our lives whom we see as having hurt and upset us in big and little ways. The ego would have us see them as guilty and deserving of punishment. We justify our anger, and ultimately, we may "forgive" them while still holding onto what they have done. If we want to heal we must bring their "sin" back to our own minds and be willing to release everyone, including ourselves, from the bondage of guilt and sin. This is an enlightening experience and very powerful in shifting the mind from wrong-minded to right-minded perception. Nothing has to change in anyone. Through forgiveness, we are undoing the ego thought system of hate, specialness, selfishness, and attack. We see it was all made up and we can choose to withdraw our investment in it, as it is not the truth.

The people with whom we have had great difficulty in our own lives are precisely those who played their role perfectly for our healing. This world is a classroom for undoing our misperceptions and everyone plays their part for our benefit. In my family, I was required to take over the mothering and housekeeping role at a very young age. To a large extent I forfeited my childhood because my mother was not willing to do her part as I perceived it. I learned later that I had a past life where I worshiped God and lived as a martyr. I was told by an astrologer that I had come to the world to heal the sacrifice in the mind. Given this to be the case, I had the perfect mother to show me my mistaken choice for martyrdom. I apparently was holding the belief that I had to suffer and make myself worthy of God's love. When I saw how I had chosen this perfect script for my healing, I was able to appreciate the part my mother played, and I was able to release her from my judgments. Everything had been perfectly orchestrated for my healing, and I am grateful for it all.

Today, when we are tempted to accuse anyone of anything we can look at the tremendous burden and cost there is to us. We are accusing ourselves of the same thing we see in others, as it is all about our own mind. **"There is a simple way to find the door to true forgiveness, and perceive it open wide in welcome. When you feel that you are tempted to accuse someone of sin in any form, do not allow your mind to dwell on what you think he did, for that is self-deception. Ask instead, 'Would I accuse myself of doing this?'"** (W.134.9.1-3) We do not deny what someone did, but ask ourselves, "How does what I am accusing my brother of show up in me?" In other words, the guilt I am projecting on anyone starts in my own mind. As Jesus says over and over, **"As you see him you will see yourself."** (T.8.III.4.2) (ACIM OE T.8.IV.19) Whenever we have judged anyone, it is impossible not to make

the same judgment of ourselves. Any condemnation of anyone becomes a condemnation of ourselves. If we really believed this, would we ever want to condemn anyone? Would we really want to do this to ourselves once we realize we are only hurting ourselves by condemning others?

The figures in our dream were written into our script as the recipients of our attacks so we could be off the hook. This is how the ego actually has us keep the sin while blaming someone else. Thus, someone else pays the price for my existence; yet Jesus wants us to see that we are the ones who pay the price. Now we can use every situation in our lives as a classroom. This is where we can learn to ignore the ego's urgings to see others guilty. Instead, we turn to Jesus/Holy Spirit who brings a new interpretation to every situation if we truly desire it. Devotion to our healing will motivate us to do this.

I have used this practice again and again and have found it helpful in situations where I have found myself judging someone. Whenever I am truly willing to look at my own mind, I can see in myself some version of the guilt I project on others. For example, when I judge someone for being greedy, I can see areas of my life where I put my interests above my brother's. When I am willing to turn every judgment around and take responsibility for it, I can find some version of it in myself.

Think of someone you have a grievance with and look at your own mind to see if you have some version in you of what you are accusing them of. You will find that you apply the same standard to yourself as you do to your brother. You will believe you should be condemned for the same thing you condemn in him. While we will consciously condemn him, we will unconsciously condemn ourselves for some form of the same thing. This is why we feel so bad about ourselves. It is our own self-attack and self-judgment that we project on others. It may look different in the form in which it appears. For example, I might be offended by your laissez-faire attitude when you failed to inform me of a cancellation, and I showed up for an event that was not happening. I condemn you for brushing it off as insignificant because I see myself as inconvenienced. I hold myself to a different standard, demanding absolute compliance, never allowing myself to make a mistake. I judge myself for my rigidity in this regard and now project that judgment on you. If we are to heal our self-judgments, we must look at every grievance we hold against anyone and take responsibility for our projections. We think projecting guilt keeps us innocent, but as we read in the Lesson yesterday, we are simply polishing our halo while perceiving "**. . . its tarnished edges and its rusted core.**" (W.133.10.1)

There are great benefits in doing this practice. We lift a tremendous burden from ourselves when we apply true forgiveness in situations where we are tempted to make judgments. There is such a sense of "**deep relief**" (W.134.6.1) when we offer forgiveness. "**If you have been practicing thus far in willingness and honesty, you will begin to sense a lifting up, a lightening of weight across your chest, a deep and certain feeling of relief. The time remaining should be given to experiencing the escape from all the heavy chains you sought to lay upon your brother, but were laid upon yourself.**" (W.134.16.3-4) It is a gift we give ourselves.

The person we are upset with and whom we judge holds the key to our salvation because they show us the unhealed parts of our own minds. When we judge them, we are keeping us both imprisoned. They are our saviors because they hold the key to our release. Forgiveness truly is a gift to ourselves, and it is always fully justified for all the reasons stated. Forgiveness sees the nothingness of "sin." We look on behavior, which appears in a thousand different forms, (W.134.7.2) but we are not deceived that we are looking at anything real. "**It [forgiveness] does not heed the self-accusing shrieks of sinners mad with guilt.**" (W.134.7.4) "**It looks on them with quiet eyes and merely says to them 'My brother, what you think is not the**

truth'." (W.134.7.5) Be willing to release your judgments so you can know your brother as yourself—completely guiltless.

"Forgiveness must be practiced, for the world cannot perceive its meaning, nor provide a guide to teach you its beneficence." (W.134.13.1) It is outside of the laws of this world and is in fact, **"as alien to the world as is your own reality."** (W.134.13.3) It works outside the world of time. **"Our practicing becomes the footsteps lighting up the way for all our brothers, who will follow us to the reality we share with them."** (W.134.14.3) But for this to be accomplished, we must do the practice. For fifteen minutes, twice today, we ask of the Holy Spirit, Who understands the meaning of forgiveness, **"Let me perceive forgiveness as it is."** (W.134.14.6) Then let the Holy Spirit bring to mind someone whom you need to forgive.

Now, catalog this person's "sins" one by one, without dwelling on any one of them. Then, **"Briefly consider all the evil things you thought of him, and each time ask yourself, 'Would I condemn myself for doing this?'"** (W.134.15.3) Would I want to hold this "sin" against myself and condemn myself for it, just as I condemned him? Determine not to lay this chain upon yourself. Look at what you are condemning in someone and then look inside yourself to see how you are judging yourself for the same thing or some version of it.

Forgiveness becomes a daily practice when we are willing to do the healing. It is a constant discipline of mind watching. We must become vigilant regarding our thoughts and as we do we see the benefits in increased peace and joy. Allow all thoughts that arise to be brought to truth. With honesty, openness, and willingness, look at your judgments, anger, and frustrations that come up with anyone today. Put them on the altar within where they will be easily dismissed by the Holy Spirit who will render the verdict—you are eternally innocent. Trust in His healing light to shine away your grievances. Remind yourself, **"No one is crucified alone, and yet no one can enter Heaven by himself."** (W.134.17.7) We can't enter Heaven at the expense of anyone. We are not separate. We share the same Self.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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