

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 20 **I am determined to see.**

Sarah's Commentary:

How determined am I to see? What is my reluctance about? To see is to have vision, which means we let go of judgment. Judgment is what keeps our specialness in place. It is what keeps us feeling superior, different, and separate. It is what keeps us invested in thinking we know. I was watching the news about the captain of the cruise ship who was being vilified for leaving his passengers aboard as he made his escape. How easy these kinds of situations are for us to judge, but judgment costs us vision. It costs us our peace, our joy, and our happiness. We don't see the connection between holding onto judgment and loss of peace and happiness, but Jesus is showing us what we can't see. He is motivating us to learn what he is teaching so the pain of guilt we experience can be seen for what it is.

When we come to the place where we begin to recognize that something is missing in our lives, we become more willing to let go of what we think we know and open to the messages given us to practice in these Lessons. We may have achieved our dreams and goals in the world, but we may still lack fulfillment. Perhaps we came to the Course because nothing we have tried has worked. It does not matter what the reason is. What matters is that now we are willing to see where this path leads us. In other words, we are developing some trust that perhaps where Jesus is leading us is a better place than where our lives have taken us up to now. We still have a lot of resistance, though, which is why Jesus is so gentle with us. He says that he does not want to coerce or convince us. He only wants to show us how unhappy we are and show us the way that can bring us to consistent peace and joy. No, we may not yet be convinced, but we may be more willing to see what he has in store for us.

Some of us have been spiritual seekers for a long time and have gone through a variety of paths and teachings in seeking enlightenment. In spite of this desire for awakening, we come up against fear and resistance. This may include the times when we try to do the Lessons regularly, but we "forget." We drag our feet about doing the practice. We actively rebel against the thoughts put forward. We get sleepy or hungry when we try to do the reading. There are many ways the ego keeps us distracted. **"Yet your willingness to learn of Him depends on your willingness to question everything you learned of yourself, for you who learned amiss should not be your own teacher."** (T.11.VIII.3.8) (ACIM OE T.10.VIII.76) Later in this section, he says, **"You may complain that this course is not sufficiently specific for you to understand and use. Yet perhaps you have not done what it specifically advocates. This is not a course in the play of ideas, but in their practical application."** (T.11.VIII.5.1-3) (ACIM OE T.10.VIII.80)

We want to be right about our perceptions, and we still want to put the blame on others for our circumstances. We think we know what our needs and requirements are for our own happiness. There are times when we ask for guidance, but often, we rely on our own decisions. We still look

outside of ourselves for the fulfillment of our needs. We say we want happiness and peace of mind, but we have defined how that should look. We try to get our needs met through our special relationships, requiring others to do our bidding. We are very defended against looking at our part and our responsibility for everything that seems to happen to us. Jesus asks us to look at how invested we are in not wanting to see. This requires that we get very honest with ourselves since these are the blocks the Course continually talks about that keep us from the love we say we want.

"Your decision to see is all that vision requires. What you want is yours." (W.20.3.1-2)

We want other things besides our awakening. The ego is still very much at the forefront, and our minds resist structure. We do not like being told what to do, even though Jesus guides us gently in this process. He never forces us in any way and never coerces our practice. It is all up to us.

You will notice that in the first nineteen Lessons he has been so careful not to push us in our practice but simply to invite our participation. Now he tells us that what we really want is to spend time with God because we want to be happy. If we regard ourselves as being coerced, the resistance will show up as **"resentment and opposition."** (W.20.1.6) That is why the workbook approaches structure with great care and caution. **"This is our first attempt to introduce structure."** (W.20. 2.1) However, **"Do not misconstrue it as an effort to exert force or pressure."** (W.20.2.2) He reminds us that this isn't about making us do something against our will, but indeed, it is about our will to be happy. He knows that getting aligned with God's Will is the only way we could ever be happy because our true will is God's Will. Jesus knows, just as we increasingly see for ourselves, that our idea of happiness has never worked except perhaps intermittently. He says our moments of happiness are indistinguishable from pain.

How this looks is that we may feel great pleasure at getting a new job, new car, new relationship, coming into lots of money, going off on a wonderful trip, or any number of things the world defines as pleasure. Yet this Lesson says that we really can't distinguish between **"joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, love and fear."** (W.20.2.6) This certainly makes us take notice. I think I do know the difference, but in the illusion, Jesus reminds us that there is no hierarchy of differences. All illusion is about fear. All illusion is just our way of keeping ourselves from the truth. It is one big distraction the ego has set up to keep us in the dark and give us small scraps of apparent happiness. In an ever-changing, shifting pattern of events, we try desperately to manage but mostly feel at the mercy of events that are not in our control. If we really believed that through the application of this teaching we would experience total release from fear and real joy, it would certainly enhance our motivation to want to see.

We are being encouraged to appreciate that there is great reward in doing this mind training. All that is required is our **"decision to see."** (W.20.3.1) He will do the rest. The effort asked of us is really minimal, as we are just being gently encouraged to do the practice only as long as we don't experience strain. How much do you want the result? The goal is indeed awesome. It is about our salvation. It is about restoring our true power to our awareness. It is about waking up from this dream state. It is about the determination to have vision restored to us.

"Can the salvation of the world be a trivial purpose? And can the world be saved if you are not? God has one Son, and he is the resurrection and the life. His will is done because all power is given him in Heaven and on earth. In your determination to see is vision given you." (W.20.3.4-8) Jesus wants us to understand that while he was identified as the one Son of God, we are the same as him. We can do whatever he could do. We are the resurrection and the life. All power is given unto us. We can't even change that about ourselves. We can only be unaware that this is so. When vision is restored to us through our practice of these teachings, our awareness of this power will return to our minds. The world is not external to our

minds, and therefore, all Jesus is talking about here is that the world is seen differently when our thoughts are changed about it.

The practice requirements now increase. We are now repeating the idea at least twice an hour, attempting to do so every half hour. At the end of the day, we can see how this went. While we are encouraged to make a real effort to remember, we are asked not to kick ourselves if we don't.

We can be firm with ourselves in practicing these Lessons, yet gentle. There is no benefit in crucifying ourselves. That is just another ego ploy to increase our guilt. If you forget, pick up on it again without berating yourself. Just notice that you are forgetting and that your determination is not yet strong.

Let's look at the practice instructions. We repeat the idea "**slowly and positively**," (W.20.5.1) remembering that we are determined to exchange our present state for one we really want. This is not just about saying the words but letting them really take on a powerful meaning and affirming that this will bring about our happiness. We are asked to make a real effort to remember. How do we do that? Remembering this Lesson every half hour will take commitment. Think about what will help you to remember, but whatever you do, don't make yourself guilty and upset if you miss doing the practice. Just notice your resistance and start again. "**Do not be distressed if you forget to do so, but make a real effort to remember.**" (W.20.5.2)

Whenever you are tempted to get upset with any person, situation, or event in your day, you can apply this Lesson. Any judgment you make about anything or anyone can change if you are willing to look at your judgment and let it go. When any situation is seen with vision, we see only a call for love and understanding. I noticed my judgment last night when I watched the movie *Atonement*, where a 13-year-old girl sees something she misunderstands, tells a lie, and destroys all possibility of happiness in three lives, including her own. Her lie has devastating results, and it is easy to want to judge her and think events such as this, that lead to such devastating results, are unforgivable. This was exacerbated as she had full knowledge of what she did. We want to see guilt "out there." I am reminded that we are not responsible for the error in the mind, but we are responsible for the Correction. To accept Atonement for myself is to be willing to take responsibility for my judgments and give them over to the Holy Spirit.

"What you desire you will see. Such is the real law of cause and effect as it operates in the world." (W.20.5.5-6) In other words, when I judge, it is because I want to see someone guilty. The cause is in my mind. I see in the world what I choose to see because I still want to see guilt outside of my own mind.

Thus, we are asked to use every opportunity to watch our minds and remind ourselves today, "**I am determined to see.**" (W.20)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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