

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 24

I do not perceive my own best interests.

Sarah's Commentary:

I am still thinking more about yesterday's Lesson, as it is such an important Lesson. You could say it is very karmic in that our attack thoughts keep bouncing back at us. What I give, I receive. We do unto others as we would have them do unto us, which is the golden rule and is part of every religion as it is part of A Course in Miracles. What is different from other teachings, however, is that Jesus teaches we can't apply the golden rule until we are in our right minds. In other words, we can't know what is the loving thing to do unless we are guided by the Holy Spirit. To do unto others is to be guided as to what is truly loving. On our own, with the ego as our guide, we can't know, which leads right into this Lesson that says we don't even know our own best interests, let alone anyone else's. We think we do, don't we? What is the Lesson here? It is to be humble and admit that we don't know what is best for us, let alone anyone else.

We believe we can take care of our own interests and rely on our own judgments. We trust ourselves in this regard, more than we trust anyone else. We have learned that if we don't take care of our needs, who will? Jesus says that we don't know our own best interests, and **"In no situation that arises do you realize the outcome that would make you happy. Therefore, you have no guide to appropriate action, and no way of judging the result."** (W.24.1.1-2) It seems to us that we know our needs and our problems, but if our only problem is the separation, the problems we think we have are not real. They are just a smokescreen so we won't see the only problem we have which is the guilt in the mind. Our seeming problems are a distraction from our real problem. We spend our time trying to solve things in the world when the source of our problems is in our own mind.

The Lesson today says that if our perceptions are wrong, and they always are, how can we know what to do in any situation? **"What you do is determined by your perception of the situation, and that perception is wrong."** (W.24.1.3) Clearly, Jesus is saying that to be on our own means that we are listening to the "guidance" of the ego, and that guidance is always based on wrong perception. We think we know what our needs are and how to meet them. We do our best to find solutions for the problems we think we have, and we try to fulfill our needs and desires as we define them. We do the best to take care of ourselves, always staying vigilant on our own behalf and never fully trusting anyone.

The ego ". . . is unaware of what you are, and wholly mistrustful of everything it perceives because its perceptions are so shifting. The ego is therefore capable of suspiciousness at best and viciousness at worst. That is its range. It cannot exceed it because of its uncertainty. And it can never go beyond it because it can never be certain." (T.9.VII.3.6-10) (ACIM OE T.9.VI.40) That is why Jesus says that we need to **"Resign now as your own teacher."** (T.12.V.8.3) (ACIM OE T.11.VI.51) Clearly, this is challenging for us because we want to be in control. We have learned that the only thing we can depend on is

ourselves. We don't trust the world to support us. Yet we live with the uncertainty of never really knowing what is the best thing to do for ourselves, which produces anxiety.

Now we need to be brutally honest in asking ourselves, "How well have we done, being the captains of our own ship?" How do we measure that? The Course would ask us to measure it through the test of truth. What is that test? **"You have one test, as sure as God, by which to recognize if what you learned is true. If you are wholly free of fear of any kind, and if all those who meet or even think of you share in your perfect peace, then you can be sure that you have learned God's lesson, and not your own."** (T.14.XI.5.1-2) (ACIM OE T.14.VII.63) When we turn to the ego as our guide, we are not wholly free of fear of any kind. We live in a constant state of uncertainty, and at best, suspicious, of what will come at us next.

It takes humility to recognize just how much we don't want the peace of God and how firmly we cling to our belief system with its pursuit of our selfish, individual interests. In our arrogance, we hold a demeaning image of ourselves, thus denying our true identity. **"Arrogance makes an image of yourself that is not real. It is this image which quails and retreats in terror, as the Voice for God assures you that you have the strength, the wisdom and the holiness to go beyond all images."** (W.186.6.1-2)

The truth is, **"I am as God created me."** (W.94, W.110, W.162) But we have denied our true identity, deciding for ourselves who we are. To the ego, to be humble is to look upon ourselves as lowly and unworthy sinners. Jesus teaches us just the opposite. He says, **"Humility consists of accepting your role in salvation and in taking no other."** (W.61.2.3) He asks us to learn to see ourselves, along with all our brothers and sisters, as worthy of God's Love. It does indeed take humility to look honestly, calmly, and without judgment at the arrogance of the ego, and be amused by it instead of being distressed. When we feel distressed, we are believing the ego has power, but the ego is nothing. It only has the power we give it. We look at the ego with humility when we are willing to question our point of view, our interpretation, and our definition of ourselves, of everyone we encounter, and everything going on in our lives. When we are willing to let go of our interpretations, we can step out of the ego's arrogant stance and accept the Holy Spirit's perception. This is true humility, which accepts, "I do not know," since the "I know" mind is not open to being taught.

It is with this humility that we need to look at our perceptions and see they are always wrong. How could we ever be certain of what is in our best interests? We can only be taught when we accept that we do not know what our best interests are. We simply don't know. "How can that be?" you may wonder. Jesus answers that question in Workbook Lesson 47, where he says, **"If you are trusting in your own strength, you have every reason to be apprehensive, anxious and fearful. What can you predict or control? What is there in you that can be counted on? What would give you the ability to be aware of all the facets of any problem, and to resolve them in such a way that only good can come of it? What is there in you that gives you the recognition of the right solution, and the guarantee that it will be accomplished?"** (W.47.1.1-5)

Sometime after I returned from my year of study and meditation in Sedona, I thought it was in my best interests to sell my house, go homeless for a while, and pursue my spiritual goals, traveling the country, spending time with spiritual masters, and attending various retreats. I put my house up for sale, and the day I got an offer on my home, Don showed up in my life. This threw me into confusion as I thought I had been following guidance in selling the house. I had an offer on the house a few days after I met Don, and now, I did not know what to do. His presence threw

my plans into jeopardy because I believed he was here for a reason that I needed to explore. It all felt very orchestrated. So, I took my house off the market, but my mind was in turmoil. This state of turmoil continued for quite some time.

Prior to meeting him, I had assumed I was done with special relationships of this nature. I had been on my own now for ten years after the death of my husband. I felt quite complete, having gone through so much healing in that relationship. Now layers of anguish, rage, and hatred were showing up in my new relationship. I was startled by the intensity of these feelings. Since I was now here in my home, Don encouraged me to start teaching the Course and he agreed our relationship should be based on healing. Soon people were showing up and sixteen years later we have gatherings here three times a week and the group has expanded to three other locations. The home is perfect to accommodate large gatherings including movie nights, potlucks, and workshops.

Despite the fact that I resisted the relationship, looking back I now see the perfection of how everything has unfolded. Initially, I was angry, believing my best interests were not being served. Yet increasingly, I see how perfect it has all been for my healing. I saw my interests were truly being served in ways I could not ever have imagined. Instead of turning to other teachers, I was given an opportunity to connect with my own inner Teacher and learn such deep lessons of forgiveness through the relationship and as a result of facilitating gatherings. However, getting to a place of acceptance took some time.

Holding the belief that I needed to move on in order to serve my best interests resulted in many conflicting goals in my mind. This is always the case when we decide to set our own direction, using the ego as our guide. I would miss my friends here. I would miss the stability of being in one place. I would enjoy the travel but would have no home base. I looked forward to the freedom but would feel the loneliness of not being connected to what I know. It was a mixed bag of conflicting goals, just as this Lesson tells us. Thus, I was making a large number of demands of this situation with many contradictory goals. When we let it all go and agree that we do not perceive our own best interests in this or any situation where the ego is the guide, we are more willing to turn to One Who does know. We are more willing to be humble and turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance.

It is all a matter of trust in the Holy Spirit. To accept this, I need to let go of my ideas of what would make me happy. I need to let go of all my judgments of what is good and what is bad in my life because I don't know. I am always reminded, **"In no situation that arises do you realize the outcome that would make you happy."** (W.24.1.1) When I did not get what I thought I wanted, I was angry and unhappy for a time, and mostly, I was acting like a rebellious child. I did not realize how wrong I was about what I thought would serve my best interests. Unhappiness is the result of setting our own goals by ourselves. By doing this, we can indeed achieve everything we think we want, but peace and happiness will still elude us.

Can you see why manifesting what we think we want can be a problem? We don't know what will make us happy. The only thing of value from manifesting what we think we want is to affirm that the mind has power. And that power is of God because, **"Even in miscreation the mind is still affirming its Source, or it would merely cease to be. This is impossible, because the mind belongs to spirit which God created and which is therefore eternal."** (T.3.IV.5.10-11) (ACIM OE T.3.VI.45)

Five times today, for two minutes with eyes closed, search the mind for unresolved situations you are concerned about. When one comes to mind, name all the goals you hope this situation will end up meaning for you and all the outcomes you want from it.

When you have exhausted your list of outcomes, repeat the thought **"I do not perceive my own best interests in this situation."** (W.24.7.2) It will become clear to us, as we do this, that we are making a large number of demands on any situation which has nothing to do with it. Many of our goals are contradictory. We have no unified outcome in mind, and we will be disappointed in regard to our goals, no matter what the outcome is. Most important, we truly do not perceive our own best interests. Jesus tells us the exercises for today require much more honesty than we are accustomed to. A few subjects, honestly and carefully considered in each of the five practice periods, which should be undertaken today, will be more helpful than a more cursory examination of a large number. Two minutes are suggested for each of the mind searching periods.

"In applying the idea for today, name each situation that occurs to you, and then enumerate carefully as many goals as possible that you would like to be met in its resolution. The form of each application should be roughly as follows:

"In the situation involving _____, I would like _____ to happen, and _____ to happen,

"and so on. Try to cover as many different kinds of outcomes as may honestly occur to you, even if some of them do not appear to be directly related to the situation, or even to be inherent in it at all." (W.24.5.1-4)

Look at some unresolved situation and ask yourself what you want to come of it. We are called to be very honest with ourselves as we may not always want to acknowledge our many conflicting goals. For example, if I am having difficulty with someone, I may have a goal of wanting this person to get what they deserve for being mean to me, but I also want them to like me. I also want to be friends with them. I want them to see how they have hurt me, but I don't want to tell them this. I want them to ask for my forgiveness and acknowledge what they have done, but I don't want to be seen as being unkind. Do you see what I mean by conflicting, non-unified goals? Try to go deep with this exercise and recognize that you need to approach it with unaccustomed honesty. I say unaccustomed because the ego likes to rationalize and cover up our baser thoughts with lovely spiritual thoughts. The only caution is to look at these thoughts with equanimity. The idea is to be honest but not to judge yourself or make yourself guilty. To do so is just another ego ploy. Simply be a detached observer of the process.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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