

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 280

What limits can I lay upon God's Son?

Sarah's Commentary:

There are many references to honor in the Course. I remember how it first came to me many years ago when I was at a retreat on forgiveness in Sedona. While I was very drawn to the words of the Course in those early years, my understanding of it was very limited. While many people in the group had tons of questions over the three days, I said nothing, feeling somewhat intimidated by all the wisdom in the room. At the end of the workshop, there was an opportunity given for only one last comment. Many were still clamoring to speak and now I was among them. I felt this very strong compulsion to make a point and, as it happened, I was the one called on for the final comment.

The words that came out of my mouth sounded like nothing I would have ever said. They clearly did not come from me, Sarah. I expressed deep, heartfelt gratitude to Robert and Allan, who had been doing the teaching, but the words coming from me were not my words. It felt like a Presence speaking through me. While I heard myself speaking them, they did not feel like my own words. What struck me most in retrospect was my use of the word "honor." I had never used this word in relation to anyone before. It is a word that communicates deep respect and extremely high regard. What was expressed seemed to arise without any conscious thought on my part. Not surprisingly, it struck an emotional chord in the presenters and really touched them. It was a deeply transformative moment all around and an affirmation of Something in me that was not of me.

Later, I was reading the Text and came across this phrase: **"Honor is the natural greeting of the truly loved to others who are like them."** (T.3.I.6.3) (ACIM OE T.3.III.24) Reading those words in the context of my experience left me speechless. Jesus also says in this section, **"Innocence is incapable of sacrificing anything, because the innocent mind has everything and strives only to protect its wholeness."** (T.3.I.6.1) (ACIM OE T.3.III.24) **"It cannot project."** (T.3.I.6.2) (ACIM OE T.3. III.24 *different wording*) All it can do, he says, is **"honor other minds, because honor is the natural greeting of the truly loved to others who are like them."** (T.3.I.6.3) (ACIM OE T.3.III.24) The words literally jumped off the page. I was quite new to the course, and, like all of us in the early stages, I needed assurance that there was Something in me beyond my current range of understanding; so, I was very grateful for this affirmation of Presence.

"Let His understanding of the miracle be enough for you, and do not turn away from all the witnesses that He has given you to His reality." (T.16.II.5.6) (ACIM OE T.16.III.15)

"A better and far more helpful way to think of miracles is this: You do not understand them, either in part or in whole. Yet they have been done through you. Therefore your understanding cannot be necessary. Yet it is still impossible to accomplish what you do not understand. And so there must be Something in you that *does* understand." (T.16.II.2.4-8) (ACIM OE T.16.III.11)

There are many more references in how to see our brothers and the honor we should bestow on them. In Chapter 7, we read, **"Only honor is a fitting gift for those whom God Himself created worthy of honor and whom He honors. Give them the appreciation God accords them always, because they are His beloved Sons in whom He is well pleased."** (T.7.VII.6.1-2) (ACIM OE T.7.VIII.76) Later in this section, Jesus tells us that there is One Teacher in all minds, and **"He always teaches you the inestimable worth of every Son of God, teaching it with infinite patience born of the infinite Love for which He speaks. Every attack is a call for His patience, since His patience can translate attack into blessing. Those who attack do not know they are blessed. They attack because they believe they are deprived."** (T.7.VII.7.3-6) (ACIM OE T.7.VIII.77)

It seems this is the Lesson given me right now because I need so much to remember the true value of my brother. This Lesson reminds me today to not deny anyone the limitless freedom in which they were created or I deny my own inestimable value. This Lesson is an excellent reminder for me that my expectations of others, and the comparisons and judgments I make, lay limits on my brothers rather than giving them the honor due them because of who they are.

Today, I am called upon to release my opinions of anyone who comes to my mind and to release the comparisons I make with anyone. I am also called upon to recognize any feelings of superiority and specialness that I carry about who I think I am. When we make comparisons and see differences with our brothers, we are setting limits on them, and thus we limit ourselves. I find myself making comments about what someone is saying on TV, for example, and in that criticism, I lose sight of the truth of who that person really is and thus who I really am. I am seeing myself as better and smarter. I am more special, and I lose sight of the fact that we are truly all the same. We share the same Spirit and the same ego characteristics, with variations only in the storyline and characters in our scripts. No one has left the Father's Mind except in illusions. We are all called to recognize the Christ in everyone we meet and to make every encounter a holy one so we can know the truth about ourselves. Thus, we give honor to all of our brothers and sisters with no exception.

"Specialness is the great dictator of the wrong decisions. Here is the grand illusion of what you are and what your brother is. And here is what must make the body dear and worth preserving. Specialness must be defended. Illusions can attack it, and they do. For what your brother must become to keep your specialness is an illusion. He who is 'worse' than you must be attacked, so that your specialness can live on his defeat. For specialness is triumph, and its victory is his defeat and shame. How can he live, with all your sins upon him? And who must be his conqueror but you?" (T.24.I.5.1-10) (ACIM OE T.24.II.7)

This is another reminder of how we are just seeing our own lacks, unworthiness, and limitations in our brothers and sisters when we criticize them. Their limitations certainly may look different than our own, but the content is the same. We will not know our own unlimited Self when we project our own self-attacking thoughts onto others and make them responsible for how we feel. We have a propensity to fix others, to find fault, and to see ourselves as superior and special. We can even see our superiority and specialness in our victimhood and frailty because we believe no one can suffer like we do. To see our brothers and sisters with the honor due them, we need to take responsibility for our projections and forgive our limitations so we can learn to see with vision and recognize the Christ in everyone.

You may be thinking, "I do not feel superior. In fact, I feel that others are better than me. I don't feel special at all." Yet Jesus says that the beliefs we hold about our superiority are hidden. Underneath our sad stories of victimhood is a gleeful experience of revenge for those we see as the victimizers.

Therefore, we are called to look deeper at our motivations so we can recognize our purpose, which is to prove we are right about who we say we are, and separation is the truth. We affirm through our victimhood that others have made us the way we are, and they are responsible for our condition. Thus to be broken is a state of revenge for what they have done to us.

Specialness is the reason behind all attacks. It is our secret vow to attack each other and thus maintain the separation. In this instance, the belief may be, "I am actually better than those people who think they are so superior." There is no one living in a body who does not have some form of specialness going on and sees their brothers as different from themselves. **"And difference of any kind imposes orders of reality, and a need to judge that cannot be escaped."** (T.24.I.3.6) (ACIM OE T.24.II.5) Because of the differences we see in our brothers and sisters, we judge and evaluate who they are in relation to us. We can only judge if we feel superior and know better because a judge will always be above that which he judges. Our specialness is a way of keeping reality at bay. The truth simply cannot intrude on what we have decided we are. It must be welcomed by us.

We value what we have made. In fact, there is nothing in the world we value more. It feels to us to be important in this world and to have value, so we fight for it and defend against any kind of criticism. We do whatever we can to have a high sense of self-esteem, but self-esteem will never substitute for the truth of who we are. We prop up our fragile egos, yet who we think we are is indeed a very shabby substitute for the truth of our Being.

Investing in our specialness is just another way of investing in our separate selves. There is a fear of leaving the familiar territory of our lives. Our lives may not be wonderful, but our circumstances and beliefs are what we know. What will happen to us when we leave the perception of the self as we know it? Our fear is of the unknown. What will happen to our lives and to our relationships? What will there be to talk about? Our current bonding with others is so much about sharing dramas and traumas. We seem to bond with each other through pain and struggles. We empathize with the mutuality of our personal suffering, but we can never truly join in the illusion. Our false empathy, by joining with anyone in their victim story, will never heal anyone.

To invite the truth is challenging because it requires a willingness to release the specialness of our separate identity, and we fear the outcome. That is part of the push-pull of awakening. Yet as our feelings of specialness fall away on this path, we begin to see our lives more like a story we have made up and a role we have taken on. The limits we have laid on ourselves and everyone around us lessen as we let the false go. We increasingly recognize that our brother, the Son our Father loves, was created limitless. Our investment in the dramas and the struggles of life have been loosened in the recognition that they are all illusory. We are coming to know who our brother is---limitless as we are.

Let's really look at our hidden beliefs and fears today, which are the core of all the dreams of this world. Unrecognized fear leads to projecting this world and seeing our fears in everyone around us. Our everyday pain and suffering become important experiences because they are the means whereby we can undo our deeply buried and repressed ego thoughts of sin, guilt, fear, and hate, which reflect the sum and substance of *all* of our difficulties. But so much of that is not conscious. Jesus tells us that these are the hidden warriors we must learn to see. In the Introduction to Chapter 21, he says that first, we have to look within. With our choice for the ego, a world of quasi-infinite combinations of problems and solutions arises. There is only one problem and one error, even though it seems to have taken many forms. As we read in Chapter 18, **"That one error, which brought truth to illusion, infinity to time, and life to death, was all you ever made. Your whole world rests upon it. Everything you see reflects it, and every special relationship that you have ever made is part of it."** (T.18.I.4.4-6) (ACIM OE T.18.II.4)

Now we have an opportunity to return to the only problem---the choice for separation over Oneness and guilt in place of love. These are the choices confronting us every day in this classroom. Ken Wapnick wrote that so many who get on the spiritual path really want to stay positive and focus on experiences of unity and love. Yet this can just be a further defense against looking at the way the mind has identified with guilt. Jesus cautions against this strong temptation to deny the ego by covering it over with spirituality and love in our special relationships. **"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. It is not necessary to seek for what is true, but it is necessary to seek for what is false. Every illusion is one of fear, whatever form it takes. And the attempt to escape from one illusion into another must fail. If you seek love outside yourself you can be certain that you perceive hatred within, and are afraid of it. Yet peace will never come from the illusion of love, but only from its reality."** (T.16.IV.6.1-6) (ACIM OE T.16.V.35)

After the ecstasy, there is still the laundry, as Jack Kornfield describes so well in his book by the same name, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path*. In other words, we have work to do in undoing the darkness, regardless of how many states of enlightenment we may have experienced. Our mystical experiences are valuable in that they motivate us to do the work of undoing the ego thought system. Continuing to run after these experiences, hoping for more, is another way to distract ourselves from our work of staying attentive to the ego and doing the work of forgiveness. The effort is worth it and we are worth the effort.

"When you have learned how to decide with God, all decisions become as easy and as right as breathing. There is no effort, and you will be lead as gently as if you were being carried down a quiet path in summer. Only your own volition seems to make deciding hard. The Holy Spirit will not delay in answering your every question what to do. He knows. And He will tell you, and then do it for you. You who are tired will find this is more restful than sleep. For you can bring your guilt into sleeping, but not into this." (T.14.IV.6.1-8) (ACIM OE T.13.IX.92)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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