

## ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



### Lesson 11

## My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world.

### Sarah's Commentary:

What do we do when we experience the world as letting us down, hurting us, betraying us, or not supporting us? Don't we usually try to do something about the situation? We try to find solutions in the world that will make things better for us. In other words, we try to change the forms "out there." Yet clearly, Jesus keeps reminding us over and over again, the world we see is nothing more than ". . . **the witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition.**" (T.21.IN.1.5) (ACIM OE T.21.I.1) Since that is the case, we are told, "**Therefore, seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world.**" (T.21.IN.1.7) (ACIM OE T.21.I.1)

In other words, my meaningless thoughts are the cause and the world is the effect. It certainly does not seem that way to us. I think the events "out there" are causing me to react the way I do. Somebody cut me off in traffic and therefore I am angry. Someone betrayed me, and therefore, I am feeling hurt. Someone ran into my car, and therefore, I am feeling vulnerable. My taxes have gone up, and I feel victimized. We tell ourselves that our anger, our retaliation, and our unhappiness are justified by something that has been done to us. We feel victimized by the conditions of the world and by what others seem to be doing. It all comes from thoughts we are thinking that have no meaning. The events themselves are neutral. We are the ones giving them all the meaning they have for us. Jesus says that we are singing a dirge of victimhood. "**Healing occurs as a patient begins to hear the dirge he sings, and questions its validity.**" (Psychotherapy Pamphlet.2.VI.1.5) The first step is to tune into what we are thinking, and the second step is to question our thoughts.

The purpose behind this Lesson is to consider that we might have it all backward because we think the cause of everything is outside of our minds and is the reason we think, feel, and perceive the way we do. This is our experience of the world. In this Lesson, we are told the thoughts in our minds are the cause that ". . . **determine the world we see** [and experience]." (W.11.1.3) The only thing that will bring peace and joy, instead of the anger and distress, is to see that we have chosen the script. In other words, it is our dream. Given this, we cannot be victims of this world because we are the ones that dreamed it into seeming existence in the first place. We made these bodies that come with the sensory apparatus that give us evidence of the reality of everything we experience. We identify with what we have made and think it is who we are---a body living in the world.

"**Today's idea introduces the concept that your thoughts determine the world you see.**" (W.11.1.3) "**The key to forgiveness lies in it.**" (W.11.1.5) We are told that this idea alone if we really get it, will ensure our release. "**Be glad indeed to practice the idea in its initial form, for in this idea is your release made sure.**" (W.11.1.4) It will free us from guilt, fear, and myriad emotions that seem to creep upon us seemingly against our will. In the end, it will free

us from our seeming bondage to the ego. How it all happens is through forgiveness. We may wonder how the idea that our thoughts determine the world we see ties in with Course-based forgiveness? While a lot more is said in the Text and in future lessons about forgiveness, the key here is that if the world is real and terrible things are really happening to us, forgiveness becomes impossible; but if the world is a reflection of our own thoughts, bouncing back at us, forgiveness is about healing the perception that someone has hurt us. If I realize I am a character in this dream, and I have put you in my dream to help me see my unhealed perceptions, I come to realize that no one is doing anything to me. I am responsible for my dream. Everything that seems to happen to me is by my own decision. **"Forgiveness recognizes that what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred."** (W.PII.Q1.1.1)

When we learn to withdraw our judgments of "good" and "bad" from what seems to be happening, there is nothing to react to. In Course-based forgiveness, we bring awareness to all the thoughts, beliefs, and concepts we hold. This is the first step in forgiveness, as we can't heal what we don't see. The purpose of the world is to reflect back to us our own thoughts so we can see the unhealed judgments we hold. As such, the world becomes an important classroom for showing us the misperceptions we hold that seem to be creating the problems we perceive.

If I feel hurt by what I deem is being done to me, I take on the mantle of victimhood. I am like a puppet at the mercy of the world. I blame others for making me feel the way I do. In doing so, I make myself powerless, but I can now start to see that I am the one who chose what I am feeling. I don't have to choose anger in the face of attack. I am the one choosing to hurt myself with my response. I am responding to something that starts in my own mind. It starts with the beliefs I hold about myself. It starts with my own self-attacking thoughts. We all have insecurities we cover over with false assurance, confidence, and bravado. It comes from a belief that there is something wrong with us. It comes from feelings of unworthiness and abandonment. We try to keep this hidden, and put on a brave face and move forward with a false sense of certainty. While seemingly doing our best, we feel our efforts are often not appreciated, that we are being misunderstood and sometimes outright attacked and betrayed, and thus we feel victimized. It comes from our identification with the ego where we play a role rather than being transparent and authentic. It is all in the name of self-protection. We do what we can to keep ourselves feeling safe and secure.

What we are defending is the guilt in the mind. Forgiveness is about acknowledging our self-deprecating thoughts without judging ourselves for them. When we know the innocent Self we are, no defense is needed. The innocent are invulnerable. Through forgiveness, we increasingly see attacking behaviors as having nothing to do with us. We are being called to respond with love and understanding. What we give we receive for ourselves.

My mother experiences hallucinations and the onset of dementia with every episode of a bladder infection. Whenever I notice her symptoms I ask the staff to send her urine to the lab. The nurse collected the urine, but when the doctor came, she said there was no need to send the urine to the lab because she was not convinced the symptoms warranted a test. I am sensitive to my mother's condition and believed a test was essential. I could not understand the doctor's position and I expressed concern to the nurse. My immediate response was to listen to the ego mind and take immediate action to rectify the situation; but I have learned through the Course, to step back from the ego, take the time to turn to the Holy Spirit with any problem, and choose peace. A couple of hours went by. The guidance was to do nothing. I then got a call from the nurse who told me she had prevailed on the doctor to have the test done. The solutions proposed by the ego would have created difficulties for everyone. By withdrawing my judgments from this situation, the miracle was able to show up. I have had numerous examples of problems being solved without my

involvement. I am not saying there are situations where action needs to be taken. What I am saying is that it is not helpful to follow the guidance of the ego, which always speaks first.

If the world is nothing more than what I project onto it, the power is within my own mind to allow for another way of seeing everything and everyone, which changes our whole experience of everything and everyone. If we really were the victims of outside events, we would indeed be powerless, but if it is my thoughts that cause what I see, then the power is in me to choose to see if differently. Through forgiveness, I can change my mistaken perceptions. I can choose to withdraw my belief in victimhood. We have Mighty Help in this process. We can't do this without the Holy Spirit, but we can start the process. All it takes is willingness to look at our thoughts and bring them to His healing light.

While the thought that we are the cause of everything we see holds a lot of power, it also brings up fear. The thought, that we are responsible for what we see and experience and for everything that seems to happen to us, seems onerous. Have I really chosen it all? Jesus quickly assures us that we should be happy that indeed we have chosen it all for in this thought is our release! **"Be glad indeed to practice the idea in its initial form, for in this idea is your release made sure."** (W.11.1.4) What we are released from is the bondage of the ego that holds us hostage to guilt. For now, let's just trust the process and accept that we are being gently led to our ultimate freedom.

The practice instructions urge us to use the words of this lesson in an **". . . unhurried, even leisurely fashion. The introduction to this idea, in particular, should be practiced as casually as possible."** (W.11.3.2) Again, as in the introduction to the Workbook, we are reminded not to strain in the application of the idea. Jesus recognizes that we may experience some uneasiness in applying this idea. We are to do this exercise three times, for one minute or so. **"However, if there is little or no uneasiness and an inclination to do more, as many as five may be undertaken. More than this is not recommended."** (W.11.4.2-3) That is an interesting caution, and I suspect that Jesus is speaking to our inclination to try for perfection or to please the teacher. Of course, this is the purview of the ego mind and introduces strain and ritual, which he cautions against. It is not about trying to be a good student but only about the desire for more peace and joy in our lives, which will motivate our practice. The goal is to achieve peace, relaxation, and freedom from worry. Thus, strain is not helpful in doing these Lessons, although discipline is.

In essence, we are letting go of the reality of this world; we are willing to give up the need to be right and accept humility, instead of admitting that we just don't know. **"Humility brings peace because it does not claim that you must rule the universe, nor judge all things as you would have them be."** (Song of Prayer.1.V.1.4) We have taught ourselves certain things that seemed to be true, but we are now learning that nothing we thought we knew and understood is true. If my meaningless thoughts are the cause of my life experience, and the world is the effect, everything I have thought I understood about the world and myself is being reversed.

When we value things of this world, they become very important to us. We are invested in them. What happens as a result is that these things have the power to hurt us and to shatter our peace because we have given them that power, and thus, we experience fear. Now we are looking at our beliefs, values, and concepts that we hold about ourselves and are starting to question them so our wrong-minded perceptions can be changed to right-minded perceptions that reflect God's Love. We learn through this teaching that the only thing really worth valuing is the peace of God. As we get connected with this peace, which is already in us, we no longer have fear, because anything not of God can have no effect on us.

How this looks to me right now is that I believe I am being attacked by a circumstance that seems to be binding me to the feeling of resentment. My false ideas about this situation seem so real and my resentment and anger feel justified. If I go to my ego mind for answers, then I try to overlook how I feel, I tell myself it is not so bad, that it is not important, and I can be at peace in spite of this situation. Or I might try to address it in form and try to fix it "out there." Either way, it is a direction offered by the ego. It reflects the ". . . **thinking of the world.**" (W.11.1.1) Resistance is in my mind to this lesson because I think my feelings of anger are justified by the situation. Until I ask for help and admit that I just don't understand anything and that I am willing to be shown, I will stubbornly insist on justifying my position. That is what this lesson is getting at. **"Be glad indeed to practice the idea in its initial form, for in this idea is your release made sure."** (W.11.1.4) Today, I am willing to give over my need to control, understand, and justify. Instead, I let the Holy Spirit show me the way.

Love and blessings, Sarah  
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