



## LESSON 122

### **Forgiveness offers everything I want.**

#### **Sarah's Commentary:**

Jesus tells us that forgiveness offers us everything we want: peace, happiness, a quiet mind, a sense of worth, beauty, safety, deep abiding comfort, joy to meet the day, and more. What is more? It brings us home to the memory of who we really are. **"My forgiveness is the means by which the light of the world finds expression through me. My forgiveness is the means by which I become aware of the light of the world in me."** (W.82.1.(63).2-3) Ultimately, forgiveness becomes the means by which we learn that we have done nothing that needs forgiveness! **"Forgiveness thus becomes the means by which he learns he has done nothing to forgive."** (T.26.IV.1.6) (ACIM OE T.26.V.25) In other words, forgiveness undoes what never happened. We are innocent, never sinned, have done nothing wrong, and deserve only the love that was given us in our creation. When the blocks to love are removed through the process of forgiveness, we will know that nothing that we think we have done has changed us as the Son of God.

We are completely loved, but we block that love with our judgments, grievances, expectations, demands, wishes, specialness, victim stories, opinions, values, judgments, strategies, and manipulations. Thus, we can't know the glory of our Being when we listen to the voice of the ego. **"The holy place on which you stand is but the space that sin has left."** (T.26.IV.3.1) (ACIM OE T.26.V.27) This is the holiest of altars. It is a space made clean of our investment in sin and guilt. All that is required of us is to commit to looking at our wrong-minded investments.

Our obsessive, raucous thoughts occupy the place in the mind where holiness dwells. We hold onto these thoughts only because of our fear of love, believing that God will punish us for our "crime" of separation. **"What but a miracle could change his mind, so that he understands that love cannot be feared?"** (T.26.IV.4.6) (ACIM OE T.25.V.28) Jesus tells us that only a little hindrance stands between this love and the world of guilt and fear. We are just a thought away from Heaven. In other words, what blocks the love are our meaningless thoughts that we have given power, but we can withdraw that power anytime we choose.

Yes, the benefits of forgiveness, laid out in this Lesson, are clearly what we all say we want. Who does not want ". . . **happiness, a quiet mind, a certainty of purpose, and a sense of worth and beauty that transcends the world?**" (W.122.1.2) Jesus paints a picture of what we all yearn for. The problem is that we think we know how to achieve these benefits ourselves. We think we know our own best interests. We have been relying on the ego to tell us where our happiness lies. We set goals for ourselves that we think will bring about peace and happiness, and then we try to implement our own means for achieving our goals.

We think we know what we need to have a fulfilled life of joy and contentment. As long as we follow our own ideas of where our happiness lies, we will continue to believe we are reaching out

for pleasure but will, in fact, receive more pain, more guilt, and more fear. Clearly, we are not convinced that this is so because if we were, every moment would be spent in forgiveness. We would be very vigilant of any thoughts of worry, distress, unease, anxiety, judgment, anger, anticipation, frustration, or anything keeping us from the experience of joy available to us in every moment. We would be very motivated to turn these thoughts over to be healed. We would be willing to see our own minds as the cause of our lack of ease and joy and not put the blame for our unhappiness on anything in the world. The cause of any distress comes from our own minds where we hold core beliefs such as "I am bad," or "I am unworthy." These beliefs perpetuate the illusion, which is why it is so important to question them. If we are an extension of God, they simply can't be true.

We all have stories of what others have done to us and why we are the way we are. Whatever problems we experience or whatever our situation, we always have someone we can find to blame and hold responsible for our condition. This is the film, running in the mind, projecting the movie onto the screen of this seeming world. It is a movie we watch over and over in our minds, hoping for a better ending each time, but unless we change the input of our own thoughts and beliefs, the outcome will continue to be the same. Our thoughts are responsible for our experiences in the physical world. As long as those thoughts are based on guilt, we will live in fear of what will come next.

When we tell our stories, we project guilt onto others whom we hold responsible for having done us wrong. It is the way we try to make meaning of our lives by taking our interpretations of disparate situations and weaving them into a story. Now, we must take what we have made to the truth. **"Bringing illusion to truth, or the ego to God, is the Holy Spirit's only function. Keep not your making from your Father, for hiding it has cost you knowledge of Him and of yourself."** (T.14.IX.1.4-5) (ACIM OE T.14.V.38) Everything we have come to believe must be released if we are to know ourselves. **"The past that you remember never was, and represents only the denial of what always was."** (T.14.IX.1.10) (ACIM OE T.14.V.38)

We have not changed ourselves. We are and always will remain, God's perfect Son. Our stories are all meaningless, for only reality is true. **"It cannot change with time or mood or chance. Its changelessness is what makes it real. This cannot be undone."** (T.14.IX.2.7-8) (ACIM OE T.14.V.39) When we deny our responsibility, deny our guilt, suffocate it, or stuff it in the dark recesses of our minds, healing can't happen. Truth cannot be brought to the illusion. We must be willing to look at the darkness and bring it to the light of truth. This is what forgiveness is. It brings us back to awareness of the Self we are. We are already whole and complete. Forgiveness requires that we look objectively at our unloving thoughts. It is a process of undoing what we have made. With forgiveness, what we made to hurt, harm, and blame can now be used to heal.

We were told in the Lesson yesterday that forgiveness is acquired. It must be learned. Our part in the process is the desire and willingness for healing. We start by recognizing our dark thoughts, our attachments, our judgments, our investment in specialness, and our need to be right. How much do we want the truth for ourselves? Jesus says that we must ask honestly, how much do we want a world we rule instead of one that rules us? How much do we want to know our own power and give up our helplessness and victimhood? How much do we want to know our innocence and that of everyone else? In other words, how willing are we to look at our darkness so we can know God's love, which we still fear?

What we see in our brothers and sisters is just a reflection of the guilt in our own minds. As long as we feel guilty and project our guilt onto others, we will believe we deserve punishment and will experience this punishment delivered to us in the form of problems. The world will not feel like a

benign place. We hate those who seem to be the cause of our pain, but the cause is always the guilt in our own minds. Without the guilt, any attack would have no place to land in us. We truly would see all attack as only calls for love and for help, and would accept responsibility for everything that seems to happen to us. As we are reminded in Chapter 21, **"I am responsible for what I see. I choose the feelings I experience, and I decide upon the goal I would achieve. And everything that seems to happen to me I ask for, and receive as I have asked."** (T.21.II.2.3-5) (ACIM OE T.21.III.15) This is one of the hardest statements for us to fully accept.

Because the world is a closed system and ruled by guilt and fear, we need the Holy Spirit's help. Our part is to apply the Lessons as faithfully as we can and use our experiences in this world as the classroom for forgiveness. We consistently turn to the Holy Spirit to teach us how to interpret every situation we encounter. The ego tells us that the cause of our distress is in the world. It tells us that we are the effect of situations that cause us to be upset and that we are victimized by situations outside of our own minds. The Holy Spirit reminds us that the world is an outward picture of our own inward condition, and changing our thoughts is the only thing that will change our experience.

If forgiveness offers us all these gifts, **"Why would you seek an answer other than the answer that will answer everything?"** (W.122.4.1) What is it that we seek? We focus mostly on looking for happiness in things outside ourselves. They are all trivial pursuits that have no lasting value. It is all about investing in the ego's mantra to seek but never find. Jesus tells us, **"Seek for it no more. You will not find another one [answer] instead."** (W.122.4.4-5) There is nothing wrong with pursuing another relationship, another job, more money, fame, recognition, a new home, a better body, or another vacation, but none of these things will bring us the deep peace, happiness, and transcendence that we are hoping to find. Only forgiveness, which is found in the mind and not in anything outside, offers us what we are truly looking for. The answer to every problem is found within.

Behind every problem and every distress we seem to have is the miracle awaiting our acceptance. All that is required is our willingness to bring our problems to the only solution there is, which is the miracle. **"Changelessly it stands before you like an open door, with warmth and welcome calling from beyond the doorway, bidding you to enter in and make yourself at home, where you belong."** (W.122.5.3) What is calling us is to know our innocence? The Call is in our right minds where miracles are stored. This is our treasure house. It is all within us now. There is nothing to seek. It requires willingness and commitment to surrender our way, recognizing that we have been wrong about everything. The roadmap is laid out for us and help is available to show us the way.

Jesus says that our commitment up to now has been half-hearted, our dedication less than diligent, and our trust has been partial. We ask for help but then turn to our own solutions; or, we determine what the problem is and then ask for help, thinking we know the problem. Jesus reminds us that the only problem we have is the guilt in our minds as a result of the belief we cling to that we have sinned. Throughout the Lesson, Jesus keeps reminding us over and over to turn within where the only answer is. The ego mind has no answers for us.

I recently bought a large box of incontinence products for my elderly mother. When I left the store, I found that I was given the wrong size by the clerk. My mother lives in long-term care and quite a distance from the store. I felt inconvenienced by the mistake and blamed the clerk in my mind, and now I had a grievance. I felt imposed upon by my heavy schedule of activities, particularly as we were to be away for the next two weeks. As a result of our trip, there was much preparation to be done, including writing commentaries in advance. I felt anger at the salesperson, as well as myself, for not being more vigilant. In the midst of all of this, I took the time to stop and breathe

and remind myself that God did not bring this suffering. It was a choice I was making to throw away my peace. Yet in spite of this awareness, I found myself unwilling to just let it go.

I marveled at my resistance and stubbornness in holding onto the anger. I felt justified in feeling distressed. This is an example of a choice point. I asked myself, "Do you want to hold onto your point of view and stay in hell, or bring your dark thoughts to the truth, and let them go?" Then I asked for help to see it differently. I remembered to substitute some helpful self-talk for my obsessive ego thoughts, telling myself that a healed mind would not be upset by this circumstance. You may look at this and see it as a minor disturbance compared to something you may be dealing with, but Jesus says that there are no small disturbances. Judgments are the oxygen of the ego, and as long as we are invested in the ego, we will relish our judgments.

Do we indulge our anger, or do we choose to forgive it and accept the miracle? This is the invitation always there for us. It does take willingness to choose to release our stubborn insistence that something should be different than it is. The question is, "Will I use this situation to keep myself in hell, or will I turn it over to the Holy Spirit in the recognition that I don't know my own best interests, and I don't know what anything is for?" I chose to ask the Holy Spirit to help me not to use this situation to keep me from the peace and love available to me. It is available in every situation, no matter how seemingly large or small. All problems are the same. They have no reality.

Is my situation easier to forgive than a car accident, a grave illness, or someone who has betrayed us? It does seem so, but Jesus reminds us there is no order of difficulty in the illusion. It is all the same because it is all nothing. Anything keeping us from peace is a hindrance and keeps us in hell. **"Forgive and be forgiven. As you give you will receive."** (W.122.6.3-4) Anytime I hold something against you, I am holding it against myself, but if I could see your innocence, then I could know my own.

What we are learning is to see the Christ in everyone. This is the meaning of seeing with vision rather than believing what our senses tell us. Mother Teresa saw this when she described everyone she helped as, "Christ in his distressing guises," or, as the Course says, **"I do not know what anything, including this, means. And so I do not know how to respond to it. And I will not use my own past learning as the light to guide me now."** (T.14.XI.6.7-8) (ACIM OE T.14.VII.65) In other words, we are surrendering our own misperceptions and our current way of seeing and bringing them to the light to be dispelled. It certainly does take willingness, and this is a choice we must make if we want peace of mind. No one will thrust this on us. The power of decision is our own. This power is in us. It is our inner Teacher.

When we think that we know anything, then there is no room for learning. We must be willing to be taught. **"Forgiveness lets the veil be lifted up that hides the face of Christ from those who look with unforgiving eyes upon the world."** (W.122.3.1) When our unforgiving thoughts or **"dead thoughts"** (W.122.3.2) are cleared away, we will have vision. These dead thoughts are our guilt, our fears, our self-hatred, unworthiness, specialness, and all ego thoughts, in whatever form. They are all the thoughts that keep the memory of God buried in our minds. Dead thoughts keep us from vision, and without vision, all we see are our own projections of the guilt in our minds.

When we stubbornly hold onto our perspectives, we resist admitting that we are wrong about everything. Jesus describes this as arrogance because we refuse to accept our own innocence. We are as God created us--unlimited beings of light and love. As long as we hold onto our own beliefs about ourselves and challenge what Jesus teaches as just beautiful thoughts that don't apply to us, we are being arrogant. This only serves to keep the memory of God that is in our right minds, locked away. Forgiveness offers us the key to unlocking this memory. We do so by bringing these

dead thoughts to the light and choosing against them. **"You cannot give yourself your innocence, for you are too confused about yourself. But should one brother dawn upon your sight as wholly worthy of forgiveness, then your concept of yourself is wholly changed."** (T.31.VII.2.4-5) (ACIM OE T.31.VI.69)

Think about all the things you want. Think of all your hopes and dreams that you pursue in the world. Pursuing them can never offer the gifts Jesus lays out for us in this Lesson. In fact, he asks, **"What fancied value, trivial effect or transient promise, never to be kept, can hold more hope than what forgiveness brings?"** (W.122.3.5) In other words, we can and will pursue the things in the world we think will bring us happiness, yet this Lesson says that only forgiveness offers everything we want. It is the doorway home to the Self we are.

The definition of forgiveness given us in the Course is about releasing our dark dreams of guilt and fear, held in the mind, that we project onto the world. It is the means by which we remember the truth of what we are. It is to release the blocks that keep us from knowing our innocence and wholeness. Thus, it is the complete answer for all that troubles us in this world. Jesus says, **"Let us today rejoice that his is so, for here we have an answer, clear and plain, beyond deceit in its simplicity."** (W.122.6.6) Certainly, this is unlike the answers we find in the world that are extremely complex yet unstable like **"fragile cobwebs."** (W.122.6.7)

How willing are we to see forgiveness as the only answer that will truly deliver everything we want? Another way this might be put is, how willing are we to take responsibility for everything in our lives? He urges us, **"Do not turn away in aimless wandering again."** (W.122.7.2) **"The world can give no gifts of any value to a mind that has received what God has given as its own."** (W.122.7.5) Again and again, we are urged to see forgiveness as the answer. It is an answer that can never fail. He tells us to be thankful that this is so. (W.122.5.1-2)

Can you see how much urging there is in this Lesson to stay with the answer he has given us, and **"Do not turn away in aimless wandering again?"** (W.122.7.2) Jesus really wants us to remember the gifts forgiveness gives because he wants us to be happy. When we recognize all the rewards we receive through forgiveness, our trust will increase. Now we continue on with hope and faith and carry the rewards of the practice periods into the day. We do not lay the Lesson aside, but **"Retain your gifts in clear awareness as you see the changeless in the heart of change; the light of truth behind appearances."** (W.122.13.4)

Be willing today to look at your dark thoughts. They are not who you are. Look at them with Jesus from outside the dream. Recognize their unreality. The gifts of peace and joy are always present in the mind, and they are brought to awareness when the blocks to love are released through forgiveness. Regardless of what is going on around us, we can still be at peace. Peace is changeless and does not require events and situations to be any different than they are. Remember, these events and situations are actually our perfect classroom for applying forgiveness. Indeed, we can welcome them, as they facilitate our awakening.

Love and blessings, Sarah  
[huemmert@shaw.ca](mailto:huemmert@shaw.ca)

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