

## ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



### **LESSON 148** **Review IV Lessons 135 and Lessons 136**

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

Lessons 135 and 136 are both very long. You may want to revisit them, as I did today, because both offer perspectives that one would not expect. Any defense is frightening because Jesus tells us our defenses stem from fear, and thus, with each defense we make, our fear is increased. Defenses can only come from a sense of threat, and the threat means we are vulnerable. It is a threat we believe comes from outside our own minds, but the real source of the threat is the guilt in our minds. When the guilt is projected, we experience a sense of threat from the world, as now we fear attack. Any defense we design against the threat we fear will not address the cause of the fear, which is the guilt buried in our own mind. To us, it looks like the threat is real and coming from outside the mind. Yet the guilt in the mind seems to call for punishment from the world. This is what we fear. When we recognize it all comes from the guilt and terror in our own minds, we can see this is where our attention needs to be if we want to heal our sense of vulnerability.

Getting in touch with the terror within the mind is not a lot of fun, to say the least. I recently had an experience of this as a result of an event in my life. My immediate response to the feeling of threat was to lash out in anger. The anger I projected brought forth fear of retaliation. Then, the cycle of attack and defense, blaming and defending, came into full force. In the aftermath of this whole situation, I finally invited Spirit to help me to look within at the real source of the issues, which seemed to be reflected in the external conditions. I did not realize how much fear was buried deep within and how vulnerable I felt until I was willing to uncover the cause of the upset in my mind.

Every upset in our lives covers some deep wounds. Unearthing the wounds and bringing them to the inner altar for healing is essential. The external situations in our lives help us to see where healing is needed, as they are a mirror of the mind. No, it is not pleasant, but always helpful. At times like this, I often turn to the Course, using it like an oracle, as I look for guidance. I opened the Course randomly and came to a section about our magnitude and our littleness. **"Not to question your littleness therefore is to deny all knowledge, and keep the ego's whole thought system intact."** (T.9.VII.7.3) (ACIM OE T.9.VI.44) I recognized that I was called to look at how I was keeping the ego thought system intact by accepting my littleness. What is real and true is our magnitude, but the way to magnitude is by going within, with Jesus as our guiding light. He asks that we not go there alone. We ask for help to have the courage to look honestly at how we are reflecting our littleness. The challenge is to look at this without judging ourselves for it, which is not always easy!

All our defenses, including making plans to mitigate future threats, are about our belief that we are bodies with feelings that get hurt. Now we feel the vulnerability of our condition, yet Jesus continually reminds us that we are mistaken about our identity. Our reality is this glorious infinite Spirit, but as long as we identify with these bodies and personalities, we will defend ourselves.

Jesus does not make us wrong because a Child of God is never wrong. He only asks that we look at how all this has been set up so we can go back to the mind and question what we believe. He is simply asking that we let him help us recognize the true source of our power in the mind in order to undo our investment in the illusion and realize that this is not how God created us.

Our plans appear to have developed as a defense against change. We are threatened by the truth of our reality as an invulnerable Son of God. As we learn to release our plans and learn to trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit more and more, we experience more and more joy and peace. For me, this has been a process where I find myself taking my hands off the steering wheel of my life and recognizing the illusion of control. Nothing I have ever done of any value is mine. Yes, the ego tries to take credit, yet it has never really accomplished anything of value. As I learn to trust more, I find, increasingly, that things just fall into place without me. It all just happens. Events and people show up perfectly with little or no effort on my part. I just do what is obvious and in front of me to do, and He takes care of the rest. As I get more and more affirmation of His presence, there is a growing trust. I need do nothing. The more I interfere, the more stressful the situation becomes. With Spirit, all is done with ease and done through me and not by me. It is a continuing process of learning to trust.

It is important that we not feel guilty for making plans in the illusion. Jesus is asking us to focus our attention not on what we do in this world but on what is going on in our minds, as we make plans. When we lock our doors, pay our insurance, put on our seat belts, and design strategies to protect ourselves against being hurt, we are preserving our sense of threat. It is not about making changes in our behaviors on the level of form but about recognizing how our plans, originated by the ego, are based on fear and based on protecting and preserving the self we think we are. As our minds are healed, our strategies for self-protection are lessened.

When we are willing to accept that we are not victims of what we thought was a threat to us, we can ask for the help of Holy Spirit to forgive ourselves for using our plans to attack ourselves and to separate from God's Love. Our plans are merely defenses against the truth. They defend us from the truth because they keep us locked in the false perception that we are these fragile beings and are extremely vulnerable. Jesus assures us that when our minds do not abuse the body by assigning roles to the body it cannot fulfill, then it will be strong and healthy.

The focus needs to be on the mind, which is the cause of all the effects in our lives. Thus, I find that when I am angry and upset or worried and suffer and cannot sleep or eat, I am choosing to listen to the ego. I don't need to indulge it. I have the power to choose to turn from it. The ego does not necessarily take this lightly and tries to do what it can to hold my attention. Yet I have the power to choose not to listen. Before coming to this teaching, I had no idea this power was in me. I did not know there was another Voice I could listen to. When I choose peace, there is nothing to trigger me. There is nothing outside my own mind. The only reason I get upset by something someone says to me is because I believe what they are saying. This belief comes from my own self-attacking thoughts. The opportunity for healing is now given, which is all perfect to the Spirit, though not always seen that way by the ego.

These Lessons are helping us uncover the many layers of defenses we have against the truth of who we are. We are learning to look at the sin, guilt, and fear in our minds so that they can be forgiven. It is not helpful to simply change our behavior in the belief that this is a real change. While we are still holding onto our misperceptions, the guilt and fear will remain intact in our minds. What is important, therefore, is to do the real healing of looking at the blocks to love that we are holding in our minds. Of course, behavior then naturally follows, because when the blocks are gone, we naturally function from the right mind and our behaviors will align with the love

within. Beneath all these crazy thoughts is the truth: **"My mind holds only what I think with God."** (W.RIV.IN.2.2) (ACIM OE W.RIV.3)

This Lesson came a day after I had been asking for guidance about a situation where I felt wrongly accused and was asking how to see it. **"If I defend myself I am attacked."** (W.135) I got my answer in perfect timing, as is often the case when these Lessons show up. Jesus asks us, **"Who would defend himself unless he thought he were attacked, that the attack were real, and that his own defense could save himself?"** (W.135.1.1) I will not give illusions reality. I am reminded today that all attack is a call for love and understanding, and ultimately it is my own call. To respond in any way other than with love ". . . adds illusions to illusions, thus making correction doubly difficult." (W.135.1.3) Isn't that what happens when we respond to attack? It all gets very complicated. The simplicity of salvation is to bring our mistaken perceptions to the truth. Letting my seemingly justified attack go and recognizing that it is all call for love, allows the peace already in my mind to prevail. Even more so, when Lessons show up, often specifically for the question currently in our minds, we can be assured the Holy Spirit is there, offering us His answer. He is always there. We just don't hear the answer because we are preoccupied with figuring it all out on our own. To do this on our own is to be listening to the voice of the ego.

As I was struggling in my mind with how to address what seemed like a difficult issue, I got a beautiful affirmation from a Course student, who reminded me of the truth about myself. At the risk of reflecting an ego perspective, the message, which I have abbreviated here, said, "Sarah, how can I thank you for that which moves me through you...your insights, wisdom, and example of holiness. The spring of grace that flows from your heart to those you care about is so honorable. I just send so much love and gratitude to you and Don for sharing like you do and can hardly wait to sit in your sanctuary again." How beautifully things are orchestrated in our lives when we simply step aside. How beautifully the Holy Spirit speaks through others to the truth in ourselves. How lovely is the heart that extends itself into the mind to bless. A metaphor I like is to imagine a storm raging around us, but now we can choose to enter the quiet in the center of the storm. In the quiet center, the storm has no reality.

I find when any kind of trouble brews in my life, I really get the Lesson. When things go according to my plans, it is much easier for the ego to just sit back and congratulate itself on its spiritual progress. I am always thankful for these opportunities to watch the mind and be humbled by the way truth dawns on my mind when I am willing to get more honest about my intentions and my motivations. One of my favorite passages in this Lesson always brings gratitude when Jesus says, **"What could you not accept, if you but knew that everything that happens, all events, past, present and to come, are gently planned by One Whose only purpose is your good? Perhaps you have misunderstood His plan, for He would never offer pain to you. But your defenses did not let you see His loving blessing shine in every step you ever took. While you made plans for death, He led you gently to eternal life."** (W.135.18.1-4)

This does not mean God brings all these events into our lives. The fact is, the script for our lives has been written, but within each event, there is a gift offered by the Holy Spirit for our healing. Thus, no matter how difficult or challenging the situation seems to be, there is always a gift in every situation. All we have to do is to be willing to see it so the Lesson can be learned. Within the script, the Holy Spirit offers us an alternative. The alternative is always perfect for our awakening, and it is always a miracle.

Sickness is also a defense. It is something we apparently choose quite deliberately when the truth gets too close for comfort. It allows us to distract ourselves and become committed, once again, to the belief that we truly are vulnerable bodies, being attacked by something outside us. Sickness simply affirms that the body is what we are, and it has all the power to make us feel whatever it wants, keeping us separate from others, making us sick, and eventually bringing death. Yet sickness is a defense because it affirms that we have defeated the truth and thus defeated God and made Him wrong about us; but when truth enters, illusions are gone. It is like turning on a light in a dark room, where darkness no longer exists.

The only antidote to sickness is to accept the truth about ourselves and let our minds be healed. Of course, when we do experience sickness, it is not helpful to ask why I did this to myself and what is wrong with me. It is there only to help us realize it is a mistake to confuse our body with the truth of who we are. We just need to remind ourselves that the truth is---we are invulnerable. The body is just a tool to bring love and healing to the world, and when we get this and remember our Identity, then its health is guaranteed.

Love and blessings, Sarah  
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