



LESSON 180

Review V ~ Lesson 169 and Lesson 170

Sarah's Commentary:

[169] By grace I live. By grace I am released.

[170] There is no cruelty in God and none in me.

Are you challenged by the external circumstances in your life and wonder why your work with the Course is not bringing more harmony into your life? In fact, things may even seem to be more difficult for you than when you started with this spiritual program. For some, this is indeed the case. So what's up? Generally, it is about the unhealed aspects of the unconscious mind getting flushed up. The feelings that are coming up have been there, but they have not been in our awareness because we were so defended against them. We were not prepared to look at them while our defenses were strong. When we do not look at what we are defending, we project all our subconscious issues onto others and see our secret sins there. The practice we have undertaken with the Workbook is now flushing up the issues stored in the mind. It is a good thing, as it is only in this way that healing can be brought to our unconscious beliefs.

To do the healing work on our own minds, it is important to bring our projections back to the mind and take responsibility for them. **"The little problems that you keep and hide become your secret sins, because you did not choose to let them be removed for you."** (T.25.IX.9.1) (ACIM OE T.25.X.86) Our part is simply to look at them without judgment. The deepest layers of guilt in the mind are seen most clearly in our difficult relationships. These relationships can be a source of great healing, provided we are willing to see that everything that is brought to the surface through these relationships is in our own minds. It is an outward picture of our own inner condition. It is a mirror for us where there are unhealed beliefs in the mind, which can now be seen and for which we can be grateful.

Whatever is showing up in our lives at any moment is another opportunity for healing. We don't know why certain things go the way they do in our lives. **"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?"** (W.135.18.1) We do not know our own best interests. What seem like our greatest setbacks may, in fact, offer us the most opportunity for real gain. We just do not know, and it is not helpful to try to figure it out or analyze the situation or our part in it. The important thing is to get out of our own way and not judge what is happening in our lives as good or bad. Remember that this Course is all about undoing the blocks to love so uncomfortable feelings will get flushed up for healing. This is not a time for discouragement. The undoing of these blocks provides us with an opportunity to wash away that which keeps us from the awareness of the truth, and the truth is that we are innocent, divine Beings.

We may be under the delusion that if we just get everything right spiritually, all else in the world would become absolutely blissful and peaceful for us, which is the case when our minds are in that

state. But until we reach that state, the world will continue as a necessary classroom for undoing what still needs healing in the mind. As the mind is healed more and more, the events of this world will not necessarily change, but what will change is our interpretation of these events. When we have given over our judgments for healing, we will see everything simply as it is, with no emotional impact on us. In other words, our peace will not be affected by what we observe in the world. The condition of detachment is quite an advanced spiritual state. However, it is not a cold detachment but one of deep compassion. It is important not to deny the reactions and judgments we have to events in our lives, as this would simply constitute a spiritual bypass. We must be honest with ourselves and have the courage to look behind our defenses. When we get triggered and react to circumstances and events, it is a valuable gateway to healing.

The events and circumstances of this world continue to offer us great opportunities for healing. Every circumstance, every problem, and every difficult relationship is perfectly designed for that purpose. We are not victims, as we are the ones who have conceived of these situations which constitute our script. We are the ones who have dreamed them into our lives for our healing. Everything is purposeful when used for undoing the blocks to love. We may wonder how we could be truly peaceful when so many things seem to challenge us. Yet every challenge provides us with another opportunity to choose forgiveness and peace in the face of the temptation to get upset.

Jesus reminds us to **"Concentrate only on this, [the little willingness] and be not disturbed that shadows surround it. That is why you came."** (T.18.IV.2.4-5) (ACIM OE T.18.V.33) In the Manual for Teachers, Jesus asks us not to despair because of limitations. **"It is your function to escape from them, but not to be without them."** (M.26.4.2) In other words, we need not be disturbed that we still get rattled by our issues and need to continue to work to overcome our judgments and negative reactions. Being born in a body in this physical world is a limitation in itself. **"Made to be fearful, must the body serve the purpose given it."** (W.PII.Q5.What is the Body?3.4) Yet we can change the purpose the body will obey by changing what we think it is for. When used as a communication device by the Holy Spirit, the body has a holy purpose and its health will be assured. Remember that the definition of health in the Course is inner peace.

Sometimes, Course students chastise each other for making judgments, but this is just an attack on a brother, judging him for making judgments. It is not helpful. We all make judgments, which is not the real problem. The only problem is when we are not willing to bring those judgments to the Holy Spirit Who will then shine them away. It is not our job to try to fix ourselves but to do our best not to judge. It is more honest to recognize that we have judged and to take responsibility for those judgments. **"I am willing to recognize the lack of validity in my judgments, because I want to see."** (W.51.[2].5)

When things seem to go wrong in our lives, we may respond with frustration, disappointment, anxiety, and anger. Jesus reminds us when we look at how we are responding and take responsibility for our projections by turning them over to the Holy Spirit, they will be healed. When Jesus asks us to **"Make this year different by making it all the same,"** (T.15.XI.10.11) (ACIM OE T.15.XI.112) he means that we can respond to every situation, no matter what it is, with peace. We don't have to seek for it since it is already in our right minds. We are simply blocking with our judgments the peace that is already there. Everything that goes on in our lives carries the same lesson, which is to see every seeming problem for what it is---just a shadow and not the truth. We do not react to it as something bad, and we do not give anything or anyone the power to disturb our peace and happiness.

As I think of Jesus and his crucifixion, it is not something one would willingly choose, no more than I would choose crucifixion in my life. Yet increasingly, I come to the realization that I cannot judge the events of my life, nor to always be able to see, at the time, what purpose they serve. Difficult and painful circumstances show up for us so we can learn to choose forgiveness and peace, as Jesus demonstrated through his ordeal. Looking back on some of the painful situations in my life, I now see their value.

New age philosophy, with its focus on manifesting more abundance, prosperity, and happiness within this dream, assumes that we know what will make us happy. Certainly, we would not choose to manifest the difficult situations and challenges in our lives. Yet when our purpose is to awaken from this dream, we learn to accept all the events of our lives and increasingly see how they serve the purpose we have chosen for ourselves. It is not about making the illusion more beautiful, although there is certainly nothing wrong with enjoying abundance and beauty in our lives. Enjoying and appreciating what shows up in the illusion is wonderful, but we don't make it our goal or indulge the ego's idea of what will bring us happiness if our purpose is to awaken.

This reminds me of Jim Carey's comments where he said: "I hope you get everything you ever dreamed of so you can see this is not where your happiness lies." Some seem to need to "fill their boots" with the things of this world: career, money, power, and prestige, in order to ultimately see that there is no happiness there. Others come to hear the Call through very difficult situations.

Jesus says that he needs us to reach out to others. Everyone in our lives is there for a purpose, however briefly. It reminds me of the movie, *The Four Feathers*, which takes the main character in the movie, Harry Faversham, on a journey of self-discovery, growth, and, ultimately, trust in his fellow man and trust in God. Harry Faversham, an Englishman, asks Abou, who rescues him on the plains of the Sudan, "Why are you protecting me?" To which Abou responds, "God put you in my way. I have no choice." Harry is astounded, as Abou represents the enemy. He tells Abou he must have done something terrible to offend God that God would put an Englishman and a Christian on his path. It is a matter of destiny. Who has been put in your path to offer you this kind of opportunity to forgive? There are no mistakes in how the world is orchestrated for our healing.

Another movie that carried this theme for me was *Whale Rider*. It powerfully demonstrates the idea of an ancient calling, compelling us to follow our destiny. The little girl, who is living in a Maori tribe set in New Zealand, feels destiny calling her from birth and is undaunted, despite tremendous obstacles. While she feels a strong pull to be with her father and leave her calling behind, in the end, she cannot stay. She has chosen to be a mapmaker, and she must follow her inner guidance, regardless of the consequences to her. While she is hurt by the actions of her grandfather, who dismisses her because she is a girl and in his view not worthy of a high calling, she moves forward with great resolve, yet with no bitterness, nor rebellion. Nothing will stop her. She is relentless in her determination. It is a deeply inspiring story of a little girl, whose actions transcend and transform her world and thus the perceptions of those around her.

We all have a destiny we are called to that only we can fulfill. But whatever it might be, it is only a backdrop for our true calling, which is to remember who we are. Whatever we seem to be doing in the world, we are doing it for only one purpose. It is to allow everything to be used for the purpose of healing our minds. Sometimes our situation can seem overwhelming. Yet just as in the movie, while we do not always understand it, how willing are we to go forward and trust that we are where we need to be at this moment? If it feels like a difficult and challenging time for you, just be in the experience and trust that all things work together for your highest good. We are being called to be patient and simply live the question until the answer comes. It is not up to us to

try to change ourselves but only to look with the light of the Holy Spirit beside us at what the experience is. I am becoming more and more aware that I do not have to plan my life, and in fact, it has always seemed to evolve perfectly, in spite of my plans. It all seems to show up as it is meant to. To resist what is, is to suffer. It is to demand, "I want it thus!"

We have all chosen the teachings of A Course in Miracles as our path, at least for this moment. What the Course does is to simply point to the truth. The truth is already within. We just need to listen. Another movie that demonstrates this beautifully is the Swedish movie, *As it is in Heaven*. In this movie, the main character is depleted by the events of his life and is determined to find his way back to himself by simply being still and learning to listen and be guided.

We can be grateful we are shown the way through every difficulty. The way is to remember that neither our happiness nor our unhappiness comes from anything outside our own minds. Today, we use these words to focus our attention on the truth: **"God is but love, and therefore so am I."** (W.RV.10.8) **"With this we start each day of our review. With this we start and end each period of practice time. And with this thought we sleep, to waken once again with these same words upon our lips, to greet another day."** (W.RV.11.1-3)

Ultimately, the goal is the experience which can only be found in the silent mind. **"And thus, when we have finished this review, we will have recognized the words we speak are true."** (W.RV.11.5) This means we will know because we will have had the experience of God's Love. No words can substitute for that. It is something that comes through the practice. When and how we come to know is not something that can be explained.

This is the final Lesson in the Review. We are reminded that the experience of grace is to receive in order that we may give. **"By grace I live. By grace I am released."** (W.180 [169]) It follows on the Review Lesson from yesterday, **"Your grace is given me. I claim it now."** (W.179 [168]) Today, we focus on our release through grace.

"There is no cruelty in God and none in me." (W.180 [170]) This is a reminder that attacking in self-defense amounts to cruelty. We think that self-defense is what keeps us safe. When we defend, what we are doing is giving the attributes of love to fear, because we think this god of fear is our protector. The ego whispers to us not to be some kind of spiritual wimp by letting our defenses down. It tells us that responding with love will make us vulnerable and our safety will be jeopardized. We think attack has power over others. This Lesson asks us to face this false god of fear and cruelty that speaks to us unceasingly about our need for protection and to recognize that it is powerless. All of our power comes from our Father, God, Who is pure love, with no cruelty in Him and thus there is none in us. That is where our safety lies.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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