

## ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



### LESSON 197

#### **It can be but my gratitude I earn.**

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

The Lesson today clearly affirms that gratitude is only in our own minds and is not something dependent on anything outside of us. Gratitude and love go hand in hand because both reflect the Oneness of reality. Just as attack comes only from our own minds, the same is said here of gratitude. This Lesson addresses the belief we hold that there can be something outside of our own minds that can help us or hurt us.

Gratitude is a gift we give ourselves. If I give anything to anyone and they do not respond as I expect they should, I may withdraw the gift unless, of course, I see that I give only to myself. Since that is the case, I would not want to withdraw the gift. When someone does not respond the way I expect them to, with gratitude, appreciation, attention, loyalty, or a gift in return, then I may have a grievance. Now, what I have given is no longer a gift, but an attack on them. In effect, I am saying, "I did this for you, and I expect something in return." Clearly, this is an affirmation that we are separate because we don't realize we are always only giving to ourselves. There is no one outside of ourselves, so the gift is given or withdrawn from ourselves.

The special relationship is about bargaining, where we give with the expectation or requirement of a gift in return; hopefully, it is something better than what we have given. If I don't get what I expect from you, I hold a grievance in my mind and no longer choose to give. When we see ourselves as doing our part in being generous and do not receive appreciation, love turns to resentment and bitterness; but, this is not giving and clearly not love. The conditions we have placed on the gift make it a form of manipulation. If you prove you are not worthy of my gift, I take it back. It is how we relate to God, believing He too wants something from us in return for His gifts, and ultimately, it will cost us our lives. Our misguided perception is that we must sacrifice for His love. Thus, our relationship with God becomes one of bargaining.

Putting any conditions on our giving is what we think a capricious God does. **"And so you think God's gifts are loans at best; at worst, deceptions which would cheat you of defenses, to ensure that when He strikes He will not fail to kill."** (W.197.1.5) We think God asks something of us, and if we don't give it, He will kill us. We defend against His "love," as we fear our vulnerability. We don't trust love, and in the same way, as we protect ourselves from God, we set up defenses against being hurt in our relationships.

**"How easily are God and guilt confused by those who know not what their thoughts can do."** (W.197.2.1) Jesus explains this by telling us, **"A major source of the ego's off-balanced state is its lack of discrimination between the body and the Thoughts of God. Thoughts of God are unacceptable to the ego, because they clearly point to the**

**nonexistence of the ego itself. The ego therefore either distorts them or refuses to accept them. It cannot, however, make them cease to be.**" (T.4.V.2.1-4) (ACIM OE T.4.VI.70) He goes on to say that what we try to do is conceal our "unacceptable" body impulses and also our impulses toward the love of God because both threaten us. Our fear of love is our fear of God, for the ego tells us that to accept His love is to lose ourselves. We are threatened by this because all the ego is concerned with is self-preservation.

Jesus assures us, **"Yet you will never realize His gifts are sure, eternal, changeless, limitless, forever giving out, extending love and adding to your never-ending joy while you forgive but to attack again."** (W.197.5.3) In our attacks, we affirm separation and differences. We must remain vigilant when trying to be helpful and loving to another. There may be a subtle hook, where we see that we are giving in order to get, which is the nature of the special relationship. Whenever you see this in yourself, it is important not to feel guilty and beat on yourself. Recognize that this is very helpful to your healing. It is something you can willingly put on the inner altar for healing so you can accept the love that you are back into yourself.

When we deny the strength of God in us, all we have to depend on is the weakness of the ego. **"Deny your strength, and weakness must become salvation to you."** (W.197.2.2) We rely on the ego to save us, yet the ego is a sign of weakness accompanied by guilt. To overcome this belief in weakness, we try to get strength from those around us, competing for some form of power. The ego has extracted its strength from the death of God, and now it seems to live off His strength.

Today, we keep our awareness on the attachment we have to the results of our giving. We remember that when we give truly, we earn our own gratitude. Every gift we give is received. Every blessing we give our brother is received, even if it is not apparent to us. **"In his mind there is a part that joins with yours in thanking you."** (W.197.4.2) **"In your gratitude are they accepted universally, and thankfully acknowledged by the Heart of God Himself."** (W.197.4.5) It does not matter whether others express appreciation or not because a part of their mind is grateful, and the gift is acknowledged in the One Mind. What is given is accepted by the One Mind. The light of Christ shines in every mind where the gift is received. The same light shines in us all, as minds are joined. When we come to know our gifts are only given to the Self we are, we realize that to give and to receive are one in truth.

In Oneness, there is only the One Self that gives and receives the gift. Whether it is the gift of forgiveness or healing or some other kind of gift, it is all the same. It is all a gift given to ourselves. To be concerned with whether the gift has been received or not is to see others as separate and that is an attack. We are One Self, one with each other, and One with God. In the holy instant we experience a moment of sanity and recognize that we have not changed ourselves from the glorious beings we are as God's Son.

The core of the gift given to our brothers, regardless of the form, is forgiveness. When the gift of forgiveness is given and received, we experience our own innocence. When we withdraw the gift, we reinforce the guilt in our own minds. Sometimes our giving has subtle hooks attached in the form of expectations that we have of how they should respond to us. Again, it is giving to get. For example, we may be nice to someone because there is something we want for ourselves. We are kind and helpful because we think we will get love and appreciation in return. This is different than just letting the love of the Holy Spirit come through us, with no concern for any kind of response. The ego can be subtle and wily in not acknowledging that what we are doing is giving to

get. Great honesty and courage are called for to look beyond the immediate inclination we have to deny the truth that we want something in return.

**"Withdraw the gifts you give, and you will think that what is given you has been withdrawn."** (W.197.6.1) Clearly, when I withdraw my gifts, I believe others will do the same to me. It creates suspicion of our brothers that, like our own gifts, their gifts have strings attached as well. Sometimes, when we receive gifts from them, we wonder what they want and expect of us in return. That is why receiving can be difficult for us. God, too, is constantly giving us His gifts of love and holiness, but we have withdrawn from His gifts, substituting our own instead. Now we believe He is the One Who has withdrawn His gifts from us. I am the one who has withdrawn my love, but now I project that belief and see others withdrawing their love from me. **"Do not forget, however, that to deny God will inevitably result in projection, and you will believe that others and not yourself have done this to you."** (T.10.V.2.1) (ACIM OE T.9.XI.94) This is where Byron Katie's work is so valuable, where we turn around what we are seeing in anyone and recognize that it all starts in our own minds. For example, what I see in you, I turn around and take responsibility for, since it is in my own mind.

The gifts of love and forgiveness, which are the core of all our giving, remind us of who we are in truth. When our guilt is healed, fear is gone, and we experience the love of God, Who has laid His Heart in our own. **"In your heart the Heart of God is laid."** (W.197.8.5) The memory of God is in our right minds. Jesus reminds us, **"He holds you dear, because you are Himself."** (W.197.8.6) We can only know this when we exclude no one from His Love; for again, we are only doing this to ourselves. So whenever we feel unfairly treated by anyone, we are saying that they are different from us, which reinforces our separation from each other, and in our minds, it justifies our attacks on them.

Today, notice when you want to withhold gratitude from people in your life, when you feel unfairly treated by anyone, when you are tempted to exclude anyone from your life, when you are inclined to hold grievances whenever your expectations are not met, or in any situation where your thoughts and feelings are not peaceful. They are all opportunities to see how you are withholding joy, given you by God, from shining forth. Our focus is to undo the false self and remember who we are.

Today, above all, we can be grateful for this teaching and for this classroom where we have many opportunities to fulfill our function, which is to reflect God's Love through forgiveness. Every brother contains the memory of God's love. Thus, we can **"Give thanks for all the countless channels which extend this Self."** (W.197.9.4) There is no one outside of our own minds. **"It can be but my gratitude I earn."** (W.197)

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

Published in DAILY LESSON MAILING by <http://www.jcim.net>  
JOIN MAILING LIST HERE: <http://bitly.com/CIMSMailingList-Signup>