

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 325

All things I think I see reflect ideas.

Sarah's Commentary:

I remember being with a group of Course students one night and watching *The Apprentice*, featuring Donald Trump. Each of us had an opinion as to what we were seeing: we shared whether it hurt us to watch the one that was seemingly rejected, or if we identified with the winner, or if we relished in the special relationships, or if we made judgments about how it should have come out, or if we liked one and not the other, and on and on. In fact, there was no meaning in what was going on except for what each of us was giving it. As Lesson 1 says, **"Nothing I see in this room means anything."** (W.1) And Lesson 2 says, **"I have given everything I see in this room all the meaning that it has for me."** (W.2) Everything we are seeing is completely neutral. Our judgments and our projections give it all the meaning it has for us. You may notice your reaction as you watch a movie where some character is going to walk into a dangerous situation, and you want to yell at him not to go there as if the images on the screen could be changed by your injunctions.

In the same way, we think we have some kind of power over the images on the screen of this world. When we try to change the world instead of changing our thoughts about it, it is the same as trying to change the outcome of the movie on the screen instead of changing the film in the projector. Our mind projects whatever we see in the world, and only by changing our mind can we let go of our ideas of how things should be.

You may remember that in Lesson 130 we read, **"Perception is consistent. What you see reflects your thinking. And your thinking but reflects your choice of what you want to see. Your values are determiners of this, for what you value you must want to see, believing what you see is really there. No one can see a world his mind has not accorded value. And no one can fail to look upon what he believes he wants."** (W.130.1.1-6)

What we see with our eyes is not real. It all reflects a process that is just going on in our minds and projected out. As we make judgments and condemn, we see a world of condemnation. As we take responsibility for healing our thoughts and look through the "eyes" of forgiveness, we see a world of gentleness and loveliness. As our thoughts change, the meaning that we give to the world we see changes.

As Jesus reminds us, **"Projection makes perception. The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that. But though it is no more than that, it is not less. Therefore, to you it is important. It is the witness to your state of mind, the outward picture of an inward condition. As a man thinketh, so does he perceive. Therefore, seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world."** (T.21.IN.1.1-7) (ACIM OE T.21.I.1)

Later, **"The world you see but shows you how much joy you have allowed yourself to see in you, and to accept as yours. And, if this is its meaning then the power to give it joy must lie within you."** (T.21.IN.2.7-8) (ACIM OE T.21.I.2)

We hold the belief that what we perceive comes from without, but this is not the case. Mind is the cause and the world is the effect, not the other way around. Everything starts in our minds. We give our own meaning to forms in the world that are all neutral. It is my state of mind that I see reflected outward, hard as that is to conceive. The reason it is difficult is that our senses deceive us.

We read in the Manual for Teachers, **"Where do all these differences come from? Certainly they seem to be in the world outside. Yet it is surely the mind that judges what the eyes behold. It is the mind that interprets the eyes' messages and gives them 'meaning.' And this meaning does not exist in the world outside at all."** (M.8.3.1-5) Our interpretation gives meaning to everything we see. It all **"starts with my idea of what I want."** (W.325.1.1) Then the mind makes up an image of that desire, and this is projected outward and looked upon. Yet we still believe that we are at the mercy of people and events that seem to be the cause of our reactions. In other words, events outside seem to have control over our responses, but it all starts in our own mind. The good news is, this is where the power to see everything differently resides. If I perceive that someone says something unkind to me and seems to dismiss me, it is only because I want to be hurt. Their behavior has nothing to do with me. My interpretation is a choice I am making. I can choose instead to see their behavior as a call for love and understanding.

As an example, I was recently talking to a friend who was lamenting that she has no family in the immediate area and that her daughter does not want to move to be closer to her, which is her wish. She is depressed about the situation and said that she feels her daughter should take some responsibility to be more available to her mother and visit her more often. No matter how much she tries to control the people in her life, she appears to be pushing them away instead. Clearly, the beliefs and values she is holding are keeping her in hell. It is not what the family members are doing at all, but what she believes is necessary for her happiness.

The primary questions are, "What is it that you want? Do you still want to hold onto your special self, your values, your self-concepts, or do you want the Atonement? Do you want to continue this dream of suffering, or do you want to awaken to the truth of who you are? Do you want fear, or do you want love?" It is all about what motivates us. Another way to ask these questions is in a practical way that applies to our daily lives. "Do I want to hold onto my anger, or do I want peace and healing of my mind?" As my partner said to me yesterday, he was giving up "stunting" and "sulking" because he recognized he did not want to hurt himself as he had been doing. He had used these behaviors in the belief that others would recognize that they were the cause of his suffering, but now he could see he was the cause and was creating suffering in his own mind.

We have absolute power over how we respond to every circumstance. We are not the victims of forces outside of us. It can be a bit of a stretch for our mind to absorb that everything we experience is the effect of a decision for what we want. When we hold onto our insane desire to be separate, unique, special, condemning, attacking, and retaliating, we absolutely experience the results of those thoughts. Conflict, loss, lack, judgment, and competition all come from these insane thoughts. What this looks like is that we see in the world whatever is in our mind. We think that the world is punishing us, and we are at its mercy, when, in fact, the world is simply bringing us the results of everything we ask for. When we hold guilt in our mind, we ask for punishment. We expect recrimination, and we torture ourselves for what we believe we have done. The good news is that

we can make another choice. We are not responsible for the error. Our responsibility is to choose the Correction. We can choose peace now. When we are willing to take responsibility for our mistakes and bring them to the healing light of the Holy Spirit, they are all washed away.

In Chapter 27, we are given another way to see our relationships that are the source of many of our difficulties, as we perceive them. Jesus tells us, **"Dream softly of your sinless brother, who unites with you in holy innocence. And from this dream the Lord of Heaven will Himself awaken His beloved Son. Dream of your brother's kindnesses instead of dwelling in your dreams on his mistakes. Select his thoughtfulness to dream about instead of counting up the hurts he gave. Forgive him his illusions, and give thanks to him for all the helpfulness he gave. And do not brush aside his many gifts because he is not perfect in your dreams. He represents his Father Whom you see as offering both life and death to you."** (T.27.VII.15.1-7) (ACIM OE T.27.VIII.75-76)

"Brother, He gives but life. Yet what you see as gifts your brother offers represent the gifts you dream your Father gives to you. Let all your brother's gifts be seen in light of charity and kindness offered you. And let no pain disturb your dream of deep appreciation for his gifts to you." (T.27.VII.16.1-4) (ACIM OE T.27.VIII.76)

Can you feel how much resistance there is to choosing to give up your judgments of a brother who is seemingly causing you difficulty? My mind is holding judgments of someone today, and I can see how I am building my case with all the "reasons" for the judgments. I am not saying the behaviors I see her exhibiting are not there, but only that it is up to me in how I interpret them and whether I choose to throw away my peace as a result. Seeing sin in my brother allows me to escape responsibility for the sin I believe is in me; but their sin is just a projection of the shadow in my own mind. Whatever I don't like in me, I will attract in some form in a brother who shows me what I am projecting. Whatever I hold as positive in my image of myself has a shadow. For example, if I see myself as honest, I will judge those who are dishonest. Instead of looking at my own shadow where I am being dishonest, I am tempted to judge it in my brother. When my concepts and what I judge as good and bad about myself are released, then space is made for the truth of who I am and who my brother is.

We resist giving up our way of seeing because we want to be right about the way we have set things up in this world. Yet only when we are willing to take responsibility for our judgments and put them on the altar within can space be made for the truth to rush in. Only when we release our desire to attack and to gain at our brother's expense can we experience the peace and joy that comes from our willingness to forgive. Giving up attack thoughts is the only way out of this insanity. Anything else simply perpetuates the cycle of sin, guilt, and fear. We want our brothers to be guilty so God's punishment, which we fear for ourselves, will fall on them instead of us. We are then choosing to be seen as helpless, innocent victims who always did our best. This is all an ego set up, which Jesus helps us to see as false.

If we really saw that projecting guilt onto others is how we keep ourselves in fear, would we not want these thoughts healed by the Holy Spirit so we can experience the peace behind our attack thoughts? When we want this more than anything, our motivation to give up dreams of attack and revenge is heightened. When we see that we are doing it to ourselves, we can wonder at the insanity of it all. If we recognized that all our suffering is something we have invited because of our own guilt and its consequences, would we not be very willing to give up the insanity? **"What I see reflects a process in my mind, which starts with my idea of what I want."** (W.325.1.1)

Every situation we find distressing today provides us with another opportunity to look at our judgmental thoughts, at our need to be right, and at our need to feel superior in order to try to purchase our innocence at the expense of our brother's guilt. Choose to bring these thoughts to the light of truth.

We need to get honest about what we truly want. When we are clear that all we want is to know our own holiness, we will be highly motivated to release our judgments and ask to be shown how to see every brother through the eyes of Christ. In every situation, determine in advance what you want to come of it.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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