



Lesson 344
**Today I learn the law of love; that what
I give my brother is my gift to me.**

Sarah's Commentary:

The law of love is that giving and receiving are the same, mentioned very often in A Course in Miracles. **"What I give my brother is my gift to me."** (W.344) This law works in the ego framework as well as in the realm of the Holy Spirit. In the ego thought system, when we think we are giving guilt to our brothers, we are actually keeping it; and when we give attack, we receive the attack we think we are giving. It is not hard to see that when I get angry at my brother the anger is still in me. I think I am giving it to him, yet it is right back at me.

In the thought system of the Holy Spirit, when we give love or forgiveness, we receive it for ourselves. When we see innocence in our brother, we know our own innocence. The law works the same in the world of hate as in the world of love. Giving and receiving are the same. The ego has sold us a bill of goods, telling us that we can safely blame others and get rid of guilt in the process. In this way of thinking, when I attack my brother, I believe that I have safely given the guilt to him while holding onto innocence for myself.

It is true that, in the world of form, what I give to you, I no longer have, or what I take from you, you no longer have, but behind all form is thought. Thought determines what I am giving or receiving. If my thought is to give a gift in form as an expression of the love I feel for you with no expectations of getting anything back from you, I experience that same love for myself. I still have what the form represents. We have all experienced this when we have given someone a gift that is perfect for them and reflects our deep love for them. If the giving is accompanied by expectations that they must reciprocate in some way, then what I give them is not a gift of love but one of guilt. And when this is the case, what I receive for myself is more guilt. The gift now has strings attached, and they owe me something in return.

In the world, I accumulate treasures, which I see as mine. I think of all the things I have as belonging to me alone. I think my house belongs to me alone. I think my car is mine alone. Yet this lesson states, **"And as I looked upon the treasure that I thought I had, I found an empty place where nothing ever was or is or will be. Who can share a dream? And what can an illusion offer me?"** (W.344.1.3-5) In other words, Jesus helps us to see that what we accumulate in the world is nothing at all. It can't be shared and it can't offer us anything of value. Only ideas can be shared, and behind all form is an idea. If things are just ideas, what I appear to be giving in form is still just a gift to myself. The joy we feel when we give someone a gift and feel our hearts expand with love and generosity is true giving and receiving.

At some level, we know things really have no meaning except when we give them. We say things like, "You can't take it with you." For me, as I get older, this has more meaning. I used to collect heirlooms like old dolls and collector plates until I asked myself, "What is this for?" I used to keep photo albums of all my trips until I had many shelves full of them and I started to deeply question their value for me. Many things, that I just had to have, fell away over time as I incorporated the Course teachings into my life. I came to the place in my life where more and more I questioned what anything was for. I couldn't find satisfactory answers to keep accumulating more stuff. There is nothing at all wrong with material things, and we are not guilty for having stuff. As Jesus says, they are nothing---not good, not bad, merely nothing. Yet if we use what we have for a holy purpose, it becomes meaningful. It means we allow the Holy Spirit to decide for us. Where should my money go? What purpose can my home be put to? What purpose is there that reflects the law of love? What if I really knew that what I give away will be the only thing left in the end, and what I hold onto for myself alone will be lost?

Jesus reminds us that the law of love he speaks of is not ours. ***"This is Your law, my Father, not my own."*** (W.344.1.1) In other words, we believe we lose what we give away. There is a part of us that holds back in everything, whether in the money we give, what we give or hold back in a relationship, what we consider our own self-interest that we protect, or what we allow ourselves to give to God. In other words, we protect some aspects of our individuality and our self-interest. In this world, we still live according to laws that protect our interests as we see them, but we are invited to increasingly question where we put our attention. We can increasingly look at what we give that is a real gift---when we give it, we keep it. As we learn to give more and look at the places we hold back, we can learn about God's law and see how we apply it in our own lives.

"Yet he whom I forgive will give me gifts beyond the worth of anything on earth." (W.344.1.6) Haven't we all experienced the shift that happens when we bring attack thoughts and grievances to the Holy Spirit and space is made for love? It is a joyful experience. When we attack, we are only hurting ourselves. What we give truly, we receive for ourselves and our hearts swell with joy. When we release our angry thoughts, our fearful thoughts, our grievances, our judgments, our expectations of how others should be, our needs, and our belief in lack, we know the fullness of Self and the radiance of Being, which is a gift beyond measure. ***"Thus is the law of love fulfilled. And thus Your Son arises and returns to You."*** (W.344.1.8-9)

That is what this journey is about. It is not about how much we acquire and hold onto. It is about releasing, loving, being, and sharing. It is about joining with each other, so we can know, ***"How near we are to one another, as we go to God."*** (W.344.2.1) Thus, we experience ***"How near is He to us."*** (W.344.2.2) Clearly, Jesus understands this is a process for us. We are not yet ready to give all to all. He knows that we are still holding back, but we are taking steps up the ladder. ***"How close the ending of the dream of sin, and the redemption of the Son of God."*** (W.344.2.3) We are coming to a deeper realization that we are One and that our brother's call for love is our own. We unite in remembering that our only purpose here is to remember who we are and that we can only do that as we give what we most want for ourselves.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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