

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 4

**These thoughts do not mean anything.
They are like the things I see in this room
[on this street, from the window, in this place].**

Sarah's Commentary:

It is initially challenging to watch our thoughts, yet that is precisely what we are being asked to do. We are generally not aware of the myriad thoughts in the mind. The mind is very noisy, but we are not used to paying attention to what the thoughts are about. We may feel depressed and disheartened and wonder where these feelings come from yet all day we are holding thoughts and beliefs that we have not tuned into. We are sending messages to ourselves that create distress, but we have not tuned into the sad song we are singing to ourselves with these thoughts. Our thoughts dictate our feelings, and thus, our feelings can be a good gateway to the beliefs we hold about ourselves and others. Because our feelings come from the thoughts, beliefs, values, and concepts we hold, it is important to watch what we are thinking.

When we lament, "I can't help it. That is just the way I feel," we are assuming we are at the mercy of our thoughts and our world. We believe the world is the cause of how we feel, and we are the effect. We are learning that the events that seem to have an impact on us are actually neutral. It is the meaning we choose to give these events that determines how we feel. The inner and outer are the same. We are being shown that ultimately our thoughts have no meaning, just like the forms we see have no meaning. The only meaning they have is the meaning we give them. Our thoughts are not different from the forms we perceive and give meaning to. **"They are like the things I see in this room."** (W.4) It is not about good thoughts or bad thoughts. We judge our thoughts as good or bad, but we are being told they are simply not real. The only reality is Oneness. Nothing outside of that is real. The problem is, we give what is "outside" meaning. The meaning we give it is all based on past learning. Jesus says that what we are seeing is an ". . . **outside picture of our inward condition.**" (T.21.IN.1.5) (ACIM OE T.21.I.1) We give the picture meaning. It serves the ego, which wants us to see value in the world and stay focused on what is outside of the mind so we will stay invested in the world.

When we start to look at our thoughts and pay more attention to them, we can see how they are all over the place, rapidly changing from one thing to another. Noting the thoughts crossing the mind is not an easy exercise for us. We have not been trained to look at our thoughts. In looking at our thoughts today, we are told, **"Do not, however, select only the thoughts you think are 'bad'. You will find, if you train yourself to look at your thoughts, that they represent such a mixture that, in a sense, none of them can be called 'good' or 'bad'. That is why they do not mean anything."** (W.4.1.5-7) What we want to consider today is that they are neither good nor bad but that they simply don't mean anything. What we are trying to get to is that underneath the thoughts we think we are thinking are our real thoughts, of which we are not aware. To become aware of our real thoughts, we need to look at our meaningless thoughts and see them for what they really are—nothing.

But now we may wonder what real thoughts are underneath the thoughts we think we are thinking. Jesus explains that they are thoughts that spring forth from the eternal Self and are thoughts of joy, love, and the Oneness of our Being. The truth of who we are is behind the meaningless thoughts we are thinking. Our thinking mind has covered over the truth because the ego has us focused on the seeming reality of this world. As we apply these Lessons, we start to see the unreality of this illusory world projected from the wrong mind.

We are just starting the mind training and may find ourselves judging and reacting to the exercises, but it does not matter. What is important in doing these exercises is not to look for some kind of perfection or expectation of where we think we need to be, nor is it helpful to strain in doing them. To strain is to put the ego in charge of the undoing. Remember, all that is required is willingness to look at the thoughts without judgment. Our part is simply to bring these thoughts to the light. The Holy Spirit does the rest. Our part is not about undoing the egoic thought system because the ego will not undo itself. The Holy Spirit in the right minds is the strength and power in us Who brings the Correction. His Correction is to judge us as guiltless. We are not here to change ourselves as we are already perfect, whole, and complete. Our part is to bring awareness to thoughts and beliefs that block this truth in the desire to know the Self we are.

It is not helpful to drive yourself crazy trying to catch all your thoughts. Do the exercise only as long as you don't feel strain, and try to suspend your judgment about all of this. Recognize in this process that the ego may get threatened and resist the exercise. It does this because it is at risk of being undone and no longer controlling our lives.

Jesus says this is a major exercise that will be repeated in a different form. **"The aim here is to train you in the first steps toward the goal of separating the meaningless from the meaningful."** (W.4.3.2) What thoughts do you cherish? We may cherish memories of good times, but we also cherish grievances, judgments, painful thoughts, and thoughts of unworthiness. Obviously, these are thoughts that hurt us, so why do we keep them? We keep them because they have come to define who we think we are, and thus, there is pleasure and pride we get from how we have come to define ourselves, even as a result of thoughts we see as painful. Likewise, the thoughts we think we like come with a hefty price tag because they keep us rooted in the illusion and the illusion always brings suffering.

While these thoughts do seem to have power over us, Jesus still tells us to consider that they are meaningless. **"It is a first attempt in the long-range purpose of learning to see the meaningless as outside you, and the meaningful within."** (W.4.3.3) What is meaningful within is the truth of what we are as created by God. What is outside us is not real. Another way to see this is that behind what we call the mind, with all its random thoughts, is the real or spiritual mind that is still unwavering and all-encompassing. It is blocked by the mind that differentiates and takes pleasure in its own thoughts. We are attached to our uniqueness and special individual self, even if the experience of that self is full of pain and suffering. We are at the beginning steps of letting go of this self-identity by being the observer of it. It all starts with observing our thoughts.

This Lesson is a first step in realizing that we can start the process of looking at our thoughts and recognize we give them all the power they seem to have. We learn through this process that we can ultimately release the power we have given these thoughts.

We learn early in the text reading, **"The Holy Spirit and the ego are the only choices open to you. God created one, and so you cannot eradicate it. You made the other, and so**

you can. Only what God creates is irreversible and unchangeable. What you made can always be changed because, when you do not think like God, you are not really thinking at all. Delusional ideas are not real thoughts, although you can believe in them. But you are wrong. The function of thought comes from God and is in God. As part of His Thought, you *cannot* think apart from Him." (T.5.V.6.8-16) (ACIM OE.T.5.VII.67)

Jesus explains that there are only two emotions: One is love, which is our inheritance, and the other is fear, which we have made. As we learn to uncover our thoughts and are willing to give them over to the Holy Spirit, we make space for the love that we are to come through. Another way of putting it is that when we uncover our ego thoughts, which are in the wrong mind, we make way for miracles. Regardless, the love we are never changes, in spite of our thoughts. No matter how shameful, ugly, or demeaning our thoughts seem to be, they are meaningless because the part of the mind thinking them is also meaningless.

In the practice instructions, we are told, **"Unlike the preceding ones, these exercises do not begin with the idea for the day. In these practice periods, begin with noting the thoughts that are crossing your mind for about a minute. Then apply the idea to them. If you are already aware of unhappy thoughts, use them as subjects for the idea. Do not, however, select only the thoughts you think are 'bad'. You will find, if you train yourself to look at your thoughts, that they represent such a mixture that, in a sense, none of them can be called 'good' or 'bad'. That is why they do not mean anything."** (W.4.1.1-7)

Then we are told, **"This is a major exercise and will be repeated from time to time in somewhat different form."** (W.4.3.1) From this, we get the sense of its importance in our mind training. We learn to recognize that the meaningless is outside and the meaningful is within, but since there is nothing outside of the mind, nothing in form is meaningful, including our thoughts. Our thoughts are no different than other forms, like the things in the room, which don't mean anything. The only meaning is in content, not form.

Our thoughts have actually put us into a state of mindlessness. Thus, the ego has succeeded in blotting out of our awareness the content of God's Love. Now, we see the world of form, and the content of love is buried beneath the forms (our thoughts). That is why it is important that we learn to look at them and learn that we have a choice and a Mighty Power in the mind to heal all that stands in the way of the truth.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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