



LESSON 83 Review II ~ Lesson 65 and Lesson 66

Sarah's Commentary:

In the introduction to this review, we are again reminded that we must be determined not to be sidetracked in applying these Lessons to the people and situations in our lives. We have the power of decision so that it is up to us to make a choice to give up the ego by being vigilant in watching the mind for thoughts of guilt and fear. When we notice such thoughts, we turn them over to the Holy Spirit. His light will shine them away. There is nothing more for us to do. Indeed, there is nothing more we can do. Our part is to bring awareness to our fearful thoughts and take responsibility for them. Our minds are powerful. When we give power to our fearful thoughts, they keep us in misery.

We believe that we have sinned in choosing separation and now we must escape from God and hide in the body and the world where we will be safe from His wrath. We bought into the belief that we could leave God and with this belief came a load of guilt. We believe we have done something so horrendous that we could no longer return to our pristine home in God. We have made Him into a punishing God, and we fear His punishment. Not only do we feel that we have done something terribly wrong, but we are wrong in our very being. With this thought comes all of suffering and feelings of unworthiness, shame, depression, anxiety, lack, abandonment, stress, frustration, worry, resentment, and disappointment. Who of us doesn't experience these kinds of feelings? Yet none of them reflect the truth of who we are.

Now we are choosing to listen to the appeal Jesus makes to us in the Course. He asks us to see what havoc and suffering have come to our lives as a result of the choice we made to believe we are separate from love and thus guilty. Jesus is showing us how the ego has led us to believe that we could find some level of happiness in the world, and we should continue to seek outside ourselves for that happiness. What the ego does not want us to see is the true source of happiness that can only come by choosing against its counsel. Its whole focus is to lead us away from our true power, which is in our right minds.

We can never find lasting happiness in the things of this world. As long as we look for our completion in the world, instead of turning within, we will never find what we are looking for. **"The freedom to leave behind everything that hurts you and humbles you and frightens you cannot be thrust upon you, but it can be offered you through the grace of God."** (T.11.VI.6.3) (ACIM OE T.10.VII.64) No one is going to hurl us into Heaven. **". . . you have no commander except yourself,"** (T.6.IV.9.4) (ACIM OE T.6.V.53) but we have a mighty Guide whenever we are ready to turn to Him for help. He will take us as quickly or slowly as our fear will allow. We are in charge of our salvation. No one is coming to save you except your Self. It is the Holy Spirit in your mind that you can always turn to.

In this Lesson, Jesus is telling us that our only function is the one God gave us, and that function is to forgive. We have many and varied functions in the world related to goals we have for our lives and for our daily activities. These goals are about achieving happiness by managing and controlling external events. If they go our way, we feel a level of satisfaction. When they fail to meet our needs, we suffer. This morning I had many goals for myself to get some things done, including this commentary. However, a friend called and asked for some of my time. When we met, she asked me to do some errands for her. I felt some distress, thinking about the amount of time this would all take and about the goals I had set for myself. However, I felt the prompt to respond to her call; so I chose to release my investment in what I deemed important to get done. The ego reminded me of my many tasks, but I chose not to listen, though initially there was a sense of anxiety. Yet in choosing to go with my friend, I felt the peace and joy that came with spending time with her. I notice life becomes much clearer and sweeter when I live in the moment and release the future and my own plans. So often, the things we feel we need to accomplish just fall away or their importance is no longer there.

Having said that, if we respond to a request because we are trying to be nice or "people-pleasing," it is not an authentic response but a response based on guilt. We always need to be very discerning as to whether we are listening to the ego or to the Holy Spirit when we choose to say "yes" to a request. This is not always easy to see. The important thing is to reflect on what we are feeling. If I say yes and mean no, there will be a grievance and resentment. On the other hand, sometimes I ask myself if my salvation depends on saying "no." Jesus reminds us to do what our brother asks as long as it does not hurt us or our brother. **"His very insistence should tell you that he believes salvation lies in it. If you insist on refusing and experience a quick response of opposition, you are believing that your salvation lies in not doing it."** (T.12.III.2.2-3) (ACIM OE T.11.IV.25) **"Do not leave anyone without giving salvation to him and receiving it yourself."** (T.8.III.4.7) (ACIM OE T.8.IV.19) It is all about discernment, which takes a lot of practice and vigilance in watching our thoughts and feelings. If we are not at peace with our decision, we need to recognize there are conflicting wishes in the mind. We may be doing one thing behaviorally, but our thoughts are not consistent with our behavior.

Our only goal is to be happy, peaceful, content, and totally unaffected by events, plans, and intentions. How much does my happiness depend on whether I do my shopping, write my commentary, do my income tax, or any number of tasks on my list today? Does my salvation depend on these things? Remembering my one important function releases me from making all these goals the reason for my life. It is not that we don't have things we need to attend to in our lives. What I find for myself is that I just need to use every situation as an opportunity to learn to be at peace. Now peace becomes the priority in all things, and I remember my only function is the one God gave me. This is where my happiness lies. When I was not accomplishing what I thought was important to get done this morning, I needed to let go of my idea of what was important and instead, act on what my heart was calling me to do.

Happiness is truly a choice I can make in any moment when I am choosing with the Holy Spirit. Unhappiness is also a decision based on needing to be right about my story with regard to any situation. When we ask for guidance about where we are to go and what we are to do, we are no longer relying on our own judgments. Instead, we rely on the Holy Spirit, rather than our own idle wishes. When we listen to the ego, we are doing things out of guilt. Now we are called to take responsibility for our own lack of peace, rather than making someone else responsible for how we feel.

We may think we can resolve our conflicts by making a decision about which of our goals have priority, and then we think the conflict will dissipate. However, we will still feel the stress of all of

the remaining goals that are left undone. Jesus urges us to remember that it is not about reducing conflict in our lives but releasing it all by remembering our true purpose in this world. If our only purpose is to forgive, love, choose happiness and peace in every moment, and to follow the prompts of the Holy Spirit, our doubts and fears disappear.

When we have conflicting goals, we are torn in many directions. We've all experienced this. The more fundamental these goals are, the more painful the situation becomes. Jesus says it causes all kinds of problems for us. We become uncertain in what to say and what to do. We are filled with doubt, and we become distressed. The conflict comes from whether we choose God's way or the ego's way. This is the fundamental, divided condition of our minds. When the conflict in our minds becomes acute, our motivation to choose the function God has given us increases because we recognize that this is where our happiness lies. It lies in our decision to forgive.

If I have an argument of any kind, I would rather lose the argument and win at choosing peace. Thus, it is about choosing our divinity over winning at the urging of the ego. With the ego, we choose to attack, blame, and hold a grievance. When we blame and hold grievances, we just gather more guilt, which keeps us further invested in the illusion. That is what our attraction to guilt is about. The choice for peace seems like the obvious choice until we are in the battle. When we are, it seems to us that happiness lies in winning the battle and getting our way. That is why it is important to prepare our minds with the specific application of the idea for the day. Otherwise, we will be tempted to forget our function.

"My happiness and my function are one." (W.83.3.1) My only function is an internal change of mind and change of teacher, choosing no longer to listen to the ego and turning instead to the Holy Spirit. The ego tells us our happiness comes from things going well in the world. Clinging to anything external that we want to go our way will never work and will keep us in the conflict. The external world has only one helpful purpose, which is to be a reflection of what is going on in our own minds. Now we can see where healing is needed so we can bring our dark thoughts to light. Our happiness comes only through forgiveness. Does this mean we give up things we think we want in the world? No. We are only asked to look internally to see what our thoughts are about any situation.

The Course is about applying this teaching to every situation in our lives. Jesus is helping us understand that even though we might get some pleasure in the world, it is transitory. The only true pleasure is found in our choice for peace. When something is disturbing our peace, we are asked to apply the Lesson. We will increasingly see that true happiness comes from letting go of guilt. Our guilt is what must be undone. The things outside ourselves that seem to have power over us are illusions that we have given power to. We react to these things as if they were real, and we give them the power to make us unhappy. Whatever form of upset we experience, we need to recognize that it has no power to impact our happiness. These Lessons are showing me where my happiness truly lies. **"And I must learn to recognize what makes me happy, if I would find happiness."** (W.83.3.5) The only thing that can make us happy is to forgive.

The belief in the power of our minds to choose forgiveness, to choose to release the belief in the illusion, and to bring us the happiness we seek, is something we are not completely ready for. We still cling to things that we seek in the world for our happiness and still work to strategize how to acquire happiness through the events and people we manipulate in the world. Sometimes it will work temporarily for us, but this happiness is neither consistent nor reliable, changing from moment to moment and situation to situation. The idea here is not that we should give up anything we think we want, but to see that the Course is offering us hope for real happiness. When we see that, we become increasingly motivated to turn over our way for His way.

Today, as we go through our day, we are asked to stay vigilant with regard to anything that seems to make us unhappy or brings upset to our minds. When we do the work daily by applying our Lessons, we remind ourselves, **"Nothing, including this, can justify the illusion of happiness apart from my function."** (W.83.4.4) Today, let forgiveness lead you to the happiness within. The peace of God is waiting for your acceptance, which means anything that gets in the way is another opportunity to release how the ego would have you see it. We need to be happy learners, which for me means staying vigilant, being patient with myself, and being willing to accept every opportunity that shows up to learn forgiveness.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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