

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 17 **I see no neutral things.**

Sarah's Commentary:

This Lesson continues to look at the relationship between what you think (cause) and what you see (effect). The truth is that people, objects, and events outside of ourselves are not the cause of our reactions. What we see is determined by our thoughts. What we see and experience are the effects of our thoughts. We project what we are thinking and believing onto people, situations, and events in the world. Now we see our thoughts reflected there. Yet we don't realize the cause of everything we see starts in our own minds. We think the world is the cause of how we feel, and we see ourselves as the effect. Thus, we feel like a victim of this world and helpless in the face of events, people, and circumstances acting on us.

And so, we wonder, "How did I get here (on this planet)?" "How did it happen that I have the parents that I do?" "Why am I so unhappy?" We don't see that it is all by our own decision. We have come to believe that none of this is our choice and that it is events outside of our own minds that are the cause of how we feel and think. We chose to separate from God, but we do not want to take responsibility for that choice. Instead, we project our decision to separate onto God, and now we make Him responsible for abandoning us. It is how we have reversed cause and effect. This reversal forms our belief that the world is acting on us, and there is nothing we can do about it. If this were the case, we truly would be victims of our circumstances, but it is all set up that way by the ego so we would not have to hold ourselves responsible for the separation. If we can claim that we are powerless over our decisions, we can blame others for our condition.

What if we are wrong, as Jesus says we are? **"If it were not so, perception would have no cause, and would itself be the cause of reality. In view of its highly variable nature, this is hardly likely."** (W.17.1.5-6) In other words, the illusory world of perception would then indeed be real and would be the cause of our experience. If this were so, we would be hapless victims of a random, changing world. We would then be caught in hopelessness, and all the conditions of the world, including suffering and death, would be real. When we realize that it is our minds that are the source of what we see, then we have the power to choose our experience. And through this process of choice, we can be released from the hopeless cycle of birth and death. Jesus tells us that indeed there is a way out, but we must be willing to acknowledge that we have been wrong and learn to think differently. **"This is not the way the world thinks, but you must learn that it is the way you think."** (W.17.1.4) In other words, don't look to the world to support your new way of thinking. That is why we need those mighty companions, who provide support when we start losing our way.

We have come to trust our way of seeing the world. The perpetrators of our experience are seen "out there." This forms the stories that we tell about our lives. We trust our senses and believe that what we see and experience is the truth. We wonder why we feel bad about ourselves, so we look at the cause of our distress and describe reasons for our feelings of anger, depression, sadness, or

grief. It usually starts with our parents, who did not meet our needs adequately. It includes our friends, our teachers, and our society in general. We blame others for attacking us, betraying us, hurting us, upsetting us, avoiding us, or neglecting us. We are convinced the cause of our difficulties is outside ourselves, and not as a result of our own thoughts. We want to make sense of the snippets of things that have seemingly happened in our lives, so we tell a story that fits our experience. We weave it together in such a way that it seems to make rational sense, and we are determined to be right about our perspective, bringing forth evidence for our position.

For years, I told the story of the victimization at the hands of my parents until one day the question put to me was, "What if I chose them?" What if they were absolutely perfect for what I came to this planet to learn? Contemplating this possibility changed the way I saw them. I actually could see how perfect they were for my classroom of healing. I am now able to be grateful for all the events of my life. Increasingly, I see it is my chosen script and that it serves my highest good. Though often painful to the ego, I can now see it is all for my awakening when used for this purpose.

Jesus is trying to help us accept that nothing we see or interpret is the truth. Nothing! We are wrong about everything. It is impossible to come to this awareness until we are ready to admit our way does not work, no matter how hard we try to get our needs met and no matter how much we try to avoid pain. At some point, we become motivated to listen to what Jesus is teaching us, but our whole upside-down perception needs to change, and it won't happen overnight. It requires discipline, patience, and gentleness with ourselves. It is not an event but a process and not an easy one for us. We will have many opportunities to make new choices in the way we perceive any situation. **"Trials are but lessons that you failed to learn presented once again, so where you made a faulty choice before you now can make a better one, and thus escape all pain that what you chose before has brought to you."** (T.31.VIII.3.1) (ACIM OE T.31.VIII.87) That is such an encouraging thought!

We are learning to see that our thoughts are where the power is and not what others do. This is a reversal of how we think now. I find it helpful to think of myself as the director of the play of my life. I wrote the script for the characters that show up in my dream. They play their part perfectly for my learning. They are just playing out the role I assigned to them. In my play, there are special people who take center stage. Some I love to hate, and others I think I love, but they hurt me, betray me, and upset me at times. Sometimes they fulfill my needs perfectly, but other times, they fail my requirements. And when they consistently disappoint me, they become the most difficult characters in my play, and I regret our paths ever crossed. Then, there are the irritating minor roles---the inconsiderate clerk in the store, the guy who cut me off in traffic, or the person who kept me waiting. I keep forgetting that what I am seeing are all my own thoughts projected onto the screen and reflected back to me. As long as I am seeing their actions as independent of my thoughts, I am powerless. If I think what I am seeing is a fact I make a convincing case that all of it is exactly the way it is. When I see it that way, I am telling Jesus that he is wrong in what he says. I am telling him that I am right about the way I see the situation, and furthermore, I have the evidence and am prepared to make my case. This is what we do every time we justify our feelings of being victimized.

Jesus tells us, **"It is always the thought that comes first, despite the temptation to believe that it is the other way around."** (W.17.1.3) This is the whole basis for forgiveness. To forgive is to see my own self-judgments and self-attacks projected out. **"Projection makes perception. The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that."** (T.21.1.1-2) (ACIM OE T.21.I.1) **"It is witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition."** (T.21.1.5) (ACIM OE T.21.I.1) What I see in the world is a reflection

of my thoughts, and they reflect my inner condition based on the concepts I hold about myself. Now I have the power to observe what I am thinking and choose healing. I can choose to look at my brother as the ego directs, which is to judge, attack and see guilt "out there"; or I can choose the Holy Spirit as my Guide and Teacher and look within at my own condemning thoughts. While this is empowering, it is also difficult until we develop sufficient discipline through our daily practice. Until it becomes our default position to turn to Holy Spirit, we find ourselves reacting to the external, but we must not judge ourselves for our mistakes. It is just another opportunity to observe what we have done and give our judgments to the Holy Spirit. We are called to be constantly mindful of our resistance and how we push this teaching away. The ego set it up so we would never change our minds and be stuck in this cycle of sin, guilt, and fear through myriad lifetimes, living at the mercy of a cruel world, suffering and dying with no hope of ever knowing true joy and peace. That is why we need help from outside of this system. This is where the Holy Spirit comes in.

The purpose of the Course is to help us see the sameness of all illusions. Some problems are not bigger than others, even though it appears to be the case. Until we recognize that all illusions are the same, we find some more difficult than others. They have no meaning except the meaning we give them. Some we prefer more than others. Some we see as more difficult than others. Just as there is no hierarchy of illusions, there is also no hierarchy when it comes to miracles. The miracle does not regard some illusions more difficult or harder to address than others. **"There is no order of difficulty in miracles. One is not 'harder' or 'bigger' than another. They are all the same. All expressions of love are maximal."** (T.1.I.1.1) (ACIM OE T.1.I.1)

"Regardless of what you may believe, you do not see anything that is really alive or really joyous. That is because you are unaware as yet of any thought that is really true, and therefore really happy." (W.17.3.2-3) What an amazing statement! It is certainly radical for us because we think of this experience as our life. Yet Jesus says, **"What you have given 'life' is not alive, and symbolizes but your wish to be alive apart from life, alive in death, with death perceived as life, and living, death."** (T.29.II.6.2) (ACIM OE T.29.III.15) We are told in the Course that the body does not die because it has never lived. What the Course calls life is what can never die, which is our eternal Self. The body and world are the effect of our choice for the ego thought system of sin, guilt, and fear projected out. Sin is the past, guilt is the present, and fear of consequences is the future. Thus, in the ego thought system, suffering, aging, and death are part of the reality of time and space. When we accept this as life, there is nothing we can do about it except live our lives as best we can, avoiding pain and seeking pleasure. However, what we are learning in this Course is that suffering and death are the results of our thought system. We will come to know our innocent, eternal Self, which cannot suffer or die when we learn to identify with the thought system of the Holy Spirit, rather than the ego.

Nothing we see is true. Only God's thoughts are true. Only what God created is real. God created perfect love. Nothing real can be threatened (Spirit). Nothing unreal exists (body/form). Reality is everlasting, unchanging, and true. Perceptions are temporary interpretations based on our beliefs, past experiences, and associations. There is no objective world. There is only One Reality. There is only One Divine Mind and nothing apart from it. We believe we have separated from our Source, although this is not possible. What is possible is our lack of awareness of our connection with God. The belief we hold, that we have separated from our Source, has brought pain into our minds. The belief that we have separated from God is the reason for our mountain of guilt, and this is what we now project onto others.

"Nothing beyond yourself can make you fearful or loving, because nothing is beyond you. Time and eternity are both in your mind, and will conflict until you perceive time solely as a means to regain eternity. You cannot do this as long as you believe that anything happening to you is caused by factors outside yourself. You must learn that time is solely at your disposal, and that nothing in the world can take this responsibility from you." (T.10.in.1.1-4) (ACIM OE T.9.VIII.59)

For one minute (or less if you feel a lot of resistance coming up), three or four times today with eyes open, say, **"I see no neutral things because I have no neutral thoughts."** (W.17.2.2) Then, we look about and resting our glance on each thing we note long enough to say, **"I do not see a neutral _____, because my thoughts about _____ are not neutral."** (W.17.2.4) It is helpful after you complete your morning practice to set a time for the next one, or the day can just slip by and so can the practice. Setting a time in advance helps to alleviate forgetting to do the practice.

If you find you experience resistance, **"the length of the practice period may be reduced to less than the minute or so that is otherwise recommended."** (W.17.4.2) What a loving teacher we have who takes us through this process so gently, not asking us to strain. He recognizes that this is challenging for us and that we will have tremendous resistance. He does not wish for us to experience more guilt than we already have. He understands this idea runs contrary to everything we now believe. Noticing our fear and resistance can be helpful, so we can ask for help with it.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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