



LESSON 176
Review V ~ Lesson 161 and Lesson 162

Sarah's Commentary:

[161] Give me your blessing, holy Son of God.

[162] I am as God created me.

In the introduction to these Review Lessons, Jesus offers to lead us on the journey he took and tells us that he is renewed each time he leads one of us to ". . . **the place at which the journey ends and is forgot.**" (W.RV.7.1) He needs our cooperation, as he asks us to "**Help me now to lead you back to where the journey was begun, to make another choice with me.**" (W.RV.7.5) We do that by undertaking the practice and giving it more time and effort. He encourages us on behalf of our own healing. It means being vigilant in watching our minds and seeing when we are giving attention to the ego and believing what it tells us. Healing does not require revisiting every decision, however. It can all be undone by healing the beliefs that led to those decisions.

When he says we are just being led back to where the journey started, this means that nothing is irrevocable. We simply recognize we made the wrong choice for the ego and, with it, for sin, guilt, and fear. Now we can make another choice in each situation that tempts us to listen to the ego. In this way any wrong choice we believe we have made in our lives can be undone in each moment. Transfer of training means that our healing applies to all situations. So, when we give up belief in attack, rejection or unworthiness we need not experience it again in any situation. It was all just a mistake, and mistakes can be corrected. It also means we need not feel guilty about the choices and decisions we have made, and there need not be regrets as it can all be used for forgiveness and healing. Each mistaken belief we hold can be undone with the help of the Holy Spirit until the memory of who we really are as God created us is restored.

It is important to remember we have not changed ourselves. Whenever we start to beat up on ourselves, allow doubt thoughts and beliefs to enter, or our unworthiness to slip in, we can pause, step back, breathe and remind ourselves of the truth. This is so effective to do to discipline the mind not to go down the rabbit hole with the ego. When we start on this journey, the ego gets threatened, becomes suspicious, and ultimately vicious, warning us of the consequence of this path. We may start to question whether it works for us and may be tempted to abandon the teaching. We need each other and our mighty companions to strengthen our weak resolve when we are tempted to wander off the path. The wonderful thing about "talking" to you as I write these commentaries is that I am really talking to myself and reinforcing the Lessons in my own mind. It is a gift I receive, as I give.

This Course is not just a personal path of salvation, however. To undertake this journey alone is to undertake it with the ego as a guide. We heal through our connections and collaborations with each other, extending miracles so we know that we have received them. They are always in us,

awaiting our acceptance. Every time we offer a blessing instead of judgment, we feel renewed. Everything we give, we receive. We are not separate from each other, but part of the whole. When we say, **"Give me your blessing, holy Son of God,"** (W.175 [161]) we are not asking for anything of our brother. What we are expressing is the desire of the heart to see the innocence in our brother so we can know it for ourselves. We extend love and acceptance rather than judgment. When we know we are invulnerable, there is nothing to defend, and thus we see no attack from anyone. We know only safety and peace. We share the same light with everyone. The truth is in us all. We are all the same. The light in everyone is all there is to see. When we judge and attack anyone, we have forgotten who we are.

We need not be in the presence of anyone physically to do this healing. To forgive is to let go of the beliefs we hold in the mind. Jesus said, Judas could not have betrayed him as Jesus did not believe in betrayal. It is important to remember that there is no world outside the mind. Thus, as the mind is healed, so is the world, which is a projection of the mind. And since all minds are joined, and we are just One Mind, then my healing heals the world. As Jesus says, he is incomplete without us, and we are incomplete without our brothers because there is only one Self.

The practice both in our meditation, contemplation, and daily lives, requires vigilance in watching our thoughts and being willing to apply the teachings throughout the day. When our day is dedicated to healing, we put God at the forefront, and the activities of the day recede into the background.

In the Course, meditation is only mentioned twice, although there are apparently a few more references in the original dictation. In the Text Chapter 18, Jesus mentions it by saying, **"Nor is a lifetime of contemplation and long periods of meditation aimed at detachment from the body necessary."** (T.18.VII.4.9) (ACIM OE T.18.VIII.66) Certainly, the Lessons urge us to spend quiet time with God, yet meditation is not an integral part of the Course curriculum. In fact, caution is recommended not to make idols of our spiritual practice. It is not about avoiding meditation if it is helpful to our spiritual path, but meditation should be a means, not an end

In the Manual for Teachers, Section 16, **"How should a teacher of God spend his day?"** (M.16) there is a caution against routines. **"Routines as such are dangerous, because they easily become gods in their own right, threatening the very goals for which they were set up."** (M.16.2.5) Therefore we should not ritualize our practice into something we do as a routine in which the form becomes more important than the content. We might think that, just by doing the Lessons as prescribed, we earn points for being good and thus appease God and make Him happy with our efforts. We may believe we need to make ourselves good in the eyes of some external judge instead of being motivated to wake up from this dream.

The Course is different than other paths. **"Your way will be different, not in purpose but in means."** (T.18.VII.5.1) (ACIM OE T.18.VIII.67) **"You are not making use of the course if you insist on using means which have served others well, neglecting what was made for you."** (T.18.VII.6.5) (ACIM OE T.18.VIII.68) **"All such attempts will ultimately succeed because of their purpose. Yet the means are tedious and very time consuming, for all of them look to the future for release from a state of present unworthiness and inadequacy."** (T.18.VII.4.10-11) (ACIM OE T.18.VIII.66)

Jesus urges us to start each day right, as a way to save time, by spending time with God as soon as possible on awakening. Setting our intention for the kind of day we want is also an important part of the morning practice. **"The goal is clear, but now you need specific methods for attaining it. The speed by which it can be reached depends on this one thing alone; your willingness to practice every step. Each one will help a little, every time it is**

attempted." (T.30.IN.1.2-4) (ACIM OE.T.31.IN.1) He goes on to say that, eventually, we will make the practice into a habit, so the remedy will always be available to address every egoic thought. We do this by calling on the Holy Spirit in every situation. Thus, we make no decisions by ourselves; meaning, no decisions will be made with the ego. When we set this intention in the morning, the day is given to the Holy Spirit and our own judgments are suspended in favor of His direction. He says our only problem is, **"You still make up your mind, and then decide to ask what you should do."** (T.30.I.3.2) (ACIM OE.T.30.II.6)

When we start the day right, we connect with the stillness of our Being. We are to **"Simply do this: Be still, and lay aside all thoughts of what you are and what God is; all concepts you have learned about the world; all images you hold about yourself."** (W.189.7.1) We are being asked to surrender and come with wholly empty hands, meaning an empty mind, and openness to a new experience. The attitude with which we approach our quiet time is important. It includes: 1) confidence because we are uniting our will with God's, 2) desire and determination, because it is our only goal and our only need to end this ancient search, 3) importance, because we are needed for the healing of the world, and 4) holiness, because of its inestimable value to us.

Michele O'Donnell, a Christian spiritual healer, says that you can watch your thoughts go by like birds in the sky, but you don't have to invite them to build a nest in your hair. It is not about having no thoughts, but about letting each thought that comes up simply go, releasing these thoughts to the Holy Spirit. No matter how obsessive and challenging the thoughts are to your peace, try to look at them dispassionately and without judging yourself for them. Look at them from above the battleground, and recognize that from this place, outside of the dream, there is nothing serious going on here in this illusory world. With the help of Jesus, we can let them go, rather than weaving them into some kind of story. Remember that the natural state of the mind is a state of stillness, peace, and joy. If we are not at peace, we are doing something to stop the mind from taking its natural course.

The ego fears this experience seeing itself as a body, with private thoughts, real problems, a victim of circumstances and doing its best in an uncaring merciless world. Ultimately, we still value the separate self, and with it, we value our opinions, our beliefs, and our concepts. The attraction to the self we made is the attraction to guilt.

In the center of our minds is perfection, truth, God, holiness, and the Source of all joy, of which we are not wholly aware now, yet we are assured that the Source goes with us wherever we go. Even without our awareness, God goes with us everywhere we go! Truth simply awaits our acceptance. It is acceptance of the Atonement, which is to accept the Correction for our misperceptions.

The purpose of each Lesson is to bring awareness to the thought for the day. We start the meditation with this thought and use it to pull our attention back when the mind gets distracted. It is not intended that we say the thought over and over like a mantra, but to use the thought to focus the mind, and then sink down and inward, into the quiet center. The mind is not in the brain or in the body, but outside it. The words simply point to the truth and are used to help focus our attention. We wait in quiet anticipation for the experience.

The important thing is to do what works for you. Practice what is most effective for you. The Course is not about rules, and you will not find anything in the Course that speaks about having to be in a certain body position while meditating, or about using your breath, or using any kind of devices, such as needing to be in front of a statue or a lit candle. However, there is no injunction

against any of that, either. If these actions are helpful to your process, all is good. This Course is not about form but only about the content of our minds.

Jesus takes this journey with us. He tells us that when we visualize taking his hand and walking with us, it is no idle thought. He is there as a symbol of love already in the mind. He is not remote, nor distant from us. He does not dismiss our uncertainty as irrelevant. He understands. He has taken this same journey. That is why he knows the way and why he is described as our elder brother. If this relationship bothers you, it is an area for healing, just like any other relationship in which you project your discomfort on someone. If the thought of Jesus, as a symbol in the mind, does not bring comfort as your chosen friend, call on the presence of the Holy Spirit, Love, God, or whatever symbol is helpful to you.

The central thought, which begins and ends our day today, as well as each practice throughout the day, is **"God is but [only] Love, and therefore so am I."** (W.RV.4.3) Then, we review Lesson 161, **"Give me your blessing, holy Son of God."** (W.176 [161]) We recognize that the people in our lives can offer us a blessing that can transform and enlighten us. The blessing comes when we recognize they are not who they seem, as the symbol of fear and hate, but are really our saviors. Behind their appearance as a body and an ego is the Christ. This brother reflects the love of God showing up in this specific form. Jesus reminds us our minds are naturally abstract, but right now we don't understand abstraction, so we need specifics on which to focus forgiveness. All forgiveness is the release of judgments and grievances that our brothers seem to evoke in us. They are the reflection of our own unhealed thoughts.

Our next Review Lesson says, **"I am as God created me."** (W.176 [162]) This Lesson is literally the same as **"God is but Love, and therefore so am I."** (W.RV.4.3) We keep having to be reminded that no matter what we think we have done, we can't change the truth about our Being, as created by a loving Father. Our state is love. God is only love. He is nothing but love. That is His nature and His nature establishes our own. We can't change what we are, as we were created. It is a fact, and it is the Atonement Principle, which affirms that we are as God created us. We have become unaware of this truth, but we cannot change it. We think that we have changed the truth by accepting the tiny mad idea where we wondered what it would be like if everything was different. The answer is in everything we see and experience in the world.

What we have come to believe about ourselves are only wild imaginings. We give them power because we believe them, but it does not make them true. We think that there are lovely, good parts to us and many parts that are vicious and hateful. Neither what we think is good nor what we think is bad is the truth. They are only concepts that we have accepted as true. The truth is beyond these self-made concepts, which are reinforced by the world and accepted by us. As Ken Wapnick says, just because billions of people hold something as true does not mean it is.

We need to support each other on this path, as it is outside of the collective thinking of the world. Thus, it can be a challenge because our minds have been conditioned by the beliefs held by the majority. We have bought into the cult of the ego. We drank the Kool-Aid! These conditioned thoughts are what we release when we remind ourselves, **"I am as God created me."** (W.176 [162]) We enter our quiet time with God to experience the truth that is beyond these words. Our practice times now are a preparation for Part II of the Workbook.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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