

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 195 Love is the way I walk in gratitude.

Sarah's Commentary:

Think of the ways in which you are grateful. What are you grateful for today? Are you grateful that you have a place to live, unlike those who find themselves homeless? Are you grateful that you have a job while others don't? Are you grateful that you are healthy, unlike someone who is sick and suffering? Are you grateful that you have a partner, unlike someone who is alone? Or you may feel, "There but for the grace of God go I. At least I am better off than that person."

We may be grateful that God saved us from a car accident, even if others had to lose their lives. We may be grateful when our team wins, although the other team lost. We may be grateful that we beat someone to the front of the line in the grocery store or we beat them to the parking place. In these examples, aren't we basically being grateful that we have gained at someone else's loss? This kind of gratitude depends on seeing ourselves winning when someone is losing. In other words, this kind of gratitude is all about comparison and differences. Jesus says, "**It is insane to offer thanks because of suffering,**" (W.195.2.1) but that is the ego's notion of gratitude, which is based on differences. It is based on the principle of "one or the other."

Specialness always makes comparisons. On our spiritual path, we even compare ourselves to those who are more or less enlightened than we are. We go through our lives with the mantras of "better than" or "worse than" everywhere we look. "**The ego literally lives by comparisons.**" (T.4.II.7.1) (ACIM OE T.4.III.32) We feel superior when we feel better than someone else and angry, diminished, or jealous when we feel worse than someone else. It is truly the disease of the ego, and it is the dark side of the ego's version of gratitude. It is important to bring these dark thoughts to awareness, rather than to deny the thoughts and feelings that arise. The reality is that we do make these kinds of judgments. It is what the separation is about. Jesus understands that this is our condition when he says, "**But what is different calls for judgment, and this must come from someone 'better,' someone incapable of being like what he condemns, 'above' it, sinless by comparison with it.**" (T.24.I.4.2) (ACIM OE T.24.II.6)

When you see your brother as better than you, then "**Your brother is your "enemy" because you see in him the rival for your peace; a plunderer who takes his joy from you,**" (W.195.3.1) This goes back to the discussion of special love and special hate relationships in which Jesus says that if we see our brother as having something we don't have, we believe he has something that was actually taken from us. If he is the one winning in this competition between us, "**Now is vengeance all there is to wish for.**" (W.195.3.2) Now, all we want in this rivalry is to see him diminished because he has what we believe we rightly deserve. We may, for example, experience this when those, who seem to have it all, take a fall. We enjoy these moments because we no longer see ourselves as "less than" someone who previously seemed superior. We now see

ourselves as taking back what we think we rightly deserve. It is a situation of gaining our happiness at someone's expense. Of course, we assume the same program is running in their minds too. In the same way, we are upset and angry if someone has more than we do. This is the nature of the ego thought system—always "one or the other."

Comparisons are everywhere in this world of separation and competition. Clearly, we see ourselves as better than those who murder and hurt others, but Jesus says, "**Love makes no comparisons.**" (W.195.4.2) "**Against the littleness you see in him you stand as tall and stately, clean and honest, pure and unsullied, by comparison with what you see.**" (T.24.II.1.6) (ACIM OE T.24.III.12) Our specialness depends on seeing the lack in others while purporting innocence in ourselves. We want to see them as the guilty ones so we can see ourselves in a better light. Yet if we are willing to look at ourselves with great honesty, can see our own hateful, murderous thoughts and realize that the content of the ego mind is always the same.

Jesus says that thoughts of comparison with others are "**pitiful and depreciating.**" (W.195.1.4) Comparisons create a tremendous burden for us. They are a significant obstacle to our peace. Any comparisons made are unloving because the comparison is a way of setting things apart. They are another way to keep the separation going and to see our brothers as different from ourselves. "**Let us not compare ourselves with them, for thus we split them off from our awareness of the unity we share with them, as they must share with us.**" (W.195.5.4) Comparison is a way that we avoid our reality of Oneness with all our brothers.

We can indeed be grateful we are given the means to turn these dark thoughts over for healing. We are given the means to escape this prison-house we made. There is "**One Who offers you the certain means whereby all pain is healed, and suffering replaced with laughter and with happiness.**" (W.195.2.2) Pain and suffering are always the result of our investment in specialness, but true gratitude, based on love, can show us the way. When gratitude is joined with love, we recognize our sameness. We share the same thought system that brought us into the experience of this world of duality, but we also share the same One Self. Our sameness reflects the Oneness of our reality. We can be truly grateful that, instead of bargaining and reciprocity where we always try to benefit at the expense of our brother, our freedom can be found in the recognition of the sameness we share. This sameness is a reflection of the Oneness of Heaven. It is recognizing that as we are released, our brothers are as well. While we imprison them with our judgments, we imprison ourselves as well.

We all share the same purpose. We all want to escape from this prison-house, but we can't do it when we hold thoughts of specialness. These are thoughts of comparison and differences. In fact, Jesus asks us to question why we would want to hold onto this kind of insanity and turn away from him and the peace and joy he offers us. "**Nor could the even partly sane refuse to take the steps which He directs, and follow in the way He sets before them, to escape a prison that they thought contained no door to the deliverance they now perceive.**" (W.195.2.3) To refuse to question our perceptions is to continue in our insanity, relying on our misguided perceptions of who our brothers are.

The ideas presented in this Lesson are that gratitude is not about raising ourselves above anyone but recognizing the unity we share with everyone. Thus, true gratitude is to the Holy Spirit, Who has given us the means to recognize our Oneness. "**Faith and belief and vision are the means by which the goal of holiness is reached.**" (T.21.III.4.1) (ACIM OE T.21.IV.32) Gratitude makes room for "**the sick, the weak, the needy and afraid, and those who mourn a seeming loss or feel apparent pain, who suffer cold or hunger, or who walk**

the way of hatred and the path of death." (W.195.5.2) In other words, to think we can raise ourselves above anyone at all is to keep ourselves separate and alone.

When we are tempted to look at anyone and be grateful that we are not like them, we exclude ourselves from love. We all share the same unity. (W.195.5.3) Only when we experience the inclusiveness of all our brothers is gratitude sincere. Otherwise, we are thankful for nothing but the suffering of others. However, if we extend gratitude to everyone, the way opens up to know our Self and be grateful for it. It comes from a recognition that we are not lacking. We already have been given everything. No one can take peace from us. It is in us. **"Our gratitude will pave the way to Him, and shorten our learning time by more than you could ever dream of."** (W.195.10.1) It goes hand in hand with love.

What is true gratitude? It is gratitude for our Oneness and for being given the means to go home together. We are grateful for all of our brothers with no exceptions! Am I to be grateful to those who push my buttons (which elicits my anger and rage), those who seem to abandon me, or those who hurt me? The answer here is a resounding *Yes!* Gratitude for all events, circumstances, and difficulties will move us forward immeasurably. How could we ever access the guilt in the mind without the help of those who bring it to our awareness? Without them, we would have no way of seeing the unhealed aspects of our minds. That is why this supposed enemy is really our savior from hell. When we recognize this, we are invited to turn our anger and revenge into a song of gratitude. While it may seem difficult, our part is actually simple. We acknowledge our thoughts and release them to the Holy Spirit. He will do the rest. We can be grateful that we have been given everything. We are not lacking. We have everything within us we look for outside of ourselves where it can't be found.

Regine Akers recently wrote a piece that relates beautifully to the gifts our brothers offer, in which she says: "It is easy to feel enlightened or transformed or spiritual when things seem to be going your way...when people agree with you, when they state how much they like you, when they do as you ask. But if there is a need for these things, the ego will rise again, because the ego is always there. When the ego rises with some type of upset or suffering, you can deny it or explain it away but if this is done, the gift is being missed. There is a great gift in ego appearing from hiding. The gift is finding the path to freedom again. One may need to admit I wasn't as far along as I thought. That is OK. You've found the path again. Yay! Now for those earlier practices of forgiveness, observation, and attachment. Rest, accept, trust. Watch your thoughts and feel your emotions but don't believe them or act on them. Wait and let the storm pass. Do nothing. Just watch. Above all else, blame no one or nothing. Even what seems to be your current pain, be grateful. Be vigilant and grateful. You never really wanted to fool yourself anyway. Thank God you are at home."

Honor is the natural greeting of the truly loved to others who are like them. Jesus says, **"Give only honor to the Sons of the living God, and count yourself among them gladly."** (T.7.VII.5.8) (ACIM OE T.7.VIII.75) Honor is due everyone because they are as God created them, one with me. Truly, I can be grateful for all the blessings, as well as the opportunities these brothers and sisters offer me for forgiveness and healing. Wow, if only we could keep this at the top of our awareness all through the day today. Today, as I think of each of you, I am truly grateful that you take this journey with me. I am grateful that we all go together. I am grateful for this Course and for the opportunities to release comparisons, specialness, and all thoughts that keep us separate. **"Today we learn to think of gratitude in place of anger, malice and revenge. We have been given everything. If we refuse to recognize it, we are not entitled therefore to our bitterness, and to a self-perception which regards us in a place of merciless pursuit, where we are badgered ceaselessly, and pushed about**

without a thought or care for us or for our future. Gratitude becomes the single thought we substitute for these insane perceptions. God has cared for us, and calls us Son. Can there be more than this?" (W.195.9.1-6)

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(W.195.9.1) In other words, we bring awareness to our ungrateful attitude in which we feel better than others. We uncover this attitude in our own minds, so we don't do a spiritual bypass, trying hard to see our brother beyond our judgments. This will never work. We must face the darkness in the mind and be willing to acknowledge our judgments. We must put them on the inner altar and be grateful for the gift this practice offers us. We need not be grateful for anyone's behavior but only for the awareness it brings to our own minds. We can be grateful we can't change the truth of what we are. We are still One with God at home dreaming of exile. We willingly open our minds to the deep peace that comes from the recognition that no dream can change our reality. Love is the only reality! In love and gratitude for you who join me on this journey.

Love and blessings, Sarah

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