

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 222

God is with me. I live and move* in Him.

Sarah's Commentary:

When Jesus says God is the air I breathe, the food by which I am sustained, and the water which renews and cleanses me, he is talking in beautiful metaphors. It is a way of saying that God is our Source of life, and since we think of life as being sustained by food, water, and air, our sustenance by God is akin to that. We experience the body as our home. We want God to join us in our reality to make our lives happier. In other words, we want to add spirituality to our lives so we can hold onto what we value about our lives yet still include God. Spirituality thus becomes an add-on to our lives.

To awaken is to remember that our only home and our only happiness is in God. Healing is not about bringing more light to the darkness. It is about bringing our false thoughts (our darkness) to the light. It is only in this way that the veil of forgetting is lifted so we can experience real transformation and come to know what we are as the dreamer of this dream.

What we think of as life is not what it is. The truth is that what we think of as life is a dream and we are mythical beings or characters in this dream. None of it has reality. There is no life but God's. I function as if I were contained in a body and separate from others, trying to find my way in the world, trying to be successful at what I do, and doing my best to be happy. I try to be as good as I know how to be toward people around me and do my best to try to find my way back to God. But magnitude can only be experienced when we surrender all we think we think and know. This requires a strong motivation and desire for Truth. Where is my desire to know the holiness I am in my list of what I want? This is important because what we have now is what we want. When we see we don't want what we are currently experiencing we can bring to our awareness our true aspiration for truth and sincerely ask for help.

We cannot come to God if we think we know the way. **"Think not that you can find salvation in your own way and have it. Give over every plan you have made for your salvation in exchange for God's."** (T.15.IV.2.5-6) (ACIM OE T.15.V.36) We trust that the way will open as we willingly forgo our plans and turn to One Who knows. When we give over our way and our plans and trust in Him, He shows us the way. Our part is to bring awareness to the beliefs we hold in the mind that keep us from the truth of what we are. This means we must look at our thoughts, recognize our judgments, notice our grievances, and see how we defend against the truth. **"It is your thoughts alone that cause you pain. Nothing external to your mind can hurt or injure you in any way. There is no cause beyond yourself that can reach down and bring oppression. No one but yourself affects you."** (W.190.5.1-4)

The truth is in our right minds. Our Teacher, the Holy Spirit within, is always available to us. His presence becomes known to us when the motivation is strong to release the obstacles that block the truth. We must want the truth to commit ourselves to this process. The undoing of false perception is a choice. It all starts with willingness.

The first part of the Workbook is about undoing our wrong-minded perceptions. Through this process, we have an opportunity to see that there is another option available to us. Until we found this teaching in which the two thought systems in the mind are described, we were only aware of the voice of the ego, which seemed to be the only voice in us. This voice constitutes the conditioned mind. Now we are aware of another Voice within us that can only be heard when we withdraw attention from the voice of the ego. The ego always speaks first, is obsessive, loud, and persistent. Training and discipline are required to ignore this voice because it is very familiar and seems to be what we are. We think it is natural and don't question it. It seems to define us. However Jesus describes it as the stranger that has entered our pristine home (the mind) at our invitation. We now identify with this stranger as if it is ourselves.

When Jesus says, "**He is my home, wherein I live and move,**" (W.222.1.3) it is again a statement of our true home with God from which we have never separated in truth. I remember, as a little girl sitting in church, asking God to reveal Himself to me, and when I did not get any "sign", I finally gave up on the whole notion of God, even though somewhere inside I always had a strong sense of a spiritual presence. I did not know where to look to get some confirmation of the feeling of this presence. I did not know to look in my own mind. I did not know the presence of God was as close to me as my own breath. I did not know that it was a matter of uncovering the unforgiving thoughts in my mind so Love would be revealed to me as my Self. My life is God's Life. My right-minded thoughts are God's thoughts. There is no one to seek and no one to save us. We must do the work of undoing what we have made that keeps us from the awareness that we are One with Him—*now*. All we need to do is to apply this teaching to our daily lives and His Presence in us can then be experienced. What a relief that is! What a comfort!

Take in the words, "**He covers me with kindness and with care, and holds in love the Son He shines upon, who also shines on Him.**" (W.222.1.4) These are such powerfully loving thoughts. I think of God offering safety in all circumstances, always holding me up and protecting me, no matter how the situation might look. Feel the power and beauty this thought conveys and know this can only come because of a deep contentment. When we are not content and feel restless, we seek for something that we can never find. This is the substitute reality that Jesus talks about, where we turn to idols of specialness we think will make us happy. Until we learn where our peace and happiness lie, we will keep looking for it where it cannot be found. We finally become disillusioned, which is a good thing. It can be a gift that takes us in a new direction to find a better way. The answer is given when the mind is open and willing to listen within.

Loneliness has been such a big part of my life, and it certainly is a condition of the state of separation. Yet now I have a growing recognition and acceptance that I am truly never alone. He walks with me and always has. Having an experience of His presence ends the longing. Knowing the steps to take to open up to the awareness of His presence, which are clearly laid out in this Course, reconnect us to our hearts. Any feelings of being cut off, of being alone in the world, of having no support, and of being separate from everyone else are healed in this process when we lay them on the inner altar to be healed. The Holy Spirit does the work of dissolving what we bring

to His healing Light. We cannot fix ourselves. We must trust that it is done without our interference.

We make but one choice repeatedly in the Course. It is the choice to remember who we are. We are making this one choice over a series of small steps we take, but it is always the same choice. We are always choosing between truth and illusion, between love and fear, between forgiveness and attack, and between Heaven and hell. We are always choosing whether to turn to the ego as our teacher or the Holy Spirit. But there is no urgency, no rush, and no expectation put on us, thus we are called to be loving and gentle with ourselves in this process of undoing. Feeling guilty for any lack of progress is still part of the ego game to keep us feeling guilty.

It can be hard to remember that it is not helpful to think we can judge or fix ourselves or try to make ourselves holy which we may try to do. Our part is to look at all interfering thoughts and smile with recognition at their nothingness. We just need to be willing to look at them unflinchingly, with openness and courage and then turn them over. Looking from outside of the dream, with the love of Jesus, we can smile, as we recognize that the characters in the dream and the situations we encounter are all illusory. Yes, they seem very serious to us in the experience of the dream, but from a higher vantage point, with no judgments of good or bad and right or wrong, we can see it all differently. Indeed, it all becomes a perfect classroom for healing, if we keep our minds focused on the blessing available behind every seeming problem.

We are now attempting to go beyond words to experience, as we continue to do the forgiveness work by clearing the thoughts that come up in the mind and disturb our peace. The process of clearing is a process of bringing awareness to these thoughts without judgment of ourselves. We can then experience the holy instant—the miracle and bring peace to the One Mind. If we lose our peace because of someone or something that seems to disturb us, we use the Lesson to redirect our thoughts, remembering that **"God is with me. I live and move in Him."** (W.222)

It does not matter how busy we are with the doings of the world. The focus is not on what we are doing but what thoughts we hold in the mind as we do what we do. Thoughts that block our awareness of the truth are what we bring to the Holy Spirit, asking Him to help us. We do this by constantly asking for guidance. "Holy Spirit, help me to see this situation from Your perspective. Help me to know how to respond. Help me not to use my own idea of what to do. Guide me in what to say and what to do. Show me the way." With our willingness, in each moment to turn to Him, the ego becomes increasingly irrelevant. To use time in this way is to use it for a higher purpose. Time can waste us as well as be wasted. **"The basic decision of the miracle-minded is not to wait on time any longer than is necessary. Time can waste as well as be wasted."** (T.1.V.2.1-2) (ACIM OE T.1.I.87)

Let us be reminded, as in paragraph two of the Section **"What is Forgiveness?"** (W.PII.Q1.2.1), all we need to do today with any judgments we make is to raise them to doubt. **"Perhaps there is another way to look at this. What can I lose by asking?"** (T.30.I.12.3-4) (ACIM OE T.30.II.26) We question our judgments by affirming, **"I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself."** (T.31.V.17.7) (ACIM OE T.31.V.60) Thus, we raise to doubt our need to be right about everything and instead open ourselves to happiness. **"Do you prefer that you be right [about the way you set up reality] or happy."** (T.29.VII.1.9) (ACIM OE T.29.VIII.43) By remembering the truth of what you are and who your brother is you can only then be happy. We

are all the same Self. We come to know this when we raise all judgments to doubt. We acknowledge that the way we have set up reality, and have stubbornly refused to question our perceptions, has kept us in hell. We know we are in hell when everything we do is a chore and everyone we encounter brings judgment to the mind. Perhaps there is another way to look at this situation or this person. Perhaps I have been wrong. Perhaps I have been stubbornly choosing against my happiness because I justified my way of seeing this situation or this person. Now I give up my opinions and my need to be right. I step back from my stories and no longer wish to justify my interpretations.

“I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace. I made the decision myself, but I can also decide otherwise. I want to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace. I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequence of my wrong decision if I will let Him. I choose to let Him, by allowing Him to decide for God for me.” (T.5.VII.6.7-11) (ACIM OE T.5.IX.96)

Releasing our way allows us to be shown another way. To see God is to see our brother's holiness. We can only experience our brother's innocence by releasing our judgements and grievances. We have many people in our lives with whom we can practice this. They include our parents, children, siblings, partners, politicians, and all our special love and special hate relationships. Our special function in this world is all about forgiving these special relationships that are part of our curriculum. We do so by looking at our thoughts, judgments, beliefs, and attitudes toward them as they come up and willingly releasing them to the Holy Spirit. This is the work of forgiveness we are here to do. All these thoughts are projections coming from our own minds, based on our self-judgments, self-hatred, and self-attacks. They are what we do not want to acknowledge in ourselves, so we project onto others and see the guilt in them. All we see in anyone is an outward picture of our own inner condition. We are not at the mercy of the world. We need do nothing but look at our thoughts and be willing to surrender them. It requires desire and courage to be very honest with ourselves. When we find the mind defending, denying, justifying, or projecting, we are choosing to be right, rather than happy.

We cannot do the work of forgiveness without understanding the metaphysics of the Course. It makes no sense to be told, **“Forgiveness recognizes what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred”** (W.PII.Q1.1.1) when we are so certain that we are right about what our brother has done, based on our senses. Our senses were made to keep our focus outward on the world. The whole point here is to recognize that there is no world and that we are all figures in a dream. Thus, what I see "out there" is just a thought projected from my mind and acted out in my brother, based on a false idea of God's Son as a separate being and different from me. Instead of seeing with my eyes, made by the ego to show me a world that does not exist, Jesus asks me to look through his eyes and to doubt how I see anything. It requires giving up the idea that I am right. It means raising my judgments to doubt. **“It [forgiveness or the miracle] merely looks on devastation, and reminds the mind that what it sees is false.”** (W.PII.Q13.1.3)

Jesus talks about this in the Manual for Teachers, in the Section **“Open-Mindedness,”** (M.4.X) as follows: **“As judgment shuts the mind against God's Teacher, so open-mindedness invites Him to come in. As condemnation judges the Son of God as evil, so open-mindedness permits him to be judged by the Voice for God on His behalf.”** (M.4.X.1.3-4) (ACIM OE M.4.23)

Every time we let a brother off the hook for what we think he has done, we release him from the prison we have put him in. It takes willingness on our part to let go of our own distorted perceptions. To be open-minded is to close the door on our own interpretations and only be open to those of the Holy Spirit. **"Father, my mind is open to Your Thoughts, and closed today to every thought but Yours."** (W.PII.236.2.1) This transition, from judgment of guilt to the Holy Spirit's verdict of innocence, is just another way of talking about forgiveness.

If we ever thought we had achieved complete forgiveness with someone, according to this Section in the Manual, we have not and will not until we reach the end of the journey. So let us not get discouraged about our progress in the Course. As long as we are here, we have work to do in releasing our judgments. Welcome this opportunity, instead of judging yourself for your judgments. **"Forgiveness is the final goal of the curriculum."** (M.4.X.2.9) (ACIM OE M.4.24)

"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. Empty your mind of everything it thinks is either true or false, or good or bad, of every thought it judges worthy, and all the ideas of which it is ashamed. " (W.189.7.13)

With judgment set aside, **"What then is free to take its place is now the Will of God."** (W.PII.Q1.1.7)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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