



LESSON 71

Only God's plan for salvation will work.

Sarah's Commentary:

Manipulating, planning, conniving, and strategizing in order to gain happiness in the world are where we put a lot of energy in an attempt to keep ourselves fulfilled. What plans do you have that you think will bring you happiness? What do you want to be right about? What grievances are you holding, and who needs to change or do something different in order for you to be happy? Our whole focus is on the idea that if someone acted differently or if we got what we wanted, we would be saved. In other words, we would be happy. The source of our salvation is seen to be outside ourselves. If something outside ourselves were different, we think we would be happy. We make demands of everyone when we follow the ego's plan for salvation. We don't want to hear that there is no hope in our plans for happiness. This is not good news to us as long as we identify with the character in the dream. Jesus says that all of us who have come here hold some hope of finding happiness in the idols of the world.

It is so easy to get caught in power struggles with those around us and to hold onto grievances and complaints when we feel others are not acting the way we deem they should. In other words, they are not fulfilling the function we have defined for them, and now we see this as a cause for grievances. We perceive ourselves as innocent victims of those people who betray us and leave us at their mercy. We feel like no one knows or understands us, and we perceive ourselves as unfairly treated. **"The ego's plan for salvation centers around holding grievances."** (W.71.2.1) It's plan centers around our being angry and hurt and holding grievances against everyone and everything for not saving us from our unhappiness.

We tell ourselves that if it weren't for this person, this situation, or this event, we would not be experiencing the difficulties we have today. We make them responsible for how we feel. As far as we are concerned, they have failed us. All our complaints, manipulations, and attacks are geared toward getting the changes we think we want and need. We think that if we could show them how they wronged us, they would change their tune, and we would be saved. In other words, we project our own lack of happiness onto others. Projection is, in fact, the human condition. Healing is about withdrawing our projections and taking responsibility for them, seeing them for what they are and thus seeing the cause of all our distress as starting in our own minds.

Jesus tells us over and over that this world is not our natural environment, and we don't fit here. We will never find the comfort, happiness, and peace we are seeking with the ego as guide. **"The ego has built a shabby and unsheltering home for you, because it cannot build otherwise."** (T.4.I.11.1) (ACIM OT T.4.II.18) **"Only God could make a home that is worthy of His creations, who have chosen to leave it empty by their own dispossession."** (T.4.I.11.4) (ACIM OE T.4.II.18) When we realize that this is not our home, we give up trying to adjust to a world that does not fit what we really are. We become motivated to do the work of undoing what the ego has taught. We begin to accept that true peace and happiness will never be

found in the world. It can only be found when we accept that **"Only God's plan for salvation will work."** (W.71) This is not exactly a thought we embrace while we still try to find happiness in the world. When we are ready to acknowledge that our plans will never bring real happiness, we start to look deeper into our own minds where true happiness lies.

This process requires a deep and sincere level of honesty with ourselves to see how we are constantly use others on behalf of our own salvation. It is the nature of our special relationships whether of special love or special hate. When we believe that something outside of ourselves will fulfill us, we use our relationships as a dumping ground for our guilt and as a way to get others to fulfill our perceived needs. Our focus on winning at another's expense and bargaining for what we want, works in opposition to our reality as we were created and is in opposition to God. Some of the strategies that we use to try to extract what we want from others can be quite aggressive, while others can be very subtle. Some strategies we might recognize in ourselves are when we punish someone, who has disappointed us, by ignoring them, giving them the silent treatment, giving them a look of disapproval, shedding tears so they know how they have hurt us, threatening to leave, withdrawing, pleading, begging, or cajoling. Or, we may try bargaining by giving them something they want so they will give us something better in return.

Can you see the many strategies the ego uses to try to get needs met? As David Hoffmeister says "A sense of separation from God is the only lack that really needs to be corrected. This sense of separation comes only from a distorted perception of Reality, from which you then perceive yourself as lacking, and from which all seeming needs arise. One's responsibility now is to relinquish all needs but the singular need for God. There was no perceptual universe that existed before the thought of separation, nor does it actually exist now. One must see that what seems to be a multitude of images is just one error."

It is essentially the human condition, yet Jesus says, **"Each grievance you hold is a declaration, and an assertion in which you believe, that says, 'If this were different, I would be saved'. The change of mind necessary for salvation is thus demanded of everyone and everything except yourself."** (W.71.2.4-5) All of us feel this way. That is why we are here. This thought system has made the world of separation and of needs and lack. It does not make us bad. Our part is to look at this thought system so we can see clearly how the ego has set it all up. It is set up to defeat our own best interests which is our singular need for God!

"Like to a dream of punishment, in which the dreamer is unconscious of what brought on the attack against himself, he sees himself attacked unjustly and by something not himself. He is the victim of this 'something else,' a thing outside himself, for which he has no reason to be held responsible. He must be innocent because he knows not what he does, but what is done to him. Yet is his own attack upon himself apparent still, for it is he who bears the suffering. And he cannot escape because its source is seen outside himself." (T.27.VII.1.3-7) (ACIM OE T.27.VIII.62)

Jesus shows us that we can escape the ego's secret wish of maintaining the separation and maintaining differences. It is up to us to bring awareness to how we are playing the ego's game, but we are not alone in this, as he is our helper and guide in this unknown territory. We made the choice for the separation, and now we can choose to take responsibility for our attack thoughts, judgments, and grievances and bring them to the inner altar in our minds where truth resides. As yesterday's Lesson reminds us, **"My salvation comes from me."** (W.70) I am responsible for my happiness. No one else. I am not the victim of the world I see. There is a way out. How much do I want it?

Holding onto grievances and projecting the guilt in our minds onto others is how we punish others for what we perceive they have done. We would rather feel rotten and hold onto grievances just as long as we get to be right and make others responsible. Sometimes we even build alliances to convince ourselves of the truth of our perceptions by finding others who will agree with us. This is the ego at work! As long as we believe in the ego's plan for salvation, we will strive to meet its requirements. These are based on the belief that if someone did it differently, we would feel safe and happy. If circumstances were different, we would be saved. We have all come to this world, which is a world we actually brought with us when we came, in order to experience being in control and independent. We all want to hold onto our own way, which explains why there is resistance to God's plan for our salvation.

As long as we look to anything external for our happiness, as long as we continue to feel like victims, as long as we hold grievances, and as long as we project our own attack thoughts onto others and make them responsible for how we feel, the ego's plan remains dominant in the mind. As long as we hold onto our faith in the ego and its savage and tyrannical control we will remain imprisoned. We continue on this road until the pain and misery of our failed relationships and our never-ending problems motivate us to find another way.

"Seek but do not find' remains this world's stern decree, and no one who pursues the world's goals can do otherwise." (M.13.5.8) That is the ego's mantra, and that is what we do as long as we still have some hope that the world has something to offer. We keep trying to find happiness in the world which will always elude us, and when our plans don't work, and they never will, we **"become depressed or angry."** (W.71.8.3) Your **"insane attempts and mad proposals to free yourself"** (W.71.8.4) ultimately bring depression and anger. Haven't we tried our best? Aren't we just innocent victims of circumstances beyond our control? Isn't it important not to have people control us? Should we not set firm boundaries to protect ourselves? Are we not justified in holding onto grievances when people are being so unreasonable? Our plans for our happiness have always failed, yet we keep hoping they will work just this once. With each event and circumstance, we think that this time it will work, already knowing deep down that once again it won't. Even what we extract with our manipulations does not really satisfy. Yet we persist.

While we are inclined to justify our anger and defend our position, it is not the route to peace, happiness, and real joy. The only answer is given us by God. Our own answers are always wrong. Does this threaten us? You bet. It would be the end of the ego if we really stopped listening to its madness. In my experience, when I have been able to release my stubborn resistance, release my demands and expectations, and sincerely choose the Holy Spirit's script and not my own, miracles result. My mind then shifts to a place of quiet, of surrender, and of happiness. Anger never feels good. Oh yes, we all know its expression can have an immediate payoff, but then the guilt arises, and we end up paying the price in loss of peace. Our fear increases because we always expect retaliation, whether real or imagined. Thus, we are only hurting ourselves when we project guilt onto others.

"God's plan for salvation works simply because, by following His direction, you seek for salvation where it is. But if you are to succeed, as God promises you will, you must be willing to seek there only." (W.71.5.1-2) When we try to follow two plans God's and the ego's, we are totally confused and miserable, and it becomes impossible to achieve either one. That is what we are doing currently. We are willing to accept that forgiveness brings us happiness because we have experienced this is so. We know that taking responsibility for our projections brings healing, but we still want to hold onto our special relationships and try to extract from them what we still think will meet our needs. We still try to find some happiness in the things of this world. This brings conflict because we now hold two conflicting thought systems. We want to forgive and love, but we also want to retaliate and pursue our own goals. We want our specialness,

which comes at seeing others different than us. We want to maintain separation, and we want to enjoy it while making someone else responsible when pain arises. With God's plan for salvation, we see our brothers as ourselves. We are the same and this sameness reflects our Oneness. When we join with our brothers, the separation is being healed.

The conflict between our two thought systems---of the ego and of the Holy Spirit---will be resolved only when we realize there truly is no other alternative to God's plan for happiness. We are told His plan cannot fail. We have seen our plans always fail to deliver lasting happiness. We need to get very honest with ourselves to truly see this is so. **"And let us rejoice that there is an answer to what seems to be a conflict with no resolution possible."** (W.71.7.2) It may seem like a demand is being made on us where we are required to give up our way for His. It may seem unjust and restrictive. The ego does not like that! We may feel depressed and angry about giving up our plans, but we need to look very honestly at the results of what the ego offers and recognize that deep peace has never been delivered through our own efforts.

Today, let us tune into God's plan and ask, ***"What would You have me do? Where would You have me go? What would You have me say, and to whom?"*** (W.71.9.3-5) If you think you are not hearing a response, remember **"He will answer in proportion to your willingness to hear His Voice."** (W.71.9.7) It is just a matter of willingness not to listen to the voice of the ego that is talking all the time. In order to hear the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we need to tune into our prompts and our nudges. We need to stop listening to the ego. We may be concerned that we won't succeed in hearing the Holy Spirit, but Jesus reminds us we have a right to His answer, and we must not refuse to hear. We approach this exercise with as much confidence, openness, and willingness as we can.

When we listen to the Holy Spirit, we get a sense of knowing what is the right thing to do. We receive prompts that guide us in what to do next. If I lay aside my plans for the day and really quiet the mind, I get an answer to questions in my mind. Remember, the Holy Spirit is in our minds now. He is our own Voice of truth. When we have a sense of peace, we can be assured He is guiding us.

We need not get attached to the outcomes. Remember, this is about giving up control and not controlling what others will do or what should be happening. It is not up to us. We must leave it in God's hands. **"Only God's plan for salvation will work."** (W.71) We are doing this Course in order to change our minds—not to get something in form, not to have a prettier illusion, and not to manifest what we think will bring us happiness. Our only happiness comes from His plan, which is to release our grievances so our light can shine forth. That is what David Hawkins calls true power while our way is to use the force of our own thinking mind. True power comes from within. It comes from the heart.

This Course is totally uncompromising. That is what makes this path both difficult and yet so clear. Our plan is to add spirituality as an adjunct to our own goals; but what that does is lead to divided purpose and thus conflict. Until we step over to only one side of this conundrum, we will have a divided purpose and be in conflict. Only God's plan will bring the end of conflict and misery, and for that, we can rejoice. Yet, to say yes to God's plan means to say no to the ego's plan, yet we still resist. Jesus recognizes that it is all a process of undoing our fear and thus developing trust in him. But when we consistently apply these lessons, Jesus delivers on his word. It is all a matter of doing what he asks, not because he asks, but because of our deep desire for peace and happiness.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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