



LESSON 76 I am under no laws but God's.

Sarah's Commentary:

Jesus demonstrates in this Lesson that as long as we invest in our identity as bodies, we will be bound by the laws of this world. While the body is illusory, we still believe in its reality. Jesus is not asking us to deny our bodies while we still believe in them, nor to dismiss our experiences in this world. In fact, we can effectively use every experience to undo the illusory nature of the body and the world. We must not dismiss our experiences as "just illusion" while we still believe in them. Actually, this world is a great classroom to use for the purpose of waking up from this dream.

Our belief in the laws of nutrition, friendship, finances, medicine, economics, and so on are not to be dismissed. To deny our need for medicine, sleep, food, money, air, or relationships while we still believe in our reality as a body would be inappropriate denial. It would be a confusion of the metaphysical level that is the level of absolute truth with the level of the mind where we think we are in the body and in the world. At this level of the body and the world, Jesus shows us, we can make a choice between the wrong mind of the ego's thought system and the right mind. With the Holy Spirit in our rights minds, we can choose to lessen the hold these laws have on us. As the mind shifts, behavior will follow. Changing our behavior will not change our minds. As long as we choose to identify with these laws, they will have power over us.

Jesus reminds us that it is not appropriate to deny our investment in the body while we still believe in it. He says, "**The body is merely part of your experience in the physical world. Its abilities can be and frequently are overevaluated. However, it is almost impossible to deny its existence in this world. Those who do so are engaging in a particularly unworthy form of denial.**" (T.2.IV.3.8-11) (ACIM OE T.2.III.56) In the same way, it would be inappropriate to stop doing what we still believe has power over us. For example, not to eat foods we believe will sustain our health, not to take medicines we think we need, not to lock the doors, or to avoid seeing a medical practitioner when we are sick, are all examples of how we might deny the fear that is still in the mind. Nevertheless, the laws we hold and the remedies we seek are all magic because they will not save us. Magic provides us with a temporary relief of the symptoms, but the only real healing is to heal the guilt in the mind. True healing is the recognition that our reality is only Spirit.

Tomas Vieira's journey through sickness provided an excellent example for me in this regard. He used the illusion of sickness to awaken to the truth in recognizing his reality as Spirit. Nouk Sanchez, his long-time partner, in describing this process, indicated that Tomas awakened quite some time before he left his body, so there was no individual, personal Tomas left. Thus, the appearance of a suffering, sick body was completely illusory. His identification with the separate self was gone. In this process, he recognized there was nothing about the body to be saved. To hold onto the separate self would be to maintain the separation from his reality as Love. As

reported by Nouk, "He accomplished this by consistently choosing only peace in each moment when 'appearances' tempted him to believe that he was a body and not an eternal Being." In the same vein, when any of us who spent time with him saw him as sick, he challenged us to heal our minds, as we were not seeing him correctly. We were focusing on his body, believing incorrectly that it was his reality.

We are challenged in this Lesson, and by the example above, to look beyond appearances in every circumstance where we see sickness of any kind. While we choose to live by the laws of this world, we are asked to see how senseless they really are so we can know there is another way to see that is always available to us. It is to see salvation where it really is—in our own minds and not in anything outside of ourselves. What we are asked to shift is our purpose. It is not about giving up money, our special relationships, exercise, foods we consider good for our health, and certainly not the air we breathe but to recognize the purpose they hold in keeping us invested in the body and in this world. In other words, all our attention is going to the effect (the body) rather than looking at the cause (our minds). When our purpose is shifted, we use everything for awakening from the dream of this world by questioning it all.

The reason we feel so bound to the laws of this world is because we are looking for our salvation in the world. When we totally identify ourselves as a body, and we want what the world has to offer, it follows that we will be bound by its rules. Jesus says, **"you bind yourself to laws that make no sense."** (W.76.1.5) We do so because we want to prove, this is reality. We want to prove that Jesus is wrong about us, that we are not spirit, but that we are bodies that will die. (W.76.1.6) Now he invites us to, **"Look for it [salvation] where it waits for you, and there it will be found. Look nowhere else, for it is nowhere else."** (W.76.2.4-5)

He tells us to look for salvation where it is and to be glad it is not in the world but within ourselves. That is where we need to look. We will never find it in the things of this world. Not taking our bodies and our issues so seriously may be a good start. There is something in us that knows this, but there is also a lot of resistance. When we look honestly at our lives, we can all see the investment we have in the body. **"It puts things on itself that it has bought with little metal discs or paper strips the world proclaims as valuable and real. It works to get them, doing senseless things, and tosses them away for senseless things it does not need and does not even want."** (T.27.VIII.2.2-3) (ACIM OE T.27.IX.78) When asking about purpose in everything, he says we need to ask, **"What for?"** (T.4.V.6.7) (ACIM OE T.4.VI.77) **"For nothing here but is defined as what you see it for."** (T.29.VI.5.4) (ACIM OE T.29.VII.42)

This is a challenging Lesson because we are asked to examine everything we currently hold true. What does our salvation, (our happiness) depend on? This question was addressed in Lesson 71, where Jesus talked of our fruitless search for salvation in the things of this world and how these things have imprisoned us. **"For what you think you need will merely serve to tighten up your world against the light, and render you unwilling to question the value that this world can really hold for you."** (T.13.VII.11.6) (ACIM OE T.12.VII.69) In other words, the more things, events, and circumstances of our lives appear to serve us, the tighter they hold the world has over us.

Until we start to question everything, until we challenge the beliefs we hold, and until we see that our investments in the things of this world do not bring us peace and joy, we will continue in this endless pursuit. Jesus tells us we are very confused about pain and joy. **"You no more recognize what is painful than you know what is joyful, and are, in fact, very apt to confuse the two. The Holy Spirit's main function is to teach you to tell them apart."**

(T.7.X.3.4-5) (ACIM OE T.7.XI.101) Byron Katie used to tell a story of how she could see two prisoners in the same cell, one living in peace and perfection, the other living in hell—same world, same cell, different thoughts. The world is what it is. The only thing you can control is your story about it.

Today, we are asked to look at what are the things we believe we need for our happiness. What do we give power to? What rules do we have for our lives? What senseless things do we invest in? What do we feel bound by? If you don't exercise but eat ice cream and spend money on entertainment, do you feel guilty? What rules do you hold about nutrition, beauty, vitamins, friendship, and reciprocity? Are these beliefs bad? No. They don't mean anything. The meaning we give them is in our mind. They are all centered around our wish to believe in the reality of the body. We believe we are separate from each other and in competition with each other. Further, we believe we need these laws to protect and preserve our bodies. We are very invested in preserving our ego and our bodies. This is where we put our attention; but now our priorities are shifting, and our goal is to know ourselves as God created us—perfect, innocent, forever loving and forever loved.

The seemingly reasonable and accepted rules for relationships serve the ego's purpose of establishing expectations for how we and others need to be if we are to be happy. All this does is guarantees disappointment, unhappiness, and grievances when these rules are violated. Jesus calls these laws that we believe in, "**strange and twisted laws.**" (W.76.3.1) What we are being asked to do is to look at them and not to try to change them. We are asked to look at the purpose they serve for us. As we look at our rules for relationships without judgment, we can see we need not be bound by them. This is how we achieve a sense of freedom. (W.76.3.1) Can a Son of God be bound when the truth about us is always free?

Jesus invites us to look at three specific areas in which we have a lot invested. They are money, sickness, and special relationships. He says that we believe we would "**starve unless you have stacks of green paper strips and piles of metal discs.**" (W.76.3.2) We think there are pills and medicines that will "**ward off disease and death,**" (W.76.3.3) and we think we "**are alone unless another body is with you.**" (W.76.3.4) Again, we are asked to look at how we see these things. What fears come up in your mind when you think of being sick, dying, not having enough, or being alone? It is not about giving up having money, which is needed for our sustenance, but more about what fears we have and what beliefs we hold about it. How much do we try to hang onto it?

I had a significant investment that ended up being wiped away due to fraudulent activity on behalf of the company. Several of the investors committed suicide when it became apparent that they would never retrieve the money. Others lost their relationships. Some spent more money by taking on a class action suit. There were some that chose to take revenge on the perpetrators through various activities. For me, it was an opportunity to look at the value I put on money and to put my effort on forgiveness so peace could prevail in my mind. Isn't that the only sane option? In the end it does not matter what the action one wishes to take as much as it is to do it with peace in the mind.

Special relationships have a significant hold on us in terms of the "laws" we hold about them. Whether those relationships are ones of special love or special hate, they are all significant in keeping us invested in the ego. When we hate others, we may believe our salvation comes from seeing them suffer or at least get their "just desserts." When we think that we love them, they keep us bound to our needs, as they become idols to replace God in our minds. We then feel we don't need God's Love when we have our own substitute for it. Special love is all about bargaining, in

that we must give in order to get, all the time hoping to give as little as possible to get as much as possible in return. Special love is about reciprocity and limits us to the body, as do all the laws we hold.

Again, Jesus is not asking us to give up these laws but to question our investment in them. He is really not saying that we should not have friendships, money, or we should ignore the bodily needs. He is reminding us that at the end of this journey, we will recognize the illusory nature of the body. Instead of putting all our attention on the effect and making it the entire purpose of our existence here, Jesus is showing us that in focusing on our minds, everything we have made can be used by the Holy Spirit for another purpose.

Think of some of the things you believe. Do you believe you would be happy if you lost weight, were in better shape, if there were peace in the world, if the political party you hate was defeated, if you had a new car, if you had more money, if you had certain people in your life, if certain people left your life, if you had a better boss, if you had more friends, if people were nicer to you, kinder to you, respected you more, if you could live somewhere else, if you could retire, and so on? Further, do you believe you would feel better if you just figured out which vitamins to take, how to keep yourself safe, healthy, how to protect your kids, how to increase your self-esteem, and on and on? **"It is insanity that thinks these things. You call them laws, and put them under different names in a long catalogue of rituals that have no use and serve no purpose. You think you must obey the 'laws' of medicine, of economics and of health. Protect the body, and you will be saved."** (W.76.4.1-4)

It all sounds reasonable in the world we live in, doesn't it? I can relate to all of this. We spend each day obeying these kinds of laws in the belief that they will protect us, but they are not real laws. They are laws we obey as long as we believe in them. Because we believe in them, we obey them until we question them and loosen our investment in them, just as we question the reality of our body and the world. In the meantime, we simply take care of ourselves. It would be self-punishing not to do so while we still believe in them, which would hardly be loving. There is no value in feeling guilty about taking care of our bodies. On the contrary, all of our experiences here have value so we can look at the beliefs we hold and question them.

This Lesson is about loosening our beliefs and challenging our minds to recognize, regardless of how much effort we put into making ourselves believe that we are in this reality, it is still only a dream and nothing we do will make it real. On the metaphysical level, our true Self lives only under the law of love. This law only gives, while the ego's laws are only about getting, keeping, and maintaining. Our real happiness is about remembering that we are under no laws but the law of love. Jesus says that even many so-called religions have set forth what is God's and what is ours, meaning that what belongs to God is holiness, omniscience, and omnipotence, while what is ours is limited and vulnerable; and we believe that we must obey them to keep us safe.

The laws of this world, which are actually the belief in magic, imprison us. When we get this, **"The light has come."** (W.75) In other words, when we get this, we will be enlightened. We will wake up from this dream of separation. We will see the illusion for what it is. We need to hear the truth so our thoughts of guilt and separation can vanish. What really suffers is the mind. The mind is really hurting itself because of the guilt that is there. **"The body is endangered by the mind that hurts itself. The body suffers just in order that the mind will fail to see it is the victim of itself. The body's suffering is a mask that the mind holds up to hide what really suffers."** (W.76.5.2-3) So the mind hurts the body to make the body seem to be the reason for our suffering. This seems to protect the mind from the fact that it is the cause of the suffering and has simply displaced it onto the body. The body thus becomes the scapegoat for the mind.

Now the body suffers, and we ask for healing of the body when the only answer is healing of our minds. Now we try to save ourselves with medicine, which is called magic, but **"Your magic has no meaning."** (W.76.6.3) Why? It has no meaning because it is trying to save the body, which does not exist. This keeps the role of the mind hidden from our awareness. Medicine only has the illusion of an effect, which is why it is called magic. It imprisons us to the "laws" of the world, which are not real.

What is important here is that Jesus is not asking us to see our brother without a body but to see him as innocent. **"Your question should not be, 'How can I see my brother without a body?' Ask only, 'Do I really wish to see him sinless?' And as you ask, forget not that his sinlessness is your escape from fear."** (T.20.VII.9.1-3) (ACIM OE T.20.VIII.66) Neither is he asking us to see ourselves without a body or deny the body, but he is asking us to notice how we project our sins onto other bodies and to bring those projections back to our minds so they can be healed there. Currently, we believe we are bodies. That is why we are reminded so often that we are still as God created us, which is spirit.

Clearly, we have significant resistance to accepting the fact that we are not a body. If we judge others who are Course students for their psychological and physical concerns, all we are seeing is our own self-judgment. This is not helpful, nor is it loving. When we see sin in ourselves, we suffer, and when we see it in others, we attack. In this whole process of undoing the guilt in our minds, we are called to be gentle with ourselves. The degree to which you are gentle with yourself will be the extent to which you are gentle with others in their process. Only patience and gentleness are called for, whether with ourselves or others. It is all the same.

The main thing we might notice about this Lesson is our resistance to the idea that salvation is not outside ourselves in all these laws. It requires that we begin to recognize the body as an effect, and the mind as cause. Ideas leave not their source. Fixing the body will never address the guilt in the mind, which is projected onto the body in order to protect the mind. The body is the place where the mind's guilt is hidden from awareness. The importance of recognizing that we can make another choice for our healing and happiness by looking for it where it is, which is in the mind and not outside ourselves, is what this Lesson is getting at. Thus, instead of trying to change the effect, we are asked to look at the cause, and forgive it there.

Jesus is helping us to see that when we feel empty inside and want food, we are really trying to fill the lack we feel. What we are really looking for when we reach for the hot fudge sundae, or the pizza, is God. When our focus is on more and more money, it is because we feel impoverished and lacking and are looking for abundance in form when in fact it only resides with God. Through our special relationships, we attempt to resolve our loneliness for God. We fill the emptiness, loneliness, and lack, as a result of our separation from God, with forms outside ourselves, but they will never fulfill us.

The exercise today is to look at the laws we hold and see how we have used them to replace the laws of God. Then we look at some of the laws we obey, of nutrition, immunization, medication, bodily protection, friendship, and reciprocity, and step back from them, we see how they are tied in to our belief in our bodily existence. Again, we are not being asked to give them up but to look at our dependence on them and to recognize that they are a reflection of the guilt in our minds, projected onto the body; thus, they are there to maintain the effect of our guilt, which is the body.

We are also cautioned not to engage in magical thinking, which is believing that our spiritual practices will correct things that are going on in our lives and thus make us happy. It is another way to ensure identification with the body and the ego. When we value magical thinking, it is no

different than putting value on pills, money, and other things we see as important for the body. Our eternal self is beyond any of these things. This is where our protection is. Our protection comes from knowing with certainty that we are not affected by the things of this world because we know ourselves to be beyond it.

In my experience, I am more aware of how I have restricted myself to rules that had to be met in my relationships, demands and expectations that I have had about how friends were to be, requirements for how many hours of sleep I believed I needed, requirements I had about how my house had to be kept, certain rules of etiquette, requirements for when and what I had to eat, and on and on. When I started to question these "laws", they started to loosen and many things changed over the years. While I don't deny the bodily requirements that I have, I see that worldly laws are all external while the miracle is an internal change that comes through forgiveness. The results have been increasing freedom, joy, and blessings.

Today, we are asked to bring all our misguided beliefs to the light for healing. Then, we can truly know that we are totally safe and experience the freedom that comes from this. I am free from all danger and tyranny. I am as God created me. **"I am under no laws but God's."** (W.76) It is my statement of freedom from the tyranny of the ego. **"It is our acknowledgment that God is our Father, and that His Son is saved."** (W.76.12.3)

Love and blessings, Sarah
huemmert@shaw.ca

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