



LESSON 158

Today I learn to give as I receive.

Sarah's Commentary:

I have spent a big part of my life trying to get approval, affirmation, recognition, and love from others. I wanted to be seen as helpful, smart, loveable, creative, supportive, and a million other things. It was not until this Course came into my life that I began to see that how I see myself is not dependent on how everyone should see me, but how I choose to see them! Everyone is just a reflection of my mind! The only way I can know the Self I am, as innocent and whole, is to see my brothers in the same way. It is to see with Christ's vision and not with my own interpretation (judgment) of who my brother is. This learning is dependent on taking responsibility for my projections onto others and seeing that they all come from my own mind. In other words, the judgments I have about myself are what I see in others. They are shadows of what I don't want to acknowledge in myself.

The people in our lives that we tend to attract, as well as those we find particularly annoying, are those who reflect this shadow side of ourselves that we are unwilling to acknowledge. We would rather blame them and judge them or elevate them, than take responsibility for our projections. Yet healing happens when we take back our projections and bring them to the Holy Spirit, Who will shine them away. Now space is made for the miracle. It is not about striving to get others to see me in the way I want to be seen but to clean up my projections that I put onto others. It is to increasingly recognize that it is all coming from my own unhealed perceptions. Thus, everyone is a mirror in which I see myself. **"This lesson is not difficult to learn, if you remember in your brother you but see yourself."** (W.158.10.3) It is not how you see me but how I see you that reflects the state of my mind.

"If he be lost in sin, so must you be; if you see light in him, your sins have been forgiven by yourself." (W.158.10.4) Our practice today is about seeing with the eyes of Christ. **"Today I let Christ's vision look upon all things for me and judge them not, but give each one a miracle of love instead."** (W.349) Or, as the prayer in Lesson 295 says, **"Help me to use the eyes of Christ today, and thus allow the Holy Spirit's Love to bless all things which I may look upon, that His forgiving Love may rest on me."** (W.295.2.2) To see with Christ's vision is to see the innocence in our brothers.

I have come to see that while I make healing seem like such a long and hard journey that will last until I will finally achieve consistent peace in my life, it is actually the ego that prefers it this way. The ego is happy to take this journey with us just as long as we don't make it easy. The ego does not trust anything that is easy; thus, we struggle to find our way to peace when all we have to do is be willing to let go of our way of seeing and turn to Spirit. His Answer is immediately available to us but we don't always want it. We prefer to stubbornly hold onto our own perspectives. We prefer our own movie so much that we are reluctant to leave it---we just keep rolling the film.

But now we can question this. We can put our perspectives to the deeper investigation as to what is under our difficulties. Why do I feel the way I do? What am I holding onto? What is there for me to see in this situation that I am not seeing? What beliefs do I have that get in the way of my peace? How have I defined myself, using this particular situation to attack myself? Am I willing to be grateful for every experience that helps me to see what I am holding onto that is not the truth? How is my suffering serving me? What do I get to be right about? How do I use it to punish others? Am I willing to give over my self-attacking thoughts to the Holy Spirit by putting it all in His Hands and letting it go?

The Lesson starts with the reminder that we get over and over in this Course. Jesus affirms again and again that our reality is totally sinless, purely spirit, invulnerable, and created out of love. There is nothing we can do, or have done, to change ourselves. This is what the Atonement Principle is about: assuring us that we are still the same as we were created---holy, pure and innocent. Regardless of what terrible things we judge ourselves for, we can't change the truth of who we really are. Yes, we have lost sight of our reality. However, that does not mean we can change the Self we are. Our entire work with the Course is to remember the truth about ourselves that we have kept hidden from awareness. It can only be accomplished when we look at our misperceptions and bring them to the Holy Spirit in the right mind.

We believe our reality is a body and a personality with a story we tell of our lives in the world. None of this is true. We are not these bodies and personalities that we identify as ourselves. Neither are we our past, our mistakes, our "sins," our sadness, our roles, our self-concepts, nor our stories. Nothing I believe I have done in my years on this planet has changed anything about my reality as a Mind, which is, and always has been, forever sinless. Christ's vision looks past the body to the Son of God as He really is and sees the light of holiness there. **"It beholds a light beyond the body; an idea beyond what can be touched, a purity undimmed by errors, pitiful mistakes, and fearful thoughts of guilt from dreams of sin."** (W.158.7.3) There is no specialness in this love, as it is not selective. Everyone is the same. Everyone has the same light of divinity within and shares the same need to wake up from this dream.

Differences were made by the ego for a purpose. It was all set up so we could project our own guilt onto others. Thus, we see the guilt in our minds in them, although it is important to recognize this guilt does not belong to us. We made a vow to each other, **"a promise to another to be hurt by him, and to attack him in return."** (T.28.VI.4.7) (ACIM OE T.28.VII.57) It is by this agreement that we could claim our innocence and our specialness at the expense of our brother's innocence. It is an innocence achieved at his expense in the belief we can avoid punishment from a wrathful god whom we hope will see us as the innocent victim of attacks not our own. This is just a ruse, and somewhere in our minds, we know this is so, which is why we end up feeling very guilty. The thing is that we have made another promise that we will keep. It is the promise we made to God but have forgotten. **"In his creation did his Father say, 'You are beloved of Me and I of you forever. Be you perfect at Myself, for you can never be apart from me.'"** (T.28.VI.6.5) (ACIM OE T.28.VII.59) What we don't remember is that we replied, **"I will."** (T.28.VI.6.6) (ACIM OE T.28.VII.59)

When we see bodies and what they seem to do in the world, we see attack, murder, wars, betrayals, competition, thievery, and many forms of betrayal. It is important to recognize that while the form of the attacks differs, in the end, we see the sins we are holding in our own minds, which we are projecting onto others. No, I have not murdered anyone, nor have I killed anyone in war, but the murderous thoughts I hold in my mind are the same. They kill my peace of mind and make me forget who I am. While I prefer to see the wrongdoings in my brothers, the error in my mind is

the same, as long as I am condemning any aspect of the Sonship. It is the guilt in my mind that I conveniently project "out there," and now I see it in my brothers, while seeing myself as pure and innocent. This is a false picture of myself and one I hold onto because it keeps me from recognizing the guilt in my own mind, which I have denied. The only way we can see beyond all these behaviors and see with Christ's vision is to bring our projections back into our own minds and see that the enemy "out there" is actually within the mind. Now we are no longer powerless against outside forces but can choose to heal our minds. Only in this way can we clear the way for Christ's vision, and only in this way can we awaken to who we are.

Christ's vision will then overlook all the seeming sins we see in the world, and "**In His forgiveness are they gone.**" (W.158.9.2) Further, the forms of the sin does not matter, nor how enormous it appears to be, nor who seems hurt by it because the effects are completely undone. There is no hierarchy in illusions. All illusions can be put in one category, which is---they are simply not true. And, even more amazing, he says "**They are no more. And all effects they seemed to have are gone with them, undone and never to be done.**" (W.158.9.5-6) Through forgiveness, what appeared to happen is wiped away. The only way we can really understand this is to realize that this world and our experiences here are all illusory. They are all dreamt by the mind that seemed to fall asleep to what it really is. This is the only way true forgiveness makes sense. Otherwise, we would be trying to overlook what is real. Instead, we forgive our brothers for what they have not done. Ultimately, nothing real has happened. It is a pretty amazing that we can look at some of the horrors of the world and are willing to accept that none of it ever happened. It was all just a dream, no different than what we see when we awaken from our nighttime dreams and realize their unreality.

This has to be understood within the context of time and the script. First, in relation to time, he tells us that we seem to be on a journey through time, but the journey is already over. To us, time goes in one direction with a lot of events that seem entirely arbitrary, where the future is unknown, with circumstances changing, events taking place, people coming, going, dying, and being born. It all seems to flow through time and seems to have some kind of continuity. We encounter many unexpected events in our lives, which turn everything upside-down and create chaos. It feels to us as though these events come out of nowhere. "**Yet,**" Jesus says, "**there is a plan behind appearances that does not change.**" (W.158.4.2) Further, while things appear arbitrary to us, "**there is no step along the road that anyone takes but by chance.**" (W.158.3.3)

It has all already happened since time is over. We are just reliving an experience in our memory, remembering it from the end of the journey. The journey is over. It has already happened, which we will know when we wake up. A fuller discussion of this can be found in Chapter 26, in the Section, "**The Little Hindrance,**" where Jesus says, "**Time lasted but an instant in your mind, with no effect upon eternity. And so is all time past, and everything exactly as it was before the way to nothingness [illusion] was made.**" (T.26.V.3.3-4) (ACIM OE T.26.VI.32) Yet while time is meaningless, we believe in it so "**why should you waste it going nowhere, when it can be used to reach a goal as high as learning can achieve?**" (T.26.V.2.3) (ACIM OE T.26.VI.31) What we can achieve by our learning is vision, or true perception.

He asks us to "**Look lovingly on the present, for it holds the only things that are forever true. All healing lies within it because its continuity is real.**" (T.13.VI.6.2-3) (ACIM OE T.12.VI.50) In the present, each moment is free from the past, which gives us the complete freedom to choose what we want in that moment. "**The present is before time was, and will be when time is no more. In it are all things that are eternal, and they are one. Their continuity is timeless and their communication is unbroken, for they are not**

separated by the past. Only the past can separate, and it is nowhere." (T.13.VI.6.5-8) (ACIM OE T.12.VI.50) So the present is the same moment as it was ten thousand years ago. We impose our own continuity on time with our stories. And with our belief in time, the mind feels more and more imprisoned.

Furthermore, if "**The script is written**" (W.158.4.3) and the time has been set for when our experience comes to an end, then we are just mentally reviewing what has already gone by. So, we might just as well relax and let our doubts go. If what we are to learn is revealed at the appointed time, as Jesus says, then we need not fret about where we seem to be. Does this mean that everything is already determined? Is it all just fate? Is there nothing we can do? It certainly seems that way, yet we read that we can save thousands of years, as we do our forgiveness work, and we can skip parts of this mental review, which is what the miracle does. So, it seems that it is not all already determined. Ultimately, we will all experience revelation or awakening. Miracles enable us to save time. Perhaps, it is all a matter of how willing we are to participate in the process of our salvation. Our part is to let go of our defenses and see how we deny taking responsibility. The world can be such an awesome and perfect classroom when used for healing purposes. It means everything that seems to happen to us can be seen as a wonderful opportunity to learn to undo our untrue selves so the Christ Self can be revealed.

The important thing is not to linger here by being tempted to delay our awakening. We are already at the end of the journey, just imagining we are making it again. The story is already over, but we won't know that until we are ready to experience it. Another way to see this was explained to me by a friend, who says that he imagines himself sitting with Jesus in a theater and the story they are watching together is some portion of his life unfolding in front of him like a movie. It is a helpful way to recognize that we are the ones dreaming our stories and not one of the characters on the stage. When we identify with the story, as we might identify with a movie we are watching, we forget that the characters are just dream figures, as we are drawn into feelings of anxiety, laughter, sadness, or grief. In the same way, we can get lost in our own movie of our lives and identify with what is happening, as if it were all real. When we forget to be the observer and become the character in the movie, we forget who we are. We then take the movie of our lives very seriously. Healing happens when we remember to step out of the movie and watch it all without judgment. Nothing in the story is right or wrong, good or bad. It is just all unreal. We can now choose to observe what has already happened.

We are learning to see with vision. It is like learning a language, where we do language labs and grammar studies, the purpose of which is to eventually speak and understand the language. It is the same with the Lessons. We do the Lessons and the meditations, not as an end in themselves but as a way of strengthening our ability to forgive and to see with spiritual vision, which is precisely the goal of the Course. It is not a Course to study or to understand intellectually. It is a teaching to apply in our daily lives. It took me many years of study to get sufficiently motivated to really live the teachings to the best of my ability by becoming very willing to do the work on a daily basis, moment by moment, watching my thoughts.

The Manual for Teachers, speaks more about the world of time, saying, "**What happened long ago seems to be happening now. Choices made long since appear to be open; yet to be made. What has been learned and understood and long ago passed by is looked upon as a new thought, a fresh idea, a different approach. Because your will is free you can accept what has already happened at any time you choose, and only then will you realize that it was always there.**" (M.2.3.2-5)

Jesus knows we will have a great deal of struggle trying to understand all this, so he says, "**There is no need to further clarify what no one in the world can understand. When revelation of your oneness comes, it will be known and fully understood. Now we have work to do...**" (W.169.10.1-3)

We need not be concerned with the final experience of revelation, but only with each act of forgiveness, which brings us closer to the time already set. Everything we experience is perfect for our learning. Nothing is by chance. Everything is as it needs to be. Our part is to accept and to allow. There is nothing to strive for. In fact, striving is of the ego. We need not concern ourselves with when the time will come for our awakening. We need not get anxious or feel guilty at our rate of progress. We only need to do what is in front of us each day in applying the Lessons and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit.

For now, let us be comforted by the fact it is not difficult to learn to give as you receive "**if you remember in your brother you but see yourself. If he be lost in sin, so much you be; if you see light in him, your sins have been forgiven by yourself. Each brother whom you meet today provides another chance to let Christ's vision shine on you, and offer you the peace of God.**" (W.158.10.3-5) If anyone seems to be attacking me, it is just another opportunity for me to see my own guilt that I have hidden from myself. All I am seeing are my own thoughts. It is an outward picture of my own inward condition. "**Here is the joining of the world of doubt and shadows made with the intangible.**" (W.158.6.1) We are bringing our misperceptions, based on our wrong-minded thought system, to the light of the Atonement. Thus, we can experience the "**quiet place within the world made holy by forgiveness and by love,**" (W.158.6.2) until our journey ends at the real world and Heaven's gate.

Christ's vision is like a stepping-stone within the experiences of time, illusion, the world, and Heaven. When we have reached the real world, we are done with this journey and "**Experience—unlearned, untaught, unseen—is merely there.**" (W.158.6.4) We need to only concern ourselves with getting closer to vision, which is true perception, and when that is achieved, experience (revelation) is just remembered at the appointed time, not learned. "**It matters not when revelation comes, for that is not of time. Yet time has still one gift to give, in which true knowledge is reflected in a way so accurate its image shares its unseen holiness; its likeness shines with its immortal love.**" (W.158.11.1-2) In other words, we do the practice of seeing with the eyes of Christ today and let go of any concern about the end of the journey. We recognize that we are all the same, not in form but in our shared need to wake up from this dream and in who we really are. This is the reflection of the truth that we are One. We just need to be willing to do what is in front of us now instead of worrying about when we will achieve Heaven. "**Now you must learn that only infinite patience produces immediate effects.**" (T.5.VI.12.1) (ACIM OE T.5.VIII.81)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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