



LESSON 181

I trust my brothers, who are one with me.

Sarah's Commentary:

The point of these next Lessons is to continue to firm up our willingness. Jesus recognizes our commitment is not yet strong. Again, we have another opportunity in these next twenty Lessons to increase our dedication, even though "**You are not asked for total dedication all the time as yet.**" (W.PI.IN.181-200.1.2) These Lessons underscore the importance of our practice to have an experience of the truth. Jesus understands our fear, which is what makes us forget the Lesson throughout the day. There is no need to feel guilty, but Jesus urges us to firm up our dedication because he knows this is the only thing that will make us happy. We are still not convinced that following this teaching is where all our happiness lies. None of our substitutes will bring us the happiness we seek. Because we do not know our own best interests, Jesus says we do not yet completely see the value of our goal.

The goal of these next twenty Lessons is to widen our horizons, which is another way of saying to expand our limited vision. Our blocks keep our vision narrow. We still want control over our own lives, and we still want to control others. "**But the experience of freedom and of peace that comes as you give up your tight control of what you see speaks for itself.**" (W.PI.IN.181-200.2.4) This tight control is what keeps our defenses in place. Healing requires we give up this control by looking at what we are working so hard to protect in ourselves. Until we see the value in his goal and not our own, we will not relinquish our control. As long as we identify with the ego, we will try to do everything to protect our image of ourselves. Jesus does not chastise us for this, but he merely lets us know that our motivation will be intensified when we have the experience of what he speaks of.

We need words for now to muster our motivation. "**And so we start our journey beyond words by concentrating first on what impedes your progress still.**" (W.PI.IN.181-200.3.1) Our defenses against the truth are still strong, and as long as we defend against His love, we cannot achieve the goal. This Course is about looking at how we try to protect ourselves with our defenses, so the blocks we hold against the love we are, can be undone. The love is already in us. We do not have to go looking for it. We just have to take responsibility for the thoughts blocking it from our awareness and be willing to be humble and surrender what does not serve our highest good.

We must be aware of our fears in order to let them go. This requires we look at the fear, to bring awareness to it. That is all. The Holy Spirit does the rest. "**The holy instant is the result of your determination to be holy. It is the answer. The desire and the willingness to let it come precede its coming. You prepare your mind for it only to the extent of recognizing that you want it above all else. It is not necessary that you do more; indeed, it is necessary that you realize that you cannot do more. Do not attempt to give the Holy Spirit what He does not ask, or you will add the ego to Him and confuse the two.**" (T.18.IV.1.1-6) (ACIM OE T.18.V.32)

Our defenses keep us bound to our "stuff," our story, our way of seeing things, and our way of being. We have made an alliance with the ego, without which it would have no power at all. We have become comfortable with our story and wonder who we would be without our worries, our sickness, our sadness, our anxieties, and our specialness. Now we are asked to bring it all to awareness, so it can be released. When the blocks to love are released, we will have an experience of the peace of God. This is the experience that will motivate us to keep applying the Lessons. This is the beginning of the journey home, which is a step-by-step process. Each day, when we take steps to release our grievances, we will be taken closer and closer toward our goal. The irony is that we are already there, but we have not yet accepted it.

It is always amazing to me how well defended the ego is in ways we don't always see. I remember learning this clearly one day from a Course student and friend, who is an astute psychologist. It was a lesson that demonstrated to me how subtle the ego is. It keeps us from noticing how we are constantly defending ourselves. My friend was a visiting Course student and teacher, and translator of the Course. I took him for lunch to a restaurant where the chef, someone who usually catered to me, proposed we share his signature dish. It was much too big for me, so I proposed to my friend that we share it. He refused. Then the chef said he would happily give me half an order, to which I agreed. Shortly thereafter, I started to notice a stab of pain in my head. I confessed to my friend that I was getting a bit of a headache. He asked if I was aware of the reason this were so. When I indicated I had no idea, he said it was because I had ordered something I did not want in order to please the chef. He conjectured further that I was angry at him for refusing to share the dish.

My immediate response was complete and total denial. The more he insisted, the more I resisted. It was only later, in the quiet of my own thoughts, that I went deeper and recognized a pattern playing out in many areas of my life. It was about pleasing others (the chef), going along with something I truly did not want to do, trying to impress, not taking time to listen within to what I really wanted, and feeling rejection from my friend for seemingly not wanting to please me. We can see, if we are willing to look, that even from the seemingly insignificant, we keep ourselves defended. We all want to be right about our perspectives. Until we are truly ready to let them go and do the learning and healing, we simply continue to defend the way we see everything and make ourselves right.

"I trust my brothers, who are one with me," (W.181) removes our focus on our brothers' sins and asks us to release our judgments of them. Most of our lives have been about trying to get others to see us in a good light. We have developed an image, with the skills, abilities, and attitudes we hold, all to get the kind of attention and acceptance we are seeking. Yet Jesus says how we feel about ourselves is not determined by how others see us. It is only in how we see them; because, how I see you is how I see myself. If I see the love in you, the Christ in you, and the holiness in you, I see there is the same loveliness and beauty in me. If I respond to your attacks and see them as a call for love, I know the love in me. The world affirms that we need to have love in order to give it. Yet Jesus reminds us that love is already in us, and when it is extended, we know we have it. If you are not feeling good about yourself today, you might bring to mind someone who needs your support, and be grateful for them for being in your life. Extend your blessing, so that you might receive it for yourself.

Every time we see error in someone, every time we focus on their sins and all the things they have done wrong, we have judged ourselves for the same sin. Does this mean we should not see the mistakes and errors of others and become totally blind to them? We are not being asked to trust the egos of our brothers. We will see errors, but we are called to look beyond the ego and recognize

the perfect innocence of our brothers, so we can know our own innocence. This is the truth about them and about ourselves. But this Self is hidden from our awareness, when we refuse to recognize the innocence in every brother, just as it is in us. We are not denying the facts of their behavior in the world. We are simply trusting in their sinless nature.

The ego has no power. How can anything have power in a dream? Jesus reminds us to forgive our brother for what he has not done. Yes, in the dream he has made mistakes, but in reality, nothing has happened. Our brothers are our saviors simply because in them, we see the choice we have first made in our own minds, to see with the ego or with the Spirit. Jesus asks us to remove our focus on their sins, so we may experience the peace that comes from faith in sinlessness. Their mistakes, if focused on, are witnesses to our own sin. Our intent is to see the light of Christ in them, so we can know it in ourselves. This is not about not making judgments because we will judge, but it is about being willing to turn our judgments over to the Holy Spirit. Through forgiveness comes a new perception.

Jesus talks of our selective attention, which is about where we put our focus. He tells us our focus is what gives consistency to what we see. I can thus make a case for my point of view, line up all my "facts," and argue on behalf of a perception of someone's sins, flaws, and screw-ups. The ego relishes this process. It is why we seem to relish gossip and create stories of why we are right about the way the world has mistreated us and what our judgments are about. We occupy our time analyzing the egos of others and comparing how we measure up in turn, making ourselves special. Specialness is such a trap of the ego and is what keeps us rooted in the illusion. This is what David Hawkins calls the juice or the payoff that we get from our investment in our beliefs, concepts, values, and perceptions. Without the payoff, we would not continue this process. We even get a payoff from suffering or we would not hold onto it. We make ourselves special by focusing on the errors of others and, in turn, comparing ourselves as more superior and righteous. We like to magnify their errors and minimize our own, but Jesus says it is impossible to play that game without suffering. We will naturally apply exactly the same judgments to ourselves as to our brothers. Thus, when we see their sins, it is because we want to see our guilt in them and see ourselves as the innocent victim of their attacks. The cost to us is that it keeps our joy and peace at bay. To do so is to maintain the separation.

Jesus tells us, "**Remove your focus on your brother's sins, and you experience the peace that comes from faith in sinlessness.**" (W.181.2.5) When we do this, we become motivated to give more time and attention to this practice. The only way to peace and to know our innocence and the way to reinforce our own faith is by seeing the Christ in everyone, with no exceptions.

Our brother's ego has no more power than ours to change the truth of what he really is and who we really are. What we are trusting in, then, is his sinlessness. As Jesus says "**When you correct a brother, you are telling him that he is wrong. He may be making no sense at the time, and it is certain that, if he is speaking from the ego, he will not be making sense. But your task is still to tell him he is right.**" (T.9.III.2.4-6) (ACIM OE T.9.I.2) What we are trusting is not that everyone will act in a loving manner, but behind the ego's antics is the ever-present love of Christ in everyone. This is what makes our brother right. When he is speaking from the ego, of course, he will always be wrong.

Today, instead of allowing the ego to cruise for guilt, "**We seek for innocence and nothing else.**" (W.181.3.5) Obviously, our wrong minds have a different focus. They are preoccupied with past mistakes, past grievances, guilt and shame, as well as future goals and plans. Jesus says these are the blocks to seeing with vision. In the holy instant, we release our preoccupation with the

past and the future. We all have a list of things that others have done to us. It is this list we are being asked to release. The list contains everything we accuse ourselves of by making our own sinful past real. Today, we let our sinlessness become apparent by releasing our attack thoughts. **"We instruct our minds that it is this we seek, and only this, for just a little while."** (W.181.3.2) He clearly understands this is a process for us in each moment. **"We do not care about our future goals."** (W.181.3.3) He is releasing us from any long term commitment.

Clearly, people do appear to attack us, to hurt us, to betray us, and to create situations that seem dangerous to our well being. Jesus reminds us, **"When a brother acts insanely, he is offering you an opportunity to bless him. His need is yours. You need the blessing you can offer him. There is no way for you to have it except by giving it. This is the law of God, and it has no exceptions. What you deny you lack, not because it is lacking, but because you have denied it in another and are therefore not aware of it in yourself. Every response you make is determined by what you think you are, and what you want to be is what you think you are. What you want to be, then, must determine every response you make."** (T.7.VII.2.1-8) (ACIM OE T.7.VIII.72)

The power of our minds is immense. Our minds will take whatever we do in one case and generalize it to all cases. What this means is that how we see one person is how we will see everyone, including ourselves. We can't love one and hate another and know love. When we deny a blessing to a brother, we will feel deprived of the blessing for ourselves. When we deny one brother's reality, we blind ourselves to all reality. We really cannot think poorly of someone and confine that negative intent to that one person. Thus, attack thoughts directed at anyone will affect our perception of everyone, including ourselves. No wonder he asks us to guard our minds. Specifically, we are to instruct our minds today to **"... seek for innocence and nothing else."** (W.181.3.5) Can you imagine that with every negative thought you have you are creating karma for yourself, meaning that with each thought you have you are inviting judgment on yourself because what you give you receive. If we really believed this, would we not be highly motivated to release our attack thoughts?

When we see our brothers' guilt, we remind ourselves **"It is not this that I would look upon. I trust my brothers, who are one with me."** (W.181.6.4-5) Imagine what a gift we give to ourselves if we stay committed today to our goal by not allowing any anger, judgment, distress, or frustration of any kind, to stay in our minds. We set the intention by doing our morning practice, holding in mind nothing but our great desire to see our own sinlessness, and experience our true reality. We also set aside any concerns today about the future, not allowing our ego to discourage us by telling us that **"even if you should succeed, you will inevitably lose your way again."** (W.181.4.3) **"These concerns are but defenses against present change of focus in perception. Nothing more."** (W.181.5.3-4)

We try to remember our intention hourly and use this Lesson to **"keep us safe throughout the day."** (W.181.7.1) And, as the evening comes, we spend time in quiet meditation, where we recognize the importance of releasing the blocks to the awareness of who we are in truth. The holy instant is an experience of timelessness, which is transformative. When we come back into the world, we bring with us a new vision, and we see that we are all the same---a reflection of the Oneness of God.

"There is a course for every teacher of God. The form of the course varies greatly. So do the particular teaching aids involved. But the content of the course never changes. Its central theme is always, 'God's Son is guiltless, and in his innocence is his salvation.' It can be taught by actions or thoughts; in words or soundlessly; in

any language or in no language; in any place or time or manner." (M.1.3.1-6) "This is a manual for a special curriculum, intended for teachers of a special form of the universal course. There are many thousands of other forms, all with the same outcome." (M.1.4.1-2)

Love and blessings, Sarah

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