



Lesson 332
Fear binds the world. Forgiveness sets it free.

Sarah's Commentary:

This Lesson follows on the heels of yesterday's discussion about conflict. From this, we can conclude that there is no conflict between the truth and illusions. This Lesson makes it perfectly clear, **"Truth undoes its evil dreams by shining them away. Truth never makes attack. It merely is."** (W.332.1.2-4) Truth merely awaits our invitation and imposes nothing on us. It enters in when we make space for it through forgiveness. Until we make space for truth, it merely waits patiently for our readiness. Nothing is forced on us. It is our choice. Thus, we can conclude that truth is in the stillness. **"It [the miracle] merely looks on devastation, and reminds the mind that what it sees is false."** (W.PII.Q13.What is a Miracle?1.3) There is no coercion, there are no demands, and there are no requirements. There is only our decision to release all that is false. **"The search implies you are not whole within and fear to look upon your devastation, but prefer to seek outside yourself for what you are."** (T.29.VII.4.6) (ACIM OE T.29.VIII.46)

James Twyman, in his writings, said we should not get comfortable in the world.

"What other path is there to walk but this path, the one where you have stood without moving while an entire Universe passes around you? Grow uncomfortable in your skin, for it is not your home. See what it is like to stretch free from these chains, then embrace the whole world. It is there for you now, if only you would choose to receive. Grow uncomfortable in this world, even this universe, that every world and every universe may be yours. Do not become comfortable with anything other than the truth, which does not move and does not change. You are the heart of that truth, beating constantly and without end."

What we have become comfortable with is fear. We would certainly not consciously call fear our friend, yet while we are comfortable in the world, we are held willing prisoners to fear. We look to fear to protect us. Our bodies are the embodiment of fear. Just think about it. Everything we do in the world reflects fear. We constantly protect the body and the psyche against all kinds of potential attacks, whether it be the weather, viruses, accidents, or verbal and physical assaults. We protect against our fear by locking the house, putting on a seat belt, buying life insurance, saving money for the "future," protecting our assets, exercising, eating right, joining the right groups, competing, and any number of defenses. There is nothing wrong with any of these. It is not that we should feel guilty that we build defenses against potential catastrophes, nor is there a requirement to stop doing any of these things. It is not about changing our behaviors. Rather, we are called to watch our thoughts about the situations we encounter in our lives and to recognize how much of an investment we have in our fear-driven strategies. These behaviors remind us over and over how vulnerable we are when we think our reality is the body.

The Course is not about changing behavior, but about changing our minds. We are simply being invited to look at the fear thoughts behind the behaviors and bring them to awareness. As the mind is healed, some of these behaviors will naturally fall away, but that is not what is important. What is important is what is in the mind. Clearly, it is not about exercising, buying insurance, or locking our doors, but it is about which thoughts motivate these behaviors. They are all about our vulnerability as bodies, living in the world. Certainly, there is value in taking care of the body while we still believe we are a body, as it can be put to a holy purpose. Everything can be used for the purpose of watching our thoughts and giving them over to be transformed. The goal is for the ego to die before the body does.

I have a friend who is afraid of food. She lives in fear of eating the wrong food and getting sick. There is no joy in sharing a meal with her because the discussion is all about pesticides, genetically modified food, the dangers of eating meat, the problems with dairy, and so on. There is nothing wrong with healthy eating. Her choices in food may well be the best choices to make for the well-being of her body, but what needs to be looked at is the extent of the fear in the mind. I recently had a discussion with a salesperson about buying life insurance. I noticed how much fear came up in my mind when I listened to the sales pitch. I realize buying insurance would be based entirely on my fear of leaving financial challenges for my family. I am not saying this comes up for everyone who buys insurance, but I watched my thoughts and self-judgments that I was not a good and responsible person if I did not buy into this program.

I choose to trust the future by placing it in the Hands of God. There are those in my life who are a shining example of this for me and live without fear of financial insecurity. This is not about denying that there are certain responsibilities we have in the world. We must follow our own prompts, but we don't need to participate mindlessly in the thought system of the world. We all must engage in the illusion to some extent, but we can do so while still maintaining a state of peace. It is not what we are doing, but the mindset we take into the doing.

Sometimes, when we are in this place of discomfort and a sense of displacement in the world, we get very distressed. "What is wrong with me?" we ask. "Why does everyone else seem to be so content, while I am feeling like I don't fit in and don't belong here?" You might consider that this is a more powerful place to be than "happily lost" in the illusion of your **"evil dreams."** (W.332.1.2) Further, there is no one on this planet who does not share in this sense of discomfort and displacement, no matter what it may look like. That sense of displacement and discomfort only changes when we join with God's Will for us.

Truth is available to any one of us at any moment we open to it, meaning that it is available when the fear that binds us to the world is released through forgiveness. It is through forgiveness that truth shines away the fantasies that keep us bound and in chains. These chains may appear to us to have some pleasant aspects to them when they serve our specialness as we see it. We are willing prisoners to our special relationships of bargaining and reciprocity, and we call this love. Yet it is a picture of fear and guilt. The thoughts in our minds that we have accepted as true are all illusory. When truth dawns on our minds, we awaken to what is real. **"And by its presence is the mind recalled from fantasies, awaking to the real."** (W.332.1.5)

We will never be coerced by truth. It will come only to the extent that the fear is released. We are always in control of how quickly we agree to release illusions. It is how we **"realize the freedom"** (W.332.1.8) that is our inheritance. How much do you want freedom from fear? The offer is always there. Freedom is continually being held out for us to receive. We free ourselves only as we bring awareness to our fear thoughts. Forgiveness is about looking at all our defenses

and everything we hold dear and bringing it all to the light of truth. With forgiveness, the chains that seem to bind us are loosened.

We take our brothers with us in this process as there is just One Self. Forgiveness is what allows truth to enter in and to free us from this seemingly hopeless situation. Why does it feel hopeless? It feels hopeless because, with our investment in the ego thought system of sin, guilt, and fear, there is no way out. It is a never-ending loop---What I think, I see. What I see, I experience, and what I experience, I think. It is a dream of darkness, all based on wrong-minded thoughts. It is a world bound by fear because it is based on the thought of fear. Only through forgiveness are we freed from this loop. When our thought of fear is replaced by the thought of love, we still see the illusion, but we no longer participate in the thought system of this world. We are free of its hold on us.

We don't generally think that all fear is unforgiveness. Fear comes from the belief that we have destroyed reality, and now we fear God's punishment, which is why we have escaped into the body and the world. Forgiveness undoes the guilt and fear of this avenging God. We are now called to take responsibility for the guilt we project onto those whom we see as responsible for our condition. When we are willing to look at our guilt with honesty and courage and without judgment, we are set free by the Holy Spirit. Only when we stubbornly justify our anger do we stay in hell. Jesus says, **"If he speaks not of Christ to you, you spoke not of Christ to him."** (T.11.V.18.6) (ACIM OE T.10.IV.58) In other words, if I am not willing to see the Christ in him, no matter what he seems to have done, I am seeing him wrongly. It all starts with my own mind. I can tell what I conveyed by my brother's reaction to me.

The beautiful thing is that we do not have to fight against our anger and our fear. In fact, to do so would be counterproductive. We do not have to manifest anything, shout down the ego with affirmations, nor try to stay positive. We do not have to try to fix the ego for that cannot be done. All we need to do is allow the light of truth to shine away our fears. All we need to do is bring every thought of guilt and fear to awareness and be willing to question and release it. It is not about doing anything different in the world. It is about going from mindlessness to mindfulness. We do that by bringing our projections back into the mind, which is the only place where we can choose again to have the Holy Spirit reinterpret them.

Notice when you are in a state of fear, how powerless you feel. Notice how crippling guilt is in your life. We feel small and frail in its presence. Forgiveness offers us the opportunity to see how God's power can really work in our lives. As we recognize this power more and more, we grow in confidence in what we are, as we were created by God. We are not these vulnerable, lost, and weak selves, but truly powerful beings. Freedom is being held out to us in this moment. Are we willing to be released now? Look at the situations you are facing where fear comes up for you. Allow yourself to forgive the people involved in those situations, and affirm that **"as we offer freedom, it is given us."** (W.332.2.5) **"To give and to receive are one in truth."** (W.108)

Love and blessings, Sarah

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