



LESSON 123

I thank my Father for His gifts to me.

Sarah's Commentary:

What a blessed day we are invited to have today in gratitude and thankfulness! For me, I am most grateful for this Course and how it has contributed to my life. Where would I be without it!! I spent years searching for something to ease my inner sense of loneliness. As a young girl, I sat in church, looking for a sign from God, and when it didn't come to me in a form I could understand, I gave up on religion entirely.

The search for meaning continued as I took my degree in psychology and then pursued many workshops, educational opportunities, and other modalities, looking for truth. You name it, I did it. Whether it was Gestalt Therapy, Transactional analysis, EST, or T-Groups of various sorts, they all attracted me in my search for myself. It was all about looking for who am I? Why am I here? What is my meaning? Much of the group activity and individual work was based on analyzing the ego, or as Jesus would put it, it was about looking for light in the darkness. Not surprisingly, nothing I did delivered the answers I was searching for. When the Course came into my life, I was suspicious of its origin and reacted to the Christian language. I had given up on God many years prior; but as I started pursuing it more, I sensed the words contained the truth. They resonated at a deep level, even though I did not understand much of it. I plunged into the Lessons with little understanding of what they were really about because I had not read the Text and did not have the context that would have been helpful. Nevertheless, I applied the Lessons to my life as best as I could and simply doing what I was told to do each day. My life was at a low point and I was ready to trust that there may be an answer for me here.

What motivated me to keep going was Dr. Willis Harmon, a physicist and director of the Stanford Research Institute (SRI). He was the one who introduced me to the Course around 1982-83. He was hired for the position of director of SRI by Dr. Edgar Mitchell, the astronaut who had an epiphany during his return trip from the moon. It was this experience which led him to establish the institute dedicated to research in alternative realities, healing, psychic abilities, remote viewing, etc. Dr. Harmon assured me that if I did one Lesson a day for one year, my life would never be the same. Nevertheless, I struggled to get started with the Course until I met Paul Steinberg, a publisher of the Course who came to Edmonton to speak about it. While I was not ready for the radical messages he presented at this seminar, in particular that there is no world and we are not really here, he nevertheless had brought along some books, one of which was the background story of the scribing of the Course written by Robert Skutch.

This was exactly what I needed. I had been listening to channeled material over the years, and when I learned how the Course came through Helen Schucman with help from Bill Thetford, there was no more hesitation. I began the Lessons and have never looked back. Dr. Harmon was right when he assured me that my life would change after one year of dedicated study and application of the Lessons. I will be forever grateful for Holy Spirit, Who brought this man into my life, and

for Edgar Mitchell, whose epiphany started this whole chain of encounters. How beautifully the Holy Spirit orchestrates everything for our awakening. Both of these individuals, Dr. Harmon and Edgar Mitchell, served their function in my life and have both made their transition.

With each shift, with each miracle, and with increased peace in my life, I became more certain of the truth of this teaching and my trust and faith grew. Much as I had resisted Paul Steinberg's message that there is no world, there was growing acceptance, as I continued through the Course, of the possibility that this world really may all be a dream that we made up. What I really liked was that I did not have to try to reconcile the bad with the good in the world. I no longer had to wonder why God let bad things happen to good people. Increasingly, I was learning to let go of *my way*. I no longer had to put all my energy into trying to control events and people in my life. I saw the futility of relying on my own meager strength and limited understanding to figure things out.

I could rest in the growing awareness that this was the perfect right path for me and accept that everything was determined and the end was certain. I learned to trust Jesus as my elder brother and developed a personal relationship with him. There was a lot of healing that had to come about in order to even say his name out loud. I did not come out of the closet in proclaiming him publicly as my friend, for many years. I had rejected him and now needed to let go of negative past associations. As I saw evidence in my life that forgiveness truly was the answer, my faith and trust grew.

I also found myself giving up on the notion that there was a savior outside of my own mind. I increasingly came to accept that the Answer was within my own mind and that the Voice of Truth was there all the time. No one was coming to save me. I had to do the work myself. That was quite a revelation and initially somewhat depressing. I did not want to hear that God did not create the world, and I was just a character in this dream that I had dreamed up. This meant that neither my happiness nor my distress came from outside of my own mind. The good part was that I had the power to change my mind regarding how I perceived the situations and people in my life. I could see that my interpretations were the source of my misery.

I am changeless love. Nothing else is real. No matter how many mistakes I think I have made, no matter how I think I have screwed things up, and no matter how unworthy I feel, Jesus assures me that I haven't changed anything about the truth of who I am because I can't change my reality. Of course, we can be unaware of who we are, but we can't change who we are in truth. The Atonement Principle establishes that it is impossible to change what God created perfect. We are one Self, which means we are love, we are innocent, complete and perfect with all of God's attributes. Doesn't this make things simple? It means that everything but the truth of who we are is really all meaningless. It means that we don't need to beat up on ourselves or experience the guilt of having screwed things up. Nothing has happened. Nothing we have done has changed who we are in truth!

I am never alone, and for that, I am grateful. I sense the presence of powerful spiritual companions and guides on this journey. I am grateful for the guidance of the ever present Voice of the Holy Spirit in my right mind in the form of prompts, signs, symbols, and nudges, as well as messages delivered through others. When in the flow of His Love, the path is gentle and everything is given perfectly. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to share this path with so many lovely beings who offer me opportunities to know the truth about my Self. Yes, this includes my gratitude for those who seemingly create difficulties for me, as I increasingly recognize that they truly do hold the key to my salvation. Increasingly, I am aware they are in my life so I can see those places in myself where I still need to release, to heal, and to let go of what is false and does not serve my highest good.

Everyone perfectly mirrors what is going on in my own mind. Everything is just an outward picture of my inward condition. If I want to change the outward picture, I must bring all my self-concepts, my beliefs, my values, my opinions, and my judgments to the truth. Whoever shows up in my life is given to me as my assignment in forgiveness. I can now see the perfection of it all. My unhappy childhood is now seen as perfectly orchestrated by my higher mind for the purpose of bringing me to this path. I am grateful for it all. That is what Jesus means by being a happy learner. **"They will be happy learners of the lesson this light brings to them, because it teaches them release from nothing and from all the works of nothing."** (T.14.II.4.5) (ACIM OE T.13.VII.59) He is asking us to learn to be happy learners, meaning to accept the perfection of the classroom of our lives when it is used for healing, but we must be happy learners. **"If you would be a happy learner, you must give everything you have learned to the Holy Spirit, to be unlearned for you."** (T.14.II.6.1) (ACIM OE T.13.VII.61)

I am grateful for the assurance that I will find my way home. Very early in the Text, Jesus assures us that **". . . the outcome is as certain as God"** (T.2.III.3.10) (ACIM OE T.2.II.48) Later, he tells us that we can afford to be patient because of the certainty of the outcome. Along the way on this journey, I have found many friends and companions who have come into my life exactly as I needed them for my growth and healing. I am grateful for the many teachers who have shown up and deepened my understanding of the Course and encouraged its application in my life. I have felt God's ever-loving support every step of the way reflected in the many miracles in my life. The deepening awareness of who I really am in God's sight has been such a gift.

To rest in Him is the only rest there is. I am grateful for the opportunities to overlook error and to increasingly see who my brothers really are when I look with vision. Every opportunity presented to me to release a judgment, to take responsibility for an attack thought, and to recognize that I need not judge myself in this process, has been such a blessing. I am not the healer of my own thoughts. I simply bring them to the Holy Spirit Who does the heavy lifting. He thanks me for giving Him what does not serve me. **"For He would offer you the thanks you give, since He receives your gifts in loving gratitude, and gives them back a thousand and a hundred thousand more than they were given."** (W.123.6.3) Today, not only do we express our thanks to Him, but sit in quietness and hear His gratitude expressed to us. So much love to be absorbed!

"Today let us be thankful. We have come to gentler pathways and to smoother roads. There is no thought of turning back, and no implacable resistance to the truth. A bit of wavering remains, some small objections and a little hesitation, but you can well be grateful for your gains, which are far greater than you realize." (W.123.1.1-4) We may be feeling a lot of resistance and hesitation while we still cling to the investments we have in the world and to our grievances and problems. While we do have resistance and lots of wavering, we have made progress in accepting forgiveness as the only answer. Our part in this process is simply to bring our dark thoughts to the light. Shifts happen as we commit to watching our minds. We are told that our gains are even greater than we realize. Jesus is always gentle and encouraging of us. He reminds us, **"Some of your greatest advances you have judged as failures, and some of your deepest retreats you have evaluated as success."** (T.18.V.1.6) (ACIM OE T.18.VI.41) In other words, we have no way of evaluating our progress on this path. When we are grateful, however, it will bring more awareness to our minds of the gains we have made.

God has not abandoned us, **". . . nor left you to yourself, nor let you wander in the dark alone."** (W.123.2.2) **"Be grateful He has saved you from the self you thought you made to take the place of Him and His creation."** (W.123.2.3) We could not have made the gains we have without Him. Thus, **"We sing the song of thankfulness today, in honor of the**

Self that God has willed to be our true Identity in Him." (W.123.4.2) We can truly be grateful that God has not changed His mind about us. He has made it impossible for us to change the truth about ourselves, as we were created. We have simply become unaware of our true reality. We never left our home and have not changed ourselves. We can only know this when we give up the blocks to the awareness of our reality. This is our responsibility. The power is in our own minds. There is no one outside our own minds to save us. We must be the ones who are willing to do the work with the help of the Holy Spirit. We must be patient with ourselves. **"Faith in the eternal is always justified, for the eternal is forever kind, infinite in its patience and wholly loving."** (T.19.IV.B.i.10.1) (ACIM OE T.19.V.b.69)

We are called to listen intently to His message, as **"His word is soundless if it be not heard."** (W.123.5.4) Because we are willing to do the healing and are willing to take our function in the world in accepting the Atonement for ourselves, He is thanking us. **"Thanks be to you who heard, for you become the messenger who brings His Voice with you, and lets It echo round and round the world."** (W.123.6.1) Our function in the world is not one of literally bringing the message to the world, but simply through our Being, shining our light into every mind. It is not about doing something, but only to accept the Atonement for ourselves. In other words, we accept the correction of our errors in perception. As we do so, the light shines through us and miracles are brought to every mind open to receiving them. The light we bring is carried around the world by the Holy Spirit. Our part is to do our own healing and not interfere. **"You have been willing to bring the darkness to light, and this willingness has given strength to everyone who would remain in darkness."** (T.18.III.6.2) (ACIM OE T.18.IV.29)

"Receive the thanks of God today, as you give thanks to Him. For He would offer you the thanks you give, since He receives your gifts in loving gratitude, and gives them back a thousand and a hundred thousand more than they were given." (W.123.6.2-3) Just for giving Him the gift of our thankfulness, He gives us His gratitude. What a blessing to experience this deep level of communion with our Source. This is true prayer. How different this is than to focus on praising God and beseeching Him in our prayers. The time of *mea culpa* is over. Now is the time of our resurrection!

In the process of giving our thanks to Him, so much power is unleashed! **"This holy half an hour given Him will be returned to you in terms of years for every second; power to save the world eons more quickly for your thanks to Him."** (W.123.7.3) It's overwhelming when we really think about this and with deep humility and gratitude accept it must be so. **"Receive His thanks, and you will understand how lovingly He holds you in His Mind, how deep and limitless His care of you, how perfect is His gratitude to you."** (W.123.8.1)

If you find it difficult today to embrace this message, be willing to bring any self-attacking thoughts of unworthiness, depression, sadness, despair, and impatience, to the light of the Holy Spirit. Know that behind these dark thoughts, God's light is shining constantly. We are the ones choosing to obscure it. When we are willing to bring these thoughts to the truth, only then can we walk through our day with light footsteps. This Lesson is not so much about focusing on specific things in this world that we are grateful for, although that too is helpful in learning to be grateful, but it is about putting more of our focus on the eternal gifts already given us. To be grateful for that which comes and goes makes gratitude less constant, because when the gifts come, we are grateful and when they don't come, we feel distress. The gratitude Jesus talks to us about in this Lesson becomes part of our very being and is not dependent on external circumstances. It is an inner condition where we experience the constancy of the truth about ourselves, the love we are, and the changelessness of our being, which is innocence, peace, love, and joy.

I will conclude with my deepest, heartfelt gratitude to each of you who contribute to this walk we share together in such a meaningful way. **"Be glad you have a function in salvation to fulfill."** (W.123.3.4) It is the function of forgiving our special relationships. It is why we are here. It is what time is for! With gratitude comes deep feelings of joy and with it comes the desire to extend, to give, to share, to support, to care, and to love. When our focus is on taking and getting for ourselves, we are called to do the forgiveness work of releasing all the thoughts and feelings that block this natural desire to extend. We come to know ourselves when we extend our gifts. We know the gifts are in us as we give them. Giving and receiving are the same.

In morning and evening meditation, for fifteen minutes, we give thanks for the eternal gifts and for the specific gifts in our lives. Also, we look at areas where we lack gratitude. We bring to mind people and situations where we don't want to smile on everyone we see, and we ask for help of the Holy Spirit in bringing these thoughts to the light. We thank God for His eternal Love for us, for having created us changeless, for His presence in our lives, and for never having abandoned us. He has given us a special function in salvation, and His Love for us will remain shining in us forever. We thank Him for the gains we have made as a result of His presence in us. We honor the Self He has willed to be our true Identity in Him. We are grateful for the Friend we have in the Holy Spirit and for His infinite patience with us. Then, we take in His thanks to us and feel how lovingly He holds us in His Mind and how deep is His limitless care.

"Remember hourly to think of Him, and give Him thanks for everything He gave His Son, that he might rise above the world, remembering his Father and his Self." (W.123.8.2) **"Today we smile on everyone we see, and walk with lightened footsteps as we go to do what is appointed us to do."** (W.123.4.3)

Love and blessings, Sarah
huemmert@shaw.ca

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