

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 336

Forgiveness lets me know that minds are joined.

Sarah's Commentary:

Our misperceptions keep our minds separate. In truth, we are One and our minds are joined. We recognize this when we forgive because only then are the blocks to love released. Forgiveness wipes away the belief in sin. Sin is just another name for the separation. It came with the belief that we had done such an awful thing to leave God. To leave God is to think we left who we really are in truth---the eternal Son. The reality is that it is impossible to leave our Source, as we are a thought in the Mind of God. There can be no separation because we are One with Him. All minds are joined in the Oneness we are. Sin and separation simply are not real. What is required is a willingness and a desire to shift our perception from what is false to that which is true. The means for this is forgiveness, which ultimately takes us to the end of perception. Knowledge is then restored and the illusion is no more.

Our perceptions, by their very nature, are distortions. We need the Holy Spirit to help shift these perceptions from what is false and restore them to the truth. Perceptions are rife with judgments. These distorted perceptions are healed through forgiveness, which **"opens the hidden altar to the truth."** (W.336.1.4) This altar is in the mind, where the choice for separation was originally made. When our unhealed perceptions of our brothers are healed and our body has served its purpose as a vehicle for joining, then perception disappears, and all that is left is the truth of what we are as one eternal Christ Self.

We are called to let the mind **"return and look within, to find what it has vainly sought without."** (W.336.1.5) This reminds me of what Eckhart Tolle tells us when he says, "Stop looking outside for scraps of pleasure or fulfillment, for validation, security, or love—you have the treasure within that is infinitely greater than anything the world has to offer." Jesus also taught that the kingdom of God is within. To search outside ourselves is to search in vain. We are called to release all the thoughts that keep us separate and keep us feeling very much alone. They are our judgments, comparisons, needs, specialness, jealousies, expectations, fears, competition, demands, anger, misunderstandings, hurts, grievances, conflicts, hates, defenses, and on and on. Such thoughts keep us in the clutches of the ego and separate from each other.

We all have stories of victimization. While they appear to have different forms, the content is all the same—an emphasis on our innocence, the reason we protest it, claiming it was not our fault, and our justification on why we need to attack and defend. We may have believed we were not adequately loved or were rejected outright. "It is not my fault" is the mantra of the ego. Sickness is by far the most evident reason to prove that it is not our fault. We believe sickness proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is not our fault since it is caused by viruses and bacteria. We do not see that only guilt is the cause of our suffering. **"Of one thing you were sure: Of all the many causes you perceived as bringing pain and suffering to you, your guilt was not among them."** (T.27.VII.7.4) (ACIM OE T.27.88)

Our goal is to see that we are the same Christ Self. Jesus describes what happens when we are joined in a holy relationship as follows: **"For what one thinks, the other will experience with him. What can this mean except your mind and your brother's are one? Look not with fear upon this happy fact, and think not that it lays a heavy burden on you. For when you have accepted it with gladness, you will realize that your relationship is a reflection of the union of the Creator and His Son. From loving minds there is no separation. And every thought in one brings gladness to the other because they are the same."** (T. 22.VI.14.2-7) (ACIM OE T.22.VII.64) In essence, it only takes one willing person to heal any relationship. My partner will experience what I am thinking. While this may bring fear, it is powerful to recognize that as we take responsibility for our ego-driven perceptions, we invite the miracle. The miracle removes the barriers that keep us separate and allows the holy light to infuse the dark places we hold against a brother.

When we perceive our brother through the lens of the ego, we can't know him. What we do is put our false distortions on him. We see him through our projected biases and our own self-judgments. Forgiveness is about having our perception of our brother changed from one of sinfulness to one of sinlessness. Our part is to bring our distorted perceptions to the Holy Spirit, who is always there, consistently and patiently, waiting for us to bring our misperceptions to Him. He is not outside of our minds. He is the light of truth shining within the mind. Changing perception from the wrong mind to the right mind is a precondition to knowledge. **"Knowledge is restored after perception first is changed, and then gives way entirely to what remains forever past its highest reach."** (W.336.1.2)

Forgiveness, from a Course perspective, is based on the fact that nothing real has happened. It is all a dream. If I had truly sinned, I could not **"look within, and find Your promise of my sinlessness is kept; Your Word remains unchanged within my mind, Your Love is still abiding in my heart."** (W.336.2.2)

If this were not so, it would mean that we really had changed ourselves. It would mean that our character traits and our personality is, for the most part, fixed. It would mean that we have sinned and deserve punishment, and that what we think about ourselves is the truth. Forgiveness is based on the fact that nothing we think about ourselves is true, despite what we have done in the dream. We have not sinned. This harkens back to the Atonement Principle that says, no matter what we think about ourselves, the reality is that we cannot and have not changed ourselves. Our purity is guaranteed by God in our creation.

We see ourselves as sinful, which is why we need forgiveness to sweep away our misperceptions of our brothers and ourselves. We need to look at our unforgiving thoughts and ask for help of the Holy Spirit to shine them away. This is a process of acknowledging our upsets and seeing that they are just our inner call for healing. When conflict shows up in our lives, we generally see it as something someone has done to us. Yet Jesus invites us to see that all conflict comes from within our own minds and healing is about taking responsibility for our own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. We are not the victims of the world we see. We have set up a pattern of behavior to defend ourselves against the pain of unmet past needs. We have developed strategies to protect ourselves, which can never work. Now we are given a process to release the pain of past associations and bring them to the truth. This is how forgiveness works. Our part is to bring awareness to the patterns played out in our lives that keep us from peace. The Holy Spirit does the rest.

Because we think our inner altar has been defiled, we are afraid to look within. We think that what we will see is vile and will lead us to want to kill ourselves. Yet when **"Its lilies [of forgiveness] shine into the mind,"** (W.336.1.5) we find what we have **"vainly sought without."**

(W.336.1.5) There is no peace of mind found by looking outside ourselves for anything in this world. Looking within may seem frightening; yet through the process of forgiveness, we come to recognize the good and pure and divine Self we are. We recognize our intrinsic worth. Now we are less afraid to approach the altar within---the holy place where the truth about us shines forth.

"In quiet may forgiveness wipe away my dreams of separation and of sin. Then let me, Father, look within, and find Your promise of my sinlessness is kept; Your Word remains unchanged within my mind, Your Love is still abiding in my heart."

(W.336.2.1-2)

We know we need to forgive when we are not at peace. When we want peace more than we want to be right about how we see things, we invite the Holy Spirit to look with us at our misperceptions. Our views are based on what the ego tells us, and it always speaks first and is always wrong. Now we are invited to turn to the Holy Spirit and ask how He would have us see this situation. He will reinterpret what the ego insists is the truth if we are willing to be wrong.

When we are willing to look at our fears, our judgments, our self-attacks, and our distress together with the Holy Spirit/Jesus, He shows us the unreality of it all. Thus, we can see our wrong-minded perspectives while not judging ourselves for them. As we look at the darkness, despite our feelings of pain, anxiety, unworthiness, anger, guilt or doubt, we open to receive healing through the miracle in this instant. We look with Spirit past ego appearances and accept the Atonement.

Ultimately, the way I see anyone is the way I see myself. Today, we reclaim responsibility for our projections onto others and recognize that we are only affected by our interpretations. With forgiveness, our mind can be healed so we see everything that seems to be happening to us as an expression of love or a call for love. Thus, we come to know ourselves as the love we are and always have been. We have simply forgotten. The reality of awakening is certain because it is guaranteed by God.

Nouk Sanchez offers a beautiful prayer to Spirit within that fits so well with this process:

"Spirit, I accept your Atonement. I accept your divine correction of error in my mind, and I allow your healing to flow through my mind. I accept that you have already healed both the cause and symptoms (effects) of this problem; the decision and its shadow. If the problem's 'appearance' continues, or if there are continuing 'symptoms' (appearances) that cause me to doubt, I then offer these doubts to you as well, to correct in my mind. I remember in any holy instant that as I sincerely accept Atonement, it is done! To continue to be concerned after I have forgiven and accepted Atonement is to doubt your Love and prolong the illusion of time and suffering. Remember: Love without trust is impossible; doubt and trust cannot coexist. I remember this and I have gratitude that Spirit has already healed my mind and I accept with this, the healing of all symptoms (effects). It is done! "

Love and blessings, Sarah
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