



**LESSON 284**  
**I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt.**

**Sarah's Commentary:**

I accept that I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt, yet so often my mind seems to want to justify all kinds of reasons for the hurt that I am feeling and to hold onto grievances. There is always some kind of payoff or "juice" we get from our suffering. For example, suffering can be used to project guilt onto others for what they have seemingly done to us. This brings a kind of "pleasure," which is not something we readily want to admit, nor are we always consciously aware that this is what we are doing. **"The 'reasoning' by which the world is made, on which it rests, by which it is maintained, is simply this: 'You are the cause of what I do. Your presence justifies my wrath, and you exist and think apart from me. While you attack I must be innocent. And what I suffer from is your attack.'" (T.27.VII.3.1-4)** (ACIM OE T.27.VIII.64) We are clearly making the case that the world is hurting us and that there is a certain underlying glee in making others responsible for our condition.

Yet the cause of our problems and their solutions is never outside of ourselves, but in our own minds. Yet we stubbornly protest, "I have been hurt by what *you* did!" Well, if that is the case, it means that we have given meaning and power to a situation that is, in itself, neutral. We are hurt and betrayed because that is what we want. Why would we want it? We want it because it proves that the cause of our problems is outside of our own minds. It proves that the world is real, we are victims of what it has done to us, and this is what we want. Identifying with the ego is the wish to prove God wrong and insist on the correctness of our perception. This is our tantrum against God, in which we insist that we are who we say we are, and therefore God is wrong about us.

The truth is that the cause of everything that we experience and the solution to our situation are both in our own minds and nowhere else. This is actually good news. If the power is outside of our own minds, we are then caught in victimhood with no escape. Of course, that is exactly how the ego has set it up, but it has kept its program from our awareness. The ego's purpose is always to keep us invested in this illusory world. This world is ruled by the Laws of Chaos where God is one of the characters in the dream which makes it impossible to turn to Him. **"For now He has become the 'enemy' Who caused it, to Whom appeal is useless."** (T.23.II.7.3) (ACIM OE T.23.III.25) Jesus shows us exactly how the ego has set everything up and what it has made is foolproof and very ingenious to keep us locked in its matrix. But Jesus shows us the matrix and how it works and asks us to look at it calmly rather than be upset by it. Once we are able to see it, we can be released from it. He shows us that we can now make another choice. We are being shown that everything starts in our own minds, where our power is. We can actually step out of this circus and enter the quietness of the meadow, which is our own right mind outside of the matrix.

Regina Dawn Akers writes, in *The Teachings of Inner Ramana*, that the thinking mind is very active. "If you watch it, you will see it is much like acrobats in a circus. It is always jumping this way and that, bending and turning, and it has some very amazing moves." She goes on to say what it does is distract us from reality. If we continue to focus on the circus, we will not notice reality, but we can choose to lose interest in our thoughts. Yes, she acknowledges, it is very tempting to pay attention to them, but our deep desire is to settle in the quietness of the meadow. Now we must learn to see our addiction to the hype of the circus. It will continue to be there, but what we lose is our attachment to it. Grief and suffering are based on our investment in the reality of this world. When we enter the meadow, we will smile gently at the idea that we are at the mercy of forces outside of ourselves.

**"Loss is not loss when properly perceived. Pain is impossible."** (W.284.1.1) Jesus says that we are mistaken in the way we see things and what we have come to believe. To us, loss and pain are part of our experience here. We have a big investment in suffering, and we get very invested in empathizing with the suffering of others. It proves to us, indeed, that loss, pain, grief, and suffering are very real. It proves that our existence as bodies is real and that we can be sick and die. It makes what God says about us, as eternal beings, wrong. But again, Jesus tells us that there is another way of seeing. When loss is perceived properly, we no longer see it as a loss. We see that it has all been made up, but it is not something we will see right away. It is a process we go through in loosening our mind from our wrong perceptions of ourselves and of the world. All that is required is willingness and openness to accept the truth of what we are being taught.

Early in my years with the Course, my husband died suddenly. We were traveling in Europe and he was flown from Germany to London, England for emergency surgery. Many angels showed up on my trip home, which showed me I was truly being supported in miraculous ways. Yet the pain of loss and grief were very evident. I kept turning to the Course for solace. Its words soothed me and brought me peace, but there were many moments of tears and sadness. I was alone one evening, in bed, late at night, sobbing, when a very gentle loving voice spoke to me with the question, "How much longer do you need to cry?" I was startled by the question, but I felt it deserved an answer. I replied, saying perhaps I would be willing to give up my tears after another ten minutes. My response felt so silly that I could not continue to cry. Instead, I burst out laughing. Why ten minutes, I wondered? Why not thirty, sixty, or the rest of my life? I was not being admonished for crying. I felt that I was being supported by this gentle voice in whatever I needed to experience. However, it became very clear that I could make a choice. I was not a victim. I did not know what anything was for. How could I know why my husband had died? How could I possibly know what was in my best interests? All things truly do work together for good.

This did not mean that I never again felt the grief of this loss. I had many more meltdowns, yet increasingly, I could experience the grief while still remain the observer of it from outside of the dream and not judge myself for it. The loving presence was there, supporting me as I cried. I could experience the deep longing and sadness as long as I wanted to, all the time knowing the power of decision was my own, and the willingness to do the healing was very strong. The healer was Divine Love, and it was in my mind. Whenever I aligned with the Divine within and whenever I chose to leave the circus and enter the meadow, the healing and joy that came with it were immediate. I realized that not one single thought of grief and loss was true. Freedom was in the releasing my attachments to my story of loss and victimhood.

Grief, pain, hurt, loss, and suffering are impossible because God would not hurt us and there is no other Source. If He gives us only peace and joy, anything else we experience must come from what we are making up and not from Him. If I suffer, I am believing a thought that something should be different than it is. When we accept what is, without the stories we tell about the situation, we experience the freedom of our Being. What we have made has no real source except in the wrong mind. If I am experiencing pain, I alone am the one choosing these hurtful thoughts. They are nothing but a dream. When we wake up, we realize the nothingness of it all. This is not unlike our nighttime dreams.

Last night, I dreamt of someone who died and I was wrapping up the body and feeling the pain of the loss of this person in my life. Where did this thought come from? Obviously, it originated in my own mind and was projected into the dream. It was no more real than my experience in this worldly dream. With this projection came all the feelings of loss and grief, but were they real? Did they have a real source? Or were they just manufactured thoughts with no substance? Where did they go when I woke up? These thoughts are nothing and nowhere and no different than the thoughts I am conjuring up in this moment. They are all thoughts chosen by me. If I am the one holding these thoughts, I can elect to change them.

OK, perhaps I can subscribe to that, but there does seem to be pain in my life. I do experience grief and loss, and it does seem these feelings come from real events in my life or in the lives of others. Clearly, Jesus is not asking us to deny our experience. He is only letting us know that in all of us the truth is there and untouched by anything we might be thinking. All we are doing is blocking it with our thoughts. Now he instructs us on how we can come to accept the truth already in us and how to change the thoughts that hurt us.

The Lesson is quite explicit and offers us some clear steps to do this. In Lesson 187, Jesus invited our gentle laughter at the idea of sacrifice, which takes many forms such as pain, loss, sickness, grief, poverty, starvation, and death. Is it really a sacrifice to give up all these forms of pain and to see their unreality? Why would we want to hold onto them? He invites our laughter at the idea that pain and suffering are something we would want to keep just to prove that we are right about ourselves and this world of separation. In this Lesson, Jesus lays out five steps to help us recognize how ingrained our thinking is and how much investment we have in the illusion.

When we look at the idea, "**I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt**," we are told "**This is the truth, at first to be but said, and then repeated many times; and next to be accepted as partly true, with many reservations. Then to be considered seriously more and more, and finally accepted as the truth.**" (W.284.1.5-6) Jesus sees our resistance to having our thoughts changed. To us, it may seem to take a long time. It is a form of cognitive therapy, where we substitute our thoughts for His Thoughts. Jesus has infinite patience with us and will never coerce us. He continues to urge us to be patient and gentle with ourselves. The undoing of our current thought system is a process.

Step 1. "**This is the truth, at first to be but said...**" (W.284.1.5) We are basically just repeating a thought and trying to understand it and considering the possibility that it may be true.

Step 2. "**...and then repeated many times.**" (W.284.1.5) We are now trying to accept the truth of the statements and are still not sure that this is so. We will struggle with Course teachings like, "There is no world," or "I am not a body." These thoughts argue with what we are perceiving. The

mind resists these ideas, so we need to be convinced of the truth of them. We may intellectually accept the truth of this thought system, but still not apply it consistently to our lives.

Step 3. "**...and next to be accepted as but partly true, with many reservations.**" (W.284.1.5) Sometimes, we will have an experience of the truth presented to us. We may experience a shift and a deeper sense of this idea. Or, we may do the forgiveness practice and receive a miracle. We get an insight where the truth is revealed to us in some "aha" moment of recognition, or we might see innocence in someone in a moment of true joining. While we accept the ideas, we still have many reservations and put forth many arguments and raise many questions.

Step 4. "**Then to be considered seriously more and more.**" (W.284.1.6) Now we have increasing experiences, proven to be true, in which we apply the idea. We are now validating the experience in more and more situations. This builds trust that when we let go of our way of thinking about ourselves and the world and simply try out a new way, the shift happens. With each shift, our confidence that we are being guided in this process grows until we stop relying on our own thinking mind. We have never had answers that got us out of our pain and suffering and brought lasting happiness. As we recognize the truth of this, we are more motivated to turn to the Holy Spirit, Who does have the answers for us.

Step 5 "**...and finally accepted as the truth.**" (W.284.1.6) At this stage, we now see the idea is applied to every situation equally. There is no more order of difficulty seen in miracles and so there are no more reservations and no more exceptions. The transfer of training has been accomplished, so the Lessons are applied to all areas of one's life.

Yes, the process takes effort and practice, determination and choice, commitment and dedication. It takes effort to get to a place of total effortlessness. In the use of the words offered to us, we get in touch with the deeper meaning and recognize the content being offered here, until we go "**beyond these words today, and past all reservations and arrive at full acceptance of the truth in them.**" (W.284.1.8)

These steps actually lay out the whole process of this Course. It applies not only to this Lesson but to the entire teaching. We have all had this experience, where we start by repeating the words and then go deeper with our understanding. We all still have many reservations, though our acceptance of the truth of this teaching is growing, as we apply the lessons and see the results in our lives. It is all a process that for most of us takes place over many years of doing this work until we come to the end of the journey. Our resistance still comes from the fear of giving up our investment in our identity as an individual. We need to recognize how the truth is terrifying to our separated egos. Yet we are gently led through this process of recognizing that what God has given us cannot hurt. Thus, grief and pain must be impossible.

Love and blessings, Sarah  
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