



Lesson 12
I am upset because I see a meaningless world.

Sarah's Commentary:

This idea corrects ". . . a major perceptual distortion." (W.12.1.1) What is that distortion? The distortion is our belief that the world has meaning and is the cause of how we feel. We think that when we are upset it is because something happened to us, and as a result, we are hapless victims. We end up blaming people and circumstances in the world for our situation. "I would be happy if my car started, if it weren't so cold outside, if my children did not disturb my peace, if my job were less demanding, or if I had the right relationship." In other words, I'd be happy if the world weren't so upsetting, so frightening, so sad, so violent, so insane, or so disappointing. Yet Jesus says, **"All of these attributes are given it by you. The world is meaningless in itself."** (W.12.1.3-4)

When we start to see that the world outside of us is a reflection of what is inside, we may start to feel confused as to who is to blame for the problems in our lives. We may point to difficult childhoods and wonder how we were responsible for that. We may blame our parents for our low self-esteem and then blame our partners for exacerbating it with their behaviors towards us. The difficulty is that while we are blaming anything outside of us, we are unable to resolve the situation in front of us. Waiting for anyone else to change or trying to resolve a situation from the past makes us powerless. To free ourselves requires taking responsibility for how we choose to see every situation; it is to forgive the past by letting go of our meaningless thoughts that keep us bound.

This does not mean we should deny what we are experiencing. The idea is to see the experience as coming from our own meaningless thoughts. We are the ones who give meaning to these thoughts. They all come from the belief that we are separate and alone and are guilty of having left our home with God. Coming from this false belief of separation, we see ourselves as sinful and guilty; but the sin and guilt in our minds are so intolerable to us that in order to feel better about ourselves, we project it onto situations, people, and circumstances in the world, believing they are the cause of what we feel. Now we blame them for our condition. This makes us the victim of what we believe they have done to us, but now we are asked to see how our perceptual distortion removes responsibility from us and puts it onto the world. Yet the world is meaningless. It is our meaning that we put on it, all coming from our own minds.

Last night, I was watching a PBS program about various places in the world under siege---Sudan, Northern China, Syria, North Korea, and many others. As I was listening to the program, I watched my judgments about this world being insane, frightening, sad, and violent. (W.12.1.2) Yet this Lesson says it is, in fact, none of those things. It is all meaningless. It is just a movie playing out in front of me on the screen. What upsets me are my judgments about it. Any attributes I ascribe to the world are what I have given it. Of course, there is no question that in this dream, the events of this world do have disastrous consequences, but the consequences are not real. They

have no real effects. What we are learning to see is that we can choose to be an observer of the world and watch the projections that we put onto people, circumstances, and events. We can learn to be attentive to our thoughts and observe how we respond to the world that we think we are seeing, and recognize that our judgments start with our own self-attacking thoughts, all starting with the guilt in the mind.

Whether you watch these kinds of events on TV, read the papers, or choose to avoid doing so, what is important is whether your decisions come from your belief that there is something real going on in the world. If you don't want to look because you think it is all real, you are still avoiding a world you are giving meaning to.

The reality is that we are not actually upset because of what we see in the world. What upsets us is that the world is meaningless. The meaning we put on the forms of this world comes from our own minds. We are very invested in the meaning we give everything. In fact, it is important for us to be right about the meaning we give to everything. This Lesson reminds us that the world is meaningless, and "**What is meaningless is neither good nor bad.**" (W.12.5.1) This is important because "... a 'good world' implies a 'bad' one, and a 'satisfying world' implies an 'unsatisfying' one." (W.12.3.6) Whatever keeps us invested in this world keeps us from recognizing that the only reality is Oneness.

"But because it is meaningless, you are impelled to write upon it what you would have it be." (W.12.5.4) We are not ready to accept the meaninglessness of our own thoughts. The world and all our thoughts about it are there to make us forget who we are as One with God. As such, we are unlimited, perfect, and innocent; but because we feel we have sinned and are guilty, we have come to hide in the world from the love of God. We have come to hide from what we really are.

Jesus says, "**The world was made as an attack on God.**" (W.PII.Q3.2.1) We made it as a place to keep our belief in sin and guilt hidden from our awareness and instead blame outside conditions for how we feel. This requires a world that we can make responsible for our condition. The deeper reason for this is to avoid God's punishment. We don't want responsibility for separating from love. We would rather believe others have taken love from us. Thus, for us, the world serves as a block or distraction to remembering who we are. It was made to keep the truth of who we are out of our awareness. But just because what we think is meaningless does not mean our thoughts have no power. After all, our whole world arose from the thought of separation and is held up by the power of our belief.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us, but we don't hear because our thoughts block the truth. They block His messages that are constantly communicating with us. He speaks to us of who we are. Believing there is a world outside of Oneness is a false belief. Believing there could be something outside of everything is impossible. It all comes from the same meaningless thought that I could be separate from God and be on my own. Everything in the world is a shadow of that one meaningless thought projected out. It is meaningless because we can't separate from God. It can't happen. That is what the Atonement Principle guarantees. We can only be unaware of our true reality.

"If you could accept the world as meaningless and let the truth be written upon it for you, it would make you indescribably happy." (W.12.5.3) Our compulsion to give everything we see our meaning is a defense against the truth. Our fear is that if we don't fill all the spaces with our own meaning, the truth of who we are would shine through. "**Beneath your words is written the Word of God.**" (W.12.5.7) We can't know it until our own meaning, which we have given everything in the world, has been released. It is a process. Our preference is

to be right rather than happy. We have a big investment in our specialness and our individuality, even if we are not happy. Doing these exercises daily supports us in our intention to wake up. It is not a process of trying hard to get this, but ultimately, it is about surrendering into it.

Jesus asks, "**Would God have left the meaning of the world to your interpretation? If He had, it has no meaning. For it cannot be that meaning changes constantly, and yet is true.**" (T.30.VII.1-3) (ACIM OE T.30.VIII.82) Each of us gives the world the meaning we think it has, and we change our minds about that meaning from time to time. Thus, there is no consistency in the interpretations we have given the world. Why does a meaningless world upset us? If the world has no meaning, how could we have meaning? The meaning I put onto the world is my meaning, and I think that what I think matters and is important. Thus, we are afraid of knowing the truth because we value our separate existence. We believe that in our separate self we can feel powerful, superior, and special. That is why we write our meaning on everything. If we did not do so, God's meaning would show up in the space left free of our own meaning, and that is what we fear.

In our practice today, we are to look around quite slowly, and as we glance from one thing to another, we give whatever our glance rests on equal time and attention. No one thing has more value than anything else. As I look around my office, I see a picture of myself on a mountaintop taken when I first met my husband. I see a commemorative medal given me for significant service to the country. I see a gift given my deceased husband by his children. I recognize that I give them all some kind of meaning based on thoughts from the past. These I judge as "good" thoughts. Then, I see the clutter in my office. I see disorganization everywhere. I see the dust on my desk. I see my bills that need to be paid before the deadline. I see emails that have not been answered. I see my appointment book. And, as I look at these things, I feel a disturbance in my mind until I remind myself that everything I see has equal value. (W.12.2.7) It is all meaningless. It only has the meaning I have given it. What I see are all just forms, empty of any meaning except that which I give them. My mind wants to linger on what I think I find distressing. "**Why, then, should a meaningless world upset you?**" (W.12.5.2) Again, it does not matter if we don't understand any of this. It does not matter if we actively resist the idea. Application of the idea is all that is asked of us.

The application of these lessons is about undoing our false beliefs. "**Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. It is not necessary to seek for what is true, but it is necessary to seek for what is false.**" (T.16.IV.6.1-2) (ACIM OE T.16.V.85)

Today, we practice removing our meaning from the world and recognizing that we do not know what anything means. We believe we suffer because of the things that happen to us. We have taught ourselves that we are victims of this world. We have, in fact, chosen to use this world to hide the truth of who we are from ourselves. We are now, at least somewhat, willing to surrender our meaning to allow the Truth to show us Its meaning.

For this practice, three or four times, for one minute or less, look about slowly, shifting your glance at regular time intervals. As you look about, say, "**I think I see a fearful world, a dangerous world, a hostile world, a sad world, a wicked world, a crazy world,**" (W.12.3.2) and so on. Use whatever descriptive terms occur to you. This includes positive ones such as a good world, a satisfying world, a wonderful world, and a peaceful world, but remember these attributes imply their opposite. This is not the world on which God's truth is written that would make you indescribably happy. At the end, we add, "**But I am upset because I see a meaningless world.**" (W.12.4.4) Our gentle teacher does not want us to strain in doing this exercise, so

terminate it if you feel pressure. Do not push yourself or try to be a perfect student or you will judge yourself and feel more guilty, which is not helpful to this process.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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