



LESSON 217 ~ Review VI

[197] It can be but my gratitude I earn.

Sarah's Commentary:

Jesus tells us that we open to the love we are by healing everything in our minds that stands in the way of love. Then the love in us extends and flows through us, as we become a vehicle for the Holy Spirit. It is a love without conditions of any kind. Such love is not given erratically, nor is it based on bargaining and reciprocity, where we are happy when our needs are met and unhappy when they are not. Real love never turns to hate. Love is what we are. It is in us and not dependent on anything outside of us. Love is freedom, which is a frightening thought to the ego because to the ego, love is all about control, bargaining, and giving to get. The core of the special relationship is all about this kind of "love." In our special relationships, if we do not get the gratitude and reciprocity we think we deserve for our "gifts" of giving, we get angry and bitter and withdraw our love.

Healing is about clearing the blocks to love's awareness so we can come to know the truth of what we are. This is achieved when the world is seen as a classroom used for the purpose of healing the blocks to love. We accept the Atonement for ourselves, which is the Correction for the ego's projected guilt. We willingly give over to the Holy Spirit all that stands in the way of the light and the love that we are. When we come to recognize how the ego set this all up, we need no longer pursue its agenda. Its goal is to keep us mindless so we won't know we have another choice. The ego has convinced us that salvation comes through attack because our seeming attack on God is how the ego was established in the first place. In our special relationships, we enact this same idea of gaining at someone else's expense. We give to get. Jesus exposes the nature of this kind of giving so we can make another choice.

Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves. We have imprisoned ourselves with our own attacks. It is not about forgiving perceived wrongs in someone else, but taking responsibility for our expectations of others. It is about seeing the subtle hooks in our giving, which must be released if we are to truly receive. When we see what the ego is up to, instead of judging ourselves, we can now look at the ego without guilt. With willingness, honesty, and courage, we look at our judgments, our anger, our worry, our sadness, our fantasies of what we think we want or need, our self-concepts, and our beliefs. As we see what was previously hidden from our awareness, we bring it all to the Holy Spirit. What was in the way of love is now quietly released back into the nothingness from which it came.

Our willingness is enhanced when we realize that alignment with the ego will never make us happy. Now we can choose to take responsibility for the unhealed parts of our mind most often triggered in our special relationships. Thus, our relationships are most helpful when used for the purpose of healing our own minds. By consistently turning to the healing power of the Holy Spirit

within our own right mind, rather than listening to the voice of the ego in the wrong mind, we come to more consistent peace in our lives.

Every gift we give is given for ourselves, just as every attack we make is made on ourselves. In Lesson 197, Jesus talked about how we demand gratitude from others for the gifts we give. If we do not receive what we want, we withdraw the gift. Yet when a blessing is truly given, not only is it immediately received within the giver, it is also received in the mind of our brother, even if it is not immediately acknowledged. Not only that but God Himself accepts the gifts we give. There is only one mind and that is the Mind of God, where we already are in truth. No matter the form of the gift, when the content is love, we can know we have it in ourselves, as we give it.

Anything we give, when we want something in return, is not a gift. As we read in this review, ***"Who should give thanks for my salvation but myself? And how but through salvation can I find the Self to Whom my thanks are due?"*** (W.217.1.2-3) In giving we receive, and ultimately, what we receive are the gifts of joy, peace, innocence, and love. This is really what we can be grateful for because then we have an experience of the Christ Self we are. As we extend love (forgiveness) to our brothers, we receive a blessing for ourselves. We are not bound by the dictates of the ego that demands its due for the gifts it gives. Everything is about reciprocity to the ego. It wants to gain. To the ego, giving seems like a loss. When we identify with the ego, we see our interests as separate from the interests of others and in competition with everyone.

Anything we do in the world to "be nice" to someone is just a conditional aspect of worldly love with the ego as the guide. Having a day that feels good is just a trick of the ego to keep us believing that what happens in the day is the source of our happiness. If we believe there is a "good" and a "bad" way to be, we are caught in the ego world of form. Our function is to realize who we are as unlimited beings. Mind is cause and the world is the effect of our thoughts. We can experience our unbounded Self when we step out of the matrix above the battleground, turn to Holy Spirit, and let ourselves be guided.

It feels insulting and even threatening to the ego identity to be told to give up control and surrender to God's Will. Surrender may feel like we are losing something and indeed we are. But what we are losing is the tyrant that currently guides our lives. It is mostly a moment-by-moment release. For example, if I am feeling impatient, I can choose to step aside in that moment and observe my feelings instead of acting on them. When someone calls with an invitation, I can stop and ask for guidance, instead of immediately reacting. When I want to voice an opinion, I can step back and be still. My opinions come from my beliefs and take positions based on limited information. When anger shows up, I can remember it is never justified, and I can ask for a miracle. This moment-by-moment surrender takes a level of mind training and discipline that we are not necessarily good at, but with practice, we will get better until the ego no longer dominates our lives.

We read in Text Chapter 18 IV (ACIM OE T.18.V), ***"The Little Willingness,"*** about the importance of determination in accepting our holiness. Trying to make ourselves holy is counterproductive. It is not our job to atone first, clean up our minds, or try to make ourselves pure. The issue is that we are the ones that want to be in control, and so we put the ego in charge of our healing. But Jesus reminds us that purification is of God, not something for ourselves to undertake. Willingness and readiness are all that is required of us. ***"I who am host to God am worthy of Him. He Who established His dwelling place in me created it as He would have it be. It is not needful that I make it ready for Him, but only that I do not interfere with His plan to restore to me my own awareness of my readiness,"***

which is eternal. I need add nothing to His plan. But to receive it, I must be willing not to substitute my own in place of it. (T.18.IV.5.9-13) (ACIM OE T.18.V.37)

The reality is that the false identity has no idea how to love or how to be helpful. The ego is always out to get, rather than to give. My responsibility is to use every event, circumstance, and situation in my life to heal my mind, not to decide how to fix myself. It is not my job to ensure that anyone stays or goes in my life. It is not my job to change the world. It is not for me to make anyone happy. It is not for me to be a people pleaser in order to be liked. My job is only to change my mind about myself and the world. Only in this way can I become a clear channel for His Love. Guidance comes through clearly when egoic interferences are out of the way. We then are able to hear the prompts on where to go, what to say and to whom, and what to do.

Love is the way I walk in gratitude. To know what giving really means, we need to be constantly willing to release attack thoughts. Releasing attack thoughts opens the door to who I am as the Christ Self. As the error in my mind is corrected, I experience the holy instant. By my trying to figure out how to be loving or good to others, I am working on the level of form and not on healing my mind. Being kind, generous, and loving in my terms are all about conditional love because I am determining how that might look in form. We need to get out of our own way. When our own self-attack is healed, everyone is blessed.

Chuck Spezzano, with Psychology of Vision, does healing work based on *A Course in Miracles*. He recently wrote of a healing that demonstrates the importance of giving up our self-attacking thoughts and beliefs so everyone can receive the blessing we receive. He writes:

"He was so full of self-attack because, though he, himself, was doing great at work, his son was failing at everything he tried. Only recently had his son gotten a normal, although poor-paying, job. His father felt like he was underperforming. His father had discovered that during the marriage with his first wife, she had been having an affair with one of his business associates. It had devastated him. When he got a divorce, it had devastated his son. While he and his wife had happily remarried different partners, his son had never fully recovered. While this man was a great success and admired by his associates, he felt like a failure inside because of his son. Because he was now happily married, it had been fairly easy for him to forgive his ex-wife after the event, but he had never forgiven himself. He was quite adamant in feeling guilt and punishing himself for it. Finally, I shared with him a principle that I learned from *A Course in Miracles*—attack is not discrete. You may think you are only attacking the person you are attacking but actually, you are attacking everyone. Or as I put it, attack is not a pistol that shoots the one you are aiming at, in this case, himself. Attack is a machine gun that sprays the crowd - including those you love the most. When people realize this, it is the very motivation needed for them to give up attack and replace it with blessing.

"During the Business Workshop, I demonstrated to the CEO just how much stress he was adding to himself by his self-attack. I showed him how the self-attack, because of its magnitude, was generating a vicious circle of guilt, self-attack, and stress in his life. It was only when I showed him that because the self-attack was not discrete, he was now attacking his wife, his son, his ex-wife, all of his friends and work associates when he attacked himself that he was finally motivated to let it all go. He was also motivated to let his guilt go when I was able to show him that the guilt he carried was equal and connected to the guilt his son and ex-wife were carrying. I showed him that if he chose

to bless himself he would be able to bless his ex-wife, his wife now and his son also. I set up a simple healing walk in which he at first embraced someone who represented his self-attack so he might integrate all this energy in a positive way. As he did this *and was finally* able to accept himself, he let out the most heart-rending cry that brought most of the participants of the Business Workshop to tears. He kept crying, 'I didn't know...I didn't know...' He had not realized that he was attacking his son when he attacked himself. He had not known that the guilt he carried kept his son and ex-wife in guilt also. He was finally willing to embrace the healing gift of blessing---desiring the best for another in place of his self-attack. He could then easily bless himself and share this gift of blessing with his son, his wife and his ex-wife."

We see in this example how healing our minds is ours to do, and when we do it, it is a gift to everyone. Opening ourselves up to the healing of our own minds offers us an opportunity to reflect love and offer salvation to everyone and receive Heaven's thanks.

"What is Heaven but a song of gratitude and love and praise by everything created to the Source of its creation?" (T.26.IV.3.5) (ACIM OE T.26.V.27) "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)

"Let our gratitude unto our Teacher fill our hearts, as we are free to choose our joy instead of pain, our holiness in place of sin, the peace of God instead of conflict, and the light of Heaven for the darkness of the world." (W.190.11.2)

"Give thanks to every part of you that you have taught how to remember you." (T.13.VII.17.8) (ACIM OE T.12.VII.76) As we willingly bring awareness to the barriers we hold against the love we are, we begin to awaken to our reality. Forgiveness is the means given us to heal our self-attacks. Through forgiveness, the ego dissolves. We put our self-attacking thoughts and our judgments on the inner altar where they are healed. In the holy instant, there is a moment of recognition of the truth of ourselves, and we are overwhelmed with gratitude that what we've made of ourselves is not the truth. I am overcome with tears of joy and a thankful heart. Love always trumps hate.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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