



LESSON 216 ~ Review VI
[196] It can be but myself I crucify.

Sarah's Commentary:

It is not difficult to get that when we attack, we suffer, but it is much more difficult to really live it every day, especially when we experience any kind of perceived attack and feel justified in retaliating. Notice how easy it is to see flaws and what seem to be idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies in others and to use these to judge and criticize. Yet it is precisely what we do not like in ourselves that we condemn in others. The solution is, of course, **"If I attack, I suffer. But if I forgive, salvation will be given me."** (W.216.2.4) Forgiveness in the Course is always about remembering that the lesson is always our own. Everything comes from our own minds. We are the dreamers of our own dream. We are judging something in a brother that we have not forgiven in ourselves. Our brother can truly be an effective mirror for our own mind if we are willing to take responsibility for what we see in him as a projection of our own perceived deficiencies and self-attacks.

Now, if you look closely at the wording of this Lesson, you will see that it speaks entirely about what we are doing to ourselves. When I get upset with someone, I find it helpful to see that there is no "other." What I am seeing in anyone is entirely in my own mind. I can only be affected by the situations and behaviors of others attacking me if I give them the power to hurt me. Seeing ourselves as victimized by others is the way the ego set it all up so we can justify our attacks and deem ourselves innocent in the face of their attack. When we forgive, by seeing that we are responsible for our own pain, we see that in truth no one has done anything. Yes, in the dream, something seems to have happened, but the cause is only in our own minds.

Others are just playing out the script we have written for them. It is as if they are reading their lines from a teleprompter, and these lines have been determined by us. This probably feels like quite a stretch, but it is very helpful in remembering that their response to us, which may look like an attack, is actually orchestrated by our own minds for our own awakening. We are not the victims of the world we see.

Jesus asks us to be wary of the idea that we can be unfairly treated. **"Unfairness and attack are one mistake, so firmly joined that where one is perceived the other must be seen. You cannot be unfairly treated. The belief you are is but another form of the idea you are deprived by someone not yourself."** (T.26.X.3.1-3) (ACIM OE T.26.XI.87) Our brothers have simply revealed the pain and unhealed aspects of our own minds. This pain must be brought forth for healing. Because they have revealed it to us, they are actually our saviors. If we forgive, salvation will be given us, and what is salvation but to know our own innocence, joy, and happiness. We cannot know this when we attack.

"What we give, we receive" is a law that works one hundred percent of the time. There are no exceptions to it. I can think I am hurting you and maintaining my innocence, but this is the lie of the ego, which tells us we can get rid of our guilt by projecting it onto others. Anytime we hurt anyone or try to gain at our brother's expense, we will suffer. We cannot escape the reality that what we do to others we are actually doing to ourselves. The ego tells us that when we project guilt, we are free of it. What it does not tell us is that this is precisely how we keep it.

The golden rule says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In other words, what you give, you receive. It seems like there is a choice of what to give. The choice is to offer love to our brothers, or to withhold it from them. However, there is no wiggle room with this law. What I give, I receive. It is an immutable law. When I cause pain, I will feel pain in return. How it shows up is that I suffer guilt and believe that I deserve punishment, and thus I draw it into my life. The difficult events of our lives are based on the belief that we have them coming to us because of our attacks on others.

All attack is meant to hurt. We can say we did not mean it, but we are just lying to ourselves. We actually attack because we want to. That is why watching our mind takes discipline, vigilance, and the courage to be very honest with ourselves. It requires we look openly at our intentions and see where we try to get from others, using them for our personal gain. What we are doing in these situations is always hurting ourselves while serving our specialness. I cannot think of anything that undoes the ego more readily than to take this law very seriously and use every opportunity to look at our defenses and take responsibility for our projections. When we are not being kind, forgiveness is called for. We forgive as soon as we see that we have tried to gain at our brother's expense.

Any negative thought we have about anyone can immediately be dispelled by sincerely applying the Lesson. Application of the Lesson must become a habit that we over-learn, as it is not generally our immediate reaction to a difficult situation. "**The ego always speaks first**" (T.5.VI.3.5) (ACIM OE T.5.VIII.73) means the ego will be the first to give us its interpretation of any situation. Thus, our response today is: "***This thought I do not want. I choose instead***____," (W.RVI.IN.6.2-3) "***If I forgive, salvation will be given me.***" (W.216.1.4) Or, "***This thought I do not want. I choose instead***____," (W.RVI.IN.6.2-3) "***It can be but myself I crucify.***" (W.216.1.1) Or, use a version that works for you so it will be meaningful to you. This is not just rote repetition of these words. Words are powerful, but only when we connect with them deeply and with sincerity and conviction.

If what I am doing brings me suffering, I have another opportunity today to recognize---I can experience peace instead of this. Would you not be highly motivated to change your thoughts and behaviors if you truly believed in this law? You would want to do this out of your own self-interest. If I were thinking of shooting an arrow at you that would land in my own heart, I would be highly motivated not to make that attack on you. Thus, the Lesson affirms that this is exactly what happens, except the forms may change in which of our attacks come back at us.

If I blame you, I may find my car breaks down as my form of self-punishment, or I may lose my job, or I may get sick. We draw all these experiences to ourselves for a purpose. They are all there to remind us that, as we forgive, the world looks more and more benign to us, regardless of what problems seem to be there. We are then able to see beyond the events and accept them as part of our classroom, rather than resist and see them as bringing us punishment and more suffering.

There are many ways we attack our brothers. We may even find ourselves using the metaphysics of the Course to make the other person wrong. We may try to correct them, judge, or critique them in the belief that we are being helpful. Yet when we step aside and place the Holy Spirit in charge, only then is peace possible, but we need to be gentle with ourselves in this process. We have believed for a very long time that the cause of our distress is outside of our own minds. Changing our minds about this belief requires a lot of vigilance and discipline. Jesus is helping us to realize that everything is coming from our minds and not from hostile elements in the world or as a result of the condition of the body. This is all part of the ego's strategy to keep us mindless.

When we discover the murderer is within, it can induce a lot of guilt; and when we feel guilty, we find ways to punish ourselves. "**For the ego does want to kill you, and if you identify with it you must believe its goal is yours.**" (T.13.II.5.6) (ACIM OE T.12.II.5) In Lesson 196, "**It can be but myself I crucify,**" Jesus says that our attacks on others in the name of self-defense lead to our fear of crucifixion at the hands of God and the world. As Lesson 198 reminds us, "**Only my condemnation injures me. Only my own forgiveness sets me free.**" (W.198.9.3-4)

It is helpful to remember in this regard, "**Everyone makes an ego or a self for himself, which is subject to enormous variation because of its instability. He also makes an ego for everyone else he perceives, which is equally variable. Their interaction is a process that alters both, because they were not made by or with the Unalterable [God]. It is important to realize that this alteration can and does occur as readily when the interaction takes place in the mind as when it involves physical proximity. Thinking about another ego is as effective in changing relative perception as is physical interaction. There could be no better example that the ego is only an idea and not a fact.**" (T.4.II.2.1-6) (ACIM OE T.4.III.25)

How does this relate to today's Lesson? Well, we all play the game of separation and the game of hurt. We have called into our experience all the characters that show up in our play, as well as those who play the roles of our friends and enemies. We are like children playing this game, but we have forgotten that it is a silly game and now we take it all seriously. Yet, we can stand back and laugh at it all. Our thoughts about it hurt us when we take it seriously. We can heal this hurt by asking for help to forgive our thoughts, even if we don't do it in a tangible way, or in proximity to those who have seemingly hurt us. We can do it just in our own thoughts alone, and we can do it by forgoing our desire to crucify our brothers, or to try to get for ourselves at their expense. When we forgive, we see we are all the same. We share the same ego, albeit with different life circumstances, and we share One Self.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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